

Chapter 121: Jessie

Claire

After I hung up with Zoey, I went to find Feena. She was in the kitchen with Jessie, teaching her how to make some dessert for lunch.

'Zoey and Keegan are on their way here. Zoey recognized the name.' I tell Feena in the mind link. If Zoey isn't the daughter of Jessie's Alpha, I don't want to get her hopes up.

"What are we making here?" I ask, coming to look in the bowl.

"Jessie said her favorite cookie was chocolate peanut butter, so we're making some to serve with lunch." Feena says, just as Nita comes in, carrying food from the pantry.

"What's all this? Looks like we're having a cookout?" I say, looking at the food items, ground beef, hamburger buns, and chicken.

Feena smiles and blushes. "Dane asked me what my favorite dinner is. I told him I used to love having cookouts in my pack when I was a child. We've never done that in this pack, so he asked Alpha if we could purchase a few grills. They are scheduled to arrive today,

so we thought it would be nice to have a cookout and let the pack sit outside to eat tonight."

"I love that idea! Not only is it something new and fun, but it's a great way to bring the pack together."

"I thought so, too," Feena says, adding more flour to the cookie batter as Jessie mixes it together.

"Does anyone know how to grill in this pack?" I ask, thinking there is no way that Tereshan does.

"Dane said he does," Feena says.

"I do too, Luna," Nita says. "And I cook a mean pork butt and ribs. We'll have to plan a barbeque soon."

"Now my mouth is watering, and I just ate breakfast," I tell them.

'Luna, Alpha Keegan and Luna Zoey just arrived at the border,' one of the patrols informs me in the mind link.

'Thank you. Let them through,' I tell him.

"I'll be right back," I say, looking at Feena.

She nods and continues to give Jessie instructions on making the cookies.

I go outside to wait for Keegan and Zoey to arrive. It's only a couple of minutes before I see their car coming down the road. When they pull up, I walk out to meet

them, hugging Zoey and noticing immediately that she smells like Keegan.

I stand back, looking at her questioningly. She smiles, pulling her shirt away from her neck and showing me her new mate mark.

"Congratulations!" I say, hugging her again.

"Thank you," she says, pulling back and looking at Keegan lovingly as he comes around the car. He kisses the side of her head tenderly before looking at me.

"I figured I'd take this opportunity to speak to Tereshan. I'll need to make some arrangements to be away while Zoey is in heat."

"Of course, Alpha. He's down in the cells talking to Roman at the moment, but I'll let him know that you're here."

Zoey takes my hands. "Before we go inside, you said Jessie was in the brothel, but I never saw her there. I would have recognized her."

"She only got there about a week ago, right about the time you and Amelia escaped. I guess she's been living on her own for a long time. She stumbled across Alpha Eason's pack lands, and he put her there."

"But she's just a child," she says.

"Fourteen is what Feena said."

"It sounds like her. I would want to bring her to our pack if it's her. I spoke to Keegan about it on the way here. She would be more comfortable with me as her Luna and Amelia as her Beta female since she knows us."

"If she's agreeable, so am I, but I'll warn you, Feena said she had nightmares all night and is terrified."

"That doesn't surprise me, that place is awful."

We turn and walk inside. I lead them into the kitchen. Jessie is carefully putting cookie dough on a cookie sheet as Feena talks her through what to do.

"Jessie." Zoey says softly.

Jessie's head snaps up and the spoon in her hand clatters to the ground. "Alpha Zoey?"

Zoey steps around me, opening her arms. Jessie's races into them and begins to sob hysterically.

"I thought you were dead, I thought everyone was dead," she says over and over before beginning to hyperventilate.

"What's going on?" Tereshan asks quietly, coming up behind me.

"Jessie is part of the same pack that Zoey and Amelia were from. They are part of Jessie's previous Alpha family."

I step forward, putting my hand on Zoey's back. "Let's find a more private place to talk, shall we?" I say.

Zoey nods and begins to guide Jessie as I lead them to Tereshan's office.

"Is there somewhere you and I can speak privately while they get settled, Tereshan?" I hear Keegan ask.

