

The Pack's Nemesis (Quirin's Story)

Chapter 21-25

The Pack's Nemesis (Quirin's Story)

Kennedy

After checking on Samuel, who is about as sweet as he can be, I head back to the table with Quirin.

"Hey Luna, are you planning on lapping us again tonight?" someone calls out.

I turn, frowning? "What?"

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"We were running patrols last night when you decided to make all of us feel like lazy asses when you passed us three times." I'd been so upset that I hadn't even been paying attention.

"Oh. Oh, I'm sorry. I wasn't trying to make you feel bad. Echo just needed to stretch her legs," I tell him.

"That's okay, Luna. It's just a reminder that we need to push harder to make sure no one gets past our borders. It was pretty impressive," a third patrol member says.

"Thank you.

If you ever need anyone to set the pace for you." I begin and laugh when they all begin to say "NO" loudly.

When I turn back, I see Quirin watching me. I'm pretty sure that's pride twinged with possessiveness on his face. Since he doesn't keep the link between us open often, I'm not exactly sure

"Let's see how the food is tonight," I say, sitting down and starting to eat.

"Are you really that fast, Luna?" one of the warriors at our table asks me.

"I'm the fastest one in my family," I say.

"How did I never know this about you?" Quirin asks me.

"I was never running away from you, Alpha," I say, and feeling happy and flirtatious, I wink at him.

This time, I feel a rush of hot desire along with his low rumbling growl of pleasure before he shuts off the link between us again.

'We need to do whatever you just did again, Kennedy. It's been days since our mates have been inside us, Echo says, practically panting with need in my head.

It has been a while. Most newly mated couples are barely out in public because they can't keep their hands off of each other. I know we've had some issues, but anytime Quirin has touched me, he's made sure to keep a distance between us since that first night. Even his kiss this morning was sweet and gentle, not like the passionate kiss we shared our first night together.

'Well, if he's going to be training us tonight, perhaps we can take the opportunity to brush against him, maybe straddle him. Or maybe we pull him into the shower with us after we're all hot and sweaty, Echo purrs in our mind.

I like all of those ideas, so I'm more excited than I've ever been to train when we finish dinner and say goodbye to the others. I glance around and don't see Arlo anywhere. I'm glad, but I still need to make sure that Quirin knows that he might become a problem. I'm not exactly sure what role he expects me to take with the warriors, but he seems to be fine with maintaining the discipline as I assist the omegas and run the packhouse.

"Do you want to change before we go?" he asks me. I look down and realize that I'm probably not wearing good sparring clothes. Since Quirin was in warrior

training right before dinner, he's already dressed appropriately.

"Yes, give me a few minutes," I say and bound up the stairs.

78%

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I quickly get dressed and when I come back downstairs, I see Quirin talking to one of the female warriors in our pack. I've watched my mate for a long time, watched how he interacts with she-wolves, so I'm not concerned with how he's interacting with her. I am, however, concerned about her flirtatiousness with my mate. I can tell she's using something that happened in training to get my mate to touch her, having him walk her through how to get out of some hold.

A growl escapes me before I even realize what Echo is going to do.

"Oh, Luna, I'm so sorry. I was just asking Alpha Quirin to assist me with a new maneuver we learned in training."

"I see that," I say, fighting Echo's jealousy and her intense desire to swipe at this she-wolf and shout that Quirin is ours.

'He is ours. Stop it, I tell her.

'She touched him,' she growls.

'She's a warrior: I'm sure he touches all of them. You know he wasn't giving her the look that we're used to seeing on his face when he's interested in taking them to bed. So, stop this.

"That she-wolf needs to know her place and it is NOT in our mate's bed, she growls.

I feel Quirin's arm come around my waist, firmly gripping my hip and pulling me closer to him. I'm not sure if he's sensing Echo's anger at this woman or if he's making sure she doesn't attack her.

"I'm afraid that Kennedy and I have plans for this evening. We can go through the maneuver again during training tomorrow," Quirin tells her.

"Of course, Alpha. Thank you. Bye, Luna"

He doesn't release his grip on me until we're out of the packhouse, then he turns to look at me.

"What was that about?"

"Echo didn't like another she-wolf touching you," I say honestly

"Echo..." Quirin says, calling her forward.

"Yes, mate?" she replies in a sultry voice making him smile.

"Whose mark is this on my neck?"

She purrs loudly. "Mine!" she says then lifts up on our toes to lick our mark. I can taste the saltiness of his skin, and I can feel his body shiver from her action.

"Echo, you cannot attack our pack members simply because they are practicing new training methods," he says stroking his knuckles over our cheeks.

She leans into his touch. "She was flirting with you."

"Was she?" he asks "I didn't notice. I was too busy listening to my mate coming down the stairs."

