



# Moonborn Hearts

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**Category:** Fantasy

**Description:** A rejected omega. A second chance bond. A war that changes everything.

Luna Rayne never expected her sixteenth birthday to destroy everything she believed in. When her best friend-and fated mate-Jace, rejects her in front of their entire pack, Luna's world shatters. Branded as worthless for being an omega, she flees Ashmoon with nothing but a broken bond and a heart full of silence.

But the Moon isn't done with her yet.

Crossing into forbidden territory, Luna stumbles into the arms of Alpha Kael of Crescent Fang-a fierce, mysterious leader with secrets of his own. When a second chance mate bond ignites between them, Luna must choose: run from fate again... or embrace the power within her.

As whispers of war rise and Jace returns to claim what he so easily cast aside, Luna discovers a gift that could tip the balance-one no one ever expected from a girl like her.

This is not just a story about mates and magic.

It's about becoming the wolf they said you could never be.

Rejection made her a ghost.

Love made her a fighter.

But choice made her legendary.

**Total Pages (Source):** 25

# Page 1

*Source Creation Date: July 21, 2025, 1:57 am*

I used to think we'd be side by side forever.

Not because fate said so, but because we chose each other.

Before the moon, before the bond, before everything fell apart-

There was just us.

Me and Jace.

Every morning, we met at the edge of the woods before training-same spot, same rhythm.

He'd always bring an extra apple because I hated the cafeteria food, and I'd always braid a wolf fang into his bracelet for good luck before patrols.

We weren't mates. We weren't lovers. Just.. . Luna and Jace. Best friends.

And I would've been okay with it staying that way-

If it didn't hurt so much to love him in secret.

"Last one to the creek owes the other a favor!" Jace shouted, already sprinting off with that stupid, cocky grin of his.

I rolled my eyes and took off after him, feet pounding against pine needles and dirt, my lungs burning with laughter. He always won. He was faster, stronger-heir to the

Ashmoon Alpha and a born leader. I was the opposite. An omega. The quiet kind. The overlooked one.

And yet, he always came back for me.

When we finally reached the water, he was already sprawled across a flat rock, arms folded behind his head, grinning like he hadn't just outrun me by a full minute.

"Still slow, New Moon," he teased, using his dumb nickname for me.

"And you still have dirt in your hair, Golden Boy," I shot back, flicking water at him.

He laughed and sat up. And for a second-just a second-I swore his eyes lingered on me differently. Softer. Longer.

But it passed.

"Can you believe we turn sixteen tomorrow?" he said, skipping a rock across the creek. "You ready to find your mate?"

I smiled like it didn't break me.

"Maybe," I lied. "You?"

"Eh." He shrugged. "Doesn't matter who it is. I'm gonna be Alpha someday. I'll have to choose wisely. Strong bloodline. Someone respected."

Not someone like me, he meant.

He didn't say it. He never would.

But I heard it in the silence between his words.

I looked away before my voice could betray me. "Well, whoever she is, she'll be lucky."

He nudged me with his shoulder. "Nah. Whoever you end up with? Poor guy's not gonna know what hit him."

I laughed, but inside... it ached.

Because no matter how close we were,

No matter how many sunrises we shared-

## Page 2

*Source Creation Date: July 21, 2025, 1:57 am*

I woke up on my sixteenth birthday to the sound of wolves howling.

Not just any howl-the howl. The one every young shifter dreams about, the one that signals the Awakening.

It was tradition in Ashmoon. On the night of your sixteenth birthday, your wolf awakens under the full moon-and if the Moon Goddess wills it, so does your mate bond.

And this year... it was mine and Jace's turn.

I stared at my ceiling, breath tight, heart pounding.

I wasn't ready.

Not for the shift. Not for the bond.

And definitely not for the truth.

Because deep down, I knew.

If Jace was my mate...

He'd never accept it.

?

By the time the sun set, the entire pack was gathered in the moon clearing. Bonfires flickered, drums beat like heartbeats, and the scent of pine smoke wrapped around us. Everyone wore white, a symbol of purity and rebirth-except for the Alphas, who stood in ceremonial black.

I stood barefoot at the edge of the circle, toes curling in the cool grass, arms wrapped around myself. My stomach twisted in knots.

Then Jace stepped out beside me.

He looked... breathtaking.

Tall, golden-skinned, and calm in that effortless Alpha way, with his hair a little too messy and that silver pendant around his neck catching the firelight. He gave me a wink.

"Nervous, New Moon?"

"Terrified."

He laughed and bumped my arm with his. "We got this."

I smiled, even though my hands were shaking.

Then the drums stopped.

And the Elders called our names.

"Luna Rayne of the Ashmoon Pack."

"Jace Theron, son of Alpha Kellan."

We stepped into the center of the circle. My heartbeat pounded louder than the crowd. The moon overhead glowed silver-blue, heavy with power.

A ripple passed through me. My bones trembled. My chest burned. My wolf stirred-restless, awake.

I gasped. The world tilted. My vision blurred and snapped into clarity.

And then... I smelled him.

Jace.

His scent-cedar and firelight and everything I'd ever wanted-hit me like a tidal wave.

The bond roared to life.

He's mine.

He's my mate.

The Moon chose him for me.

I looked up at him, everything inside me shaking.

His eyes met mine.

And then... everything shattered.

He flinched.

Took a step back.

"No."

The word echoed louder than any howl.

"No," he said again. "This-this isn't right. You're an omega."

The crowd went quiet.

My breath caught in my throat. "Jace..."

"I can't accept this," he said. "I won't. I'm sorry, Luna."

And just like that, he walked away.

No apology. No explanation.

Just rejection-sharp and brutal and final.

The bond inside me cracked. My knees buckled. I didn't even shift that night. My wolf howled from somewhere deep in my soul.

Not for the pain.

But for what we'd lost.



## Page 3

*Source Creation Date: July 21, 2025, 1:57 am*

I didn't sleep that night.

How could I? The bond-my bond-had been torn in two like it meant nothing. Like I meant nothing.

By sunrise, I still hadn't shifted. My wolf refused to come forward. She was... silent. Curled up inside me like a wounded animal too broken to howl.

I stared at my reflection in the mirror of the packhouse infirmary, trying to convince myself I was still whole.

But I wasn't.

Not anymore.

The door creaked open. I expected a nurse or maybe Elder Cira. Instead, it was Jace.

Of course it was.

He looked tired. His shirt was wrinkled, and his hands were stuffed into his pockets like he didn't know what to do with them.

"Hey," he said, like he hadn't just ripped out my soul twelve hours ago.

I didn't respond.

"I didn't mean to hurt you."

I turned slowly, blinking back the storm in my chest. "But you did."

He flinched.

"I can't accept a bond with an omega, Luna. You know that. The pack would never respect me. My father would never-"

"Then maybe you're not the leader you think you are," I snapped, the words sharp and shaking.

His jaw clenched. "It's not that simple."

"No, Jace. It is."

Because I would've chosen him. Every version of him. Even the coward standing in front of me now.

But he wouldn't choose me.

"I should've known," I whispered, voice cracking. "The Moon may choose... but not everyone listens."