'Do you need me?' Tereshan asks in the mind link.

'For now, I'm good. It will probably be easier if you aren't in the room while we talk.'

'I'll use Dane's office. Call me if you need anything.'

When we get to the office, Zoey sits Jessie on the couch beside her. I grab some tissues and sit across from them. Zoey listens as Jessie tells her everything that happened. While the story is similar to the one she told me, Zoey knows the people involved in the battle and in Jessie's escape. She asks her specific questions about what she saw and where she ran.

"They killed my parents," she says tearfully.

"I know, sweet girl. I'm not sure how you survived on your own, but you're very strong." Zoey brushes the hair out of Jessie's face.

"Do you know, I'm a Luna now?" she asks Jessie.

"You are? When? How?"

"Alpha Tereshan and Luna Claire helped me too. Me and Amelia."

"Alpha Amelia is alive too?" Jessie asks, excited.

"She is and she is mated to the Beta in our pack. I am mated to the Alpha, Alpha Keegan. He came in with me, but you may not have seen him. He's very kind, a good man. We want you to come live with us."

Jessie's smile fades. "He won't want me. Not if he knows what happened to me. No pack will want me."

Zoey takes Jessie's face in her hands. "Sweetheart, Amelia and I were in the brothel before you were. My mate knows that, and he wanted me anyway. The same is true of Amelia's mate. They are cutting ties with the man who put us there. I understand it was Alpha Eason that put you there?" she asks the last part.

"Yes, he said it would be fun. It wasn't."

"No, it wasn't. But neither of those men will hurt you again. Alpha Keegan has cut ties with both of them. Keegan is a farmer. We have lots of land, with plants growing all the time. There's plenty to do and you can work outside or inside. Usually, the omegas want a mix of both, so they switch off on days some outside some inside."

"Really? That sounds great!"

"So, would you like to come live with us? To become part of our pack?"

She looks at me before looking back at Zoey.

"Yes, yes thank you," she says, throwing herself into Zoey's arms again.

Chapter 122: Preparations

Tereshan

I watch as Claire takes Zoey and Jessie into my office before turning and leading Keegan into Dane's. Instead of sitting behind the desk like I would have in the past, I sit in a chair beside him.

"I'm guessing we're here to talk about your mate smelling like you now?" I smile, watching him as we sit. I'm jealous, I know it. Claire is ready and so am I, but with everything happening, we need to be prepared. I can't just give in to my desire to mark and mate her.

"Yes. I know the timing isn't great. It just sort of happened." He says sheepishly.

"I understand that. I've almost marked Claire several times."

"So, she has agreed too?"

I smile, thinking of her statement this morning. "Yeah, she's ready. But my Beta and my Gamma both found their mates and now you have marked yours. We can't all go out for our mates' heat at the same time, especially after last night."

"Tell me about that, what happened?"

I tell him about the information we gained about Franco being in debt, but no one knows why. Then I tell him how we got the girls out of the brothel and the fight before I left.

"Yeah, he'll be coming for you. The debt part is interesting. They didn't hear anything at all?"

"Equipment, is what they said, like bulldozers. Does that mean anything at all to you?"

"Bulldozers, back hoes, dump trucks, those types of things are used for levelling land or digging holes. I haven't heard that he's into any type of land development. That might explain his debt, if he was buying up land and building it, but I'd think we'd have heard about that."

"I have some feelers out for the brothel, I'll have my guy dig a bit deeper and see if he can find out if Franco is buying up land. I'm guessing that if he's leveraged the brothel to the maximum, then his grocery stores are probably the same, which would also explain why he was so angry about me pulling out. He's going to feel any loss of business if he's that in debt."

"Before we get to the brothel, I wanted to let you now, we didn't find anything in your soil. My guys will be here today to start digging up the land. If they find anything, I've told them to call me, but otherwise, it's just rich in minerals, which is good for farming."

"And whatever you found may have nothing to do with this, but that's not how Claire took it and her instincts are almost always right. So, let me know if you find anything."

"Will do, now back to the brothel. What are your plans for the girls?"

