

The Pack's Nemesis

– Chapter 61 – 65

The Pack's Nemesis

(Quirin's Story)

Kennedy

I've just sat down and laid my head on the side of Christy's bed when there is a commotion out in the waiting room. I step out of the room quickly to see Beta Kier, Terrance, and Randall walk in with David and Slater.

"What are they doing here?" I snarl. As exhausted as I am, I do not want anyone who was associated with Arlo in this hospital.

"Alpha wanted them to clean up the bathroom, Luna," Kier says.

"Take them around back. I don't want them in my hospital."

Slater scoffs and begins to turn, however, I step forward.

"Problem, Slater?" I snarl, letting Echo push forward. I push the full force of my Alpha aura on him and watch him fall to his knees as his neck lifts in submission. Shock registers on his face as I prowl toward him.

"I'm guessing you knew what that sick brother of yours intended to do to that poor girl, didn't you, Slater?"

"I was in the cells, Luna. I didn't have any part in it," he chokes out, his throat fully exposed to me.

"But you did know he wanted her, didn't you? You knew what he planned to do?" I ask, standing in front of him and watching as sweat begins to pour down his face.

"Yes," he spits out, unable to lie with my aura pushing against him.

"This is MY hospital. These are MY omegas. I will not tolerate anyone mistreating my omegas and if I say you are not allowed in my hospital, then you'd better get your pathetic ass out before I get really angry."

"Yes, Luna," he says..

"Well, you heard her. Get the fuck out!" Quirin snaps from his place at the door.

"Take them around back," Kier says, yanking David toward the door.

I stand there, watching as they walk out.

"I told you. You never fucking listen," I hear David whisper to Slater as he's hauled outside.

I stand there until they're gone, then I look at Quirin.

"Did you need something?" I'm exhausted, and angry, and hurt. My eyes feel dry and hot and my body aches from being in surgery for hours. I should probably care more that Quirin is here, but I can't muster the energy for him right now.

"If you're sleeping here, so am I," he says.

I don't bother to acknowledge him, I just turn and walk back to Christy's room, laying my head down on the bed and finally letting the tears that have wanted to come for hours come.

I must fall asleep because the next thing I know, Deborah is gently rubbing my back.

"Luna. Luna, why don't you go get a shower and get something to eat. I'll stay with Christy."

I lift my head off the bed and shift my body, hearing multiple joints crack from the terrible position I slept in. I crack my neck and stand, not feeling any more rested than I did last night.

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+13

"Did they clean the bathroom?" I ask her.

"You'll smell it when you walk out. Apparently, they were told to get every spot of blood off the tile and out of the grout. They used a lot of bleach," she says, taking the seat I was sitting in.

I look over Christy's vital signs, checking the recordings from overnight before finally stepping outside.

I'm a bit surprised to see that Quirin is gone, but there's nothing comfortable about sleeping in waiting room chairs.

I turn to walk out of the electronic doors and see something taped to the door. I frown and pull the note off the door.

'Kennedy,

I needed to go deal with something. You were still asleep, and I didn't want to wake you. If you don't come for breakfast, I'll bring you some food, but you should get a shower and change your clothes. Once Christy wakes up, I'm sure you'll be very busy. There are some other things we need to talk about, but those can wait.

With all my love,

Your mate, Quirin'

I stare at the note, not sure how to feel about it. On the one hand, it makes me feel better knowing that he stayed all night. He's the Alpha and even if I wasn't here, Christy needed someone here for her. But the 'With all my love' part is throwing me. That doesn't sound like Quirin at all.

I realize I'm not only not hungry, but my stomach feels nauseous. I can't remember the last time I did eat. I step outside and the moment I do, the smell of poorly cooked food waifs my way from the packhouse. There's something about the smell of the greasy food that makes my stomach churn and I turn, racing back inside until I get to the new bathroom where I find a toilet and dry heave the bile in my stomach.

I was already feeling tired, but the violence of my vomiting has my hands shaking as I rinse out my mouth. The thought of, walking into the packhouse with that smell nearly sends me back into the toilet. My next thought makes me even sadder. Christy was always the one who brought me food when I hadn't eaten. She was the one who would make sure that I didn't miss a meal if I lost track of time or forgot to grab breakfast on the way over here.

I lean over the sink, trying to calm the turmoil that is building up inside me. It's difficult since I can't take a deep breath because of the burning scent of bleach all around me. I look into the mirror, seeing that my eyes look as haunted as I feel.

'Echo, tell me we're not pregnant.'