He leans in and gives us one of those chaste kisses before taking my hand. "Now, you're not getting out of training. It's important

I pull Echo back as he leads us away from the p

turns, dropping my hand.

78%

When he's reached an area where he feels that we can train, he

"Alright, show me what positions you remember from your and we begin. "Alright, show me what positions you remember from yo

pup training," he

Echo was right about one thing, having our mate giving us one-on-one training means that he's close to us, leaning around us and fixing our form, making sure that I don't put myself into positions where I might dislocate something, those sorts of things.

I will say this about my mate, he's not only an excellent fighter, which is apparent

in his knowledge that he's teaching me, but he's also an excellent instructor.

I swear I can feel his body responding to our closeness just as mine is. I'm struggling to focus on his instructions because his close proximity is very distracting. Add to that, I know my scent is getting stronger the more he touches me and heat pools in my core.

"Okay, let's call it a night," he finally says. I'm sweaty from the workout, but that's not what has my blood racing through my veins and pulsing in my ears. I want my

mate.

"Yes, we should go get washed up," I tell him.

We walk back to the packhouse, and I notice that several people look at us, as if expecting that we've been rolling around in the grass outside.

When we finally get to our room, I turn, expecting Quirin to kiss me. Instead, he moves past me and goes into our closet. I follow him, but almost as if he's trying to avoid me, he skips out of the closet before I walk in.

'Echo?'

'Let's strip down and ask him to join us in the shower,' she says, as surprised by his distance as I am.

It's not easy for me. I'm unused to being naked in front of others. But Quirin is my mate, the man I love, the man who loves me. So I strip down, take a deep breath to calm myself and step out of the closet completely naked.

"Quirin, did you want to join me in the shower?" I ask him.

I watch as he turns, seeing me naked. His eyes go nearly black with desire and

his teeth clench so that he doesn't break a tooth.

"You go ahead. I'll be right behind you," he says.

"Okay," I say, surprised yet again.

I go into the bathroom, turn on the shower and get in.

I wash my hair. No Quirin.

I shave my legs. No Quirin.

I wash my body. No Quirin.

tightly that I'm shocked

Finally, I turn off the water and that's when he comes in, carrying a towel which he quickly wraps around me.

"Did you want to wear one of my shirts again tonight?" he asks.

+23

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+23)

"Sure," I say, still feeling confused.

He brings in a shirt and unceremoniously pulls it over my head, helping me to get into it. Then he brushes out my hair.

"Don't wait for me. I know you're tired," he says, waiting for me to leave before turning the water on in the shower again.

I crawl into bed and wait for him. He takes a long time but when he finally emerges, he sees me watching him.

"What are you still doing awake, Little Pup?" he says softly.

"Waiting for you." I say ignoring the pet name and hoping that he'll understand that I want him.

"You should be asleep," he says. He turns off the lights, and crawls into bed behind me. He pulls me against him, wrapping himself tightly around me.

"Goodnight, Kennedy."

"Goodnight, Quirin," I say.

I lie there awake for a long time and it finally occurs to me. I'm just like all of his

other one-night stands. He only ever sleeps with a woman once, only this time, he's stuck with me for life.

The Pack's Nemesis (Quirin's Story)

Quirin

It took Kennedy a long time to fall asleep last night. It took me even longer.

+23)

The moment Kennedy walked out of the closet naked, it felt like every drop of blood in my body went straight to my dick. It was throbbing so hard that I thought I might explode right there

It was all I could do to tell Kennedy to go get in the shower. I'd been worried that she might come over and touch me and it would have been all over from there. I barely have any self-restraint when it comes to her anyway and having been in close contact with her, smelling her scent increasing during our sparring session, had not helped me at all.

Then, I'd had to get myself off in the shower, twice, just to make my dick stop throbbing painfully. All of that was a waste though when I stepped out of the shower and saw her grey-green eyes watching me. She was still awake, waiting for me. I gotten hard again

and then struggled to fall asleep, listening to her breathing that took a very long time to even out.

I'd been pleasantly surprised with her defensive skills during our training session. She's definitely got Alpha instincts and while she's not a fighter and not well- trained, she's got a good foundation.

I wake up at my usual time, feeling exhausted. Since I showered last night and I'm just going to get sweaty at training, I grab a pair of shorts and my shoes before getting ready to go downstairs. Rather than just leaving, I walk over to the bed and lean down to kiss Kennedy.

She surprises me not only by being awake but also by turning her head and capturing my mouth in a kiss. It's so unexpected that I don't have time to hold myself or Raif back and before I know it, I'm growling and taking her mouth in a possessive kiss. My arms wrap around her, pulling her to me as I dominate her mouth.

It isn't until I hear her sweet whimpers that reality finally comes crashing back down on me. She's got her legs wrapped around me, the arousal from between her bare thighs soaking my shorts.

