

SECOND CHANCE LUNA

Chapter 1

“Miss Phoebe! Miss Phoebe!”

The chorus of excited squeals greeted her as she entered the packhouse kitchen. Phoebe smiled, sinking to her knees as the ten young pups

ranging from four to thirteen rushed to greet her. She laughed, hugging each of them tight, rubbing noses with a few she was particularly

close to.

~ “Thank you so much: «king tem today,” one of the female wolves said, carrying a two-year-old.

Phoebe stood, accepting the pup who giggled at her and said, “It's no problem at all. This is my favorite part of the day. All right everyone,

let's go on a scavenger hunt!”

“Yeah!!”

led them to the woods. This was how all her days started since her rejection.

The Rimrock Pack was located in the southwest corner of Washington State about forty miles from Mount Rainier. Only a few miles to the

north was the similarly named town. The town and the pack had been there so long no one remembered which had been established first.

Regardless, the pack used the city for many of their needs, including shopping and schooling, though their pups sometimes had a difficult

time adjusting to a human-run school. Pack members who went on to college generally only went as far as Seattle or, more rarely, Portland.

Phoebe was no exception.

Their pack was not overly large, about four hundred members, a respectable size carefully nurtured by their previous alpha. While most pack

members lived in the packhouse, Phoebe still lived in the small cottage she once shared with her parents. She was not an omega but also

not one of the high-ranking members.

Like the majority of pack members, she was one of the unranked masses: the nameless cogs without which the pack would cease to

function. Her parents had been fated mates and also unranked members, though not without their own bit of prestige. Her mother had

been head cook and her father the chief groundskeeper in charge of the pack gardens as well as a tutor for members struggling with their

studies as he was one of the few with a college education.

Human beauty standards didn't mean much to wolves who skewed more toward voluptuous profiles. High-ranking wolves were fit,

muscular and aggressive whether male or female, especially if they were warriors. The unranked members below them were not quite as

extreme muscle-wise, but still physically strong. Below them, omegas lacked physical prowess and stamina. Though they didn't stand a

chance in a fight against a high-ranking wolf or even most unranked ones, omegas were still far stronger than humans.

As an unranked member, Phoebe was...average. She was average height, if somewhat petite by wolf standards. Her form was pleasingly

curvy, though her breasts were only B-cup. Like most wolves, she had a mane of thick mousy-brown hair that reached just past her

shoulders though her skin was on the pale side. Her only notable physical feature was her silver-gray eyes. Phoebe was average in every

way, except her wolf.

Wolf spirits usually awakened in their mid-to-late teens. The more powerful the wolf the sooner it emerged. Alphas, betas and some

gammas awakened as early as sixteen, while omegas might awaken as late as their early twenties. Phoebe's wolf awakened when she was

fifteen.

Phoebe was in a deep asleep when Mani suddenly woke her up with a bright, Hello, moonshine!*

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To say she was surprised was putting it mildly, but Mani proved to be excellent company for a wolf san siblings. An even greater surprise

awaited Phoebe on the first full moon after her sixteenth birthday. Mani woke her in the dead of night and insisted she go out into the

forest behind her parents' cottage. Sleepy and confused, Phoebe nonetheless obeyed her wolf's directives.

Once outside, she greeted the rising full moon only to be wracked by a sudden excruciating pain as her joints popped and bones

lengthened and realigned. Fur bristled, covering her body as her nose elongated to a muzzle. Mani talked her through the pain, urging her

not to resist and to give into her wolf instincts. After an excruciating hour, Phoebe stood on four padded paws.

"Shall we see ourselves?" Mani suggested, bringing them to the water's edge of a nearby pond.

Looking at their reflection, Phoebe saw a silver-white wolf. Their fur practically glowed in the moonlight with silver-blue eyes that shimmered

like water.

"We're...beautiful.

"Yeah, we are. Let's go for a run."

Phoebe let her wolf take over. They stretched and sniffed the cold, clean air before rushing off into the woods. It felt good to run, to feel the wind through her fur and fill her lungs. It all ended too soon and they returned home. Mani talked her through the shift back and they safely returned to bed before the sun rose.

For some reason Mani insisted on keeping their early shift secret and usually stayed quiet deep in the recesses of Phoebe's mind to avoid others sensing her. Phoebe didn't argue, though she was confused since the first shift was an important rite of passage for every werewolf.

Even more confusing was her wolf's color. Gray was fairly common, but Phoebe never heard of a silver wolf. Even Mani was at a loss to explain, or at least unwilling to. Desperate for answers, Phoebe spent long hours in the packhouse library as well as her father's study

researching werewolf history and silver wolves without any luck until she found a book of werewolf lore. According to it, silver wolves were even rarer than white wolves. They were wolves of prophecy and considered harbingers of chaos and upheaval.

Mani shrugged off the book's description saying, 'you read too much,' but refused to give any definitive explanations. It was strange to think her own wolf would keep secrets from her but without anyone else to consult Phoebe let it go.

Phoebe thought her wolf's secretive nature was just to hide its early awakening, but as her eighteenth birthday approached Mani showed no signs of revealing herself. As far as others could sense, she was wolfless, which led to some ostracizing and bullying. She didn't

particularly mind it and Mani was amused by the pack's efforts to ridicule them. It was easy to ignore and she focused on her studies to graduate early and go on to college.

