

## SECOND CHANCE LUNA

Chapter 5

Phoebe. Her name is Phoebe.

“Yes! Phoebe!” Lobo happily whined, eager to learn the name of her wolf.

“I thought I told you I didn’t want to see these heathens while we had guests,” Kristie snapped as she neared Phoebe surrounded by pups.

Phoebe bowed her head, “Sorry Luna. It wont happen again.”

“It better not. I won't have our guests' night ruined by these spawn.”

“Of course, Luna. Come along pups,” Phoebe herded the little ones inside the packhouse.

“Jace? You okay?”

Jason’s hair bristled as he tried to calm his wolf, ‘Easy.’

“How dare she talk to Mate like that! I'll rip her throat out!” Lobo growled.

“Easy, let's be smart about this.’

Jason frowned. It wasn’t right for his mate to bow to any wolf, Luna or no. Kristie’s attitude had been rubbing him the wrong way since his

arrival and now he had a hard time controlling his disgust. Jason never heard of a Luna who hated pups or treated them with such

contempt, chosen or not.

As his mate disappeared inside, Jason struggled to suppress his urge to follow. He searched for her for so long he wanted to keep her within

his sight at all times. But he was the guest of honor and could hardly leave without drawing notice. He had to handle this situation carefully.

Alphas were very protective of their territory and there was protocol to follow for a wolf to transfer packs, though no one would prevent an

alpha from claiming his rightful mate.

“Mate come home with us!” Lobo growled.

“Jace! What's wrong?” Luke’s voice finally cut in.

“My mate. That was her.”

“You mean the one who took the pups inside?”

“Phoebe. Her name is Phoebe.”

“What do you want to do?”

“Go inside and watch her for me, please.”

“Sure. Don’t worry. She'll be safe.”

“Keep me updated. I want to know everything.”

“Yeah, yeah. It'll be like you were there yourself.”

Jason suppressed a growl. He wanted nothing more than to be at her side, but something told him not to reveal his hand too soon. There

was something off about them that went beyond simple, chosen mates.

“What was that about?” Jason casually asked as Kristie returned.

“Oh nothing. Just a little trouble with the staff” she smiled.

“Staff?”

“Yeah, poor wolfless Phoebe. Minding those little heathens is all she is good for

Jason raised an eyebrow, looking at Graham for insight as the latter downed the rest of his beer. With a belch, Graham set down the now

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empty bottle with the others before demanding another from the nearest pack member. A new bottle soon replaced the last and he didn't

hesitate to drink deeply from it despite the fact his wolf had to be suffering. Jason warily eyed his hosts. Something was very, very wrong

with these two.

While Jason was too prominent a figure to slip away, Luke had no such issue, quietly returning to the packhouse. Entering the dining hall,

the echoes of laughter directed him to a small room off from the kitchen.

This room, unlike the dining hall, was plastered with the children's artwork and educational posters from their lessons. It made the room

cozy, unlike the sterile atmosphere of the larger room. The same sense of unease that made Jason wary of their hosts also piqued Luke's

mind. Packs thrived on their pups, which were literally their future. It was unnatural to hide them away like some dirty secret. Not wanting to

disturb the group, Luke stood near the door, out of sight, peeking around the corner to observe his pack's Luna.

She was average height, standing only a little over five feet, but more concerning was the fact she seemed thin. Luke didn't recall seeing her

at lunch and now he wondered if she was getting proper meals. Wolves tended to have a higher metabolism than humans, so it was

important they consumed enough calories or else they would rapidly lose condition, especially if they shifted often.

She also seemed paler than normal, though she could also have a naturally lighter complexion. Luke knew wolves from certain parts of

Europe and the east coast tended to be paler than those on the west. Her hair was a mane of rich chestnut with a healthy sheen and her

smile was warm, causing her eyes to shimmer from gray to silver. It could also be her wolf hovering close to the surface, though he never

heard of a wolf with silver eyes, most had brown or amber.

The pups quickly took their seats at a long table laden with colorful paper, glitter glue, markers, sequins, buttons and string. In front of the

younger pups, the paper had been cut into star shapes with rows of plastic bins full of different craft supplies so they could color and

decorate their stars as they wished. The older pups were given plain, paper squares. Once they were seated, Phoebe demonstrated how to

fold the paper square into an origami star once they finished decorating it. The older pups colored their paper, folded it and, if they chose,

Phoebe sprayed the finished project with adhesive and they sprinkled glitter over it for the final touch.

Attaching strings to the finished projects, Phoebe climbed up on a step stool to hang the stars from the ceiling, much to the pups' delight.

When they were done, they cleaned up their project table before pushing it to the wall. Once it was out of the way, Phoebe brought out her

final surprise, a bucket. She placed a light in the bottom before setting it on the ground. Over the bucket she added a paper fire, effectively

making a faux campfire. The pups giggled, gathering around it as if it was real, holding branches with paper marshmallows and hotdogs on

the end.

"Excuse us."

Luke jerked back, allowing the kitchen omegas to enter, bearing plates laden with real hotdogs, salads, coleslaw and other goodies from

dinner. The pups squealed delight using the ketchup, mustard, relish and other condiments on their hotdogs. Each was given a soda and

they happily ate their dinner around the pretend campfire.

Luke's stomach complained about its own empty state. He stepped into the kitchen and helped himself to the sides lining the center

counter. Outside, he knew there were barbeque ribs and steak along with burgers and hotdogs, but he didn't mind missing out as he

watched over his pack's Luna, keeping Jason informed about her activities.

