

The Liable Choice

by nagandsev

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Chapter 1 of 1

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Looking around at the cold, mausoleum walls of the Ministry, Remus shuddered. The morbid memories of loss and waste from the war returned. He hated being here, waiting in the belly of the beast; the reason *why* he was here, was even more revolting ... ridiculous.

I should be home. With Teddy, rather than... Ever since Nymphadora's death, living with the fact that he had survived, when she had died ... the merciless killing curse of Bellatrix Lestrange ... unabatingly gnawed within him. Only Teddy. Teddy was his reason for breathing, his reason for living.

I shouldn't be here; it's the third bloody time... Remus felt his chest tightening, his breathing become irregular and strained. *Teddy needs me. I'm not there. He'll be screaming for me!* Even though his mother-in-law was taking care of the little tot, Remus' overwhelming angst consumed him when away from his child.

Teddy had Nymphadora's hair, eyes and... Remus bit his inner cheeks, wincing, diverting himself from being consumed with maudlin longing *I must be strong: can't let them see me weak! Must be strong. For Teddy.*

Pacing outside the Wizengamot's tribunal entrance, his palms sweating as the ceaseless remorse tortured him, obsessing that he survived... *a hair's-breadth escape from the jaws of death...* Ironically, his cursed blood had kept him tethered to human life.

Remembering his abandonment of wife and child, shortly before Nymphadora's death, Remus anguished *Nymphadora! How could I have ever left you? And now ... left forever alone... only Teddy...*

And now this this abhorrent Marriage Law... *Can't they leave me in peace? I've had a wife ... the only witch who had ever wanted me, the real me, who knew me, my condition, my past... and still... risked everything, loved me uncontrollably... unconditionally...*

A bitter sneer crossed Remus' face. *Don't these Ministerial bastards know that werewolves only mate for life? Only once in a lifetime. A love like no other.*

A single tear rolled down his scarred-streaked cheek.

"Remus Lupin? We're ready to see you," a pert Percy Weasley announced, waiting to usher Remus into the inner chamber.

"Please, have a seat, Mr Lupin," instructed Cornelius Fudge, the presiding judge, while looking over several parchments placed before him.

"This is the third appeal of objection ... do you not realise that you, as well as any other able-bodied Wizard, fall under the Marriage Law? The death toll from the war and plagues weighs on us all. Only through severe and adhered laws for procreation may we insure for the future of Wizardkind, a balanced existence against Muggles. Which all who wish to remain in the Wizarding world must and will acquiesce to."

"I have ..." repulsed, Remus forced himself to make his point, "... reproduced, procreated. Filled my quota. Contributed. My son," he paused, correcting himself *our* son lives... he is a healthy, normal baby boy."

"Yes! Exactly the point, Mr Lupin. One Teddy Lupin, biological mother was the deceased Nymphadora Lupin née Tonks?"

Remus throat muscles tightened. He couldn't breathe.

"Mr Lupin? The deceased Nymphadora Lupin was the biological mother of your son?"

Remus, choked with tears, glared at Fudge. *Deceased? She died, fighting, you bastard; all for the greater good... that the likes of you survived and she didn't.* He could only nod his head in spastic affirmative movements.

"I'll take that as a 'yes' ... let it be entered," instructed Fudge, wagging his finger at Percy.

Seeing Remus wiping his face, Fudge offered, "Mr Lupin, do you need a moment to compose yourself?"

"No." Remus sniffed deeply. Then, impulsively, he forced the issue. "As well as my former marriage status, the court is fully aware of my Werewolf status. This alone should exempt me from this new ordinance. My kind has always been Undesirables."

"Your kind, Mr Lupin? Yes. You particularly? No. It is proven that healthy, normal offspring may be sired from you. Young little Teddy is ... granted a Metamorphmagus ... but Metamorphmagi are quite useful and of keen interest to the Ministry... he is a healthy little wizard. There is no need to think further offspring will be anything other than normal. Granted your copulation is carried out within the lunar period when the moon is waxing wan and the witch shall be ovulating respectively, of course."

"You are harmless during the waxing moon, are you not?" insisted Fudge.

