

# *Rejected*



LA MEUTE SILVERMOON

VIRGINIE T.



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**Rejected**

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## *Lilou*

I'm worried about Lessie. Sure, she's doing better, but she almost died, and no one is ready to forget Cathy's disappearance—let alone Peter's loss. It's a dark time for the Silvermoon pack, so suggesting the integration of a new wolf is delicate, even when it comes from me. I'm not acting out of selfishness but for the good of the pack, though that doesn't make it any easier.

"Aaron, we need a healer."

"There's no rush."

"You're refusing in Cathy's memory, and I understand that."

I didn't really have the time to get to know her. However, I know how tightly connected every member of the pack is. Everyone in the Silvermoon pack is precious, without exception, and as a healer, Cathy was in regular contact with many of them.

"Still, we need a healer, and Mathew is the perfect choice."

At least, if my intuition is right—but I have little doubt. Cassandra feels the same way now that she's had time to reflect. I'm convinced he's a shapeshifter. I recall several moments of hesitation in his presence, certain glances that seemed too bright, growls masked behind a cough. He has to be one of us. Either way, I'll know for sure as soon as I stand in front of him.

"We can trust him, and he has no attachments."

"Exactly. Are you certain he's a shapeshifter, Lilou? It's unusual to be a loner, even more so to live in a big city. We can't stand strong scents or loud noises."

"You've asked me this question several times. My answer isn't going to change. Yes, I believe he's one of us. No, I don't know why he works in the city. And no, I'm not going to change my mind. Mathew is my friend, as well as an excellent nurse. He helped me a lot once. He's the one who got me back on my feet. He'll be an asset to the pack."

That's when Reese bursts in, galloping on all fours. I'm not fast enough to catch him, but my mate is, grabbing him by the scruff of his neck.

"Where do you think you're running off to so fast, little pup?"

Our son then gives him his most innocent look—the one he pulls out whenever he wants something.

"No need to bargain. You're not going outside without supervision."

This little one-year-old devil has filled our lives with joy ever since the Thousand Oaks pack entrusted him to us a few weeks ago. I had long since given up hope of becoming a mother, so I cherish every moment of the gift I've been given. But I haven't forgotten my responsibilities. I am the alpha female of the Silvermoon pack, and as such, I must ensure their well-being—starting with welcoming a new healer.

I move closer to Aaron, who doesn't hesitate to wrap his arm around me while adjusting Reese more comfortably against his chest. It's been this way since we met. Our chemistry is undeniable, inexhaustible. I used to be afraid of men. My ex had destroyed me, both physically and psychologically, but all it took was one look from my man, a few reassuring words, for all my barriers to crumble. That's how it always is between soulmates. Our bond is powerful, an undeniable truth. We are a couple, but we are also one—an inseparable entity.

“Aaron, trust me. We need Mathew, and I have a feeling he needs us too.”

“You won't let this go, will you?”

I give him my most dazzling smile, the one that makes him melt inside. Come to think of it, Reese has probably picked up on this technique by watching me.

“I'm a she-wolf, darling. I love to bite and never let go of my prey.”

His deep laughter sends vibrations through his chest, making me shiver—something he doesn't fail to notice.

“Don't look at me like that, or I promise you won't be leaving the territory.”

Deep down, I know what's holding him back. He can't go to town with me. He's the alpha male. The pack needs him to maintain balance, not to mention that leaving Reese so soon after adopting him is out of the question. He's probably a soul healer, like Jaxen. Having both his parents absent at the same time would be too unsettling for him. He's already suffered the loss of his biological parents not long ago. There's no need to subject him to a similar anxiety with both of us leaving together. No, I have to go. I know Mathew. I'm the one who needs to talk to him, and since he's stopped answering my calls...

“Promise me you'll be careful, Lilou. You know I can't live without you.”

I know. He literally cannot exist without me, and that's something I could have done without knowing—a constant sword of Damocles hanging over my head. But I wouldn't turn back for anything in the world. I'm too happy to regret anything.

“Don't worry. Cassandra is coming with me.”

“Good grief... I should probably feel sorry for your friend Mathew, then.”

I burst out laughing, though deep down, I suspect he's right. Cassandra, even before becoming a wolf, was a real tigress. But since her transformation, she's downright terrifying when she wants to be. She's the kind of woman you never want to cross.

“I'll be back soon—and with a new wolf for the pack.”

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# Chapter 1

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## *Mathew*

Another exhausting day, just like the others. I sigh as I climb the stairs leading to my apartment, clinging to the idea of the peace that awaits me there. I perceive all my neighbors with unsettling clarity. Every breath too loud, every argument, every child's cry. All these sounds strike me, fraying my already battered nerves. I feel trapped in my own skin. My bones ache to stretch, my wolf howls for release in my head. Despite the years, this sense of urgency never fades. On the contrary, it seems to be intensifying in recent months—ever since Lilou left.

