

Luna Graced | 3: Chapter 3

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CARSON

Carson was exhausted. He'd been fighting his restraints for days, but there didn't seem to be any relief in sight. Though his pain had to be nothing compared to what Abby was going through.

He'd never been in love with her, not even once they found out they were mates. But he wasn't given a choice in the matter, not if he wanted to be the pack alpha.

When he was with Taylor, it was like someone opened a jar of lightning inside of his body. He couldn't fight how he felt, even though he knew it was wrong.

His parents and the pack expected him to be ashamed he'd hurt Abby, and of course he felt bad for her, but he also couldn't deny his heart. He loved Taylor and their unborn pup.

And mated to another or not, he was going to be with her. And be a father to their pup.

His father hadn't come around again, but his mother visited regularly. And today, she'd allowed him to video chat with Taylor. His heart had swelled with love when he saw that flat belly which would soon grow round with his pup.

Being able to see the woman he loved had soothed him, but not enough. Abby's agony continued to torment him through the pack link. If she was going to die, it felt like she was taking him with her.

Wearily, he leaned his head against the wall of the cell. "Mom...is anyone helping Abby?"

"Yes, the pack doctor is giving her sedatives. The herbs weren't working."

"How much longer will she be in pain?"

"For the heat? A few more days. For everything else? The rest of her life."

He groaned. He felt bad, *he did*, but... "I'm in love with Taylor, Mom. Everyone can say it's wrong, but I feel things I never felt with Abby. I know I'm mated to her, but it just didn't feel right."

His mother's eyes filled with tears. "Why didn't you come to us?"

“Because I didn’t know anything was wrong until I brushed against Taylor by accident one day and felt the tingles that Abby talked about having with *me*.”

“Before that, I just thought my feelings were different because I’m an alpha, and *we’re* different.”

His mom’s eyes went wide. “Moon Goddess! I’ve never heard of anything like this. Mates are meant to want only each other.”

“I know,” Carson croaked, his voice shaky. “But I *don’t* want to be with her. I can’t love someone else and be mated to Abby. But as long as she’s in pain, I will be too. What do we do? How do we stop the pain?”

“You’ll have to reject each other. We’ll have her reject you first so you carry the brunt of the pain.”

He nodded. “Is there anything else I can do?”

“I don’t know. Accept your punishment? Your father is very serious about keeping you away from your unborn pup and Taylor.”

His lips curled back in a vicious snarl, and he strained against the cuffs holding him to the wall as his inner alpha power rose.

“He will *not* keep me from my future mate or pup!” he roared, then took in a few deep breaths to calm himself. “My wolf is surging. I can’t control him much longer.”

“You *have to* control him, Carson, or you’ll find yourself banished.” Her eyes filled with tears, but she dashed them away. “I’m doing what I can to protect you, but you’ve done significant damage to this family and this pack.”

His mother shook her head, and she looked so sad, he wanted to cry along with her.

He would never forgive himself for hurting everyone. But he would also never be able to forgive himself if he didn’t follow his heart and be with Taylor. There didn’t seem to be any good way to resolve this.

As Carson watched his mother walk away, he smelled Abby’s heat on the breeze, and his wolf fought to come forward to claim his mate.

But it was the *wrong* mate, damn it.

Abby would have made a good companion and a fine mate, the perfect luna to his alpha. If he’d never experienced the elation he felt with Taylor, he would’ve been satisfied.

Now both of them were doomed to suffer.

ALPHA EDWARD

Edward sat beside his mate and waited quietly for his most loyal warriors to come through the door, having invited Abigail's parents to a private meeting.

The first thing he'd done after visiting his son's cell three days ago was order the pack to stay in their homes while he figured out how to handle Carson's mess.

But Abigail's heat was over and he'd just lifted the restriction.

She'd been allowed out of her cell, but she was still in great pain, and her wolf had to remain sedated so she wouldn't kill Taylor and the unborn pup.

Carson remained in custody, his wolf closer to the surface than ever. He refused to accept his punishment and stay away from Taylor and was still fighting to free himself no matter what it took.

