

The Wolf God's Unwanted Luna chapter 121-130

The Wolf God's Unwanted Luna

Vivian's POV

And then, there was his apology from earlier. That moment. The way he spoke it had caught me completely off guard. Smooth, sincere, and with a voice rich and deep, like honey-drenched thunder. If he ever sang lullabies, our future kids would probably fall asleep within seconds.

Wait. Kids? *Oh no.* My eyes popped wide open as panic surged through me.

What if he wanted kids right now? What if he didn't want any at all? I wasn't ready for either answer!

This was the kind of conversation mates were supposed to have, right? Most wolves didn't wait too long to start families, and that was perfectly fine... for them. But this was me. I loved kids cute, bubbly little things but I'd never had to actually raise one. I didn't know how to discipline them or deal with temper tantrums. What if I failed completely as a mom?

Still... a small part of me imagined cradling something tiny and warm, with little tufts of dark hair and stormy blue eyes, and my chest ached in a way I hadn't expected.

But first... mating. Which Mother Nature seemed hell-bent on fast-tracking. I hadn't even heard of a male triggering a female's heat cycle before. Maybe it was a Lycan thing? Because it sure as hell wasn't normal.

I felt *her* stir inside me my inner wolf and I immediately shut that line of thought down. Nope. Not opening that door right now.

See what I mean? It was like my whole life had been shoved into a blender and someone hit 'purée.' All I wanted was one simple, normal problem to deal with. Like... running out of toilet paper. That'd be an absolute dream.

Except I didn't have a job. Or any money. And living off of Zaliver still made me feel weirdly, stubbornly guilty.

Fantastic. I couldn't even buy toilet paper if I needed it. A hopeless groan ripped from my throat and I buried my face deeper into the mattress.

"Wow, that looks like a blast," a familiar voice said from the doorway amused, smooth, and unmistakable.

I froze dead in my tracks.

Oh no.

Even without looking, I knew exactly who it was.

I turned my head just slightly, letting my hair fall like a dark shield across my face. I peeked at him from under the curtain of strands before immediately facing the bed again.

He saw me naked.

And now, he saw me screaming into a pillow. Could this day possibly get any worse?

The thought hit me out of nowhere, and mortification flushed through me like wildfire. I wanted the bed to swallow me whole just open up and drag me straight into the earth like in those ridiculous horror movies.

I heard movement. He was moving closer. Too close.

"Vivian?" Zaliver's voice was low and gentle, cautious like he didn't want to startle me.
"What's wrong?"

Everything. Everything was wrong. But all I managed was an indistinct grunt into the comforter.

The bed dipped heavily under his weight, and I tensed immediately when I felt his large, warm hand press gently against my back.

"Talk to me," he murmured softly.

I turned my head to the side, the pillow creasing my cheek. Stars, who even lies face-flat on a bed like this? It was horribly uncomfortable.

"You saw me naked," I mumbled, my voice muffled and completely humiliated, "and I'm not even sure how I feel about this whole mating thing... if I even want to mate at all. And... I don't know if you want kids, or what would happen if we did mate because I'm pretty sure you haven't exactly been... celibate."

I rushed the words out so fast they barely felt real, like maybe if I said it fast enough, it wouldn't count.

"I'm sorry, what was that?" Zaliver asked, his tone polite and entirely composed, like I hadn't just babbled something completely insane.

I groaned and took a deep breath. "I said," I repeated slower this time, "you saw me naked, and I'm not sure how I feel about the mating yet, or if I want to mate at all. Plus, I

don't know if you want kids, or what would happen if we do mate, because I'm pretty sure you didn't exactly keep your dick in your pants."

My last words came out in a breathless, high-pitched squeak more than anything else.

He went dead silent for a beat.

"Hmm," he hummed thoughtfully.

I frowned and shifted slightly to look up at him. He wasn't looking at me. His expression was completely unreadable, blank even. His gaze was fixed off somewhere distant in the room.

"What?" I asked, suddenly anxious about what was spinning behind those pale, intense eyes of his. Zaliver was never predictable he always reacted in ways that threw me completely off balance.

Finally, he inhaled deeply.

"I won't lie. I looked when the towel dropped," he said with zero shame. "I'm not going to pretend I didn't. I can't take back what happened today, and honestly, I wouldn't want to. I love your body the way it is, Vivian. That's all I'll say on that."

My breath hitched in my throat.

"As for the mating thing... I'm not surprised."

"What the hell is that supposed to mean?" I snapped, a sudden mix of flattery and annoyance curling in my chest.

He gave a quiet, bitter chuckle. "It's no secret that I've been a terrible mate. I'd be shocked if you weren't second-guessing everything if you didn't question mating with a monster."

That hit me square in the chest. I wanted to say something to ease the bitterness in his tone, but he shook his head before I could even open my mouth.

"Don't," he said gently. "Don't try to fix this. I'm not going to pressure you to choose me. That's why I've been pulling back, especially in the mornings trying not to... cross any lines. You've shown me something I never considered before: choices. You've taught me I never really gave you any. So this one is yours to make. If you decide not to mate with me... I'll accept it. Begrudgingly, yes, but I'll respect it."

He leaned closer then, his voice dropping low with that familiar, natural dominance that always made my heart flutter despite my irritation.

"But don't get it twisted, Vivian. You're still mine."

A strangled, breathless laugh burst out of me.

The ridiculous phrase "a thousand-year-old virgin" crossed my mind, and I almost choked on my own air. Zaliver saying "baby" and "mine" in the same breath? Yeah, we were definitely crossing into uncharted territory.

Chapter 122: Ghosts and First Dates

"And about the kids," he continued, his tone softening, "I've spent most of my existence watching others build families, create memories. I've never had much interaction with children, but if they're ours? If they're a piece of you? Then I'd be honored, Vivian."

He paused and moved his large hand up to gently brush some stray hair away from my face. I stared up at him, the undeniable tenderness in his gaze softening something tight and anxious deep inside my chest.

"So again, it's entirely your choice. If you want kids, you've got a willing contestant hell, I'm the only contestant that matters anyway," he said, a small, playful smile gracing his lips.

I blushed like an embarrassed schoolgirl.

Strangely, I started to feel like myself again maybe not entirely, but the edges of who I was before all this chaos were finally starting to return. I wasn't ready to forgive him completely. Not yet. But... people mess up.

No one messes up quite like Zaliver, of course, but still. He was trying. Changing, even.

Then, out of absolute nowhere, my inner wolf's territorial streak won, and I growled, "And yes, I know you've slept with a lot of women."

He frowned, his brows knitting together.

Well. That thoroughly killed the tender moment.

I turned away and gave him my back, my pride slightly wounded.

"I don't see why you're upset," he muttered behind me. "It's not like you didn't already know."

"No female wants to hear that the dick meant for her has been in other women!" I snapped before I could stop myself.

My wolf howled in hysterical laughter inside my head. "You go girl!" she cheered enthusiastically.

"Oh, shut it," I muttered back to her under my breath.

As soon as those outrageous words tumbled out of my mouth, regret hit me like a sharp slap to the face. Not because I didn't mean them, but because I had said them aloud. Out loud. Why in the world did I say that out loud? Goddess, take me now.

The silence that followed was suffocating. Zaliver didn't say a single word for what felt like forever. Uncomfortably, agonizingly long. My heart thudded in my chest as the quiet stretched on, smothering every last ounce of boldness I had left.

