Luna was 12 when the bombs dropped and people rushed to the vaults.
After being rescued by Virgil, from a dying Vault, Luna learns how to survive in a nuclear wasteland. But when a simple supply run turns into the biggest fight for her life, who will she turn to for help?
I had a life before The Great War and Vault 111. I don't remember much of it, but I can still remember the way my mom sang in the shower, and how my dad was always working on the car. He had a thing for modifying the engine, to get as much mileage per gallon as he could. We weren't poor, but we weren't rich either. What we did have was each other though. At least until the bombs fell.

The day the Great War began was the day my life ended.

Well, the life I knew.

Mom was frantic, afraid to leave something we might need behind. Dad was cool as a cucumber, but then again he always was. He had signed us up for guaranteed entry into the vault a few weeks ago, and asked us to pack an emergency bag and leave it somewhere we could easily grab and go, if need be. I had packed a change of clothes, my tooth brush, my teddy bear, and some candy. Mom said I should only pack the essentials. Those were the essentials, to a twelve year old girl.

When we arrived at the Vault, they took our belongings and made us change into their blue and yellow Vault Suit. We were then escorted to a big room with many strange looking pods. We later found out they were called Cryo Chambers, or something. I didn't pay much attention to that part, I was too excited to climb inside one of them. The padding inside looked really comfy, and it had all sorts of important looking buttons I wanted to push. The Vault people helped each of us to climb in and get settled, before closing the pod doors and activating something. I could see mom across the isle from me, she mouthed "I love you" to me, and I mouthed it back. She looked scared. I couldn't see dad, he was on my right. I bet he was glad he had signed us up for this though.

There was a humming sound, the same one our fridge makes. The chamber was beginning to cool down. Condensation was forming on the glass, blurring the outside world. I was suddenly so very tired, my eyelids felt heavy, and darkness crept in from the edge of my vision.

The world went black, and all my senses dead.

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It felt like no time had passed, maybe 5 minutes had. It was still cold inside the cryo chamber, and opening my eyes was probably the most painful and drawn out experience I'd ever had. They felt so dry, and there was something cold and crusty, like frost, on them. It felt as though my eyes were glued shut, with ice. A groan of pain and annoyance managed to escape my throat. That hurt too.Bringing my hands up to my face, I rubbed my eyes, in hopes that would help to warm them up and make it easier to open them and see.

I could see that there was a man standing outside my pod, "Dad?" I croaked, confusion muddling my already hazy mind.

"Don't worry, everything is going to be alright."

That didn't sound like my dad. Who was that? Why were they standing there? What did they want? Where was mom and dad?

"Who are you?" I asked, terror creeping into my voice.
He turned away slightly and shifted something he was holding. His voice came back to me, slightly muffled, "I'm here to help you."
Virgil toiled away at his chemistry station, trying to recreate a cure for his super mutant condition. He had been human when he took Luna away from the desiccated remains of Vault 111. To this day, though he has refused to answer her questions as to why he came for her, has been honest and open about working for The Institute in the recent past. Luna accepted him for who he is, despite what he did while in that place.

"No, no. That's not right. What about..." Virgil mumbled to himself, mixing different liquids. Despite having spent the last ten years with him, she still had next to no clue what most of those ingredients were.

A yellow alarm clock Luna had found and brought home chimed the hour, indicating it was time for her to take another dose of Radaway and RadX. In a corner of the cave, Sam, their junkyard dog, growled his displeasure of the annoying clock. She smirked at his reaction before crouching down to rummage through the worn, red steamer trunk, where they kept any medicines they needed and might have use of, and found one of each left. "Shit." She sighed, grabbing them from the crate and standing back up.

"Language, young lady." Virgil chided, shifting from his spot as he turned around to face her.

"Sorry, but I kinda need more Radaway and RadX."

His face went grim, "How many, of each, are left?"

"You're looking at them." Luna replied, holding them both up. "We're pretty much out of everything except for Buffout."

Virgil adjusted his broken glasses, and rubbed the side of his misshapen green face. "Hmmm," he rumbled, lost in thought. They had always managed to find enough of anything they possibly needed out here in the vast Glowing Sea, but Luna was only human, and had felt the sickness caused by radiation poisoning in the past. It was getting harder to find supplies nearby, they were having to travel farther and farther away from our cave each time.

Luna sucked in the hot, rancid air of the cave, having grown used to it over the last couple years, "I could go to Sommerville Place and see if they have anymore Radaways. Or, I could try my luck with Diamond City and trade for more supplies." It was a suggestion, and a hopeful wish in one. She knew he didn't like the idea of her traveling that far, especially alone.

Virgil sighed, not happy with what needed to be done. "Fine. But only because I can't risk being the one to go there, and get caught by the Institute." Before Luna could say something smart, he added, "And you have to take Sam with you." At the mention of his name, Sam perked up and tilted his head expectantly.

"You should leave soon, so that those," he pointed at the Radaway and RadX, "don't wear out before you manage to get out of the Glowing Sea." Luna nodded, agreeing and realizing just how soon she would have to leave after using them. There was a backpack kept in the corner near their beds with some spare clothes and purified water already in it. Grabbing an old pipe pistol, a baseball bat, and the cap stash Luna was almost ready to head out. Sam was already up and sniffing at her bag by the time she found some cram and Instamash to stuff in the bag as well.
"Ready to go, boy?"

Sam wagged his scarred, stump of a tail, "Arrf!"

Virgil came over to their makeshift bedroom, "Please, be careful out there." He had a somber look about him, more so than usual. "I will." Luna embraced him in an awkward hug, due to his height and shape. This could very well be the last time they see each other, but she couldn't think about that now. Not as she was about to head out the door, so to speak.

It was an odd sensation, leaving the cave. Excitement, fear, anxiety, and yet hope was intermingled with it all. Luna wasn't just leaving the cave, she was going to get more supplies. *I'm travelling on my own! And farther than I'd ever expected!*

Stepping outside the cave, Luna was greeted by the yellow, toxic sky, the stagnant haze of radiation, and the smell of acrid decay stinging her nostrils and eyes. Nearly everything was dead, this close to ground zero, except for the ghouls, irradiated and mutated insects,...and the Deathclaws.

There was a kind of makeshift path, that led North-East. Following that path was the fastest and safest route down the side of the mountain our little Rocky Cave was on. At least it was safe until it led her straight to a Deathclaw fighting two Radscorpions. Falling into a crouch, Luna hid behind a sizable mound of rocks, "Psst! Sam! Here, boy!" Calling him to her side was the best she could do to keep them out of danger for the time being. They couldn't stay behind those rocks forever, not with the clock ticking down until her Radx wore out. Luna craned her neck up, looking for the safest way around the ongoing battle. Two against one. Either way they we were totally screwed. *Whoever survives this fight will pick up our scent and come looking for something to chow down on.* There was a steep ravine to the left of the skirmish, it had an overhang that would keep them out of sight, but there was no telling how far past it would take them. If even one of those monsters fell into the ravine Luna and Sam would be trapped. The sides were too steep to make a swift escape...but it was also their only chance to make it to past the creatures.

"No time like the present, eh, Sam?" She whispered to her companion before shuffling out from behind the rocks and down into the ravine. It was steeper than it looked, and resulted in Luna stumbling, sliding, and rolling down the side most of the way until she reached the bottom.

The ravine led out into the open and somewhat leveled off with the rocky, uneven ground. A few yards ahead of them lay the O'Neill Family Manufacturing plant in ruin. Relief turned into doubt as Luna could feel the Radx wearing off now. Doubt turned into dread as the crack of thunder sounded in the distance.

"Great, just what I need. A fucking Rad Storm to lighten up the mood." Sam growled, sensing the danger the storm would bring, as well.

Picking up the pace, Luna opted to run as far as she could to cover as much ground as possible. She had little time to waste with the storm churning overhead, darkening the skies. *Fuck, fuck, fuck,* she thought, stumbling a few times. Streaks of sickly green shot through the sky, followed by the crack of thunder. The wind had begun to pick up, tossing bits of garbage and dirt around. There was something in the distance. Some kind of tower. *The Relay Tower!*

"Come on, Sam, if we can make it to the Tower before dark then we'll be able to make it to Sommerville Place by midnight!" Luna huffed, refusing to slow down. Sweat was dripping down her neck, soaking the back of her plain grey shirt. She wiped the sweat that was beading on her forehead and beginning to run into her eyes. Thankful for Virgil sheering her hair a few weeks ago, Luna reveled in the feel of the humid air on her damp scalp. It seemed to help cool her down, in a way.
Luna and Sam had surpassed the Relay Tower well before midnight, only slowing for a break when she was having difficulty breathing. Sam was enjoying the run, his tongue lolling to the side as he panted away and furiously wagged his stump. Once Luna had caught her breath they began moving again. The radiation and taken its toll on her, especially after the storm hit. She had used the last Radaway when they reached the Relay Tower, unsure of whether or not she would survive long enough to make it out of the Glowing Sea.

They walked in comfortable silence, watching as the land slowly, and slightly, changed. The trees were still dead, but didn't look as devastated as the ones in the Glowing Sea. The skeletal remains of vehicles still had some colour to them, some even had a tire or two.

As Luna and Sam neared Sommervile Place, they could see the glow from the roaring fire at the top of the hill. Seeing that fire reminded Luna of food, and thinking of food reminded her stomach that she hadn't eaten since this morning. Her stomach began cramping and growling, demanding to be fed. "What I wouldn't give for a good meal and a hot drink right about now..." Luna mumbled to herself. Sam seemed to understand the feeling and showed it by giving a soft whine.

Gunshots, interrupting their food-reverie, came from the direction of the house.

Something was wrong.
Luna raced up the hill with Sam leading the way. She tripped, over a protruding root, and came crashing down on her knees. The pain and shock of the fall, mixed with the urgency to reach the house, had adrenaline pumping through Luna's veins. Her movements felt jerky and her knees were numb to majority of the pain, except for a sharp sting that let her know the skin had broken and was bleeding.

Without missing a beat she was back on her feet and scrambling to the top of the hill. The gunshots became a cacophony of noise. Screams of pain and cries of war were swallowed by the surrounding trees.

To her immediate right there was a man clad in military fatigues and scratched up combat armor, taking cover behind a splintered stump. Mid turn, as he was about to take aim at whoever he was firing at, he spotted Luna and began shooting in her direction instead. One of the bullets chewed its way through her thigh before she could even react and take cover. The rest either missed or grazed her arms and cheeks. Whoever this guy was, he wasn't a very good shot. Luna drew her pipe pistol and dove for cover behind the once yellow, rusted out, skeletal car that was to her left. The hole in her thigh oozed blood with every beat of her heart. Pulling the belt from the loops of her battered brown cargo pants, Luna wrapped it around her thigh, above the wound, and pulled it tight; effectively staunching much of the blood flow.

The shouts and most of the gunfire had quieted to just a few shots every couple seconds now. The fight was over, but there was no telling who came out victorious from Luna's vantage point. She hoped that Sam was alright. When Luna had fallen coming up the hill, Sam kept racing ahead and disappeared at the top.

"Hey!" Luna shouted, up and over her left shoulder. "Who survived?" She queried.

"That depends." Her attacker stated.

She let out an exasperated sigh, "On what? I'd really rather not get shot again." Came Luna's snide reply.

He paused. "Depends on whether or not you're a Gunner."

A branch snapping to Luna's right drew her attention. She turned to see what it was and was met with the butt of a shotgun to her temple. Vision blurry, she could only vaguely make out the figure of another man. He seemed quite large, possibly muscular, but Luna was having a hard time discerning what was what through the blur. The edges of her vision began to darken and fear snaked its way up her spine before everything finally went dark.

There was a jumble of voices, all talking over each other. Luna couldn't decipher anything in particular that they were saying, the words were just a buzz of noise. Slowly, she opened her eyes, and snapped them back shut. The light from the campfire had the same intensity of the sun, sending pain pulsing throughout her eye sockets. Groaning in pain, she tried to bring her hands up to cradle her throbbing head, and found they were cuffed and chained to the side door of a Vertibird. There was an image of a skeletal-esque head with an 'X' on the forehead paint on the side.

"Look who decided to join the land of the living!" There was a roar of hearty laughter from the group of men. A rustle of clothing, and clank of armor, drew Luna's attention. Someone had gotten up and came over to where she lay on the packed and rocky earth.
"Why did you come here?" The grizzled Gunner asked with a certain calmness that one only experienced before being ripped into by a Chameleon Deathclaw when they knew they had no chance of surviving. Luna turned toward him slowly, trying not to disturb her increasingly upset stomach and swollen head, "Does it matter?" She snapped.

"No, I suppose it doesn't." His blue gaze was intense and penetrating, as if he could see into her very soul. His shout was sudden and rang through her skull, "Tyler! Get her cleaned up. Can't have our little prize bleeding everywhere and drawing the attention of those damn mongrels."

Prize?! Who the hell do they think I am! Luna struggled against her cuffs.

"Wait, what are you talking about? I don't want anything to do with you and your merry little band of raiders!"

"First of all, we're not raiders. Second, I'm talking about bringing you back to HQ for our Captain. He's been awfully lonely these past few months, and you're just his type." He sneered and reached out to caress her cheek, then stood up and walked back to the group as Tyler came over to her. The threat was clear to her. She was going to be their toy, their slave.

Luna looked Tyler square in the eye as he kneeled down. There was something off about him, but she couldn't put her finger on it. She didn't have to ponder long because Tyler quickly set about cleaning her wounds with a bottle of vodka and cleanish looking rags. When he began to speak to her in such a low whisper, she had to strain to hear him.

