

SECOND CHANCE LUNA

Chapter 2

Five years had passed since then and Phoebe continued to avoid the packhouse. The only difference now was that her parents had passed

away, leaving her alone to maintain the cottage and garden. Now, whenever Graham and Kristie mated, she only felt a dull ache and,

thankfully, those times were few and far between.

The alpha pair had yet to produce a pup and heir, but that wasn't completely unexpected. Chosen mates were less fertile than fated ones.

While a fated pair could easily produce four or five pups, chosen ones would only have one or two in the same amount of time. Given that

Phoebe felt his betrayal less often, she could only assume the pair didn't mate as often as they used to making it even more difficult to

conceive.

Though she wondered about the pack's future stability, it wasn't her place to question their alpha. No one knew she had been his fated

mate and no one would listen to a wolfless, unranked she-wolf anyway. So she focused on what she could do for the pack: namely

educating the pack pups.

"All right, gather around," Phoebe laughed as the kids swarmed around her.

Phoebe carried the two-year-old on her hip while the others waited for the rules of their game. Sometimes it felt as if the pack treated her

as a glorified pup-sitter, but she didn't mind as it allowed her to spend time with them. She used their numerous outings to teach them

various bits of practical knowledge.

She took them to a wide clearing filled with wildflowers. When they arrived, a pair of deer spooked and leaped back into the safety of the

forest shadow. It was a promising sign that no one from the pack had sullied the area so they should have no problem with their scavenger

hunt. Piled off to the side were several baskets woven from wild grasses. The pups immediately noticed them and fidgeted with excitement.

“Okay, so did everyone bring their herb book?” Phoebe asked, holding up her own.

Eagerly, the pups held up their homemade pamphlets they made during their craft project earlier in the week. Taped to each page was a

medicinal herb that had been pressed and dried specifically for the application. Each page also included the plants name and the most

common uses written in Phoebe’s neat scrawl for the younger pups, while the older pups wrote theirs themselves. Over the last few weeks

they had learned about herbs, how to identify edible plants from poisonous ones and where to find them. Now it was time to put that

information into practical experience.

“So today we are going to have a scavenger hunt!” Phoebe announced to excited cheers. “As I’m sure you’ve figured out, we are going to

collect herbs. I want you to split into pairs because...why?”

“Safety first!” the pups chorused.

“That’s right. So, in pairs, you will take your baskets and collect as many herbs from your books as you can find,” Phoebe said. “I will award

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special prizes for the most herbs picked, the biggest variety of herbs collected and for the rarest herb found.”

The pups bounced on their heels eager to begin.

“Remember to stay within the boundaries of the clearing. Ready? On your marks. Remember our safety rules! Go!”

Squealing, the pups darted to the pile of baskets before dispersing through the clearing. Phoebe smiled, cooing at the two-year-old pup in

her arms. He was too young to take part in this event but he would still benefit from being able to run around in the fresh air.

“Miss Phoebe! Miss Phoebe!”

She turned as an eager pup hurried up to her, holding a sprig with bright yellow flowers.

“Is this wormwood?”

“No. That's mustard,” Phoebe answered, kneeling down to the pup's level. She never liked to talk down to them. “Let's see what

wormwood looks like again, shall we?”

The pup dutifully opened her book to the appropriate page for comparison. Phoebe was always patient with the pups and never lost her

temper. They were young and still learning so it was natural for them to make mistakes.

Once the mini-lesson about the difference between the two herbs was over, the pup returned to her brother and continued their hunt. The

pups were free to ask her any questions, but she wouldn't help them find the herbs. Phoebe smiled at the young pair.

Blake and Emma were brother and sister born one year apart so they were close. Their parents had also been unranked members of the

pack. Their mother was the alpha's maid and their father was an architect who designed most of the packhouse as well as many of the

private homes scattered throughout the territory. Unfortunately, both had been killed in a rogue attack two years ago, leaving the pups

orphaned.

Since then, Phoebe did her best to look after them, taking them shopping for clothes and school supplies as well as making sure they were

included in activities. Orphans could easily be ostracized by other pack members and that was something Phoebe wanted to avoid. Strong

bonds kept a pack together and she wanted the pups to maintain and cherish those bonds. So far, her efforts seemed to make the

difference. The others included the orphaned pair in their games and didn't bully or belittle them.

After an hour, the pups gathered around her to show their efforts. Phoebe led the group to the pack hospital where Bridget waited to

receive them. Bridget separated out the herbs and gave the pups what appeared to be an impromptu lesson in first aid, demonstrating how

some herbs could be used with minimal handling and how to bandage injuries.

Like Phoebe, Bridget was on the petite side, though slightly taller than the former. Her hair was a rich chestnut with a hint of an auburn

sheen and her skin a soft tan color as was usual for werewolves. She had a round, pretty face and a small, pert nose.

