

The Wolf God's Unwanted Luna - Chapter 241: The Kitchen Secret[1,378 words]

Chapter 241: The Kitchen Secret

Vivian's POV

I slipped my arms securely around his waist, leaning my back against his warm chest. I felt him bend his knees slightly to steady our weight, his bare feet planted firmly on the smooth floor.

"I promise you that I will never, ever, ever forget to eat my meals," I said softly, "if you promise me that you will never, ever, ever get into a brutal fight with other gods again. Deal?"

His lips thinned into a tight line, and he grimaced. Then he groaned out loud, looking up toward the ceiling for help before looking back down at me.

"How about we compromise: I will try my best not to fight other gods, and you promise to at least order takeout food if I happen to be gone?"

I laughed out loud, knowing full well that he would probably not be able to resist starting a fight if the situation called for it. And just as surely, I knew I would worry myself sick every single time he walked out the door.

"Fine," I said, still chuckling softly.

"Fine," he echoed back with a smile.

Just as we successfully reached our little truce, my wolf piped up from somewhere deep inside my mind, sounding a little too friendly for my personal liking. *Now that we have finally agreed on food, can someone please feed this physical body before I start eating myself from the inside out?*

Zahliver burst into a loud, booming laugh. "You just had to add that smart comment in, did you not?" I asked my wolf silently.

Well, duh. Since you are not taking the proper responsibility for feeding the body we share together, I figured I would just take matters into my own claws, she replied cheekily.

Claws? We do not even have hands in here right now, my beast corrected her with a mocking tone.

My wolf growled at that playful jab, and I could not help but snicker out loud.

"Whose side are you even on right now?" I whispered under my breath.

The side that actually feeds us which happens to be neither of you two. Aka, the guy over there, she answered simply.

Zahliver took my hand in his, his rich laughter still echoing softly as he led me down the stairs. At the bottom of the staircase, I spotted Joshula standing in the kitchen, freshly showered and wearing what must have been one of Zahliver's old cotton pajama sets they hung rather loosely on his lean, athletic frame.

"Now that all of us are finally clean, I think it is high time we got some dinner started," Zahliver said, walking briskly over to the refrigerator. He started pulling various ingredients out, then suddenly paused mid-motion and turned around to look closely at his brother. Joshula's face twisted into an expression of utter confusion as he stared back and forth between Zahliver and me.

"What is going on?" I asked, catching the heavy question lingering in his green eyes as he stared at us.

"You do not cook your own meals?" Joshula asked slowly, his voice laced with disbelief.

I narrowed my eyes at him, instantly sensing the shock and perhaps a bit of old-fashioned judgment hiding in his tone. Behind him, Zahliver made a funny face at the refrigerator door and quickly shut it closed. He walked over and stood right beside his very confused and possibly endangered brother.

"Uh, Joshula, times have changed quite a bit since your day," Zahliver said awkwardly, scratching the back of his neck. "Women are not really expected to do all the domestic work around the house anymore."

Joshula nodded slowly in acknowledgment, but I could easily tell that he was still struggling to wrap his head around the modern concept.

"I am well aware that cultural customs have evolved over the ages," Joshula said carefully, choosing his words with precision. "Fate kept me somewhat informed as the outside world changed, but hearing about it secondhand is entirely different from experiencing it firsthand..."

My defensive glare softened as I began to understand his genuine struggle with the new era.

"For a quick second there, I thought you were implying that I should do all the kitchen work simply because I happen to be a woman," I said, tsking lightly and shaking my head at him. "Trust me, I could cook if you really want to risk getting severe food poisoning."

His soft green eyes widened in alarm at my warning, and then he glanced over quickly at Zahliver, who gave a knowing, solemn nod. Zahliver quickly resumed his rightful role as the master chef of the house.

"So your powerful brother does all the cooking now?" Joshula asked, clearly bewildered by the role reversal. I nodded enthusiastically, knowing exactly why this seemed so strange to him. Our reasons for being surprised might have been different, but the general feeling of disbelief was exactly the same.

Joshula half-turned his body to look directly at Zahliver, who currently had his back turned to us.

"When on earth did this massive shift happen? Last time I checked, you could not catch a single fish with a wooden spear even if it was sitting helplessly in a tiny puddle right in front of your face," Joshula said, looking highly amused.

Something metal slipped clumsily from Zahliver's hands into the sink with a loud clatter, and he swiftly picked it up.

"Is that really true?" I teased, grinning widely as I watched Zahliver's broad back stiffen up defensively.

Joshula turned his full attention to face me, matching my wide grin, his bright green eyes sparkling with mischief. Leaning forward slightly, he rested both of his forearms casually on the kitchen table.

"He might be much older and stronger now, but I was definitely the primary guardian back then. He was always way too reckless and far too spirited for his own good," he murmured softly, sounding more like he was talking to himself than anyone else.

"Well, you were young too, so you must have done wild things," I pointed out. Joshula's head tilted to the side, his eyes narrowing thoughtfully at my words.

"What do you mean by that?" he asked after a brief moment of silence.

"You were young and reckless too. So what did you get up to back then?" I asked quickly, hoping I had not accidentally offended him.

Before Joshula could come up with an answer, Zahliver cut in smoothly without bothering to turn around from the stove.

"He trained relentlessly for fun with the other warriors who craved the wild rush of battle. Or he kept me on a tight leash whenever I looked like I was about to do something monumentally stupid. Am I right, brother?" Zahliver called out over his shoulder.

My nose suddenly caught the rich, savory scent of cooking meat drifting through the air.

Joshula shook his head with a deep, rumbling chuckle, then lifted his gaze toward the ceiling.

"Oh yes. Right you are, little brother. Like always," he said dryly.

"Not always! And just for your official information, the only reason I did not catch that fish back then was because it looked like a pile of well, you know what it looked like. I was certainly not about to eat that gross thing," Zahliver defended himself loudly as he moved around the stove, efficiently adjusting the food before walking over to sit down right beside me.

Joshula muttered under his breath, rolling his eyes dramatically. "Oh yes, that completely explains everything."

Even though all three of us knew quite well that the much heavier, serious conversation was still waiting quietly in the wings of our minds, the kitchen still held a comfortable, subtle tension. It felt like they were both silently waiting for the other person to finally bring up the unspoken questions and the old accusations that still lingered heavily in the air. But not me no, I was certainly not about to be the one to open that scary door.

It was not my place to interfere, and honestly, I just wanted to savor this normal, peaceful moment of seeing Zahliver talk so easily, even if they both carried a bit of underlying unease beneath the surface.

The Wolf God's Unwanted Luna - Chapter 242: The Secret Name[1,604 words]

Chapter 242: The Secret Name

Vivian's POV

I glanced over at Zahliver across the kitchen island and asked, "What on earth are you making for dinner?"

He grinned widely as he stirred a steaming pot on the stove. "Ribbs, macaroni and cheese with mashed potatoes and gravy, a little bit of vegetable soup, and if you happen to still have room left over, ice cream for dessert."

My jaw practically hit the floor as I peeked past Joshula toward the kitchen counter. How on earth had Zahliver managed to pull all of that together without me even noticing? Various food containers and fresh ingredients were spread out everywhere did he actually plan this massive meal yesterday?

Joshula looked genuinely surprised by the spread. "You really know your way around a kitchen now."

Zahliver shrugged his broad shoulders, shooting me a quick side glance. "You kind of have to learn how to cook if you want to eat well. I certainly do not trust anyone else cooking for me after what happened when you " He suddenly stopped himself mid-sentence, freezing up completely.

My eyes went wide in surprise, already piecing together what he had almost let slip. Joshula's polite smile stayed in place, but there was something very tight and strained about it.

Trying desperately to steer the conversation away from the heavy tension filling the room, I blurted out, "So, what is the age difference between the two of you anyway?"

Joshula hesitated for a brief second, then answered slowly, "He is... well, he was four years older than me."

I flinched internally, realizing almost instantly that maybe that had not been the best question to ask right now.

My wolf muttered darkly in the back of my mind, *Definitely time to write a official guide called 'How to Talk to Your Revived Brother-in-Law Who Your Mate Accidentally Killed'.*

I could clearly feel Zahliver's silent disapproval radiating from across the room, and I mentally growled back at my wolf. *Sorry, I whispered. This awkward tension is completely unbearable.*

Thankfully, Zahliver finished plating the food and stood up to bring the dishes over. I stood up right along with him to fetch the extra plates and silverware from the cupboard.

"Do you need a hand with those?" Joshula asked politely, reaching out his hand to take a plate.