She's quiet long enough that I know that I have to take a test. Thankfully, it's something that I purchased in the first round of medical supplies. I go to my office and get the pee

test, and also a syringe to draw my blood. If Echo can't say with complete certainty that I'm not pregnant, then I want to make damn sure that I

am.

I go back to the bathroom and pee on the stick, then carry it back to my office and draw my blood while I wait for the first

results.

When I look back at the stick, my eyes fill with tears. I don't know if I'm happy that I'm going to have a baby or if I'm devastated that it's happening right now. Of all the times for me to find out I'm pregnant, it had to be when things are at their absolute worst between me and Quirin.

I shove the stick in my desk drawer and set the blood to process. I've just decided

to deal with the nasty smell and go get myself some crackers and some clothes to change into, when I hear someone yelling for me.

"Luna! Luna, please help us!"

I rush out to the waiting room to see Terrance carrying a very pregnant woman. She's groaning and is in obvious pain.

"Luna, I know you're angry at all of us, but please, please help my mate," he begs. The scent of his fear is almost as strong as

the scent of her hormones.

I grab my stethoscope from the front desk and rush over to her. "What's your name?" I ask her.

"Lillian, Luna," she groans.

"Follow me, Terrance," I say, rushing her into Room One. Deborah pops her head out of Room Two.

"What's going on?"

"I've got this, you stay with Christy in case she wakes up." I say, holding the door

as Terrance takes his groaning mate into the room and carefully lays her on the

bed.

"I need to get some equipment. How long have you been in labor?" I ask her.

"All night. I was on guard duty and when I got to our room, she was already in labor. She wanted to deliver outside, but the baby hasn't come and now she's started to bleed. I can smell it," Terrance says. I can smell it too.

"Okay, I'll be right back. Try to help her breathe, and Terrance, you need to stay calm."

He nods. "Yes, Luna."

I rush to the storage room, getting everything that I'll need, including the heart monitors, epidural, and ultrasound machine. I'm so thankful I purchased this equipment. My ability to save Lillian and her baby's life will depend on it. On my way out, I grab my phone. Depending on what happens, I'll need my mom to walk me through this.

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The Pack's Nemesis (Quirin's Story)

Kennedy

When I walk back into the room, I begin asking Lillian questions about how long she's been in labor, if she's had any pre- natal care, and if she's lost any pups during pregnancy or delivery before.

"This is our first pup, Luna. If you can't save them both, please save my mate. I'll give her another pup, but I don't want to lose her, Terrance says.

"My goal is to save them both," I say, as I put the IV in Lillian's arm and get the drip started before turning to set up the ultrasound machine.

"Alright, let's see what we've got. Lillian, I know you're in a lot of pain, but I need to try and see what's going on." Terrance holds her hand while she grits her teeth through the pain.

As soon as I begin running the wand over her stomach, I know what the problem is.

"Your baby is breech. You'll never be able to deliver him in this position," I say, running the wand around her stomach to make sure that he hasn't ruptured the uterus. Everything looks to be intact, he's just not in the right position to give birth.

"Him? Did you say we're having a boy?" she asks me.

"Yes, you're going to have a boy. So, right now, I need you to sit up for me, Lillian. Terrance, you'll help hold her steady. I'm going to give you an epidural. It's going to numb you from the waist down and then I'm going to deliver your son."

I've inserted epidurals before, but never without my mother or Noelle watching to make sure I did it right.

"Terrance, pull my phone out of my back pocket," I say, turning enough for him to pull it out for me. He lays it on the bed.

"Siri, call Mom," I say, and look at Lillian. "Deep breath, Lillian. Take a real deep breath for me. I'm going to numb the area and then I'm going to insert the needle for the epidural." I hear her hiss as I numb the area.

"Okay, I need you to take another deep breath for me and this time, I'm going to insert the catheter when you exhale, and then we can start the epidural. It will take fifteen to thirty minutes to take effect, but you should start feeling the effects in a few minutes. Okay. Deep breath," I say.

While she breathes in, I look at the phone. It went to voicemail.

As she exhales, I slide the needle into her spinal column, before putting the catheter in, then I tape it to her body before helping Terrance to get her to lie down. Then, I turn on the anesthetic and pull off my gloves, calling my mother again.

"I'll be right back. Try to relax while this takes effect. You should start getting some relief from the pain soon," I say.

It goes to voicemail again. I look at the time. It's still early in the morning. She could be sleeping, but more likely, my father skipped warrior training and is keeping my mother busy. I dial her number again, stepping out of the room.

She answers right before it goes to voicemail. She's panting and brushing her sweaty hair out of her face.

"Kennedy, is everything alright?"

"No Mom, I need your help. Tell Dad I'm sorry, but I need you."