Then, his deep voice cut through the air like a sharp blade.

"Are... are you jealous of women who meant nothing to me? Women I only used to relieve myself?" he asked, his voice low and tight with sudden anger.

My breath caught in my throat. My eyes widened at his brutal, blunt words.

Well... when he put it like that...

I didn't turn around to face him. Couldn't. I wasn't ready to see the fierce expression on his face. What was I even supposed to say in response to that?

"Vivian," he snapped.

I jumped. My name cracked like a whip in the quiet bedroom. Slowly, hesitantly, I turned to look at him, my lips parting at the furious expression contorting his sharp features.

"Why are you mad?" I whispered, completely unsure whether I was terrified, confused, or both.

He stood up in one fluid motion, throwing his broad arms into the air with sudden exasperation.

"Because you're putting yourself in the same category as women who meant absolutely nothing to me. You're jealous over ghosts, Vivian of a past I never would have lived if I'd known you existed. Do you think I wanted that kind of meaningless life? I thought I'd be alone forever unloved, unwanted. And when that's your reality, physical pleasure becomes a pitiful substitute. But you? You're not them. You never were. Don't let your mind convince you otherwise," he said, his harsh voice softening near the end.

My chest tightened painfully.

"But I bet if I told you I'd slept with guys before " I began.

"You haven't," he cut in immediately, frowning hard.

"But if I had "

"But you didn't," he insisted, his icy eyes narrowing.

"Well, if I do "

"You won't," he growled, the Lycan in him rising to the surface.

I grinned wickedly. "I dunno. Dylan O'Brien and Jensen Ackles really do call to me "

The words were barely out of my mouth before I had to roll rapidly off the bed to dodge him lunging directly toward me. Reflexes of the goddess, activate.

He sprang up in a blur of terrifying speed, eyes narrowed into icy blue slits. His lips pulled back slightly, flashing sharp, dangerous canines in warning. Oops. Definitely not amused.

I started crawling away across the rug, but in a blink, he had me pinned face down to the floorboards. One of his massive hands held both of mine tightly above my head, and his long legs pressed mine firmly apart. His heavy weight pressed gently but unyieldingly against my back, halting any further movement. My heart thudded wildly not out of fear, but something much more reckless and thrilling.

He leaned down until his mouth hovered right beside my ear, his breath hot and dangerous against my skin.

"Why do you make this so damn hard for me?" he murmured darkly. "Every instinct I have wants to mark and claim you right now, and you go and talk about other males."

I wriggled beneath him, trying to free my wrists. But instead of being mad or scared, something inside me found the whole situation... hilarious. I let out a shaky giggle. That turned into a light chuckle. Then full-blown, stomach-aching laughter.

Zaliver let out an exasperated huff, thoroughly annoyed, and got off me. With little care for elegance, he scooped me up in his arms and plopped me back onto the mattress like a heavy sack of potatoes.

"H-Hey!" I said between breathless gasps, still laughing.

He rolled his eyes. When I finally calmed down, he raised a dark brow at me like I was completely insane. I gave a lazy shrug. My hand brushed against something soft beside me on the comforter.

"Oh yeah! This reminds me why do you have this and a very unflattering picture of me under your pillow?" I asked, holding up the familiar peach dress.

His lips pressed into a tight, reluctant line before he answered.

"What else was I supposed to cuddle while you were gone?" he muttered softly. "And that's a lovely photo of you."

I sat up straight, eyeing him suspiciously from head to toe.

"Who are you and what have you done with the real Zaliver?" I asked with mock seriousness.

He just shook his head and gently took the dress from my hand, folding it with surprising care before placing it down. Then he reached for my hand and brought my knuckles to his warm lips, his eyes locked intently on mine.

"I believe the question, my beautiful little mate, is what have you done to Zaliver?" he said, his deep voice remarkably low and sincere.

I blinked, an intense warmth blooming in my chest. "I don't know... Why don't you tell me?"

He smirked. "Nope. Now hurry up and change."

He let go of my hand and turned to walk into the walk-in closet.

"What? Why? What's wrong with what I'm wearing?" I asked, looking down at my casual clothes.

He paused at the doorway, giving me a sweeping look over his shoulder, a knowing smile curving his lips.

"It's not appropriate for where we're going... or what we'll be doing."

I narrowed my eyes, my heart fluttering wildly. "And what exactly is that?"

He chuckled under his breath and gave me a playful wink.

"Our first date, of course."

Tip: You can use left, right, A and D keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

The Wolf God's Unwanted Luna

Vivian's POV

"You know, it's not like I'm ungrateful or anything, but when you said 'date,' I imagined dinner maybe a drive with some cheesy car games not walking for miles," I grumbled under my breath.

We strolled through a quiet neighborhood that looked like it belonged straight out of a movie. Little boutique shops lined the cobblestone sidewalks, kids squealed as they ran through a nearby park, and fairy lights already twinkled between the trees even though the sun was still dipping lazily toward the horizon. The entire scene felt almost too perfect, like a painting brought to life.

Zaliver just chuckled, throwing a heavy arm around my shoulders and pressing a warm kiss to the top of my head. I scowled down at the sidewalk while his amusement vibrated through me through our bond.

"Patience," he said, a playful smile tugging at his lips. "I thought you'd like to see this place up close on foot."

"You could've parked closer," I muttered. "I can see just fine from the passenger seat, thank you very much."

He laughed loudly a deep, rich rumble that drew a few glances and fond smiles from nearby strangers. I felt the sudden shift of his weight as he leaned heavily into me, thoroughly amused.

"Damn giant," I mumbled, rolling my eyes. That only made him laugh harder.

Eventually, we stopped in front of a cozy small bakery tucked neatly between two antique shops. I blinked up at the hand-painted sign in confusion. This definitely wasn't a standard dinner spot.

He opened the door for me, and we stepped inside. The soft, heavenly scent of vanilla, baked goods, and cinnamon filled the air instantly. The interior was cozy and painted in warm pastel shades soft pink and lilac with delicate floral stencils edging the high walls. Tables were arranged all over the room, each fully equipped with mixing bowls, measuring cups, and detailed recipe cards.

I counted about ten couples, all of whom paused what they were doing to look up at us. Well, mostly at me.

I shifted uncomfortably under the sudden scrutiny until I felt Zaliver's large hand land firmly on my shoulder.

"Don't mind us," he said smoothly, and despite how casual he sounded, there was an undeniable Alpha command layered subtly beneath his tone.

Everyone quickly looked away and turned back to their own stations. Zaliver led me to a private table in the corner and handed me an apron. I eyed the chalk sign on the wall behind him:

"Couples Night. Bake when you're ready. Eat when you're ready. We do not take responsibility for bad cooking or food poisoning. Enjoy!"

Oh. Well, alright then.

"So, we're baking?" I asked, raising an eyebrow as he expertly tied his apron on like this was just another casual day for him. The baby blue color made his piercing eyes pop ridiculously.

"Yes. Now put yours on," he said with zero hesitation.

I did as I was told, trying my absolute best not to burst out laughing.

"What?" he asked, catching my suspicious smirk.

I bit my lower lip. "Do you, uh... come here often? Take cooking classes?"

The mental image of the terrifying Lycan King baking pastries possibly being gently scolded by a human instructor while he pretended to behave was almost too much for me to process.