"There's a 10mm strapped to the underside of the pilot's seat. There's also two guards watching our camp at all times." Tyler cast a casual glance over his shoulder, then went about slowly bandaging her thigh.

"Why are you telling me all this? And where is my dog? You didn't..." Luna choked on a silent sob before she could finish her question. Tyler looked up and tried not to falter in his bandaging, lest one of the others was watching a little too closely.

"I'm telling you because you don't want to be here as much as I don't, and I'm busting out of here as soon as I'm put on guard tonight."

Luna screwed up her face in confusion. "How are you going to manage that? You said there was two guards at all times, meaning someone else will know if you just pick up and run."

"Don't worry, I've already thought about that. You were kind of an unexpected addition to my escape though. Really, this whole day didn't go as planned." The bandage on her thigh was finished, and the rest of her cuts had been cleaned but were too minor to require anything more. Tyler began packing up his medkit as he quickly explained his plans for escaping.
At some point in the night Luna had fallen into a restless sleep. She dreamt of hideous monsters that wore rusty armor and had great big leathery wings, and a thousand eyes, who crawled on spider-like legs with human hands for feet. She tried to run from them but she felt like she was moving in slow-motion, with the ground swallowing her up like quick sand.

When Luna finally jerked awake her clothes where soaked with a cold sweat, and she was breathing heavily. She fought the panic that threatened to consume her every thought and breath by telling herself it was only a dream.

A horrendously cryptic dream. The sound of metal lightly clanking together drew her attention away from the panic. Craning her neck, Luna noticed that most of the mercenaries had gone to bed, just the two guards were left wide awake. One was slowly walking around the perimeter of their camp, laser rifle in hand, while the other sat at the campfire and heated a couple cans of pork 'n beans, by the smell of it. Neither one of them looked to be Tyler, so he must still be in his bedroll. There was a mumble of voices from a few feet away, casual conversation, Luna guessed from the slow cadence of the voices. Shifting, to get a better look around, made the wounds in her thigh burn and throb to the beat of her heart. Stilling her movements seemed to help slightly. As long as she didn't move too much the throb turned into a dull ache. Maybe Tyler would know if there was some Med-X in one of their bags, to alleviate some of the pain to come when it was time for them to move out. Leaning back against the Vertibird she was chained to, Luna tried to get comfortable and relax. Soon fatigue pulled at her eye lids, like lead on a fishing line, Luna struggled to keep her eyes open and found herself drifting back to sleep in a matter of minutes.

Someone was shaking her somewhat violently, until she rolled over and slapped their hands away. "What?" Luna snapped irritably, her voice husky from sleep.

"It's time." Private Tyler whispered, shifting one of the bags on his back to the dirt in front of her. "I think this is all your stuff. I couldn't find your gun so here's the one from the Vertibird, you're going to need it." A 10mm pistol was placed on top of her bag of things. Tyler rummaged in his pocket and pulled out a few clips of ammo and tucked them into a side pocket on the well-used backpack before moving to pick the lock on her cuffs. They fell away with a muted clank, landing in the dirt.

In no time at all Luna and Tyler had their bags and weapons secured and were bolting across the craggy, packed earth. Careful to avoid jutting rocks, roots, and landmines in the predawn darkness. Gradually, as the night grew into day, the land became marshy, sodden with radioactive water. By late noon Luna and Tyler stopped to rest before moving onward.

Tyler found a suitable rotted log for them to perch on. Luna sat down and retied the frayed, mismatched laces on her too-big boots, "What happened to the guards when you came to me last night?" She cast a glance at her captor-turned-rescuer. Tyler slowly took a sip from his can of purified water before he answered her question, giving himself a moment to consider his words. "It was supposed to be myself and one of the new recruits. I was woken up first and told to wake him up as well. I tried to wake him. Shook him hard as I could. Nearly yelled loud enough at him to wake the whole camp, until I noticed that he was dead."

Luna jerked her head up to look at him fully. Was he serious? Or was this all some sort of ploy to get her to trust him even further? Questions raced through her mind, going unvoiced.

Tyler continued explaining, casting his eyes downward out of...shame? Remorse?

"He . . . I saw an empty bottle of whiskey and a handful of Jet inhalers. I think that he intentionally
killed himself."

Luna blurted the first question of many, "What was his name?" Tyler looked up at her, remorse was clear in his eyes now. "Jacob. His name was Jacob."

"Was he forced to join up?"

"Yes."

"Why?" Anger flared in Luna’s chest, her face burned from containing it. He shrugged, "Because he was just some junky that needed to be taught discipline. He needed to learn control, and to get clean off that shit."

His remark only added fuel to the fire, and yet at the same time appeased some deep part of her. "Why did he, why did your leader . . . say those things about me?"

Now Tyler looked at her, fully facing her, "Because you're a woman," Luna's eye brows knitted together in what could have been disgust or confusion, "you're also beautiful in your own right. You've got Old World curves. You're not just some malnourished jet-head that could be knocked over by the wind if it blew in your direction." He continued. What Tyler said about her couldn't be true, Luna had never considered herself to be beautiful. What, with her shaved head, greenish-blue eyes, tattoos of wasteland monsters crawling up here arms, and what she considered to be excess fat riddling her body. Luna thought of herself as overweight and disgusting. No matter what she did to lose the weight, it stuck like glue. Virgil said it was because of her pure genetics, that hadn't been corrupted from years of irradiated breeding, therefore it was easier for her body to go into survival mode and cling to the fat - to ensure her own survival. It all sounded like bull shit to her, though. Fat was fat. Ugly was ugly. How could anyone even stand to look at her?

"Whatever" Luna huffed, a nerve had been touched, and she tried to cover it up by brushing off Tyler's explanation. He was obviously lying to her, just to be nice, which just made her even more pissed. In an effort to change the subject again, Luna snapped "Where the fuck is my dog, anyway. You didn't tell me last night, so tell me now. What did you do to him?" The accusation was clear in her voice. It was a wonder that Tyler hadn't shrank away from the tone, or outright shot her in the face.

"He's fine. I think." He snapped back at her.

"What the fuck is that supposed to mean? Sam is all I have out here! If anything has happened to him, it'll be on your head!" Luna now leaned forward, ready to spring into action at any sign of a threat. The threat clear on her face and in her voice.

"Look, would you just calm down already? He's fine, okay? Your bloody dog is fine. He ran off before we even took you."

In the history of mankind, no one had ever calmed down when told to 'calm down'. Luna lunged to her feet, grabbed her pack and stalked off faster than Tyler could say "What in the goddamn?".

She would come to her senses soon, remembering that she needed him. Then she would be back quicker than a mole rat on psycho, apologizing for her attitude . . . Wouldn't she?
Late afternoon turned into dusk quickly, and Luna continued to angrily stomp her way through the marshy land. By the time night had settled in, Luna stopped to look at her pipboy. The screen flickered before it came online. Her health stats were shown but she quickly turned the dial until she found the maps file. Zeroing in on her current location helped her see that there was a building of some kind, a few minutes walk to the north of her, it sat along the edge of what appeared to be the marsh turning into a riverbank. Either she was to rest there for the night, or keep walking north until she hit Diamond City. But that was at least a two day walk if she was fast and didn't take many breaks. As if her body had taken a vote, Luna's knees buckled and her wounds opened up again, seeping fresh blood through her bandages. Too bad she hadn't thought to ask Tyler for some Stimpaks or MedX before storming off. With a sigh that sounded more like a groan, Luna pulled herself up and started heading towards the location.

Black clouds darkened the night sky, blocking out what little light the sliver of moon provided, foretelling of a thunderous radstorm. Fat drops of acid rain assaulted the earth, encouraging Luna to veer away from the marshy bank, fearing it would make the trek dangerous in the current weather situation. She scrambled up a soggy slope, effectively covering herself in mud. The climb turned out to be harder than she thought it would, but at the top she was greeted with the sight of rusted out cars, what used to be rest rooms, a small cabin further up the hill, and a dead mirelurk. Stench from the rotting flesh hit her nose like a ton of bricks, making her eyes water.

Nothing smelled quite like a dead mirelurk.

Through the blur of tears, Luna spotted the chipped red paint of a Nuka Cola vending machine and made a beeline straight for it. Not ten steps later a loud buzzing filled the air, resulting in every hair on the back of her neck standing on end. Luna reached for the gun, that was tucked into the holster at her hip. Flicking the safety off, and trying not to stumble, Luna dove for cover behind the shell of a red car, at the sight of a couple of Stingwings. It seemed as though she was taking cover behind cars a lot lately.

A flash of green light flooded the landscape and the air took on a greenish haze-like quality. The first Stingwing flew past her, then circled back, having spotted it's prey.

Thunder crashed in the distance.

A second Stingwing approached from Luna’s left. They wasted no time in attacking her with furver. The mutated bugs took turns striking at her with their long needle-like mouths, in an attempt to latch on to their meal. One managed to stab her right shoulder, driving her to the ground, on her back. Luna screamed, the pain was unlike anything she had ever felt before. Rolling to her uninjured side allowed her to push back at her attackers and bolt for the possible safety of the restrooms.

One stall had collapsed in on itself and would provide no purchase for climbing up and away. Not when she was bleeding and covered in mud. Luna slammed open the only standing stall, ran inside, and locked the door behind her. She pushed the skeleton from the grimey toilet, planted herself on it, and braced her feet against the door. Inside the restroom the buzzing was louder, echoing off the walls in an eerie way. One of the Stingwings rammed into the door a couple times before one of them tried crawling under the door to reach it's dinner. Luna took aim and fired her gun, unloading three rounds into the creature before it finally collapsed in a pool of it's own blood, dead. The second bug tried flying above the door, and startled Luna. She fired at it wildly, wasting four shots before the fifth finally blew the Stingwing's brains out. The smelly goo splattered across the rotting ceiling, dripping down in great clumps of grey matter and shattered exoskeleton. Luna doubled over and
heaved up the contents of her stomach, and continued to retch for a few more minutes, until she was
shaking from the effort and exhaustion. She wiped her mouth with the back of a shaky hand,
holstered her smoking gun, and slowly unlocked the door. Careful not to step on the carcasses, Luna
exited the restroom.

She stood just outside the doorway for a moment, taking deep breaths to clear the stench from her
nose, to no avail. The Nuka Cola vending machine beckoned her with it's iconic red paint, which
seemed to glow in the sickly greenish hue of the radstorm.

Luna glared at the machine begrudgingly, unsure if it was even worth the trouble of nearly being
skewered and drained by hideously mutated mosquitos. They were bad enough two hundred years
ago, when they were tiny. She shuddered just thinking about a whole swarm of them, at their current
size.

Turning, Luna walked towards the vending machine and thanked her lucky stars. Six whole bottles
of Nuka Cola stared back at her through the scratched glass door. Luna pulled her pack off her
shoulders and stuffed the six bottles of Nuka inside. It had definitely been worth the fight. She
checked the cigarette machine and garbage bin as well, coming away with two packs of musty
cigarettes, a beat up tin of ancient coffee grounds, and a can of pork and beans, which she stuffed
into her bag, for later.

Luna walked around the restroom building towards the cabin that sat just a few short yards away.
Would it be worth it to check it out? She didn't have a lot of ammo left, and if she was attacked
again, she would likely die before she got the chance to flee. Shaking her head, Luna avoided the
cabin and continued on down the rocky path towards her destination.

A cabin, that looked more like a shack, sat nestled between a handful of trees, about five or six feet
above the soggy ground. Moss hung from the sides creating a kind of curtain below it. There was a
make-shift ramp that led from the ground, onto another shack, and then up to the tree-shack. Several
boats formed a kind of 'bridge' from one side of the river to the other. In the distance, Luna could see
two nests of eggs in the mud. Groaning, she came to a full stop to assess the situation further. From
where she stood it appeared as if the eggs had all been smashed, but for all she knew they had
probably hatched. She also couldn't see any signs of the full grown Mirelurks, that were known to
stand sentinel to their precious offspring. But their lack of visible attendance didn't mean anything.
With her luck there was probably a mirelurk hiding beneath her, waiting for the perfect moment to
break through the soggy earth and attack her.

Luna broke out in a cold sweat, making her palms slick. Thoughts of all the ways she could be
ambushed and killed plagued her mind. Reaching for the 10mm at her side, her hands trembled.
Luna slowly creeped forward, careful to avoid any mines or possible Mirelurks.

Approaching the cabin and ramp, Luna spotted a picnic table with a rusted blue cooler on top, a
camp fire with a big stew pot, and could finally see that there was actually a second cabin on the
ground beneath the ramp. It would be about as safe to sleep in, as the one above it, since both
were fairly open to the elements and had no doors to at least hinder or discourage predators, but she
checked it for any forgotten supplies. Poking her head inside, she saw a blood spattered chem box to
her immediate right, and a dirty mattress with the long-ago rotted remains of someone's skeleton in
the middle of the cabin.

Her jaw clenched.

Luna had problems with seeing the remains of people, no matter the state of decay. The sight always
left her feeling sick, apprehensive, angry, and then finally empty. The feeling of emptiness was
something she had developed over the years as her own way of protecting her mind. Perhaps to
block out any unresolved emotions she had about her deceased parents.

Turning away, she continued to scout the area. Rounding the corner so she was facing the trees that the second cabin was suspended between she saw the reason for the smashed eggs, and lack of Mirelurks. It looked as if their corpses had been gathered up into a pile. Chunks of flesh, legs, and claws looked to be cut or ripped from their bodies. Perhaps harvested by who ever had killed them, or maybe a scavenger had been attracted by the rancid smell and had themselves a feast - based on the scattered lumps of flesh.

Either way, it was a bloody, stinking mess.