"Kennedy, what's wrong?" I hear my father's deep voice in the background and I know I was right about interrupting them.

"It's mom I need," I say. She begins moving quickly, I'm assuming out of bed.

"Tell me what it is," she says.

I tell her about Lillian and her breech baby.

"Epidural?" she asks, quickly getting dressed,

"It's in," I say, looking at the clock on the wall. "It's been nearly fifteen minutes." +13)

"Okay, here's what you're going to do. You're going to put me on speakerphone and video. I want to see her ultrasound and I need to see her"

"Okay," I say, feeling relieved that my mom is here to help me. I walk back inside and look at Lillian.

"How are you feeling?" I ask her.

"Better, but not completely numb yet."

"That's normal. I have my mom on the phone. I'm going to put her on

speakerphone and video so she can walk me through how to help you. You know my mother is a world-class doctor, right?"

"We've heard," Terrance says.

I turn back to my phone and turn on the video and speaker. I introduce my mother to Terrance and Lillian and she let's them know that they are going to be just fine.

"Did my daughter tell you that we have a rule in our hospitals?" she asks and I smile, even with my nervousness.

"No," Lillian says, looking at me.

"No one dies in our hospital. It's kind of a thing with us," I tell her.

"That's a good thing," Lillian says.

I turn and begin telling my mother everything I know about Lillian's labor, showing her the ultrasound images and how the baby is seated in the uterus.

"Okay, let's test the feeling in her stomach and legs," my mother says.

"Terrance, can you hold the phone while I do this?" I ask.

He comes over and takes the phone while I begin pressing a needle against

Lillian's skin. When she doesn't respond, I know we're ready.

"Lillian, are you familiar with a Cesarean section?" I ask her.

"You're going to cut my stomach open, right?" she asks.

"Yes, and I'm going to get your son out that way."

"Terrance," she says, with fear in her voice.

"Uh..." he says, trying to figure out how to be there for his mate and hold the phone at the same time.

'Quirin, I need you in the hospital right now, I say, opening the mind link and closing it again right away.

I grab a sheet, expecting it to take Quirin a few minutes to get here, but he must have been in the waiting room because he walks in before I can even get the sheet up to block Lillian's view.

"What can I do?" he asks.

"Terrance, give Quirin the phone," I say, placing the sheet in between me and Terrance and Lillian.

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"Quirin, Mom is going to help me with this procedure. I need you to make sure the can see what I'm doing to the can guide me," I say, barely looking at him. I squeeze my hands together, willing the shaking from earlier to stop, and I take a deep

breath.

"You've got this, Kennedy. You've done it before, first a few weeks ago with Anna. You can do it again. I have complete faith in you," my mother says confidently.

I nod, my mother's words grounding me as I open my eyes and grab the scalpel.

My mother guides me through the process of cutting into Lillian's stomach. I use Quirin to help me with the retractor in open the skin and miscle around her abdomen and then I carefully slice into her uterus, following my mother's calm directives.

When I pull the baby boy out of Lillian's womb, I feel tears begin streaking down my cheeks.

"Kennedy, take the baby and begin the process of removing the fluid from his nose and throat. Quirin, show me the heart monitor so I can check on Lillian," my mother says.

I take the baby and suck the mucus and fluid out of his nose and mouth and begin rubbing him roughly until he begins to cry angrily. Then I wash him off and wrap him up before taking him back to Lillian and Terrance.

"Congratulations. You have a baby boy." I say.

I lay him in Lillian's arms and return to her lower body so I can sew her back up. Again, my mother walks me through the process, making sure that I do it right and after I put in the last stitch and tape up the incision, I feel like I might collapse. "Quirin, when is the last time my daughter ate?" she asks, apparently seeing me and realizing that my hands aren't as steady as they should be.

"It's been much too long, Luna," he says, watching me.

"Let's make sure mom and baby are doing well, then you need to take care of your mate, Alpha."

"Yes, ma'am," he says.

I take the phone and he pulls the sheet away. Mom and I make sure that Lillian is able to nurse and Quirin finds a bassinet somewhere. Lillian is asleep before I leave the room and Quirin brings in a cot for Terrance to sleep on if he chooses

to.

I walk out of the room, feeling like a zombie walking through a fog when Terrance rushes out of the room behind us. "Luna. Luna, I can't thank you enough. I'm forever in your debt. Please, I know you're angry at the pack and we deserve your anger, but many of us have seen the benefit that you bring to our pack. There are many of us who love and admire you, Luna. I just wanted you to know that."

I nod. "Thanks, Terrance."

I wait until he's back in the room with Lillian and his son before I turn to walk out. I really need that shower now.