He reached over and poked my cheek. "Wouldn't you love that? Sorry to disappoint. I'm just naturally gifted in the kitchen."

"Oh really?" I teased. I mean, I believed him... kind of... but come on. Everyone needed some kind of practice, right?

He leaned in close, his smirk wicked and knowing. "Want to test that theory?"

I crossed my arms with a confident grin. "I bet my cake ends up looking better than yours."

"Looking?" he repeated, thoroughly amused.

"Yes. Looking. Let's not bring actual taste into this just yet."

"Challenge accepted."

I gagged. Literally gagged into my hand.

"Oh god, why did I put that in my mouth?" I clutched my stomach with one hand and covered my mouth with the other. The taste was somewhere between pure charcoal and utter regret a burnt sponge with a generous dash of horror.

Zaliver stood beside my station, trying his hardest not to laugh out loud, but the sheer twinkle in his eyes gave him completely away. His own cake looked like something straight out of a high-end food magazine: smooth lavender icing, intricate white piped details, and a perfect, delicate Z+V piped right on top. Of course.

I wiped my mouth with a napkin and slumped into the chair beside my tragic creation.

"You have dishonored me," I told the cake, glaring bitterly at its uneven, burnt, and slightly concave form. "After all my hard work, you betray me like this?"

"Dishonored the chef, too," Zaliver added, biting his lower lip to keep from cracking up.

I turned to shoot him a sharp glare and bared my teeth at him playfully. He raised his broad hands in mock surrender, but his grin only grew wider.

I rose from my seat and stood beside him, staring mournfully down at his picture-perfect cake.

"I guess this means you'll be doing all the cooking from now on," I said, pouting just a little bit.

He wrapped his long arms around me from behind, pulling my back flush against his chest.

"Forever and always," he murmured into my hair, his deep voice remarkably soft and proud. His smile was radiant, his icy blue eyes dancing as he looked down at me.

Honestly, it was hard to stay mad at my failed cake. Especially when the rival baker looked like this.

"Yeah. Well... whatever. Let's see if your cake actually tastes better than mine," I huffed, trying to wriggle out of his warm hold. But instead of letting me go, Zaliver just spun me around in his arms with a cocky smirk on his face.

"Let's be honest here anything tastes better than your cake."

I gasped, utterly offended. "Hey!"

He laughed freely. "It's true!"

I rolled my eyes and slumped against his broad chest dramatically. "Yeah," I muttered with exaggerated solemnity.

"But it was... pretty," he added in a softer, comforting tone.

Immediately, my bullshit radar started blaring loudly. I burst out laughing, and even a few of the couples nearby chuckled at our little performance. We must've been quite the spectacle in this quiet bakery.

"Pfft, no way. That thing was an absolute, hideous mess," I said, glancing back at the lopsided blob I'd left on the table.

"Okay, okay, I'm done talking about your cake. Come on, we're not finished yet," he said, gesturing for me to follow him.

"What about your cake? Don't I get to try it?" I asked, slipping off my apron and tossing it onto the counter.

He motioned to someone nearby, and a sweet, red-haired woman walked over holding a neatly tied blue cake box. She handed it over to him with a polite smile and walked away.

"Later," he said as he carefully placed his masterpiece inside and sealed the box shut. Then he held out his hand for me, raising a dark brow in challenge as he eyed my sad excuse of a cake still sitting abandoned on the table.

"Do you want to take " he started.

"Oh, shut up." I snatched the offensive blob of flour and burnt frosting and tossed it straight into the trash can like it was radioactive waste.

The Wolf God's Unwanted Luna

Vivian's POV

I stomped back over to him and grabbed his hand. He didn't say anything, just stared down at me with that same unreadable expression before leading us out to the car.

Once inside, he asked me to put the cake in the backseat, but I gave him a look like he'd lost his mind.

"What?" he asked, holding the back door open.

"Hell no. That cake would go tumbling the second we hit a curve. I'll hold it on my lap, thank you very much."

He shrugged and walked over to the passenger side, opening the door for me. I smiled my thanks and slid into the seat, carefully securing the box on my lap. Outside, the sky was beginning to melt into twilight—warm swirls of orange, lavender, and rose fading gracefully into a dusky purple.

"So... where are we going next?" I asked eagerly. Baking with him had been surprisingly fun—chaotic, messy fun, but still fun. He'd managed to stay focused on his cake while also somehow stopping me from setting the kitchen on fire or wiping out on a pile of spilled flour.

"You'll find out soon," he said cryptically, eyes fixed on the road ahead.

The drive wasn't silent in that awkward way where you wait for someone to speak first. It was peaceful. Comfortable. Like we were both okay just being in each other's presence.

Eventually, he pulled over to the side of the road, and I blinked at the stretch of dense forest and jagged hills stretching out in front of us.

"Please tell me we're not going in there," I said slowly.

"We're not," he replied calmly.

I sighed in immense relief. "Good."

"We're hiking," he added with a completely straight face, taking the cake box from my lap and marching off toward the trail like he hadn't just ruined my life.

"Yipeee," I deadpanned, twirling an imaginary party streamer in the air.

Before I could follow, he stopped and turned to face me.

"Oh, wait. Before we go... can I call my parents?" I asked. "Your PIN's the only way I can use your phone."

He reached into his back pocket and tossed me his phone, which I caught easily with a grin. I quickly dialed my parents' home number and waited as it rang.

"Hello?"

"Hey, Dad. It's me," I said brightly, fully aware of Zaliver quietly studying me from a few feet away.

"'It's me' could be any of my kids," he teased immediately.

There was a loud smack and some scolding in the background, then his voice returned, sounding much more contrite.

"Hey, Vivian."

"Yup, it's me. Your *only* child, by the way," I teased back.

He laughed. "It's good to hear from you, young lady. You said you'd call soon—it's been—"

"I know, I know, sorry! I'm about to go on a hike like literally right now so I can't talk long."

"Hike?" he asked in pure disbelief. "Are you on something?"

"What?" I blinked, utterly confused.

"Drugs, Vivian. Are you on drugs? Because the daughter I know wouldn't walk to the mailbox, let alone hike. Are you sure you're mine?"

I pursed my lips and glanced over at Zaliver, who was nodding solemnly like he completely agreed with my dad.

"Ha ha. Very funny. Anyway, just wanted to say I'm doing fine," I said, ignoring their judgmental glares even across dimensions.

"Well, glad to hear it. Your mother sends hugs and glares. I mean, kisses," he said quickly, and I heard my mom scoff loudly on the other end.

"Love you both. Bye!" I said before hanging up. I couldn't resist muttering under my breath, "*Any of your children*, huh?"

"It was a joke," I imagined him saying right as the call ended.

I handed the phone back to Zaliver, and once again, that same strange look crossed his face. Like he was realizing something—something unexpected, but something that made him... happy.

And I couldn't help but wonder what exactly he was thinking.

"Ready?" Zaliver asked, his deep voice low and smooth.

I gave a small nod, bracing myself as we stepped off the gravel and into the dense forest. The air was cool and damp, earthy with the rich scent of pine and fallen leaves. I sighed softly, dragging my feet after him, not entirely sure what this little outdoor outing was meant to accomplish.

"So," I started, carefully stepping over a thick, moss-covered log, "is there a reason you decided to take me on a date today?" I asked, accepting his outstretched hand for balance.