"I have to get to training," I pant.

"I know. I just wanted to say good morning." Her voice is so sweet, and her scent is swirling around my head making me dizzy with need and desire.

"You should go back to sleep," I tell her. She shakes her head.

"I want to order those things I need for the hospital," she says.

"Good. You do that," I say, setting her back on the bed and forcing myself to turn away from her. "I'll have them send food over for you at lunchtime, since you don't seem to remember to eat."

I've just reached the door when she stops me.

"Quirin, wait. I wanted to talk with you about Arlo."

I turn to look at her. "Kier told me. I took care of it."

"I'm worried that..."

Kennedy, I spoke to Arlo. I gave him the choice of leaving the pack or running extra patrols. He chose patrols. He won't be bothering you anymore.

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84%

(+23)

I can tell she's not quite done with our conversation, but I have to get out of here before I rip her clothes off and bury myself inside her.

"We'll talk later," I tell her, before practically racing from the room.

I use training to get rid of the pent-up energy and sexual frustration I'm feeling and when I go inside for breakfast, I hear that Kennedy has already gone to hospital.

"Kier, get your food and join me in my office. We need to talk about this weekend,"

I tell him. As I'm walking to my office, I see Deborah.

"Deborah, can you take a computer over to the hospital so Kennedy can order what she needs."

"Yes, Alpha, but do we really need all of those supplies she wants to order?"

"If Kennedy says we do, then we do," I tell her. I have no idea what Kennedy is ordering, and I really don't care. I have the money and if yesterday was any indication, the hospital is making her happy.

"Okay, Alpha," she says.

When Kier comes in, I let him know that we need to discuss Kennedy and I being away this weekend.

"Alpha Connor is having his Alpha ceremony on Saturday. Kennedy and I will be leaving early enough on Saturday for her to spend some time with her family. Because it's a big deal, I'm expecting that we'll spend the night. You'll be in charge while I'm gone."

We spend a couple of hours making sure that everything is set. Just before he leaves, I look at him.

"Maybe I should start sending you to these events, Kier," I say.

"Why is that?" he asks, looking completely unimpressed.

"You haven't found your mate yet. Maybe she's a Beta in one of these packs? Or maybe she's an Alpha, who knows," I say to him.

"I'm good, Alpha, thanks," he says, walking out before I can ask him any more about it.

I reach out to the kitchen omegas asking them to

take Kennedy some lunch when my phone rings. Look at the caller

ID and pick it up.

"Hello Farrah, what can I do for you?"

"I thought it was me who was doing something for you," she says

"You are correct, as always, Farrah."

She chuckles. "I am going to see you this weekend, right?"

"It's Kennedy's twin's Alpha ceremony. I'm sure she won't want to miss it."

"Good. Now, I'm assuming you'll be inviting her entire family to her Luna ceremony?"

"That's correct."

"And you're making arrangements to ensure that no one attacks Alpha Warren or his family, correct?" she asks.

"I'm sorry, who's the Alpha of this pack?" I ask sharply. Very few people can get away with speaking to me the way that Farrah is.

"I have no intention of having anything to do with an attack on that family. Besides the fact that Henry is in an alliance with Alpha Warren and will renew that alliance this weekend with Alpha Connor, Luna Yara saved my life. And because of that, I found Harold, adopted two sons, and finally found happiness in my life that I never expected to have again. That is a debt that I can never repay. So, I will have no part in any act of aggression against their family, whether intentional or unintentional. I trust you, Quirin. If you tell me that you're making plans to keep his family safe from your pack members who still harbor anger and resentment towards Alpha Warren, then I will accept that," she says, her tone just as sharp as

mine.

I'm familiar with Luna Yara's impact on Farrah's life. I've heard the story and it doesn't surprise me. In the past, I would never have let my pack hurt Luna Yara by attacking anyone in her family. But now, I have an even bigger reason to ensure Alpha Warren's safety.

"I would never allow anyone to disrespect Kennedy that way. This is her home, and they are her family. I am going to offer that any of my pack members who don't want to be here can leave while her family is here. They will have to accept her as their Luna first,, or they will be unwelcome to return."

"Are you going to need more warriors to help patrol your borders during that time?

I'm sure Henry would be willing to send some of his," she says.

"I'll talk to him this weekend when we're at Connor's Alpha ceremony."

"Perfect. Now, let's get down to business. Here's what I've planned so far..." she begins.

I spend the next hour talking through Farrah's plans for Kennedy's Luna ceremony.

"You should talk to Luna Yara this weekend about getting a dress for Kennedy."

A dress? I hadn't even considered that.

"Maybe Luna Yara will want to take her daughter shopping," I say appalled at the idea of having to find a dress for my mate.

Farrah chuckles. "Just talk to her. She'll help you figure it out."