Luna gagged, then quickly covered her nose and mouth with her free hand. There would be no point in wasting time and energy heaving what little contents were in her stomach, seeing as she still hadn't eaten in, and already puked up anything she had in her stomach.

Walking back to the ramp, Luna limped up it towards the upper most level. She was surprised to find a lamp that still burned, radaway, a carton of dirty water, and a full bottle of vodka on top of a book case. At least she would be able to drink away the her pain tonight.

Out of the corner of her eye, the glint of green metal sat undisturbed from beneath the little book case. It was an ammo box.

Luna knelt down on her good knee, careful not to open her bullet wound any further than necessary, and pulled the box towards her. It was unlocked! Inside lay a jumble of .45 rounds and a box of .38 rounds. Shrugging off her backpack, avoiding her wounded shoulder, Luna opened a side pocket and stuffed the ammunition inside. Who knew if she would need it or not later on. If not, she could always trade it for food at the Diamond City Market. Or maybe she could eat one of her 10mm rounds if she got desperate enough...

Luna left her bag in the cabin and limped down to the second one to grab the mattress and haul it up the ramp. There was no way she would be caught dead sleeping down on the ground where the river could flood and sweep her away, drown her, irradiate her even more, or bring more predators to her. Once inside the second cabin with the skeleton, she gently kicked it to the side of the room, and bent to grab the mattress. Spotting the dried blood on it, she quickly decided to sleep on the other side of it.

"Gross..." Luna muttered to herself, pulling the mattress to stand on its side. It was pleasantly lighter than she had expected. Perhaps from all the years it had spent rotting.

The move up to the cabin had been quick and painless, for the most part. Jog-limping back down to the ground cabin, Luna grabbed for the luggage case and unzipped it, revealing a set of raider armor for her arms and chest. They were a bit rusty but would be far better protection than her shirt and cargo pants. Hopefully the chest piece would fit and fully cover her full breasts, and the arm pieces would actually strap all the way around her arms. Looking down, Luna saw another ammo box that held some plasma cartridges and more .45 rounds. She pulled on the raider armor as swiftly as she could manage, struggling slightly with how to properly secure the armor, so it wouldn’t slip and expose any vulnerable areas. Once strapped on, Luna grabbed the ammo and chem boxes and headed back up to the uppermost cabin.

Placing herself on her newly acquired bed, Luna opened the chem box and pulled out the red inhaler and strange looking syringe. Was this medX? Luna studied the syringe, unsure if she should be using it or saving it for later, to find out what it was from someone who was far more familiar with medical supplies, than she was.
Luna dined on two hundred year old pork and beans, and a bottle of Nuka Cola. She ate the beans with her fingers, and used the now-empty Nuka bottle to mix some of her vodka and another bottle of Nuka Cola. It was strong and hard to swallow, burning her throat as it made its way to her stomach. Maybe next time she wouldn’t mix so much vodka into the Nuka, but it did the trick and took some of the edge off from the pain.

With everything safely tucked back inside her bag, Luna laid down on the lumpy rotten mattress, gun in hand and facing the entrance, and settled in to get a bit of sleep before making the trek to Diamond City in the morning.
Luna didn't wake up so much as become aware of the extreme discomfort her new armor caused her; combined with the cold sweat that soaked through her dirty clothes. Trying to sit up was futile, as a massive throbbing headache made itself present. It was probably from her little Meet & Greet with the butt of that Gunner's weapon, but she couldn't be sure.

Luna groped around for her gun in the dark, the only light she could see by was the dim green hue emanating from her Pipboy, which wasn't nearly enough light. The lantern had gone out at some point while she slept, as such, Luna was lucky she hadn't knocked it over and set herself on fire.

something nagged at the back of her mind, pulling her thoughts in another direction. Slowly, Luna realized something peculiar, Why is it still dark outside? I feel as though I've been asleep for ages. I couldn't have sweat this much in just a few short hours...could I?

Luna turned her Pipboy on, fully illuminating the tiny shack's room, and checked the date and time.

"What the fuck?!" She exclaimed, shocked to see that she had slept for nearly thirty hours.

"There is no bloody way I drank myself into a coma. How...." confusion rippled through her mind. Luna finally found her gun, it had been cast into one of the far corners near the entryway. Had she thrown it there in her sleep it wouldn't be a surprise. Luna often thrashed and kicked in her sleep, which she had found out the hard way when she constantly woke up with bruises on her hands and legs, and once even had one on the back of her head. Virgil had told her it was from 'throwing herself' at the wall, and onto the ground, and that perhaps her dreams and nightmares were too emotional for her to handle. Little did he know just how close he was to the truth, that she often dreamed about when she had gone to see her parents in that vault.

Virgil had trekked across the Commonwealth with her when she was 14, back to Vault 111, upon her insistence and constant questions. The sight of her parents' unrecognizable rotting corpses, half consumed by something, or someone, had been too much for her. The nightmares that followed had spoken a testament to that.

Stumbling to her feet, Luna adjusted the armor so it sat more comfortably, and grabbed her bag from the floor boards. She slung it over her shoulders and stepped outside to begin the long journey to Diamond City.

The Stranger

The stranger had stopped for a quick piss, but before he could even unzip his black pants he spotted someone, a few yards away, stumble and then fall face first into the grass. They didn't move.

Grumbling, the stranger drew his shotgun and held it at the ready, not knowing if it was a clever trap or someone in need of help, then slowly approached the prone figure on the ground.

A girl? Dead?

He toed her. Nope.

Circling her cautiously, the stranger poked at her with his shot gun, careful to not fire a round
accidentally. At this point he didn't know where to find a trader to get more ammunition, and he
couldn't afford to waste the last box of it. Of course, she might have some ammunition he could
liberate from her corpse. Then again, it didn't look like she had a shotgun hidden on her, or in her
backpack, so it wasn't likely she had the shells he needed.

Upon closer inspection he deduced that she had probably fainted from blood loss, as the wound in
her shoulder was currently oozing.

"Shit," he whispered to himself. "Shit, shit, shit!"

The stranger stood back up and paced, keeping an eye on the girl on the ground. He went back to
her side and cautiously rolled her over. She didn't move, other than limply complying with his
actions. The girl had a pale but pretty face, not breath-taking, but pretty. Gently arching brows, long
dark eye lashes, a straight nose that was neither too small nor too big, a wide mouth with thin lips.
No, not thin, they were delicate, and there was a faint scar in the middle of her lower lip. She had
tattoos riddling her arms, like sleeves, it was hard to tell from all the blood and dirt but it looked like
they depicted deathclaws, mirelurk kings, and perhaps radscorpions. What an interesting choice.
Also interesting was the fact that she was not a malnourished skeleton of a woman, like many of the
people nowadays. She had meat on her bones, a healthy amount. Enough to get her through a hard
winter with little to no food. Did she run away from the Institute perhaps? Did that make her a synth,
or an experiment of theirs? How else would she look so healthy in this decrepit wasteland, where
clean water and proper food was so scarce.

Just then her eyes fluttered open, they were icy blue and held confusion. After a few seconds her
eyes glazed over and she became limp again, her hand falling from her hip, just outside of his view.
She was going to pull her gun on me! The stranger was angered, mostly at himself for not noticing
sooner. He could have easily been killed by her, and he wouldn't have even seen it coming.

But, he was also impressed that she still had some fight left in her, when obviously her body was
weakening. The girl didn't look like a raider, besides the bulky armor. And usually they travelled in
packs. Perhaps she had killed some and stole their armor after escaping the Institute? Not likely,
simply because she appeared to be alone, nevermind the fact that she was missing the harsh makeup,
severe scars, and didn't look like a jet-head.

The stranger slung his shotgun across his shoulders, and began walking away. Not my problem, I
don't owe her shit. And I definitely don't need anyone else trying to brainwash me into doing their
bidding.

Then why does it feel wrong to leave her laying there?

With a put-upon sigh, the stranger turned and stomped back towards her, grumbling expletives under
his breath. He stooped down and slide an arm beneath her knees and neck, then, as gently as he
could, put her over his shoulder and began walking back the way he had come.

After a couple hours, the stranger had to stop and adjust the way he was carrying her. The bag she
wore kept sliding and almost falling off of her, or would clank against his shotgun. No point in
attracting any predators when he had a wounded person bleeding all over him.

He slid the girl's back pack over his shoulders, it was too small for his broad shoulders, but didn't
impead his actions.

During the long walk, he considered other possibilities, besides blood loss, as to why she had fainted
like that. He also considered whether he should be taking her to see Doctor Sun in Diamond City, or
Doctor Amari in Goodneighbor. Seeing as Diamond City abhors ghouls, they probably wouldn't let
him past the gates. They would probably also shoot him on sight, and if he survived, would they accuse him of kidnapping the smoothskin in order to justify their attack?

Goodneighbor it is then. At least he had a history with Doctor Amari and the people there.

The town, when they reached it, was naught but old debilitated buildings, crumbling in upon themselves, open storefronts run buy an assaultron and a prewar ghoul, the Hotel Rexford, the Memory Den, and The Third Rail bar. All of which he was intimately familiar with, and had been trying to leave behind.

The girl hadn't stirred since trying to pull a gun on him, until now at least. Her face was buried his back, her groans muffled by the leather and armor. He picked up his long legged pace, reaching The Memory den in less than three minutes. No one dared stop him, not when they read murder in his eyes.

Who stopped a deadly looking six foot two inch ghoul anyway? No one, that's who.

He stormed through the lounge of the Memory Den, barely registering Irma's greeting, and raced down the stairs nearly running into the good Doctor herself.

"I need your help." He grunted.

"With her, by chance?" Amari was pointing at the girl over his shoulder, with an assessing look on her face. She had been startled by the loud stomping of him racing down the stairs, and had figured out there was some kind of emergency. She just wasn't expecting to see Him ever again.

"Yes."

"Lay her down over here." Amari lead the way to an empty Memory chair. It was the best she had, under the circumstances.

Amari walked around the room collecting medical instruments, bags of blood, and Chems. "Do you know what's wrong with her?"

"Gee doc, figured the blood would have given it away."

Amari didn't bat an eye at his sarcastic retort, merely set up her tools on a nearby rolling table and set about removing the girl's armor and cutting off her bloodied clothing. The stranger stepped back, allowing the doctor the space to work.

"You remember that I specialize in brains, and that I'm not exactly a 'doctor', correct?" She cast the man, who was no man, not a stranger to her, a questioning look. He nodded, but didn't say a word.

"Alright then," she mumbled to herself and peeled away the last of the sticky, bloodied clothing scraps leaving the girl in her plain underwear, "let's see what we have here."

Various cuts and bruises riddled the unconscious girl's body. The most severe of wounds was the gunshot in her thigh, and what appeared to be a stab wound in her shoulder.

"Oh!" Amari started, going straight to the wound in the girl's shoulder. "What did this?" She said, more to herself than anyone in particular. The wound was angry and red, the flesh swollen and hot to the touch. Gently touching the flesh around the wound, Amari could feel it throbbing in time to the beat of the girl's heart. It hadn't healed at all, in fact, it was getting worse. There was dried blood around it, and fresh blood and yellow goo inside it.
"This is infected!" Amari reached for a can of purified water, a scalpel, and a bottle of vodka that was stashed on the lower tier of the rolling table.

Well that explains a lot.

"If we can't get this wound cleaned up, and the infection cured, she could die. Her blood will become septic, resulting in a toxic environment for her organs." Amari spoke rapidly, trying her best to wash out as much of the thick puss as she possibly could with the purified water and vodka.

"Wait, we?" The tall stranger's brows drew together in confusion. "I'm no doctor, I can barely clean my own wounds." He continued, in his accented gravelly voice.

"That doesn't matter, I need you to go to Diamond City and find Doctor Sun. He will have antibiotics. We'll need those if you want me to help this girl." She reasoned, trying not to sound like she was giving an order.

"I can't go to Diamond City, they won't let me in." The stranger angrily grumbled.

Amari dropped what she was doing and turned her full attention to the ghoul standing before her, "Find another way in, then!"

What the hell have I gotten myself into?
Chapter 7

Leaving Goodneighbor, the stranger followed the cracked pavement that veered to the right, eventually becoming packed earth. Gunshots sounded in the distance, echoing off the metal walls of buildings built centuries ago. Garbage littered the dirt road, some of it pushed into small mountains that seemed to have fused together over the years.

Taking a left, and then another left, the stranger trekked past the mutilated corpses of super mutants and raiders alike, beginning his journey to Diamond City, for a girl he didn't even know.

The first thing Luna became aware of was the burning pain in her shoulder. Extreme discomfort and nausea followed swiftly after.

A clinking sound drew her attention to the fact that she wasn't alone, and that she didn't know who or what was out there.

Peeling her eyes open, she was briefly blinded by the bright light that shone from ancient fluorescent bulbs. Turning her head, Luna swept the red-bricked room with a quick and accessing glance, looking for obvious dangers. The biggest threat was the strange woman, dressed in a white lab coat, and black pants. She didn't look like a wastelander, nor raider. But that didn't mean she wasn't a threat.

Virgil had warned Luna, through the years, that people weren't always who or what they claimed to be, and to not be fooled by outward appearances.

The woman's shoulders suddenly tensed, and she whipped around. Surprise warred with concern on the woman's tan face, her almond shaped eyes betraying nothing else.

"You're awake!" She sounded shocked, as if she hadn't expected Luna to survive the night.

Luna struggled to remain still when all her instincts were screaming for her to get up and pull her gun on the stranger. Instead, she opted for information, first, seeing as she was in nothing but her skivvies.

"Who are you?" She queried in a low voice.

"I'm Doctor Amari. And you are...?"