"Sure, thank you," I said, passing the dishes over to him. When his cold fingers accidentally brushed against mine, a strange, fleeting sensation ran straight through my body it was subtle, but deeply unsettling. My wolf and beast both perked up sharply in alarm. I quickly blamed the weird feeling on his freezing cold hands.

Joshula looked thoughtful as he tried to figure out the best place to set the plates down. I froze for a second, watching him closely, but quickly shook off the weird feeling and grabbed the drinking cups.

When everything was finally set up, I sat back down at the table.

We had a proper dining table in the house, but we rarely ever used it because it always felt like there were too many empty chairs and too much cold distance between us. Eating right here felt much better, closer, and far less formal.

Once we were all quietly eating our food, I decided to be the one to finally break the heavy silence with a simple question. I usually hated being the person who forced conversation, but Joshula looked genuinely curious about the food, and I was still feeling awkward trying to eat in front of someone totally new. Zahliver, as usual, looked calm and confident.

"So, Joshula," I began smoothly, "I could not help but notice that your eyes have a lot of green in them. Which parent did you inherit that from?"

Joshula put his fork down neatly on his plate and leaned back comfortably in his chair. I reached over to pick up my glass of juice as he replied, "I remember very little about our parents now, but I believe I inherited our mother's eyes. Zalvius inherited "

Zahliver's head whipped around toward us instantly, his eyes wide open and suddenly looking very anxious. His gaze was completely filled with quiet guilt.

I accidentally choked on my juice, quickly patting my chest with my hand as a violent coughing fit took over. Through my hacking cough, I shot Zahliver a fierce glare. He just sat there awkwardly, barbecue sauce smeared around his lips, grinning sheepishly at me.

Joshula's eyes locked onto me immediately, deep concern plain on his face as he reached out a hand, half-offered to help. "Are you alright over there?" he asked gently.

I nodded quickly, forcing my lungs to steady my breath. "I am just fine," I rasped out hoarsely.

He sank slowly back into his chair, but my mind was completely stuck on what he had just said a moment ago. "Wait a minute... what did you just call him?" I asked sharply.

"Zalivus?" Joshula repeated, his dark brows knitting together in utter confusion as he glanced over toward Zahliver. Then, suddenly, a knowing grin spread wide across his face, his bright green eyes lighting up with sudden understanding.

"You actually renamed yourself, did you not?" he said, folding his arms across his chest with a chuckle.

I muttered under my breath, "Apparently, he did."

Zahliver quickly wiped his mouth clean with a paper napkin, then glanced at me nervously, his voice sounding just a bit shaky. "It is really not a big deal. I never liked my

old name anyway. After carrying it for over a hundred years, I figured changing it to Zahliver was much more fitting for who I became."

He casually slid his arm behind my chair, but I could still feel a faint flicker of annoyance that he had kept this little secret from me all this time. Still, I caught the genuine worry glinting in his striking blue eyes as if he secretly feared I would be deeply hurt by his withheld secret.

"Oh yeah, sure. Is there anything else you want to confess to me tonight? Like a long-lost wife tucked away with six kids? A secret island hideout somewhere? Or maybe a pet goldfish you keep hidden down in the basement?" I teased playfully, raising a single eyebrow at him.

His facial expression suddenly shifted from nervous to completely serious before he answered quietly, "Two."

I blinked hard, completely confused. Then he let out a heavy sigh, his voice dropping low with feigned regret.

"Two kids. And the poor goldfish unfortunately died last week."

My mouth dropped wide open in pure shock, but a second later I caught the bright spark of genuine amusement dancing in his eyes. He threw his head back and laughed out loud, and I found myself playfully smacking his arm, which only seemed to make him laugh even harder at my expense.

After a few light smacks that clearly did not faze him in the slightest, I finally gave up and crossed my arms over my chest, giving him a cute pout. Ignoring the highly amused look spread across Joshula's face, I muttered softly to myself, "Two kids, my ass..."

My wolf groaned in agreement in the back of my head. *We should definitely make him sleep out on the living room couch for that last stupid joke.*

I kept muttering, "...and I am going to get my own name changed too... that will be the absolute last secret he ever keeps from me. Let us see how much he likes that idea."

Zahliver's rich laughter softened into a warm chuckle as his strong arms slid completely around my waist. "Oh, come on now, my love, I am truly sorry. Please do not change your name," he whispered softly into my ear, resting his heavy chin comfortably on the crown of my head.

I love your name very much, almost as much as I love you, he whispered gently straight through our mental bond.

That sweet gesture completely melted the last of my lingering irritation, and I relaxed fully back into his warm hold, chuckling softly. I glanced over at his brother with a wide grin. "See what crazy things I have to deal with every single day?"

Joshula nodded along, happily playing right into our banter. "Oh yes, I certainly do. It deeply amuses me that neither of you seem to care at all that the poor pet fish named Gold supposedly died last week."

All three of us exchanged mutually confused looks for a second before it finally hit us what Joshula was actually talking about.

"No, no, wait the fish's name was not actually Gold well, I mean, technically it is a goldfish, but that was just a stupid joke. The fish is not really... actually, you know what, I will just explain the whole stupid thing later," I stammered out, realizing with a groan that I had probably just made the whole story ten times more confusing.

Desperately changing the subject before I dug my grave any deeper, I offered cheerfully, "Who wants some ice cream for dessert?"

Joshula shook his head politely, declining the offer. "No, thank you very much. The big meal was truly excellent, but I honestly do not have much of an appetite left."

I glanced down quickly at his dinner plate it was barely a third eaten. A strange thought crossed my mind in that instant. Was his sudden lack of appetite some kind of lingering side effect from his resurrection? Had I even felt hungry when I first came back from the dead? Huh. I really had no idea.

The Wolf God's Unwanted Luna - Chapter 243: The Long Overdue Talk[1,166 words]

Chapter 243: The Long Overdue Talk

Vivian's POV

Zahliver looked unsettled by Joshula's barely touched plate, but he kept his thoughts to himself, quietly finishing what was left. I, on the other hand, had cleared my plate completely. It was clear these two needed to talk really talk and I wasn't about to let it drag on any longer. So, I made sure to get them out of the kitchen while I cleaned up. First time I'd ever orchestrated something like this.

His eyes went wide with panic the moment he realized what I was doing. He shook his head as if to say, No, please don't, but I just shook mine right back. He'd thank me later. Some conversations weren't meant to be dodged or delayed forever.

I heard their footsteps drift slowly toward the living room, then the faint sound of them settling down. I half-expected Zahliver to break the silence first, but no neither of them said a word. Not a hint of conversation, not even the slightest small talk. I didn't even strain to listen. For a good five minutes, that quiet held while I washed and dried the dishes.

Seriously? my wolf grumbled. They might as well get up and help instead of sitting there like statues.

I sighed, turned off the water, and dried my hands before heading out to the living room.

There they were. Zahliver sprawled on the couch, and Joshula planted firmly in the only chair facing him. Both staring off in opposite directions like the wallpaper had suddenly become the most fascinating thing in the world.

I stomped my foot and groaned aloud. Marching over, I planted my hands on my hips. Honestly, I couldn't believe these two would rather sit in dead silence than say a single word to each other.

I can, my wolf muttered, clearing her throat.

I really do not feel like playing Dr. Phil right now, I whispered back.

Well, if not you, then who? my beast demanded.

I took a deep breath and squared my shoulders. "Look, I know you both hate talking about this. And if neither of you can express what you're feeling, then tough. I'm not going to live in a house full of awkward tension every time I say something that might make this worse I know it will happen. You're brothers, not enemies. It's going to take time, sure, but you can't get through this if you refuse to acknowledge it and work it out. So come on, boys. Speak up."

Zahliver blinked, eyes briefly meeting mine before flicking away. His posture straightened; his gaze grew fierce, but beneath that, I could feel the hesitation the fear of what was coming.

Joshula's green eyes met mine with gratitude. He nodded, then slowly turned his attention back to Zahliver, his gaze sharp and measured.

I was about to step back and give them space when Joshula raised a hand, shaking his head. "No. Stay. You're part of this as much as he is now," he said, fixing me with a serious look.

I stayed put.

Zahliver swallowed hard and said quietly, "I'm sorry for killing you."

Joshula didn't hesitate. He nodded, placing his hands together in front of him. "I know you are."

Zahliver ran a hand through his hair, pushing it back, then took a steadying breath before continuing.

"I would have never done it if I'd had the choice. My human memory is hazy on how things got so bad, but I remember during and after. I'm truly sorry for what I did to you when all you ever did was take care of me. It should have been the other way around."

