

The Wolf God's Unwanted Luna - Chapter 171: Sparks and Echoes[1,179 words]

Chapter 171: Sparks and Echoes

Vivian's POV

He looked down at me then, something hot and dark flickering in his eyes. He stepped forward, crowding me back until my lower back bumped the edge of the sink. His body followed, and I was made all too aware of the firm pressure at the front of his pants.

"Tease," he murmured low, his voice a seductive threat. "You know damn well why work felt so empty today. But maybe... I should remind you."

My breath caught, coming out slower, heavier. Heat pooled low in my belly. I gave a tiny nod, my voice completely lost.

He leaned in and began tracing a line of soft, heated kisses along my jaw, then across my chin before returning down the same path, this time nipping softly at my skin. My fingers found their way under the hem of his shirt, pressing into the smooth strength of his waist, needing something to hold onto.

"For starters," he whispered, his lips brushing my throat, "I was at the office, when I could have been here with you..." His mouth trailed lower. "...on you. In you."

A tremor ran through me, sharp and electric. One of his hands snuck beneath my shirt, his palm warm on my bare waist. His thumb began slow, deliberate circles over my skin, each one winding me tighter inside.

"R-Really..." I managed, my voice shaky and breathless.

"Mmm." His mouth curved against my skin, his teeth grazing lightly. The sensation shot through me like sparks, making my hips instinctively shift toward him.

I wasn't used to this version of him bold and completely unfiltered but spirits, I wanted him. Every inch. Right now.

"Zaliver..." I began, my voice trembling with need.

But just like that, he pulled away.

He stepped back, strolling around the counter like he hadn't just turned me into a puddle of molten heat. He leaned casually against the other side, blinking at me with his perfect, smug innocence.

"So," he said lightly, "how was your day?"

I gawked at him, still half-pressed against the sink, breathing like I'd just run through a sudden thunderstorm. My eyes narrowed. My wolf practically howled in absolute frustration.

"Boy, bring that dick here!" she growled, deadpan and thoroughly unimpressed.

Zaliver's chuckle was deep and amused. He closed his eyes, shaking his head with a helpless smile, like he couldn't believe what he was hearing.

My heart froze.

When he opened his eyes again, they were shining bright with laughter.

"Your wolf is something else," he said, chuckling softly. "Honestly, it's hard keeping a straight face when I hear her. She's... entertaining."

A strangled, horrified sound tore out of my throat.

"No. No, no, no!" I slapped both hands over my face. "You've been hearing her this whole time? Please tell me you haven't!"

Mortified didn't even begin to cover it.

My wolf was suddenly dead quiet. I couldn't even tell if she was embarrassed too, or if she was pretending to pass out from secondhand shame.

Zaliver stepped toward me and pulled me back into his arms. I didn't lean into him I was still too stunned to even blink properly. His warmth surrounded me, but I stayed rigid, like my body had disconnected from my brain entirely. He leaned down, his lips grazing the shell of my ear as he spoke in a low, teasing whisper.

"I must not tell lies," he murmured mockingly. "My mate's forbidden it."

A sound escaped me half a laugh, half a strangled groan of pure embarrassment. "You've got to be kidding me."

"It's really not that bad," he tried to soothe, but I shook my head furiously against him.

"It is when I know you've heard some really messed up things!" I practically wailed.

He had the audacity to grin down at me. "Most of which, I happen to agree with."

I gaped up at him, then shoved hard at his chest and pulled away. "See?" I said aloud, mostly to myself. "Now he knows how twisted your mutt-ass really is."

"Hey!" my wolf snapped indignantly from inside my head. *"Technically, I'm just a part of you, so... that makes you the real pervert. I'm just the voice of honesty. Hey baby!"* she called out flirtatiously to Zaliver.

Zaliver burst into laughter, clearly hearing her through our bond. "Hello," he replied smoothly.

I smacked his chest again. "Don't encourage her! She's going to get worse now."

He gave me a wicked grin, his eyes darkening with playful heat. "I'm not exactly opposed to that."

I groaned and rolled my eyes, but a reluctant smile tugged at my lips. "Of course you're not."

Slipping out of his embrace, I skirted around the counter to the kitchen's other side. "Anyway, it's 'later.' I want answers now."

His expression shifted immediately gone was the teasing spark, replaced with a heavy seriousness that furrowed his dark brows. He didn't answer right away, just turned to the fridge and began rummaging through it.

"Yes, but first... what do you want to eat?"

"I'm not hungry," I said. My stomach was tight with nerves and curiosity, not to mention distracted by the very unfair view of him leaning into the fridge.

He paused, turning just enough to peer at me with narrowed eyes. "Have you eaten?"

"I had lunch with Hannah," I replied quickly.

"I know," he said with a single nod. "But have you eaten here?"

I shook my head. "Still not hungry, though."

He pressed his lips together in a tight line. "What?"

I sighed. "What are you doing? Are you dodging my questions?"

He pulled out some fruit and set it on the counter. "Do you want a smoothie?"

I blinked at him. "Sure...?"

"Good." He sounded oddly satisfied as he got to work slicing.

"When you marked me last night..." he started, his voice casual, as if he were commenting on the weather. "Did you feel anything unusual?"

I gave him a long, skeptical look, though he wasn't watching me. "You're gonna have to narrow that down. There were a lot of sensations happening last night."

Even without turning, I felt the hum of amusement through the bond. He was pleased by my response, the smug Alpha energy practically rolling off him in waves.

"Okay, specifically while you were marking me... did you feel a rush of power? Like... a sudden awareness of everyone and everything? Even if it only lasted a few seconds?"

I paused, thinking back to that exact moment. It hadn't felt like a typical mate mark. It had been deeper, like some ancient river of energy had opened up and surged through me.

"Yeah," I said slowly. "I did feel something. Why?"

He kept slicing fruit as he explained, "That was you calming my Alpha instincts, yes... but also you connecting to every wolf through your Luna bond. You didn't just mark me. You claimed your place over every pack. That rush? That was you stepping into the role you were born for."

I stared at him, my eyes wide. "Wait... What?"

The Wolf God's Unwanted Luna - Chapter 172: Masks and Mischief[1,073 words]

Chapter 172: Masks and Mischief

Vivian's POV

He finally turned to face me, his expression serious. "You're linked now, Vivian. To every pack, every wolf. I don't even know the full extent of what that might mean for you. It's new for me, too I've only ever had myself to figure it out."

He dumped the chopped fruit into the blender and snapped the lid on, letting it whirl to life.

I ran my hands through my hair, my heart thumping with a cocktail of panic and awe. "So... what now? Am I supposed to do something? Like... actual Luna duties? I haven't been trained for anything like this," I admitted, anxiety bubbling up fast.