Luna was hesitant to answer, hesitant to give this woman any kind of information that might lead back to Virgil. She knew full well that the Institute was still hunting him, despite their efforts to make it look like they don't care. No one just walked away from all that technology, all that research, all those secrets, and lived to tell about it. No one, except Virgil. There had been a handful of times when Luna had spotted an older model synth fighting off whatever dangers lurked in the Glowing Sea. Usually they traveled in packs of two or three, and they were always destroyed before ever reaching the cave.

Ignoring Amari's question about her identity Luna dug for more information. "Where are my clothes? Are you working for the Institute? Is that where we are? How long have I been here? What did you do to me?" She couldn't stop the flood of questions that fell from her lips.

Amari raised both hands in surrender, "Woah, woah, I'll answer all your questions in due time. You need rest first, though. You have a nasty infection on your shoulder. And your clothes didn't make
"Please, take it easy. The man who found you has gone to get some antibiotics, which you need."

Luna was confused by the doctor's statement. She didn't remember seeing anyone, and she definitely didn't remember being carried anywhere.

"What man? Where am I?" She asked, afraid of all the possible answers.

"You're in Goodneighbor." Amari had changed directions and grabbed a can of purified water from a desk to her right. "Would you like something to drink? You've been out for quite some time."

Luna accepted the water almost absently, trying to digest what little, but shocking, information she had received. She was vaguely aware of Goodneighbor, but unsure of where it was in relation to where she needed to be; which was Diamond City.

Luna took a sip of the water, and it quenched a thirst she didn't know she had. She took another sip, and eventually chugged the whole can of water with a satisfied sigh. Amari took the empty can from the girl and tossed it into a different nearby, empty, trash bin.

"I'm Luna." She said almost shyly, "I need to find my dog and get to Diamond City. Can you tell me how to get there, from here?"

Amari turned back towards Luna, with a stern look and firm tone she said, "You can't leave yet. Not until you are healed."

That just seemed to piss off Luna, but she kept her mouth shut. Being rude to the person who was helping her wouldn't be wise. Not yet, at least.

"Well, how long until this guy gets back?"

Amari was quick to answer while she went back to her desk, "A couple hours. Why don't you try to sleep. It'll go by faster." she said over her shoulder.

And leave me vulnerable to you to pumping me full of whatever drugs you fancy? In your dreams lady.

"Sure." Luna whispered, skeptically. She closed her eyes with the intent of staying awake and listening for anything suspicious Amari might try. Before Luna knew it, though, she had fallen back into a deep sleep.

When Luna next woke, it was to the sound of voices. One had a familiar accent, from before the Great War, it was deep, rumbling, and very gravelly, like he didn't use it often. The other voice was accented as well, and somewhat familiar, making it easy for Luna to quickly identify it as Amari.

Trying not to draw undue attention, Luna peeked open an eye, looking in the direction of the voices. It was an awkward angle and Luna soon found herself slowly turning her head to accommodate her
position.

She saw a giant of a man, clad in black leather. He was turned away from where Luna lay, but she could see that his head and face were wrapped in some kind of a cowl, that muffled his deep voice. She studied the new stranger, gathering as much info as she could, in case she needed to make a quick escape. Strapped to his back, overtop of his heavy leather jacket was a large double barrel shotgun. A combat knife was strapped to his hip, and a satchel hung from a belt on the opposite hip. His black leather pants were torn in the knees but otherwise held together well enough, cupping a firm and nicely rounded backside. His black combat boots were worn down in the heel, from walking many miles on the hot, dry earth, and scuffed and bloody on the toe.

Luna found herself admiring his derrière, and the toned muscles in his legs and shoulders. It should have been outlawed to look that good from behind. Reining in her rampant hormones, she gave herself a mental shake and went back to assessing his threat level.

He was definitely a threat. Luna just hoped he wasn't a Gunner.

Finally paying attention to their conversation Luna was fairly intrigued as they talked like they were old acquaintances, or possibly friends.

"...and have you been keeping away from Daisy on purpose? I hear she's been angry you didn't stop to say goodbye to her before you left." Amari prattled on. The big man just grunted and shifted his weight.

"She knew it was just for fun." He ground out. Straight to the point, and honest. Interesting.

Just then he turned to face Luna and she realized she had stopped pretending to be asleep, and had both eyes open, staring directly at them. His gaze pierced her very soul, it seemed, giving her a flash of guilt for every thing she had just thought about him, as if he heard it all. Of course, it didn't help that she remembered her lack of clothing, and the fact that he could see nearly every inch of her naked, plump body. That thought alone sent the heat of a deep blush racing across Luna's cheeks.

"Ahhh, you're awake!" Amari swept past the mountain of a man and went over to Luna, "How do you feel?" Amari asked, while helping her to sit up.

"Uhm, groggy and very sore. But who's that guy?" Luna pointed a dirty, chubby finger at the stranger in the room, her curiosity getting the better of her.

The man in question grunted. She couldn't tell if he was offended or not, but she also didn't know him well enough to care, especially after that pang of guilt his look had given her.

Amari gently smacked the palm of her hand to her forehead and said, "I completely forgot! Luna, this is Charon, a friend of mine and also the man who brought you here. Charon, this is Luna, she had a serious infection that you helped cure."

Luna squinted at him, giving him another once-over. Her eyes lingered on the knife clipped to a belt on his hip, her mind racing through all the possible ways he could kill her with just that knife, as well as all the ways she could get close enough to rip it away and defend herself if she needed to.

"My eyes are up here." Grumbled Charon, annoyed that the girl, Luna, was staring at his crotch. He then turned backed to Amari and almosted whispered, "And I'm not a man. Not anymore."

Luna's eyes had snapped back up to Charon's head, searching his cloaked face for his shadowed eyes. She couldn't quite see them but they had a sort of faint glow about them. The kind of indistinguishable glow one used to see, before the war, when the non-fusion powered batteries in a
flashlight would lose power and slowly die, leaving the item they powered with nowhere near enough energy to light up all the way; resulting in said faint glow.

Amari didn't say anything further, to Charon. Instead, she turned to Luna and requested that she test her shoulder to see if it had healed up enough for her to leave.

"Are you kicking me out, Doc?" Luna teased while raising her arm and gently rotating it, stretching tender, fresh muscle tissue and skin.

Charon audibly groaned at her terrible joke, and crossed his arms. Doing so had his leather jacket creaking, and straining against his biceps. Damn him for being so visibly ripped.

"Well, Luna, this isn't exactly a clinic, nor is it a hotel. If you want a place to stay and rest up then you can check in at the Rexford. I'm sure they would be happy to rent you a room for the night."

Amari had a point, and it didn't surprise Luna, but she did find herself a little insulted. The fact that Amari had assumed she would stay there any longer than she needed too, especially since Luna had made her mission clear from the moment she woke up.

Without missing a beat, Luna gathered her things, said a quick and quiet "Thanks for patching me up." and briskly walked out the door. She didn't bother stopping to get dressed, instead opting for pulling a spare tee and ragged jeans from her pack and pulling them on as she walked. The jeans were trickier, Luna found herself hobbling towards the front door, thankful there were no obvious onlookers in the main lobby. She stopped at a nearby chair to pull on dirty socks, and her clunky boots.

As she finished tying the last knot in her laces, a soft noise drew Luna's attention to the end of the room. She spotted a woman draped elegantly across a chaise lounge chair with a cigarette in one hand, and a glass of amber liquid in the other. Realizing the water earlier had done nothing to quench her true thirst now, Luna licked her lips and asked the woman "Do you know where I could get a stiff drink around here?"

Grinning, Irma replied, "Sure I do."
Chapter 8

The Third Rail was unlike any other bar in the Commonwealth. For starters, the bartender, Whitechapel Charlie, was a foul mouthed Mr. Handy, whom the customers didn't seem all too bothered by. In fact some people seemed to enjoy having it mouth off to them.

Second, the Third Rail had live music, in the form of a beautiful woman, with black hair and a tight red dress, by the name of Magnolia. Luna couldn't be sure of her last name, no one seemed to know what it was; not that it truly mattered. Last names were an Old World thing, used to keep track of lineage.

Luna swiveled away from Magnolia crooning onstage, so she was sitting properly at the bar. She took a swig of her beer, grimacing at the warm, and stale, flat flavour. The only reason she kept drinking it was in order to get a nice buzz going, and that was something the beer was still good for.

Anger welled up inside Luna, anger at herself mostly. How could she have let her wounds get so bad that she fainted? Fainted! I might as well have swooned at Charon's feet just from looking at him...oh wait, I almost did. What is wrong with me?! He probably thinks I'm so pathetic and weak that I can't take care of myself.

Luna shook her head in disappointment, and finished her beer. Slamming the empty bottle on the counter, Luna decided it was time to leave. She bought a bottle of whiskey for the road, and turned around in her seat only to be greeted with the sight of two Gunners coming down the stairs at the back of the room. They stopped to talk to a group of wastelanders, and thankfully hadn't seen her yet. Luna slipped from her squeaky seat and tried to silently creep away. The only possible place for her to hide was to her left. There was a hallway along the far end of the wall, near the back of the room, that hopefully led to an emergency exit. A wooden sign hung above the doorway read 'VIP'. Luna prayed to whatever God still existed that the red glow in the hall was from an exit sign.

To Luna's extreme disappointment, the hallway veered to the right and ended in a room. She nearly tripped over her own feet at the unexpected sight of a man, pouring himself a drink, in the room. He was sitting in what appeared to be an anitque red chair, or perhaps it was brown. Luna couldn't discern the colour due to the red lighting. Not that it really mattered.

He looked up, curiosity flashed across his face before he registered her appearance. Tattered clothes, tattoos, blood, dirt, and grime on her face and arms, and the gun on her hip.

"If you're looking for the best sniper in the 'Wealth, that's me. And if you're looking for a hired gun it's two hundred and fifty caps for my services." He placed the bottle of bourban on the table next to him before sipping from his glass.

"I need to hide. Help me and I'll pay you whatever you want. I need to get out of here fast though!" Luna was nearly on her knees begging this man for help.

"Woah, woah, who's after you? And how much do you have on you right now?"

Luna patted the pockets on her pants, then her chest, and ended in pulling her backpack off and throwing it at his feet.

"Here! Take everything I have. The caps are in a side pocket somewhere. You can sell whatever's in
there too, just hide me!" Her voice raised an octave, fear causing her skin to grow cold and clammy.

The merc glanced down at her bag and pushed it to the side with his booted foot, "Uhm, well you didn't tell me who you were trying to hide from yet, but I guess you can try to hide behind or under that couch there." Luna followed the direction of his hand, her hopes falling, but she was just desperate enough to try anything at this point. She scrambled over to the couch and pushed it away from the wall, glancing around for anything else she could use.

"I'm MacCready, by the way."

"Luna." She huffed in reply, the couch being heavier than it looked. Luna got down on her hands and knees, and shimmied in behind the couch, trying to take up as little space as possible, and make the couch look as natural as possible while it sat pushed away from the wall a little. MacCready came over to help her by pushing the couch closer to the wall and effectively trapping her back flat against the wall while she tried to support her weight on one arm and her left knee. It was the most awkward, uncomfortable position she had ever been in.

MacCready stooped to grab her bag, and hefted it onto the couch. As he turned away to, resume drinking, two Gunners strode into the room. They eyeballed everything, as though they were checking for hidden enemies, weapons, or escaped prisoners.

"Robert Joseph MacCready." One of the Gunners said, it was almost a greeting, but sounded too hostile. Perhaps they knew each other? That would certainly explain how the man knew MacCready's full name.

"Winlock. Barnes." MacCready bit back, sinking into his antique chair and gulping his bourbon. He grabbed the bottle and untwisted the top, pouring himself another drink. This time the glass was full, nearly to the brim.

"Can't say I'm surprised to find you in a dump like this one." Sneered Winlock.

MacCready didn't waver under the Gunners' heavy stare. "I was wondering how long it would take your blood hounds to track me down, Winlock. It's been almost three months...don't tell me you're getting rusty." There was mock concern in MacCready's words. He raised his glass for another sip, feigning comfort and confidence in his own territory. "Should we take this outside?" He continued, before Winlock or Barnes could interject.

"It ain't like that. I'm just here to deliver a message." Snapped Winlock. His fingers itched to pull out his gun and blow MacCready's head clean off. Or maybe use his combat knife to do the job. Same result, more blood, more personal.

MacCready stood up now, bourbon sloshed from the glass, his anger flaring red hot, "In case you forgot, I left the Gunners. For good."

"Yeah, I heard." Oh, yes. Winlock would enjoy using his knife on MacCready. "But you're still taking jobs in the Commonwealth, and that isn't going to work for us."

MacCready couldn't contain his anger any longer, Winlock thinks he could just walk up in here and mess with him, on his own turf, and mess with his business? Hell no. "I don't take orders from you, not anymore. So why don't you take your girlfriend, and walk out of here while you still can."

Barnes seemed to finally find his voice, "What! Winlock, tell me we don't have to listen to this shit!"

Winlock raised his hand to silence his partner, "Listen up, MacCready. The only reason we haven't filled your body with bullets yet, is because we don't want a war with Goodneighbor." Winlock took
a step towards MacCready, getting in his personal space. Just as he hoped, MacCready took a step backwards, the backs of his knees bumped into the antique chair, resulting in MacCready falling back into it. Winlock would look back on this small victory and smile at it, for a very long time. Continuing his speech, and glaring down at MacCready with a hint of a sadistic smile, Winlock said, "See, we respect other people's boundaries...we know how to play the game. It's something you never learned."

"Glad to have disappointed you."