For a long time, I believed she would be my redemption, my way of mastering the beast inside me. Unfortunately, she's gone, and she won't be coming back. She's in Silver City. I've heard of that place. I know what it means. She found her other half, and with that, all my hopes are gone.

I cross the threshold and shut the door hastily, savoring the silence that follows. Soundproofing the entire apartment cost me a small fortune, but it was worth every dollar. Tranquility is priceless. And beyond that, shielded from prying eyes and free from distractions, I can finally transform.

I barely have time to remove my clothes before the shift begins. My bones crack violently, and the transformation takes place in agony—just like every time. I pant, falling to my knees as my wolf seizes control of our being with brutal force. He's growing less and less tolerant of our situation. We are one. He understands our unique condition. But he can no longer adapt to it.

He wasn't made to live in the city. The overwhelming scents and ceaseless noises drive him mad, making him irritable—angry, even. And that's not even counting the lack of greenery, of vast nature where he could run free. Instead, he's confined to a human apartment, and I already know that when I regain control, I'll have to fix whatever damage he's caused.

My floor is ruined, covered in deep scratches, and my furniture... To an untrained eye, it probably looks like I had a dog that chewed up every corner.

I shift back into human form, exhaling heavily, trembling on the floor, drenched in sweat.

“Thanks for your cooperation...”

My rhetoric has no effect whatsoever on my animal, which lashes the air with its tail under my skull before curling up into a ball. It's finally calm, appeased. But for how long? I knew that lunar madness would eventually take hold of me. Still, I thought I had a little more time. I'm only twenty-eight. I shouldn't be affected by this illness for at least two more years, maybe more, depending on my wolf's will. Yet I can feel its claws sinking deeper and deeper into my being. I'm losing a battle with rigged results, and I'm alone in trying to solve this impossible problem. No woman awakens my desire. Lilou was the only one my animal accepted near him, and now... Now, lunar madness is consuming me, probably because of the abandonment of the one I had hoped to take as my mate. Fate is so devious! Haven't I already suffered enough, existing in solitude, far from a pack, from its comfort, and from the social bonds that are so essential to a wolf's balance? I'm ungrateful. It's already remarkable that I was able to live in peace under these conditions for so long. I guess everything must come to an end, and mine is fast approaching. I rub my face, filled with regret, as I head toward the bathroom.

The heat of the water loosens my muscles as the jet lashes against my skin, numbing my nerve endings in a way that feels almost blissful. A good meal after this, and I'll be as good as new—at least until the next episode. Unless it comes sooner than expected. I get the feeling that my moments of respite are shrinking more and more. I dry off vigorously, using my movements to rid myself of the pain caused by the transformation. Slipping into a simple T-shirt and loose shorts hanging off my hips, I then prepare a meal consisting mainly of barely cooked red meat—a way to comfort my wolf. He has a hunter's instinct, and he sorely misses the thrill of the chase, the kill. He especially loved tracking small prey on full-moon nights. But those are memories from another life, almost from another person. I finally doze off on the couch, my stomach full and my mind filled with strange dreams.

I grimace as my muscles tense up excessively. My awkward sleeping position has left me sore all over. I stretch as much as I can, working out the stiffness in my limbs while wondering what I'll do with my day. I have the day off. Most people look forward to these days with excitement. For me, they're the ones where I feel the most bored, not knowing what to do with myself and having too much time to think. When Lilou and Cassandra still lived in town, we used to spend these days chatting. But they're gone now.

Neither of them is coming back, according to the last message from the fiery redhead, and I no longer know what to do with my time on the days I'm not at the hospital. I'll start with a good breakfast... and maybe some cleaning. My wolf made a mess. My coffee table didn't survive his rampage. There's no point in trying to fix it. This time, I have no choice but to throw it out. Maybe I'll go buy a new one this afternoon. That'll keep me busy. Then again, the thought of stepping into a crowded store doesn't thrill me much.

I finish tossing the pieces of my furniture into the dumpster when my attention is caught by a scent I would recognize anywhere. However, when I turn my head, I see nothing except a few passersby walking along the sidewalk, oblivious to whoever might be in this alcove. To be fair, there's nothing in this corner except the building's trash bins. I must have imagined it. And yet, the feeling lingers, and the scent grows stronger as I step into the stairwell, followed by another just as familiar to my keen sense of smell.

Growing impatient, I take the stairs four at a time, barely pausing to breathe before finding, standing in front of my door, the two faces I've missed so much.

"Lilou, Cassandra."

Throwing my arms wide open, I pull them both into a hug, and they giggle as they return my embrace.

"We're happy to see you too."

I let them go, my suspicions confirmed the moment I catch their scent—they're werewolves. And from the way they wrinkle their noses in unison, I assume my secret is out.

"We should go inside your apartment."

Cassandra grimaces, pressing her hands to her ears.

"Please, say yes. The city is absolutely unbearable!"

I understand. I've gotten used to it, but for newly transformed werewolves, the contrast between Silver City and here must be awful. So I unlock the door and step aside, letting them enter before shutting it behind me.

