HOWL OF THE WILD - CHAPTER ONE

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Lucy Wilkins is now twenty one and living and working in Nevada City, California. She lives in a two bedroom apartment with a seaview and balcony. One day, she meets a gorgeous looking man with striking blue eyes named Paulo Vanadic but the visions she's been suffering with since the wolves' incident when she was nine, become much more frequent. Meeting Paulo leads Lucy getting into some trouble with a group of hooligans, which Paulo saves her from. And more trouble with a black leather cladded group of men who trashes her apartment looking for her and him. It turns out they're a pack of wolves, so is Paulo, and so is she! Shocking Lucy entirely.

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One

"Hey, Miss Wilkins, are you going to start serving today or tomorrow?" said my boss, Tony Moran, annoyed.

I snapped out of my little daydream and poured some fresh espresso into a mug and took it over to the customer who'd ordered it. I'd worn my long, dark brown hair back in a low ponytail. The man winked at me but I ignored it and carried on serving.

By lunchtime, the small Italian cafÃ©, I worked at on the corner of Dwell Street in Nevada City was bustling with people who wanted to drink in or take away coffee. When I went on my break at half past one in the afternoon, I collapsed on one of the booths.

I'd moved from North England to Nevada City, California last year when I turned twenty one. It was my parents' idea for me to do some travelling. So, here I am in sunny Nevada City, California, working my butt off, and don't get paid much. I lived in a two bedroomed apartment with a sea view and a balcony. I should be so happy. But I wasn't.

My work colleague and friend, Silvia Johnson, slipped into the booth opposite me. She was a fiery red head with blue eyes and real pretty, too.

"Luc, honey, what's wrong?" she asked in concern.

"Do you remember I told you about my experience when I was nine years when a grey wolf rescued me from a black wolf and then bit me?" I asked.

She nodded and pulled out her packet of cigarettes from her apron pocket and took one out to light it. "What about it?" she asked.

"I keep remembering it; do you think that's strange? Shouldn't I forget about it like many things from your childhood?" I asked. My eyes looked up and my jaw dropped to the floor as a tall, dark haired, handsome man walked into the cafÃ©.

"Lucy, hello," Silvia said, snapping her fingers in my face. She turned around to see what I was gawping at and grinned turning back to me. "Go get him. If you don't, I will."

The man saw me and stared deeply and then came walking over to me. He had the bluest eyes I had ever seen on a man with black hair. He smiled down at me ignoring Silvia's attempts at flirting with him. He wore faded blue jeans with holes in at the knees and a black leather jacket.

"Hi, you're Lucy Wilkins, right?" he asked in a sexy, Eastern accent. He laughed light-heartedly at my surprised expression. "I'm Paulo Vanadic. I read your name tag."

I found myself blushing. Who was this guy? He looked so familiar to me, somehow. But how? "You look sort of familiar to me, have we met before?" I asked.

"Once, a very, very, long time ago in a different form," Paulo replied. I did wonder what he meant, but before I could ask my uptight boss demanded Sylvia and I to get back to work.

"Sorry, our break is over," I apologised to him, standing up and we were standing so close together that our bodies were almost pressing.

"That's a shame," he said sadly, making me blush and took my right hand in his and raised it to his lips. "Until we meet again, my lady."

"Um, do you want coffee?" I said quickly, as he turned towards the door as a bunch of foreign students walked in towards the counter.

Paulo glanced back over his right shoulder and suddenly a weird vision flashed before my eyes. Of two wolves running freely over meadows; a white wolf and the grey wolf that came to my rescue all those years ago.

When the vision had gone, I had Sylvia by my side asking if I was alright as I was standing in the middle of the cafÃ© staring into space. When I came to my senses, I noticed that Paulo had gone to my disappointment. I rushed out the cafÃ© and looked both ways down the busy high street but I couldn't see him. I went back inside and demanded to know from Sylvia where he'd gone.

"Lucy, I really don't know. I didn't look, I'm sorry. I was more concerned about you," Sylvia explained herself clearly. A concerned look upon her face.

I put my arms around her and we hugged.

"I said back to work, you two," said Tony, angrily. He was staring at us from behind the counter. He was the typical Italian man. Short and plump with dark hair in white pants and t shirt, and a white apron tied around his waist.

Sylvia and I got back to work serving customers.

By the time I finished my shift at half past six that night, I was exhausted. I said good bye to Sylvia and Tony as we locked up. I took a short cut back to my apartment where a group of black hooded hooligans were standing in the dark alleyway smoking a cigarette. I held up my head high as I walked past them as they all watched me walk and a couple of them whistled after me.

I turned my head slightly over one shoulder when I heard footsteps behind me, my brown eyes widening in terror. I quickened my walk with my heart pounding. I stopped suddenly and one of them stepped up behind me I could feel his vile breath on my neck.

"What do you want?" I asked, in a confident voice.

