

# The Pack's Nemesis

## – Chapter 81 – 85

### The Pack's Nemesis (Quirin's Story)

Warren

I'm excited to get started with Quirin this morning. Not only is it good to feel needed, but I want to nurture the new relationship that we have. I'll tread lightly, I don't want to do anything to disrupt the new bond that we've created. But I want him to know that he's family now and that's important to me, it means something to me.

I stepped away when Quirin and Henry were saying goodbye, and I'd seen Beta Kier and Beta Arianna descending the stairs together.

"Congratulations! I hope you'll be as happy as Yara and I are," I said, smiling when Arianna blushed sweetly.

"Thank you, Alpha," she said.

I'd watched them walk into the kitchen and heard the squeals of excitement from her friends as Arianna showed off her mate mark.

I waited patiently for Quirin and saw him turn to see what was going on in the kitchen, then saw his pack members ask to speak to him. It's difficult not having my own tasks to do, but I know that it's important as an Alpha to meet with your pack members when they ask for your time. So, I turn, looking out the back windows of Quirin and Kennedy's pack thinking through the possibilities of how we can begin to clean up the pack lands. It's going to take a lot of time and energy, which excites me. I need to feel needed again.

"Alpha Warren," Quirin says from behind me.

I turn and smile at him. "I thought we agreed that I was just Warren to you."

He smiles, something I've never seen him do unless Kennedy was nearby. "Warren, my pack members would like to speak with you. They want to take you up on your offer to talk to them like you talked to me. Are you still willing to meet with them?" he asks.

"Absolutely," I say, stepping forward.

"Thank you. Let's meet in my office. My warriors are already there," he says.

When we step in, I see about ten warriors, male and female, waiting to meet with me.

"Good morning, everyone," I say as I step in. They have all pulled up chairs and are facing Quirin's desk.

"Would you like a chair, Warren?" he asks me.

"Yes, thank you." He grabs a chair for me and I pull it in front of his desk, facing the group. Quirin leans against his desk rather than sitting. I'm not surprised that he doesn't sit. Quirin has always been full of energy. It rolls off of him in waves, although that energy has a decidedly more positive feel to it since he's been mated to my daughter.

"Alpha Warren has agreed to speak with all of you. I will remind you that he is your Luna's father and as such, I expect you all to remain respectful during this meeting and afterward," Quirin tells them.

"Yes, Alpha," they say, then turn to me.

I lean forward, putting my elbows on my knees, more or less putting myself at their level and hoping to make them feel more open to talking and hearing what I have to say.

"First, I'm assuming that all of you lost someone in the wars during the time when

I was Alpha and was fighting against the other Alphas. Is that a correct assumption?" I ask.

I watch as they all nod or quietly agree with me.

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"Anyone from Alpha Brady's pack?" I ask, a few hands go up.

"Alpha Thomas?" Only one hand,

"Alpha Simon?" Multiple hands.

"Alpha Quinton?" A couple of hands.

"Did I miss anyone?" I ask. Everyone looks around, but no one else raises their hand.

90%

I sit back and scrub my face. "You're all younger than I am, closer to Alpha Quirin's age so you might not realize that things were different back then. Wars were constant. My pack

was being attacked nearly every day. My warriors were dying, whether from battles or from battle wounds that were improperly treated by the shit doctor I had before I found Yara"

The memory of those dark times fills my mind. That is, until my mate pushes her sweet consciousness into mine, wrapping around me like she's holding my hand in a unified presence to push the painful memories away.

"Those were very dark times. As an Alpha, you never want to see good men and women die, and especially for no good reason. No good reason that I could see anyway. Alpha Quinton wanted my pack lands. He entered an alliance with Alpha Brady and Alpha Thomas to attack me repeatedly and it was slowly working. My pack was dying."

"Then I found Yara," I say and smile. "She changed everything for me. She came into my life and immediately began healing me and my pack. She is so damn good at what she does that my pack started getting stronger right away."

I watch as they all look at each other. "Just like Kennedy has done for us," Quirin says and they nod.

"Well, your pack is strong, she just made you stronger. Mine was dying out. We were riddled with infection, had wounds that didn't have time to heal, we were fighting with fevers and barely mended bones or poorly set bones that fractured again easily..." I shrug. "I only tell you this so you understand what it was like. It was a dark time for all of the packs. But then, Yara arrived and it quickly became apparent that she was the reason that my pack was getting stronger very quickly. That's when the Alphas started coming for my mate," I say, and Arric growls in my chest.

"When I was finally strong enough to go on the offensive and start attacking instead of waiting to be attacked, I did. I created an alliance with Alpha Harold, and we began working together against the other packs." I hold up a hand, looking at the ones from Simon's pack. "I'll get to Simon in a moment. The reasons for my attack on him are different."

"We took out Alpha Thomas' pack first. We thought we collected everyone who wasn't a warrior at the time to bring them back to my pack, but we obviously missed at least one," I say gesturing to the woman who said she was from Thomas' pack.

"My father was a warrior. His death killed my mother before we made it to the safe room. I was afraid, so I hid."

I nod. "How old were you?"

"Twelve."

"That had to be terrifying for you," I say gently.

She nods and I see her fighting her tears.