I pushed past him before he could say anything else.

And this time... he didn't follow.

?

By nightfall, I made my decision.

I stuffed what little I owned into a torn backpack-my journal, a worn hoodie, and a

single photograph of Jace and me from when we were kids.

I left my markstone on my dresser.

And I ran.

Through the forest. Past the border. Beyond Ashmoon.

I didn't stop until the trees grew unfamiliar and the pain numbed into something I could carry.

Because if I stayed, I'd always be his omega. His mistake.

But out there, somewhere...

I could become mine.

## Page 4

*Source Creation Date: July 21, 2025, 1:58 am*

Ashmoon had always been my home.

Every tree, every trail, every howl in the distance had once meant comfort. Belonging.

But now?

It was a graveyard of memories I couldn't bear to visit.

I crossed the pack's border before dawn, barefoot and shivering. The morning mist clung to my skin, but I didn't stop. Not when branches scratched my legs, not when rocks dug into the soles of my feet.

The pain reminded me I was still alive.

Barely.

I didn't have a plan. I just needed to get away-from Jace, from the pack, from the rejection still echoing in my bones. I kept moving until my legs ached and the trees began to blur together, the scent of Ashmoon fading behind me.

I was officially rogue now.

Unclaimed. Alone.

And for the first time in my life... free.

?

By nightfall, I collapsed beside a stream, exhaustion sinking into my muscles. I cupped my hands into the cold water, letting it cool my burning throat.

That's when I heard it.

A low growl.

Not mine.

I froze, lifting my eyes to meet a set of glowing amber ones across the water.

A wolf.

Massive. Powerful. Pitch-black fur like smoke and eyes that burned like wildfire. He didn't growl again-just stared. Watching. Waiting.

Then he shifted.

And in his place stood a tall boy with broad shoulders, scars on his arms, and an expression I couldn't quite read.

"You're trespassing," he said. His voice was gravel and thunder.

I swallowed hard. "I didn't mean to."

He narrowed his eyes. "You crossed into Crescent Fang territory. That's not something we take lightly."

Crescent Fang.

The neighboring pack. Ruthless, dominant, and rumored to kill rogues on sight.

Perfect.

"I didn't know," I whispered. "I just ran."

"From where?"

"Ashmoon," I said. "I'm not... welcome there anymore."

He looked at me for a long moment. Something in his expression shifted-curiosity, maybe. Or pity. I couldn't tell.

"What's your name?"

"Luna."

His eyebrows twitched. "Of course it is."

He tilted his head slightly, like he was listening to something only he could hear.

Then his eyes locked on mine.

And in one breathless second, the air snapped.

My heart seized.

His scent hit me like lightning-cedar and storm clouds and something older than the earth.

His mouth parted slightly. "You're..."

My voice broke. "No. That's not possible."

Because I could feel it.

The bond.

Again.

He took a slow step toward me, eyes wide.

"You're my mate."

## Page 5

*Source Creation Date: July 21, 2025, 1:58 am*

I didn't run.

I probably should have. After everything that happened with Jace, the last thing I wanted was another bond, another boy looking at me like I was his before I even knew who I was again.

But this boy... this Alpha... didn't move like Jace.

He didn't smirk or shrink back.

He looked like he'd seen a ghost.

Or a prayer.

"You're my mate," he said again, softer this time, like he didn't quite believe the words himself.

My chest tightened. "That's not possible."

"Why not?"

"Because I already-" I stopped. Swallowed the words. "It doesn't matter."

His eyes searched mine like he already knew. "You were rejected."

It wasn't a question. Just truth, spoken plainly.



I nodded once, barely.

He didn't flinch or pity me. He just let the moment hang between us, respectful, quiet.

Then he said, "You're safe now. My name is Kael."

Alpha Kael.

Crescent Fang's leader. I'd heard rumors back home-about the brutal way he took the title, the pack that feared him, the wars he ended.

And now he was saying I was his.

I didn't know whether to laugh or cry.

"Come with me," he said.

I hesitated. "What if your pack doesn't accept me? I'm... no one. An outsider."

"You're my mate," Kael said simply. "That's enough."

?

The Crescent Fang village was carved into the cliffs and shadows of an ancient forest-half-hidden, half-wild. It wasn't neat like Ashmoon, or orderly. It was raw. Powerful. Real.

Wolves stopped to stare as we walked through, their eyes flicking between Kael and me. No one said anything, but I could feel the tension ripple through them like a low growl.

Kael didn't care. He led me straight to the packhouse-a dark stone building draped in moss and lantern light-and handed me a blanket, a clean change of clothes, and a room.

"I'll give you time," he said. "You've been hurt. You don't need to decide anything tonight."

I blinked at him. "You're not going to force the bond?"

"No," he said, eyes steady. "But I'm not rejecting it either."

And with that, he left.

Not demanding. Not controlling.

Just... patient.

It was the first time someone looked at me and didn't see what I was missing.

Only what I could become.

I curled up on the cot, my thoughts spinning in too many directions. My body was still aching, but not in the same way it had the night before.

Because somewhere deep in the part of me that still believed in the Moon Goddess, I felt it.

This wasn't the end of my story.

It was the beginning of something else.

Something stronger.

## Page 6

*Source Creation Date: July 21, 2025, 1:58 am*

I expected Crescent Fang to treat me like a threat.

Like a stray. A pity case.

But no one came knocking. No one growled at my door or tried to chase me out.

The silence felt suspicious at first-too easy, too kind.

Ashmoon had taught me to brace for cruelty.

But Crescent Fang?

Crescent Fang watched... and waited.

On the second morning, I stepped out of the room Kael had given me and found a tray sitting by the door: oatmeal, fruit, tea. No note. No guard.

Just care.

I didn't touch it for a full hour, thinking maybe it was a test.

Eventually, hunger won.

It was warm.

?

Kael didn't force a conversation.

In fact, I didn't see him again for three full days.

During that time, I wandered the outskirts of the village-far enough to feel the trees but close enough that I didn't trigger a patrol. I watched Crescent Fang's wolves train in the fields with discipline, speed, and strength unlike anything I'd seen back home.

They were sharper than Ashmoon. Wilder. But... freer, too.

There were no ranks shouted or omegas shoved to the sidelines.

Everyone fought.

Everyone mattered.

And for the first time in my life, I didn't feel like I was less.

I just felt... unnoticed.

And honestly?

It was kind of a relief.

?

On the fourth night, I sat outside near a flickering lantern, legs crossed and wrapped in one of Kael's oversized flannels someone must've left for me.

I heard footsteps before I saw him.

"You're adapting faster than I thought," Kael said, stepping into the glow.

"I'm used to being ignored," I replied, not bitter-just honest.

"You're not being ignored," he said. "They're watching. Quietly. Deciding."

"Deciding what?"

"If you're one of us."

I didn't say anything.

He handed me something small-a bundle of dried sage and flowers, tied in twine.

"It's for your room," he said. "Helps you sleep."

I stared down at the bundle, touched it gently. "You don't have to be nice to me, you know."

"I'm not being nice," he said. "I'm being honest."

I looked up, startled.