He reached out and lightly touched my arm. "First of all, no you don't have to do anything. I'll handle the heavy lifting. But... there is something else."

The hesitation in his voice was subtle, but it hit me like a cold gust of wind.

Uh-oh.

My mind raced. "Wait, what is it? Am I going to have to take some kind of Luna assessment? Oh no, I can't! I'm awful at tests! Doesn't matter how much I study, I always bomb them "

He raised a brow. "What?"

"I mean it! I panic. I sweat. I black out I once misspelled my own name on a pop quiz "

"Vivian," he interrupted gently, but I didn't stop.

"Is there a Luna quiz? An oath? A pop interview? A judging council?"

He chuckled, and it instantly soothed me a little. "No. Nothing like that."

I squinted at him suspiciously. "Then why the ominous tone?"

He looked down, that subtle frown returning to his face. "Because it's not something I can control, and I hate that."

Something in my chest shifted, tightening at the sound of real vulnerability in his voice.

"What is it, Zaliver?" I asked softly.

He glanced up, eyes meeting mine, something dark and ancient swimming in his gaze.

"I think... something else was awakened last night. Not just between us. Something older. And it's coming."

"What?" I asked, blinking at Zaliver, unsure if I heard him right.

"The thing is," he began, his voice low and edged with frustration, "when you marked me and I accepted your claim... it sent out a ripple. Every wolf out there felt the shift in the

hierarchy. Alphas, betas, even packs across the oceans... they've all been hammering at my mental barriers all damn day."

He practically growled that last part, his expression full of annoyance.

My heart skipped. Oh crap. So the entire werewolf world felt it? Of course, they knew their supreme leader had been claimed, but the identity of his mate... they didn't know it was me. Not yet. But that wouldn't last long.

"So... what happens now?" I asked hesitantly, already bracing myself for something unpleasant. He grimaced, and I knew I wasn't going to like the answer.

"They won't stop until they understand why the balance of power changed. That means we need to hold a formal meeting."

I blinked at him. "Wait... you're telling me you, the terrifying Lupus Deus, are actually going to leave your secret lair and hold a talk with the alphas?"

He arched a brow at me, and after a long pause, realization hit me like a cold splash of water.

"Hold up... I have to go too?"

The smirk that tugged at his lips confirmed everything. He turned, finished blending whatever concoction he was making, and poured it into two glasses. He brought one to me, set it down in front of me, and stole a kiss while I sat there in wide-eyed horror.

"Looks like we're throwing a ball," he said against my lips, far too casually.

A ball?

What the actual hell.

Later that night, I was sprawled on the bed, watching him type away at his laptop. My head was still spinning.

"You can't just drop this on me and expect me to be okay with it," I complained, tossing a pillow at him. "I don't even want to go to this thing, let alone be in charge of planning it."

Without looking up, he replied, "I already told you just make a list. Theme, colors, table layout, whatever you want. I'll have someone get it done before we arrive."

That last bit caught my attention.

"Wait... if I get to make the decisions, why can't I stay behind and oversee the setup myself?" I asked, hopeful.

Zaliver let out a low, dry laugh. "Yeah, no. There's no way I'm letting a horde of alphas and their followers step foot on our island. Not happening. Some of them would see that as an opportunity to stir trouble or assert dominance. We'll host it off the island we'll be gone a few days."

He stood up from his desk and slowly made his way to the bed, placing his hands on either side of me before crawling over, eyes locked on mine. I instinctively wrapped my arms around his shoulders, the heat in his gaze making my stomach flip.

"So, all I need to do is..." I trailed off.

"Tell me what you want," he murmured, his voice like velvet. "Your wish is my command."

I bit back a grin. "Okay, then..."

My legs wrapped around his waist out of pure excitement. His eyes flashed black for a split second, and I barely noticed how tightly his hands gripped the pillows beneath me, completely absorbed in his closeness.

"What if we made it a masquerade ball?" I blurted out. "You and I could wear special masks something unique just for us!"

He lowered his lips to my throat and began kissing softly.

"Mmmhmm," he hummed against my skin, clearly distracted.

"Should we coordinate colors? Maybe you wear something dark and I "

"Whatever you want, baby," he mumbled, moving to the other side of my neck, right over the mark he'd left.

That's when it hit me.

He wasn't listening to a single word.

I could probably ask him to declare war on someone and he'd agree without question right now.

Well then...

Smirking, I leaned up close, letting my lips brush the shell of his ear, and whispered something wicked, something I knew would get his full attention.

His body stilled, and he slowly pulled back, eyes gleaming with challenge.

"Naughty cloud," he growled with a crooked grin, before giving me exactly what I asked for.

The Wolf God's Unwanted Luna - Chapter 173: Blades and Betrayal[1,126 words]

Chapter 173: Blades and Betrayal

Vivian's POV

I glanced across the open training field where Zaliver and Venom were standing a few feet away. Well, Zaliver was talking rapidly, his jaw tight, his expression a volatile mixture of rising irritation and forced control. Venom, on the other hand, stood stone-faced, completely unbothered, almost bored. Whatever conversation they were having over there clearly wasn't a friendly chat.

I watched as Zaliver pointed a sharp finger at Venom, then shook his head in absolute frustration. Venom leaned in slightly and muttered something I couldn't quite catch. Zaliver stilled. Then slowly far too slowly for my liking he turned his head to look straight at me. His expression was completely unreadable, carved from cold stone, but the way he studied me made my chest tighten with anxiety.

What the hell was going on?

He turned back to Venom and gave a single, curt nod before walking over to stand right beside me. His arms crossed tightly over his broad chest, his heavy shoulders tense, muscles coiled tight like he was preparing for something big. Something dangerous.

I narrowed my eyes up at him. "What?" I asked warily.

He didn't answer right away. He just tipped his head slightly in Venom's direction.

I followed his gesture and saw Venom setting up heavy mats across the stone floor. Once he finished, he strode over to the weapons wall and grabbed something I couldn't quite make out from this distance. The air shifted around us, growing thick and heavy with mounting tension. I looked between Venom, the mats, and Zaliver each quick glance stacking more confusion and dread deep in my gut.

"You're not fighting him, are you?" I asked slowly, trying to keep my voice calm, even though my instincts were screaming at me. "Is that why you brought him here?"

Zaliver's icy pale blue eyes dropped to meet mine. He gave a small, slow shake of his head. My wolf perked up instantly, sensing something dark just beneath the surface something dangerous, something thrilling.

"Not me," he said, his voice deep. "You."

My whole body locked up in place. "Me?" I repeated, my voice rising shrill with utter disbelief. "Me?! Against him?!"