His voice cracked with emotion, the weight of his regret hanging heavy in the air.

Joshula's face was unreadable, his green eyes distant as he listened to Zahliver's confession. I couldn't tell what storm was brewing behind those calm eyes.

"I hated myself more than you could ever imagine once I realized what I'd done," Zahliver's voice cracked with pain. "I broke free from the compulsion too late. I can't fully grasp what you felt, what you're feeling now. I understand if you don't forgive me. But I want you to know I planned revenge. I carried it out. Had I known what Fate was doing to you..." His voice trailed off as he looked at Joshula, silently asking for a response.

I waited alongside him, watching Joshula's pensive face. The tension between them was electric fear, worry, hope all tangled together in a knot that pulled at my heart. I stepped behind Zahliver and rested my hand on his shoulder. He reached up and squeezed my hand softly in return. Maybe a silent thank you. I silently wished they could heal this, that Zahliver wouldn't have to live with the pain of his brother's existence being a reminder of what tore them apart.

Minutes passed like hours as Joshula sat motionless, eyes locked on Zahliver. Slowly, he tilted his head to the side and finally, his gaze flicked to me. For just a heartbeat, his empty green eyes searched mine and then, something shifted.

Zahliver stood, tense and ready, waiting for Joshula's words. His back was rigid, muscles taut like a coiled spring. Then, a slow, genuine grin spread across Joshula's face. He pushed his chair back and stepped forward toward us.

"Of course I forgive you, brother. None of this is your fault." His voice was calm but firm. "I can't hold you responsible for what happened so long ago, under those extraordinary

circumstances. Your mate," he glanced at me with a sparkle in his eyes, "is right. We're brothers, not enemies. Harboring ill will or plotting against you would do no good. I forgive you, Zahliver."

I smiled, touched by the flood of relief and disbelief washing over Zahliver. Though I couldn't see his full expression, I could feel the lightness in his stance the release of a burden. They embraced, and I glanced at Joshula, happy to see the first real warmth between them. He returned my smile quietly.

After breaking apart, they returned to their seats, and I settled beside Zahliver.

"So... if you don't mind me asking," I began, curling my feet beneath me, "how are you... you know... here?"

Joshula raised a brow at my awkward wording, but I just shrugged. Zahliver pulled me closer, then turned his gaze back to his brother.

"It's true. Fate wasn't exactly clear on how..." His voice lost some of its earlier joy, turning grave at the mention of Fate.

"It's strange. I remember very little. The last clear memory I have is feeling my body flooded with power I didn't understand. Then the healing began, but I was unconscious while my body slowly put itself back together. It was always dark where I was, but Fate came to me from time to time, speaking telling me things."

Joshula leaned forward, curiosity sharpening his voice. "What kind of things?"

The Wolf God's Unwanted Luna - Chapter 244: The Morning Light[1,726 words]

Chapter 244: The Morning Light

Vivian's POV

Joshula shifted uneasily in his wooden chair, his gaze dropping down to the floor for a brief moment before lifting back up, his expression looking clear but somewhat distant.

"Fate kept me informed, oddly enough, about the progress of the outside world," Joshula explained quietly. "His own passing thoughts and ramblings mostly, nothing that truly mattered in the grand scheme of things. I could not respond to him, I could only listen. There were brief moments when I was actually able to move my physical body, and during

those times, he showed genuine joy and delight in how well I was healing up," Joshula said, his voice dropping low, sounding almost reverent.

Something in the careful way he spoke about Fate made my brows draw together closely in deep concern.

"Why on earth did Fate keep you all to himself hidden away like that for all this time?" I asked softly.

Joshula shrugged his shoulders, looking completely uninterested, like it was a question not even worth much of his thought. "I am honestly not sure."

Before I could react or ask more, Zahliver murmured quietly beside me, "Well, I happen to know why."

I turned my head quickly to look at him, feeling very curious.

"When I finally reached Fate, he had planned to use you against me in order to force the two of us to fight each other to the death. Just seeing your survival was supposed to shock me enough to break my spirit. He knew full well that I would never hurt you again on purpose," Zahliver said grimly, his dark eyes fixed firmly on his brother.

My heart skipped a painful beat in my chest.

"He actually wanted you to fight your own beloved brother? All over again?" The pure disgust bubbled right up to the surface in my voice, even if no one had asked for my opinion.

Zahliver's voice sounded dark with total agreement. "Yeah, that is... completely messed up."

Joshula gave a short nod of his head before clearing his throat. "When I was finally fully awake, Fate showed me the incredible new abilities I could wield and proved just how strong I had actually become."

There was something in his tone that sounded almost fond—a strange detail that made me tilt my head in confusion. Could I possibly be imagining that tone?

"Mother Luna actually said something about—" Zahliver began, but I cut him off eagerly, far too excited to wait.

"Luna? As in Mother Luna herself? You actually saw her with your own eyes? What is she even like? What does she look like? Tell me everything right now!" I practically whispered, my heart pounding loudly against my ribs. Every single wolf alive secretly craves to know their divine creator.

Zahliver blinked in total surprise as I practically bounced up and down beside him, but he quickly caught my hands in his, gently trying to steady me. I could not stop the wild excitement that lit up my face.

"She is... well, she is sort of..." He hesitated for a second, his dark eyes narrowing suspiciously at me. "She actually reminded me a lot of you, in a strange sort of way," he said, almost talking to himself.

I stared right at him, searching his face for any hint of teasing, but found only absolute sincerity shining in his eyes.

"Really?" I breathed out, completely stunned.

"Yeah, really," he said softly, looking down at me with something deeply warm filling his gaze.

She reminded him of me... Somehow, just hearing that made my chest swell up with pride and emotion.

Zahliver chuckled softly at my dazed, happy grin. "Anyway, she mentioned something else..." He paused for a second, thinking very carefully. "He asked her for a special favor—probably to give him the power of many wild wolves, just to make you heal much faster and stronger... maybe even more than that." Joshula nodded silently in agreement right beside him.

Zahliver's eyes darkened as he fell deep into thought. "Maybe we should actually test why Fate thought you could possibly defeat me in a fight."

Joshula's voice suddenly sharpened with a clear, sharp challenge. "What, you honestly do not believe that I could beat you in a match?"

That sudden statement instantly snapped me right out of my swirling, distracted thoughts.

"I am not even a werewolf anymore, Joshula," Zahliver replied smoothly, leaning back against the couch with a calm sense of certainty. "But I can safely assume that raw divine power flows strongly through you right now."

Joshula hummed softly in thought, considering his words.

I leaned forward eagerly, suddenly feeling curious about the outside world again. "You just said that Fate told you all about the world's progress over the years. Does that mean he literally never showed you the actual outside world outside these walls?"

Joshula nodded thoughtfully and said, "You are quite right. Fate showed me plenty of pictures, old books, and those magical moving things called movies and documentaries,

but I was never once allowed to actually leave this place." He glanced casually toward the tall window, where the pale morning sun was just beginning to peek over the horizon. That soft, golden morning glow hit me with a sudden, crashing realization—Zahliver and I had not slept a single wink the entire night through. And looking at him, maybe Joshula had not slept either.

A massive wave of bone-deep exhaustion suddenly crashed over my shoulders. I glanced quickly at the digital clock hanging on the wall: it read 6:55 a.m.

Good grief, why did morning have to come so early? This was not even a fancy dinner anymore; it was early breakfast time. How strange life was.

"Well, I guess the two of you still have an awful lot of catching up to do," I said aloud, stretching my tired arms up as I stood to my feet. "But honestly, I have not slept in forever. I am going to go take a long nap right now. Peace out, boys."

Zahliver immediately stood up right beside me, rubbing his tired eyes with the back of his hand. He looked just as thoroughly wiped out as I felt.

"I think we can easily finish this long conversation later today, Joshula. What do you say?" Zahliver asked politely, pulling me close against his side as he waited for his brother's final answer.

Joshula stood up from his chair and walked over toward us. "I completely agree with you. We could all use some proper rest right now."

Zahliver gave Joshula's broad back a friendly, affectionate pat, and together we turned and headed slowly up the stairs toward our bedroom.

"Good morning—or good night, I suppose, Joshula. See you soon," I called out cheerfully over my shoulder as I slipped inside our room. His soft, quiet laughter was the only reply I heard.

I flopped face-first onto the big bed, instantly landing in a messy star shape, and closed my heavy eyes for a brief second. Zahliver climbed in right beside me a moment later, slid underneath the warm covers, and pulled me tightly against him—somehow cleverly tugging the heavy blanket up from beneath me so that both of us were fully covered and warm. He turned me gently onto my side, matching my exact movement, and let out a long, contented sigh into the quiet room.

