

Luna Graced | 4: Chapter 4

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CARSON

Both blood and tears were flowing in the room as Carson slid the sharp blade around the edges of his mark, feeling a matching pain in his own flesh.

But Abby just stood there, silent, her face a stoic mask.

He felt her icy stare deep in his soul.

He reached up with his other hand to steady the blade, but as soon as he touched her skin, it felt like he'd been slammed into a brick wall.

He gasped.

Then a brief flash of something he couldn't identify passed across Abby's face before she closed her eyes.

"*What?*" His father stepped closer to them, followed by Warrior Michael. Both were growling at the sudden tension coming from their pups.

"I...I felt like I was thrown against a wall. Abby...I think I've made a grave mistake."

"Yes, Carson, you have." She kept her eyes closed, but he could feel the devastation roll through her, see his mark not quite carved out of her.

The silver blade clattered to the floor, but his father picked it up and placed it back in his hand.

"Finish this."

"I...I *can't*."

"You will!"

"I can't! I can't! I see it, I feel it. I don't understand what's happening!"

"I will cast you out, Carson! Haven't you put Abigail through enough!"

Summoning what little strength he had left, Carson lifted his head and looked at his mate. He had to put her out of her misery. He knew this.

But why was he feeling these things for her *now*, when it was too late? What was ~wrong~ with him?

He forced himself to slide the silver knife through the last bit of her flesh, then staggered to the side and threw up.

His father had to stand him back up, then physically turn him to face Abby.

Shame and despair tore through Carson as he fought to keep control of his body, but he managed to find his voice.

“I, Carson Oru,” he said, rasping and hoarse. “True mate of Abigail Canaver, reject you and our mated bond. I ask that you remove your mark from my flesh. I do not deserve to wear it...”

The least he could do was take responsibility and accept the consequences.

“I am deeply sorry, and I welcome whatever punishment the Moon Goddess chooses to bestow on me for not recognizing our mate bond when it was gifted to me.”

He didn’t even wince when she cut into his shoulder with the silver blade.

By the time she was done excising her mark, the wound was already healing. But nothing could alleviate the cold emptiness he felt when she tossed what was left of her mark on the floor by his feet.

Even thoughts of his pup and future mate offered him no comfort.

“Carson,” he heard his father say through a strange ringing in his ears. “I’ll speak with you later. Warriors are waiting outside to escort you back to your cell.”

Numb, he bowed to Abigail’s family and to his bloody former mate, then walked out the door and surrendered himself to his guards.

ABIGAIL

Luna Hazel handed Abby a damp towel, and after wiping the blood off her shoulder the best she could, Abby finally looked down.

There was a crescent moon burned into her chest, signifying that she was only a sliver, not whole.

The mark of rejection.

A message from the Moon Goddess for all to see.

And yet...

Carson had felt something for her at the very end, she was sure of it—even though they had partially severed the bond at that point. And it had rocked her to her core.

Alpha Edward approached her.

“Abigail, Alpha Luko and his beta will be here tomorrow to escort you to the north.”

She bowed her head. “Yes, Alpha.”

“You are not being banished. This pack does not shun you.

“Luna Hazel and I adore you as our own, and this pains us more than you will ever understand. As we both know that this has pained *you* on levels that we cannot comprehend.”

“Yes, Alpha.” She kept her head down.

“Abby...please look at me.”

She lifted her head and met his eyes.

“Know that I have great respect for you, and you will always be welcome here.

“Your parents have opted to stay here to give you some room to adjust to your new pack. But if after twelve moons they still long to be with you, I have already made an agreement with Alpha Luko to transfer them.

“It would be an honor for him to have such an esteemed pair of warriors in his pack.”

“Yes, Alpha, and thank you.” She sighed. “I’m sure you understand that while I’m no longer mated to Carson, my wolf wants revenge, wants blood. And I don’t want to be responsible for anyone being harmed.

“Given the opportunity, my wolf would seek out the...” She swallowed a painful lump in her throat. “*Indiscretion* and eliminate it, so it truly is in the pack’s best interests that I leave.”