"You can play tough all you want, but if we hear you're still operating within Gunner territory all bets are off. You got that?" Winlock jabbed a calloused finger in MacCready's face, further invading his personal space.

MacCready scowled, "You finished?"

"Yeah... We're finished. Come on, Barnes."

With that, they turned and walked out, not turning to check if MacCready had pulled a gun on them. They knew he wouldn't, if he wanted to live out the rest of his days in relative peace.

MacCready continued to scowl, and gulped down his drink. Already picking up the half empty bottle and pouring himself another full glass. After a few tense minutes, and the fact that he had nearly forgotten his hidden fugitive, he grumbled, "You can come out now, they're gone."

"This might seem stupid to ask, but, should I be hiding from you too?" Came Luna's muffled question. MacCready sighed, then stood up and ambled over to the couch, pulling it away from the wall and freeing the girl.

"No. I'm not a Gunner anymore. Besides, why were you hiding from them? You know, aside from the usual problems people are wanted by the Gunners for."

Luna stood back up, with a little trouble. Her muscles were sore and stiff from holding such an uncomfortable and awkward position for so long. She dusted off her hands and knees, taking her time to find the right words, and answer his question.

"A few days ago, I was captured by the Gunners. They wanted to give me to their head honcho as a gift, or a prize, or something. They didn't say exactly what for, just that I was 'his type'." Luna almost choked on the phrase. She knew what it meant, Luna was no stranger to the concept of sex. Though she had never had sex, for fear of contracting some incurable, terminal disease, she was well aware of it. Her parents had diligently taught her about how babies were made, consent, safe sex, and the signs to look out for in a potential partner - to make sure they were healthy and not carrying any sexually transmitted diseases. That didn't mean she didn't get riteously horny sometimes, she was human after all, and in the peak, of what her parents would call 'her fertile years'. Of course, that didn't mean she wanted to be some goon's trophy, sex toy. Just thinking about his unwashed, possibly diseased genitals, made Luna want to hurl. Which reminded her, Luna had not eaten in at least two days, maybe more. And, as if she needed another reminder, Luna's stomach began cramping and growling horribly, making her feel downright sick.

MacCready blew out a puff of air, "That's...that's messed up. But you know what?" He took a sip of his bourban, "That guy is a crazy son of a bitch. I've heard some terrible stories about what he puts his girls through. He even convinced his men that Jet-heads, chem users, could be cleaned up and make good cannon fodder. They ate that shit up, too." MacCready put his glass on the table to his left, then pulled a pack of cigarettes from his pocket, and lit one. "The Gunners are crazy motherfuckers, and I'm glad I got out when I did."
Luna sat on the couch that she had hidden behind, finding a chance to rest and gather information on the people who wanted her. "Why did you join them in the first place?" She asked, genuine curiosity in her voice.

Blowing a smoke circle, MacCready didn't miss a beat, "The money." Shame flashed in his eyes briefly, before being replaced with sadness. Luna realized that this was a more sensitive subject then it seemed. She decided to change the it, so as not to piss him off.

"So you're for hire, then?"

MacCready snorted a laugh and then answered, "Not anymore, doll." Luna's face screwed up in confusion, and then slowly, anger. I gave him all my shit. What the fuck?

"I work for you now. You already paid me."

Luna wanted to wipe the smug look from his face, and she wanted to do it with her fist. But, she had to admit that she had a heady rush of relief, knowing that she would have some form of protection and companionship in the Wastes. A pang of guilt stabbed in her heart, at the thought of having left Private Tyler behind. He had helped her escape the Gunners, and had sort of been her companion in the first place, and she abandoned him in a fit of misplaced rage. Maybe there was still time to go back to find him, to thank him for sticking his neck out for her. Would he still be waiting for her in the same place, or would he have already moved on without her? It had certainly been a number of days since she left him behind. Perhaps Luna would find her dog, Sam, as well.

With renewed vigor, and enthusiasm, Luna stood up and said, "We better get a move on then. I have someone I need to find.", then turned and began heading for the exit with MacCready in tow.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you all so much for the comments and kudos!! I've had a bit of writer's block with this chapter, so it was a kind of a struggle to get through but here we are! I just want to point out as well, that this story is not beta read, though I do reread each chapter multiple times to check for errors and mistakes before posting (sorry I don't always catch all the mistakes!)
MacCready had given back Luna's backpack, citing 'It's just a bunch of junk. What's the point of carrying it?'.

When Luna protested and claimed that she couldn't pay him any other way, and that it wasn't just junk, MacCready simply said "Start a tab, you can owe me the two hundred and fifty caps."

Along their way out of Goodneighbor, the pair stopped in to see Daisy and Kleo, in order to stock up on supplies before hitting the road, officially. While MacCready chatted with Daisy next door, Luna cautiously approached the assaultron and found herself at a loss for words. How the hell do I address this thing?

Clearing her throat, Luna began, "Uhm, you sell guns right?"

"Of course," came Kleo's robotic voice, "I've got a weapon for every situation. Hunting, protection, cold-blooded murder, HOT-blooded murder."

Luna's eyebrows shot up and her mouth hung open in surprise. "An assaultron with a sense of humor!" She exclaimed.

"I'm a woman, baby. Can't you tell?"

"Oh my god, I'm sorry. Yes, yes I can tell you're a woman. I didn't mean to offend you!" Luna waved her hands in front of her and apologized profusely. "I just didn't realize assaultrons could identify as a specific gender."

Kleo studied Luna briefly before responding, neither angrily, nor happily, "Assaultrons do not have true genders, we are assigned male or female programming. But as far as I'm concerned, I'm a woman. And I run a store that sells very large guns."

Luna accepted the woman's explanation without further comment. Who was she to tell someone that they can't be their own chosen gender, despite how they were born, or created?

"What do you have for trade?" Luna asked, hoping she would have some cool looking guns, and maybe some ammo for her 10mm. She would have to find something to clean her gun with, as well. But before Kleo could pull out her boxes of ammunition, and available weapons, MacCready stepped up to the counter and told Kleo that all they would be needing was a couple 10mm clips, some frag grenades, and all the magazines of 5.56mm rounds that she had.

Kleo remaind silent, other than to calculate the total and demand the payment, which surprisingly MacCready paid for in full.

Leaving the gates of Goodneighbor, Luna awkwardly cleared her throat and said, "You didn't have to do that."

MacCready looked at her curiously, "Do what?" He asked.

"Pay for everything. I could have paid for my ammo, you know?" She glanced at him from the corner of her eye, and shoved her hands into the pockets of her ripped jeans before kicking a rusted empty can across the street; the light clanking echoing gently around them. Luna had always found it difficult to thank anyone who helped her, not because of pride or anything, but because she felt she didn't deserve the help or kindness, seeing as she was practically an orphan. An unwanted burden.
The Wasteland was a harsh place to live, and not many people survived it. Too many people often found themselves starving, becoming severely dehydrated, and even dying from radiation. At least, if a bullet didn’t happen to find it’s way into the back of their skull, or something caught up to them first. And with her being rescued from a failed experimental vault, Luna only saw herself as an added strain on anyone who helped her, despite it being out of kindness.

"As I said before, add it to the tab. Besides, it really wasn't that much, and we'll need it while we're out here. You can't pull payment from a corpse." MacCready explained, pulling a pack of cigarettes from his coat, and lighting one. Taking a long drag, he continued, "That does bring up a question, though. Where are we going?"

Luna thought for a moment. The original plan had been to get to Diamond city, buy supplies, and go home. It was supposed to be just another supply run. Wasn't it?

So why had everything gone so wrong?

"Honestly? I don't know." Luna said, feeling truly at a loss. "I kind of want to see if I can find the guy who helped me escape the Gunners, so that I can thank him."

MacCready took another drag from his cigarette before pinching off the ember and put it back in the pack. "Kind of?" He asked.

"Well, yeah. I mean, he risked his life to help me get away, and then I abandoned him when I got mad." Luna briefly explained, embarrassed about the truth.

He looked at her fully now, "You're not just going to abandon me if you get mad, are you? I can take care of myself and all, but you still owe me those caps." MacCready half joked.

Luna blushed, then rolled her eyes in an attempt to seem unbothered by his words and kept walking, "No, I'm not going to just run out on you. After all, you did help me avoid the Gunners, too. I owe you."

MacCready laughed, "Yeah, about 320 caps total, by my count!"

By dusk they had reached roughly the area that Luna had left Private Tyler.

MacCready set about scouting the area and searching for possible enemies, while Luna started a small fire, and unpacked her cookware. She nestled a pot of purified water, and ancient coffee grounds, in the embers of the fire. While she waited for it to heat up, she dug through her bag for a box of Salisbury steak, and Instamash.

Before Luna knew it, MacCready had come back to their small camp. He reported that he saw a pair of Mirelurks about a mile to the southeast.

"They shouldn't bother us as long as we keep the fire low, and remain quiet." He claimed as he found a relatively dry rock to sit on. Luna poured the hot, black liquid and handed him a dented metal cup of steaming black coffee, that despite its age, still smelled like coffee and not mothballs, or worse.

Silence stretched on, as they sipped their coffee, and ate their dinner. Luna pushed her instamash into
hills and valleys on her plate, lost in thought.

"Cap for your thoughts?" MacCready had finished his meal and was staring at her intently, cigarette hanging from his lips. The light from the fire warming his stubbled cheeks, turning them somewhat rosy. It only added to his roguish good looks.

"Just thinking about...well, everything." She began, and as soon as the words left her mouth she found herself with a bought of verbal diarrhea. "I was just supposed to buy supplies in Diamond City and go home. I left the safety of my cave, with my dog, and headed out - thinking I could handle anything that was tossed my way."

MacCreade assumed her 'cave' was a euphemism, but kept that thought to himself, and continued to listen in earnest. They would be traveling together after all, so it was best if he learned as much about her while he could. Traveling together meant trusting each other enough to not let the other get shot in the back of the head. And in order to gain that trust, they would need to understand and know each other.

"But then I heard people screaming and there was gun shots." Luna continued, "I ran over to help them as much as I could. It was Somerville Place. They traded with us often enough that we had become allies, even friends. I don't know if anyone survived, but that's when I was taken prisoner by those damn Gunners." She heaved a agitated sigh.

"I lost my dog, my best friend, in that fire fight. I don't know where he is. I feel so lost without him." Fat tears welled up in Luna's eyes and ran down her cheeks, leaving wet trails through the blood and grime on her face.

"Why don't we search for him?" MacCready suggested, reaching over the short distance to rest his hand on her knee, in a show of sympathy and unity.

Luna grasped his hand, thankful for the friendly company and sympathy.

"I thought he would have come back to me already. What if he's..." a sob cut off her train of thought, it was too much for her to handle at the moment; the possibility of Sam being dead.

MacCready moved from where he was sitting, to kneel in front of Luna, taking both of her small hands in his rough and calloused ones, "Hey, hey now. It'll be okay, we'll find your dog."

He was reminded of his son, Duncan, when he would lose his favourite toy, except Luna wasn't a small child having a meltdown, and her dog was not a toy. She was simply overwhelmed with everything that had happened to her in the last few days, and losing her best friend was just the icing on the cake.

"Until then," MacCready continued, "you should get some sleep. I'll take first watch."

Luna gave him a small smile and quickly finished her meal, unrolled a battered, threadbare sleeping bag, and climbed inside. She was asleep almost as soon as her head hit the pillow.

Halfway through the night Luna had relieved MacCready of guard duties, allowing him to get some sleep before they began their search for Tyler, and Sam.

Just before dawn, Luna awoke MacCready, allowing them to get a head start on packing their belongings. MacCready rolled his blanket and pillow into a tight bundle, while Luna repacked all of her cookware and leftover food. They did this in silence, partly due to lack of sleep, and so as not to alert any possible unseen predators that might be lurking nearby.
Once they had their bags ready, and settled on their backs, MacCready set about looking for human, and canine, foot prints. Luna stood watch, weapon drawn and ready for any threats around them, allowing MacCready to focus solely on tracking.

The silence between the two companions dragged on for what seemed like forever, when in reality it had only been a handful of hours. The sun had reached its peak, baking the scorched earth with its radioactive rays.

Luna pulled her backpack off and dug around for two cartons of dirty water, handing one to MacCready, and keeping the other for herself. Gently tearing the top open, she took a sip of the grimy contents, thankful to at least have some form of liquid on such a hot day.

"So," MacCready began, "how old are you?"

Luna choked on her water, startled by the sudden question, "Excuse me?" She coughed.

"Oh, I'm just wondering how old you are. You don't seem to have very many scars, just those tattoos, and you don't look haggard like many of the other people around here." He crouched down to examine a print on the drying mud.

Luna self consciously rubbed at her forearm with her free hand "Uh, thanks? I think. And, well, the children of Atom gave me these tattoos."

MacCready jerked his head toward her in surprise and made a somewhat disgusted noise at her response, his carton of water forgotten.

She was raising her water for another sip but stopped halfway and faced MacCready. "What? Is it something I said?"

"The Children of Atom? Seriously? Don't you realize they are dangerous people? They'll kill you just for not being a believer!" MacCready stood back up and grasped her forearm. "You're not a believer are you? Please tell me you don't believe in Atom."

Luna pulled free of his hold, "No, I don't believe in Atom. And for your information, the only reason I have these tattoos is because we had a peaceful trading agreement with the Children of Atom. They began spewing shit about my needing the 'mark' in order to be protected by Atom out in the Glowing Sea."

Luna was breathing heavily, her anger and pride starting to get the better of her. How could he think she was a believer? Did she really look that stupid, and irradiated? was it the shaved hair?

Taking a few steps away, Luna inhaled deeply, holding her breathe and letting it clear her head.