Slowly, he became aware he had an audience. Luke turned to see one of the cooks warily watching him. The she-wolf studying him was an

omega, but well within her prime, giving her an aura of experience and elevating her status somewhat even toward a beta like him. Luke

gave her a respectful nod.

She pressed her lips together before asking, "Just what do you want from her? She doesn't like playing games, especially the ones you want

to play."

Luke grimaced at her candor before turning his head to show his mark. He thought the gesture would be enough, but she wasn't

impressed.

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"I'm just confused," Luke finally said. Maybe he could glean some information from this she-wolf, "why are the pups in here and not

outside?"

"Because our Luna doesn't like pups. She thinks they get in the way."

"But pups are a pack's future."

“Not according to her.

Luke frowned. Alpha Graham was still young by werewolf standards, so there was no reason for him to feel rushed into securing a mate. He

didn't have to wait as long as Jason, but certainly he could have given it a little time.

“Phoebe takes care of those pups like she was their mother,” the omega continued. “She's sweet and gentle, so I won't tolerate no playing

around with her”

“I promise you, I have no intentions of doing that.”

The cook watched him a moment longer before returning to her duties. Luke hesitated, but slowly sidled back to the door as the pups

finished their supper.

“Miss Phoebe! Tell us a story!”

“Yeah! Story time!”

Phoebe chuckled as she gently cleaned the two-year-olds face, “And what kind of story would you like?”

“An adventure story!”

“A story about kids like us! Adults are boring.”

“A scary story!”

“Oh my, that's a tall order,” Phoebe laughed. “Let's see...how about Treasure Island? I haven't told you that one yet, have I?”

“What's it about?”

“Well, it's about a treasure hunt.”

The pups shared dubious looks.

“It has adventure on the high seas, about a young boy just your ages...and it has scary pirates!”

“Okay!”

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Phoebe chuckled, urging them to settle down. When all were comfortable she started, “Once upon a time in a small English town...”

Jason struggled to keep his revulsion in check as Graham continued to drink heavily. Kristie flashed him flirty smiles and tried to play footsie

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under the table. The only thing keeping his wolf under control was Luke's running commentary of his mate's activities. Jason could almost

picture the scene as she and the pups crafted their stars then pretended to camp around their campfire. By the time she related the plot of

Treasure Island Lobo was practically swooning.

“Mate is amazing!”

‘Agreed.’

Jason sighed, looking out across the patio with a relaxed smile. Her scent still lingered in his nostrils. What he wouldn't give to trade places

with Luke and watch over her himself. A pressure on his leg caused his skin to prickle, bringing him out of his revelry. His eyes shifted to his

host where Kristie sat smirking. He could feel her trying to mindlink him, but Jason shut her out, changing position so he was out of her

reach. Lobo stirred with a growl. How dare anyone interrupt their fantasies about their mate?

As the party wound down, couples began to disperse. Some simply wandered off while others headed to the packhouse. Jason assumed

they were retrieving their pups. His suspicions were confirmed as Luke continued giving him updates. The last pups Phoebe escorted to

their own room within the packhouse before she departed, leaving through the back door and disappearing into the night.

Luke followed at a discrete distance, tracking her to a cottage. Jason was on the edge of his seat as Luke described the single-story structure

surrounded by a cozy garden with the woods butted up against it. The windows were dark when she arrived and remained that way as she

went directly to bed. Luke prowled the perimeter not picking up any strong scents but hers. It seemed she lived alone.

Jason frowned. He certainly didn't mind the fact his mate was not surrounded by unmated males, but it was unnatural for a she-wolf to live

alone. She-wolves generally possessed more gregarious natures than their male counterparts and preferred to live in close proximity with

one another.

In all likelihood, the cottage was her parents' home and where Phoebe grew up. The fact she was living alone meant they had already

passed. Lobo whimpered in sympathy, upset they hadn't found their mate sooner and would have been there for her during what was

certainly a trying time. But why would his mate live so far from other wolves? Most in her situation would have moved into the packhouse

to be closer to other she-wolves, their support and comfort.

"Looks like she's gone to bed," Luke commented. "What do you want to do?"

"Go to Mate!" Lobo immediately demanded.



He would give anything to follow through with his instinct, but Jason hesitated. Waking her from slumber by suddenly appearing on her

doorstep was sure to be confusing for her. No, he needed to talk to her. They needed time to get to know each other. But...

“I don’t like leaving her out there alone so far away from the pack.”

“Agreed,” Luke answered. His pack’s Luna needed to be protected at all times. It was an instinct he didn’t dare fight. “What about a guard?”

Jason hesitated. Aside from Luke, the rest of his escort were unmated males, a fact that made Lobo bristle. He didn’t doubt the loyalty of his

warriors, but he also couldn’t fight his instinct to protect his unmarked mate from interlopers.

“What about Cam?” Luke suggested, knowing his thoughts.

Cameron was a fierce warrior and a skilled fighter. He was also gay. Unmated or not, he would certainly be no threat to the bond slowly

forming between Jason and his mate.

“Good. Have Cam meet you.”

“Should I tell him why he’ll be guarding a random she-wolf?”

“He’s smart. He’ll figure it out on his own. But yeah. Tell him to keep it to himself for now. ..At least until I can speak with her.”

“Got it.”