"I still honestly cannot believe everything that has happened to us, Vivian," he whispered softly right into my ear. "I finally have my brother back safe and sound, my old revenge is officially complete, and best of all, I have you right here beside me. It honestly feels like a crazy dream."

I curled my body further into his warm chest, feeling safe and completely surrounded by comfort, when a sudden, mischievous little thought popped right into my head. I giggled quietly to myself.

"Ouch!" he suddenly exclaimed in surprise, pulling back just enough to look down at me, clearly completely puzzled by my actions.

I stayed put right where I was, wearing a wide, innocent grin.

"What on earth was that sharp pinch for?" he asked, blinking in confusion.

"I just pinched you hard to prove to you that you were not dreaming this time," I said playfully, absolute certainty ringing clearly in my voice.

He let out a low, rumbling growl, pure amusement dancing clearly in his rich tone.

"Yeah, but why the hell did you have to pinch my ass?" he grumbled good-naturedly.

"Well, that specific part was just strictly for my own personal peace of mind," I admitted shamelessly with a bright smirk.

He shook his head slowly, a warm smile tugging right at the corners of his lips. "Of course it was, my little trouble."

The bedroom finally fell completely silent, and I was just drifting off to sleep when I suddenly felt the undeniable urge to say one last thing out loud.

"You were totally right, you know," I murmured softly into his chest.

"Hmmm? About what?" he replied sleepily, his eyes looking heavy with approaching slumber.

"Zahliver definitely suits you much better as a name. You were right about that whole thing all along." I exhaled the whispered words quickly.

His strong arms tightened protectively around my waist, and then he pulled back just slightly to cup my face and kissed me firmly right on the lips—a deep, deliberate kiss that instantly jolted me wide awake. My eyes fluttered wide open to meet his dark, clear blue gaze.

My breath caught sharply in my throat.

"What was that sudden kiss for?" I whispered breathlessly.

"Just for being wonderfully you," he said softly, his voice full of pure affection.

"Oh." I felt a deep blush creep up my cheeks, suddenly feeling quite shy under the intense weight of his loving gaze.

Slowly, deliberately, he leaned his head down once more and kissed me again—this time slow, deep, and thoroughly intoxicating—making my back naturally arch against his chest. I gasped softly for fresh air as he finally pulled his lips away just a tiny fraction.

"And what about that one?" I asked, my voice coming out shaky and breathless.

A wonderfully wicked grin spread wide across his handsome face before he finally answered, his voice dropping low, husky, and full of raw passion: "For being entirely mine."

The Wolf God's Unwanted Luna - Chapter 245: The Dark Memory[1,546 words]

Chapter 245: The Dark Memory

Vivian's POV

A sudden scream shattered the quiet night air sharp, desperate, and completely raw.

I jerked straight upright in the bed, my heart pounding wildly against my ribs like a trapped drum, and caught Zahliver doing the exact same thing beside me. Our eyes locked for a split second, silently asking each other if everything was okay. Then another piercing scream tore through the house but it definitely was not coming from either of us.

Without a single moment of hesitation, Zahliver bolted straight out of the bed like a flash of lightning. Panic flooded my chest instantly as I scrambled out right after him, my eyes wide with fear. The terrible sound was coming from down the hall, directly from Joshula's guest room a sound that honestly tore straight through my soul. It was the agonizing cry of a man drowning in unbearable pain, trapped deep inside the torment of a terrible nightmare.

When we finally reached his closed door, Zahliver suddenly froze in his tracks, his face turning into a pale mask of sheer despair and fear. His entire body seemed completely rooted to the spot, as if invisible, heavy chains were holding him right there in the hallway. Over on the bed, Joshula was writhing violently, his eyes squeezed tightly shut and his fists clenched so hard they were white, his horrific screams cutting right through the quiet room.

I knew immediately what was happening: he was trapped inside a vicious nightmare, totally lost in a dark place that I could not reach. Zahliver looked completely helpless,

utterly unsure of what he should do next. So, pushing gently past him, I edged closer to the bed with cautious steps.

You never, ever physically shake someone who has recently come back from the dead while they are caught in the middle of a bad nightmare. That was a strict rule I had learned the hard way in the past.

I quickly grabbed one of the soft pillows scattered on the floor one that Joshula must have thrown during his torment and gripped it tightly in my hands. Joshula's face was glistening heavily with cold sweat, his features horribly twisted in agony, and he let out another loud, agonizing shriek.

"Joshula!" I shouted loudly, throwing the pillow right at his head with everything I had.

It was a risky gamble, but I desperately hoped it would break through the darkness.

The exact second the pillow made contact, Joshula's hands snapped out like sharp claws, ripping viciously into the fabric with teeth that looked far sharper than I ever expected. His eyes snapped wide open, but they were not his familiar, deep green color anymore. Instead, a fierce, dark mustard-yellow glowed ominously in the dim room, burning with pure, unadulterated hatred.

I gasped out loud in shock. His wild eyes locked straight onto mine, looking utterly terrifying.

Zahliver was instantly standing directly in front of me, half-crouched defensively, every single muscle in his body tense and ready either to protect me or to fight for his life.

Joshula suddenly stopped tearing the pillow apart, spat a piece of white stuffing out of his mouth, closed his eyes tightly, and took a long, deep, shaky breath. When he finally opened his eyes again, the soft green color had returned though he looked deeply tired and worn out. He raised a trembling hand, running his fingers slowly through his damp hair, a movement that made Zahliver flinch slightly beside me.

"I sincerely apologize for causing such a disturbance," Joshula said quietly, shaking his head back and forth as if he were desperately trying to shake off the lingering grip of the nightmare. "I seem to have just had a... bad dream," he added, a hollow, fake chuckle escaping his lips as his eyes nervously settled on Zahliver.

I could not shake the heavy feeling in my gut that maybe it should have been me standing there out in front, crouched and vulnerable, instead of Zahliver taking the brunt of the risk.

"Are you actually okay?" Zahliver asked after a long moment of silence, stepping forward very hesitantly, his voice heavily threaded with uncertainty.

Joshula's quick response of "Yes" came far too fast, his physical body still trembling slightly. His smile looked much too calm, way too forced, and his wide eyes betrayed him completely.

"What actually happened? What were you dreaming about to make you sound like you were dying over there?" I asked softly, taking a careful step to stand just behind Zahliver's left shoulder.

Joshula's eyes darted quickly around the dark room, stubbornly avoiding our gazes. "I honestly do not remember the details. It completely slipped my conscious mind the second I woke up," he replied far too quickly to ever sound genuine. His strong jaw tightened hard, and I could instantly sense that he desperately wanted us to leave him alone. Zahliver must have caught onto that vibe too.

"Is there anything at all that we can do to help you right now?" Zahliver asked gently.

"Not right now, thank you," Joshula said tightly through thin, pursed lips.

"Alright then. We will just leave you to get some more rest," Zahliver said with a heavy, troubled sigh, worry clearly written all over his face.

"Thank you," Joshula murmured quietly.

We slowly turned around to head back toward the door, but right at that moment, his hand shot out with surprising speed, gripping my wrist tightly. A cold, numbing sensation instantly traveled straight up my arm, causing goosebumps to erupt across my skin. I looked down at him, feeling deeply surprised and uneasy.

Zahliver paused right at the bedroom door, his hand resting on the brass handle. He glanced back anxiously at Joshula with a questioning look before finally pulling the door open and stepping out into the hall.

The heavy, suffocating silence that followed felt like the crushing weight of everything they had left completely unsaid between them.

Joshula's voice dropped low, but it sounded surprisingly firm as he spoke up. "I would actually like a moment alone with you, Vivian, if that is alright with you."

I frowned deeply, glancing down at him in total confusion. What on earth could he possibly have to say to me in private that he did not want his own brother to hear?

Zahliver held our combined gazes for what felt like an absolute eternity, then slowly nodded his head, his jaw locked tight as he quietly pulled the door shut behind him.

The exact second I heard Zahliver's heavy footsteps fading away down the hallway, Joshula turned his full, undivided attention back to me. His hand closed gently but firmly

around my wrist again, an unexpected pressure that made my inner wolf instantly bristle up and curl her upper lip in a silent, warning growl. My human beast mirrored that exact same sharp sense of unease and physical alertness.

I quickly pulled my hand free from his grasp, watching closely as he stared down at his now empty hand, flexing and then clenching his fingers thoughtfully before looking back up into my eyes.