"I don't care that you're from Ashmoon," he continued. "I don't care that you're an omega. What I care about is whether you're you-because so far, the girl I met at the stream had more strength in her eyes than most wolves I've fought beside."

Heat bloomed in my chest.

"Why are you really helping me?" I asked, quiet now.

Kael's gaze held mine, steady and unshaken.

"Because fate gave me a second chance. I'm not wasting it."

And with that, he walked away-leaving me stunned in the firelight, holding a bundle of sage in trembling hands.

Because maybe... just maybe...

Kael wasn't like Jace at all.

## Page 7

*Source Creation Date: July 21, 2025, 1:58 am*

I didn't believe in second chances.

Not for people like me.

Not for omegas who had already been rejected, who ran away, broken and unclaimed.

But Kael made it hard not to wonder.

Every time I saw him, something inside me shifted-quietly, steadily, like the tide pulling at the shore. It wasn't loud like the bond with Jace had been. It didn't explode like lightning or feel like drowning.

It was something gentler.

Like being seen.

Like coming up for air.

?

I didn't want to admit it at first.

But I started to feel it-the warmth of Kael's scent in the halls, the way my wolf stirred when he was near. My instincts didn't panic like they had with Jace.

They leaned in.



Drawn. Curious.

Hopeful.

And that scared me more than anything.

I didn't want a second mate. I didn't want another bond I couldn't trust. Another heartbreak I couldn't recover from. I didn't want to lose myself again.

So I tried to bury it.

Tried to keep my distance. Tried not to care.

But the bond?

It didn't care what I wanted.

?

One evening, Kael found me sitting under the old pine tree at the edge of Crescent Fang's eastern cliff. It had become my spot-somewhere I could think, breathe, and pretend the world wasn't spinning beneath me.

He sat beside me in silence, his presence steady but never overwhelming.

"I keep trying not to feel it," I whispered, not looking at him. "But it's there."

"I know," he said simply.

I turned to him then. "How can you be okay with this? You don't even know me."

"I don't have to," he said. "The bond doesn't lie."

"That's what I thought last time," I murmured. "And he rejected me. Said I wasn't enough."

Kael's jaw tightened slightly, but his eyes never left mine.

"He was wrong."

The words hit harder than I expected.

"Jace wasn't my first heartbreak," I said, voice trembling. "But he was the one I believed in the longest. The one I loved before I even understood what love meant."

Kael didn't flinch or ask questions. He just listened.

"I don't expect you to love me," I added. "I don't even expect you to stay. I just need... time."

He nodded. "You'll have it."

I looked down at our hands resting in the grass-his, scarred and steady. Mine, unsure and shaking.

And still, I could feel it.

Not a scream.

Not a demand.

Just a whisper in my chest that said,

This time could be different.

## Page 8

*Source Creation Date: July 21, 2025, 1:58 am*

For the first time since I left Ashmoon... I woke up and didn't feel like running.

The nightmares still came sometimes-Jace's rejection echoing through my bones, the weight of not being enough pressing against my chest-but they didn't grip me the same way anymore.

Not here.

Not in Crescent Fang.

Kael had kept his distance just like he promised. No pressure. No forced touches. Just patience. Just presence. And somehow, that made me trust him even more.

I didn't know what the bond meant yet, but I was starting to believe I could choose what came next.

And maybe... that choice could start with me.

?

I stood at the edge of the training fields that morning, heart pounding in my chest like a war drum. The Crescent Fang warriors were already moving-sparring in pairs, running drills, moving like a living storm of strength and precision.

I was the only outsider.

The only omega.

But not the only fighter.

"Can I join?" I asked the she-wolf in charge of the session. Her name was Mira-Kael's Beta-and she looked like she could kill a man with a single look.

She raised an eyebrow. "You ever trained before?"

I nodded. "A little. Back home."

She stared at me a moment longer, then tossed a training blade at my feet.

"Pick it up."

?

I trained until my legs shook and my arms felt like jelly. I got knocked down more than once, bruised and breathless, but every time, I got back up.

Not because I was strong.

But because I wanted to be.

By the end of the day, Mira offered me a half-smile and a nod.

"You're a lot tougher than you look."

"Thanks," I muttered, wiping sweat from my brow. "I think."

"You'll fit in here. Eventually."

Eventually.

It was more than anyone at Ashmoon had ever given me.

?

That night, Kael found me again, sitting by the cliffs, watching the stars.

"You trained today."

"Yeah," I said, rubbing a bruise on my shoulder. "Your Beta tried to murder me."

Kael chuckled lowly. "If you're still alive, it means she likes you."

I turned to face him, my body sore but my soul... lighter.

"You meant it, didn't you?" I asked. "When you said I'd have time?"

He nodded. "Every word."

I hesitated, then reached into my pocket and pulled out the old photo I'd been carrying since I left Ashmoon-the one of Jace and me as kids.

I held it over the edge of the cliff.

"I loved him," I whispered. "But he never saw me."

Then I let go.

The wind caught it.

And just like that... I let him go too.

Kael didn't say anything. He didn't need to.

But when he sat beside me, close enough that our shoulders touched, I didn't move away.

Because this time, I wasn't falling.

I was choosing.

## Page 9

*Source Creation Date: July 21, 2025, 1:58 am*

For weeks, it was quiet.

Almost too quiet.

I trained every morning with Mira and the Crescent Fang warriors. My body grew stronger, sharper. I learned how to fall without fear, how to strike with purpose. The others began to nod at me in passing, then speak. Then smile.

I wasn't just surviving anymore.

I was belonging.

And Kael-he stayed true to his word. He gave me space, but not distance. He'd sit with me during meals, offer calm conversation when the world got too loud, walk beside me when my thoughts felt heavy.

The bond between us no longer felt like a fire I had to fear.

It felt like a flame I could warm my hands by.

And for a while... it was enough.

Until I smelled him.

?

It happened during a late patrol.



Mira and I were running the northern border trails, just outside the edge of the ridge, when a gust of wind caught me by surprise.

It hit me like a punch to the gut.

Cedar and smoke.

Ashmoon.

I stopped dead in my tracks.

Mira turned sharply. "What is it?"

I didn't answer. Couldn't. My heart was beating too fast, the old panic rising in my throat like bile.

"Someone's been here," I finally said. "Someone from my old pack."

Mira's eyes narrowed. "You sure?"

"I'd know that scent anywhere."

She growled low in her throat and took off running. I followed, limbs shaking-not from fear exactly, but from something worse:

Dread.

It didn't take long to find the tracks. Deep pawprints. Fresh. Headed south. Headed inward.

They didn't cross our border.

But they came close.

Too close.

Mira turned to me, her expression cold. "You tell Kael?"

"I haven't yet."

"Do it. Tonight."

?

When I reached Kael's quarters, I hesitated in the doorway.

I didn't want to bring Ashmoon into this place.

Not into the only home I'd ever truly chosen.

But when Kael looked up at me from the desk-his dark eyes calm but alert-I realized I didn't have to protect him from the truth.

He was ready for it.

"There's someone from Ashmoon watching the border," I said.