When we finish, it's close to time for afternoon warrior training. head outside and

see Kennedy looking around, squatting down and looking through the grass in an area where pups play.

I walk over to her and squat down beside her.

"What are you looking for?" I ask her, not seeing anything.

"I'm not exactly sure. But when I find it, I'll let you know," she says.

The Pack's Nemesis (Quirin's Story)

Kennedy

Today when I go to the hospital, I begin going over what supplies I would like to have for the hospital versus what I feel is critical or at least necessary. Some things, like a new x-ray machine, are necessary, but based on the cost, I set it aside for now. Hopefully, I can get Quirin to talk to me about the cost of these things and what the pack can afford at some point in the near future.

I'm pleasantly surprised when Deborah comes in with a laptop that she said Quirin sent over for me. Since I'd forgotten to ask about one, this is perfect.

I log in, finding the information on the medical supply store that we use for ordering. When I look back on previous orders, I see that Deborah was right. They only ever order the basics and most of that is in smaller sizes for pups.

I put in my order, taking a deep breath when I see the cost, and push send. I guess I'll find out later if Quirin freaks out over the cost.

Christy brings me lunch again today, letting me know that Quirin once again requested that someone bring me food.

"Perhaps I should just put in a standing order to have a sandwich ready for me in the morning. That way Quirin won't have to worry about it. I'm sure he's got plenty of other things on his mind," I say.

"I don't get the impression that he minds, Luna," she says.

"Everything going okay with you?" I ask her.

"Yes, Luna. I haven't seen Arlo. He's apparently pretty busy."

"Good. Thank you for bringing this by," I say.

"You're welcome. Oh, and Susie said that Samuel is doing well. She wanted me to let you know."

"Great news, thank you."

I'm just finished eating when I hear the doors to the front of the hospital slide open. Since hardly anyone ever comes in, I listen.

"Is Luna here?" a woman asks.

"Yeah, what's going on?" Deborah asks her.

"I'd like to speak to Luna," she says as I come walking out.

"Hi there. What can I do for you?" I ask, seeing one of Quirin's warriors carrying her son. This one is older than yesterday but still under ten, so he doesn't have his wolf.

"Hi, Luna. I was talking to Kelvin during training this morning and he said that you really helped Samuel with the stick he got in his foot. I was wondering if you would take a look at Tommy's knee for me?"

"Sure, follow me, what's your name?"

"I'm Emily, Luna.

"Hi Emily. Hi, Tommy," I say, holding a door open for them. I can't use the bed until they arrive, but I can put him on the

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couter whale i crouch in front of him like I did with Serv

"How old are you, Tommy?"

"Wow! Getting to big so, what's wrong 1 koring, or any to put on the over

"You don't want him on the bed die aks

"I don't trust thone beds, but I've ordered some new ones, so if you have to come back in a couple of days, hopefully you'll have a more comfortable place to st 1 sey, smiling, Tommy is done react, but sinor be's bere for something to do with him. I'm not surprised

"Well, he injured his knee several days ago, maybe a week wyp now, but it's not being, she says.

1 pull up a chair and sit down in front of him looking at his knee, 1 en bus don't sell any infection. It's not a terrible injury but 1 can see that it's seeping and bleeding a late and notbeding

"Any fever?" I ask as 1 look over the injury,

"How did you get this?" I ask him.

"I was playing, and I fell," he says, shrugging,

"There's a pup play area on the right side of the packhouse, Luna I don't know if you've seen it yet"

"I think I passed it on the way to the woods," I say, "I see it's seeping, but I don't see or smell any pussy discharge. Have you seen any signs of infection?"

"No, Luna. And it hasn't gotten any worse, it just isn't getting any better. And when

I try to scrub it, Tommy says it hurts too much"

The area around the scrape is red and slightly swollen, but not terribly angry looking. I begin gently pressing around the injury. "Does it hurt if I touch it here?" I ask him.

"No," he says, watching me.

"Okay, I'm going to swab the area and also scrape some of the skin and a bit of tissue off your knee, Tommy," I say, looking up at Emily, "I won't get my microscope until tomorrow, possibly the next day. But I'll check to see if it's some sort of bacteria that's keeping him from healing."

"Will it hurt?" Tommy asks me.

"It shouldn't. But I'm guessing that you're the son of two strong warriors, am I right?" I ask him.

"Yes, Luna," he says proudly.

"Then, I don't think it will hurt at all," I tell him, standing. "I'll be right back," I tell Emily.

When I step out, I look for Deborah. "Do we have any test tubes, or microscope slides, or anything that is sterile that I can put this skin sample in until my equipment arrives?" I ask her.

"No, Luna, but I can boil some glasses for you," she says.

52%

+13

"That will have to do I say, thankful now that I decided to add test tubes to the order. The slides come with the microscope, but I'll need to order some more.