Before I realize what's happening, Quirin scoops me into his arms.

"What are you doing?" I ask weakly, leaning my head against his chest, not having the strength to argue with him about carrying me.

"I'm following your mother's orders. She's right, you need to eat. I've never seen your hands shake before Kennedy and you're dead on your feet. You've been going non-stop for

two days. I know you're still furious with me, but I'm not going to let you fall on your face because you don't want me touching you. You can yell

at me when you're strong again."

I nod. "I am still mad at you."

"I know, and you have every right to be angry with me. I was wrong and you were right. But I will love you and I'm going to take care of you. Get some sleep."

I nod again and thankfully, I'm asleep before we get to the packhouse and the hideous scent of burning food

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The Pack's Nemesis (Quirin's Story)

Quirin

I didn't want to leave the hospital and Kennedy this morning, but when I heard that Slater was missing. I woke Kier and we went hunting. I'm not sure how the fuck he got out but when I return to the hospital later and realize that Terrance is there with his wife who is struggling to deliver their baby, I wonder if he was distracted and didn't lock the door properly at the end of his shift.

David was no help, swearing that he didn't see anything because he was asleep. I used my Alpha command to make sure that he was telling the truth and he was.

Slater attacked the guards on duty, knocking them out before racing off. Kier and I tracked Slater to our border, then continued on, following his trail to see if he stopped anywhere. We tracked him for about an hour before deciding to return to the pack. I don't like it that Slater is gone, but he must have known that I was going to kill him. He and Arlo were very close. There's no way he wouldn't have known or tried to help cover up what happened to Christy if he hadn't been in the cells at the time. He'd already be dead if I wasn't focused on trying to fix things with Kennedy.

When I got back to the hospital, I realized what was going on. I heard my mate, sounding exhausted, talking to her mother on the phone.

I sat in the waiting room and mind linked Susie.

'Yes, Alpha?'

'When's the last time anyone saw my mate eat?'

She was in surgery all day yesterday and she fell asleep beside Christy before she could get any food last night.

'Yesterday morning, Alpha.

Shit and she's about to go into surgery again from the sound of it. I'm just about to ask Susie to bring something for Kennedy to eat when Kennedy opens the link between us, barking that she needs me.

I'm up and moving in an instant and I see the surprise on her face when I walk in faster than she expects. I quickly assess what is happening and take the phone from Terrance. Then I watch, fascinated as my mate follows her mother's instructions and saves Lillian and her pup. I'm so fucking impressed with my mate. She just keeps surprising me, making me realize how much I've underestimated her.

It's not until she's covering Lillian's stitches that I see her hands begin to shake. The adrenaline in her system is wearing off and now the lack of food and probably lack of sleep are making themselves known.

I'm not surprised when Luna Yara realizes that her daughter is struggling too. She's been focused on her this entire time, making sure that she knew how to save our pack members.

After Lillian is settled, I'm about to follow Kennedy out of the room when Terrance rushes forward. I listen while he thanks Kennedy for saving his mate and pup. I can tell that his words are genuine and that he means what he's saying about the pack starting to love and admire her.

As I scoop her into my arms, I think about that. I've never felt quite so disconnected from my pack as I do now. Or perhaps, I've always been this disconnected, but it's taken Kennedy's involvement to help me see that I may not be as good of an Alpha as I thought I was. I didn't know what happened to Christy. I didn't even feel it. And Arlo using Kennedy as a threat should have given Christy more incentive to link me or Kier, but she didn't. That tells me that my omegas either don't trust me to protect them, or don't trust me to listen to them.

I look down at Kennedy, passed out in my arms. Listening is definitely not something I do well, just ask my mate.

"How is she?" Kier asks, walking over. I'd mind linked him that I was helping Kennedy with surgery and to cover any pack issues.

"Exhausted. What the fuck is that smell?*

"Leo started a fire again. None of know how to cook, Alpha"

"How the hell did a pack full of rogues survive in the wild? I growl softly so I don't wake Kennedy

"We hunted in wolf form. If we cooked anything it was on an open fire, not a kitchen stove. It either isn't cooked enough. it's burned. I had to order new pots and pans after last night's debacle"

"Well then, it sounds like Kennedy's lesson is well aimed."

"It is."

"Do me a favor, make sure someone is with Christy at all times. She is afraid of being alone and after what happened, I don't blame her. Talk to Susie and Arianna and find out who her friends are, make sure someone is with her until she wakes up When she does, I want to know right away,"

"Yes, Alpha. How's Lillian?"