Once she felt calmer she turned back to MacCready and said, "They told me the tattoos would help protect me from the radiation. I was told the ink is a mixture of Rad X and mirelurk blood." Luna huffed a breath and laughed a little bit, "I don't even know how they got their hands on mirelurk blood! There isn't water around for miles!" In the blink of an eye she sobered up, "The protection didn't last as long as they thought. Within days it had worn off and I was extremely sick from the radiation."

MacCready was dumbstruck and speechless with the amount of information she had just given him. When he didn't retort, Luna continued.

"I almost died. Luckily for me, Virgil found enough RadAway and other supplies on a nearby
Institute corpse, while out scavenging."

"I...I'm sorry, Luna." MacCready looked down, and away from her, out of shame. "If I had known, I would have kept my trap shut."

Luna shrugged it off, her anger forgotten, "It was years ago. Obviously I survived."

Before either of them could continue their conversation a low and menacing growl filled the air around them.

Something rustled in the tall, dead grass, slowly approaching them.

Luna and MacCready drew their weapons and aimed in the direction of the noise, prepared to fire upon whatever creature would lunge from the grass. This far south of Diamond City it could easily be a Deathclaw, probably a juvenile, judging by the fact that it wasn't towering over them, and the grass, it was hidden within. Or it could be a Yao Gai.

Either way, they were screwed.

A savage snarl ripped from the throat of the beast as it lunged from its hiding place, straight towards MacCready.

Luna's heart gave a painful squeeze. She recognized the patchy coloured fur as it staggered to a stop just before reaching MacCready, huge globs of saliva and spittle dripping from its mouth. The creature's teeth were yellow and sharp as a Deathclaw's, though some were obviously missing.

"Sam!" She yelped before MacCready could get a shot off.

Without taking his eyes from the snarling junkyard dog, and refusing to lower his gun, MacCready questioned Luna.

"Sam? Are you sure this is your dog?" He was straining to keep his voice in check, still of the mind to try and not attract anymore angry creatures.

"Yes," Luna heaved a sigh of relief, and in her most soothing voice said, "Sam, it's okay, boy."

The beast was unconvinced, choosing to continue snarling at the unfamiliar human with a gun, that appeared to pose a threat to him and his human.

"Maybe try lowering your gun." Suggested Luna, trying to figure out a solution to calm the tense situation. It would do her no good if Sam decided to rip out MacCready's throat, or alternatively, if MacCready shot Sam in the face; in an act of self defense.

MacCready struggled with his own survival instincts screaming for him to keep the gun leveled at the vicious, looming dog, but he could also sense that Luna might have a point. Slowly, MacCready lowered his gun until he gripped it loosely, with both hands, in front of him. He would still be able to use the barrel and stock of the gun to block an attack, although it would be a struggle to get a shot off.

That seemed to do the trick, almost as if the dog was replaced with a more amiable one. His stump of a tail wiggled, and the snarling stopped. Sam trotted over to Luna for a reunion full of slobbery kisses and many pets.

MacCready laughed nervously, unsure of what to do, or what he had just witnessed. He felt as though he narrowly escaped a brush with death, and yet a part of him knew that Luna wouldn't let
that happen, and for that, he realized he trusted her just a little bit more.

"So what now?" He asked, carefully slinging his rifle across his back, so as not to trigger the beast again.

"I don't suppose you found any human tracks out there?" She implored hopefully, still rubbing the top of Sam's furry head while he licked her face. Then, holstering her gun, Luna stood back up. Her knees were beginning to ache from crouching for so long. Perhaps today was her lucky day, having found Sam, she may yet find Tyler as well.

MacCready shook his head, "Sorry, nothing human. Aside from us, at least."

And just like that, all the hope she had felt just moments ago seemed to turn to dust, replaced by more guilt.

He could see the light in her eyes die, just a little bit. "I'll keep looking though. There's bound to be something out there."

Luna shrugged one shoulder, disappointed and depressed that she wouldn't be able to right her wrongs with the man who saved her life. "Don't bother. Just take me to Diamond City." She half mumbled.

MacCready looked away from her, disappointed in himself, as though this was somehow his fault - failing to find tracks that might have lead them to her friend. "Okay," he very nearly choked out, "Let's get this freak show on the road then. I have money to make." His voice had become gruff, his words cutting deeper than Luna had expected, resulting in her wincing slightly. MacCready didn't see her wince and so began marching back towards Diamond City, with Luna and Sam in tow.
Chapter 10

The journey to Diamond City was swift and relatively uneventful. When the days turned into night and she unrolled her grubby sleeping bag, Luna found herself looking forward to being able to bunk down in an actual cot, or a mattress on a frame. Anything would be better than sleeping in the cold mud or the rocky, hard packed earth.

Having reached the ruins of Boston, Luna's mood plummeted with each passing city block. Every sign, rusted out vehicle, and torched store-front dredged up memories of times before the Great War. When things were better; at least to her. Despite resource shortages, an insanely inflated economy, civil conflicts, and fears of contracting the New Plague, Luna had lived a relatively sheltered childhood. It was only after being awoken from cryo, did Luna learn of the truth behind the war.

She had finally pieced together why her father always tinkered with the car, did his own home repairs, and why her mother tried starting her own backyard garden, though it failed miserably. They were trying to save money and grow some food for the coming rainy days.

"What's with the long face?" MacCready queried. A lit cigarette bobbed from his mouth. His voice had startled her from her reverie.

Luna restrained herself when the urge to kick a crushed tin can arose. "Nothing." She hesitated, unsure if she should tell him the truth. Would he understand? Would he call her crazy? What if he decided she was indeed crazy, a danger to him, and decided to put her out of both their misery?

Shaking her head, as if to clear it, and taking a leap of faith, Luna decided to tell him.

"I was just thinking, well, actually seeing all this," she waved her arm at the buildings and cars around them, "I was reminded of how things were before the war."

Luna stopped to pick up a twisted plastic Nuka Cola cup. "Nuka Cola used to taste so different." She said, almost to herself.

MacCready stared at her in silence, his expression unfathomable.

"I think my dad was trying to get away from all the bullshit that we had to deal with every day, that's probably why he would try to take me out every other weekend, to see a movie, or go camping. We'd always get snacks and a couple Nuka Colas. Mom usually didn't want me having too many sweets, she was worried it would make my teeth rot, and that I would get fat." Luna gave a dry laugh, her amusement was more so due to the irony of the situation.

"End of the world and here I am, quite thick, wouldn't you agree?"

MacCready smirked, his eyes crinkling in the corners, and said "I like it."

Luna nearly tripped over her feet and felt a blush crawling up her neck. Never in all her days did she think someone would actually admit that. Hell, she didn't even think anyone would actually be attracted to her, in general. Especially since her mother had really drove home the whole 'fat is ugly' concept.

Yet here she was, with a hired gun, and he had just complimented her.

Maybe he was lying, though. Did he think that he might get more money, and favors, out of her if he blew smoke up her ass? People in the wasteland sure did get around, and who could blame them? If
the mutated creatures or raiders didn't get you, then a sip of some bad water would. Death was around every corner and everyone just wanted to enjoy living while they could.

Luna decided to ignore his comment, unsure of how to respond, or even how to take it. Yet it pleased her, deep down, either way.

They walked, in silence, for another hour before they reached the the gates of Diamond City.

The Great Green Jewel of the Commonwealth. More like Great Green Target of the Commonwealth, from where Luna was standing.

A horde of super mutants were in the midst of storming the gates, their hellish hounds tearing through the city guards like they were nothing. It was an absolute blood bath, and Luna wanted nothing to do with it.

MacCready had pulled her and Sam behind a car that lay on its side, hushing her with a hand over her mouth. After a moment, MacCready removed his hand and peeked out from around the car, assessing their chances of survival, should they choose to proceed.

Many of the City Guards lay prone on the ground, their innards spilled upon the cold hard ground, blood eagerly soaked up by the packed earth. Peeling his eyes from the gruesome sight, MacCready looked towards the gates. Three guards were still alive. Two of them stood upon sturdy defense towers, throwing grenades wildly, and firing their guns in all directions. The third guard was arguing with someone over the intercoms on the closed gate. He looked as though he had pissed his pants, judging by the wet stain.

Sliding back down to the ground beside Luna, MacCready said "This doesn't look good. I think we need to get out of here, while the getting is still good."

"I agree, but what's going on out there? What happened to the guards? Are they going to be okay?" Luna started to stand up, to try to get a look for herself but MacCready grabbed her arm and pulled her back down to him. "No!" He hissed, "you'll get your head blown off!"

As if to emphasis his words, a stray bullet ricocheted off the car, where Luna's head would have been.

In a small voice, Luna asked "So what do we do now?"

MacCready looked around and spotted a manhole with bright orange pylon cones around it, just a few yards down the street. There was plenty of cover from a few cars and a large bus. The real challenge would be to pass from vehicle to vehicle undetected.

"There." Pointed MacCready.

As quickly and quietly as they could, the trio bolted away from the violence, and headed towards the best possible hideout, hoping to wait out the mini war.

Though Super Mutants were not known to hide in sewers, that didn't mean other creatures weren't busy making it their home. They would have to be careful.

MacCready reached the manhole first and began his attempt at dislodging the cover. It was far heavier than he had expected, and the tiny hole didn't allow for much leverage. Luna quickly looked around for some kind of steel or metal bar that could be used to hook into the hole, and move the heavy, metal disc.
A deep bellowing sound echoed through the streets then. The earth shook in tandem with heavy steps, as though a herd of elephants were stomping by.

"It seems our luck has just run out." MacCready grunted, unwilling to give up on their, seemingly, only escape route.

Luna covered her ears, the cacophony seemed to make her teeth rattle. "What is that noise?" She called out in disgust.

"Behemoth." Was all MacCready could manage through gritted teeth.

Luna continued her search, and was successful, for she had spotted a chunk of re-bar that looked like it might fit in the manhole cover. She dove for the bar, shaking off bits of sludge and debris then handed it to MacCready.

He took it, gratefully, and wedged it in the hole he had just been prying at with his hands. It was a perfect fit.

In a matter of seconds he had the manhole cover lifted and was shoving it to the side. They lowered Sam down the whole swiftly, yet carefully, then MacCready ushered Luna next. He was keeping an eye out for any more Super Mutants, that might spot them.

"I don't think I'll fit down there!" Luna cried out, the thought of being stuck in a small space with limited movement causing her to panic

MacCready whipped around to look her in the eye. "Yes, you will. Just try."

Anxiety and fear warred within her, both consuming her every thought. They didn't have time for her to be uncertain, as the Behemoth was getting closer. They could see its head and shoulders coming up over the top of the bus now. It had spotted them and roared, spittle flying from its jagged teeth and peeling lips.

As if on cue, a gang of super mutants and their hounds could be seen racing towards them. Some fired their guns wildly, others wielded sledgehammers or spiky boards.

Luna froze on the spot, fear and panic having turned her blood into ice. Turning away from Luna, MacCready bore witness to a dozen super mutants and a Behemoth laying waste to everything that stood in their path, bearing down on the two humans and their junkyard dog.

Acting fast, MacCready grabbed Luna around the waist, hauling her with him down to the ground. He struggled to situate her with her feet in the hole, as her survival instincts took over and she fought him the whole way. She wanted to run in whatever direction didn't have enemies, just running away from this area seemed like a good idea to her, as long as it meant she didn't have to go down that hole.

"I'm sorry." He whispered, before shoving her down through the manhole, where Sam eagerly waited below. Once Luna had her hands and feet on the small ladder inside, she moved down the rungs quickly. After a few seconds there was splashing, which MacCready took as a sign that Luna had made it down relatively safe enough. Or perhaps mirelurks were attacking. There was no time to ponder that thought.

Without delay, MacCready began climbing down, and was trying to pull the manhole cover back into place. He managed to get it about half way there before giving up and jumping down the last few rungs on the sewer ladder.
Landing on the balls of his feet, in putrid smelling sewer water, MacCready staggered slightly before grabbing Luna's arm and dragging her down the first tunnel he saw. Sam was gaily barking up a storm, excited by the running.

Shots rang out from the direction they had just come from, though none of the bullets seemed to be fired in their direction.

Eventually they slowed their run to a jog, and came to a stop. Their breathing was ragged, and sweat beaded on their foreheads; more from the adrenaline than the actual running, as they hadn't run for more than a few minutes.

"That was fucking close." MacCready gasped. His hands were braced on his knees, as he tried to steady his breathing. Luna leaned against the grimy sewer wall, breathing hard. "Don't you ever, ever, make me run again. I hate running." She manages to spit out, somewhat angrily.

"Yeah, Princess? Well I hate swimming." He snidely remarked back, "So don't ever make me go swimming."

After a few hours of stumbling around in the dark and dirty sewers, the trio managed to find an exit that thankfully was not swarming with mutants, or mirekurks. Just a few mole rats, which were easily dispatched. MacCready climbed up the ladder first this time, and upon pushing the manhole cover back he realized they had made an error somewhere back at a fork in the sewer.

"What's up there?" Luna called from below, urging him to make quick work of getting out of the manhole. MacCready muttered, "You're not gonna believe this." as he helped Luna and Sam out of the sewer.

Brushing herself off and kicking sludge from her boots, Luna glanced around, and at first didn't recognize their surroundings. after a few seconds it dawned on her. "Goodneighbor?!" she cried out, in surprised and shock.

MacCready merely huffed a laugh, pulling out his pack of cigarettes and lighting one.