"I'm sorry you had to go through that. I'm sure you didn't know that you'd be safe coming to my pack. Most of the women that we brought back had been taken against their will from Alpha Harold's pack.

actually how I convinced Alpha

Harold that I wanted an et

When I found out that the

women

were from his pack, that they'd been forced into mate bonds with Thomas' warriors, Harold and I worked together to return them to their home. His Luna, Farrah, was one women. She can corroborate what I've said, if you don't believe me."

"I think ... I think maybe my mother was one of those women. She despised my father."

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"You must have been very strong to have survived on your own for so long," I say to her before refocusing on the others.

10:31 Fri, 21 Mar

"Alpha Quinton and Alpha Brady wanted my mate. But it was Simon who took her," I say, and they gasp.

I look at them. "You didn't know?" They all look at each other and shake their heads.

"Yara came from Simon's pack. Did you know that Simon killed his own father when he realized that Solomon had hidden Yara from him?"

"What? That's not what we were told," one of the men says.

"I'm sure it's not. Patricide, especially when the Alpha was loved by his pack, isn't exactly the way to get the get the pack to follow you."

"How do you know he killed Alpha Solomon?" another warrior asks.

"He told me so himself."

They all look at each other. "He told our warriors you did it. He said that's why they had to attack your pack."

"I had no reason to kill Alpha Solomon. Unlike the other Alphas, he didn't attack unless someone attacked him first. As I've already said, my pack was dying. I had enough wars to fight without trying to kill an Alpha who wasn't attacking me. Simon lied to you because he wanted Yara. He was obsessed with her. I'm guessing that obsession started early which is why Alpha Solomon tried to protect my mate by sending her off to college and not telling anyone where she was."

I feel Yara's presence in my mind again, strong and sure as I remember that terrible time.

"He kidnapped Yara and took her into hiding, letting his warriors lead me and my warriors back to your pack. That's when we attacked. He had my mate. If you saw what your If Alpha did to Alpha Jasper, then you have an idea of the fury that I felt when we attacked your pack. He betrayed you and honestly, I didn't care what happened to any of you at that time. I only wanted to find my mate. But once I did and I knew she was safe, I sent my Gammas back to bring anyone into our pack who wanted a home. Many of those people still live in my pack, or in Alpha Harold's. Again, you can talk to them and verify what I've said," I tell them.

"But I know that many chose not to

join our packs. That was the same in Brady's pack as well. I wasn't willing to have another Alpha out there who would come for my mate. Just like Alpha Quirin didn't leave Alpha Brogan alive, I couldn't leave Alpha Brady alive. Once we'd taken down

the warriors, the offer to come to either my pack or Alpha Harold's was made to everyone. I didn't like parents with young children going rogue, but I didn't want to force anyone into a pack where they didn't

want to live either," I say, shrugging.

"You're saying our parents chose to go rogue? It wasn't because you forced it on them?" a warrior asks.

"I hated the idea of anyone choosing to go rogue, but I hated seeing parents with young children making that choice the most," I say honestly.

Everyone looks around at each other.

"What other questions do you have for Alpha Warren? It sounds like he was able to clear up a lot of lies and assumptions that you may have had about him," Quirin says.

When no one has any questions, I stand. "Thank you for letting me speak to you and tell you my side of what happened all those years ago," I say. The other stands as well.

"Alpha Warren, I may only be speaking for myself, but thank you for taking the time to clear things up for me. I ... I've been harboring a lot of hatred for you that was misdirected because of what Alpha Simon told us," a warrior says.

"I feel the same."

"I do as well."

"Thank you, Alpha."

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From the nods in the room, it seems like maybe all of Quirin's warriors have a better understanding of what happened and why I attacked their packs. Hopefully that knowledge will help those old wounds to heal.

"I'm going to be here for a while, helping to clean the silver off of your pack lands.

If you ever have any questions, please know that I'm happy to speak with you," I tell them.

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"On that note, Alpha Warren and I are going to start looking over the pack lands to see when and how we need to get the silver out of the ground and make our pack safe again. If you need to speak to me later, I'll make time to speak with you and as Alpha Warren said, he's willing to speak with you as well. Being mated to your Luna has taught me that communication is very important. It's something all of us need to work on, myself included," Quirin tells them.

When I step out of Quirin's office, Yara is there, waiting for me. I walk up to her

and pull her into my arms, holding her and breathing in her scent.

I thought you might want to remind yourself that I'm right here, safe,' she says in the mind link.

As always, my mate knows exactly what I need.

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## The Pack's Nemesis (Quirin's Story)

Kennedy

After Quirin left, my mother got me settled while mumbling about my mate. Then, she finally focused on me.

"How are you feeling? Anything from Echo?"

"A bit of fluttering, but not much. She's still weak and so am I," I tell her.

"You lost a lot of blood, so that's to be expected. Plus, I'm sure Echo is being a good momma wolf and making sure your pup stays safe and strong."

I swallow the bite of food and look at my mother. "Speaking of pups, what's this I hear about you wanting another one?"

She smiles, obviously thinking about whatever she and Dad talked about last night.