"She and her pup survived, thanks to Kennedy. Let's talk to Deborah and Lane. If they know how Kennedy wanted the hospital set up, let's do that for her while she's asleep."

"What do you want to do with David?"

*Keep him in the cells for now."

"And Slater? What are we doing about him?"

"Increase the patrols. I don't trust him. Have you felt your tether to him break?" I ask him.

"Yeah, it was while you were in surgery with Luna," he says.

I reach out, feeling for the bond to Slater and realize that it's been severed.

"How did I not feel that?" I wonder out loud, feeling even more like I'm disconnected from my pack.

"You were in surgery and you're worried about your mate. You're putting her first, right? So, one tether snapping might not have registered as being that important," he says, but I know that it should have. It makes me wonder if the connections that with have with all my pack members is weak. I need to fix that as well.

"When all of this is done, we're having a recommitment ceremony. I need to make sure that every one of our pack members is fully vested in this pack. If they aren't I want them out."

"Yes Alpha. Along those lines, what do you want to do with the silver in Jasper's pack."

"We need a plan. I just need to focus on Kennedy right now. She needs sleep and once she wakes up, she needs to eat," I say, flinching. "Is there anything in the packhouse that she can eat?"

"I'll ask Arianna to make her a sandwich or something. If she's mad about it, she can yell at me," he says.

"Nah, she can yell at me. I'm the one saying she needs food that is edible."

I turn, looking at my mate as I carry her upstairs. Her scent is covered with

antiseptic, the smell of Lillian, Lillian's blood, and their son. Underneath that is the scent of Christy and her surgery and then underneath that, I can just barely smell

my

mate.

When I get her upstairs, I strip off her clothes and start a warm bath. I carefully wash the scent of everything and everyone off of her but mine and her scent. I like

it much better when she only smells like the two of us.

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st she's ready.

"Cocking" I say, watching as Randall drops a pan, sending some indistinguishable meat flying all over the kitchen before cursing loudly

"That's a cooking Susie says, watching her mate, Kelvin, as he too tries to cook

"Can we please help them. It's painful to watch," another omega says.

I think about our Luna's words. "She said you were on strike, and she threatened

us if anyone asked for your help, but she didn't say anything about you offering your help," I clarify,

"Oh, thank the goddess! Kelvin, turn that before it starts to burn and turn the heat to low," Susie says and Kelvin begins doing what she says,

Cameron, the preta goes in AFTER the water starts to boil, Arianna says.

"Really? Should I take it out?"

"No, dump it and start over, several omegas say as they start directing the warriors to add spices, stop adding spices, or whatever else they aren't doing

right.

"Thankfully, I have someone who snuck me some food last night," I murmur. Arianna gives me a side-eye glance and smiles but doesn't say anything,

"Did you need something, Beta?" one of the omegas asks me, but now, all of them are focused on the warriors, helping them to make something that will be close to an edible meal for tonight.

"Two things. Alpha wants a sandwich made for Luna. She hasn't eaten and he wants something she can eat. He said he's willing to take her wrath for going against her wishes," I say.

"We've already made her a couple of things," Arianna says without looking at me, before giving another instruction to Cameron. They seem to have focused on one or two warriors and are helping their designated warrior to cook. "When we realized that she wasn't eating, we started setting aside small meals so she can eat as she gets hungry," Susie says, telling Kelvin to take the pan of meat off the burner and put it into the oven.

"Then oven?" he asks, turning to look at her like she's crazy. She just looks at him, raising an eyebrow.

"What's your problemn, Kelvin? Put it in the fucking oven. I'm starving. I want something that I can actually choke down tonight," Randall growls.

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"What's the second thing. Betal" Ariana weke me as Pantall tunches elexing Wie pan and tordre cred fox windo umega immediately begins telling him what to do

"Luna's out, possibly for the rest of the night?

"Are Warrior Lillian and her baby, okay?" Arianna wake, this time she does took
me

"Yes, she saved Lillian and their baby" I say and everyone stops and looks

"She did?" Bandall aske
at

"That's what Alpha said and he was there, so he would know, hayway, she wants

to make sure that Christy isn't ever alone. I need to know who her friends are so I can ask them to take shifts sitting, with her this afternoon and overnight. Deborah has been there all day, but..."

"We'll make sure she's never alone, Beta" Susie says, and they all turn to look at
me.

"She's friends with all of us, one omega says.

"She's always so sweet, I know she'd do the same for us another says,

"We'll take care of her" Arianna says.

I nod, "Let me know if you need anything at all. Alpha is with Luna while she gets
some much needed sleep"

I walk out of the kitchen. I'm only a few steps away when I feel her tug on my arm.