I took a dramatic step back, clutching my hand over my chest. "Are you insane? I've never even thrown a proper punch in my life! He'll break me like a twig. I'll be wolf-chow! He'll toss me around like a dog's chew toy! Hell, I'll be paralyzed before the match is even over! Hope you enjoy being on top for the rest of our mated lives, 'cause I'm about to be a pancake!"

Zaliver didn't flinch at my outburst. His face remained unreadable, calm annoyingly calm. Like this whole crazy idea was totally normal.

"He won't hurt you," he said firmly. "Venom has better control than anyone I know "

I gasped out loud as Venom stepped closer, and my eyes landed squarely on what he was carrying in his hand.

"Not hurt me?!" I shrieked. "What the hell is in his hand?! Is that a knife?! No, hell no! I'm out of here. This is literal suicide wrapped in leather handles!"

I glared at the long, dagger-like weapons clamped tightly in his grip. Venom didn't say a word, just stepped closer and offered the gleaming blades to me, handle first. I didn't hesitate for a second. I snatched them from him, muttering aggressively under my breath. Better to have them in my hands than in his.

There were two of them. Identical. Simple, perfectly balanced, and deadly-looking.

"I have a theory I'd like to test, Luna Vivian," Venom said calmly, as if we were discussing the simple morning weather. "You might remember yesterday I mentioned "

"If your theory ends with me flat on my face with a broken tailbone, we can skip the whole damn thing," I interrupted sharply.

I didn't even try to lower my voice. The nearby warriors weren't trying to hide their immense interest either. A broad half-circle of onlookers had already formed around us, settling in like they were watching a show.

Venom gave a small shake of his head, his tone still maddeningly polite. "Not at all, Luna. I won't even strike you "

"Oh, really?" I scoffed, throwing my free hand up into the air. "And how do you plan on fighting without actually hitting?"

His golden eyes didn't even flicker. "Control."

Control, my ass.

If I had to do this, I'd go down swinging. Or flailing wildly. Either way, it definitely wouldn't be graceful.

I stared down at the sharp daggers in my hands and then out at the gathering crowd of wolves. This was it my public humiliation as Luna. They'd whisper about this across the pack for months. Maybe even years. *Did you hear about the new Luna who got tossed by Venom in under five seconds flat?*

Nope. I wasn't doing this. I shook my head firmly, preparing to walk off.

Then Venom glanced over at Zaliver and said something that made the blood freeze solid in my veins.

"Alpha has already consented to this."

I turned slowly, narrowing my eyes right at Alpha Zaliver.

"You traitor."

"Oh really? Well, Alpha is sleeping on the couch tonight." I narrowed my eyes just a bit more, just enough for him to know I meant every single word.

"Please, just trust us, Luna Vivian. There's a very valid reason " Venom didn't even get to finish his thought.

The crowd surrounding us had already erupted into a low, angry growl, their expressions turning fierce and protective.

"This is outrageous!"

"Not the Luna!"

"She'll take her place, that backstabber!"

"Can't believe he'd even think of putting her in danger "

A savage snarl suddenly tore through the entire building, silencing the chaos like a sharp thunderclap. Zaliver. His sheer presence alone instantly shut everyone up. Heads bowed rapidly in submission, but the heavy atmosphere stayed thick with tension and unease. Not everyone was convinced this was right and oddly enough, that touched something deep in my chest. They didn't even fully know me yet, yet their natural wolf instincts flared to protect their Luna.

"Vivian..." Zaliver's voice came out hoarse, deeply strained.

I turned back to him, my brows knitting together with confusion. "What's going on with you?" I asked, but my words died out as I caught a better, closer look at his face.

His eyes... They weren't just worried. They were frantic. Wild. Like he was barely holding himself together by a thread. He didn't want me to fight Venom. But if that was true... why on earth was he allowing it to happen?

"Please," he said gently, his voice low but overwhelmingly earnest. "Just trust us. Please."

The Wolf God's Unwanted Luna - Chapter 174: Viper and Fire[1,030 words]

Chapter 174: Viper and Fire

Vivian's POV

I stared into his eyes for a long moment, searching, needing answers that plain words couldn't give me. What I saw in his gaze wasn't betrayal or malice. It was just deep, raw concern. Reluctantly, I gave him a small nod.

Venom and I stepped onto the cushioned mats. My nerves buzzed like live wires under my skin. He dropped into a low, grounded stance knees bent, chest angled subtly toward me, fists raised. He looked like a damn coiled viper, perfectly ready to strike.

And then there was me. Standing stiff, legs spread awkwardly, knees bent, daggers gripped low and clumsy in my hands. I probably looked like I was trying to execute three completely different fighting styles at once and failing miserably at all of them.

I was definitely going to get my ass kicked.

I glanced at the crowd of watching wolves again. Some looked visibly tense, others intrigued, a few even excited. But when I finally found Zaliver's face, everything else around us faded away. His expression was rock hard, his jaw set tight, but his eyes those stormy, ever-knowing blue eyes held quiet encouragement.

That single look made something deep inside me steel itself. I couldn't embarrass myself. Not in front of them. Not in front of him.

"You both ready?" I asked my wolf and the ancient beast within me, who had both gone dead quiet the second my feet touched the mat.

"Always. We've got your back," they answered in unison, their twin voices calm, unified, and laser-focused.

And just like that, something powerful surged through me. Something raw. Something ancient. My whole body hummed with the sheer strength of them of all of us blending together. It was far more than just muscle, quick speed, or heightened senses. It was power. Pure, instinctive power that didn't even need a name.

My vision flashed with a spark of silver, and I felt the physical shift in my body. It was subtle, but definite. My legs adjusted on their own, my weight balancing effortlessly on the balls of my feet. My arms repositioned slightly, held more open, more reactive. My spine straightened naturally. My head tilted, and a slow, confident smirk curled on my lips.

Venom saw it happen. His golden eyes sharpened instantly, the thin black slit at their center narrowing. He dipped his chin, silently telling me, *come on*.

"Yeah, no thanks," I said sweetly, dripping sarcasm, my voice sounding smoother and far stronger than before.

He moved.

The moment his foot left the ground, the entire world stilled. It was like the whole room held its breath. My heart didn't race it beat with slow, absolute certainty. My mind fell into a quiet, icy place where useless emotions didn't weigh me down. All that existed was the fight ahead. The goal. The power humming hot in my blood. The silence before the storm.

And then, the dance began.

Venom was fast far faster than I expected. And from the way he charged, I knew he wasn't aiming to hold back. If I hadn't been on high alert, if I'd hesitated by even a heartbeat, he could've landed a strike that would've sent me straight to the med bay.