"So, you wanted to talk about something?" I asked cautiously, still trying hard to figure out the strange, twisting tension vibrating in the air between us.

"Yes, I did," he whispered softly.

I blinked in surprise. "Why on earth are you whispering like that?"

"Because if Zahliver happens to hear us, I simply do not want him to," Joshula said quietly again, leaning in just a fraction. I could not help the nervous laugh that slipped out of my mouth.

"All of the rooms in this house are magically soundproof," I explained patiently, offering him a reassuring grin. "Zahliver specifically did not want anyone overhearing private conversations, so he had the builders seal every room tight."

I suddenly remembered chuckling out loud the very first time Zahliver had explained that little feature to me, but now, having actually lived in this house for a while, I completely understood why it was necessary. Sometimes, just being in a crowded place like Hannah's old house gave me massive headaches because I could hear every single little noise from both inside and outside the walls. Zahliver could probably pick up our whispered voices right now if he truly focused hard on it, but doing so would require all of his concentration something much easier said than done when you are tired.

"Is that actually true?" Joshula sounded genuinely surprised, his interest suddenly piqued.

"Yeah, it really is," I said, curiosity once again nudging me forward. "So, come on what is it that you desperately wanted to talk to me about?"

His expression darkened, and his voice dropped down into a deadly seriousness. "It is about my dream."

"You mean the nightmare you just woke up screaming from?" I frowned, a tight knot forming in my stomach.

"No. It was not just a regular dream. It was a clear memory."

A wave of cold dread instantly settled deep in my stomach. I already had a terrible feeling about what was coming next, but I forced myself to ask the question anyway.

"A memory of what?"

"The exact day that Zahliver brutally killed me." His spoken words came out as barely a whisper.

The Wolf God's Unwanted Luna - Chapter 246: The Hidden Dent[1,397 words]

Chapter 246: The Hidden Dent

Vivian's POV

I sucked in a sharp breath, closing my eyes for a moment before releasing a slow sigh. This conversation was going to cut deep, and I could already feel the heavy tension thickening the air between us. Even though Joshula had officially forgiven Zahliver, I knew that just knowing the real truth behind those midnight screams would stir up a lot more hidden pain than he was letting on.

I opened my eyes slowly and moved to sit right at the edge of the bed, folding my hands neatly in my lap. Well, here we go.

"You said you did not remember your nightmare just to spare Zahliver's feelings," I stated gently, treating it more like a solid fact than a question.

Joshula nodded quietly, sitting up a bit straighter, his hands coming together in front of him.

"Thank you for doing that," I added sincerely. Seeing Zahliver this morning looking so alive and genuinely happy made me want to protect whatever fragile peace they had finally found, even if it was walking on thin ice.

Joshula's lips curled up into a faint smile, but it quickly faded away into something much darker.

"I would never intentionally hurt him on purpose," he said quietly, "but I keep having these terrible nightmares about that awful day. And I am honestly afraid that if they keep happening, Zahliver will eventually start to suspect that something is wrong."

His serious gaze locked firmly onto mine, and I looked away for a second, thinking it over in my head.

What he said was completely true. One forgotten nightmare could easily be dismissed as a fluke. But two or three of them? Zahliver would definitely notice. He would start digging deep into it, just like he always did, trying hard to root out the underlying problem and fix it.

Only this time, the root of the problem was him.

"That certainly sounds like a real problem. But what exactly do you expect me to do about it?" I asked, folding my arms tightly across my chest. "It is not like I majored in professional memory wiping in college."

Joshula's brows lifted in surprise as if I had said something totally unexpected, but then he gave a faint shake of his head and carried right on, his tone steady and well-practiced.

"I suppose... I was simply hoping for a welcome distraction. If someone were to gently remind me or show me the Zahliver of today, maybe my subconscious mind would finally accept that the past was just a tragic accident, and not an eternal curse. And who better to help me do that than the wonderful woman who is bonded to him?" His intense gaze lifted to meet mine, and even though his words sounded calm, the deep weariness in his green eyes seemed to grow heavier. They suddenly looked wide, almost a bit too innocent.

Yet his mouth said something completely different, his lips curling in a strange way that made me feel deeply uneasy. There was definitely something a bit off about him. His body language, his facial expressions, and even the stiff way he sat. He looked totally composed on the outside, yet he seemed to be straining heavily beneath the surface. It made me pause and truly look at him really see him in a way I had not bothered to before.

I was not entirely sure what it was or what exact feeling he stirred up in me, but the strange sensation lingered on my skin like a phantom touch. I must have stared at him for a bit too long, because he let out a soft sigh, dragging a large hand down his face with a tight frown.

"I am truly sorry," he muttered under his breath. "I completely understand if you do not want to help. You must already be feeling totally overwhelmed by everything "

"No... it is okay," I interrupted him, feeling hesitant but wanting to be honest. I could not quite put my finger on the exact issue, but something deep inside me whispered that the only way to figure out what was bothering me was to stay close enough to feel it.

It was so strange. Normally, I could easily size a person up in a matter of seconds. But Joshula? He felt like a mirror completely fogged over with steam. Polite, quiet, and well-mannered. Yet something simply did not add up. Zahliver had not mentioned anything out of the ordinary regarding his brother's behavior, so I tried my best to just shrug it off as unfamiliar territory.

"Are you really sure?" he asked, perhaps a bit too brightly.

"Yeah, I am. I mean, if I can help in any way at all, I am happy to do so," I replied, slowly rising to my feet.

"You are an absolute gem, Vivian. Thank you so much," he said softly.

I gave him a brief nod and turned around to walk toward the door. As my fingers curled around the metal handle and I pulled it shut behind me, I felt something very strange. The metal felt... dented? Frowning deeply, I looked down at my hand. The area right around the door handle was completely misshapen and warped, bearing the exact deep imprint of long fingers. It looked as if someone had gripped the solid metal far too tightly, crushing the material with absolute ease.

A cold chill crawled all the way across my skin.

I closed the door fully and walked away down the hall, but a heavy, overwhelming wave of sadness suddenly settled right in my chest. It was not mine, though of that much I was entirely sure. It felt like I had accidentally brushed up against a raging storm and the lingering gloom had stubbornly clung to me. The heavy grief did not belong to me at all, but it stuck around anyway.

By the time I finally reached our bedroom, I found Zahliver sliding into a fresh pair of black pants. He glanced over at me briefly before disappearing straight into the walk-in closet without saying a single word.

I sank down onto the edge of the bed, my limbs still feeling sluggish and heavy from a severe lack of proper sleep. Glancing over at the digital clock sitting on his nightstand, I let out a loud groan. It read 10:57 AM. We had barely managed to sleep four hours total.

Still, it seemed neither of us had any intention of wasting the entire day away. Zahliver was already getting dressed, and I figured I should probably get moving too. With a tired sigh, I stood up from the mattress and padded quietly into the closet. But the exact second I stepped inside, I stopped dead in my tracks.

Zahliver's broad back was turned completely toward me, his lean muscles shifting smoothly beneath his skin as he sifted through a row of shirts. He looked strong, solid, and completely mouthwatering.

Now that is a back truly worth admiring, my inner wolf sighed dreamily in my head, resting her chin on her paws in total bliss.

Mhmm, you said it, I agreed silently, quickly tugging off my sleep shirt without taking my eyes off him for even a second.

All that is missing from the view are a few good claw marks, she added with a delightfully mischievous lilt.

"I second that motion," Zahliver said casually from across the room, not even bothering to turn around.

I let out a loud yelp of surprise and threw my discarded hoodie right at his head. It landed squarely over his dark hair, the long sleeves hanging down like sad little puppy dog ears.

"Of course you and my pervert wolf would be on the exact same wavelength," I muttered, feeling my cheeks grow warm.

Digging through one of my bottom drawers, I pulled out a comfortable pair of black leggings and slipped them on. Seriously, leggings were easily a girl's absolute best friend in the world. They were comfortable, sleek, and best of all, they did not judge you if you happened to eat a little too much breakfast. I quickly tugged on a long-sleeved white shirt and turned around toward the sweater rack and instantly froze in place.

"Is... is that a white shirt I am wearing?" I rasped out loud, feeling utterly stunned.

The Wolf God's Unwanted Luna - Chapter 247: The White Shirt[1,346 words]

Chapter 247: The White Shirt

Vivian's POV

Zahliver gave me one of his signature eye rolls and nodded, tugging the shirt down over his torso with casual indifference. But I was not prepared at all. My mate in a tight, white shirt? It was like the universe had just handed me a wonderful gift.

