

Lost Pup

Warrick ran with the condence of a young Alpha. His paws alighting upon the ground as he skimmed through the woods. Wind whipped through his black and gray coat. Small animals scurried away as his large wolf ran freely through the forest.

This was his home, his land, and nothing could harm him here. He'd long left his friends behind, choosing to run at the full strength of an Alpha. He needed to clear his head.

He'd only just turned seventeen. They had a party and invited every unmated female in the pack. Warrick hoped to find his mate, but she wasn't in the pack. He'd have to wait for the next regional mate gathering. In the meantime, his Alpha training would start in earnest.

His parents expected him to be ready to take over the pack by the time he was twenty-five. Warrior training, management training, senior year of high school, extra curriculars, the pressure was immense. Everyone was watching him.

People compared him to his father. Pack members praised him or scolded him based on what his father would've done or what the Alpha of the Hunter's Moon Pack should do. Warrick loved his pack, but he wanted to be seen for who he was, not what he would be or who he came from.

Hearing the babble of the stream in the near distance, Warrick decided to stop for a drink. The crickets and frogs quieted as he went past, resuming their songs after he'd gotten far enough away. He watched the water for a few moments. It soothed him.

The water was nice and cool, but after a couple laps of it, Warrick tasted blood. His wolf became agitated. He had to fix it. The health of the forest was his responsibility.

Warrick wandered upstream, looking for the source of the blood. Soon, he reached the area where the stream widened into a pond where he and his friends would usually swim. It was just deep enough for a fun time for the tall boys.

In the pale moonlight, he could see something oating. He shifted into his human form. On the shore, he ran his hand through his dark brown hair. The body looked like a child, it was so small. His heart ached for the tiny human.

As Warrick waded out to the body, he heard a faint, struggling heartbeat. The kid wasn't dead! He moved faster, grabbing the little body and pulling it to him. It was a girl, her hair was made dark by the water and her little lips were blue from lack of air. The shadows of bruises played on her skin.

He took her to the shore of the pond and administered CPR. After a little while, she started coughing and he pulled her to her side. A ood of water came from her lungs and stomach. Warrick rubbed her back as she retched, trying to clear everything out.

When she was done, he turned her to him. He smelled the scent of a rogue. It was coming from the girl. She was so close to death; her scent had faded. It didn't matter though, she was small and weak. Not a threat to him or his pack.

Looking her over, Warrick found more cuts and bruises. The clothing she was in was stained and torn. This wasn't someone's cherished daughter. Her big eyes lled with tears.

"Pl... please... d-don't hurt me." She whispered with a raspy voice.

"I won't hurt you, pup. You're safe now. I'll keep you safe." He promised gently.

She started crying. It was a heartrending sound. All the pain she must have felt was in her sobs. Warrick rocked her and rubbed her back telling her she was safe, trying to soothe her. Eventually, she faded into a hiccupping sleep.

Taking her home could be dangerous. Some wolves didn't care if a rogue was a child. They believed the only good rogue was a dead one. He decided to ask his father what to do. Alpha James was the smartest and strongest Alpha in the region.

'Dad, are you up?' Warrick asked through his link.

'Just heading to bed. Will you be back from your run soon?' His dad responded.

'I found a kid. She was nearly dead. I saved her, but I think she's an abandoned pup. She's not from our pack and she looks nearly starved.' He answered.

'Where are you? Is she awake? I'll be there shortly.'

'She's not awake. She started crying after I saved her and fell asleep.' Warrick gave his dad the location and waited.

About twenty minutes later, his father arrived with the pack doctor. Both men were just over six feet tall. Alpha James was thicker than Dr. Blair. Where the doctor was lighter in tone, with blond hair and pale blue eyes, Alpha James was much darker with chestnut hair and deep brown eyes. They were best friends, but opposite in almost every way.

Dr. Blair looked the girl over quickly. He shuddered thinking about what kind of monster could have hurt a child so badly. Tom turned to his Alpha with a worried expression.

"She's a rogue. There's no pack attachments on her, past or present. I'd guess she was born that way. She's weak right now, we could kill her easily if you choose, Alpha. What would you like me to do?" He asked.

He hated having to ask, but Tom knew he had to. Even though he knew his friend would never advocate killing a child. Rogue or otherwise.

"There's no crime a child this young could've committed, Tom. It's not her fault her parents were rogues. Let's take her in and get her healthy. Just because they did something wrong, doesn't mean we should." Alpha James said.

"Yes, Alpha. I'll take her to the van, Warrick." He said softly.

"No. I'll carry her. I don't want to disturb her too much. This pup's been through a lot." Warrick replied.

His dad smiled at him. "Are you planning to put pants on or just walk around naked with a sleeping child in your arms."

Warrick blushed. He was so focused on the girl; he hadn't thought about the fact he was naked. Dr. Blair helped him get a pair of shorts on and then led him to the van.