I lean forward, scrubbing my face. "I need to find packs for them. I can absorb a lot of them, but it will take a toll on my resources here. I don't have enough housing for all of them unless I double everyone up."

"I can take some of them. I'll ask the other Alphas, the ones that don't condone visiting the brothels, at least. The ones that frequent that establishment may not be a good place for these girls. Too many memories."

"I agree, and it would be too easy for them to get put back into a position where they were being mistreated."

"Any idea how many women we're talking about?" he asks me.

"If I had to guess, I'd say roughly 50, but I also would have said there were no children there, so who knows."

"I can't believe I never realized what a disgusting piece of shit that guy is," he says, growling.

I smile at him.

"What?" he asks, half smiling, half grumpy.

"I like this side of you. I've never seen it before. Being mated brings out the Alpha in you."

"She's everything, and I won't take that for granted this time. And you may as well know, I intend to get her pregnant, so I'll be even more protective of her. I'm an older man, I'd like to retire before I die. My mate is young. I want to spend some good years with her once our pups are grown."

"You're talking like you're 50 years old. You can't be more than 35. You're not that old."

"Thirty-four, and still 15 years older than my mate. And by the time our pups are grown, and I must tell you, I plan to have as many as my pretty little mate will give me, I'll be pushing 60, so yeah, I want to start now."

"I don't plan to start having pups with Claire until this year is over. I don't want to leave our child parentless. I don't want to risk losing my child in a war either." I tell him.

He leans forward, his eyes intent on mine. "Know this, if you and Claire do have a pup, and something happens to both of you, Zoey and I will raise the child as our own. If you get her pregnant, and you die, I will look after both of them."

It's so much more than I could have or would have ever asked for. I'm overwhelmed. I stand yanking the man to his feet and giving him a huge bear hug.

I feel his body jerk at first, then he chuckles as he pats my back. "Of course, I expect the same of you if something were to happen to me."

I stand back, looking at this man, this incredible Alpha. I can't believe I ever thought he was weak.

"I will protect them and keep them safe. But nothing is going to happen to you. Franco and Eason have to get through me and my pack before they can get to you."

"Good, now that that's settled, I'm guessing my mate is planning to bring Jessie home with us, since she's from her pack originally. You don't have any issues with that, do you?"

"None," I say, walking out of the office and seeing our mates and Jessie walking out of mine.

"Everything good?" I ask as Keegan moves to pull his mate to him. Goddess I can't wait until I can mate with Claire.

"Jessie is going home with Zoey and Keegan." Claire says/

"Good, it'll be nice to have another young one in our pack. Helps to keep me feeling young!" Keegan says smiling at her. I can see it's exactly what she needed to hear.

Claire comes and leans against me, and I wrap my arm

around her.

"Can I say goodbye to Feena first?" Jessie asks.

"Of course, and you're welcome to come visit any time. We share a border, so you can come across and visit us safely that way." Claire says.

We follow her as she runs into the kitchen to hug Feena.

Feena hands her a bag. "Here are some cookies. You can't leave without taking some with you. It was your idea after all."

After they say their goodbyes, we walk them out and I pull Keegan aside.

"Let me know where you and Zoey will be. I'll make sure our patrols give the place a wide berth, but I also want to make sure that no one can attack you while you're there."

"I appreciate that. I'll be by tomorrow. We can walk the grounds together, and I'll show you where it is. It is actually closer to our shared border."

"Well, that makes it easier to guard," I tell him. "I have one there too, it's where I'm planning to take Claire when the time comes. Will your Beta be taking over while you're out?"

"He will, I'll bring him with me tomorrow to show him your lands and introduce you to him."

Claire comes to stand beside me, and I wrap my arm around her again as we wave goodbye.

When they're gone, she looks up at me with so much love in her eyes.

I turn, wrapping both my arms around her.

"What's that look?" I ask her, wishing I could feel her emotions.

"We're doing so many good things together."

"We have many more good things still left to do." I say, leaning down to steal a kiss.

When we pull back she licks her lips. "Do you know, I think I'll ask Feena to make a blueberry cobbler. I'm definitely craving my favorite flavor."

I take her mouth in a passionate kiss that leaves of both breathless.