The fabric hugged him in all the right ways, almost too well. It clung tightly to the hard lines of his chest, stretched taut over his flat stomach, and outlined every single muscle like it had been painted right onto his skin. Unlike his usual dark black shirts, this one left very little to the imagination. I swallowed hard, my throat suddenly feeling very dry.

Mate... shirt... mine. The thoughts racing through my head were not even full sentences anymore. My wolf and I were running purely on instinct at this point.

I moved without thinking at all, drawn forward like a magnet. Zahliver did not flinch or speak a word; he just stood there quietly, watching me with a flicker of warm amusement in his stormy blue eyes. My hands, trembling slightly, reached out and pressed flat against the white cotton stretched over his broad chest. It felt warm and smooth beneath my palms, and I could feel every steady breath he took.

"Vivian?" His voice was low and husky, tinged with something intensely close to desire.

I blinked up at him slowly, fluttering my eyelashes like I was not already a second away from completely losing my mind.

Whatever magical spell that simple shirt had cast over me, I was definitely not ready to try and resist it.

In a sudden flash of movement, I launched myself right at him, wrapping my legs securely around his waist. My fingers tangled deep into his dark hair as I pulled his mouth down to mine with a rush of excitement.

He caught me effortlessly, his strong hands gripping my waist and holding me tight. With a low rumble in his throat, he spun us around in a quick motion, gently pressing my back against the sturdy wall of the closet. The impact barely registered in my mind because I was far too busy kissing him.

My body trembled slightly, a rush of energy pulsing through me. I tugged gently on his hair, earning a deep, rumbling groan that vibrated right down through his chest and straight into mine. My lips trailed away from his mouth down to his warm throat, finding the exact spot I had marked earlier. My mark.

I pressed a soft kiss against the skin.

His hips shifted slightly, and another low growl rumbled from deep within his chest. He pressed closer, and a jolt of pure happiness raced straight up my spine.

"Vivian," he warned gently, his voice strained and thick with emotion. "Stop for a second, or I am going to lose focus."

I grinned against his warm skin, pressing more soft kisses up along his neck until I reached the shell of his ear.

"No way," I whispered quietly, letting my teeth graze the sensitive edge of his ear.

That earned a sharp intake of breath from him and an even tighter squeeze around my waist. I giggled softly okay, it was more like a breathy laugh and slid my mouth back down toward his neck, my legs wrapped even more securely around him.

"Vivian... seriously," he groaned, trying his absolute best to sound firm, but his relaxed body completely betrayed him. "I do not want to damn it " His breath hitched, his words getting cut off by the close proximity between us.

His hands flexed against my back, and mine traveled slowly down the strong line of his spine. Then my tongue flicked out, just barely brushing lightly over the skin right above his mark.

That was the final straw for him.

"Fuck!" Zahliver growled softly, his muscles tightening beneath my touch as he pulled me entirely flush against his chest.

Smirking triumphantly, I pressed one last quick kiss against the mark on his neck, savoring the sharp hitch in his breathing. When I finally pulled back just an inch, the look in his dark eyes heated, narrowed, and intensely focused made me grin even wider.

"I really like the shirt. A lot," I said innocently, though my giggling completely gave away my teasing game.

His eyes narrowed further, but now there was a distinctly playful glint hiding deep behind them. Leaning in close so that his lips brushed lightly against the shell of my ear, he whispered in a voice that was low and teasing, "I am definitely going to get you back for this later."

A delicious shiver ran straight down my spine. "Oh, I certainly hope you do," I whispered right back at him.

He slowly peeled himself away from me, setting me carefully down onto my own two feet, which still felt a bit wobbly. With a quick glance down at his clothes, he groaned playfully and shot me a mock glare.

"Now I have to go change my shirt," he muttered, wagging a finger at me in fake reproach. I just blinked back at him with wide, completely innocent eyes.

Laughing out loud, I slipped out of the walk-in closet carrying my chosen outfit for the day, walked over to the edge of the bed, and sat down. A few moments later, Zahliver emerged wearing a fresh set of clothes new pants and a different top.

I quickly threw on a comfortable black cardigan over a simple top and laced up my favorite black Converse sneakers. A fast detour to the bathroom mirror let me pull my hair up into a neat ponytail after running a brush through it. I added a touch of subtle mascara, a hint of soft pink balm on my lips, and my matching diamond stud earrings and necklace nothing over the top, just enough to feel put together for the day.

Define "decent" outfit? my wolf teased in the back of my mind.

I stared right at my reflection in the mirror and mentally flipped both her and myself off.

The bathroom door creaked open behind me a second later. I turned around slowly, catching sight of Zahliver peeking out from the doorway with suspicion written all over his face.

"If I tell you I am wearing ordinary blue jeans today, are you going to jump me all over again?" he asked, only half-joking.

Biting down on my bottom lip, I pretended to think it over very seriously. "Mmm... that depends. Let me see the evidence first."

He rolled his eyes dramatically but stepped out fully into the room. The second my gaze landed on him, all thoughts of playing it cool completely vanished. Those jeans fit him like a glove, hugging his frame perfectly.

"Good girl," he said with a smug smirk as he walked right up to me. I chuckled softly and grabbed his hands, pulling him just a bit away so I could inspect him properly.

"Where on earth have you been hiding this outfit from me? Is there a secret dimension hidden inside your side of the closet? Like Narnia, maybe? Because I am pretty sure I would have remembered seeing these before," my eyes narrowed in mock suspicion.

"Oh yeah, absolutely," he deadpanned smoothly. "They were hidden right behind the ugly Where's Waldo sweater. How on earth did you manage to miss that?"

I stuck my tongue out at him playfully, and he leaned forward with a mock snap of his teeth in the air. I let out a squeak of surprise and leaped backward.

"New rule starting right now," I announced, pointing a finger at him. "You are officially required to wear a lot more color from now on."

He lifted a single dark eyebrow at me. "And what happens if I refuse?"

"Then you will never find out which of your outfits make me want to jump your bones. For all you know, I might just see some other guy wearing a similar outfit and jump him instead."

The Wolf God's Unwanted Luna - Chapter 248: The New Rule[1,686 words]

Chapter 248: The New Rule

Vivian's POV

Before I could even finish the rest of my sentence, Zahliver let out a low, dark growl and took my chin firmly in his hand.

"The only one you will ever be jumping like that is me, understood?" he said.

I batted my eyelashes innocently up at him. "So, is that an official yes to my new rule?"

He gave a single, stern nod of his head before pulling me into a kiss so deep and completely consuming that it left no doubt at all about who I belonged to.

As we finally headed down the stairs together, I could not resist sneaking one last appreciative glance at his backside.

That ass. Those jeans. We really should be back upstairs right now, my inner wolf whined loudly.

"Because I have grieving pack members to see today," Zahliver muttered quietly, his eyes already fixed on the screen of his phone. The sudden weight in his tone brought a heavy cloud over the air around us.

"Oh." That instantly explained the dull aching in my center chest. The deep sorrow I felt was not mine at all it belonged to them. The mourning wolves. I had felt it before, faint and distant, but now it pressed much closer to the surface.

Of course. We had lost several lives during the brutal fight. It was foolish of me to think we had somehow emerged completely untouched. That sobered my thoughts right up, but it also stirred something fierce inside me. I could not just sit around doing nothing today.

"I want to go out and spend some time with the pack," I told him quietly. "Just to see if there is anything I can do to help out."

Zahliver looked up from his phone screen and offered me a faint, approving smile. I loved the fact that he trusted me to do that on my own.

A soft voice from behind us made both of us turn around quickly.

"Mind if I join you two?" Joshula stood at the top of the stairs, still dressed in his soft pajamas, rubbing the lingering sleep from his eyes.

"You definitely should come," I said, grinning up at him. "Though you are going to need some real clothes if you plan on stepping outside."

He padded softly down the steps to stand beside me. I looked over at Zahliver, who seemed to be studying his brother with a thoughtful, analytical expression.

"Joshula," he started carefully, "once everything finally settles down, I want to introduce you formally to the pack as my brother. They will "

"I would honestly rather you did not," Joshula cut in gently, but his voice was very firm.

Both Zahliver and I blinked in surprise, totally taken aback by his refusal.

"Why not?" I asked softly.

He shrugged one shoulder indifferently. "I would just prefer not to be introduced like that."

Zahliver stared hard at him for a long moment, his face completely unreadable, before he straightened his posture and cleared his throat.

"All right. If that is what you truly want."