Soon Edward would have to address the pack about the situation, but he needed to tend to some business before he called a pack-wide meeting.

In the meantime, he'd ordered all respect be shown to Warriors Michael and Fiona.

And especially their daughter.

Everyone knew and loved Abby. She'd been their future luna. The pack didn't want to shun her; they wanted to shun Carson. Not only had he hurt his mate, he hadn't been taking his alpha training seriously.

And the pack certainly didn't hold Taylor in high regard. She'd willingly been with Carson, even knowing he was mated and marked.

When Michael and Fiona entered, Edward and Hazel both offered the lightest bow of their heads.

"Please, sit." Edward stood and gestured to the chairs. "I have news."

He waited until everyone was seated and poured a drink. "My heart is heavy. As a father, as an alpha...as a mate and friend."

"Our hearts are heavy as well," Michael said. "I'm angry, Edward. And not about her title. This is about the pain she's in. This is about the life she's been condemned to by your son and his...whatever she is."

“I understand, and I’m working on an appropriate punishment for him. He hasn’t taken any of this seriously. Not his bond, not his mate, not his duties as a future alpha.”

“He will be punished, and it will be painful. He may have alpha blood, but he hasn’t earned the title.”

Michael bowed his head, but his voice shook when he said, “I cannot serve him.”

Edward sighed. “I ask that you not make any decisions right now while we’re all angry.”

“Yes, Alpha.”

Both women stayed quiet, but Edward noticed they watched the interaction between their mates intently. All of them were devastated for the same—and different—reasons.

“I’ve contacted alphas across the country and asked them to look in their archives for anything related to this,” he said. “It will take some time.”

“Thank you,” Michael said stiffly.

“I’ve been speaking at length with an alpha in the north.”

Michael’s head snapped up and he let out a low growl, but when Edward held up his hand, his growl subsided.

“Alpha Roman of Pack Luko.”

Michael’s eyes flashed. “He has a reputation for being ruthless. I won’t have my pup put in any more harm’s way.”

Edward took a moment to look at each of them in turn, needing to be sure they all understood. “He lost his mate and unborn pup in a rogue attack five years ago.”

His words were followed by a respectful silence.

After a moment, Edward continued. “He does have a reputation, but all is not what it seems. He’s a fair alpha, and he protects his pack at all costs.

“His pack is not what we would consider a normal one. Most of the members have suffered a loss of some type.”

“What do you mean?” Michael asked. “No one seems to know much about Pack Luko.”

“His pack consists of families, like other packs, but also of nomads and those who’ve lost mates or pups. Pack Luko looks at life a little differently than the rest of us.”

“Having an alpha that suffered a great loss has allowed them to understand that loss is a part of life, that mates who have lost one another should not be shunned but accepted.”

Edward’s gaze met Michael’s. He knew his warrior had every right to be angry at his pup’s humiliation, but as alpha, he also knew he would be obeyed in this, as in everything.

Even so, he wanted Michael to understand his choice. Not just to accept it, but to trust it.

“Abby and Carson will reject each other,” Edward said, “and after that, your pup will go to Pack Luko.”

ABIGAIL

“I, Abigail Canaver, *true* mate of Alpha Carson Oru, reject you and our mated bond. I order you to remove your mark from me immediately.”

The fire that had replaced Abby’s blood was trying to bring her to her knees, but she wouldn’t let it. She refused to feel *anything* for her true mate but disdain.

But at her words, Carson fell to his own knees in front of her, an agonized expression on his face, and reached out with trembling hands as if pleading for her to save him.

As she turned away from him in disgust, her eyes caught on her parents. They looked proud, and she was glad she was handling this better than that pathetic excuse for a future alpha.

“Carson. Get up,” Edward commanded, emitting a powerful alpha energy.

Her mate obeyed, rising unsteadily to his feet, and his father handed him an ornate blade.

Abby had chosen to have her mark carved out with a knife. She never wanted Carson’s mouth near her again.

When she felt a sting on her shoulder, and then a spreading warmth, she was tempted to look down. But she kept her eyes straight ahead.

On the boy she used to love.