He flashed toward me, a dark blur of pure movement. Most people would've instinctively backed off at the sight of a predator charging like that especially a deadly snake shifter built like him but I held my ground, my spine locked in readiness. The moment his hand darted toward me, I let my eyes sweep sharply over him. It wasn't something I consciously planned to do, it just... happened. He was taller than me by a lot, and his open stance left his right side slightly exposed. If I were just a little faster, I could've exploited it. But I wasn't going to get there in time.

The sudden shift in air pressure was the only warning I got. His hand sliced aggressively toward my chest, and with barely a single breath to spare, I twisted away, using my upper body to dodge. I dropped my weight onto my back leg and swung my other one up, hooking it tightly around his knee.

It knocked us both off-balance for a split second, but that didn't matter we weren't fighting for stability. My leg trapped his, completely throwing off his movement. He

reached for my shoulders with both hands, trying to pin me in place while his knee drove up toward my ribs like a battering ram. I shoved hard against his chest, and we tumbled heavily to the mat.

Even mid-fall, he didn't let up. His knee was still climbing toward me, so I loosened my hold and shifted fast, just as his back smacked hard into the floor. I threw my weight sideways in a fluid roll and came out crouched, already searching for him.

He rolled too, smooth and silent, coming to his feet with a terrifying grace that spoke of brutal, relentless training. I got to my feet a bit more slowly, keeping my guard high. Both daggers in my hands felt like dead weight against his kind of speed. My approach shifted without me even realizing it. I wasn't trying to stab anymore.

He was quick too quick. If he got close enough to wrap those massive arms around me, I'd be finished. I rapidly ran through the odds in my head.

I couldn't match his raw speed without it turning into a frustrating game of tag. No, I had to use what I had my smaller size, my tighter agility. And just one good hit. That's all I needed.

I studied him closely. He was built like a heavy tank shoulders wide, solid all over. His stance was perfect, evenly grounded. No obvious weaknesses. But every body has a limit, and I was going to find his.

He lunged again, and I waited. Just until the very last moment.

Then I spun into a swift cartwheel, letting my body pass just inches from his lunging form. While upside down, I jabbed one dagger cleanly into the soft spot right behind his knee.

The Wolf God's Unwanted Luna - Chapter 175: Killer Instincts[1,135 words]

Chapter 175: Killer Instincts

Vivian's POV

I landed on my feet, balanced and ready. Behind me, I heard the sharp intake of breath as his body staggered. He fought hard to stay upright, his leg trembling, instincts screaming for him to collapse completely. I couldn't help the smirk tugging at my lips.

"Huh. Didn't know I could cartwheel," I muttered, breathless but deeply amused.

Venom flipped right back up like it was nothing. He glanced at his injured knee for half a second before locking eyes with me again. No words. Just pure fire.

This time, when he charged, I didn't dodge.

I met him head-on and slammed a heavy fist straight into his throat before he could react. The sudden impact made his head jerk slightly, his breathing cut off in an instant. He didn't stumble, though. Didn't even flinch. I had to give him that he was as tough as they came.

Now he was on the defensive, blocking and deflecting every quick jab I threw. Every time he tried to grab me, I slipped away like smoke through his fingers. But I could feel the energy in the air tightening, growing heavier by the second. We were both pushing our absolute limits.

Then, as I went for a high kick, he caught my ankle mid-air.

Big mistake.

I grinned down at him, watching the confusion flicker across his face just before I twisted my other leg up and nailed him right in the side of the head with a clean, brutal spin kick. The sheer force knocked him backward, and he let go of my ankle, stumbling.

He recovered fast far too fast and his hand went straight to his jaw. I heard the sharp click echo clearly through the training field. For a second, a stab of regret hit me. Did I dislocate something?

But just as quickly, that feeling vanished into thin air. A wave of calm maybe even quiet pride settled into its place. He was still standing, still coming right at me.

Of course he was.

Venom wasn't the type to quit. He wasn't even the type to slow down.

Unfortunately for me... that made him the absolute worst kind of opponent.

And I kind of loved it.

"Stay down!"

A frustrated growl tore from my throat as I charged at Venom, my instincts surging with raw, unadulterated adrenaline. I aimed a sharp kick at his hip, hoping to knock him off balance once and for all. Instead of resisting, he let the momentum spin him completely around to face me again.

Bad move.

He should have never turned his back to me.

My opening was crystal clear and I didn't hesitate for a beat.

With a swift, brutal movement, I raised my hand and drove the dagger straight into his back, aiming directly for the spot where his heart would've been if he were facing me.

He froze, completely mid-motion.

Before I could even think, my other hand followed automatically. I plunged the second dagger low into his spine, near the base where it would sever everything if he were a normal human.

His whole body trembled.

Yet he was still standing.

The wild storm of combat suddenly faded from my mind. My clarity vanished in an instant, leaving only raw horror in its place. My eyes locked onto the metal hilts of both daggers buried deep in Venom's back. My breath caught tight. My chest squeezed into a knot.

I panicked.

"Oh my god... oh my god, what did I just do? What do I... how do I fix this?" My voice cracked sharply as heavy guilt and fear crashed over me like a wave.

I barely registered Zaliver's sudden presence beside me until his warm hands gently cupped my cheeks, tilting my face directly toward his. His touch was grounding, warm and steady even as I spiraled into chaos.

"Vivian. It's alright, baby. Just breathe," he murmured softly, trying to pull me out of my rising hysteria.

"No! It's not alright! I stabbed him, Zaliver, I stabbed him! Oh god, he's not okay! He's not... Call someone! We need a doctor!" I gasped out, my frantic words tumbling over each other.

Before Zaliver could respond, Venom turned around slowly, still trembling slightly but with a shockingly calm expression on his face. A small, oddly amused smile pulled at his dark lips.

"It's really quite alright, Luna Vivian," he said gently. His golden eyes held no trace of pain though in my sheer panic, I couldn't see anything clearly beyond the daggers stuck in his body.

Please don't die. Please, please don't die.

"I'm so sorry," I choked out, shaking my head frantically. "I don't know what came over me. I didn't mean "

Still holding my gaze, Venom reached behind himself and, without flinching a single bit, pulled out both blades. One from his back. One from his front. The heavy trembling in his body stilled completely.

I stood frozen in place, watching in absolute disbelief.

"See?" he said quietly, showing me the silver daggers. "No blood. I don't bleed."

My knees nearly buckled. "But I... I stabbed you. Three times!" My voice cracked with total disbelief. Zaliver's hand moved in slow, calming circles across my back.

Venom's voice remained completely casual, as if I hadn't just tried to murder him in cold blood. "I'm not easy to damage. That's why it was such an honor to spar with you... and to prove my theory correct."

My chest heaved. "Theory?" I echoed, my voice barely a frantic whisper. "What theory?"

He clasped his hands behind his back like a disciplined soldier and stood tall, completely unbothered by the daggers he'd just pulled from his own flesh.