The hooligans sniggered with one another. The one behind me put his hands on my hips that made me spun me around to face him.

He was a dirty looking white male, had green eyes, and a goatee. He had a mean look about him. He and his hooligan buddies surrounded around me. I felt trapped. And simply petrified of what they were going to do to me.

Suddenly, one of them was lifted up into the air then thrown against the brick wall.

The other hooligans and I glanced up surprised. It was Paulo Vanadic.

"Let her go!" Paulo commanded, as he came forward. "Or do I have to make you."

I spaced out again as another vision flashed before me of the two wolves. Their howling rang loudly in my ears. I covered my ears with my hands to block the sound out as it was too loud. I snapped out of it when Paulo started shaking me by the arms.

"Lucy, Lucy, are you alright?" he asked concerned.

I took my hands away from myears and looked at him then looked at the unconscious group of hooligans on the ground. I turned back to him. "How did you do that?" I couldn't keep the surprise out of my voice. When he was about to speak, I walked away.

Paulo followed me walking as quickly as I was back to my two bedroomed apartment with sea view.

"There is something I should tell you," he began, as I pulled out my key ring from my handbag and placed it in the lock.

"Why would I be interested in what you have to tell me?" I asked, dryly. The key was stuck in the lock. "This damn lock," I started to get annoyed.

"Please, let me try," Paulo said. I stepped away and let him try and open the lock. By magic, he'd opened the door. He turned to me and grinned. "There you go," he said.

"How'd you do that? Every time I've wanted to open the door it always gets stuck," I explained the situation with a short laugh.

He pulled out the key from the lock and gave it to me and our fingers touched it sent like electrical bolt of energy run through my body from head to toe.

Another vision came to me of the wolves and they were nuzzling one another and rubbing their backs affectionately. I shook the image from my head and smiled up at him. "Sorry about that, recently I've been having visions. Very strange visions," I tried explaining.

I opened the front door and stepped inside then turned back to him. "Would you like to come in for some coffee?"

"Sure, I love coffee," Paulo said, then stepped into the apartment.

"Sorry, could you take your shoes off, please. My landlord doesn't want any dirt around the apartments, so no shoes," I said. I rolled my eyes and he laughed. I watched as he slipped off his casual black shoes and placed them down by the front door. I smiled then walked through to the open kitchen. He took a seat onone of the high stools at the breakfast bar while I filled the steel kettle up with water and switched it on to boil.

"So, tell me about these visions you've been experiencing, maybe I can help," he said, smiling.

I turned around and looked at him. "I hardly know you and you'd probably think I was crazy anyhow," I replied, turning back to making fresh coffee in the coffee machine.

"No, I wouldn't," Paulo said firmly. "Try me."

After I made two mugs of fresh coffee I brought them over and handed one over to him and our hands touched and it sent another electrical bolt rush through me and a vision of a pack of wolves running flashed before me.

"Another vision?" he asked, taking the coffee mug from me.

"Yeah, really bizarre, I've had them since I was a kid," I replied, sipping my coffee.

Paulo leaned forwards across the breakfast bar so our faces were just inches away from each other. He held his intense gaze at me and I was hypnotised by his beautiful blue eyes. "What happened?"

"I was on a camping trip with my parents when I was nine years old in Northern England and I saw this beautiful grey wolf staring at us, but me in particular," I told him, remembering it vividly in my head. "I remember seeing a wolf's paw print that early evening when I went to the place where I'd seen the wolf but it was nowhere to be seen. Then it suddenly appeared. It wanted me to follow it and I did having this gut instinct that it would protect me from something or someone. The grey wolf had started running and I ran after it and it led me to this large lake. I was able to drink some water. And then I heard loud howls so I got scared and tried to run in the direction I came from the tent but because it was night time I couldn't see a thing. I'd tripped over a stone and then..." I stopped with my story.

Paulo gasped. "And then? Go on, you can say it," he said, encouraging me to tell the whole story. He grabbed hold of my right hand and looked deeply into my eyes.

"And then I saw a pair of bright yellow eyes in the shadows and they belonged to a big, bad, black wolf that was snarling viciously at me. It looked so angry as it stared right at me getting ready to kill me there and then," I stopped to take a breath. As remembering how petrified I had been made me shake. He squeezed my hand tighter with his.

"Go on."

I swallowed and continued with my story. "Then out of nowhere, the grey wolf came to my rescue and pounced on the black wolf that was going to kill me and they started fighting. The black wolf got hurt and ran off into the woods. The grey wolf came to me and let me stroke it and it felt so soft like silk," my voice trailed off in a dreamlike state. I stared off into space. "My Dad came to find me and the grey wolf bit me slightly on the left hand. See, you can almost see the scar," I showed him a faint teeth mark scar on my left hand. I watched Paulo's expression as he looked at my scar and he didn't look amazed or shocked. "You're not shocked?"