He glanced over his shoulder, a hint of a smile playing on his lips. "I figured you could use something to take your mind off things. What kind of mate would I be if I didn't treat mine to something a little... distracting?"

I snorted softly. "I wouldn't know," I muttered truthfully.

He chuckled, his pace steady as he moved through the forest path. "So besides walking and hiking, is there anything else I should add to the list of physical activities you hate?" He looked back at me with a playful lift of his dark brow.

I narrowed my eyes at him, already wary of where this conversation was heading. "I don't like rollerblading or anything involving heights," I replied, deliberately keeping my tone

flat even though my cheeks were heating up. His eyes widened slightly in surprise, but he masked it quickly.

"Oh," he said slowly, dragging the word out thoughtfully. I squinted at his back, sensing something behind the sudden shift in his demeanor.

"Well," he added quickly, "I'm just relieved sex isn't on that list."

My face burned hot. "Not yet," I shot back, irritated but completely flustered.

"Or ever," he said with supreme confidence, a cocky smirk in his tone. "I'll make sure of that."

He ducked beneath a large overhead branch and held it up for me to pass under, still grinning like the arrogant Alpha he was.

What was I even supposed to say to that? *Oh, thank you, mighty mate, for your guarantee of brain-melting pleasure?* Yeah, no thanks.

"*Prove it,*" my wolf whispered with a giggle inside my head, and I promptly shoved her voice aside.

"Hmmm," I hummed noncommittally.

His voice softened as he suddenly asked, "So, am I right to assume you still hold some resentment about what I did before? That you're planning a new way to get back at me?"

That made me pause dead in my tracks. I stared at his broad back, caught completely off guard. When he turned around to face me, his expression was curious, yet unreadable.

Did I still hold resentment?

Chapter 125: A View From Above

Vivian's POV

I... wasn't sure. The intense anger I had once carried had dulled over time, replaced instead by the heavier weight of uncertainty about my ongoing transformation, my upcoming heat cycle, and my rapidly changing identity.

"I still feel something about it," I admitted slowly, lowering my eyes to the damp dirt beneath my boots. "But not like before. Maybe because I'm too focused on everything else the change, the heat. It's hard to hold on to anger when you're barely holding yourself together."

He stepped closer, the soft sound of autumn leaves crunching beneath his heavy boots the only warning before he gently tipped my chin up with his fingers. The filtered twilight made his eyes seem impossibly blue, like calm waves in the middle of this wild, green forest.

"I'm sorry," he murmured softly. "All I seem to do is give you headaches and heartaches. I'm not exactly winning 'Mate of the Year,' am I?"

My heart twisted in my chest, thoroughly confused by the rare look in his eyes and the way his deep voice broke just slightly. He actually meant that.

"Headaches? Definitely. Heartache? Not as much," I replied, my voice softer this time.

"But still aches?" he asked, tilting his head with genuine concern.

I smiled faintly. "Only the good kind."

He raised a dark brow. "Oh really?" His thumb gently brushed across my cheek in slow, soothing strokes that made it hard to formulate a coherent thought.

"I think," I said, trying to steady myself with calm words, "that no matter how angry I've been or how messy things got between us, we still managed to move forward. We learned more about each other what we need, what we want and that counts for something. The road's been bumpy, but... maybe we needed the bumps. You're not a bad mate, Zaliver."

You're just learning things you never had to worry about before. And I'm discovering pieces of myself I didn't even know existed."

His eyes darkened, not with anger, but with something far deeper, something intensely possessive. "I don't deserve you," he said, his voice dropping low like a sacred vow, "but you're mine now."

I barely had time to respond before my back met the rough bark of a nearby tree and his warm lips found mine.

The kiss started gentle, slow, and reverent. But as the familiar heat began to stir low in my belly, his movements became more urgent, his mouth more demanding. I found myself clinging to him, one hand gripping the sturdy fabric of his shirt, the other threading tightly into his damp hair.

Even though everything inside me buzzed with sudden need, this time, I had enough clarity to pull away or at least try to. I began to shift my posture, attempting to slide sideways out from under him.

But he followed my movement instantly, like a shadow that refused to let me escape.

I must have tripped or smacked straight into a thick tree root, because the next thing I knew, I was falling backward with his broad weight crashing down on top of me.

"Save the cake!" I shrieked on pure instinct, bracing myself for impact.

But when I blinked, I wasn't underneath him anymore I was on top of him. Perched right on top of a very surprised Zaliver, one of his massive hands securely gripping my waist, the other holding the small blue cake box high up in the air like a dedicated waiter mid-spin.

"Save the cake?" he echoed, choking on a sudden laugh, staring up at me like I'd grown a second head.

"Yes! Is it okay?" I asked, immediately pushing myself up with my palms against his chest, straddling him without much thought. I reached for the box, but he easily held it out of my reach.

"You didn't even bake the damn thing and you're panicking about it? Not even a 'hey, are you alright?'" he teased, his tone heavy with mock injury.

I crossed my arms, sitting back slightly on his lap. "You'll heal. The cake won't. Mine was a total disaster, so I'm adopting yours."

He raised an amused brow. "You're adopting my cake now?"

"No. *My* cake," I said firmly, correcting him. "Possession is nine-tenths of the law."

His cocky grin faded, and for a second, his expression shifted into something deeper quiet, intense, and vulnerable. It made my heart lurch wildly in my chest.

"I'm yours," he said. Just like that. No hesitation. Just him, stating it like it was the most obvious fact in the world.

His eyes locked onto mine, unwavering and raw. I couldn't breathe for a beat. Zaliver always threw around the 'you're mine' claim like some possessive alpha mantra, but this? This felt entirely different. Hearing him say that *he* was mine it knocked something loose inside me.

"I guess you are," I murmured, my voice smaller than I intended. But he nodded solemnly like my words sealed a binding vow.

We just sat there in the quiet woods, lost in each other's gaze, the moment stretching and swelling between us like the tide.

Then, of course, he had to ruin the romantic atmosphere.

"You know, I really like this position. Let's skip the rest of the date and stay just like this," he said, that smug smirk crawling right back onto his handsome face.

I rolled my eyes and pushed off of him, standing up with a dramatic huff. He stood too, effortlessly brushing dirt off his dark pants.

"I didn't hike all the way up this trail to end up straddling you in the dirt," I said, arms crossed over my chest.

"But technically... you did," he shot right back.

My cheeks flushed hot. Ugh. He actually had a point.

I turned my back to him, smoothing my hair down as I walked forward up the path. "Don't get smart with me."

"How about I get sexy with you instead?" he drawled playfully behind me.

I spun around, ready to hurl some well-earned sass, only to catch him glaring directly at my rear with a blatant lack of shame. When I fully faced him, his eyes snapped back up to mine way too fast, looking completely innocent.

"Seriously?" I muttered, narrowing my eyes.

He blinked at me innocently. "What?"

"Nothing," I said with a smirk, then shoved his shoulder lightly forward. "Keep moving."

"Oh, I get it," he said with a knowing tone. "You wanna stare at my ass."

"No, I do not! Just walk!"

He laughed low under his breath, but thankfully listened, letting me herd him forward like an annoyed shepherd.

After a few more minutes of walking along the winding path, we stepped through the final line of dense trees, and I froze in my tracks.