His voice sounded perfectly even, but I could easily sense the underlying tension beneath his words. Still, he respected Joshula's personal choice without arguing.

And just like that, the day ahead of us became much more than just a time for mourning it became about personal healing too.

"It is, thank you," Joshula replied, giving Zahliver a look that made me pause in my tracks. Huh. That was... rather odd. Why on earth would he not want to be recognized publicly as Zahliver's only living relative and his own brother, no less? The guy was strange. Like, seriously strange. He was a real enigma.

Before I could dwell on that weird moment any further, Zahliver's phone chimed loudly in his hand. He glanced down quickly at the screen, and instantly his facial expression shifted into that all-too-familiar Alpha scowl. Alpha matters, no doubt.

"I have to head out now," he said with a resigned sigh, glancing back and forth between the two of us. "Be careful out there, both of you. Wait for your assigned guards before you leave the house. Bye."

And just like that, he was gone, disappearing quickly through the front door with a heavy wave of natural Alpha authority.

I clapped my hands together and turned toward Joshula with a bright grin. "So, are you starving, or are you actually ready to head out right now?"

His brows lifted slightly in mild surprise. "Why do you ask? Were you planning to cook us a nice breakfast?"

I rolled my eyes so hard I nearly strained a muscle in my head. "Please. I just meant there is some top-tier sugary cereal in the cabinet, if you happen to be interested." I waved vaguely in the general direction of the kitchen.

"Oh."

Yeah, that is right, buddy. I do not even cook full meals for myself or Zahliver unless it is absolutely necessary. You really think I am about to whip up a gourmet breakfast just for you?

"Well, I am ready to go whenever "

"Not looking like that, you are not," I interrupted him quickly, gesturing rudely down at his pajamas.

He opened his mouth as if he wanted to argue, then thought better of it and turned back toward the stairs. "Very well. I will be down shortly."

Once he finally disappeared upstairs, I wandered casually into the kitchen. We had eaten a big meal not that long ago, sure, but I was still craving something sweet.

"Let us see what is hiding in cabinet number one today..." I murmured quietly as I pulled the wooden door open.

My eyes lit up with pure joy when I spotted my secret hidden treasure Pop-Tarts and fruit snacks, blissfully untouched right behind Zahliver's neatly stacked organic protein bars and high-protein nonsense. Absolute jackpot.

I snagged a package of each and leaned my back against the counter, taking a bite like I was indulging in some grand, illegal secret. This? This was pure luxury.

But just as I started tearing into the fruit snacks, I heard the sound of footsteps returning down the stairs. Crap.

If he saw me eating junk food right now, basic social pressure would demand that I offer him some. And if he actually accepted? That would be a tragedy I was not emotionally prepared to handle.

In a sudden flash of pure survival instinct, I stuffed the half-eaten bag deep into the pocket of my cardigan, schooling my facial expression into something pure and innocent just as Joshula walked into the kitchen.

Sorry, Joshula. No sharing today.

No, you are definitely not sharing, my wolf chuckled in agreement.

Ignoring her smugness, I grabbed my purse and car keys, stepping out of the kitchen to meet him properly. He had changed into a pair of clean black pants and a dark green button-up shirt. The fit was a bit loose on him it definitely had to be one of Zahliver's old shirts. The dark green color caught me completely off guard.

My eyes narrowed suspiciously.

"Note to self," I muttered under my breath. "Raid Zahliver's side of the closet later. Seriously, where on earth has he been hiding all the non-black clothing?"

Finally, some color, my beast added happily, eyeing the shirt with just as much suspicion. I could practically feel her mental checklist forming in my mind.

I turned to face Joshula fully. "Are you ready to head out now?"

He clasped his hands neatly behind his back, eyeing me with mild curiosity. "Where are we going?"

I paused for a second to think. "First stop is the local mall. You desperately need proper clothes, personal items basically a whole new wardrobe. After that, I will ask one of my guards to give you a proper tour of the island, since I am still getting the hang of navigating things here myself. After that, we will just wing it."

He raised an eyebrow. "Guards?"

"Yeah," I said, trying my best to sound casual about it. "Zahliver insists on having guards follow me around anytime I leave the house. I mean, I can easily handle myself, but he is just... overprotective." I smiled a little at the thought, a warm feeling stirring inside my chest.

"Mmm." He tilted his head slightly, watching me closely. "I am sure they are... capable."

Just then, the sound of a loud car horn followed by a distant playful slap definitely one of my guards trying to be funny cut right through the quiet morning air. Speak of the devil.

"They are here," I said, nodding toward the front door.

Joshula frowned slightly. "How on earth could you possibly tell that from in here?"

I tapped my ear with a smirk. "Enhanced werewolf senses. Just one of the fun perks of being who I am."

His expression sharpened ever so slightly. "You are just as strong as Zahliver, then? You share the exact same... special abilities?"

There it was again that probing, testing tone. Like someone gently fishing for something hidden deep beneath the surface. It was not just idle curiosity; it felt deliberate.

"Yup," I said lightly, but added a subtle warning edge to my voice. "So do not even think about testing me."

"I would not dream of it," he replied smoothly. "It is just good to know."

I opened the front door wide and gestured for him to go first, locking it securely behind us as we stepped out into the morning light.

My guards were already waiting by the vehicle, all four of them standing near the car. Their expressions shifted the exact second they laid eyes on Joshula their eyes narrowing, muscles tensing slightly, a clear ripple of instinctual protectiveness passing between them.

I did not even try to hide my knowing smile.

Whatever today held in store for us, spending it with Joshula might just give me the vital insight I needed. There was clearly a lot more to him than he was letting on. And I intended to find out exactly what.

The Wolf God's Unwanted Luna - Chapter 249: The Stormy Corner[1,117 words]

Chapter 249: The Stormy Corner

Albericus's POV

She was in a foul mood yet again. Not that it was anything truly new she never exactly welcomed my visits with open arms but today? Today was especially bad. I had overheard one of the guards mentioning that she had almost clawed straight through the stone wall earlier. That could only mean one specific thing.

The mating mark was finally doing its intended work.

It was a sign that was both wonderfully good... and deeply terrible.

It was good because the magical bond was actively pulling her back toward me my Aurora, the real her, fighting hard through the thick fog of whatever dark magic had sunk its sharp teeth into her mind.

It was bad because a cranky Aurora could be absolute brutality personified. She possessed a razor-sharp tongue and a glare that could easily curdle fresh blood.

A few days after I had marked her, I ordered her transferred to a much more comfortable space. I was not completely heartless, after all. Now that the bond had been officially sealed, keeping her locked away in that dark, freezing cell felt entirely wrong like chaining my own lungs and expecting to breathe easy.

She was still confined, of course. Just... not living in total darkness anymore. That had to count for something positive, right?

Even though my entire day was completely packed with pressing matters demanding my attention, I simply could not focus on anything until I went down to see her. It did not matter one bit if she snapped at me or gave me that lethal look that promised murder I just needed to know she was close by and safe.

Now that she was marked, the bond tethered her to me in ways that went far beyond the physical. It was emotional. It was spiritual. Any attempt on her part to run away or fight her way out of this would only tear her apart slowly from the inside.

It was not because I wanted her to experience pain, but because the mystic bond never lies. It responds purely to absolute truth. And her core truth, buried beneath all her righteous rage, her deep hurt, and her angry curses, was that she belonged to me.

The twisted magic buried deep inside her the heavy shadow clinging to her desperation might have successfully fooled her for a while. But it stood no chance against the power of the bond. Not forever. Not as long as the real Aurora was still alive in there.

I knocked once on the heavy wooden door before pushing it open.

Just as I fully expected, the room looked as though a violent hurricane had swept straight through it. Books, soft cushions, and heavy furniture everything was completely out of its proper place. I let out a long sigh, bent down, and started picking up the scattered items.

"Could you at least try to wreck just one small corner next time?" I muttered under my breath. "Why does it always have to be the entire damn room?"

I did not even have to look up to know exactly where she was hiding. She was crouched tightly in the far right corner, curled inward upon herself, pretending desperately not to care about my presence. Her unique scent curled toward me faint sparks of hot anger and frustration laced with something much softer that she desperately did not want me to notice.

"What is the fun in doing that?" she drawled lazily, absolute boredom dripping from every word. "Especially when I am obviously not the one who has to clean up the mess."

I glanced back over my shoulder, raising a single eyebrow at her attitude.

Her next snarky comment died instantly in her throat the moment her dark eyes met mine.

Deep brown. Wildly stormy. And for one fleeting heartbeat, completely vulnerable.