Bridget was another unranked wolf that kept the pack working. A couple of years younger than Phoebe, they met shortly after the latter's

rejection. In fact the young, talented nurse was the only pack member who knew about it. She didn't know who rejected Phoebe, but knew

they were a pack member and assumed they were fairly high-ranked given Phoebe's aversion to the packhouse and official ceremonies.

As one of the few Phoebe considered a close friend, she often turned to Bridget when she needed assistance. Luckily, Bridget was a brilliant

herbalist and talented chemist so she had plenty of practical knowledge to share. Once the demonstration was over, Bridget handed out her

homemade lollipops made with medicinal herbs. If they peered through the semi-transparent, jewel-like creation they would see whole

leaves or petals of the herbs used and, now that the lesson was over, the pups could even identify them.

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The excited pups followed Phoebe back to her cottage where she handed out their prizes. Praising them for their impressive finds and sheer

amount collected, she gave out prizes accordingly. A pair of boys collected the most and received a pair of gloves and a baseball.

Surprisingly, Blake and Emma found the greatest variety and received a jug of bubble solution and bubble guns. A young pair of she-wolves

found the rarest herb to receive a styling kit with a variety of barrettes and colorful hair extensions.

Phoebe always made sure the prizes suited the awardees and their interests. All the pups received large bouncy balls for participating. She

was certain the winners would share their special prizes during their daily games.

After the prizes were awarded, Phoebe led her troop back to the packhouse. The pups were eager to play with their new toys and Phoebe

hoped they would retain the lessons that earned them their prizes. What she wanted most was for the pups to take pride in their own

abilities. Not everyone would rise through the ranks as warriors, but everyone could contribute to the pack in some meaningful way.

Most would always be in the middle, like herself. It was important to do what they could do. Finding, collecting and delivering herbs to the

pack hospital benefited everyone. Being able to perform simple first aid could save a life in dire circumstances. Those were the kinds of

lessons she hoped to instill in the pups.

“Miss Phoebe.”

She paused, seeing Blake and Emma had remained after the other pups dispersed.

“Can we come over tonight?” Emma asked.

“Are you sure you won't get into trouble?”

“Jake is patrolling tonight and he never checks on us,” Blake wrinkled his nose.

“All right. I'll make something special for us,” Phoebe smiled.

The pair hugged her before hurrying to catch up with the others. Phoebe watched them feeling a familiar pain in her chest. Ever since they

were orphaned she did her best to care for them. She remodeled her own childhood bedroom to suit the brother and sister, filling it with

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books, toys and games as well as a closet full of clothes. Phoebe even petitioned to adopt the pups officially but was denied. Her face

warmed at the memory.

“Alpha!” Phoebe stormed into Graham's office without waiting for permission.

“Explain this!”™

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Phoebe tossed the denied adoption papers onto his desk, staring at him as he flinched. It had been years since she set foot in the

packhouse and the first time she entered his office. Despite the vast difference in their status, Phoebe showed no inclination to give him proper respect. Her eyes shimmered silver as she glared at him and his wolf cowered.

Trying to maintain some semblance of his authority, he looked at the paper she tossed at him, stating, "It seems pretty obvious."

"I didn't ask you to identify it," Phoebe practically snarled. "I told you to explain it. Why did you deny the application?"

"Why would you want to adopt two pups in the first place?" he snorted. "Their family can take care of them."

"They don't have any family," Phoebe snapped. "Their aunt and uncle were killed three years ago in a rogue attack. Their grandparents

passed the year before that. Their mother was from Glacier Pack."

"Was she?" Graham frowned.

"She was your exclusive maid. Do you even remember what she looked like?" Phoebe snorted in disgust. "Have you compensated those

pups for their loss before you sent your yes man to turn off the water and power to their home? A home they were still living in. They nearly

froze to death!"

Graham winced. He did remember signing the order to turn off the power to the abandoned home, but he had been assured it was empty.

"Those pups have been living with me for the past six months so why can't I adopt them?"

"You aren't even mated!"

"And why is that, I wonder?" Phoebe growled. Mani rarely made herself known since she awakened but now she pressed close to the

surface, adding power to Phoebe's anger and enhancing her aura.

Graham involuntarily shuddered as her anger washed over him. It made his wolf completely withdraw. Feeling his wolf become submissive

irritated him. He was Alpha and everyone was beneath him, especially a wolfless female.

What made it worse was that she was right. He should have been aware the pups didn't have any close relatives within the pack. They

should have been placed in appropriate lodgings and whoever adopted them compensated for raising them.

None of that had been done because he hadn't bothered with the paperwork. Compounding the issue, Kristie overspent her weekly

clothing allowance and he had to get the money from another part of the pack's finances.

"It's not your place to question your Alpha," he forced himself to stand, giving him a height advantage since he was little over six feet and

Phoebe only five-four. "The pups will be taken care of. They don't need you. Understand?"