Alpha James was proud of his son. This was exactly the thoughtfulness and kindness he'd hoped to instill in his boys. He followed Dr. Blair and Warrick back to the van. Tom drove them to the pack hospital. The girl was put on a gurney when they arrived and wheeled away.

"Nothing we can do from here. Dr. Blair will call us when she wakes up and we can ask her some questions. Good job, son." He patted Warrick on the back.

They got back in the van and drove to the pack house. It was only a few minutes away. Warrick leaned back against the headrest of the passenger's seat.

"I'm glad we were able to save her, dad. I don't think her parents were taking very good care of her. What if we find out where she's from and it turns out they're bad? Can we keep her or do we return her?" Warrick asked.

"We'll have to assess the situation as it happens. Let's just get some rest and take care of what we can. I want to put you in charge of this situation. Do you think you can handle it?"

"Yeah. Can we have a couple warriors guard her so no one will hurt her just for being a rogue?" Warrick requested as they nally reached the Alpha's quarters.

"Sounds good. I'll put in the call. I don't think anyone in our pack would, but I understand where you're coming from." His father nodded.

"Thanks, dad. Good night." He said and headed for his room.

James O'Connell watched as his son closed his door. If Warrick hadn't suggested it, he was planning to call in a couple warriors for the same reason. The boy had good instincts. The task would be a good exercise to start Warrick's Alpha training.

He went to his own bed after assigning a guard for the girl. Wendy would be happy to hear their son was a hero. She doted on the boys and always said what good men they'd grow into.

Two days later, Warrick got the call saying the girl had woken up. He'd been preparing questions and trying to plan for anything that could happen. If this was his first assignment, he was going to nail it.

Dr. Blair told him, she was in and out of consciousness. She was weak from malnutrition and exhaustion. Warrick decided to go sit with her and try to talk whenever she was awake. The sooner it was settled, the better.

When he reached the pack hospital, he was met by Diana, a nurse and Dr. Blair's mate. She took him to the girl's room. He saw two warriors standing guard and thanked them for their service before entering the room.

"We cleaned her up a little last night. Once she's up for longer, we'll get her a proper bath. Poor baby. She's been whimpering in her sleep." Diana said.

"Have you learned anything about her?" He asked.

"She's not offering any information when she's awake. There are cuts and bruises which aren't healing as fast as they normally would. It looks like she's been whipped repeatedly. She has a silver burn on her neck, like someone put a collar on her. I don't know where her parents are, but, if they allowed this or did this, she shouldn't go back to them." She said solemnly.

The girl looked smaller, somehow. Warrick hadn't remembered her being so thin. Now there was light, he could see the silver burn on her arm linked on her temple and more bruises on her wrists and arms. Some cuts on her face looked pretty serious. He wondered who could want to hurt a little kid so badly.

"I'm gonna stay with her today. Is that okay?"

"Of course. Your father said you were in charge of her. I'll have the kitchen make you lunch later, but the Luna wants you home for dinner." Diana responded.

"I will be. Thank you, Diana" Warrick said as he sat by the girl's bed.

"No problem." She smiled and left the room.

It was another hour before the girl woke up again. Warrick saw her stir and put his phone away. She looked a little dazed, but not shocked about where she was. He saw her lick her lips and got up to pour her some water. Sitting her up, he helped her to drink and placed the cup on the table.

"Are you up to answering a few questions?" He asked.

She nodded slowly. Her eyes were wary and she jumped at his movements. Warrick hoped he could help make her feel safe. As the future Alpha, he wanted to ensure the comfort and safety of everyone in his pack.

"My name is Warrick. What's yours?"

"B-Bellamy." She rasped.

"That sounds painful. Maybe we should wait on talking." He murmured.

She shook her head. "More water."

Warrick helped her to drink again. "Let me know when you need more or when you can't go on. Okay, Bella?"

"Amy. Please." She winced.

"Sorry, Amy. How old are you?" He continued.

"I think, twelve."

"You think?" Warrick asked.

"I remember six. No birthdays anymore. Counted Christmases."

"Where are your parents?" He asked softly.

"Dead. Hunters."

"When you were six?" He probed.

She nodded.

"Did the hunters take you? Is that why you're hurt like this?" Warrick questioned.

"No. I hid. CPS gave me to humans. I ran away. Tired. Sorry." Amy whispered.

"Okay. Get some sleep. I'll wake you up for lunch. It'll probably be soup and jello." He smiled.

"Better than nothing... trust me." She laughed and grimaced at the pain.

Warrick chuckled and tucked the blankets around her. He mind-linked to Dr. Blair and Diana about her name and assumed age. Dr. Blair told him, he'd thought she was closer to eight or nine, but malnutrition could've stunted her growth.

He linked to his future Beta, Marcus, to have him talk to his father about murders where a child was found around six years earlier. It was a shot in the dark, but he hoped she came from a city or town nearby.