"Your father made a good point when we spoke last night. Very soon, you'll have a pup and I'm guessing Connor and Madison will as well. So, rather than having my own pup to focus on, I'll focus on yours and being the best possible grandmother ever! Can you imagine if you both have twins??" she asks excitedly.

I was on the verge of telling her that of course she'll be the best grandmother ever. She's the best mother ever, but then ....

"Did you say, twins?"

"Well, yes, sweetheart. I had two sets of twins, and you are part of one of those sets. Granted, I think maybe I produced a lot of eggs because, well, your father practically made me desperate to have his pups. But still, twins tend to be genetic and as intense as your mate is in life, I can only imagine what he's like when it's just the two of you."

I know I'm blushing profusely. "Mom..." I grumble.

"Don't 'Mom' me. I know passion when I see it. And you, my daughter, would want and expect the same passion in your mate bond that I have in mine," she says. Rather than answer her, I shove some more food in my mouth.

"He is excited about being a father," I say when I swallow my food.

"From what your father tells me, Quinton loved Quirin. He might have been the only person who Alpha Quinton ever truly loved in this life. So, I'm not surprised that he's excited about being a father. I expect that with your guidance, he'll make a wonderful father."

"You seem very confident about Quirin."

My mother's eyes get a far away look in them. "He's had a very hard life. But unlike his father, he loves his mate with everything in him. I believe that's Harold and Henry's influence on him. He wants to be a better man for you, and I know from experience that a man who loves his mate like that, will do everything in his power to not let her down. So, yes, I'm very confident that Quirin will be the man, mate, and father that you want him to be."

"Can I tell you a secret?" I ask her conspiratorially.

"I love secrets," she says excitedly leaning forward as if someone might overhear us.

"He's so different when it's just the two of us. He can be so gentle and kind, so unlike what others see in him."

"That's love, baby girl. And like I said, that man loves you more than anything in this world."

"I really like it. I really like that I'm the only one who gets to see that side of him. It's as if that part of him is only for me."

She takes my hand, squeezing it. "It is. I get a different side of your father when it's just the two of us. You and I are not fighters. I could never come close to defeating your father in a sparring match, nor would I ever bother to try. But when it's just us, he will submit to me," she says, making me gasp.



She nods, smiling as her eyes go unfocused. "It's not all the time, and I don't ever push it, but he does it of his own free will. He gives himself to me completely and there is nothing more precious to me in this world than that."

It makes me wonder if Quirin would ever submit to me. I might be able to force it,

but I wouldn't want to. Like my mother. I'd want my mate to submit because he loves me and wants to give himself to me. When I'm stronger, I'll have to test that

"Now..." she begins and stops, her head tilting to the side.

"What is it?" I ask.

"Your father is meeting with your pack's warriors. He's telling them about the past," she says.

"Is he okay? Do you need to go?" I ask her.

Her eyes narrow and her fingers twitch as if she's desperate to reach out and touch my father.

"No, I'll wait until he's finished. This is important, Kennedy," she says refocusing on me. "Your pack is listening to your father for the first time."

I reach out, finding Quirin's mind open to me. Through him, I see what my mother is talking about. In our mind, Quirin pulls me into his arms, holding me while I listen in.

"Did you want to sit outside for a little while? Get some fresh air?" she asks. She's a bit distracted, just like I am, both of us focused on the conversation going on downstairs.

"Yes," I say, knowing it will be good for Echo, but it will also give me a chance to get a feel for how the pack is feeling, especially after this conversation with my father.

She moves the now-empty tray of food and then helps me to get dressed before scooping me into her arms to carry me downstairs.

"I can walk, Mom."

"I'm not facing your mate if you fall on my watch. I told him I'd look after you and I intend to."

"How long do you think it will be before we'll know if I'm having twins?" I ask her.

"Well, it depends on when you got pregnant, but I'd say no more than a week. We'll do an ultrasound in a couple of days to see if we can get any images of your pup or pups."

When we get downstairs, Arianna rushes over to me along with several of the omegas.

"Luna, how are you feeling?"

"I'm still weak, but feeling better. How are you, Arianna? Do I get to see your mate mark?"

She smiles and pulls her shirt aside.

"Ohhh, nice!" my mom and I say together.

"Alpha said that once you're stronger, we can talk about my responsibilities as a Beta. I hope it's okay, but since you're still healing, I sort of took over the kitchen duties."

"I think that's perfect. If you have any questions, let me know. I'm going to sit outside for a bit, let the fresh air and sunshine help Echo to heal," I tell them.

I'll get you a blanket. Luna Susor says

look around, not seeing Christy. "Is Christy still in the hospital

Yes, but I plan to release her today. She's not ready to go back to work just yet, but she'll heal better here with her friends nearby my mom SZY

"LUNA" Lane exclaims rushing over. "Oh, Lana. Tim so sorry that I wasn't there to protect you and keep you safe. I understand if you don't trust me to be your guard any bogen...

Lane, what are you talking about?"

"I was sleeping when you were taken. I didn't do my job protecting you

7 didn't wake you up because you'd been awake as many hours as I had. You needed sleep just as much as I did. Of course, I still want you as my guard. I trust you and I like working with you." I tell him.

Are you sure. Lana?"