She froze completely her mouth parted slightly, then snapped shut, as if she had suddenly forgotten how to draw breath. I certainly did not miss the way her heart skipped a beat or how her gaze darted nervously to my mouth before quickly looking away.

I offered her a slow, deliberate wink.

She turned her head away sharply, her long hair sliding forward like a protective shield. Even so, I caught the faint dusting of red rising up her cheeks.

And damn it if my chest did not ache at the sight.

I missed her. I missed her so much. I missed the woman who used to laugh at my terrible jokes, who tucked wild field-flowers into her hair, and who carried little lucky charms around in her pockets. I missed the woman who used to stand proudly right beside me as if I were actually worth standing beside.

My inner wolf whimpered deeply inside my mind, restless and aching with sheer longing.

Soon, I whispered back to him mentally. *We will have our real Aurora back very soon.*

"You can stare at me all you want, sweetheart," I said aloud, my tone turning teasing yet remarkably soft. "I am entirely yours, through and through."

She clenched her hands into tight fists but refused to look back at me.

I chuckled softly, moving around the spacious room to set an overturned chair upright and scoop up a few pillows. I spotted her empty food plate resting on the floor. That sight, at least, brought a wave of relief. When she first arrived here, she had been all fragile bones and heavy shadows. Whatever dark magic had consumed her had certainly not cared to feed her properly, but now... she was eating. She was healing, bit by bit.

"Look, Albericus " she started to snap, her voice tight with rising irritation.

"Tsk, tsk." I turned around quickly and pointed a warning finger right at her. "You do not get to use that formal name in here. It is Berry, or else there is no deal between us."

Her dark eyes narrowed dangerously as if she were seriously considering setting the room on fire all over again just to spite me.

I grinned broadly, crossing my arms firmly over my chest.

Game on.

"Well then," she murmured, her tongue sweeping slowly across her bottom lip in a small, deliberate movement that nearly shattered what little remained of my self-control.

"Berry," she purred, deliberately drawing out the nickname like a drop of sweet poison. "Why do you not do the polite thing for once and unchain me? Take me out for a nice walk, like a proper gentleman would do. Or..." She tilted her head sideways, her eyes glinting with pure mockery. "Are you really just the mangy little pup I always figured you were?"

The Wolf God's Unwanted Luna - Chapter 250: The Spark Beneath the Venom[1,375 words]

Chapter 250: The Spark Beneath the Venom

Albericus's POV

Her little verbal jab was not anything new. Still, I narrowed my eyes as I studied her closely. Her pupils shifted slightly dilated for a fraction of a second, then tight again. That tiny flicker told me everything I needed to know. Part of her did not genuinely mean the harsh words. It was not all pure venom. But that realization did not stop the wolf inside me from growling low and deep just beneath the surface. The alpha and the mate in me bristled, not because of the insult itself... but because it came from her lips. And because I still wanted her so badly, even now.

I leaned back casually against the sturdy stone wall, crossing my arms over my chest and forcing my body to look entirely bored. "And why on earth would I do something like that?" I asked coolly, lifting a single brow.

She rose unsteadily to her feet, dragging herself across the open space between us like she was wading through heavy water. I knew better than to be fooled her struggle was not really physical. It was a vicious internal war raging inside her mind. Even so, basic instinct made me reach out, my hands steadying her the moment she swayed on her feet.

She tensed instantly at my touch, but remarkably, she did not pull away. Instead, she leaned right into me, her weight pressing heavily against my body while her face lifted toward mine. Her dark lashes fluttered softly. Her eyes burned with something unreadable and raw. My breath caught in my throat as I clenched my jaw hard, tasting a trace of copper from how fiercely I bit down on the inside of my cheek.

Do not pull her closer to you. Do not do it.

Yet her familiar scent was everywhere, her natural warmth soaking right into my skin like it belonged nowhere else. Her hands slowly slid up my chest, her fingers tracing soft circles like quiet whispers against my clothes. I felt my knees instantly weaken beneath me. *Moon above, it has been so long since she held me like this.*

"How about this deal," she whispered, leaning in so close that her warm breath fanned softly over my lips. "I will let you touch this body you are always drooling over... maybe if you finally get what you actually want, you will finally stop following me around like a lost, pathetic pup."

Her voice was like smooth silk laced with sharp, cruel shards. Seductive, bitter, and deeply broken.

I jerked backward instinctively as if I had been burned.

"No," I said quietly, a sharp pang twisting in my chest. "That is not what I want from you."

The fiery glow in her eyes flickered out for a second, replaced instantly by a dark scowl of pure contempt. She pulled away from me with sharp, angry, jerky movements.

"Oh, you poor, foolish thing," she mocked mercilessly. "Berry cannot wait for his precious little mate to finally be whole again. Hate to break the wonderful news to you, but when she finally returns?" She let out a cruel, harsh laugh that sent a cold shiver down my spine. "That will be the exact day I die. And if I die, guess what happens? She dies right along with me. So boo-freaking-hoo for you."

A low growl tore itself from the depths of my chest before I even realized what was happening, raw and furious. My hand shot out and caught her arm, spinning her right back around to face me.

I locked my eyes firmly with hers those dark, bitter, haunted eyes and I refused to soften my gaze.

"You listen to me very carefully," I snarled softly. "I will get her back. My mate. My woman. My wife. Even if I have to rip you out of her body with my own bare hands."

Her breath hitched in her throat, but I did not stop. "Because I know I *know* she would choose pain, she would choose me, over being trapped inside her own body for one second longer with you."

For one heavy heartbeat, the absolute silence in the room was deafening, broken only by the sound of our ragged breaths.

And right there, in that quiet pause, I saw it.

Something flickered deep within her. It was barely there, but I saw it hidden behind all the endless hate and mockery a sudden glimmer. A spark of genuine recognition. A fragile thread of the woman I loved desperately fighting her way through the thick fog.

She looked away from me. Slowly. Hesitantly.

Damn right you did.

I let out a long, slow breath, trying hard to calm the raging storm inside my chest.

She was still in there. Alive.

And I was never, ever giving up on her.

"Whatever. Are you going to let me out of this room or what?" she muttered grumpily, sliding down the stone wall until she landed unceremoniously on the floor like a sulking cat. There was a comfortable chair sitting just a few feet away, but of course she completely ignored it.

I crossed my arms over my chest again, leaning my shoulder against the wooden doorway. "So you can pull your little vanishing act all over again? No thank you."

The special mating mark I had placed on her ensured that she could not easily leave the island not without Zahliver's direct permission, and that certainly was not happening any time soon. Whether she was currently a witch, a wolf, or something strange in between, the strict rules of this territory did not bend for anyone. Right now, what was she? Just a bitter spellcaster with a terrible attitude problem and a streak of awful luck.

"I will even give you a generous head start this time around. I can count to ten. Consider that my fair warning," she said dryly, heavy sarcasm dripping from every single word.

I narrowed my eyes in suspicion. What was with this sudden, desperate need to go outside? She had not asked to step outside once before she had not even cared enough to pretend to want fresh air. But right now, she looked genuinely... twitchy.

"Look..." she started, still refusing to meet my gaze. She squirmed uncomfortably on the floor, her eyes darting around the room like she was searching for a hidden exit that clearly did not exist. "As much as your annoying pet sunbeam gets on my nerves, she is still deeply tied to the light. That basically means she needs real things nature, fresh air, trees, and dirt. And in case you have not noticed, it is stuffy as hell locked up in here."

She was not entirely wrong about that. But that certainly did not mean she was not plotting some kind of trick.

I studied her tense face for a long moment, then let out a heavy sigh. If this turned out to be some elaborate escape stunt, it was going to cost me dearly later. And if it was not a trick? Well, it would... probably still end up costing me.

"Fine," I finally relented.

Her lips twitched slightly as if she were desperately trying to keep herself from smiling in victory.

"But do not think for a single second that I am letting you out there all by yourself," I added sharply, pointing a finger at her. "We are going together."

She groaned out loud and stood up, brushing off her clothes as if my very presence had somehow offended her entire royal bloodline. "Why on earth must you constantly haunt me? Your desperate need to orbit this body is frankly exhausting."

I rolled my eyes dramatically. "We are mates. Where you go, I go. If you do not like it, you are completely free to try and break the bond. But as long as it ties us together, you are stuck dealing with me."

"There is no 'we' in the word 'mates,'" she grumbled under her breath.

"But there is a 'team' if you just rearrange the letters properly. Close enough for my liking," I said with a smug smirk as she shot me a look of pure, unadulterated venom.