I turn, quickly looking around before taking Arianna in my arms and kissing her with everything in me.

Alpha isn't the only one upset by what happened to Christy. I'm the Beta of this pack. It is just as much my responsibility to know what's going on as it is his. What

if it had been Arianna? What if someone hurt her and I didn't know until it was too late? What if it was her lying in that bed?

When I finally pull back, she looks at me, searching my eyes.

"I'm right here," she says, putting her hands on my cheeks.

I nod, pressing my forehead against hers.

"I'll come see you tonight, if that's okay."

"I always want you with me, Arianna. If you don't know that by now, I'm doing something wrong."

"Then I'll see you tonight."

I kiss her once more, pushing all of my love for her into the kiss, before finally releasing her and getting back to work. We

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The Pack's Nemesis (Quirin's Story)

Kennedy

I wake up alone, in my bedroom. I listen, but don't hear Quirin anywhere in our room. I notice that it's dark outside and I must have slept through the afternoon into the evening. When I sit up, I see that I'm in Quirin's t-shirt. As frustrated as I am with him, I can't help but smile. He's taking care of me, even though I'm angry and even though I've pushed him away. It's the side of Quirin that no one else sees, the side that only I ever get to see. The soft side of Quirin.

Damn, I can already feel my heart softening toward him.

I look down and rub my stomach. We need to have a conversation very soon about this pup I'm carrying. I have no idea if that will make things worse between us, but Quirin has a right to know.

I sigh, getting out of bed. I feel weak and nauseous, but I know I need to eat something. It's been almost two days since I've eaten and now I know I'm eating for two. I brush my hair, putting it in a messy bun, brush my teeth, wash my face and get dressed. I don't feel back to normal, but I do feel better.

When I open the door to the bedroom, I can smell the food. It doesn't smell as bad as it did earlier which is good. I make my way to the kitchen and see the omegas standing around looking anxious.

"How are you feeling, Luna?" Susie asks me as another omega goes to the fridge and pulls out some small bites of food. I don't know how they know it's what I need, but I'm grateful.

"Weak. I need food. Thank you so much," I say, taking a bite of a cracker. My stomach immediately begins growling and I take another bite, adding a slice of cheese this time.

"Can we please go back to work, Luna?" Arianna asks me.

"It's been awful watching them try to figure out how to cook," another omega says.

I look around, frowning. "They didn't exactly leave the kitchen clean, did they?"

"Well, Luna, if we had gone to warrior training, you wouldn't have expected us to take down a warrior in our first couple of days, right?" Susie asks me.

"They did the best they knew how to do. It's not like they've ever done this before," another omega says.

I look at them and they're all nodding. I smile, ducking my head. "Thank you," I say.

"For what?" Arianna asks.

"For reminding me that I'm not the mean, awful, uncaring Luna that they thought they wanted. Strength comes in all shapes and sizes, not just in how strong of a punch you can throw. I hope the pack has at least learned that lesson in the last couple of days," I say.

"Oh, I'm pretty sure they have," Susie says. "They were really hungry tonight."

"So can we, Luna? Can we please make food that's edible. It's been so painful to watch them."

"Yes. I'll go tell them that you're ready to get back to work," I say. Rather than walking out, I open my arms and they all come to hug me.

"I love you all. Please, please, if anyone is ever harassing you, if anyone threatens to hurt you, I don't care what they say they will do to me, you link me right away. I will be there. I will make sure that nothing like what happened to Christy happens again."

"Thank you, Luna."

16:25 Sat, 8 Mar M

"We love you too, Luna."

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They all murmur something similar and I hold everyone in the hug for a moment before heading to the dining hall.

I'm not sure if they want to see the warriors' reactions, or if they are showing solidarity, but they all follow me into the dining hall. The room goes quiet and for the first time ever, it feels like the pack is scared of me.

"What's going on?" I ask the omegas quietly.

"Alpha told them that if you don't like them, he doesn't like them," Susie says.

"And if you want them gone, they're out of the pack," Arianna says.

"They're all afraid that you don't like them and that they'll get kicked out of the pack, Luna."

I take a deep breath, seeing Quirin walk in from the back of the room. He comes to stand beside me, but he doesn't say anything. I turn my focus to the pack.

"I don't dislike any of you. I know I said some very harsh things the other day and in some ways, I meant everything I said. You all do not act like a pack should. A pack should be an extension of your family. I know you love your mates and your pups, but you should love your pack almost as much and you don't. You all act as though you are individuals living in a group setting. But that's not what this is. A pack should be a family. We should all love each other, take care of each other, protect each other from anyone who would harm someone in this pack, even if that person is part of this pack. That is what a pack should be. That is the kind of pack that I want to be a Luna of. I want you all to recognize that everyone in this pack has strengths. Do not assume that my kindness is weakness. It is not. Others may not have physical strength, but their strengths may be the foundation

that allows you, as warriors, to be the strong fighters that you are. You shouldn't look down on the omegas because they aren't fighters. You should recognize that without them, you don't eat. And if you don't eat, you get weak and you're no good to anyone."