"That you, Luna, have killer instincts. Quite literally."

Zaliver chuckled softly beside me, pride thick and heavy in his deep voice. "I'm so damn proud of you, Vivian. You held your own against Venom."

A strange laugh sputtered out of me half disbelieving, half completely delirious. "Ha... ha... ha... oh, shit." I had no idea what to feel. Pride? Terror? Pure shock? Apparently, everyone else knew exactly how to feel. Loud cheers erupted all around us. Clapping. Yells. Celebrations. It was all happening at once.

But to me, it sounded like... nothing.

Just empty noise. Muffled and completely meaningless. Words that no longer made any sense.

I glanced back at Venom and forced a shaky, hollow smile. His dark brows drew together in sudden concern. His sharp outline blurred heavily at the edges of my vision. I blinked. Once. Twice.

My body felt distant. Light. Way too light.

"Hey... Zaliver?" I whispered, swaying slightly on my feet.

He leaned in closer instantly. "Yeah, baby?"

"Catch me."

And then, the world faded completely to black.

I collapsed into total nothing.

The Wolf God's Unwanted Luna - Chapter 176: Shadows and Chains[1,077 words]

Chapter 176: Shadows and Chains

Albericu's POV

I stood right before the thick steel door, my hand frozen just inches away from the handle. For a long, suffocating moment, I didn't move at all just stared. My pulse thudded loudly in my ears, heavy and deeply uncertain. I had no idea how this encounter was going to unfold. But turning back simply wasn't an option. Not now.

Drawing in a slow breath, I curled my fingers into tight fists and pushed the heavy door open. The thick darkness swallowed me whole. The only real source of light came from the hallway behind me and that, too, vanished completely the second the steel door groaned shut. The metallic echo bounced hard around the concrete room, and in the quiet stillness, I caught the faintest shift.

Movement.

And then her scent hit me.

That scent.

It curled softly through the air like smoke, wrapping itself tightly around my lungs, slipping under my skin, dragging up painful memories I'd fought so hard to bury. The bond we once shared stirred deep in my chest, subtle yet entirely undeniable. My body knew her the way the moon knows the tides intimately, inevitably. But my heart... it resisted. It didn't want to accept what my senses were already screaming.

"Look who decided to show up. My relentless shadow of a mate," her voice rang out, sharp and ice-cold.

I didn't need light to find her position. My eyes had already adjusted to the pitch. Her silhouette was a familiar shape sitting in the corner, posture relaxed, heartbeat calm. The exact opposite of my own. Mine thundered in my chest, raw and uneven. Her voice had sharp teeth. And it sank straight into me.

I said nothing.

The cell because that's truly what it was, no matter how many small comforts we added was completely bare, made of unforgiving gray cement. There was a small bed, a simple chair, a curtained-off bathroom. No windows. No distractions. No means of escape. She was allowed only what she needed, and even that was quickly removed after use. The light barely leaked in from beneath the bottom of the door, but that was all I needed to see her. For her, it was near pitch-black.

Her expression didn't show a trace of surprise or fear. Only weariness. And deep boredom.

That, somehow, hurt so much worse.

I stayed rooted in place, my eyes locked onto the face I used to know so well. The face that used to light up every time it saw me. What was I supposed to say to her now? What could I even say?

"So?" she pressed, her voice curling with heavy sarcasm. "You planning to just stand there like some mute bouncer, or did you come here to finally let me go?"

Still, I couldn't bring myself to speak out loud. Her quiet sigh cut right through the silence.

"Mute bouncer it is, then," she muttered. "You know, there's really no point in keeping me locked up like this anymore. I gave Zaliver his reading. The entire world doesn't revolve around him. Believe it or not."

She shifted again in her seat, the movement barely noticeable, but I heard every fraction of it. My jaw tensed tight.

"Do you need anything?" I finally asked, taking a slow step forward.

Just one small step.

It was enough to make everything in my body ache. My muscles, my thoughts, my wolf. He whimpered softly inside me, clawing forward, desperate to get closer to her. To his mate.

She gave a short, bitter laugh. "Besides my freedom?"

I ignored the sharp barb.

She fidgeted in her chair again, and though she tried her best to mask her unease, her scent betrayed her completely. The sharp edge of restlessness clung to her like a second skin. She was trying so hard to keep control. But I knew better. A wolf always knows.

Her dark hair was pulled back, tight and clean. She wore the plain gray dress I'd sent down, along with a heavy black jacket. At least she was accepting the clothing now. That was something. But the meals... the meals went almost entirely untouched. She'd always been picky, even back then. It used to make me smile the way she'd grumble about a dish and then compliment it the very next day, only to vow she'd never eat it again.

Now it just scared me to my core.

Her frame was thinning out far too much. Her cheekbones were sharper, her wrists more delicate than they ever should've been. She was fading away slowly, right before my very eyes.

And all I could do was stand there.

Watching her unravel in absolute silence.

The room was swallowed deep in shadows, the cold air thick with stale magic and silence. I stood just past the steel threshold, watching her sit completely still and shackled, barely more than a dark silhouette against the far stone wall. In this kind of darkness, her magic couldn't help her not because she didn't have the raw power, but because she wouldn't dare use it.

Aurora had always been far more light than shadow. Even now, buried beneath heavy layers of darkness, that core of hers the part that used to hum with warmth and life was still in there. I knew it. But without her light, she was completely unmoored, stuck somewhere between what she once was and what she was slowly becoming. Her magic was wild now, unpredictable. She could cast a spell, yes... but whether it would heal or destroy, neither of us could ever be sure.

That kind of uncertainty for a witch... it was like being caught in a violent storm without a compass.

"Aurora..." I let out a long breath, my voice low and incredibly careful as I took another slow step forward. She sat with her ankles crossed, her back rested against the cold stone, as if the bindings didn't even matter to her. They were loose anyway Zaliver had made sure of that. This was never meant to be a torture prison, just a heavily warded space strong enough to keep her magic from lashing out.

But it was the black blindfold that unsettled me most. She'd tried to tug it off, judging by the frayed cloth edges, but it still clung stubbornly to her face. A part of her still wanted to see. Maybe not the room itself. Maybe... me.

The Wolf God's Unwanted Luna - Chapter 177: Sparks in the Dark[1,018 words]

Chapter 177: Sparks in the Dark

Albericu's POV

"Albericus," she said, her tone cold and clipped. "Stop being a sentimental idiot and let me go. I don't want you anymore. Honestly, I don't even know why I ever did. We never made any sense."

Her harsh words hit hard, but I didn't flinch. I knew better. That wasn't her not all of her.

I dropped to my knees right in front of her, slowly reaching out to rest my hand on her leg. Even after all this time, the simple contact jolted through me like a live wire. Her body stiffened, then flinched as if trying hard to shake off the physical reaction. But it was there the spark. The bond we once shared hadn't vanished completely.