"What's so funny?!" Luna asked, a little angry, and more than confused as to what could possibly be so funny about being back at square one. We were supposed to come out on the safe side of Diamond City. But Luna knew better than that. There was no such thing as safe anymore. Just little moments where you could close your eyes for a brief moment, not even letting your guard down long enough to get a proper night's sleep; for fear of someone launching a grenade at your camp, or a deathclaw chewing through your shiny new power armor. The Super Mutants and Behemoth had been a prime example of that.

Blowing out a stream of smoke, MacCready replied "Nothing says 'welcome' like the stench of urine soaked garbage." He paused to take another drag from his cigarette, "but since we're here, why don't we rent a room at the Rexford and grab something to eat. Or drink. I'm parched."

Sam yipped in agreement, and wiggled his stump of a tail.

Managing a sigh, Luna concured, "Alright, well, why don't you two go get our rooms, while I sell off some of my junk? We can meet outside of the Third Rail when we're both finished." she suggested.

With a nod and half shrug of confirmation, MacCready turned his attention to Sam and patted the side of his thigh. "Come on, boy."
Luna sat on one of the benches just outside the doors to The Third Rail, waiting patiently, if not a little nervously, for her partners to return. If truth be told, she had become quite comfortable with having another person traveling with her thus far. It even made her feel safer, knowing she had him to watch her back, in case *shit hit the fan* as her dad liked to say.

"Miss me?" Came MacCready's smooth voice from behind, startling her out of her thoughts and memories of her father.

Luna grinned at him, "Always. Now let's head inside. You left me waiting for so long that I'm thirsty now, too. Not that the running had anything to do with it." she laughed as they headed inside the double doors.

Magnolia's crooning welcomed the trio as they descended the old stairs, into the makeshift barroom. Luna and Sam grabbed a couch off to the side and near the back, tucked away into a corner where no one could sneak up on them from behind. MacCready sauntered up to the bar, to grab their drinks and have a word with Charlie, the Mr. Handy bar-keep.

Thoroughly enjoying listening to Magnolia finish her set, Luna listened as she thanked the audience and promptly left the stage for a break.

While waiting for MacCready to return with their drinks, and Magnolia to take the stage again, Luna looked around the room, studying the faces of everyone there. Virtually all the patrons were unrecognizable, except for two.

Magnolia, who had come around from backstage and now sat at the bar with a cold water in hand was one. And Charon, who sat close enough to Magnolia that their knees were touching. Of course, Luna didn't recognize him by his face. No, he kept it covered, same as the first time they met, meaning she had never had the chance to see it. But, she recognized his broad shoulders that tapered into a narrow waist and hips; hips which currently had his combat knife, a couple shotgun shells.

Luna couldn't figure out why, but the sheer fact that their knees kept bumping and rubbing against each other angered her. So much so, that she did not recognize this as jealousy, nor had she noticed the tall figure of a man approach her. Only when he had reached the arm of the couch, and now blocked some of the dim lighting, had Luna noticed. Turning to snap at the person who wanted to bother her, Luna had to bite her tongue, for this man was tall, dark, and downright terrifying.

It was hard for her to tell, but he looked to have sandy blonde, short cropped hair, not unlike that of the military men from her century. He also had piercing blue eyes, and a strong square jaw that was peppered with a days growth of dark stubble that made her want to rub against it like a cat on a wooden post.

"Mind if I sit with you?" He asked in a gravelly yet smooth voice, gesturing at the empty seat with his large hand. His other had a tumbler half full of what looked like whiskey.

Luna felt as though she had swallowed a bunch of cotton, her mouth was so dry, so instead of speaking, she weakly nodded an affirmative, her anger momentarily forgotten.

His movements were graceful and swift, and before she knew it, Luna found herself gazing into his cold blue eyes.

Chancing a glance at MacCready revealed that he had not yet finished with Charlie. The stranger caught Luna's nervous glance and must have misread it because he asked, "Would you like a drink?"

At this point Luna's thoughts had changed gear and were now racing through all the reasons this
stranger had decided to sit with her, and all the possible outcomes. But goddamn, she was thirsty, and not just for a beer. Looking at this handsome, terrifying stranger had her blood pumping and her hormones flowing.

"Yes, please." She mumbled, suddenly aware that MacCready may not come back anytime soon, as a second glance his way showed him sliding onto a stool, with only one beer in hand, and it was his beer. Had he forgotten about her already? Was she that unimportant.

The stranger walked to the counter with an air of confidence in every step. His request to Charlie was quickly met, and he had swiftly returned to the corner, drink in hand.

"I hope whiskey is okay, you seem like a whiskey kind of girl." He growled in a sultry voice.

"Yes." Luna gratefully accepted the drink and took a rather large sip of it, letting it rest on her tongue before swallowing it. The burn was pleasurable, even more so when it made her feel warm and tingly inside after.

"So," Luna began with slight hesitation. She wasn't the most confident, especially when handsome strangers made her the focus of their interest. Truth be told, she's never really had many strangers approach her in general, unless they were trying to kill her or were the neighboring Children of Atom coming to try and convert her.

"Why are you here?" Queried Luna, taking another sip of her whiskey.

The stranger let out a throaty bark of laughter that seemed to come from his perfectly sculpted chest, not that she was admiring it through his tightly fitted dark green t-shirt or anything. Which, if she might add, displayed his large and formidable biceps rather beautifully.

"What, I don't even get a 'thank you' before having my motives questioned?" The stranger jested, not in the slightest bothered by her question.

At his statement though, Luna blushed a deep red from embarrassment and shame. Her mother had raised her better than this.

Looking down at her drink she mumbled an apology, hoping he wouldn't pull his gun on her and demand payment for being harassed by her.

He reached a large hand out and rested it on her knee, giving a light squeeze, "I should be the one to apologize, it was a poor joke. Let me get you another drink."

Before Luna could say a word, he was up and buying two more glasses of whiskey. Not wanting to be rude, Luna downed the rest of the one in front of her, feeling the liquid burn it's way down her esophagus and into her stomach. Already she was feeling warmer than usual, and she couldn't tell if it was the drink, or the way this man made her feel. Maybe it was because she hadn't eaten since this morning, or, it was a combination of everything.

He placed her drink on the low coffee table before her and took his seat. It was at this moment that Luna realized he wasn't wearing any amour, having been slightly distracted at first. She didn't want to be rude again by saying something about it, so Luna opted to keep her mouth shut on the subject until the right time.

The stranger cleared his throat before speaking, drawing her attention back up to his face.

"I assume what you were trying to ask earlier is 'what was I doing at your table'?
He sipped his drink before continuing, "Well honestly, you looked lonely. And far too innocent to be out here on
your own, even if you do have a mutt." He gestured towards where Sam lay, sleeping soundly on the floor at Luna's feet.

"So I thought you could use some company." He smiled, all charm and seduction. Luna couldn't help but stare at him in shock as her hormones warred with her better judgement.

Grabbing her drink Luna took another large sip, not bothering to taste it this time. She looked over towards where Charon and Magnolia were seated. The fates seemed to be against her, though, since within seconds of looking at the pair they stood up and were heading towards the V.I.P room where she had first met MacCready. Oddly it made her feel sad, and jealous, to see this, as she assumed the worst.

"Uhm, what kind of company did you think I could use?" She looked back at the stranger and asked, sipping her drink and fidgeting with the rim, distracted by her growing jealousy again.

"Whatever kind you want." He offered, without missing a beat.

This time Luna looked at him fully, trying to get a reading on whether or not she could trust him. Perhaps it was the booze, despite the fact that it hadn't hit her fully yet, but she had a nice little buzz going, and was feeling like she could trust him. Maybe he was a good guy and actually wasn't out to kill and rob her.

"Maybe we could just sit here for a bit? I've been on the road for a little while and just want to rest for a moment." She said rather shyly. The stranger merely gave a deep nod of acquiescence and said "Sure."

A few glasses of whiskey later, and Luna felt much more at ease with the handsome stranger. Though she still didn't know his name, she had learned that he was part of the Brotherhood of Steel.

She also learned the reason he didn't have any armor on was because he had arrived in his power armor, and had decided to leave it in a corner of the room where it would be out of the way, but still accessible to him.

"You ever gonna tell me your name?" Luna slurred, cradling her nearly empty fifth glass of whiskey. She was in such a jovial mood, having finally been able to relax for a little while, with some good natured company was something she did not want to waste, and appreciated very much. Though MacCready was good natured too, things were still a little off with him, on account of Luna being hyper aware that she owes him those two hundred fifty caps still. Plus flirting with this handsome stranger was exhilarating.

"Can you keep a secret?" He asked her, conspiratorially, his arm was draped over the back of the couch, with his fingers drawing lazy circles on Luna's shoulder blade. This man was so secretive that it was almost like pulling teeth, trying to get any information from him. But, oddly, Luna found she was enjoying the challenge.

She leaned forward in her seat and whispered, "What if I can't?"

The stranger grinned devilishly and leaned forward, as well, so they were just a breath away from each other, and growled "Then I'll have to punish you."

His words sent a shiver of excitement down Luna's spine, where a warmth seemed to pool.

"What's all this then?" MacCready dropped his bottle of beer, and a second unopened one, on the worn surface of the wooden coffee table, startling both Luna and the stranger out of their flirting.
They quickly pulled away from each other and sat up a little straighter. A blush spread over Luna's cheeks, she felt as though she had just been caught with her hand in the cookie jar.

Clearing her throat awkwardly, Luna glanced up at MacCready, "Uh, this is uh..." she couldn't properly introduce the man seated with her, for he had not yet revealed his name to her.

"You can call me Anders." The man supplied rather coldly, not bothering to look at MacCready.

Still scrambling to break the uncomfortable silence Luna reached up and grabbed MacCready's hand and announced "He's a Star Paladin in the Brotherhood! Isn't that just the coolest?" She was still slurring slightly, but tried hard to appear more sober than she really was. Even under normal circumstances she was not a physically touchy person, so just the fact that she had grabbed her partner's hand was a testament to how much she had drank, and how it affected her.

MacCready's eyes were full of concern as he stared down at Luna, before he turned to Anders and hissed, "How much have you given her to drink?" There was venom in his tone, that brooked no argument.

"Too much, apparently." Laughed Anders. He hadn't actually expected her to announce his status and affiliation right off the hop. Though, if he managed to control the situation before it gets out of hand, he might be able to keep a lid on any more information Luna could potentially let slip. She was a sweet girl, and he figured there was someone here looking out for her, it was just a matter of drawing them out before moving on with the next step in his plan.
Chapter 11

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

MacCready gripped Luna by her upper arm and was practically dragging her out of the bar, their drinks long forgotten on the small coffee table.

"Slow down!" Cried Luna, as she stumbled and tripped over a loose tile on the ground. But MacCready ignored her, keeping his grip on her arm. "Ow! You're hurting me!" At this, he readjusted his grip, but did not let go until they had left the building. Once outside, and MacCready had released her arm, he reared on her, "What were you thinking?" He shouted, throwing his arms out at his sides. "Wait, don't answer that, obviously you weren't."

MacCready began pacing in front of her and ranting about everything that she had done wrong.

"Do you realize how dangerous that man is? And do you even realize what a Star Paladin is? You could have gotten yourself killed just by sitting with him! If the wrong people saw you two together, that would be it. Game over. We would both have targets on our backs for the rest of our lives!" Pausing for a breath, MacCready continued, "Why would you even sit with him? What made you think 'I'll sit with this guy until Mac gets back'?" He paused, waiting for her answer, but when she didn't say anything, he blurted out an assumption.

"It's because he's all muscly and," MacCready gestured with his hands, looking for the right word, "...hot, isn't it?" There was a shade of jealousy in his words, and on his face. His words stung Luna to the core, so much so, that she just didn't currently have the emotional capacity to worry about his feelings and what her actions might have meant to him.

Tears pricked at the corners of her eyes, and not wanting MacCready to see them and think of her as weak, Luna just looked at the ground and remained silent. She deserved this, she thought, he was right. How could she endanger both of their lives like that? It was careless. But at the same time, she had been distracted by so many things, and plied with booze. Alcohol was somewhat a weakness for her, as a lot of the time, the only liquid she would have readily available to drink was various spirits.

Luna's chin trembled, and it was no use hiding her feelings, as the tears finally came, and fell to the ground leaving behind wet tracks in the dirt and grime on her round cheeks. MacCready saw this and softened immediately,

"Shit... I'm sorry. I didn't mean to make you cry." He reached out to her, but Luna pulled away at the last second. Sam stood between them, softly whining, and not fully comprehending the situation.

"Just take me back to the hotel." She mumbled. All Luna could think of, at this point, was how much she wanted to curl up into a ball and cry herself to sleep. She was just so damn tired, and whatever had happened back in the bar was now in the past. Mentally she just wanted to move on, but emotionally Luna felt as though she had betrayed MacCready somehow. And yet, deep down, she knew that wasn't what happened.

He was silent for a moment, as though he was about to say something more. Instead, he turned away and began walking back to The Rexford, with Luna and Sam in tow.

Thankfully MacCready had rented a room with two beds, otherwise things would have been awkward; trying to figure out who gets the bed or if they should share it.
Other than the two beds there wasn't much in the way of furniture; just a bedside table with a broken lamp on it that was set between the two beds, a rickety chair in the corner, and a dresser with a missing drawer.

MacCready propped his rifle up against the wall, easily within reach, next to the bed that was closest to the door.

"The bathroom is down stairs, on the main floor. Too the left of the check-in counter." He said over his should, as he busied himself with removing his coat and belt. His back was still turned to her, even when Luna asked if there was a shower, he merely shrugged and said "Go take a look for yourself."

Still a little bit drunk, Luna dropped her bag and gun on her bed, and told Sam to stay, before stumbling out into the hall, in search of the bathroom. All the whiskey had left her bladder feeling as though it were about to burst.