His expression didn't change, but the air around him shifted.

"How close?"

"Close enough to make me feel sick."

He stood slowly. "Then it's time we stop pretending they're not coming."

I blinked. "You think they're here for me?"

"I think some bonds break louder than others," he said quietly. "And some wolves don't let go."

A chill ran down my spine.

Jace.

?

That night, I barely slept.

Because deep in the forest-past the trees, beyond the border-I could feel it.

A familiar presence. Watching.

Waiting.

And somewhere inside me, my wolf growled for the first time in weeks.

Not in fear.

In warning.

## Page 10

*Source Creation Date: July 21, 2025, 1:58 am*

Crescent Fang was built on loyalty, not kindness.

Respect had to be earned, and I'd fought hard for mine-bruises, blisters, and blood on the training field. Most of the pack had stopped looking at me like I was a threat.

But not all of them.

Especially not her.

Lira.

Kael's third-in-command.

She was beautiful in that cold, glass-cut way-silver hair, sharp words, and the kind of confidence that came from always being wanted.

And she had been.

By him.

Rumors said Lira and Kael had once been promised to each other-before the mate bond ruined that. Before I ruined that.

She never said anything outright, but her glare could slice skin.

"Didn't take you for the type to hide behind an Alpha's protection," she said one morning, casually tossing a knife toward the center of a target board.

I didn't flinch.

"I'm not hiding behind anyone," I said. "I'm just not running anymore."

She smiled without warmth. "No, you're not running. You're nesting. Convenient, isn't it? Rejected by one Alpha, claimed by the next."

I stiffened.

Mira, who had been standing a few feet away, narrowed her eyes but said nothing.

"I didn't come here to be claimed," I said quietly.

"Doesn't matter why you came," Lira snapped. "Only matters what you'll cost."

?

That night, I found Kael on the southern wall, looking out toward the mountains. The moon lit his features in silver, and for a moment, I let myself stare.

Not because of the bond.

But because he made me feel like I was something more than my status.

"I heard what Lira said," he said without looking at me.

Of course he had.

"She's loyal to you."

"She's loyal to the pack. And she thinks I'm distracted."

"Are you?" I asked.

He finally looked at me.

"No," he said. "But I am connected."

I inhaled slowly, the word sitting heavy between us.

Connected.

The bond was still there, humming low in my chest, waiting for me to accept it.

And I wanted to.

But part of me still lived in the ashes of what Jace left behind.

"What if I'm not enough?" I whispered before I could stop myself.

"You're already more than enough," Kael said. "But I won't make you prove it."

He didn't move closer.

He didn't ask for more.

He just stood beside me.

That's the moment I realized something Jace never understood:

Love doesn't demand.

It chooses.

And Kael...

He was choosing me without ever asking for anything back.

Maybe one day I'd be ready to choose him too.

?

Still, as I looked toward the trees beyond the border, I couldn't shake the feeling.

Something was coming.

And it wasn't just jealousy.

It was Jace.

And this time, he wasn't coming alone.

## Page 11

*Source Creation Date: July 21, 2025, 1:58 am*

When Mira told me there was going to be a Trial, I thought she was joking.

"A trial for what?"

"To earn your place."

I blinked. "I thought I already did that."

She gave me a flat look. "You earned our respect. But Crescent Fang doesn't just let outsiders stay-especially not ones with Alpha attention and Ashmoon scent still clinging to their skin."

I felt my jaw tighten.

"What do I have to do?"

"Survive."

Of course.

?

The Trial of the Hunt wasn't just a test-it was legend. A rite of passage dating back to the old bloodlines, when Crescent Fang was still a rogue pack living in the shadows of larger ones.

Each year, anyone hoping to claim Crescent status-especially outsiders-had to enter



the deep woods alone for one night, armed with only their wolf and their instincts. Somewhere in those woods, a marked predator would be released.

Find it.

Defeat it.

Or be hunted instead.

The thought made my stomach twist. But I knew one thing: I wasn't going to run. Not again.

I would face this.

For myself.

?

At sundown, I stood at the edge of the forest, barefoot and breathing steady.

Kael stood nearby, expression unreadable. "You don't have to do this to prove anything to me."

"I'm not doing it for you," I said. "I'm doing it for me."

A flicker of pride crossed his face.

"I'll be waiting at the border," he said. "Come back whole."

I gave a small nod and stepped into the trees.

?

The forest was quiet. Too quiet.

Moonlight filtered through the branches in slanted beams, and the cold air carried the scent of damp moss, pine, and something else...

Blood.

I shifted quickly, my wolf breaking through in one sharp pulse of light and fur. She was smaller than most, built for speed and silence-but tonight, she was hungry for something more.

Validation.

We tracked the predator quickly. A mutated rogue-part bear, part wolf, infected with sickness and fury. They called it the Duskbeast.

Its roar shattered the stillness, but I didn't hesitate.

I ran toward it.

?

The fight was brutal.

It tossed me into a tree, ripped into my shoulder, snapped its jaws inches from my throat-but I kept moving. Dodging. Tearing. Learning.

And when it lunged for me a final time, I used its weight against it-spinning, snapping its neck between my jaws with a growl that didn't sound like it came from

an omega at all.

It sounded like a warrior.

?

When I limped back to the edge of the forest at dawn, covered in blood and dirt and half-shifted, the entire pack was waiting.

No one spoke.

Until Mira stepped forward and dropped a crescent-shaped fang pendant into my hand.

"Welcome to Crescent Fang," she said.

Kael didn't move toward me-but his eyes said everything.

Pride. Awe. Respect.

And something else I wasn't ready to name.

But I saw it.

And maybe... I was starting to feel it too.

## Page 12

*Source Creation Date: July 21, 2025, 1:58 am*

They threw a firelit feast in the village that night-smoke curling into stars, meat sizzling over open flames, drums echoing like heartbeats. For the first time, the pack didn't look at me with suspicion.

They looked at me like I was one of them.

Mira gave me a slap on the back and a rare grin. "Didn't think you had it in you."

I smirked. "Me neither."

Someone handed me a drink. A few others offered nods. Even Lira, from a distance, looked less like she wanted to kill me and more like she finally believed I could survive without protection.

I should've been glowing.

Instead, I felt numb.

Because something about that fight... about the way my wolf had snapped... it scared me.

Not because I lost control.

Because I didn't.

I wanted to win.

I wanted to hurt something.

And I didn't know what that said about me.

?

Later that night, long after the fires dimmed and the laughter faded, I found Kael in the woods behind the packhouse, splitting logs like it was the only way to silence his thoughts.

He looked up when he heard me.

"You should be resting."

I stepped closer. "Couldn't sleep."

He set the axe down.

I hesitated, then said the truth I hadn't told anyone-not even Mira.

"I liked the fight," I whispered. "I didn't just want to survive. I wanted to win."

Kael's expression didn't shift. "Good."

I blinked. "Good?"

He nodded once. "You finally chose to live."

I didn't know how to respond.

So I sat beside him in the damp grass, knees brushing, silence wrapping around us

like a blanket.

"You know what the hardest part was?" I said after a moment. "It wasn't the beast. It was... coming back."