"Aurora," I murmured, searching her face even though I couldn't see her eyes beneath the cloth, "I know you're still in there. I'm not giving up on you. Not now. Not ever." My voice cracked slightly, but I didn't stop. "I know you're still grieving Andrew. I am too. But this... this isn't what he'd want for you. You know it. You have to fight it. Let go of the dark before it consumes you completely. You can come back from this. You just have to trust yourself again."

For a second, something in her posture faltered. Then her lips curled into a sly, almost cruel smile. She leaned forward slightly, tilting her head toward the sound of my voice.

"And what if the Aurora you loved died with Andrew?" she whispered. "What if I've already let go, and this... this version of me is the real one now?"

She laughed softly, a dark, bitter sound, before leaning back again as if retreating into the shadows.

I stared up at her, my heart aching deeply.

Maybe it was true. Maybe she'd crossed that invisible line long ago and never looked back. But the Aurora I knew the one who used to spend quiet afternoons bent over dried herbs, humming softly while mixing salves and tinctures, who lit up whenever Andrew giggled she would never have let the darkness win. Not even in the face of unbearable grief.

She was once a pure light witch, careful and gentle. Magic had never been a weapon for her, only a tool for healing, for nurturing. She barely used her gifts back then, always saying they were far too powerful to be played with carelessly.

But when Andrew died...

She broke. And in her wild desperation to bring him back, she turned to the very thing she'd sworn she never would dark magic.

And now here we were.

A broken man.

A broken witch.

And somewhere between us, a faint glimmer of what once was.

I just had to reach her before that last spark went out forever.

I didn't realize what she had done until it was far too late. By the time the truth finally clicked, the black magic had already taken deep root, and any hope of bringing our son back had died along with it. I didn't just lose my son that day I lost my mate too.

The grief I should've had for our son was ripped away before it could even begin. In its place, I watched helplessly as the dark magic she summoned drained the very essence of who she was. Piece by piece, the mate I once knew faded, swallowed by something cruel and unrecognizable.

And the moment her eyes opened again, I knew. The woman I loved was completely gone. In her place stood someone else entirely, wearing her face, but with none of her sweet soul. She smiled at me cold and twisted then vanished into the dark night. I spent years, decades searching. Tracking whispers and shadows across the land. But deep down, I knew the truth. She didn't want to be found.

It wasn't just dark magic. It was a monster. And it had her in its grip.

"That might be true," I said, my voice low, almost a whisper as I stared down at my hand resting on her leg, "but I don't believe it."

She scoffed and leaned back in her chair, her body language screaming utter boredom and dismissal. Still, I let my thumb move gently over her skin, memorizing the subtle warmth that remained. My gaze lifted back to her face, searching for any tiny crack in her mask. She rolled her neck but refused to meet my eyes, choosing instead to stare off into the darkness, almost like she was trying to disappear all over again.

My wolf stirred beneath my skin, restless and tense. After more than twenty long years, we'd finally found her and she wanted absolutely nothing to do with us.

But I wasn't leaving. Not again. I would drag her straight out of this nightmare if I had to.

With steady hands, I reached up for the black blindfold that covered her eyes. I was the only one allowed to remove it. As I pulled it free, her dark lashes fluttered before her eyes snapped open. Black and sharp, swirling with a dangerous power I hated. I lifted my other hand and gently gripped her chin not harshly, but firmly enough to make sure she couldn't turn away. I needed her to look straight at me.

She did. Pure suspicion burned in those dark eyes.

I narrowed mine right back. "Enough. I want my woman back. And I want her back now."

The long days of treading carefully, hoping she'd come back to me on her own, were officially over. This wasn't her. It couldn't be. And I wasn't going to let this charade go on any longer.

She had to be alive.

She was alive.

My mate couldn't be gone couldn't be just a distant memory.

She had to be in there somewhere.

I kept repeating it like a quiet prayer, like a heavy anchor to keep myself from sinking completely into despair.

She was alive. She had to be. I couldn't bear the thought of being alone again.

She just had to be.

The Wolf God's Unwanted Luna - Chapter 178: Blood and Rebirth[1,076 words]

Chapter 178: Blood and Rebirth

Albericu's POV

My arms were wrapped tightly around her waist, right at the place where I used to feel constant warmth, electricity, and the undeniable hum of our sacred bond. But now... nothing. Just cold. Hollow. Like hugging a corpse with her skin still somehow warm. The

complete absence of those sparks those familiar pulses of recognition between fated souls struck me far harder than any sharp blade ever could.

My hands clenched behind her back, trembling, stubbornly refusing to let go even as heavy dread started crawling deep beneath my skin. My chest tightened until panic gripped me by the throat. What if... what if she was truly gone? What if the woman held tightly in my arms was nothing but an empty shell, her soul lost to the dark void?

No. No.

She couldn't be.

I opened my eyes, desperate for proof, for hope, for anything at all. But what met me were not her gentle eyes. These were pitch black, staring up at me with venomous hatred. I pulled back slowly, unwillingly. My hands still held her arms, even as she jerked her head back, trying desperately to put distance between us. I couldn't move. Couldn't breathe. My entire body felt like solid stone, frozen solid in the sheer horror of being truly, utterly alone.

Then she spoke. Her voice was heavily laced with disgust.

"Get off of me, you filthy mutt."

Her harsh words cut deeper than any sharp claws ever could.

I staggered back, letting go as if her bare skin had burned me. My arms dropped slowly to my sides. I looked her straight in the eye and didn't even bother trying to hide how much she'd just completely shattered me.

But then there it was.

A flicker.

Right in the middle of all that seething black, I saw it clearly. For the briefest second, the dark void of her eyes shimmered, softened, and transformed. A gentle hazel peeked through warm and intensely familiar. Hers. Like a tiny match flaring to life inside a deep cave of pitch darkness. It was gone in a split second, but I had definitely seen it.

She's still in there.

I wasn't insane. I wasn't holding on to nothing.

Right as my arms were falling away from her completely, she suddenly grabbed me.

Her hand shot forward and clutched my forearm like she was drowning and I was her absolute last breath. Her sharp nails dug deep into my skin, but I didn't flinch at all. Her

whole body trembled as if fighting an internal battle against something I couldn't see. The dark mask cracked open. She looked at me again, and this time, it was really her. Those eyes gods, those hazel eyes I'd memorized in another life stared back at me filled with pain, confusion, and raw desperation.

Her lips parted slightly. I stopped breathing altogether.

Say it. Say something. Give me anything. I could rebuild my entire soul from just one word.

"B-Berry... mark m " she choked out, her voice heavily strained, broken, like it physically hurt just to speak the words.