My breath caught in my throat.

We stood in a vast, open clearing that looked out over the side of the island. We were high enough to see everything: the winding rivers below, the jagged rocky cliffs, the swaying treetops, and the vast sea stretching endlessly beneath the sky. The ocean shimmered softly under the dimming light, its waves kissing the shore in a soft, steady rhythm. The sun had just dipped behind the horizon, casting warm golden and amber hues across the clouds and the sky.

It was... breathtaking.

"Wow," I whispered, my eyes wide as I took it all in.

"Worth the hike?" he asked, studying my reaction carefully.

I nodded slowly. "Definitely."

"One more surprise," he said gently, taking my hand in his. His large fingers wrapped around mine like a reassuring anchor, calming every nervous flutter in my chest.

He led me deeper into the grass, where, nestled amidst the thick green lawn and colorful wildflowers, was a setup that looked like something straight out of a romance novel. A large, cozy blanket was spread across the ground, weighted at the corners with plush pillows and a folded throw. In the center, a picnic basket, two bottles of wine chilling in an ice bucket, and a small portable speaker sat waiting.

My heart swelled happily.

It was absolutely perfect.

The Wolf God's Unwanted Luna

Vivian's POV

Zaliver set the cake down beside the picnic basket and gently tugged me under the warm blanket with him. We sat close, shoulder to shoulder, as the ocean wind danced lightly around us and the distant waves whispered their steady lullaby.

"Wait," he said suddenly, pulling out his phone. I watched as his fingers moved across the screen, and a moment later, the soft, aching notes of *Fire In The Water* by Feist floated into the quiet night air. The song wrapped around us like silk melancholy, gentle, and beautiful, like a quiet confession.

Then, his phone screen went dark. For a second, I didn't understand until small, delicate lights flickered to life in the grass all around us. One by one, pastel fairy lights in soft shades blinked on, forming a glowing circle around our little blanket. They pulsed gently, spiraling around us once, then again, and again, as if weaving some kind of silent spell. The colors shimmered in shades of lavender, rose gold, and silver-blue, casting a soft, heavenly glow across Zaliver's sharp features.

My heart clenched in my chest, almost painfully. I couldn't believe this was real.

He turned to look at me with a small, unusually hesitant smile. "Do you like it?"

How could he just ask that so simply?

I couldn't even speak at first. I just stared at the lights, the dark ocean, the food, and felt the deep warmth of the blanket wrapped around us both. Then I looked back at him this mysterious, infuriating, beautiful male who could drive me insane and still make me fall for him all over again.

"Zaliver," I breathed, completely overwhelmed. There was no way to describe what I was feeling, only that it all sat heavy, warm, and full inside my chest.

His pale eyes searched my face as my expression softened. I saw something almost vulnerable flicker in his gaze as he waited for my answer.

"So... yes?" he asked carefully, his fingers nervously fidgeting with the edge of the blanket like a shy teenager.

I smiled, my heart completely melting. I sat up on my knees, leaned forward, and pressed a soft kiss directly to his lips. He immediately responded, one large hand threading through my hair, cradling the back of my head like I might disappear into thin air if he let go. His other hand found my waist, firm, reassuring, and gentle.

The kiss was nothing like the intense, desperate ones we'd shared before. It wasn't wild or urgent. It was slow. Tender. A quiet declaration neither of us had quite found the words for yet. I felt everything in that single kiss his hope, his care, his fears, and his raw longing.

When we finally pulled back, we were both breathless, wearing matching, silly smiles. I rested my forehead against his, our noses lightly brushing in the cool night air.

"It's a yes," I whispered softly against his skin.

"I'm glad," he whispered back.

We finally broke apart, though it felt like a small heartbreak just to pull away. He pulled out the plates and glasses while I helped uncover the still-warm pasta and roasted vegetables. My brows lifted in surprise when he admitted he'd had a few pack members help carry the heavy setup up the hill, but that he had cooked every bit of the food himself. He was proud of that part. I could tell by the tilt of his jaw.

"You cooked?" I asked, smirking at him.

He gave me a mock warning look. "Yes. Personally. And I assure you, it's edible."

I laughed and nudged his ribs playfully. "I'm impressed, Alpha."

We ate slowly, savoring every bite and every quiet moment. The wine was sweet and rich, and I let it loosen the stubborn knots that always seemed to live inside my chest. We talked really talked.

He shared stories with me, little details I had never known about him. His favorite music, the way he preferred his coffee dark, how he couldn't sleep unless the window was left cracked open. We talked about things we loved, things we hated. He opened up about his brother, and when he did, his voice changed deeper, sadder, heavier. I didn't push him for more. I just listened, and he let me in.

Eventually, we laid back together on the blanket, full and content, the stars scattered above us like brilliant diamonds on black velvet. Our fingers brushed against the fabric, then twined together naturally.

I turned my head slightly to look at him in the dim light.

This man, who was feared by entire supernatural nations... had created genuine magic tonight just to make me smile.

And for the first time in what felt like forever, I didn't feel terrified of the future. I felt curious. Hopeful. Connected.

Maybe, just maybe, this bond between us wasn't just an unyielding twist of fate.

Maybe it was something meant to be cherished.

"I miss my brother terribly," Zaliver said quietly, breaking the peaceful silence that had settled over us.

The way his voice softened, almost fragile, caught me completely off guard.

"Joshula?" I asked gently, treading carefully. It wasn't a topic we'd spoken about much, if ever. The brother he'd been forced to kill was a ghost neither of us knew how to face.

"Yeah," he murmured, gazing up at the stars. "I don't remember much from my human life, or really anyone from before... except him. But I do remember the way he made everything feel lighter, like the whole world wasn't always sitting on my shoulders." A faint smile tugged at his lips, but there was undeniable pain beneath it. "I wish he were here. You'd have liked him. He used to scold me constantly. I was the older one, supposed to look after him, not the other way around."

The way his voice cracked slightly at the very end twisted something painful inside me. I turned my head further on the blanket to face him completely.

"I think I would've liked him too," I said softly, offering whatever comfort I could. "Especially since he told you off. Sounds like my kind of guy."

He laughed at that low, warm, and genuine and the tension in his broad shoulders finally eased. The quiet hum of music in the background shifted to *A Drop in the Ocean* by Ron Pope, filling the night air with its melancholy melody. Without warning, he shifted the topic, like he always did when a memory cut a little too deep.

We drifted into lighter, easier conversation. He started asking all sorts of ridiculous questions, like which kids used to bully me in school, all the way from kindergarten through high school. He was dead serious too, looking at me like he'd go hunt them down personally if I gave him names. I stubbornly refused. No way was I contributing to a supernatural hit list just because fifth-grade me got teased for her shoes.

Eventually, dessert time came around. Zaliver reached for the white box sitting next to the blanket, opened it up, and pulled out a small fork. Then, without any warning, he tugged me effortlessly onto his lap, wrapping a thick arm around my waist like I naturally belonged right there against him.

I gave him a skeptical look as he held up a bite of his lavender cake on the fork.

"What's this?" I asked, raising a brow. "Are you seriously gonna feed me?"

"Yes," he said simply, like it was the most obvious thing in the world. His piercing blue eyes locked onto mine, glinting with something dark and playful. "Now open up."