We do have swabs and I get a scalpel to scrape the skin. Just as I'm ready to go back in, Deborah comes over with two steaming hot glasses on a tray. "Here you go, Luna"

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"Thank you," I say, putting my supplies on the tray and taking it from her.

When I step back inside, Tommy watches me wide-eyed.

"Okay, let's start with a swab. This shouldn't hurt at all, but if it does, let me know."

I've just started rubbing his scraped knee when he hisses and tugs his leg away from me.

"That hurt?" I ask him and he nods.

I look at his knee more closely, not seeing anything that looks like a splinter, but it may be hard to see.

"Did it feel like a sharp pain, like there's something in your knee, or a burning pain?" I ask him.

"It didn't feel sharp," he says.

"So, more of a burning pain?"

"I guess so," he says shrugging

I put that swab into one of the glasses and grab another one. "I'm going to swab the other side. Same thing, tell me if it hurts," I tell him.

Once again, he tugs away.

"Is this normal, Luna?" Emily asks.

"I've not seen it before. I can talk to my mother about it too, but looking at it under a microscope should help me identify what we're dealing with," I tell her. "Okay, this time, I'm going to scrape the wound. If this is a bacteria, or something similar that is just on the surface, it will hopefully scrape it off and you'll start to heal. If that doesn't help and it's deeper, then we'll have to wait to see what it is so I can treat it," I tell Emily before looking at Tommy.

"This might sting a little, but I need you to hold as still as possible for me. Can you do that?" I ask him.

"Yes, Luna"

"Good. How's your pup training coming along?" I ask him to distract him from what

I'm doing. Since he's the son of two warriors, I'm positive that he's in warrior training for pups.

As he begins telling me all about it, I carefully scrape the top layer of skin and flesh from his knee. I put that into the second glass and sit back while Tommy continues talking.

"Are you done?" he asks me, looking at his knee.

"I am," I tell him.

"That barely hurt at all," he says.

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"Good. My goal is to NOT hurt my patients," I tell him as I stand again, setting my things aside.

52%1

"I don't care what anyone else says. I like you, Luna," Tommy says, throwing his arms around me. It takes me a minute to respond. I guess the pack doesn't like me.

I wrap my arms around him. "Well, thank you, Tommy. I like you too," I say,

"Come on, Tommy. Let's go," Emily says obviously embarrassed by her son's words. She takes his hand as I set him down.

"I'll let you know when I have some answers, and let me know if it gets any worse," I tell Emily.

"Thank you, Luna." She starts to walk off, then turns back. "It's not that we don't like you, Luna. It's just, we're a pack of fighters and we were all pretty shocked to find out that our Luna isn't a fighter. I guess it will just take some time for all of us to adjust to that," she says.

I nod. "You know, my mother isn't a fighter either, but she's saved so many members of her pack that no one considers her weak. Everyone recognizes that her strengths are different than theirs. They can't save the lives that my mother can save, and she can't protect the pack the way that they do. It doesn't mean she's not a strong woman. It just means that her strengths lie elsewhere," I say. She nods and turns, walking out of the hospital. Tommy turns and waves at me. I smile and wave back.

Operation Warriors Warming Up to Me: One down, about a million to go.

"The patrols were impressed with our speed,' Echo says, feeling sad.

'Correction, they were impressed with YOUR speed. I'm still the Luna who isn't a warrior.'

'What are you going to do?' she asks me.

'I'm going to do what I'm good at. I'm going to figure out why Tommy isn't healing and go from there,' I say.

With that in mind, I say goodbye to Deborah and head over the packhouse, walking around it instead of through it. I want to see if I can figure out if there is

something on the ground, maybe some sort of plant that is causing Tommy to not be able to heal.

That's when Quirin comes over to me, asking me what I'm doing. Since I don't really know, that's what I tell him. He doesn't seem to like my answer, but I realize that he's dressed for warrior training. I look behind him and see the pack warriors coming out for afternoon training.

"If I find it, I'll let you know," I tell him.

"Okay. I was thinking tonight that we could switch up your training. How would

Echo like to run. I'd like to work on your stamina. She's fast, but she starts to

wane after an hour. I want her to get stronger, be able to run fast for longer periods of time," he says.

I can feel Echo's excitement and beyond being able to run and show off her speed, I can tell that she's hoping to get Raif to mate her. Maybe then Quirin will

relax. Maybe Quirin just needs to let Raif's instincts and the mate bond lead the way.

"That sounds great," I say. "I'll see you at dinner."

He leans over and kisses me softly before heading back to warrior training. I take a moment to watch my mate as he leads the group through the warmup.

"Our man is sexy, Echo purrs.

12:13, 31 Jan MU

Yes, yes he is.