I'm positive. I SIX

"Okay then. I'm reporting for duty. I'll take my Luma Luma Yara," he says, taking me out of my mother's arms. "Where are we going

"Outside, but this really is embarrassing. I can walk

If Luna Yara says you get carried, Luna, you get carried" he says, walking me toward the back of the packhouse.

"Kennedy?" Mom calls from behind me.

Lane turns so I can talk to her. I join you in a bit. I'm going to wait and talk to your father?"

Okay, Mom," I say as Lane carries me out to the back patio. He looks around just as Susie comes out with a blanket.

"How about partial son Lunz Like right here," he says, finding a spot where the sun is blocked by some plants, but the sunlight still makes its way through That looks perfect." I say and be carefully sets me in the chair, then steps back to let Susie put the blanket over my lap.

"Luna, if you don't mind. I'd like to talk to you about the other guards. Alpha said he wanted a couple more so we can rotate out now that you're pregnant. I think that's a great idea since I can't be there every minute of every day."

"Who would you choose to be part of the Luna guard?" I ask him.

\*Well, the shortlist would include Terrance and Leo, but if Randall and Christopher can get their head's out of their asses about your father, I'd add them to the list too."

"I think they're talking to him right now," I tell him.

"They are. They're a bit younger than

I am, so they didn't understand everything that was happening. I mean, we've been attacked. We've had pack members die and we've killed pack members. I'm not saying

I like it, but it's what happens in

times of war.

"They lost loved ones. When you're young, I think you need someone to blame for that loss. What pack did you come from?" I ask

"None of the ones around here, but I

lost my father too. This wasn't the only region that had a lot of fighting Anyway, hope they figure it out.

Some of those warriors are ne

very strong and would make good tuna guards and protectors for you and your pup."

I feel him before I see him and I turn, smiling up at my mate as he strides over to

see me. He's so graceful, so sexy, even when he walks. I feel my body humming with my desire for him.

Lane, seeing my mate headed this way, nods and steps back.

"How did it go?" I ask him as he scoops me into his arms and sits, pulling me into

his lap. I notice Lane raise an eyebrow before smiling and turning away.

"I think it went really well. They, like me, finally listened to what your father had to say. He was able to clear up some lies and mistruths that they were holding on to all this time, jus like I was," he says, pressing his lips to the side of my head. "My mate was right, astm realizing you usually are, that it starts at the top. I need to do a

better job of leading this pack, of creating a family environment and tight-knit group of individuals that not only care about each other, but also listen to each other," he says.

"What?" I ask, pretending I hadn't been listening to him.

He smiles, growling softly. "Did you need for me to whisper it in your car,

Kennedy?"

My whole body shivers and I'm about to respond when howls of excitement go up

from the patrols.

Quirin is on his feet in an instance, carefully putting me back in the chair. "Stay

with her," he commands Lane.

"Quirin, what is it?" I ask him.

He turns and the sweet, sexy smile from a moment ago is now a hard, menacing smile.

"They found Slater."

## The Pack's Nemesis (Quirin's Story)

Quirin

As soon as I knew Kennedy was comfortable and safe, I stripped off my clothes and leaped off the patio. About halfway to where my patrols had announced that my trackers had Slater, Kier joined me.

'I can't wait to find out where they found him,' he says.

'I can't wait to see his face when he realizes that we know what he did. You know he thinks we don't know about his part in all of this,' I tell him.

'What are you going to do with him?' Kier asks.

'I haven't decided yet.' I growl as I feel the silver burning Raif's paws. I'm pissed off all over again at Jasper.

When we get there, I shift and walk up to Slater who is on his knees in front of the patrols.

"What's the meaning of this? I left. I wasn't bothering you. I rejected you and this pack, so why the fuck did you drag me back here?" he snarls. I glare down at him, and I can see the fear behind the bluster. I can also see that my trackers weren't exactly gentle with him while dragging him home.

"Not bothering me..."

Hmmm," I say, turning to look at Kier. "Did he bother you?"

"Yeah, I sure as fuck was bothered."

"Mmm," I agree, nodding and acting like I'm thinking through both men's statements.

"How about you, Terrance. Were you bothered?"

"Yeah, I was fucking bothered," he growls.

"Hmmm, was anyone else bothered?" I ask. Everyone agrees, or growls angrily at Slater.

"What the fuck is your problem? What did I do to you?"

"What did you do to me?" I ask slowly as if thinking it through. "Well, now, let's see. You betrayed your pack and therefore me, as your Alpha. You conspired with Jasper to kidnap your previous Luna and my mate, you conspired to kidnap my pup, even though you probably didn't know she was pregnant. Even I didn't know she was pregnant at the time," I say as if I'll give him that little bit of grace. "But, if you hadn't connived with Jasper to kidnap Kennedy, you wouldn't have inadvertently kidnapped my pup so... yeah, I'm holding you accountable for that too. Did I miss anything?" I ask, looking at Kier.

"He protected his rapist brother," he growls.

"Oh right. You not only betrayed your pack by betraying their Luna, you betrayed them by being an asshole who doesn't treat his fellow pack members with respect, therefore disrespecting me as their Alpha."

