

SECOND CHANCE LUNA

Chapter 3

The pups had been given a room in the packhouse that was hardly larger than a closet. Somehow, they crammed two camping cots and a

pair of trunks inside. According to the pups, it was drafty and dark since it only had one small window and no one bothered to install a light

bulb in the single overhead light. Even worse, the pups had mandatory bed checks.

After bedtime, the patrolling security periodically looked in on the pups to ensure they were actually in bed. It had been difficult in the

beginning, but now the patrols were getting more lax, allowing Blake and Emma to sneak away, returning to her cottage where she kept

their room ready.

Her heart ached, knowing her anger made life difficult for pups that already had enough tragedy in their young lives. Mani whimpered in

her mind, sharing her guilt. Their anger was completely justified, but they expressed it in the wrong setting. Phoebe continued to care for

the brother and sister, providing them with new q_ clothes much better than the shabby hand-me-downs from the pack's donation closet.

Turning away from the packhouse, Phoebe made her way back to her cottage. Her mind raced with meal ideas. She smiled. Normally, her

meals were solitary affairs unless Bridget stopped by, so the pups would be welcome company.

Mani perked up. Phoebe could practically feel her tail wagging in anticipation. One day, they would find a way to keep the pups close. She

just had to be patient and avoid Luna Kristie's notice.

“There you are, Phoebe.”

“Speak of the devil,” Mani huffed.

Inwardly she cringed as she turned, “Hello Luna.”

Kristie was almost a half foot taller than Phoebe, with a lithe body punctuated by an hourglass figure. Her long, blonde hair was neatly

highlighted and professionally styled, as were her nails. It was clear she spent a lot of time and money on her appearance.

Yet her aura was minimal. In fact, Phoebe barely felt it even when Kristie tried to exert influence over her. Mani confirmed that the Luna’s

aura was exceptionally weak, so Phoebe knew she didn’t imagine it. Despite this, or maybe because of it, Kristie resorted to rather extreme

measures to keep her authority over the pack. Phoebe struggled to maintain a neutral expression, keeping her disgust contained.

“How can I help you, Luna?”

Kristie smirked, “Were having some very important visitors next week and I don’t want those annoying little spawn to bother them. Do I

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make myself clear?”

“Yes Luna. I’ll arrange some activities to keep them busy and out of the way.”

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“Good.” Kristie smiled, tipping up her nose. “Poor Phoebe, I do pity you.”

“Pardon?”

“If only the Goddess had been kinder to you and gave you a wolf, then you wouldn’t have to deal with those snot-nosed kids.”

With a condescending smile, Kristie walked away. With a sigh, Phoebe tried to calm herself. A Luna was meant to be the heart of the pack

and ensure the pack's future. How could she not like pups?

"She is no true Luna," Méni gave a dismissive snort. 'Gamma maybe. Delta most likely.'

"Hmm." Phoebe really couldn't argue considering the Alpha had been her fated mate. 'I don't see why she has to act like that. She'd get

more respect if she was more personable.'

"She is in a position she was never meant to have. I suppose an inferiority complex is natural," Mani said. 'Especially since her wolf is

submissive to us.'

It is?

"Oh yes. Imagine how much her pride must smart every time her wolf shows its belly to you...a wolfless she-wolf."

Phoebe frowned. This was not the first time Mani mentioned something similar. Although her wolf continued to hide itself, other wolf spirits

instinctively sensed her presence and reacted in various ways. Higher ranks acted subservient, causing disconnections to their human half,

while the lower ranking wolves showed difference and respect.

Phoebe found they had a calming influence on others, defusing arguments even if she didn't directly intervene. Yet, despite this, others

continued to think she was wolfless, but as Mani wasn't inclined to explain, it was a mystery she never expected to solve.

"We'll just have to stay out her way.'

"Or she could stay out of ours," Mani countered. 'Next time...I vote we don't save her.'

Phoebe chuckled, remembering the night as if it had happened yesterday. It had been the night of the Winter Solstice and the pack was celebrating the longest night of the year.

Avoiding the party as usual, Phoebe's quiet night was interrupted by Mani suddenly declaring an urge to go for a run. Since the majority of the pack would remain at the party there was no reason to be overly cautious.