At Remus' non-responsiveness, Fudge persisted, "Harmless to yourself, your son? Others? Answer me!"

"Yes." Remus answered through gritted teeth.

Noting Remus' enmity, Fudge threatened, "If you continue to exhibit hostility and resistance to the law, your child will be taken away from you."

Remus froze. Somewhere a dark cloud bellowed, swelling within him; the tremulous feint echoes of a feral wolverine shadow unleashed. A savage spasm lurched deep within, barely controlling a primordial reaction to lash out.

"Clearly, you are still suffering from the post traumatic stress and effects from the war." In his most official mode, Fudge listed out, "However, the enforced Marriage Act will give your son a mother unit; one offspring minimally will be required; monitoring of patented couples will ensue..."

"His maternal grandmother...Andromeda..."

"Who is terminal; we're informed that she has not been spared the plague. Who shall take care of your son during your transformation periods?"

Silence ensued.

"Mr Lupin, let me be very clear for the last time: you are required by law, this very day, to choose and be married thereof, or face imprisonment. Your son will be taken away, placed with a law abiding couple."

In broken hacks, Remus uttered, "What witch would want me?"

Fudge didn't answer, but instead thrust forward a tethered parchment, much perused, with the names of remaining, quarantined witches.

"Your choice?" snapped Fudge.

There were names Remus recognized. Purebloods: the names of Death Eater's daughters, widows... Half-bloods ... skimming over the parchment, no Muggle-borns seemed to be listed. An ominous thought registered: vague memories and wisps of swirling names associated with pain and humiliation.

Only Nymphadora had taken away some of the fear, healed wounds that scarred him for life. The loneliness and agony he had endured before her... *to be forced to choose someone to be intimate with... to consummate a marriage, build upon a forced union in this desperate, postwar world.* And Teddy... forced to integrate a stranger into their lives... someone who could bear the burden of his curse, share the nightmare, bear all things lunar.

Remus' eyes decisively lingered on one name. Someone he remembered as an outsider, a loner, but more poignantly, someone who could share the moonlight with his son, teach Teddy not to fear the great goddess Selene, as he was cursed to do. Someone named after the haunting orb that would forever control him, torture him. The former Ravenclaw oddity. Luna Lovegood.

"Your final choice?"

"Yes."

"So let it be sealed in the records. Henceforward, one Remus Lupin and one Luna Lovegood are patented in marriage..." Fudge's voice trailed off, droning and itemizing statutes. Only when Fudge paused, did Remus look up.

"Bring forth the witch to be bonded, and released hereinto," announced Fudge.

The lithe form and iridescent glow of Luna entered the room: the official bonding and procedure thereof was swiftly enacted. Afterwards, Remus and Luna stood in front of a Floo fireplace.

Married! The overwhelming actuality hit Remus. *Good gods! I must take her home with me...*

The delicate fragrance of dirigible plums and sweet beets unexpectedly caught Remus' attention. "I don't know... what to do."

The luminous young woman said nothing, but Remus suddenly felt the touch of soft feminine skin gently, but firmly, taking hold of his rough calloused hand.

"Perhaps, we should start with going home. I'm sure your son will be happy to see you. As for the rest," remarked Luna dreamily, "these things have a way of working themselves out. One day at a time, my mum always said."

Casting her protuberant orbs accompanied by a sphinx-like smile at him, Remus unexpectedly felt the eclipse of doubt and anxiety ebb away. He gently, tentatively, held Luna close to him; they stepped together into the fire, Flooding themselves to their future.

It would be several moons later, but Luna and Teddy would await on the soft moonlit banks of a glittering midnight lakeside for Remus; his length of the werewolf's cursed transformation having ended. There, the three of them nestled together on old woolen blankets; Remus would hear how the toddler Teddy danced by the light of the full moon with Luna, learned nocturnal herbology and pointed at the constellations, already babbling and glowing with enlightened perception of the heavenly bodies. After his father had cradled and lulled him with stories of Nymphadora's daring deeds and sacrifice, Teddy would fall asleep, bundled up in fluffy warmth.

It would be then, that Luna would soothe and guide Remus to experience the moonlight such as he had never before imagined possible under the lunar deity's blessings.