"I didn't have anything to do with Kennedy's kidnapping," he yells. With a quick slap, Raif rakes his claws across Slater's face.

"That's Luna Kennedy to you. Show some fucking respect for once," I growl.

"I didn't do anything," he snarls, slapping his hand against his face, the blood seeping through his fingers.

"Funny, that's not what Jasper said."

"He lied."

"Well, he's dead now, so I guess we'll never know. Where did you find him?" I ask my trackers.

"Skulking around Alpha Jasper's pack lands," one of the trackers says, smirking because this just adds more weight that Slater is lying.

"Oh so you DO know he's dead. That makes this much easier," I say. "You're a traitor and you're here to pay your dues for participating in the kidnapping and attempted murder of my mate," I say, my voice dripping with false patience. "Brogan wasn't going to kill her!" he yells before suddenly realizing what he said.

I squat down in front of him, my fury barely held in check.

"What was he going to do with her, then, hmmm?"

"H-How would I know?" he asks, his tone much less confident.

"How did Jasper know that Kennedy's favorite spot in the pack was the overhang, and that it was the only part of the pack that wasn't patrolled? Who would have known that?" I ask, looking up at Kier.

"Only one of our pack members would have known that," he says.

"Correct. Of course, that's changed now. I can't have crazy Alphas rock climbing their way into my pack. So, the question is... what do I do with you?" I say, standing back up.

"Oh, here's an idea, let's drag him through our silver infested pack lands. He was so friendly with Jasper who contaminated our lands that you must be okay with silver, right Slater?" I ask, turning and starting to walk back.

I hear him fighting the warriors

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before I hear a very strong kick to his gut. That would be Kier. He has

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almost as much reason to hate Slater as I do. It could very easily have been Arianna that Arlo targeted, or even Slater. I'm sure it was only a matter of time before Slater followed in his brother's raping footsteps.

As the trackers drag Slater across the pack lands, the pack's warriors come running out, surrounding us and yipping in excitement. I walk ahead of them, thinking through my decision. When we come out of the forest fine, I see Kennedy still sitting in the chair where I left her. She's sitting up, obviously hearing the nearly feral excitement from the

pack. On one side of her, Lane is standing guard, and on the other, her father is standing, guarding both her and Luna Yara who is standing partially behind him and partially behind Kennedy's chair.

The energy coming from the pack is emotionally charged, bordering on mob mentality. The pack has rallied behind Kennedy and I, and they see Slater as the betrayer who was responsible for taking their Luna, the woman who has brought so much to our pack, away from them.

As I walk up, my eyes lock on Kennedy. I feel her in my mind, recognizing that I'm barely holding on to my rage at what Slater did, at his role in nearly taking her away from me. She carefully pushes herself to her feet and waits for me to come to her.

When I get to the patio, she opens her arms, and I walk into them holding her close.

"I'm right here," she says softly. "Your pup and I are safe."

"And you're going to stay that way," I growl.

"Of course we are. I have the biggest, baddest, strongest Alpha in the world as a mate and I know he will protect us," she says. I hear Warren grunt beside me, disgruntled that Kennedy put me above him in strength.

I pull back and look at her, stroking my fingers over her cheek. "I want to kill him. I want to make him suffer like he made me suffer, like you suffered. But I know that you might not want that. If you tell me you want me to give him a quick death, I "will," I tell her.

I watch the surprise on her face, then she glances over my shoulder at Slater who

is still on his knees, although now his legs and knees are bleeding from being dragged over the silver in the pack lands.

"If I may make a suggestion," Warren says. Kennedy and I both look at him but he's watching the pack's pacing and yipping behind me. When he finally turns, he looks at Kennedy, then at me.

"When I had someone who betrayed my pack, I had a similar dilemma. Obviously, Yara doesn't like violence, and Kennedy is similar, but I felt as you do, Quirin, that justice needed to be served."

"What did you do, Dad?" Kennedy asks him.

I watch as Warren smiles a menacing smile that I've never seen on his face before. It reminds me that Warren was a fighter for many years and survived multiple wars, many of them all at once. He is a strong warrior, a strong Alpha, and one that would never tolerate someone hurting those he loves.

"I let the pack have him," he says.

I turn, looking at the rabid

excitement coming from my pack and I know that what they would do to him would be worse than

anything that I did. I would torture him, make him suffer, yes. But they will toy with him, keep him alive, give him hope that he can escape before dragging him back. It would also give them a sense of unity, bonding over protecting each other.

"I took Yara inside and let them do what they felt needed to be done. Slater didn't just betray you and Kennedy, he betrayed the entire pack," he says.

I turn and look back at Kennedy. "What do you think? Could you live with that?"



I can feel her struggle to accept what will happen to Slater, but I also feel her anger that he had a role in putting our pup at risk.

"Yes, I can live with that," she says.

I hear Slater scream 'NO', but it's drowned out by the howls of excitement from the pack. "Kennedy, why don't you and Quirin come to the hospital. We can see if an ultrasound will pick anything up while the pack ... deals with this," Yara says.

I turn and look at Kier. 'Make sure we're away before you let them begin,' I say in the mind link.

'Yes, Alpha.'

"Do you mind if I come with you? I doubt we'll be looking over the pack lands today," Warren says.