She assumed, like most she-wolves, everything would make sense once she found her Goddess-given mate. Her parents were fated mates

and she never doubted their love and devotion to one another. It was sweet and she looked forward to finding her own. Little did she know

reality would be a far cry from her dreams.

She met her mate when she was twenty-one and freshly graduated from college. During her four years of study Phoebe seldom returned to

the pack. Her first week home after graduation, Phoebe sat in the cottage's porch swing quietly reading *Sense and Sensibility* when her

mate suddenly appeared.

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Graham was the son of their alpha and destined to be their future leader, which was why his father sent him overseas to attend the only

Alpha School in the world. According to Phoebe's father, the school was very exclusive, only accepting the sons and daughters of alphas

from the highest-ranking packs.

Packs were ranked based on history, size, collective wealth and the relative strength of the Alpha's bloodline. The criterion was vague and

her father said the Rimrock pack barely qualified. Attending the school was not mandatory by any means. The highest-ranking packs

generally avoided it and preferred to train their heirs within the pack. But that wasn't to say there weren't advantages.

Despite the number of packs spread across the world, werewolf communities tended to be very insular. They seldom interacted with packs

outside their immediate neighbors. By attending the school, future alphas and lunas had the opportunity to meet with others far beyond

their usual territories and make allies, in addition to taking practical classes about running a pack, managing finances and maintaining a

territory.

It also helped them find potential mates as it was usually difficult for alphas and many betas to find their fated mates within their own

packs. According to her father, packs intermingled more in the past so it was easier for high-ranking pack members to find their Goddess-

given mates, but as packs became more insular it became more difficult. While some thought it coincidence, Phoebe couldn't help but think

the Moon Goddess herself was telling her children they needed to change their ways.

Since Phoebe graduated early from high school and left for college before her contemporaries, she hadn't had much interaction with their

future alpha. From what she saw of him, he was a typical young wolf ruled by his hormones, carrying on various relationships throughout

school with little regard to attachments. She thought he could use some maturing, as did Mani.

When Phoebe heard their young alpha had returned from his studies, she avoided his welcome home party, which devolved into a drunken

shambles according to her father who had to clean it up the next morning. Mani had been quiet all day. Phoebe hadn't been expecting any

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dramatic events when she suddenly caught the scent of evergreen and chocolate. The combination was pleasant if not overly stimulating,

but she understood what it meant. Looking up, Phoebe found herself staring at her pack's future leader.

To say she was surprised to be mated to an alpha was putting it mildly. Mani immediately pressed forward, eager to meet their mate but

almost as quickly receded with a snort saying, 'Don't worry, Phoebe. I'll protect us.'

"What do you..." Phoebe's internal protest fell silent as she looked again at her mate. His confused frown turned to a cold scowl. She tilted

her head to the side, instantly wary.

"You're supposed to be my mate?!" Graham demanded. "A Luna needs to be strong and tall and beautiful and you're..."

“Average,” Phoebe said.

“Damn straight you are!” Graham growled. “And wolfless? Are you kidding me?”

Phoebe winced. She understood his confusion, but his outrage was something different. The Goddess did not choose their mates randomly.

Just as their wolf spirits were their center, their mates were their second halves. Only together were they complete. At least, that was what

her parents taught her.

“What is your name?” Graham demanded.

“Phoebe Luan,” she answered after a moment, already anticipating his next move.

“You don’t have a wolf so this won’t hurt at all,” Graham said as a word of caution. “I, Graham Archer, future Alpha of the Rimrock Pack,

reject you, Phoebe Luan, as my mate and Luna.”

Phoebe leaned forward, whimpering as a sharp pain pierced her chest. Her book fell to the ground as she hugged herself and a burning

sensation spread to her extremities. It felt as if she were being stabbed by hundreds of needles.

“Hurry up and accept it or it will just hurt more,” Graham snorted, unhappy with her dramatics.

“...1, Phoebe Luan...accept your rejection,” she managed to gasp. The pain eased to a dull ache similar to heartburn.

To her surprise, Graham suddenly bent over groaning in pain as their bond snapped. Perhaps it was cruel, but she was glad not to be the

only one suffering. Slowly straightening, he sneered at her before hurriedly departing.

“Mani? Are you all right?”

*...I will be. We will be. The Moon Goddess loves us.'

If she loved us, why did she make him our mate?'

"She has her reasons. You'll see."

Phoebe thought the worst was over, but another surprise was waiting. Two weeks after her rejection, Kristie arrived with Graham

proclaiming her to be his Luna. Their Alpha Succession and Luna Ceremonies were held in tandem on the following full moon. Phoebe

dutifully helped with preparations, but declined to attend the ceremonies though attendance was supposedly mandatory so that the pack

could swear fealty to their new alpha pair. She managed by faking ill, something she never did before.

Mani suggested a run, a precaution that proved advantageous when she was suddenly assailed with pain as her mate marked another.

Despite severing their bond, Phoebe suffered whenever Graham and his chosen mate were together. She hoped the marking would finally

bring an end to the pain, but it continued to linger, slowly dulling over time.

Phoebe kept her distance, avoiding the packhouse except when it was absolutely necessary. She knew her parents wondered about this

behavior and probably had an inkling why she did it, but they respected her privacy and did not directly question her.