

Chapter 73: Mothers and Friends

Yara

I'm about to go searching for Trena, when Katie comes in with her new baby girl.

"Hi, Luna. I know you just got back, but I was hoping you could look over my daughter for me."

"Is everything alright?" I ask her.

"I think so, but I'm not sure I'd know if something was wrong. She smells fine, and she's sleeping well, but...she's not nursing well."

"Okay, let's have a look," I say, getting Noelle to put them in a room while I quickly check that Anna and Erica are okay.

When I get into the room, Katie is pacing while Noelle weighs her daughter.

"What did you name her?" I ask.

"Emery," she says, smiling at her daughter.

"How are you and your mate adjusting to having a newborn?" I ask her.

She blows out a breath. "It's great, you know, but...well, we both worry every time she makes a sound. I've never had so little sleep."

"What does your wolf say?" I ask her.

She chuckles. "That I'm being overprotective, but that she's worried about her not latching on and eating enough."

I walk over to where Noelle is taking her measurements. She's a little underweight, and she's opening her mouth like she's hungry, being fussy.

I take a moment to look in her mouth, not seeing anything that would keep her from being able to latch on.

"Okay, let's see how you do this," I say to her.

"You mean right now?" she asks, and I can feel her nervous energy increasing. I pick Emery up and smile down at her as she searches for a breast to nurse on.

I look up at Katie and see the panic on her face.

"Have a seat, Katie. Take a deep breath. I can feel your nervousness from here. If I can feel it, your daughter will too. Sit down, relax, breathe, and calm yourself. You want your daughter to feel good when she's in your arms and nursing. If you're nervous and anxious, it will make her nervous and anxious," I say. I know this isn't always the answer. Some babies, for whatever reason, don't nurse from their mothers. But sometimes it is about the energy that the mother is giving off and in this instance, I have a feeling that Katie's 'overprotectiveness' is making her daughter anxious.

She pulls her breast out but her energy is still high.

"Sit back, get comfortable, close your eyes, and breathe," I tell her.

She looks at me a moment, looking terrified, but then she does what I ask.

It takes several breaths before she finally takes a full, deep breath.

"Good, a couple more like that," I say, forcing her to relax even though Emery is getting more fussy.

When she opens her eyes, I smile encouragingly at her. "Ready?"

"Ready," she says.

I lay Emery in her arms and she immediately begins searching for Katie's breast.

I feel Katie getting tense, and I put my hand on her shoulder. "Deep breaths. Help her find your nipple. There you go," I say when Emery latches on.

"What if she doesn't stay on?" Katie asks, looking up at me.

"Take a deep breath, make sure that you're giving her a calm environment to nurse in. If that doesn't work, we'll try something else," I say.

"Will you stay with me?" she asks.

"Of course," I say, sitting down and watching. When it looks like Katie is starting to get nervous again, I distract her.

"What's the best part of being a new mom?" I ask her.

"Everything!" she says, smiling. She begins telling me about watching

her daughter when she's looking at her, hearing her sweet sounds when she's sleeping.

"Poop is gross and, uh, it gets everywhere," she says, laughing, then tells me about how her mate wasn't careful and Emery basically pooped all over him and then proceeded to pee on him.

She begins laughing while she's talking, and I see Emery look up at her. "See, your daughter knows when you're happy."

"Hey beautiful girl," Katie says, stroking her cheek. Emery goes back to nursing, and momma and daughter continue to look at each other, Katie cooing at her.

"I think you've got this," I say softly, nodding to Noelle that we should leave and let them bond.

"How did you know what to do?" Noelle asks when we step out of the room.

"I didn't. But part of being a doctor or even a nurse is assessing the situation. Katie came in uptight and even said her wolf called her overprotective, which said to me that she was anxious. Once you get anxious about something and it doesn't work, you start expecting it to not work and then the anxiety gets worse, and it can become a terrible cycle. I just tried break the cycle. If it hadn't worked, we'd have had to try moving her to a bottle, but this seems to be helping. So, hopefully, momma and baby can begin bonding during feeding times and Katie will learn to relax."

"You're going to be a great mom," Noelle says to me.



"Something tells me that you will be too."

I check on Bradley while I wait for Katie to come out of the room. When she does, she has a sleeping Emery in her arms. "All good?"

"Yes, thanks Luna."

"If you find yourself getting anxious, talk to your mate. Find something happy to talk about, or something that she did that made you smile, so that you can keep yourself calm while you nurse."

"I will, thank you."

When she leaves, I turn to Noelle.