I look at Kennedy, wanting her thoughts. She shrugs. "Sure thing, Dad. It's your grandpup."

"I expect all of you to come to the pack hospital to have your wolf's paws or your hands and feet cleaned of silver when you're done," Luna Yara says loudly enough for everyone to hear.

"Yes, Luna," they say.

We've just reached the hospital when the sound of excited growls, howls, and yips begins behind the packhouse.

## The Pack's Nemesis (Quirin's Story)

Christy

I was woken by the sounds of the pack's excitement. The feeling in the pack made me nervous and scared and I suddenly felt vulnerable and alone. Tears began streaking down my cheeks as fear began to overwhelm me.

"Hey. Are you in pain? What's the matter?" Deborah asks me. She's the one sitting with me today.

"What's going on? Are we under attack?"

"No, I'm not sure exactly what's going on. I can find out if you want me to," she says, but I shake my head quickly.

"Don't leave me. Please don't leave me," I say to her.

"I'm right here. You're safe," she says soothingly. I'm not sure I'll ever feel safe again. Every time I close my eyes, I see him. I'm back in that bathroom with Arlo, terrified, dominated, and abused. Luna Yara said I could go back to the packhouse today, but I'm not sure that will be any better. What will the pack say to me? How will they look at me?

I hear the doors to the pack hospital open and Deborah goes to look into the hallway.

"Oh, hello Alphas, hello Lunas," she says.

"Kennedy, go with your mother. I'm going to check on Christy," I hear Alpha say. Luna Yara pokes her head into the room first.

"I'm going to get my daughter settled, then I'll be back to check on you," she says, then her gaze focuses on me and she steps into the room. "Christy?"

I feel my lips trembling as tears begin running down my cheeks again. "What's going on?" I ask.

"I've got this Luna. Go help Kennedy and I'll be in soon," Alpha says, stepping in behind her.

Luna Yara steps back out and Alpha nods at Deborah to join her. When he walks to the bed, a feeling of calm protectiveness washes over me. He wipes the tears from my cheeks then pulls up a chair, taking my hand in his.

"What has you frightened, Christy?" he asks gently. I've never heard Alpha speak so softly before.

"What's going on, Alpha? The pack feels ... I don't what they feel like," I tell him.

"The trackers found Slater. They are angry and they want him to pay for what he did to Kennedy and to you."

"To me?" I ask. Why would the pack care about what happened to me? And Slater may be Arlo's brother, but he was in the cells when Arlo attacked me.

"Luna Kennedy may have let the pack know how very angry and disappointed she was that no one protected you, Christy. That includes me. I should have known what was going on. You should have felt comfortable coming to me, to know that I would have protected

you. The fact that you didn't tell me everything I need to know about how poorly I was running this pack."

"Oh no, Alpha ..." I begin, but he holds up a finger.

"If you had felt comfortable coming to me, none of this would have happened. Things are changing quickly in this pack, Christy. I know you've been in the hospital recovering, but when you return to the packhouse, you'll feel the difference. Anyone who is not on board with those changes will be required to leave the pack. Anyone who feels scared or threatened by any pack member needs to feel comfortable coming to me, Beta Kier, or Luna Kennedy," he says, then smiles.

"Did you hear that Arianna accepted Kier and they've now marked and mated?" he asks me.

"She did it?" I ask, excited for my friend.

"She did, and the pack couldn't be happier about it."

"Really?"

"Really. Kennedy has taught all of us a lot about the different kinds of strength that our pack members bring to the pack. The warriors got a firsthand look at how much we underestimate our omegas when Kennedy put the omegas on strike and we had to cook for ourselves."

I'd heard from the other omegas how difficult it was to sit back and watch the warriors burn meal after meal.

"We're becoming a family, Christy. It's the way our pack should have been run from the beginning, but none of us, including me, had a good family life to pull from. Kennedy did, and she's leading us into a new way of thinking and living. I don't want you to be afraid. I know you have a lot to work through but know that I am here for you. Kennedy is here for you. Betas Kier and Arianna are here for you. Your friends are here for you and the warriors are here for you too. You are not alone. You are safe and you are loved."

I feel the tears coming again but for a different reason this time. I nod as he reaches up and brushes the tears from my cheeks again, as if I'm a child and he's

a loving father. It's the safest and most loved I've felt since I lost my parents.

"Hey, Christy ..." Leo says, walking in. He stops abruptly, seeing Alpha Quirin. "What's going on? Why are you crying? Are you in pain?" he asks rushing over to the bed.

"Leo, what are you doing here?" Alpha asks him, his voice more stern than it was with me.

Leo looks me over quickly before turning to Alpha Quirin. Then he stands up straight to answer him.

"Christy is my mate, Alpha. I rejected her when she turned eighteen because I thought she was too weak to be my mate. Luna has helped me to realize that I made a big mistake, and strength comes in all different ways I've asked Christy for a

second chance, and I've been trying to show her that I really do want her as my mate and that I love her very much," he says, as if he's a cadet addressing his drill sergeant.

Alpha narrows his eyes at Leo a moment then turns to me. "And how do you feel about that, Christy?"

Leo glances down at me but he doesn't move from his position.