The Pack's Nemesis (Quirin's Story)

Kennedy

I spend some more time looking through the pup play area, not finding anything, so I head back inside. Before dinner, I go upstairs to change into easily removed clothes so that I'm ready for our run after dinner,

As I'm changing, I realize that I never opened the other gifts from my birthday. I begin pulling them out of the closet and putting them on the bed. I'm not even sure I want them. They're all from the other Alphas who were invited to my party.

I open the first one and find some lacy, barely-there lingerie. What the

I quickly shove it back in its box and open the next one. This one is a nude sheer one-piece outfit that has a thong for the bottoms. Uh, no!

I shove that one back in the box too and open a third. This one is a black version of basically the same thing, Lingerie.

I decide that I don't want to open any more of them and I shove them all back into the corner of the closet. What in the world were those Alphas thinking??

"They were thinking they wanted to peel those clothes off their potential mate, Echo says.

'Can you imagine what it would have been like to open those gifts in front of my family and friends? I ask, mortified.

I reach up and wrap my hand around the pendant that Quirin gave me. I haven't taken it off since he put it on me. I look back at the boxes of lingerie. My mate, for all of his faults, knows me better than any of those other Alphas did. Unlike the other gifts, Quirin's gift was thoughtful, and it was about me. Okay, maybe it was a bit possessive making the necklace into Raif's image, but he knew that diamonds were my birthstone, and he made the eyes from my birthstone.

'His gifts have always been thoughtful. That's why we still have them all,' she says.

That reminds me that I never put that picture of him from my birthday up on my nightstand. I get it out and put it up, smiling at his very unhappy face. My mate hates having his picture taken, but he did it for me, because it was my birthday. I remember his unhappiness from that day. It was my fourteenth birthday.

"Please Quirin, will you be in the picture? It'll be my birthday present," I had asked.

"I already got you a birthday present, Little Pup," he said.

"You can take it back and save it for next year. Pleeeeease!"

He had rolled his eyes, then come to stand in the picture. Because he did, very few other people were in the picture with me. Connor was, obviously, and so was Henry, and just a

few other daring individuals, like Yorick and Wendy. Quirin's face was a mask of irritation, but I didn't care. I've always loved this picture.

I set it on my nightstand and smile. I wonder if he'll remember this. It was four years ago.

'Kennedy, where are you?' Quirin's voice floats into my mind.

I look at the clock and realize it's dinner time.

'On my way,' I say to him.

I walk downstairs, saying hello to everyone I pass. The omegas are all very friendly to me. The warriors range from lukewarm to practically hostile, especially Slater and his friends. I wonder if he's still angry about my arrival.

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"Hey," Quirin says softly when I walk up.

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"Hey," I say, and lift up on my toes to kiss him. After seeing that warrior yesterday and not having any kind of intimacy with my mate, I'm feeling a bit possessive. Echo definitely is.

He doesn't pull away, but he doesn't pull me to him like I've seen my father do to my mother hundreds of times in my lifetime.

Tonight when we sit down, I can tell he's got something on his mind.

"I want to talk about this weekend. I'm planning to go over to your family's pack earlier on Saturday for your brother's Alpha ceremony. I figured that you'd want to spend some time with your family and I'm guessing that they'll want to see that you're alive and well," he says drolly.

"That's very thoughtful, thank you. And I'm sure they know that I'm alive and well," I say, rolling my eyes.

"Do you think I should contact them about staying the night? It'll be late when the party is over and I thought you'd want to have breakfast with them in the morning before we head back," he says.

I look at my mate for a moment. Who is this man? First, I know the feelings that he has for my father, so staying in my family's pack will already be a hardship for him. But he

also hates parties. I've watched him for years putting up with them for as long as he can manage, doing his duty, before ducking out.

"Are you sure you want to stay the night?" I ask him.

"Don't you?" he asks.

"Well, yes. I would love to see my family and friends."

"Then, we'll stay," he says.

"Thank you. I know that will be tough for you," I say.

"I'll manage," he says. "And I'm guessing that you'll want to invite your family to your Luna ceremony, right?"

The warriors around us suddenly go quiet.

"Yes," I say, uneasily.

"I'll talk to your parents and brother while we're there," he says, as we finish eating.

"Maybe we can go outside and walk off dinner before we go for a run," I say, wanting some privacy to discuss this more.

"Good idea," he says, standing up. "Anyone running patrols tonight?" he asks loudly.

Several warriors say that they're in for dinner then going back to patrol duty.

"Your Luna will be running laps tonight. Try to keep up," he says, with the Quirin equivalent of a grin as he takes my hand and leads me outside. Did he just make a joke?

I hear some of the patrols groaning while others start asking if Echo is really that fast.

"Why the frown, Little Pup?" he asks as we walk.

"Did you really just make a joke?" I ask him.