And then she was gone again.

She yanked her hand back violently as if scalded, stumbling back away from me. Her back turned to me, her shoulders shaking. I could hear the loud thunder of her heartbeat it matched mine in perfect rhythm, frantic and raw.

She was still in there.

My mate wasn't gone. Not completely.

She spun back around to face me. But her eyes were completely black again, void of any sweet recognition.

"She's still in there," I said aloud, boldly refusing to let doubt slither back into my mind.

She let out a bitter, mocking laugh. "So what?" she sneered coldly. "Doesn't change a damn thing."

The twisted sound of her voice her voice stolen and distorted by whatever darkness was choking her soul snapped something deep inside me. I moved.

Fast.

My steps were quick and purposeful, every heavy stride bringing me right up to her. She didn't even react at first until my long canines descended, sharp and fully bared. Then I saw it fear.

Pure panic widened her black eyes.

She stumbled backward, scrambling to get away from me.

But I wasn't letting her go again.

Not this time.

I slammed her back against the cold cement wall harder than I meant to, but my firm grip didn't loosen for a second. My hands pinned her shoulders tight, and I pressed my body into hers to keep her completely still. There was no room left for escape, no room left for denial. I reached up with one hand and pushed her dark hair to the side, baring the vulnerable spot on her neck that I knew like a map etched directly into my soul.

"No! Get off me, you bastard! I swear I'll burn you alive!" Her furious threats were cut off by a raw, agonized scream as my sharp teeth pierced her skin.

I marked her again.

The bond that fragile connection that had been flickering in and out of existence for far too long reignited with a sheer violence that shocked even me. It surged straight through my chest like hot lightning, anchoring me to her in the exact way fate intended. My wolf instincts completely took over. I bit down harder, needing her to feel it. Needing her to know that she was mine. Still mine.

When I finally pulled back, blood staining my lips, I watched her hand lift up slowly to her neck. Her eyes were wide, horrified. She slid straight down the wall like her legs couldn't support the heavy weight of what had just happened. I took a step back, my breath coming in uneven bursts, my heart hammering in my chest. I turned to move toward the door, but I needed her to hear me out first.

"You're wrong," I said, my voice hoarse but absolute in its certainty.

She looked up at me, completely dazed. Her irises kept rapidly shifting black to hazel, then back to black. Back and forth, a fierce war raging within her.

"This changes everything."

And with that, I opened the steel door and stepped out, slamming it shut tight behind me.

"Fuck," I heard her whisper frantically behind the door, her broken voice barely audible through the steel.

But I walked away with something I hadn't possessed in a very long time hope.

The Wolf God's Unwanted Luna - Chapter 179: The Invitation[1,102 words]

Vivian's POV

A heavy black envelope with golden trim lay resting in my hands. The script on the front was bold and completely unmistakable. Inside was a single card formal, crisp, and annoyingly dramatic.

Vivian Grey,

You are invited to the celebration in honor of my newly found mate.

Attendance is mandatory for you and the highest-ranking members of your pack. You are expected at the location detailed below in two days.

This is not a request.

Failure to attend without the reason being death will result in death.

A two-day stay only. Bring your alpha, luna, beta, their children, and any additional members you deem necessary. Fated mates must attend.

Theme: Black and White Masquerade Ball. No other colors permitted.

Sincerely, the one you wolves call,

Lupus Deus

I stared down at it, my lips pursed, then flipped it over and looked up at Zaliver.

"The amount of sass in this invitation has surpassed my own. Honestly? I'm impressed."

Zaliver grinned, his broad arms folded tightly across his chest. That smug expression of his made me want to roll my eyes, but instead, I just gave him a dry look.

"I'm glad I've impressed you," he said, tilting his head back arrogantly while somehow still managing to look down at me. "So, about the clothing..."

I didn't even let him finish the thought. I gasped dramatically, bouncing up on my toes and racing over to him.

"I found the dress! It's so pretty. But you're not allowed to see it. Don't even think about peeking through the luggage!"

I pointed a stern finger straight at him, narrowing my eyes as a sharp warning.

"Deal?" I challenged.

He slowly uncrossed his arms and wrapped them tightly around my waist, pulling me in so our bodies touched.

"Oh, I don't know," he teased, his deep voice low and playful. "What do I get out of it if I behave?"

I narrowed my eyes and leaned in close, matching his smug grin with a confident one of my own.

"If you don't peek, you can take it off me when the night's completely over."

His pupils dilated instantly, his pale blue eyes darkening with sudden hunger.

"Deal," he said without even a second's pause.

I smirked in triumph and turned toward his desk, opening his laptop and pulling up a large color chart.

"Right, since you've already declared your undying love for wearing black and only black, your only choices for the handkerchief are these two colors." I gestured clearly at the screen. "My dress is one of these shades, and I'm definitely not telling you which. Midnight blue would look amazing on you, by the way."

I looked at him expectantly, waiting for his input.

When he didn't say anything at all, I squinted up at him. He looked completely distracted.

"What?" I asked, already prepared to ignore whatever opinion he had if it went against my ultimate vision.

He shrugged casually. "I don't really care. You pick."

Before I could sass him for being far too chill about it, he pressed his hips firmly into my backside. I groaned and quickly slipped out of his arms, shutting the laptop tight.

"Mother Nature is not on your side today, Zaliver," I warned him, walking around the large desk to sit down in front of him. He slumped dramatically in his heavy chair, his eyes pleading.

"One more day," he muttered like a tortured soul. "Just one more day."

I giggled at his misery, and he looked up at me with mock innocence. I shook my head softly and leaned back.

"Anyway, I already packed for us, sent the decoration list over to Jesse, and made sure the food for the turtles is set "

"We don't have turtles," Zaliver interrupted, raising a dark brow at me.

I crossed my arms.

"Not yet."

He lifted his hands in mock surrender and reached for a heavy file to sign.

I tilted my head, growing serious. "So... what's the deal with leaving Albericus behind while we're gone? Are you sure that's safe? Don't you need him if things go south?"

The thought gnawed relentlessly at me. We were about to walk into a massive gathering of the most powerful wolves on the entire planet. Some probably hated Zaliver. Others were likely deeply curious. All of them were dangerous. I didn't like the idea of walking in there without his most powerful backup. My imagination was already listing a hundred ways things could spiral out of control.

Zaliver's expression shifted when he noticed my sudden tension. He reached across the desk and took my hand in his. The instant our skin touched, the heavy weight on my chest eased up.

I smiled at him, small and soft.

But he didn't smile back.

"Don't stress, baby," Zaliver said calmly, his voice carrying that smooth edge he only used when he thought I was being adorably unreasonable. "He has to stay behind to handle things here... and to make sure his mate doesn't try anything clever." His dark gaze locked onto mine. "Even if I needed him which I won't we've got someone else coming with us."