"I'm not sure. I told Leo that if he if didn't want me before because I was weak, then he definitely wouldn't want me now because I'm even weaker," I say honestly.

"That's temporary. Look at you. Luna Yara says you're ready to go back to the packhouse already. You're so strong, Christy. I was just too stupid and blind to see it," Leo says, taking my other hand and practically begging me with his eyes to believe him.

"Well, it sounds like the two of you have a lot to work through. Leo, do not push her past her limits. You made a mistake and you will give her the time she needs to decidei she is willing to give you a second chance or not. If she decides she isn't willing to give you another chance, you will accept her decision. If she agrees to give you a chance, you will go at her pace. Are we clear?"

"Yes, Alpha."

Alpha Quirin turns to me. "If at any point, Leo makes you uncomfortable, pushes you more than you're ready for, or doesn't listen to your boundaries, you tell me,"

he says, turning to Leo. "And you will answer to me."

"Yes, Alpha. I won't make the same mistake again. I promise."

"Promise her, not me. She's your mate. A gift from the Moon Goddess herself and you chose to throw that away. If Christy gives you a second chance, you better thank her for the opportunity to love her every day for the rest of our life, and you'd better show her with your actions that you mean it," he says standing.

"Yes, Alpha."

"Remember, Christy. If you need anything at all, ever, I'm here for you," he says, holding my gaze so I know he means it.

"Thank you, Alpha."

We don't say anything until he walks out the door, then Leo turns to me.

"I promise you, Christy, if you give me a second chance, I will be the best mate I can possibly be for you. I don't want you to feel like you need to go to Alpha if you need something. I want you to come to me. If you're scared, if you're hurt, if you're happy, I want to be the first person you think of to share that with," he says.

I look down at our clasped hands then frown. "You're bleeding."

He shrugs. "They found Slater. Alpha let us have him. I punched him several times

for you. But then I realized that what I really wanted was to be here making sure that you are okay. I was worried that the excitement of the pack had scared you."

"It did. But then Alpha came in to talk to me," I say.

"I should have come sooner. I'm

sorry. I'm not perfect, Christy, and I'm sure I'll make mistakes, but I truly do want to be the best mate I can be for you. I wanted to kill Slater for having anything at all to do with what happened to you, but making sure you were okay was more important," he says, then smiles at me. "If you say that pummeling him is more important, I'll gladly go back out there and continue using him as a punching bag," he says, making me smile.

"I'd rather you stay here with me."

"Then here is where I'll stay. As long as you want me to be here," he says softly.

"You look tired. Why don't you get some rest. I won't go anywhere. You seem to sleep better when I'm here."

I nod. When he's here, he somehow manages to keep the nightmares at bay.

I close my eyes. I'm just starting to fall asleep when I feel Leo's warm lips press against my forehead. "I love you, Christy," he says, barely above a whisper.

His words send warmth spreading through my body and I fall into a calm, peaceful sleep.

## **The Pack's Nemesis (Quirin's Story)**

Kennedy

"What's going on with Christy, Mom?" I ask as she gets me strapped up.

"I'm not sure, but if I had to guess, I'd say the feeling of your pack is scaring her. I smelled her fear when I stepped into the room, but not having a mind link with her, I can't say where it's coming from."

I connect with Quirin's mind, listening to him talk with Christy. He's being so gentle with her. I send love and pride through the bond, so he knows I appreciate what he's doing. I can tell that even though he's talking to Christy and still paying attention to what's going on with me, he's also focusing on the pack and what's happening with Slater. My mate is so perfect.

"Okay, I'm set here. Once Quirin returns, we'll get started," my mom says.

"I really hope we can see our pup. That would be so exciting," I say.

"We're not sure how far along you are, so just don't get your hopes up too much. If nothing else, we should be able to get a heartbeat. Actually, let's get the heartbeat monitor wrapped around you now. I'll still wait to turn it on until Quirin comes in. I want him to hear his pup's heartbeat the same time you do," she says.

I know that Quirin can feel my excitement and I can feel that he's getting excited too. He's also very nervous, which is sweet.

"Was Dad nervous when he found out you were pregnant?" I ask her.

She smiles. "He was so excited. I only had the heartbeat at first. He listened to it over and over, played it on repeat that first night while we slept. I didn't know until I had the ultrasound that there were actually two heartbeats in there. It's not always easy to find the second one, especially if you don't know to look for it. Then, I told him we were having twins in front of the pack. He was about to go to war with Brady and I wanted to make sure he knew he had a family to return to. He went a bit crazy at first. He actually started mumbling to himself. It was pretty funny."

"Dad was mumbling? I've never heard him do that before, only you."

"He only does it when he's really stressed out. I've only heard him do it a few times. Both times he found out we were having twins," she says laughing, "and maybe one or two other times when he was worried about you kids. It's pretty rare. Your father is as tough as they come."

Dad's pretty awesome, but personally, I think my mate is tougher than Dad.

I immediately hear Raif purring in my mind, listening in. I hear Quirin warning Leo

to be careful with Christy before he comes into our room.

"How is our sweet Christy?" I ask him as he walks over to kiss me.