Seeing, from the corner of his eye, that Luna had already taken a wrong turn, MacCready shouted to her, "To the left!"

She appeared at the door then, and with a wink and pointing at him with finger-guns, she said "Right.", before continuing her search.

MacCready shook his head and grinned in spite of himself. Climbing into his bed by the door, he was finally able to relax enough to fall into a deep sleep.

Using the walls and wobbly railings to steady herself, Luna managed to find the bathroom, and it did indeed have a shower stall. Though it didn't look as inviting as she would have thought. The tiles were encrusted with a nasty green and brown slime, making her think of all the moldy food she had come across in the last ten years. There was just no way she was climbing into that filthy contraption and catching a disease, so she opted for a 'sponge bath'. Digging through a nearby set of lockers, Luna was lucky enough to find somewhat clean cloths, towels, and a dried up bar of soap. The smell of mothballs did not bother her enough to dissuade her from using the towels, as they were in almost perfect condition, aside from the smell.

Turning on the tap was an event unto itself. The handles were rusted to the point where she was almost unable to turn them, which in turn just made Luna wish that Anders was there. He would have definitely been able to get the water running, easily, with his thickly muscled arms, and his stubbled cheeks. Ugh, he could have helped me wash myself too! Luna thought, while struggling with the tap. Her thoughts had veered to an exceptionally explicit fantasy of the large man on his knees before her, his hands holding Luna's thighs open while his tongue danced across her labia. Soon, her fantasy included the mysterious man, Charon, behind her. He held both her small hands with one of his large hands, behind her back, while his other hand fondled her breasts. Luna's body pressed against Charon's, and she could feel his hard erection pressing into her lower back.

Just when she had almost given up, and had become aroused, Luna finally managed to get the hot water turned on; but it wasn't water at first. A thick brown sludge gurgled and garbled it's way through the pipes, causing loud and concerning noises to be heard throughout the floor, and possibly the rest of the hotel which served to make her feel guilty, since it was so late at night. When the sludge had run its course, a rusty brown coloured liquid, that could hardly be called water, poured from the tap.

Luna waited a few more minutes for the colour to dissipate, but when all it did was lighten slightly, she gave up. "You cant have it all." She sighed to herself.
Quickly stripping down and locking the bathroom door, Luna held one of the clean white cloths, under the running water and began washing herself.

The soap had not re-hydrated as well as she had hoped, but it was a good find and would last for a while.

Luna took her sweet time, thoroughly washing every bit of herself, as best as she could. By the end of her 'sponge bath', Luna felt almost as clean as she had the day that she had come out of the vault.

Not wanting to pull on her filthy clothes again, until they were properly washed, Luna merely wrapped herself in a towel.

With the whiskey still coursing though her veins, a now empty bladder, her bundle of clothes and bar of soap neatly wrapped and tucked under her arm, Luna ventured back out into the lobby.

Having rounded the corner to go back up the stairs, she realized that walking from the bathroom back to her shared room, in nothing but an old towel, was not the best idea. Though, to her drunken credit, the logic was sound...ish. Her fear was that someone might leave their room and see her in her current indecent state. The whiskey had definitely been liquid courage for her to simply wash in the unfamiliar bathroom, but it seemed to be wearing off, although she could still feel the effects. Her mind was hazy, her sight blurry, and her body felt positively warm and tingly.

Luna had to stop halfway down the hall, on her floor, to readjust her towel, after feeling it begin to slip down over her breasts.

And, as if whatever God was left, had heard her worst fears, the door ahead of her creaked open, and a figure stepped out. It was a tall, muscularly built man, masked by the shadows, that two hundred year old light bulbs could not chase away. As he stepped toward her, Luna was certain she recognized him, and yet refused to believe it. *There's no possible way...am I seeing things?* Luna rubbed at her eyes, unsure if the whiskey was playing tricks with her eyesight now. It wouldn't have been the first time it happened.

Anders stepped out of the shadows and stopped before her, in nothing but well fitted cargo pants. The top button was open, and the fly was still up, but Luna could have sworn, *if that bulge was any bigger his fly would be falling down! But then again, wouldn't I be too?*

Her towel problems forgotten, Luna stared, somewhat slack jawed, at the half naked man before her, with her eyes still trained on his crotch.

Anders grinned down at her and said, "See anything you like?" At his remark, Luna pulled her eyes away and up to his face, shocked that he had noticed her staring, yet again. He didn't appear to mind, since his next words were, "I didn't know the Rexford had room service." His eyes traveled down her body and then back to her face, "Because you look absolutely delicious."

For some absurd reason Luna found his pick-up line to be outrageous. She tried her best to contain her laughter, but eventually failed. Her bundle of clothes and soap fell to the floor, in her effort to hold the towel up, while still trying to control her laughter. The look on Anders face said he didn't find it all that funny, but when he crossed his arms over his chest and leaned against the wall, Luna's laughter stopped. Once again, Luna was transfixed by the sight of his muscular arms and powerful chest. Clearing her throat, and wiping the tears from her eyes, Luna tried to explain herself, "Sorry, I just, I was just thinking about you and then-" Anders cut her off by asking "You we're thinking of me?" He was actually kind of touched by the fact that she admitted to have been thinking of him. She really was sweet; sweet and naive.
Luna blushed, remembering her fantasy about him, and gave a shy nod and bit her lower lip. She was embarrassed about it now, feeling as though he could read her mind somehow. Would he be disgusted if he knew what her fantasy had been? Or would he have the same one and indulge her?

Unsure of how to continue the conversation, now that Luna felt hyper aware of her own thoughts and had been called out for thinking about him, she decided that it was time to go.

"Uhm, have a good night." She bent down to pick up her things, but Anders crouched down with her, so they were only a few inches apart.

"Why don't you come inside? I've got a bottle of whiskey, and some food." For some reason, Anders seemed almost shy, even hesitant, asking her to come into his room, and Luna, noticing this found it undeniably cute, and almost refreshing from his constant seduction and flirting.

Anders had grabbed her bundle of clothes and they stood up together, his hand cupping Luna's elbow to steady her.

She was hungry, and a bit thirsty still too, so Luna nodded her agreement, "Let me just go and get dressed. I'll be right back."

Smiling, Anders turned to go back into his room, her things still in his hand.

Luna briskly walked back to her shared room, bundle of clothes and soap forgotten, and tiptoed past MacCready's sleeping form. Thankfully he seemed to be in a somewhat deep sleep, otherwise Luna may have taken a bullet to the stomach as she came into the room.

Opening her bag, Luna dug out fresh underwear, and another pair of jeans. Smacking her forehead with the palm of her hand, Luna realized that Anders still had her clothes - which included her only bra and only shirt, as the others had been thrown out by Dr. Amari.

She pulled on her underwear and jeans as quickly as she could, and stumbled a few times when her toes caught in the ripped fabric, more than once.

It was almost bizarre to her, that their rooms were right next to each other, and she had never heard Anders come down the hall and go into his room earlier, then again, she had been talking with MacCready about the bathrooms. Maybe Anders had come up the opposite stairwell, when she had gone down the other to find the bathrooms.

Banishing all thoughts of how he managed to sneak into his own room, Luna made sure the towel was wrapped securely around her breasts before leaving the room once again. This time, taking care to shut the door quietly.

Luna raised her hand to knock at his door, but Anders was faster, and pulled the door open before her knuckles could meet the wood.

"Please, come in." He graciously requested, standing aside. The foggy, glass tumbler in his hand, sloshed amber liquid with his movements. He glanced at her towel, but said nothing about it. Luna took in her surroundings, noticing his power armor in the corner of the room, but also that the room was simply lit by a few strategically placed candles.

Closing the door, Anders turned and casually walked over to his bed and grabbed her pile of clothing. "I believe you forgot these?"

Luna scoffed at the accusation. "Forgot? More like didn't get them back." She playfully bantered. Accepting the bundle, she was primed to leave, in order to finish dressing in her own room again, but
was stopped by Anders' hand on her arm.

"Wait, don't go." He sounded so eager it was almost impossible for Luna to say no, and a part of her didn't really want to leave; simply because it was so exciting to be barely covered in the same room as this man who exudes virility. The possibilities were endless, it gave Luna butterflies, and made her heart race.

She smiled awkwardly, "But I need to get dressed."

Anders grinned, "No you don't. I'll just be coming off again."

Smirking, Luna rolled her eyes, unsurprised by his flirting, though it made her feel good.

As she turned to leave the room, clothes in hand, Anders stepped in front of her and blocked the door with an arm. His face had turned into a stony and unfathomable mask. Luna felt a stab of fear course through her veins, which seemed to sober her up slightly. She realized that in all truth she was playing a dangerous game with a dangerous man. Hadn't Mac warned her about this?

Luna took a quick step back, clutching her bundle pf clothes over her chest, in a vain attempt to protect herself. The back of her knees bumped the cold bed frame, and prevented any further escape.

"Wait," Anders reached out towards her, concern suddenly flashing across his handsome face, "I'm not going to hurt you. I just want you to stay with me for a little while. I thought we would share this night together before I go back to the Prydwyn tomorrow." He explained. "I hope I didn't scare you."

Luna shook her head, unsure of what to say. He had surprised her, for sure. But scared? Did he scare her? It was more complicated than a simple yes or no answer, and definitely something for her to chew on at a later date.

"No, I'm okay. I just wasn't expecting you to move so fast." She partially lied, biting at her lower lip anxiously.

He stared at Luna, almost expectantly, but it was hard to for her to tell what it was he expected her to do or say. Clearing her throat to break the awkward silence, Luna asked, "Can I get dressed now?"

Nodding stiffly, Anders stepped around her to grab the bottle of whiskey from the top of his dresser. Luna dressed as quickly as she could, dropping the damp towel on the floor boards of his room. When she had her bra and shirt on, Luna gently touched Anders' shoulder, signaling that it was alright to look now. He turned around slowly, and upon seeing she was fully dressed now, gave her another grin.

"Now I can look at you and not feel like a complete creep."

Luna laughed, "Jokes on you, you're still a creep." He nodded, admitting without words, that she was right. He had been checking her out, from the moment he laid eyes on her in the bar, and not just as a target for his mission. He was genuinely attracted to, and intrigued by her. She seemed so innocent, and yet there was a hard edge to her. He had seen faint scars littering her arms and upper chest, with a fresh looking pink scar on her shoulder. It was too large to be a bullet wound, and yet she had survived.

Perhaps she was lucky, or perhaps she had the skill and knowledge to survive this hell on earth.

Respect for this curvy, mysterious woman bubbled in his chest. It would be a shame if he had to kill
"You want a drink?" Anders inquired. Luna smiled, still somewhat shaken by the emotions she had just felt over what seemed like such a small and insignificant interaction., "Sure." she replied.

After handing Luna a glass of whiskey, Anders sat upon his rented bed and patted the spot next to him. Luna accepted his invitation once again, sitting on the old mattress gingerly - not because of its lack of cleanliness, but rather to avoid jostling him suddenly and having the damn thing creak under her weight.

Out of nervousness, Luna began drinking her liquor enthusiastically, and with large gulps. It tasted rancid, like sour milk in an old boot, but that's how all the alcohol tasted in the wasteland. It was the only taste, that she had ever known, unless one day she got the chance to try home brewed booze.

Luna could feel her buzz coming back almost instantly, thanks to the two-hundred-year-old-extra-fermented whiskey, the previous alcohol still in her system, and lack of food.

"I, uhm, wanted to thank you for earlier tonight." Luna said, gently touching his knee with her fingertips. "My partner and I don't know each other super well yet, so I kind of felt...lost, and alone briefly.” Her admission left Anders with a strange feeling, one that he couldn't quite put his finger on.

"You sure about that?" He chuckled, then continued, "You looked pretty pissed off before I even came over." At this, Luna couldn't help but laugh too, despite his reminder bringing up an echo of what she had been feeling at that moment, when she had seen Charon and Magnolia together. "I," She dragged out the single word, "was upset, but I've had a lot going on recently." Luna managed to explain summarily.

Anders nodded, refraining from digging at her for information so soon. Instead, he placed his rather large hand, on her thigh and squeezed, in an attempt to comfort and sympathize. His touch was electrifying for Luna, though, sending shivers of excitement down her spine and through her womanhood.

Chapter End Notes

I hope everyone is enjoying the story so far!

I've been playing a lot of FO76 lately and am kinda getting a hankering to start a little fic for that as well!

Also, I have a one shot that I'm working on currently, starring Malcom (the cannibal) from Far Harbor, and an OFC SS. its extremely explicit because I am absolute trash ;)


Anders' Field Report

Chapter Summary

A holotape Anders records before renting a room at the Rexford, conveniently next door to Mac and Luna

"Found the target in The Third Rail bar tonight. She has a companion.

Relationship, Unknown

Status, Current

I approached her once he left her side, and was gone for more than a couple minutes. She looked lost, and then thoroughly angry. It was the perfect moment for me to 'get to know her.'

We...drank, and drank some more. I needed to test her blood alcohol tolerance, for future reference. Phew, she can really hold her liquor, at least to a certain point and then she just gets ridiculous and flirtatious. I didn't even have to try that hard.

When her partner returned, he looked confused. And then it appeared he recognized me. Before I could conduct anymore tests, or gleam any information, he had her up and out of the bar faster than a Deathclaw at dinner.

So I started asking around.

His name is Robert Joseph MacCready, a hired gun, from the Capitol Wasteland. Used to run with the Gunners.

It would be a shame if someone contacted the Gunners and informed them of his whereabouts and actions...

Marcus Anders, out."

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!