"Why?"

"Because it felt like I was returning as someone new. And I don't know if that version of me deserves peace."

Kael was quiet for a long time. Then he said, "You don't have to deserve peace, Luna. You just have to stop running from it."

Something inside me cracked open.

Not in pain.

In relief.

I leaned my head against his shoulder.

He didn't speak. Didn't move.

But his warmth was steady.

And for the first time in forever, I didn't feel like I had to fill the silence.

He was already listening.

Even to the words I didn't say.

## Page 13

*Source Creation Date: July 21, 2025, 1:58 am*

There's something about paper that makes the truth easier to hold.

Maybe it's the way ink stains feel permanent. Or the way you can fold up the words you're too scared to speak and pretend they never existed at all.

That's what I did every night for a week.

I wrote letters I never planned to send.

To Jace.

To the boy who had been my best friend, my first almost-love, my first heartbreak. The boy who knew every version of me-except the one I was becoming.

The first letter started simple.

I folded that one into fourths and hid it under my pillow.

The next night, I wrote more.

Some letters I crumpled up immediately. Others I kept.

But none of them made the ache fully go away.

?

One morning, Kael caught me burning a stack of them behind the training hall.

He didn't ask what they were.

Just sat beside me, watching the flames turn words into ash.

"You don't have to erase the past," he said gently. "But you don't have to carry it either."

"I thought writing them would help."

"Did it?"

I paused. "A little."

Kael reached into his jacket and pulled something out-a thin strip of leather cord.

"For your wrist," he said. "A Crescent keepsake. We wear them during new beginnings."

I hesitated before taking it.

"Is this a beginning?" I asked.

He looked at me like I already knew the answer.

"That's up to you."

I tied it on.

Not because I was ready to forget.

But because I was finally ready to move forward.



?

That night, I wrote one final letter.

I'm not angry anymore.

I just hope one day, when you look back, you understand what you lost.

I would've chosen you.

But now...

I'm choosing me.

Then I folded it gently.

And let the wind take it.

## Page 14

*Source Creation Date: July 21, 2025, 1:58 am*

It had rained that morning.

The whole forest smelled like wet earth and renewal. The leaves sparkled with leftover mist, and the crescent-shaped pendant at my neck felt heavier than usual-as if it knew something was shifting inside me.

Something had shifted.

The letters were gone. The ghosts were quieter. My wolf stirred not with grief, but with a new kind of energy. A new kind of longing.

And I knew why.

Kael.

The bond was still there-gentle, steady-but for once, it wasn't pulling me. It was waiting. Like he always did.

And I was done waiting.

?

I found him alone in the clearing where Crescent Fang held its moon rituals. The fire pit was cold. The sky above was open. And Kael was kneeling, sharpening a blade, like the warrior he'd always been-even when he was careful with me.

He looked up when he sensed me.

But this time, I was the one who didn't hesitate.

"I don't want to run anymore," I said.

He stood slowly. "You don't have to."

"I mean it," I said. "I've been through a lot. I've carried things that weren't mine. I loved someone who couldn't love me back. But none of that defines me."

He didn't speak. Just watched.

And still, the bond waited-not demanding, not rushing. Just open.

"I want to be more than someone's second chance," I said. "And if I let this happen... I need to know it's my choice. Not fate's. Not desperation. Mine."

Kael stepped closer, careful, like I was something sacred.

"It's always been yours," he said.

Then he held out his hand-not to claim me, but to offer.

You choose.

I took it.

And the moment my fingers touched his palm, the bond didn't explode-it bloomed.

Warm and golden and whole.

My wolf howled inside me, not from pain, but from homecoming. Like she'd been

waiting for this choice all along.

Not a mate chosen for me.

A mate I chose.

Kael stepped forward slowly and placed his forehead against mine. His hands trembled-not with fear, but reverence.

"I won't hurt you," he whispered. "Not now. Not ever."

And in that quiet space between our heartbeats, I believed him.

Because this wasn't a claiming.

It was a promise.

And I was finally ready to keep it.

## Page 15

*Source Creation Date: July 21, 2025, 1:58 am*

They say when you accept a mate bond, the Moon marks your soul before your skin.

That you'll feel it before you see it-like a rush of warmth in your blood, a pull in your chest, a stillness in your bones.

They don't tell you that it can feel like healing.

Or like peace.

Or like finally breathing.

But that's exactly what it felt like with Kael.

?

The ceremony was simple. Just us. No crowd. No ritualized chants or pack declarations.

He asked me again, softly.

"Are you sure?"

I nodded. "Yes."

His thumb brushed the inside of my wrist-slow, gentle, grounding. "I don't need the bond to love you, Luna. But if you let me have it... I'll protect it like it's sacred."

"It already is."

And with those words, I tilted my head, exposing the soft curve of my neck. Not in submission-but in trust.

He hesitated.

Then lowered his mouth.

His teeth grazed my skin-not cruel, not possessive. Just enough to make the mark take. A bright, burning sting bloomed through my body-but it was nothing compared to the glow that followed.

The warmth spread outward like a sunrise.

And when I opened my eyes, Kael was glowing too.

Not literally-but everything about him looked brighter.

More mine.

I placed my hand over the new mark-just beneath my collarbone. It shimmered silver in the moonlight, shaped like a crescent and flame intertwined.

Kael traced it with his fingers.

"Perfect," he whispered.

Not because I was.

But because this-us-finally felt like belonging.

?

That night, we lay beneath the stars, our wolves curled beside each other, breath syncing in the hush of midnight.

"I never thought I'd feel this again," I admitted, head resting on his chest.

He kissed the top of my head. "You weren't supposed to just feel it."

I looked up. "Then what?"

"You were supposed to choose it."

And I had.

Not because of destiny.

But because I was strong enough now to know the difference between a bond that breaks you...

And one that makes you whole.

## Page 16

*Source Creation Date: July 21, 2025, 1:58 am*

Peace never lasts.

Not for people like me.

The bond with Kael was still fresh-my mark barely healed, the memory of his touch still warm on my skin-when it started.

Little things, at first.

Unfamiliar scents near the southern ridge.

Movement just outside the training fields.

A shift in the wind that didn't feel like wind at all-just eyes.

Watching.

Waiting.

At first, I thought I was being paranoid.

But Mira wasn't so sure.

"We found wolf tracks this morning," she said, her tone clipped as we walked the perimeter. "They're circling the territory. Testing our boundaries."

"Rogues?" I asked, heart skipping.



"No," she said grimly. "Too clean. Too calculated."

I already knew.

Ashmoon.

?

Kael confirmed it that night in the war room.

"They've sent scouts," he said, pointing to a map riddled with scent markers and pinpricks of crimson ink. "Not an invasion. Yet."

I stood by the door, arms crossed, trying not to tremble.

"Do they know I'm here?" I asked.

Kael didn't answer right away.

Mira did.

"They knew the moment you crossed the border. You think Ashmoon just lets one of their omegas disappear without tracking her?"

I flinched. "I'm not theirs."

"No," Kael said softly, "you're not."

He stepped away from the map and came toward me. "But they don't see it that way. Especially Jace."