Alpha Edward shook his head sadly. “You deserve to be luna, Abby. This is a great injustice, one that brings shame to this pack. And to the Moon Goddess.”

“Yes, Alpha. It seemed like Carson felt something at the end, and I believe he’ll have a great reckoning with the Moon Goddess.” She gave a slight bow. “Thank you for finding me a pack that will accept me.”

“We’ll be there tomorrow to see you off.”

“Thank you, Alpha. May I be excused? I’d like to have some private time and finish packing.”

“Of course.” He held out his arms. “But first, come here.”

ALPHA EDWARD

Edward felt quiet sobs shake Abby’s body as he held her, and his heart broke for the little girl he’d watched grow up, for the proud woman with warrior blood who had been brought so low.

His chest rumbled in an attempt to comfort her, and he kissed the top of her head. “I am losing not just a pack member, but a daughter. I hold great shame because of what my son has done.”

He squeezed her one more time and told her to go.

His warriors would escort her home, not just for her safety, but for everyone else’s.

Edward leaned back in his office chair and let out a deep sigh. Hazel sat across from him, sipping a cup of tea.

After the warriors had left to escort Abby home, the rest of the day had been quiet across the pack lands. Not even young pups were out playing.

This was a time of mourning.

His son, their future alpha, had gone against pack rules.

Yes, they would forgive Carson eventually, but they would never accept the wolf that was carrying his heir as their luna.

He sat up. “I will *not* allow Taylor to be luna of this pack. She is unfit.”

Hazel carefully set her teacup down on his desk. “Carson won’t be able to run this pack without a luna.”

“He should have thought about that before. I’ll allow him a second beta, but that girl will never be luna of this pack. *Ever*. She broke pack law, she broke up a mated pair, and she has no idea what it means to be a luna!”

“Edward, please!”

“Stand down, Hazel. Our son’s just lucky I’m not keeping him in a cell for the entire pregnancy. I came very close to banishing him. In fact”—he growled—“I’m not sure I still won’t.”

THE NEXT DAY

ROMAN

“We’ll be there momentarily, Alpha.”

“Thank you, Logan.” Roman stretched his long, powerful legs. They’d gotten up early in order to make it to Pack Oru by midday, and he was eager to get out of the vehicle.

He’d been quiet on the two-day drive, even for him. He just couldn’t stop thinking about what that shithead alpha-to-be had done to his mate, and every time he did, he could barely contain his rage.

He would have given anything to have his unborn pup and mate back, so knowing that someone had broken a mate bond with so little care infuriated him.

He caught the scent of the Oru territory markings and rumbled deep in his chest. *Finally.*

His beta glanced over at him. “Alpha Oru carries great shame, Roman, but this is on the future alpha.

“I’m not sure if he’ll be there to meet you or not—it’s my understanding that they locked him in a cell to keep him away from his unborn pup and the woman he broke his bond with.”

Roman growled. “I have no desire to meet a pup that spits in the eye of the Moon Goddess. And I will not hold a pack alliance with him once he takes his father’s place.”

“Understood.”

LOGAN

Logan knew Roman wasn’t at all happy, and he shared his alpha’s sympathy for the luna who’d been betrayed. Logan’s own mate had been rejected by her first mate for being unable to bear pups, then shunned by her former pack.

And he’d heard nothing but great things about the future luna of Pack Oru. That she had warrior blood and the heart of a true luna.

Other packs might even have been willing to take her, rejected or not, if their lunas hadn’t felt threatened—even though Abigail Canaver had done nothing to earn their mistrust.

Logan turned onto the paved drive that led to the large Oru pack house. The caravan of black SUVs behind them followed suit.

He noted the pack flag had been lowered to half-mast and a plain black flag added, indicating a time of mourning. "The pack is feeling her loss."

"As they should," Roman growled as Logan pulled up to the pack house. "They have no idea what that juvenile pup has done."

"She's a graced luna."

Logan gasped. "Graced?"