"Better now, I think. I'll check on her again after she moves back to the

packhouse. The energy in the pack was scaring her. Did you know Leo was her mate and he rejected her?" he asks me.

I just raise an eyebrow at him.

"Right. Of course you did," he says, leaning over the bed to kiss me again. "What is all of this?" he asks, gesturing to the equipment Mom brought in for the heart monitor and ultrasound.

"This is so we can hear your baby's heartbeat. Knowing how much Warren liked hearing our pups' heartbeats, I thought you'd like to hear it when Kennedy did for the first time. Even if we can't see anything on the ultrasound, we'll be able to hear the heartbeat."

He reaches out and takes my hand, squeezing it. He doesn't say anything, staring at the equipment. Through the bond, I can feel his nervousness ratchet up along with his excitement.

"Do you want a chair, Quirin?" I ask him. Mom turns and looks at him, but he shakes his head.

"No, I want to stand."

She smiles at us. "Are you ready?"

I look at my mate and smile before nodding. Mom flips a switch and suddenly we can hear the whooshing sound of a heartbeat.

I squeeze Quirin's hand, realizing that he's stopped breathing.

"That's our pup?" he asks, his voice so soft I almost can't hear him over the sound of our baby's heartbeat. His emotions are getting stronger, swirling around inside him, and I swear I feel his heart, nearly ready to burst with excitement. I know mine is.

"That's your pup," my mom says distractedly, looking at the monitor.

"Mom?" I ask her.

She shakes her head, but she's frowning when she turns back to me. "Let's see if

we can get an image of this little pup," she says.

"What's wrong, Kennedy?" Quirin asks, looking from me to my mom.

I raise a finger, letting him know to wait. My mother should start mumbling any minute and she doesn't disappoint me

"Better to be sure. No sense causing chaos if I'm wrong."

Quirin looks at me, frowning. 'Chaos?' he asks in the mind link.

I shrug, but I have an idea of what

my mother is talking about. We just had the conversation about twins this morning. I'm guessing my mother is seeing a second heartbeat on the monitor but before she

stress that Dad was inat

throws Quirin into the same level of he

found out he was having twins, she wants to be sure.

"Okay, Quirin, for your knowledge and understanding, this is a ultrasound machine. I won't bore you with the medical jargon, but basically, the wand sends sound waves into Kennedy's body and when they bounce against something, it creates an image of what that is on the screen."

"So, I'll be able to see our pup?" he asks, getting more excited and more nervous.

"Well, it won't be exactly what you're used to, Quirin. But if our pup is far enough along, then yes, if Mom can get the right angle, we could see the head, the heart beating, and maybe a stomach. Our little pup is just a large peanut at this point," I tell him.

"Peanut, I like that. My Little Peanut," he says, smiling. His eyes never leave the ultrasound monitor.

Mom rubs the goo over my stomach and then begins rubbing the wand over my small baby bump. She rubs it around, pushing it into my stomach, then clicks a button.

"See right there, Quirin? That lighter area? That's your pup's heart," she says.

He turns and looks at me, tears in his eyes. "That's our pup's heart," he says, his voice strangled with the intensity of the emotions he's feeling.

I hold his face and kiss him, letting our love and emotions swirl between us. I'm



not surprised when I feel my mother continuing to move the wand around. I'm sure she's looking for that second heartbeat.

"Holy Mother Moon Goddess! No wonder Echo is still weak," my mother mumbles and I pull away from the kiss quickly.

"Mother?" I ask.

A moment later, there's a knock at the door and my father steps in.

"Mother? What's going on?" I ask, getting nervous.

"I asked your father to come in, just in case Quirin needs some support," she says.

"Support? For what?" he asks, frowning at my mother then at my father who moves to stand beside him.

My father puts a hand on his shoulder. "I'm right here. Everything is going to be okay," he says.

I look back at my mother. "Is this about our discussion earlier? About twins?" "Twins? What about twins? We're having twins?" Quirin asks, and his voice is getting a bit higher and he's talking really fast. Okay, so maybe mom was right to have dad come in.

I reach out and take my mate's hand, but I focus on my mother.

"Not twins," she says, her gaze intense on mine. She reaches out to take my hand.

"Triplets?" I ask, my own voice getting softer as the possibility of having not two but three pups at once starts to settle on me.

"Triplets? That's three right?" Quirin asks in rapid succession. His emotions are pinging inside of him like a pinball machine that's being played by an expert. I not sure he's breathing or blinking at this point, but I'm still focused on my mother.

She slowly shakes her head no.

"You're pregnant with quadruplets," she says slowly, her eyes staying focused on me.

"Quad... quad... quad is four, right?"

Four? Four? We have four pups? You

have four pups inside you? That's more than one peanut. I have a family of five? I ... I ..." I turn just in time to see my mate's eyes roll back

into his head and his body begins to drop to the floor. Thankfully, my father catches him.

I stare as my father swings Quirin into his arms and carries him to a chair.

"Kennedy, are you okay?" my mom asks.

"I ... I honestly don't know, Mom. Four? Are you sure?"

She turns and points to the heartbeat monitor. There are four lines on the machine, showing different heartbeats.

She turns back to me smiling. "I knew your mate was passionate. But damn, my daughter, I didn't know he was that passionate."