I turn and look at my omegas, who all look like they are standing proudly at attention. "Your pack members, the omegas, reminded me that I am not the hardcore Luna that you all thought you wanted. I am, at heart, a kind, loving person. But I will not tolerate the abuse of anyone in my pack. I don't care how old you are or what your relationship is to the person, you don't hurt your family and everyone here is family. That is what I want. That is what I expect. And you can thank your omegas for practically begging me to allow them to cook for you again," I say, getting a lot of sighs of relief and 'yes' comments from around the room.

"I require that you rise the level of my expectation. This pack needs to change, and it starts at the top," I say, looking at Quirin. He nods, looking and acting like we are in complete agreement.

"So that is what I want. I want this pack to start acting like a family. And if your omegas are willing, they can cook you something that is more easily digested than whatever it is that you cooked for tonight."

"Thank you,

Luna!"

"We won't let you down, Luna."

"We promise that we'll make you proud, Luna," the warriors say. Their tone remains muted, but I can feel their determination to make me proud.

I turn and look at Quirin.

"Did you eat?" he asks before I can say anything.

"A little."

"Eat some more. Are you going to check on Christy? The omegas made sure that she was never alone," he says. I turn and smile at them as they make their way back to the kitchen, already talking about what they can make quickly.

"I need to make sure that she's okay."

16:25 Sat, 8 Mar M

"Are you coming back here tonight? Or should I plan to sleep in the hospital again?"

"I'll come back here."

He nods. "We need to talk, but it can wait until you've had food and checked on Christy."

I nod. "Thank you, for bathing me and putting me to bed."

"You're welcome. You're my mate. I love you, even if you're angry with me."

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+13

I walk to him and let him wrap me in his arms. I take a deep breath. I don't know what he needs to tell me, but I know what I need to tell him.

"We'll talk when I get back."

When I step back, he takes my hands. "Let me know if you need anything."

I nod and start to walk out, only to have Susie push some food in my hands. "I know you probably don't want to eat, but just take bites as you can, Luna," she says.

When I get to the hospital, I find Deborah sitting with Christy.

"How is she doing?" I ask, going to look at her vitals during the time I was asleep. "She hasn't woken up yet, Luna. How are you doing?" she asks me.

I nod. "I need to eat and regain my strength, but ... I'm better now," I say, taking a bite of the sandwich Susie gave me. Peanut butter and jelly. It's perfect.

I feel Deborah come up behind me and wrap her arms around me. "We really do love you, Luna. I didn't realize how much we needed you in this pack, but we do. Thank you for not giving up on us," she says.

I press my hands against hers. "I'm not really one to give up. As much as I am my mother's daughter, I still have quite a bit of my father in me," I say.

"Oh, we know. That angry show of power you gave the warriors after what happened to Christy reminded everyone in the pack that you are a true Alpha female. But, you're also

one of the most loving and caring women I've ever had the privilege of knowing. I've watched you treat and heal pups and warriors alike. It's made me want to be a better nurse. I ... I even signed up for one of the

classes at your brother's pack so I can attend your mother's class."

I turn and look at her. "You did?"

She nods. "Do you think that's stupid?"

"Absolutely not! I hope you like it and take more classes. I need all the help I can get around here."

She smiles and hugs me again. "Thanks, Luna."

"Anytime," I say before stepping back. "So, Christy is stable, how is Lillian?"

"Also stable Luna. She's been getting stronger throughout the afternoon and evening and I did what I always see you do and asked her wolf how she was doing. She said she was getting stronger and is healing Lillian." "That's great! Well done, Deborah. Who is staying with Christy tonight? I told Quirin that I would go talk with him later."

"We have a rotation. Don't worry, Christy won't wake up alone."

"Thank you and please make sure you alert me the minute she wakes up. Even if

I'm asleep, I want to come check on her."

16:25 Sat, 8 Mar MD.

"Yes, Luna."

I check on Lillian who is doing very well and then on her son, who they named

Titus. He is also doing very well.

"I'll come see you in the morning and if all goes well overnight, I'll release you first thing."

"Thank you, Luna."

Once again, Terrance follows me out of the room.