I blinked. "Who?"

That peculiar smile of his spread slowly across his lips. I didn't like the look of it.

"Your personal bodyguard. Specially assigned for intense situations like this," he said.

My brows knit together tightly at the wording. Bodyguard, singular. Not guards.

"My usual team isn't coming?"

Zaliver shook his head slowly, his dark hair falling over his eyes like silk shadows. He reached out and gently stroked his thumb along my knuckles.

"They're good for your protection here, especially around other important wolves. But out there?" His eyes darkened slightly. "I'll feel better if you're with him. Just for now."

I frowned up at him. "You know I can take care of myself, right?"

His lips curved into a warm smile, and he lifted my hand to press a soft kiss directly into my palm. That single touch sent a rush of heat straight up my arm, making my wolf stir beneath my skin.

"I know you can, Vivian. That's not what this is about."

I tilted my head. "So... who is it then?"

He didn't hesitate for even a second. "Venom."

I blinked in surprise. "Venom?"

"Mhm."

"But I beat him," I said flatly, remembering that spar a little too vividly. "Thoroughly."

Zaliver laughed softly, shaking his head in sheer amusement.

"You did, but even you had to notice he was holding back. Right?"

Ugh. He had a point. I didn't like admitting it, but yeah Venom had definitely gone easy on me.

The Wolf God's Unwanted Luna - Chapter 180: Untamed Force[1,083 words]

Chapter 180: Untamed Force

Vivian's POV

Zaliver's tone turned completely serious. "Besides myself, Venom's the only one I trust completely with your safety when you're not on this island."

I didn't argue with him. Not right away. Instead, I went quiet for a second, my brain tugging gently on a different thread.

"What about you?" I asked carefully.

He looked confused. "What do you mean?"

"You'll have me and Venom watching my back, but who's watching yours? I mean, you're strong, sure, but what if some pissed-off alpha decides to throw a massive boulder at your face?"

His jaw clenched tight, and I saw the exact second his heavy ego took a hit. Without saying another word, he grabbed my hand and pulled me straight out of the office.

"Hey! Where are we going?" I asked as he snatched up the car keys and headed toward the front door like a dark storm cloud in motion.

"To remind you exactly what your mate is capable of," he muttered, glaring at the empty air itself, but he still opened the car door for me. I kissed his cheek as I slid in, and his scowl faltered just enough to make me grin.

Honestly? It was cute how flustered he got whenever I doubted him.

Zaliver drove us straight to the training field, muttering under his breath now and then while also reaching across to casually play with my hair, lace his fingers with mine, or rest his warm palm on my thigh. The little touches calmed me far more than I wanted to admit.

It had been two days since I'd been excused from the field ever since the Venom situation. I hadn't shifted since gaining my wolf that night, but Zaliver assured me I now had far more control. Still, I knew I'd need to shift soon, just to test that theory out for myself.

When we arrived, he leapt out of the car, opened my door, and helped me out like a true gentleman on a mission. The sun was blazing hot, and the warriors were already out, sparring like they were auditioning for a calendar shoot. Sweat glistened on flexing muscles, and I had to squint at the sight.

Do these people ever take a break?

"Everyone," Zaliver called out, his deep voice booming right across the field. Every head turned instantly.

He glanced down at me before continuing. "Our Luna's feeling a bit concerned about our upcoming trip. I thought I'd give her a little reassurance. I need volunteers."

Several hands shot up immediately mostly the biggest, bulkiest wolves in the entire field. Male and female alike. Of course.

Zaliver nodded, and the group stepped forward. The other wolves formed a wide circle around the makeshift arena.

Then he turned to me with that familiar look. I narrowed my eyes up at him.

"You're not seriously..." I trailed off in total disbelief.

He smirked, reached back, and tugged his shirt over his head in one smooth, fluid motion.

Immediately, a possessive snarl tried to escape my throat.

I snatched the dark shirt from him and clenched it tight in my fists, resisting the strong urge to glare at every single wolf staring at him like he was a snack.

"Hold that for me?" he asked, grinning, very aware of what he was doing to me.

He stretched his broad arms out slowly, his back rippling with every movement. I wasn't the only one watching him closely. My inner wolf growled softly in approval.

Zaliver stepped into the center of the ring of warriors. At a glance, there were at least fifteen of them. Fifteen.

Worried, I mind-linked him quickly. *You can't be serious. Fifteen? You're going to wear yourself out. You could get hurt.*

He turned to look back at me, his eyes locking onto mine across the space.

Calm down, Vivian. I've got this completely. Trust me.

And the thing was... I did.

I know. I do. I just... ugh. Fine. At least push your hair back so you can see properly.

He smirked and raked his fingers through his hair, brushing it back smoothly.

Yes, dear.

Don't sass me when I'm worried about you, I shot back. *Who are you fighting first?*

I squeezed his shirt tighter, the soft fabric grounding me.

The group completely surrounded him a mix of sizes and terrifying strengths. Zaliver bent his knees slightly, raising his arms in a loose, ready position. The others mirrored him instantly, all eyes locked on their target.

He glanced back at me once more... and winked.

Then, with a subtle tilt of his chin, the signal was given.

The warriors lunged.

And my mate the Lupus Deus stepped into the sheer chaos like he welcomed it with open arms.

There's a moment in life undeniable and completely unforgettable when the truth smacks you so hard that it roots itself directly into your bones. For me, it was this: my mate wasn't just powerful. He was a god. And not the distant, serene kind. No Zaliver was a relentless, untamed force of nature. Dangerous. Lethal. Unstoppable.

They came at him all at once. From every single direction front, back, and both sides like they were desperately trying to overwhelm him through sheer numbers. Three of the biggest ones lunged straight at him, thinking they could drag him to the ground.

I held my breath tight in my chest.

But Zaliver didn't flinch.

My eyes were locked on him, tracking his every movement, my heart pounding wildly against my ribs. Maybe it was my lycan blood that allowed me to follow his insane pace, or maybe it was the mate bond sharpening my focus. Either way, I couldn't look away for a second.

He thrust his palm forward and slammed it hard into the chest of the man in front of him. The guy flew backward like he'd been shot out of a cannon, while Zaliver's legs never budged an inch. His body didn't yield. That same hand whipped to the side and snagged another attacker's arm, yanking the man across his body and using the momentum to smash him hard into a third guy who'd gotten too close.

Zaliver wasn't defending.

He was destroying.

"Body slam, bitch! You can't see me!" my wolf howled with gleeful pride, practically vibrating in my mind.

"Mmm, yes," my beast hummed in deep approval, leaning forward like she was watching a performance she'd been craving for a long time.

And honestly? So was I.