Just hearing his name made my pulse spike.

"What does he want?" I asked, my voice cold.

Kael's jaw clenched. "You."

"No," I whispered. "He rejected me. He left me."

"Doesn't matter," Mira said. "He's Alpha-born. They're possessive by nature. Now that he's realized what he lost, he'll fight to get it back."

"But it's not about me," I muttered. "It's about pride."

"Exactly."

?

That night, I couldn't sleep.

Every creak in the trees sounded like a footstep. Every breeze across my mark felt like a memory I didn't want.

Kael sat beside me on the porch, silent.

"What if I brought danger here?" I asked. "What if this bond costs you everything?"

He shook his head. "You didn't bring danger, Luna. Danger was already coming. You just gave us something to fight for."

I looked at him-this Alpha who chose me when I didn't know how to choose myself.

And I knew then...

Whatever came next, we'd face it together.

Even if it meant facing him.

## Page 17

*Source Creation Date: July 21, 2025, 1:58 am*

I smelled him before I saw him.

Ash.

Cedar.

The faint bite of smoke and shame.

Jace.

I stood at the edge of Crescent Fang's southern border, heart hammering as the wind shifted. My wolf growled low in my chest, pacing just beneath my skin like she didn't know whether to fight or run.

But I didn't run anymore.

Kael stood beside me, his presence calm and silent, arms crossed over his chest like stone. He'd come with me when Mira reported the approaching scent trail-because if it really was Jace, he knew I'd have to face him myself.

And there he was.

He stepped out of the treeline like the past itself-familiar and dangerous and far too late.

"Luna," he breathed, eyes wide the moment he saw me.

I didn't speak.

Didn't move.

He looked... different. Older, maybe. Sharper around the edges. But still the same boy who once shared apples and secrets under the trees.

Still the same boy who left me.

"I thought you were dead," he said, voice shaking.

"I was," I replied. "You killed that version of me."

Kael didn't move, but I could feel his energy humming like a blade behind me.

Jace's eyes darted to the mark on my collarbone-the shimmering crescent and flame, still fresh.

He froze.

"You accepted someone else," he whispered.

"I chose someone else," I corrected.

Something shifted in his expression-shock, guilt... jealousy.

"I made a mistake," he said. "I didn't mean to reject you. I was scared. My father-he wouldn't have approved. The pack-"

"I didn't need your fear," I snapped. "I needed your truth. And instead, you walked away like I was nothing."

He looked stricken. "You were never nothing."

"But you made me feel like I was," I said. "And now I know better."

I stepped closer-not afraid. Not weak.

"But let me be clear, Jace. Whatever you think you're here to fix... you're too late."

His jaw clenched. "I came to bring you back."

Kael stepped forward now, his voice low and controlled. "She's not going anywhere."

"This isn't your fight," Jace growled.

Kael's tone turned cold. "She's my mate. Which means her fight is mine."

Jace's eyes locked on mine. "I never stopped wanting you."

"And I never stopped waiting," I whispered. "But you didn't come. Not when it mattered. Not when I broke."

Silence.

Then I said the one thing I knew would end it.

"I don't love you anymore."

He flinched like I'd struck him.

And without another word, he turned and disappeared back into the trees-his scent lingering like regret.

?

I stood there long after he was gone.

Kael didn't speak. Just placed a hand gently on the small of my back.

I exhaled.

"I needed that."

"You earned it."

And though my hands were still shaking, my soul wasn't.

Because I had faced my past.

And for the first time, I didn't want it back.

## Page 18

*Source Creation Date: July 21, 2025, 1:58 am*

Three days passed.

Three days of tension rippling through Crescent Fang like a low growl beneath every step.

The warriors stayed close to the borders. Mira doubled the patrols. And Kael barely slept, his instincts razor-sharp, his shoulders tighter than I'd ever seen.

Because we all knew Jace wasn't done.

And I knew exactly what he was coming back for.

?

When the call came, it echoed through the trees like a challenge.

A howl.

Low. Demanding. Familiar.

Jace was back.

This time, not alone.

He waited just outside the border, flanked by three of Ashmoon's warriors-each wearing the dark, high-collared uniforms that marked them as enforcers.



Kael stood beside me as we approached, Mira and two other Crescent warriors at his back. I didn't know if I was supposed to be afraid.

But I wasn't.

Not anymore.

Jace stepped forward. His eyes met mine first, not Kael's.

"You didn't even say goodbye."

"You made that choice for me," I said calmly.

He exhaled like it physically hurt. "I didn't come here to fight."

Kael raised an eyebrow. "Then why are you here with armed wolves and no invitation?"

Jace's jaw tightened. "Because I want to speak with Luna. Alone."

Kael didn't even flinch. "No."

Jace turned to me, desperate. "Please. Just a minute."

I looked at Kael, who met my gaze. He didn't like it. But he didn't stop me.

Because Kael knew something Jace never did.

Trust isn't control.

It's freedom.

?

Jace led me a few feet into the woods, just far enough for privacy.

"You bonded with him," he said. "You really did it."

"I did."

"Why?"

"Because he didn't make me feel like I had to earn it."

He stepped closer. "Luna, I didn't know what I was doing when I rejected you. I was trying to protect you. Omegas aren't respected in Ashmoon. I thought... if I kept my distance, you'd be safer."

"Then why are you here now?" I asked. "If this isn't about power-why are you standing at the edge of Crescent Fang with warriors at your back?"

His face twisted.

"Because you belong with me," he said. "Not him. You're mine, Luna."

I froze.

There it was.

Not love.

Possession.

"Do you hear yourself?" I whispered. "You rejected the bond. You left me. You can't just come back now that someone else saw my worth and try to claim it."

"I'm not letting him take you."

"You already did."

His hand reached out like he might grab me-like he had the right.

I stepped back.

And shifted.

In an instant, my wolf stood where I had been-white-furred, eyes glowing, stronger than she'd ever been before.

She growled.

And Jace?

He finally saw me.

Not the omega.

Not the girl who once waited for his approval.

But the wolf who no longer needed it.

?

I returned to Kael's side minutes later, shifting back into my human form, chin held

high.

"He's not leaving this alone," I said. "He's going to come back. And next time, he won't be asking."

Kael nodded slowly. "Then we prepare."

And just like that, peace slipped through our fingers.

Because Jace hadn't come to win me back.

He'd come to start a war.

## Page 19

*Source Creation Date: July 21, 2025, 1:58 am*

It started with a howl.

Not one of grief.

Not one of warning.

But one of war.

By the time the sun rose the next morning, Kael had summoned the council. Mira mapped out strategy points. Warriors began reinforcing the border trenches and rotating night shifts.

Ashmoon had sent an official message.

Not a plea.

Not a request.

A threat.

I read the letter twice before tearing it in half.

"They don't want me," I muttered. "They want control."

Kael nodded, voice steady as ever. "Then they'll find none here."

?

The pack buzzed with quiet tension. Even the trees seemed to hold their breath. I watched from the ridge as Crescent Fang prepared for the inevitable-training, scouting, reinforcing the south wall where the forest thinned and Ashmoon would likely break through.