+13

"Luna, I heard what you said to the other warriors. I want you to know that I think you're right. None of us came from packs that were good or treated each other as family. Here, we've just created a pack that was similar to what we knew. We aren't a family, but we're willing to learn. Hopefully, you're willing to teach us?" he

says.

"If you're willing to learn, I'm willing to teach," I tell him.

"Thanks, Luna. I'm looking forward to seeing what this pack will become with your guidance."

I feel better as I walk out of the pack hospital. However, I need to prepare myself for my conversation with Quirin. So, rather than going straight back to the packhouse I carefully make my way to the overhang. It's one of the first places that Quirin brought me when I arrived here and I've taken every possible opportunity to come here to relax and think when I've had time.

I sit, looking out over the lights in the city far away. The moon is shining brightly and the stars are painting the sky. It's very quiet out here, far away from the packhouse.

I close my eyes, taking a deep breath and that's when I hear it, the scoffing sound of something on the sheer face of the overhang.

'KENNEDY RUN!' Echo screams in my head, ready to pull the shift just as several hooded figures leap over the edge of the cliff. They grab me and one of them slaps something over my mouth.

I try to open the mind link to Quirin, but it's closed as usual. As I breathe in the sweet smelling liquid on the cloth covering my nose and mouth, I'm not strong enough to push it open.

"Hello, Luna. We finally meet. I'm Alpha Jasper and you're coming with me."

It's the last thing I see and hear before the chloroform pulls me under.

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The Pack's Nemesis (Quirin's Story)

It starts at the top That's what Kennedy had said to the pack and she'd looked at me, basically letting me know that it's not just our warriors that need to change, that I need to change as well.

I've never really thought of the pack as a family, I mean, I spent enough years in Alpha Harold's pack that I probably should have, I saw the love that the pack members had for Harold and for Henry, but since I didn't have a pack at the time, I didn't take much notice. I didn't realize the value and importance of a pack being a family, Hell, I don't even recognize the value of family at all, or at least I didn't before Kennedy. Even my own mother chose to let herself wither away and die rather than be a mother to me, to be a family to me.

Of course, Kennedy's more than just family to me. She's everything to me. If she wants this pack to become a family, then we will. I don't know how to do that, but I'm sure that she does, and I'll follow her lead.

When Lane comes to ask about someone watching, Kennedy, something inside me tightens. I'd expected Kennedy back by now, but I also know that she would take her time if Christy is awake and she'd also want to check on Lillian and their

son.

That feeling inside my gut only gets tighter when Lane links me that Kennedy isn't in the hospital. I immediately try to link her, opening up the link between us and I get nothing. Absolutely nothing.

I'm up and moving before I tell Lane that I'll meet him there. I quickly make my way through the packhouse.

"Alpha, what's going on?" Kier asks, jogging over from where he'd been standing by the kitchen.

"I'm not sure, I can't reach Kennedy," I say as we get to the back of the packhouse. I leap off the back patio and begin running to the overhang. I lift my nose in the air, searching for my mate's scent just as I hear Rowd, Kier's wolf, begin running behind me.

'I can't reach her either, Alpha, Kier says in the mind link. 'Wasn't she at the hospital?'

'Lane went to check on her and she's not there. She's been gone for a while according to Deborah'

I wake up alone, in my bedroom. I listen, but don't hear Quirin anywhere in our room. I notice that it's dark outside and I must have slept through the afternoon into the evening. When I sit up, I see that I'm in Quirin's t-shirt. As frustrated as I am with him, I can't help but smile. He's taking care of me, even though I'm angry and even though I've pushed him away. It's the side of Quirin that no one else sees, the side that only I ever get to see. The soft side of Quirin.

Damn, I can already feel my heart softening toward him.

I look down and rub my stomach. We need to have a conversation very soon about this pup I'm carrying. I have no idea if that will make things worse between us, but Quirin has a right to know.

I sigh, getting out of bed. I feel weak and nauseous, but I know I need to eat something. It's been almost two days since I've eaten and now I know I'm eating for two. I brush my hair, putting it in a messy bun, brush my teeth, wash my face and get dressed. I don't feel back to normal, but I do feel better.

When I open the door to the bedroom, I can smell the food. It doesn't smell as bad as it did earlier which is good. I make my way to the kitchen and see the omegas standing around looking anxious.

"How are you feeling, Luna?" Susie asks me as another omega goes to the fridge and pulls out some small bites of food. I don't know how they know it's what I need, but I'm grateful.

"Weak. I need food. Thank you so much," I say, taking a bite of a cracker. My stomach immediately begins growling and I take another bite, adding a slice of cheese this time.

"Can we please go back to work, Luna?" Arianna asks me.