Chapter 127: The Price of Power

Vivian's POV

I rolled my eyes, but parted my lips anyway. The moment the cake touched my tongue, a surprised moan slipped from my mouth. Rich, decadent, and somehow better cold than warm. My eyes lit up as I bounced lightly in his lap from pure excitement.

"Oh my goddess," I mumbled around the bite, "this is so good."

I didn't notice until too late that Zaliver had gone completely still beneath me.

"Are you trying to give me blue balls?" he growled through clenched teeth. "Because if you are, congratulations. It's working."

I froze mid-bounce, laughter bubbling in my throat. I reached for the fork, but he angled it out of my reach, grinning like a predator toying with its prey.

"Nope. I'm feeding you," he said smugly, offering another bite.

I gave in. Honestly, I was too comfortable in his lap to argue, and that cake... It deserved genuine praise.

"This is amazing," I said after another mouthful, leaning back against him. "I think I'm in love with this cake."

I closed my eyes, letting the sweetness linger as I smiled to myself. But when I opened them again, I found Zaliver staring down at me, his gaze intense and unreadable.

He leaned in and brushed his lips softly across the corner of my mouth, then the other, before pressing a tender kiss to my lips. I barely had time to react before he whispered against my skin:

"Only the cake?"

"And what did you say?" Hannah leaned forward, her eyes wide with curiosity.

Courtney and Mila mirrored her exact movement, eagerly waiting for my answer, while Mark just rolled his eyes like this whole conversation was beneath him. Across the room, Luke and Johnson paused mid-card game, both looking over at me expectantly. I guess it wasn't every day you got to listen in on the awkward love life of someone tied to a godlike supernatural Alpha.

I tucked a loose strand of hair behind my ear, then pulled my knees up to my chest and hugged them tightly, trying to make myself as small as humanly possible.

"I didn't say anything," I muttered.

"What?" Hannah nearly screeched in disbelief.

I heard Mark shift beside her, probably preparing for more secondhand embarrassment.

"His question caught me completely off guard," I mumbled, the memory still fresh and painfully mortifying. "I... choked. On the cake in my mouth."

Groans and giggles rippled through the room.

I had practically flung myself off Zaliver's lap, gasping for air and flailing my arms like some uncoordinated maniac. He'd jumped up too, panicking, and started pounding on my back except, apparently, his version of a supportive "pat" felt like being hit with a solid steel beam. I swore I felt a vertebra crack.

The worst part? He completely forgot about the original romantic question and instead scolded me like a stern father figure about the dangers of not chewing my food thoroughly. I wasn't sure which was more embarrassing the actual choking or the sudden lecture.

Or maybe he didn't forget, my wolf murmured quietly in my head. Maybe he just chose not to push for an answer.

Yeah... maybe.

I looked up to find all of them staring at me with mixed expressions some amused, others full of pity. Except for Johnson. He just looked downright disappointed in me.

You and me both, honey, my wolf sighed dramatically.

"Aww, you left the guy hanging," Johnson said with a disappointed shake of his head.

Luke kicked him under the table, shooting him a warning look.

But had I really left him hanging? What did I actually feel for Zaliver?

I knew I liked him more than I liked him but how deep did that really go? What even was love? I'd never truly known it. Later that afternoon, after spending another hour chatting with the girls, I'd quietly asked them to drive me to the nearest pharmacy. If something major were going to happen between Zaliver and me during my heat, I wanted to be prepared. Just in case.

That single thought alone told me everything I needed to know.

Maybe I really did trust him enough to want him like that enough to consider sharing myself with him in every possible way. And that terrified me, because it meant I was

slowly trusting him with my heart. The weight of that kind of vulnerability made me feel like time was rapidly running out.

"You never really told me what to expect during my transformation," I said casually after lunch.

Zaliver had headed off to his office to handle some pack paperwork, and curiosity eventually got the better of me. I followed him in partly to annoy him, partly because I just wanted to be around his presence. He didn't seem to mind at all, so I curled up on his absurdly plush black leather couch near the window, pulling a soft cotton blanket over my head until only my eyes peeked out.

Zaliver looked up from his dark desk, setting aside a sleek, expensive pen. He rotated his chair toward me, his face calm and composed.

"Ask whatever you want," he said with a small gesture.

I took a moment to gather my thoughts before asking the one thing that scared me most.

"Will it hurt?"

He didn't hesitate for even a second. "I'm not going to lie to you. Yes. It will."

His blunt honesty hit harder than I expected.

"Unlike your first shift as a werewolf, where the pain of bone-breaking fades quickly from your memory, this transformation... you'll feel every second of it."

My throat tightened painfully. "All of it?" I asked softly.

He nodded, his gaze unwavering. "Every second. Every part of your body breaks and reshapes itself from the inside out. Bones crunch and stretch, your skin hardens, fur grows in like tiny needles piercing your flesh. Your ribs crack and reform to accommodate your expanding chest. Your internal organs compress and shift. Your face reshapes into a snout. And the absolute worst part..." He paused, his pale eyes steady on mine. "Your spine snaps and breaks to accommodate the new posture. You'd think your nerve endings would go numb, but it's the exact opposite."

His words painted a vivid, horrifying picture in my mind. I imagined my body bending and twisting under intense pressure, skin stretching, muscles tearing and rebuilding themselves. My stomach twisted nervously.

I wanted to run away right then. To escape all of this. But where could I go?

Nowhere. Because this was my reality now. And deep down, a part of me still wanted it wanted to be stronger, wanted to stand beside Zaliver not just as his protected mate, but as his true equal.

Even if it meant enduring every ounce of the pain.

Chapter 128: The Calamity Before the Storm

Vivian's POV

"And after. Will every shift hurt?" I asked, already bracing for the answer I didn't want to hear.

"No. It'll be quicker. The more you shift, the less pain there is. Eventually, it turns into nothing."

That didn't exactly sound like a comforting no. More like a gentle way of saying, *Yes, but you'll get used to it*. I chewed anxiously on the inside of my cheek. Maybe if I stayed optimistic, it wouldn't seem so bad.

"What about after the shift?" I continued, pushing through my worries.

He leaned back in his desk chair, his expression softening slightly as he gave a small smile. "Well, I've never seen anyone else shift like you. You're the first. I guess we'll find out together."

A small huff escaped me. "Fair enough. Um... what about the voice in my head? Will her... personality start to affect mine?" I asked hesitantly, my fingers twitching nervously in my lap.

That caught Zaliver's full attention. He straightened up immediately, dark brows drawn together as his eyes locked onto me.

"Voice?"

I hesitated. "Yeah..." I answered slowly. Suddenly, it didn't feel like something I should have said out loud.

He looked genuinely stunned and not in a good way.

"Vivian, beasts don't have voices. They communicate with emotions... strong ones. Sometimes they take over and speak through us, but they don't... have a distinct voice of their own."

"W-What?" I stammered. The blood completely drained from my face. If they weren't supposed to have voices... what the hell was living inside my head?

"How many times have you heard her?" he asked, his large hands clasping tightly in front of him.

"Just once. But I always feel her, like she's lingering just out of reach. She said I'd been blocking her out and that's why I've been getting headaches."

"You've been getting headaches?"

"Yeah," I said quickly, wincing at the sudden shift in his mood. I could feel his irritation creeping through the bond, sharp and cold like a gust of wind.

"Why haven't you told me?" he snapped, his hand slamming against the wooden desk so hard I flinched.