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"Nope. I was serious. They need to get faster. Raif does too. But for us, this is more about you gaining stamina. I want to see Echo run for two hours and try to keep up her fast pace. I'm going to have Raif nip her heels when he catches her and she starts to slow down.

"He has to catch me first," Echo says and now Quirin gives me a rare smile.

"Oh, he'll catch you. Never doubt that. It's just a matter of how long it takes him," he says.

"Can we go back to my family coming for my Luna ceremony?" I ask.

"What about it?"

"I'm not sure that's a good idea. There are a lot of warriors here who blame my father for the deaths of their Alphas, mates, and family members."

"It's not ideal, Kennedy, but I know this is an important occasion and I want it to be right for you. Once we know that they will definitely be there and for how long, I'll let the pack know that they can leave if they want. I won't allow any aggression toward your family while they're in the pack. But anyone who leaves because they don't want to be around your father will have to accept you as their Luna before they go."

"But this is their home, Quirin," I say.

He stops and looks at me. "Are you going to chose them over your family?"

I open my mouth to answer, but nothing comes out. This pack is my family now,

but I don't want that to mean that it excludes my biological family.

"If you have a better solution, I'm all ears. It's the only one I've come up with. They don't have to leave forever, just a couple of days. And depending on how many we're talking about, I can ask Henry to put them up overnight so they aren't out in the wilderness."

"I'll think about it," I say.

"Let me know what you come up with," I say. "Now, is Echo ready?"

"Yes I am, mate," she purrs at him, making him smile again.

I strip off my clothes, then shift. Once again, Quirin waits for me, then runs his strong fingers through her fur, making her shiver.

He chuckles and stands. "Run, beautiful," Raif growls.

Echo takes off, racing to the border, then turning left to begin her run around the pack lands.

Almost as if he had a timer, I feel her starting to slow down after an hour. We've run the pack lands four times, passing the patrols each time. It isn't long before I feel Raif catching us.

'Keep running, Echo,' I say, encouraging my wolf. She continues to push hard, the muscles in her legs straining after two more laps. More and more frequently, we feel Raif nipping at her heels. At first, she was able to pull away, but as the muscles in her legs get more tired, she struggles to keep ahead of him.

By the time we finish two more laps, she collapses where we left our clothes.

We're both exhausted from her hard run.

I feel Quirin's hands in her fur again. "Shift back for me, beautiful."

When she does, she whines from the pain in her muscles shifting. I feel him pull a shirt over my head and then I'm in his arms.

"I've got you, Little Pup." He presses his lips to the side of my head. "This is why we need to practice. You need more stamina."

I nod, too tired to speak. I'm asleep before he gets back to the packhouse.

The Pack's Nemesis (Quirin's Story)

Quirin

I may have had a hidden reason for running Echo into the ground tonight. After trying to maintain control over myself with Kennedy walking out of our closet naked, then telling me she waned up for me last night, I'm not sure I have enough restraint to hold on if she did it again.

Thankfully, my plan worked and Raif was right. After an hour, she began to slow and after another thirty minutes, she was struggling to keep ahead of us.

'We can practice that a few times a week. As an Alpha wolf, Echo will get stronger quickly,' Raif says as we carry her into the back of the packhouse.

Kier comes striding up, looking at her. "Is our Luna okay?"

"Yeah, we wore her out working on her stamina," I tell him.

"You know, there are better ways to work on her stamina," he says, grinning at me.

I grunt and push past him.

I carry her upstairs and start a bath. I know she's out, but she worked hard tonight and her muscles will be sore tomorrow. I turn the water on as hot as I think she can take it then put Epsom salts into the tub. Then I pull my shorts off and carefully pull my shirt over her head before turning off the water and sliding into the tub.

Her sweet citrus and mint scent blends into the menthol scent of the Epsom salts. I lean back, laying her in front of me and letting her head fall back on my shoulder. I look down and see her beautiful body. That, combined with her sweet scent has me rock hard. Something I'm becoming very accustomed to. No amount of cold showers or jacking off seems to help. My body only wants my mate.

I bathe her, gritting my teeth as I rub the washcloth over her body. Then I close my eyes and lean back, letting the Epsom salt work on her muscles until the water gets cold. When it does, pull her back into my arms and stand. I dry her off, then pull one of my clean shirts over her head before putting her to bed. I take a moment to brush the hair out of her face.

'She's perfect,' Raif says softly.

'Yes, she is. I'm glad she's starting to seem happier. And I'm glad he pack is taking their pups to see her, although, I'm still interested to know what today was all about,' I say.

I turn, seeing that she's put a picture beside her bed. Hot jealousy flows through me when I see her on her fourteenth birthday sandwiched between her brother and Henry. Is she harboring a secret crush on him? He can't have her. She's mine. She's wearing my mark.