"I'm going to go find Trena. Mind link me if you need anything."

Noelle smiles. "I almost forgot I could do that!"

"How could you, the pack is all kinds of excited. I wonder what they're doing over there."

"I guess we'll find out later," she says.

I catch Trena's scent and follow it into the woods. It's only been an hour, but she's still out here crying.

"Trena," I say softly as I approach her.

"Oh, Luna. Hi. Did you need something?" she asks, wiping her tears off her eyes and cheeks.

"I needed to see how you're doing."

She looks at me and her lips begin to quiver. I go to her, wrapping my arms around her and letting her cry. I knew Trena from Alpha Solomon's pack, but we'd never been really close. Alpha Solomon was busy keeping me away from Simon which meant that I was kept away from most of the pack members my age. I focused on my studies and as I got older, I avoided pack gatherings altogether unless Alpha Solomon was going to be there to help keep Simon in check.

"I'm so sorry, Luna. I don't know what got into me," she says, finally pulling back.

"Don't you?" I ask her.

She looks at me and I know I'm right.

"I can't have a mate. Not after what Simon did to me. No one would want me, anyway. He wasn't exactly private when he'd take me," she says. "His warriors..."

"Are all dead now. And anyone who would say anything about that time of your life would answer to me, or better yet, Warren."

"It doesn't matter. I don't know that I could ever have someone touch me..." she slaps her hand over her mouth as if she's going to be ill.

"I understand. But I will say this. Bradley is a good man. He took a silver bullet from Simon to protect me. He's basically my guard when I'm at the hospital. He's strong, but he's also compassionate, attentive, trustworthy, and I'm pretty sure he'll be excited to have found his mate when he wakes up. I can't say what the best option is

for you, or if the two of you could ever find your way together. But I would ask that, even if you aren't willing to give your mate bond a chance, that you wait to reject him until he's healthy."

"Simon shot him?"

"He did. In the lung with a silver bullet. It will be a while before he can heal from that. I don't know how long it will take for his wolf to return. But I do know that he's lucky to be alive. So, both of you have suffered at Simon's hand. Maybe that's enough to start building trust, maybe not. That's for you to decide."

She nods.

"Now, I do want you to come in so I can examine you. Did Simon hurt you?"

"Yes, but nothing my wolf couldn't heal from. It was mostly bruises and some tearing."

"What about a pregnancy?" I ask.

"After the first time, I got the pack doctor to put me on birth control. So, I'm good there."

"How is your wolf?"

"Sad that I'm afraid of our mate. She wants him, of course."

"I understand that. Annika was the same way when I met Warren. I was terrified, having only really known Alphas like Alpha Solomon and Simon."



"Alpha Solomon protected you, didn't he? That's why you never spent time with the pack when Simon was around and it's why you disappeared?"

"Yep, and it's also why Simon killed his father. Because he protected me. Simon hurt a lot of us. You most of all. But in this pack, we heal. I insist on it. Ask anyone," I say smiling.

"Oh, I've already heard," she says, chuckling for a moment. "I wish I'd known you better in Alpha Solomon's pack. Maybe we could have been friends."

"There's no reason we can't be friends now. Just because I'm your Luna, or I will be when Warren has the pack ceremony, it doesn't mean that we can't be friends."

"I'd like that."

"Do you think there are others in Simon's pack that would want to come here? Be a part of this pack?"

"I honestly don't know, Luna. I separated myself from them and I think they separated themselves from me, worried that if Simon saw them with me that he might start calling them to his office."

We're quiet for a moment.

"What's going to happen to Simon?" she asks.

"Eventually, he'll die. But Warren and this pack will make him suffer as much as possible before then."

"Good. He deserves it," she growls.

"Yes, he does. Come on, want to walk back to the packhouse with me? There's something going on and it's making me crazy. I need to know what they're doing over there. I can feel all the energy, but can't get a read on what anyone is thinking."

"Sure," she says. We stand and I hug her again.

"You're not alone, Trena. If you need to talk, need company, or just need a friend, come see me."

"Thanks, Luna."

We walk back to the pack and I'm surprised that there are so few people on the road. The ones that are there all say hello, but they've got stupid smiles on their faces, like they know a secret.

I frown. What is going on?

"I have no idea," Trena says, and I realize I spoke out loud.

I turn as we walk up the steps to the packhouse and see that the people wandering around outside have all started following me back.

Trena walks inside ahead of me as I look over the group, frowning.

"What the..." Trena says.

When I turn, stepping inside, I suddenly understand.

"WARREN! WHAT DID YOU DO?"