And for the first time, I wasn't afraid of being a burden.

I was angry.

Angry that Jace couldn't let go.

Angry that my freedom was something he thought he could undo with force.

Angry that I still carried his name like a bruise in my chest.

I stormed into the training field that afternoon, heart racing.

Mira raised an eyebrow as I picked up a blade. "You're not scheduled to train."

"I'm not here to train," I said. "I'm here to fight."

She tossed me a second dagger. "Then let's see if that pretty little mark of yours made you any faster."

?

Later, as the sun dipped below the horizon, Kael found me sitting on the porch steps of the packhouse, sweat still drying on my brow.

"They sent scouts again," he said. "Two of them. Close enough to smell the blood on our blades."

"They want to scare us," I said.

"They'll fail."

I looked up at him.

"Will you hurt him?" I asked. "If Jace crosses the border himself?"

Kael didn't answer immediately.

But when he did, his voice was firm. "Only if he gives me no other choice."

"He will," I whispered. "You know he will."

He looked at me-really looked-and in his silence, I saw it.

Not rage.

Readiness.

The calm before the storm.

?

That night, I lay awake in Kael's bed, wrapped in his warmth but haunted by the sound of howls in the distance.

Ashmoon was coming.

Jace was coming.

And I knew what they were after wasn't just territory.

It was me.

But I wasn't the same girl who ran from rejection in the dark.

This time, I'd stand my ground.

Even if it meant bleeding for it.



## Page 20

*Source Creation Date: July 21, 2025, 1:58 am*

The war hadn't started yet.

But the battlefield was already inside me.

I knew where I stood. I knew who I belonged to. I'd chosen Kael. I'd worn the mark.  
I'd sworn myself to Crescent Fang with blood and bone and bond.

But that didn't erase the years I spent loving Jace.

Didn't erase the way his voice still echoed in corners of me I hadn't sealed off yet.

Didn't erase the ache.

But it did give me the strength to face him again.

?

Kael tried to come with me, but I asked him not to.

"This one's mine," I said. "It always has been."

He didn't argue. Just brushed his fingers over my cheek once, gently.

"I'll be here," he said. "Always."

?

I met Jace at the border alone.

He was waiting-leaning against a tree like the boy I used to trust. But the moment our eyes met, I saw the change. His wolf was closer to the surface now. Wild. Unstable. Desperate.

"I knew you'd come," he said.

"Then you should've known I'd come to say goodbye."

He flinched. "You don't have to do this."

"Yes, I do."

"You think he loves you more than I did?"

I looked him in the eye. "He didn't need to love me more. He just didn't make me feel like less."

Jace's voice cracked. "I made a mistake."

"No," I said. "You made a choice. And then you let me carry the weight of it alone."

"You were always mine," he said, stepping closer.

I didn't move.

"No," I said softly. "I was yours when you didn't want me. When it was easy to turn away. But I'm not that girl anymore."

"Luna-"

"I loved you, Jace," I said. "So much it made me blind. But love without respect isn't love at all. And whatever this is-whatever you're doing now-it isn't about love. It's about control."

Silence.

Then, finally, truth.

His eyes hardened. "If I can't have you... no one will."

I took a deep breath and stepped back over the border-back into Crescent Fang territory, my side, my choice, my home.

"Then you'd better prepare to lose, Alpha."

?

I didn't cry.

Not this time.

Because I wasn't torn anymore.

I didn't belong to two wolves.

I belonged to myself.

And the one who truly loved me?

He never asked me to choose.

## Page 21

*Source Creation Date: July 21, 2025, 1:58 am*

The attack came just after midnight.

No warning. No call for surrender.

Just silence-

followed by fire.

Crescent Fang's southern wall lit up in a burst of red and orange, wolves howling through the trees as the first wave of Ashmoon warriors tore through the forest.

And I was already awake.

I'd been waiting for this.

Waiting since Jace said the words I knew he meant:

?

Kael met me in the war corridor, already armored, his eyes hard but steady. "You stay with Mira. Guard the eastern line."

"I can fight."

"I know."

"I'm not just your mate. I'm your warrior."

He paused-just long enough to let the weight of his next words land.

"No," he said. "You're my equal."

And then he kissed me like it might be the last time.

?

The forest was chaos.

Ashmoon wolves surged from the shadows, teeth bared, eyes wild. Their growls were rage. Their claws didn't hesitate. They weren't here for territory.

They were here for me.

And I wasn't hiding.

I shifted mid-run, my wolf bursting through me with a howl that split the air, white fur catching the moonlight like lightning. Mira ran beside me, deadly and fast, her fangs stained red within seconds.

We fought.

Claw against claw. Fang against fang.

I moved like I'd trained for this moment my whole life.

Because maybe I had.

Every bruise, every rejection, every broken version of me... had led to this.

Not vengeance.

Victory.

?

In the middle of the battlefield, I saw him.

Jace.

Covered in blood, standing at the center of the chaos like a king fallen from grace.  
Our eyes locked across the burning field.

His wolf growled low in his chest. But he didn't shift.

He just stared at me-like I was the prize he couldn't win, the choice that slipped  
through his fingers.

And for a second, just a second... I saw regret.

But regret doesn't stop war.

I turned away.

And kept fighting.

?

By sunrise, Crescent Fang still stood.

Barely.

The fires were out. The wounded were being tended. The air smelled like smoke and sweat and broken pride.

Ashmoon had retreated. Not defeated, but rattled. The border held.

Kael found me near the ruins of the old wall. I was covered in dirt and blood, but I was still standing.

He touched my face gently, his thumb brushing a streak of ash from my cheek.

"You saved us," he said.

"No," I whispered. "We saved me."

?

The storm had broken.

But the battle for peace wasn't over yet.

And I wasn't done fighting.

## Page 22

*Source Creation Date: July 21, 2025, 1:58 am*

The war left scars.

On the land.

On the pack.

On me.

But there was something else stirring now-beneath the bruises, under the grief.  
Something I had never felt before.

It wasn't rage.

It wasn't revenge.

It was power.

?

I first felt it during the healing circle.

Kael and I had gathered with Mira and the wounded warriors to channel energy, to mourn the fallen, to honor the strength that held the border.

I stood between them all-no longer outsider, no longer omega-just Luna.

And when the elder began to chant the old tongue, asking for the Moon's blessing on



the pack, something deep inside me responded.

A pulse.

A hum.

A calling.

My wolf stirred. My bones ached. My skin shimmered faintly beneath the moonlight.

Then one of the injured wolves collapsed mid-chant, his wound reopening, blood pouring from his side.

Everyone froze.

Except me.

I didn't think-I moved.

I dropped to my knees beside him and placed my hands over his wound.

"Luna, don't-" Mira started, but her voice trailed off as a soft glow lit beneath my palms.

White-gold. Gentle. Warm. Like moonlight poured into skin.

The bleeding stopped.

The gash sealed.

And the air went silent.

I stumbled back, breathless. "What... what was that?"

Kael's voice was hushed. "You healed him."

"I don't know how."

Mira stepped closer, studying me. "There were whispers... ancient ones. That long ago, some omegas were gifted. Not weak. Not lesser. Just different."