"And these visions you have are connected to this experience, you think?" Paulo asked, casually. He leaned back on the stool with his hands in his lap looking very relaxed. When I didn't reply, he added. "The reason I ask is because is the reason I needed to tell you something."

I sipped my coffee, "which is?" I asked.

He turned his head to the side as if he could hear something that I couldn't.

Suddenly, all of a sudden, I could hear a heavy group of leather cladded men walking down the street a couple of blocks away. They were one block away. I could hear exact sound of their heavy boots clumping along the path. The men were down at the end of my street.

Paulo quickly got up off the stool and grabbed me by the arm. "We have to go, now!" he ordered. "You can hear them, can't you?"

I could hear the men's' heavy footsteps coming closer and closer. I let him drag me to the balcony sliding glass door and I was pulled out onto the balcony. "What are we doing? What is going on?" I demanded to know, I had my hands on my hips.

He ignored me and crouched down andpulled me down with him. Paulo pulled me down again whenI stood up again. "Shut up, and stay down," he told me harshly. He looked round the corner and rose to his knees peering through the glass door. His eyes widened.

I looked through as well and my eyes widened in shock. A group of leather cladded men with big, black clumpy boots busted down my front door and entered my apartment. They were mean looking. They looked around my apartment and started throwing things about.

One of them with shoulder length black hair held up his right hand to indicate for the other men to stop and they did. He raised his head up sniffing the air and an evil smile curled around his lips. The men gathered around him.

Paulo and I ducked down and he grabbed me up to my feet then grabbed my hand and turned to me and asked. "Do you trust me?"

I stared deeply into his blue eyes and saw all goodness and sincerity in them. I smiled a bit and said. "Yes."

"We have to jump," he said. He pointed to the ground.

"Are you nuts, we'll be killed!" I said, incredulously. Paulo pulled me to the edge of the balcony and I leaned over the edge andlooked down. "Oh, god!"

The balcony door slid open and the men stepped out looking around but didn't see us as we were dangling from the balcony rail with our legs dangling in the air. They sniffed the air.

"She's still her," said the leader with shoulder length black hair wearing a leather cladded, sleeveless blackjacket zipped upand leather pants. "Find her."

They want me? I thought. What would they want with me? I'm nothing special just a small town girl from Northern England. My right hand began to lose its grip around the white bar of the balcony and I shrieked alerting the men.

The men glanced down and saw us they looked enraged and their eyes turned a golden colour like an animal's that made me shriek out and lose my grip around the bars and I fell backwards falling towards the ground.

Paulo had let himself fall back as well yelling out as he fell.

We landed to the ground unharmed with our hands on the ground and one leg up and our heads lowered. We looked at each other then turned and looked up at the balcony where the men were still glaring down.

"OK, I need answers right now," I demanded to Paulo, angrily. He grabbed hold of my left hand and dragged me back onto my feet and we started to run. I glanced back over my shoulder and my eyes grew wide with terror as the men had jumped down to the ground from my balcony and were now running after us at full speed.

Paulo and I reached a dark alleyway but it was blocked off by a wired fence. We turned around as we heard the men coming closer to us.

"Well, well, well, look who we have here," said the leader of the men. "Paulo, saving his princess from the likes of me and his own kind. But wait a second, isn't she our kind as well now?" he turned to his menand asked.

The other men all nodded.

"Let her be, Andre," Paulo said. His face darkening as he stared at his enemy.

"We're not going to harm her. Why should we harm this young, beautiful maiden here? After all, she is destined to be my bride," the leader named Andre replied. He stepped forward then stopped. "You have no idea who we are, do you dear? Nor do you know why you get strange visions and dreams of wolves. Nor do you know what's happening to you right now. I'm surprised Paulo hasn't told you yet."

"Told me what?" I asked, I glanced at Paulo and he glanced at me with an apologetic look.

"You're a wolf, my dear. You're becoming a wolf. That's what we are, all of us here together - wolves," Andre revealed the shocking revelation. He stepped back with a smile on his face with his hands out to the side. "I was going to bite you myself in my wolf form when you were nine but Paulo here had to come out and attack me instead so he could give you the wolf medicine," he pouted out his bottom lip.

I shook my head and laughed. "That's impossible. A wind up, right?" I said, glancing at Paulo and he shook his head.

"It's true, Lucy," Paulo replied. He turned back to Andre his face darkening. "You will never have her."

"We'll see about that," Andre answered, evenly. "Kill him and bring me the girl," he orderedhis men over his shoulder. He stepped back and then turned and walked away.

Paulo crouched down on his hands and knees and shape shifted into a beautiful grey wolf with blue eyes before my very eyes. In his wolf form, he snarled ferociously at the men before us with his ears right back and the hackles around his neck up.

The men shape shifted too into a pack of vicious black wolves. They looked as though they were going to kill us right there and then.

What was I going to do?

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