I run my finger over the picture of her. Even then, her light shone brighter than everyone around her. She should have been mated to Henry. He'd have been a better mate to her than I can be I'm trying but I know I'm screwing some things up. With Henry, I have no doubt that it would have been effortless. The two of them are so easy-going, so filled with light, that it would have been easy.

But for whatever reason, the Moon Goddess decided that this bright light of a woman should be mine. I set the picture back on the nightstand. I hope the Moon Goddess knows what she's doing, because if my mate is harboring some inner love for Henry, brother or no, I may have to kill him.

Those dark thoughts follow me to bed as I pull Kennedy to me, wrapping my body around her. Jealousy isn't an emotion

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I'm familiar with. I've never cared if a woman that I slept with slept with someone else. It didn't matter. Even when they tried to flaunt it in front of me, tried to make me jealous, it didn't work. Those women were a release; an hour, a night, but nothing more. None of them had the light shining around them that my mate does. None of them could ever make me feel the things that Kennedy does. None of them has ever pushed the darkness away so that I felt lighter than air.

I stare at the picture of Henry for hours before I'm finally able to fall asleep. But even in sleep, my dreams don't let me rest. I watch Henry, holding Kennedy in his arms, telling her that he loves her. Kennedy, her stomach large with Henry's pup smiling up at him. Kennedy laughing with a pup that looks like Henry, not me.

When I finally wake up, I'm full of anxious energy, frustrated and angry that she's put that picture out in the open as if she's flaunting her feelings for him in front of

me.

I get ready for warrior training, knowing that today is going to be a rough one for my warriors. But before I leave, I have to know. I have to know if she's really in love with him. I don't know what I'll do if she is, but I have to know.

"Kennedy. Kennedy, wake up."

"Hmmm?" she mumbles sleepily.

"Kennedy, wake up. I need to ask you something."

She opens her eyes and shifts her body so she's on her back looking up at me.

"Oh, I smell good. What is that?" she asks, sniffing her arm.

salts. I was worried you'd be sore today after all that running last night. Kennedy..."

She shifts around. "It worked great, Quirin. I'm not sore at all," she says, smiling up at me.

I close my eyes. I don't know if I can go back to the darkness that was my life

before she came into it. I take a deep breath and just ask her.

"Kennedy, why do you have a picture of Henry on your nightstand?"

She frowns. "What?"

"This picture," I say, pointing at it. "It's of Henry. Why is it on your nightstand?"

She sits up, and looks at it, still frowning. "It's not of Henry. It's of you. It's the only picture I have of you. I had to beg you to be in that picture. I wanted it to just be you and me, but I knew you'd never agree to that. And I was right, you never did, no matter how many birthdays I asked you to. But that one, I finally got you to get in a picture," she says, looking at me. The vice grip in my heart relaxes.

"Why would I have a picture of Henry on my nightstand? He's not my mate."

I look back at the picture, then at my mate, feeling like I can breathe again after not being able to all night. I sit down on the bed beside her.

"You're right. We should have a picture of just the two of us, one that can replace this one. Maybe we can get one taken this weekend? What do you say?" I ask

her.

"Do you mean it? After all these years, you're finally willing to have a picture with just you and me in it?" she asks excitedly.

"Well, it would have been weird if I had taken a picture with you before you were an adult," I say, trying to cover my complete and total over reaction to this picture. "But yes. I don't want to see another man's picture on your nightstand. I 12:41 Sat, Feb 1 G.

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want it to be us, so we'll take one this weekend at your brother's Alpha ceremony. Would you like that?"

She leans forward, getting close enough that her nose rubs against mine and I can feel her breath on my lips. "I would love that she whispers.

I close the distance between us, taking her mouth in a possessive dominant kiss. I plunge my tongue into her mouth, reclaiming it and her as mine after spending a horrible night wondering if she truly is.

Goddess, I want to bury myself so deep inside her that she'll never forget that she's mine, never forget whose mark is on her neck. But I know that I have no control right now. Even though she's melted against me, and I can smell the scent

of her arousal getting stronger in the air, I refuse to hurt her again.

I pull back, pressing my forehead against hers as I catch my breath. "This weekend. It's a date."

"It's a date," she says.

I stand and walk to the door.

"Oh, Quirin. I ordered some medical supplies yesterday, did you see it come through?" she asks.

"Kier handles all purchase orders, but I'm sure there wasn't any problem. If there is, let me know."

I stop at the door, turning to look at her, sitting in MY bed, wearing MY t-shirt, her lips puffy from MY kiss, her hair from MY hands running through it.

She's never looked more gorgeous.

messy

I smile at her before walking out and jogging down the stairs, before the last bit of control I have over myself snaps and I return to my bed and bury myself deep inside her like my mind, body, and soul are craving.