"What kind of different?"

"The kind that could channel the Moon itself."

?

That night, Kael sat with me in our den, eyes still wide with wonder. "You're not just bonded," he said. "You're blessed."

I laughed, though my hands were still trembling. "I'm still trying to believe that's even real."

"Luna," he said softly. "You healed a wolf who would've died. That's not luck. That's legacy."

And suddenly, I remembered something my mother once told me, long before she was gone:

"You don't have to be fierce to be strong. You just have to know who you are."

Maybe... I was finally starting to.

?

The next day, word spread.

Not just through Crescent Fang, but across the forest.

The Ashmoon omega had healed a dying warrior.

The rejected girl had saved the pack.

The weak one wasn't weak at all.

And I knew then-

Jace would return.

Not for love.

But for fear of what I'd become.

Because I wasn't just his past anymore.

I was his reckoning.

*Source Creation Date: July 21, 2025, 1:58 am*

He came at dusk.

No army.

No messengers.

Just Jace. Alone.

But I knew better.

Jace wasn't the kind to come empty-handed. And desperation? That was the sharpest weapon of all.

Kael stood beside me as we watched him approach the Crescent Fang border. The sun was sinking behind him, casting gold across his face, like the moon was already preparing to take him away.

"I want to speak to her," Jace called out.

Kael's jaw flexed, but he looked at me. "Your choice."

It always was.

?

Jace waited by the river that separated our lands-symbolic, as if even now, some part of him wanted to pretend he wasn't the villain in this story.

When I arrived, he smiled.

I didn't.

"I saw what you did," he said. "Healing that warrior. Word's spreading through every pack from here to the Iron Ridge."

I said nothing.

"You're powerful now," he added, voice almost in awe. "I didn't know that about you."

"You never tried to know me."

He looked down, then back up. "Come back, Luna."

The words tasted like ash in the air.

"You don't get to ask that," I said. "Not after what you did. Not after who you left me to become."

"I was young-"

"We were the same age, Jace. You were just cowardly."

That struck. I saw it in the way his shoulders stiffened.

"I made a mistake," he said again, like it was a prayer this time. "I've paid for it every day since."

"Good," I said coldly. "But that doesn't buy forgiveness."

His eyes sharpened, a flicker of the Alpha in him rising. "You still belong to me."

"No," I said, stepping forward, voice low and strong. "I belonged to myself even when I didn't know it. But now? I've chosen someone who sees all of me-and never once asked me to hide."

His nostrils flared. "He'll never understand you the way I did."

"He doesn't need to," I whispered. "Because he respects me more than you ever could."

Jace stepped closer, but I didn't flinch. My wolf stirred inside me, ready.

"I'll come back with you," I said, tilting my head just slightly, "if you can do one thing."

His eyes lit up. "Anything."

"Shift," I said. "And bow to an omega."

He froze.

I waited.

But he didn't move.

And in that moment, everything between us died.

?

When I returned to Kael, he didn't ask what was said.

He just took my hand.

And I whispered, "It's done."

Because Jace didn't just lose the fight.

He lost the right to know me.

## Page 24

*Source Creation Date: July 21, 2025, 1:58 am*

The war was over.

Not with a final battle.

Not with fire or blood.

But with truth.

The kind that couldn't be denied.

Jace was gone. Driven back by his pride and my refusal to kneel. Ashmoon wouldn't try again. Not after the stories spread. Not after they saw what I could become without them.

What I had become.

Not just Kael's mate.

Not just a warrior.

Not just an omega.

But Luna Rayne of Crescent Fang-

Healer. Fighter. Chosen.

\*\*



The blessing ceremony took place three days after the retreat.

It was held under the full moon, in the stone circle beneath the ancient trees where generations of Crescent leaders had stood before.

I wore white.

Not because I was pure.

But because I had survived the dirt and blood and come out whole.

Kael stood with me at the center of the ring. His hand gripped mine, strong and steady, but it was my name the pack chanted.

Not his.

Mine.

Elder Niri stepped forward, her voice like wind through the leaves.

"Luna Rayne," she said. "You came to us as a stranger. You stayed as a survivor. And you rose as something none of us expected."

I held my head high.

"You are the proof that rank is not strength. That rejection is not weakness. That the Moon blesses those who rise, even when no one tells them they can."

She stepped closer and held a silver chalice to my lips-one only used in ancient rites.

"Tonight, we name you not by your title... but by your truth."

She poured the liquid across my mark. It shimmered gold, then glowed.

Not painfully.

Radiantly.

"You are Moonborn."

The circle erupted in howls.

Not for an Alpha.

Not for a hero.

But for a girl who had once been cast aside...

...and came back divine.

\*\*

That night, as Kael and I stood beneath the trees, he kissed my temple and whispered, "You've always been the strongest wolf I've ever known."

I smiled.

"Not because I fight," I said. "But because I chose to stay standing."

He pulled me close. "And now?"

"Now," I whispered, looking up at the stars, "I choose to live."

And for the first time in my life, the Moon didn't just feel like a force above me.

It felt like it was inside me.

## Page 25

*Source Creation Date: July 21, 2025, 1:58 am*

Spring came slowly.

Like healing.

Like peace.

The forest bloomed again. The trees that once echoed with battle howls now hummed with birdsong. The southern wall had been rebuilt stronger. The fields replanted. The Crescent Fang pack walked lighter.

And so did I.

It had been two months since the last Ashmoon scout disappeared from our borders. Two months since the Moon's blessing was spoken over me. Two months since I stood face-to-face with the boy I once thought held my future...

...and realized my future was mine all along.

\*\*

Kael proposed under the twilight sky, no witnesses but the stars.

He didn't kneel.

He didn't need to.

"I don't ask because I want to own you," he said, holding my hands in his calloused,

battle-worn ones. "I ask because I want to build something with you."

My eyes burned.

"Then let's build," I whispered.

He placed a moonstone band on my finger.

It was simple. Light-catching.

Just like us.

\*\*

Our wedding wasn't grand. It didn't need to be.

There was no throne, no crown, no claim of power. Just a circle of wildflowers, a howling sky, and the pack gathered around us in celebration.

Mira cried (though she'll deny it forever). Lira brought wild lavender and peace offerings. Even the elders from distant lands came to witness the union between the Alpha of Crescent Fang...

...and the omega who changed everything.

When Kael marked me again that night-this time in love, not war-my wolf didn't howl.

She sang.

Because this wasn't destiny.

This was choice.

\*\*

Later, when the fires burned low and the pack danced beneath the stars, Kael and I slipped away to the top of the ridge. Our ridge. The place where Crescent met sky.

He pulled me into his arms, resting his chin on my head.

"You scared me once," he whispered.

I laughed softly. "Me?"

"You came into my life like a storm. And somehow made everything feel quiet."

We stood there, hearts synced, wolves sleeping peacefully inside us.

"Do you regret it?" I asked.

"Not for a second."

Neither did I.

Because I was no longer the girl waiting to be chosen.

I was the wolf who chose herself.

And in doing so, I found everything I thought I'd lost-