"I didn't think it was serious!" I defended, my lips pressing into a tight line.

He leaned back, his jaw tensed, frustration radiating off him in heavy waves. "Vivian, I don't care if it's a paper cut. If something is happening to you, I want to know. Big or small... tell me."

I swallowed hard, nodding. "Okay."

His pale eyes searched mine, and then he sat back, still visibly tense.

"As for the voice... the only explanation I can think of is that your beast has fused with your wolf somehow, and figured out how to speak through that link. That's... different."

"So... you don't have a voice?" I asked.

He shook his head.

I slumped slightly in my seat. Of course. Out of all the internal voices I could have gotten, I ended up with the sassy, cold, slightly terrifying one. I felt a sharp flicker of offense from her deep inside my mind. Guess she heard that.

"Okay... so werewolf shifts normally take, what, three to five hours?" I asked, trying to redirect my spiraling thoughts.

"Yeah," he said, tilting his head thoughtfully. "But for us... well, back then no one tracked time the same way, but if I remember correctly... my shift took eight hours."

My jaw dropped. "What?"

He didn't say anything. He just looked at me calmly, as if he hadn't just thrown me into a full-blown panic.

Eight. Hours.

That wasn't a shift that was labor. Painful, endless labor. My stomach twisted nervously. I could barely make it through three hours during a regular shift. Eight? No way. My chest tightened with rising dread.

Would the entire transformation stretch out every step of the process like slow torture? Would I even be conscious when it was over? Would I be strong enough to run, to move, to do anything at all?

And then... another terrifying realization hit me like a slap to the face.

What about my heat?

If my theory was right, then the moment I shifted, the bond would snap into place completely. And if that happened... heat would follow.

Full-blown.

My breath caught in my throat. Mating. Actual mating.

Panic bubbled wildly inside me. How much time did I even have left?

"Something else you want to ask me?" Zaliver's voice cut straight through my spiraling thoughts. His eyes narrowed, studying me carefully. He was turned fully toward me now, giving me his complete attention.

I opened my mouth, but nothing came out. I forced a weak, convincing smile. "Nope."

He didn't buy it for a second. His eyes narrowed further.

"You sure?"

"Yup."

Definitely not.

I watched Zaliver pace the bedroom, his movements deliberate but oddly distant. The sun hadn't fully risen yet barely five in the morning but the faint light creeping through the curtains was enough to outline his towering silhouette. He didn't bother switching on the

lights, and the shadowy quiet made everything feel heavier, like the air itself was warning me to pay attention.

He hadn't said a word yet, but something felt... wrong. Off. I couldn't explain it. It wasn't anything obvious he did he wasn't angry, wasn't withdrawn in a way I could easily name but my instincts were screaming. My wolf shifted inside me, deeply unsettled. Was I just overthinking this? Maybe he was simply more serious than usual. Still, the ominous feeling wouldn't leave me.

"I'll be back later. I have things I need to take care of." His voice was calm as he approached my side of the bed. He leaned down, brushing a gentle kiss against my forehead.

I looked up at him, searching his expression for something I couldn't name. When he straightened and turned for the door, I couldn't stay quiet.

"Zaliver? Is everything okay?" My voice came out soft, but I could feel my skin prickle, as if my body knew something my mind hadn't caught up to yet.

He paused at the door, his hand resting on the knob. He didn't turn to face me, just tilted his head enough that I could see the sharp tension in his broad shoulders.

"Everything's... going to be fine. Don't go outside. Looks like it's going to rain."

Then he was gone.

The door closed with a soft click, but it might as well have echoed like a deafening slam. I stayed still for a second, then pulled myself toward the window. Even with the curtains drawn, I could tell today was going to be dark, inside and out. The sky had that eerie stillness to it the kind of quiet that came right before a destructive storm.

An uneasy knot formed in my chest. I grabbed Zaliver's pillow and hugged it tightly against me, burying my face in the scent he left behind. It didn't help.

What was he doing that made his eyes gleam like that? That sharp, dangerous glint I'd seen it before, usually when something terrible was about to happen. And the way he said everything would be "fine"? It didn't sit right with me.

Zaliver... what are you not telling me?

The thought lingered just out of reach, like my brain was desperately trying to warn me but couldn't quite put the pieces into words. A dense fog clouded my thoughts, thick and stubborn. My limbs were sore and heavy, even though I hadn't done anything physical yesterday to justify it. Still, my senses were heightened. Alert. Anxious.

Maybe it was best to stay inside. Whatever was coming, I could feel it. It wasn't the world outside that scared me it was something closer. Something already here.

They always say to expect the unexpected. But what happens when you've been expecting it all along?

The only real shock... is when it finally arrives.

Chapter 129: The Eve of Vengeance

Zaliver's POV

As soon as I stepped out of the room, I knew I hadn't done a great job of hiding it from her. I'd tried, but I couldn't fake calm not when I was this close. My vengeance was within reach, and pretending everything was normal around Vivian just didn't feel possible.

I moved quickly through the shadows of the forest, the last stretch of night clinging desperately to the edges of the sky. The heavy clouds above thickened, dark with unshed rain. The scent of moisture and electricity lingered on the wind. A storm was coming in more ways than one.

By the time I reached the farthest edge of the island, the air was charged. Two of my men stood guard at the hidden entrance, silent and alert. I nodded once before descending into the cave system below.

Each step deeper into the earth brought me closer to the core of this operation closer to the reckoning I'd spent years planning.

When I entered the subterranean war room, the others were already there: Hogan, Albericus, Lexero, Fern, and Venom bent over the massive wooden table, its surface completely buried under tactical maps, old parchments, and intelligence reports. Their hushed voices cut off the moment I arrived. No one met my eyes directly.

Good. They understood what today meant.

"Report," I commanded, in no mood for delay. They knew the line between my tolerance and fury had worn dangerously thin over the course of this mission.

Venom stepped forward first, his voice like a low hiss through smoke. "We've located the door. I've locked it down and reinforced the parameters. We await your word, my lord."

Even after all this time, that title coming from him still felt strange.

Venom wasn't like the others. A serpent shifter, his loyalty ran deeper than blood. He towered over most men at seven feet tall, all lean muscle and coiled menace. His white hair was slicked back, his sharp features made even sharper by golden eyes slitted like a viper's. He had the kind of past that even I didn't press him on.

When we first met, it took time and a lot of blood for us to build trust. Now? He'd die for me without hesitation. Still, I'd never convinced him to drop the "my lord" bit, no matter how often I told him I didn't rule over snakes.

Today, I wouldn't argue. Today, I needed total loyalty. Precision. No distractions.

We were almost there. The door was found. The pieces were in place. And soon... everything that had been taken would be reclaimed.

Blood for blood. Betrayal for betrayal.

Let the storm begin.

Lexero stood before me, his posture stiff and sharp like a drawn blade, his voice steady as he delivered his report.

"The men are ready and have been preparing themselves with the dosages you ordered. Four hundred in the front line, forty thousand in the second, and another four hundred held back as reserves," he said.

He was always precise, always composed.