Phoebe headed to her garden. Satisfied they were alone and unseen, she slipped out of her clothes, folding them neatly and stuffing them

in a small bag she hid under her mother's rhododendron. The cold, night air caused her pale skin to prickle with goose bumps as she

stepped beyond the garden gate and into the woods beyond, but the discomfort faded as she shifted. Her first shift had been painful, but

now it was exhilarating as she gave into her wolf and dropped to all fours. Thick silver fur kept her warm and her senses sharpened.

It was an odd sensation as Phoebe and Mani switched places. Still aware, Phoebe's consciousness faded to the background as Mani pressed

forward. The switch wasn't strictly necessary, but it was more efficient to allow her wolf to take the lead in this form, where Méni's control

was instinctual and automatic, just as Phoebe's was in human form.

Stretching, Mani sniffed the air and assured them they were indeed alone. A light snow gently fell, landing on their fur but not melting.

Delighted with the picturesque night, Méni turned in circles with her tail held high. Leaping straight up, she snapped at the lazily falling

flakes before sprinting off with freshly warmed-up muscles. It was exhilarating to run like a ghost through the dark woods. Their breaths

came out in clouds that quickly vaporized behind them as they ran through the snowy landscape.

Mani suddenly slowed and stopped. She sniffed the air, hackles curling back as she caught the faint scent of arousal in the crisp air. They

were relatively close to the packhouse, but still far enough away for it to be unusual to meet another. Cautiously, she eased forward until her

sharp vision located the pair currently engaged in illicit activities.

Phoebe jerked to attention, recognizing the she-wolf as none other than their Luna. She was pressed up against a tree, moaning as her

partner plowed into her rather forcefully. Phoebe recognized the male as one of the delta warriors though she never had contact with them.

Mani growled softly at the sight. Either it was too quiet to hear or the pair were too occupied to notice because they didn't stop.

"H-how can she do this!" Phoebe stammered.

Mani didn't immediately answer. In the brief encounters they had with their Luna they had picked up on subtle smells of her affairs. Though

Kristie tried to hide it with frequent baths and perfume, it followed her like a cloud.

"You really shouldn't be surprised," Mani finally said. "We've known she's been doing this for some time."

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"But...shouldn't the Alpha be tearing everything apart because of her betrayal?"

"Under normal circumstances, but remember they are chosen mates. The bond between them is weaker."

"Tknow, but still..."

“Plus, their wolves never bonded.”

“They didn’t?”

“No. The Alpha’s wolf has been disconnected since he rejected us and the Luna’s...well I’m surprised she can still shift at how weak it’s

become since rejecting her fated mate.’

“She rejected hers too?’

“Of course.’

Phoebe cringed at the thought of the pain the other must have suffered. She didn’t know if there was anything crueller than rejecting one’s

fated mate. Mani turned to leave just as hunting howls chorused through the forest.

Five rogues emerged from the night, setting upon the distracted pair. Though the warrior attempted to protect his Luna and lover, he was

quickly overwhelmed. He only managed to kill one before he was brought down. Kristie screamed in horror, watching the rogues tear him

apart. She was completely frozen in fear, unable to shift or defend herself.

Mani briefly considered leaving her to her fate, but a gentle prod from Phoebe resigned the wolf to interfering. Rushing forward, she was on

top of them before they even sensed her. Mani leaped, landing on one, breaking its back before attacking another. She sank her teeth into

its neck, ripping its throat out. Whirling around, she charged the third, bowling it over and ripping into its belly before darting back into the

woods, leaving one for Kristie to manage on her own.

Angry howls filled the air, signaling the pack warriors were on the way. Kristie would only have to handle the remaining rogue for a few

minutes. Mani raced through the woods with unmatched speed, quickly distancing them from the fight. Once clear, she rolled in the snow

to remove any traces of blood from her coat before heading home. She took a long, meandering route back to avoid pursuit.

Phoebe quickly dressed before heading inside. Locking the door, she turned off the lights before going to the shower to wash away any

lingering scent of the rogues, then headed to bed as the hunting howls continued to echo through the territory.