"See? I knew it! Mathew soundproofed his apartment."

Cassandra chatters away, as usual, while Lilou stares at me so intently that I shift uncomfortably from one foot to the other. Eventually, I crack under the weight of her silence.

"Just say what's on your mind. You've always been able to talk to me."

“Exactly. I didn’t know we kept secrets from each other.”

Ouch. That stings. And she’s right. Ever since we became friends, she’s always confided in me—no pretense, no lies. But our situations aren’t the same.

“I couldn’t tell you. It’s a well-kept secret that has to stay that way. I assume your alpha informed you.”

“He might have mentioned it at some point, but I don’t listen to everything he says.”

She’s so nonchalant! Does she not realize the risk she’s taking if her alpha disapproves?

“You have to be careful, Lilou! Alphas have complete authority over the pack. He could exile you, or worse, if you put his people in danger.”

“Aaron would never do that.”

“You’re wrong!”

How can she be so naïve? Hasn’t she learned anything from her new family? Surely, they haven’t left her in the dark.

“Don’t tire yourself out, Mathew. Aaron will never act against Lilou because she’s his mate.”

I’m speechless at Cassandra’s clarification, which she finds highly amusing.

“You’re the alpha female?”

“So it seems, yes. In the end, it mostly means smiling a lot, talking, and driving my mate crazy when I disagree with him—which happens from time to time.”

I look at her with fresh eyes, ignoring the endless chatter of the pretty redhead who’s rambling about domineering mates.

“You’re so different...”

Lilou simply nods and places her hand on my arm.

“I know. So much has happened while I was gone. We have a lot of time to make up for.”

Without elaborating, she steps into my living room and sits down on my couch. I don’t miss the disapproving look she gives when she notices the sorry state of my floor.

“As for me, I could use a coffee.”

“Cassandra...”

“With one sugar. Thanks for offering.”

No point in arguing. I busy myself preparing the drinks while Lilou and Cassandra whisper so softly that I can't catch a single word. Not for lack of trying.

I find myself trembling in front of these two she-wolves, despite my six-foot-one frame. Under their sharp gazes, I feel small—like a defendant on trial. And I'm exhausted.

“What are you doing here? Shouldn't you be in Silver City, doing...”

I have no idea what they do there since I've ignored all their calls ever since Cassandra informed me she was moving there. Why delay the inevitable?

Lilou, instead of getting offended—unlike Cassandra, who's fuming—silences her best friend with a simple gesture. Whatever she says, she has the soul of an alpha female. She has the presence to match.

“Since when is visiting a friend forbidden? A friend who, by the way, doesn't pick up the phone anymore?”

Even though I regret how brutally we parted ways, it was necessary for my sanity. Then again, looking at my apartment, that's debatable.

“I had a lot of work.”

“Come on, Mathew. After all these years, you could come up with a better excuse!”

“Listen, Lilou, you know I adore you.”

I've lost count of how many times I imagined us bound together.

“But I've heard about Silver City.”

Lone wolves need to know about the packs within a hundred-and-twenty-mile radius to avoid trouble. Rule number one: never trespass on occupied territory.

“I figured out you weren't coming back because you found your soulmate. You don't need me in your life anymore.”

“Being part of the Silvermoon pack doesn't stop me from having friends, Mathew.”

“You know exactly what I mean. You're smart. You understand I'm a loner.”

“I did come to that conclusion, yes. I also know that sooner or later, the lunar madness will get to you.”

Her eyes scan the living room, and her irises gleam brighter, revealing the beast lurking beneath.

“I don't think I'm wrong in saying you're close to losing control.”

“That’s none of your business. You can’t do anything for me—you’re already bonded!”

My irritated tone leaves them both stunned. With that outburst, I’ve just laid bare my unspoken desires. Cassandra is the first to recover.

“You were hoping Lilou would eventually see you as more than a friend.”

I won’t apologize for the feelings she awakened in me. Lilou hasn’t had an easy life. Her struggles resonated with me.

Now that all my secrets are out, I’m curious to learn the real reason they’re here.

“What do you want from me, Lilou?”

“First of all, I miss you. That’s the main reason behind my decision.”

What decision is she talking about? Her eyes light up briefly before she continues.

“We’ve had some unfortunate events within the pack.”

I can sense her restraint. She’s withholding information—not that I blame her. Packs aren’t supposed to share their affairs with outsiders, especially not with loners. I’m an outcast among my kind.

“The thing is, we’re now without a healer.”

I’m not sure where she’s going with this. Or rather, I don’t dare believe it.

“I don’t see...”

Cassandra interrupts me with her usual bluntness.

“You know exactly what she wants. Lilou wants you to join the pack as our healer.”

They really do have a knack for leaving me speechless. Twice in just a few minutes—that’s impressive. I’m not the chattiest guy, but I’m not used to sitting there with my mouth hanging open, unable to find words as my thoughts race.

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