Lexero was an anomaly in our world a half-lion shifter, unable to fully transform. It hadn't stopped him from clawing his way to the top, and every scar carved into his dark chest was a testament to that. His chocolate-brown skin gleamed under the warm light,

taut over a frame honed by years of relentless combat. His long, dark hair was tied in a messy knot atop his head, and his mismatched eyes one black rimmed with gold, the other gold with a black ring never wavered when they met mine. Shorter than the rest of us at five-eleven, but no less formidable. His pride radiated off him, an aura as thick and heavy as my own.

Next was Hogan.

"There have been reports of divine presence gods and goddesses spotted more frequently in the last three weeks. The past few days have been particularly intense. Temples across the globe are reporting stolen artifacts. Things ancient and nameless. Their origins are unknown, as is the significance of what's been taken." He paused briefly, his eyes darting nervously toward me then away. "Werewolves on the East Coast are noticing a change. Tension in the air. Uneasiness. No signs of violence yet, but the atmosphere has shifted drastically. I believe their hideout may be located in that direction. The fact that they're not hiding their presence could mean they're planning something big."

He was right to be cautious.

I said nothing, but I absorbed every word. Hogan clung to the corner of the room like a shadow, his clipboard and notebook clenched tightly in his hands. The others made him nervous. I never asked why. I didn't need to, as long as he did his job.

Then came Albericus. His tone was clipped, heavier than the rest.

"As for the rat Jack Ruston's been released. I tracked down four individuals he spoke to, but no one seemed to believe his claims. They dismissed him, said you had no soul... so

obviously no mate." His jaw tensed at the mention. "I've planted some rumors near their location just in case. But what's eating at me is how he got the information in the first place... and who the first person he told was. Someone matching the description you gave."

His gaze twitched slightly, like he was holding something back. He always did that when he was close to finding something critical. I'd wait for him to get full confirmation before pressing.

The others shifted uncomfortably at the confirmation that I had a mate. I felt their quiet curiosity like static electricity in the air. Let them wonder.

Finally, Fern stepped forward. He always looked like something straight out of a twisted legend Filipino descent, skin darker than most, his canines subtly exposed even when he wasn't snarling. His stark white irises against pale sclera made his eyes nearly glow in the dark room. His loyalty, like Venom's, ran deep. I respected that.

"My sources say something is stirring in the heavens. The gods... they're assembling forces of their own. Not just preparing, but withdrawing pulling back into their golden citadel in the clouds. Some say they've got a secret weapon. Something big. Something they're terrified of losing."

His words made me pause.

I studied him for a moment longer, waiting for him to say more. But when he gave a slow shake of his head, I accepted it with a brief nod. Whatever it was, it wasn't ready to be spoken aloud.

I moved away from them, stepping up to the wide map spread across the center of the war table.

The storm was coming. And we were going to meet it head-on.

The Wolf God's Unwanted Luna

Zaliver's POV

I hadn't introduced Vivian to Venom, Lexero, or Fern because I didn't want to drag her any deeper into this than she already was. Besides, I rarely introduced her to anyone. I saw how much it weighed on her to realize she was originally seen as a peace offering crafted to tame the beast inside me. Maybe that's why she pushed herself out of whatever shell she'd been in before, and honestly, that made me both happy and wry. She had a way of getting me right where she wanted.

"Well, if they do have a secret weapon, they better hope I've got one of my own," I said darkly.

I'd spent over three hundred years away from them, honing my kills, sharpening my skills, and amassing power they never wanted to admit I had. If I used to be their secret weapon, then there was no doubt they'd try to outdo themselves again. Let them try. My power, my rage when I kill... it's unmatched. None of them can touch it.

"So, what's the plan, Zaliver?" Lexero asked, folding his broad arms across his scarred chest.

I didn't look his way. My focus was on the door's location the Amazon jungle, buried in its deepest parts.

"How long can you hold that door in place, Venom?" I asked.

"Up to a month if it isn't summoned or moved again. If they try relocating it, it'll only be fourteen days," Venom answered without hesitation. His voice always sent a cold shiver through the air, but I was used to it now. Others still tensed when he spoke, which is why Venom chose his words sparingly.

The door we were discussing wasn't just any door. It was a portal. Step through, and you instantly emerge at the other end the original twin of the door. This was the only way gods and goddesses could come down and interact with the world. Unfortunately for them, we could use it too. Few knew this, like the doors in *Monsters, Inc.* a movie Vivian couldn't stop talking about. She referenced some purple lizard, and when I admitted I had no clue what she meant, I was mostly watching her animated reactions. Multitasking, one of my many talents.

"Alright," I said, stepping closer to the table. "Fourteen days is our limit. They won't take any chances. Expect them to move the door within ten days. Be ready for anything. And don't be surprised if Alstha sends attacks to whittle us down first. She always likes a little blood before battle," I warned, watching the men nod in grim agreement.

"Your packs, tribes, and families can stay on the island if you want. There's more than enough room for all of you. The island's magic defenses will be boosted in the next three days, so if you plan to move in, now is the time."

Venom stayed quiet, as usual. No family, no real friends at least, that's what he claimed. I didn't press him. Some things were better left alone.

Fern shook his head softly. From what I'd pieced together over the years, his family was small too. Both Venom and Fern were strong, fiercely independent, and somehow managed the impossible when survival demanded it.

"My pride will stay where they are. My second-in-command is handling them now, but I want to move my wife and kids here until all this is over," Lexero spoke up, his voice steady.

"That's fine by me," I said. "I'll have you set up close to my place, if you want."

He nodded his thanks.

"All I ask is to keep Aurora where she is now. That way, both she and others stay safe," Albericus said, his tone heavy with seriousness. The temperature in the room seemed to drop a few degrees. I caught Fern's sharp glare aimed at the mention of Aurora, the witch. Those two clashed like fire and water from the moment they met, and it only worsened after she and Albericus... parted ways, for lack of a better word. Aurora had stirred up a big mess when she tried to escape her trackers.

"That's fine with me," I said. "Just make sure she doesn't mess with the island's magic. Anyone trying to get in or out dies a slow, painful death." I fixed my gaze on Albericus for a moment.

"We both know she won't just sit here quietly for a week without leverage," I added.

"So give her a reason to stay. She's your mate," Fern muttered quietly. I saw Albericus tense, his hands clenching so tightly I could almost hear the growls of his wolf echoing in my mind.

"I can't help you with that," I said firmly, "but if you need the witches' cooperation, you know where to find me."

I'd long accepted that no matter how well people thought they knew me, very few could stand the sight of my beast. It wasn't until Vivian ran from me that it truly stung, but even then, I understood why she did.

My thoughts slipped off course for a moment. I shook myself sharply.

Focus.

"No, that's fine. I'll find another way," Albericus said quickly, refusing my offer. In human form, Aurora was as sharp-tongued and sassy to me as she was to anyone else. She thought I annoyed her, and maybe she was right. When I first transformed, she fainted right in front of me and that was the last transformation she ever witnessed. She walked a fine line with me, pushing just enough but never so far that I'd lose control and unleash my beast. Not that anything she could say or do would ever make me cross that line willingly.

"If any of you change your minds, tell Hogan. He'll handle it. Now, let's get back to strategy, statistics, and what we'll need for next week," I said.

Three hours later, after endless war plans and tactics in the cave's war room, I wrapped up the meeting. But something gnawed at me not the talk of battles, but the shift in the air. My beast was restless, on edge. Even deep inside the cave, I could hear rain pounding against the stone walls, the heavy smell of damp earth creeping in.

The storm was coming.