## Chapter 22 Lilah

Well my birthday is finally here!..... while I truly don't feel like celebrating, I am beyond excited to finally get to meet my wolf... I wonder what she will be like.... What she will look like..... what her personality will be like..... as she is going to be like another person I have to share my headspace with at times so I hope she is strong, someone to help me......but at the same time I am terrified....

Anxious.....nervous...... I know shifting for the first time will hurt.... more than hurt..... imagine your bones altering shape..... shifting shape to allow your body to take on a completely different form..... I have seen so many people shift over the years...Mum, Dad, friends, family..... and you can often hear the bones as they crack and snap, adjusting into position......

I've heard tales of people being stuck between the two forms... half human, half wolf..... though I am hoping they are nothing more than that – tales, stories, made up by teenagers to scare one another because the thought of that terrifies me!.....

The plan was as it was for many of our pack on their first shift, I had spent the day before my birthday doing normal things, then rested early the night before, my Mum coming to wake me around eleven to sort myself to go out into the forest with them. After midnight it would officially be my birthday.... And hopefully the light of the moon would encourage my first shift..... as well as being near the wolves of my parents....

So once my Mum woke me I quickly got up, changing my pyjamas for an old pair of shorts and a vest top, knowing that when or if I actually shifted that the clothes I wore would be torn and discarded anyway..... I brushed my hair and threw on my old trainers too. My insides were twisting with a mixture of anticipation, excitement and nerves..... I hope this all goes ok.... I hope she is truly amazing....... I need her to be strong.....

I ran down stairs to my Mum and Dad both sitting anxiously in the living room, I think they both looked as anxious as me... I forget sometimes this is the first time they have done this.... They have witnessed many others first shifts.... But this is their little girls.... It must be quite emotional I guess..... I go to them and give them both a big hug...... this is a big step in my life and I was sharing it with them and nobody else......

"Right sweetheart, we will head up to the forest now. Make sure we get up there well before midnight, tonight is lovely and clear, be nice to sit out and admire the stars anyway.... Let you relax and calm yourself." My Dad started explaining to me what we planned to do "Mama and I will shift close to midnight to hopefully encourage your wolf forward..."

I nod at him, I cant wait for my wolf to meet my Mum and Dad's. My Dad's wolf is big, almost the same size as an Alpha wolf which is unusual, and strong, which is needed for a Beta, he is a deep grey colour, and has deep brown eyes. He was called Pax.

See all our wolves have names too, just like us, they have personality traits and quirks too, which can be challenging if they are different to the person. Our wolves are able to communicate too much like us through something similar to mindlink, and they too can feel the mate bond and family connections and pack connections also. It is believed that wolves are given to us by the moon goddess too, some believe given again generation upon generation.

My Dad's wolf was apparently a mean and moody type, according to my Mum, but one that was undeniably loyal and protective of his mate, family, Alpha and pack – an ideal Beta.

My Mum's wolf was understandably smaller than my Dad's, as she wasn't a Beta or Alpha (the Alpha is usually always the largest of wolves in a pack, a Beta is often large in size and stature too, Gammas and warriors can often be larger too but often that is more through training than anything), but she was still a good size for a female wolf, and in good shape due to being well trained as both her parents had been warrior wolves, so she had always followed a strict training regime, her wolf was a beautiful black interspersed with grey, and big blue eyes. She was called Nisha, she was as ballsy and strong as my Mum was in person so a perfect match in personalities as you could find really.

I can't remember what age I was when I first saw my parents shift, but I know I had never been scared by their wolves, despite their size of the fact they were both strong and dominant wolves, but they were obviously always gentle and kind to me, as their wolves know me as family so are extremely protective of me, however if it was an enemy I imagine they would be whole other story and be the fiercest wolf you could imagine. I had seen them both on the training fields and they could both fight fiercely and could put even the strongest wolf down. I had strong inspirations to look up an and to aspire to be like.....

"Your wolf may speak to you before she decides to shift... that can happen" my mum now begins to talk " so don't be surprised if an unexpected voice appears in your head, you're not losing your mind..." she smiles " if that doesn't happen and you start to shift, it will hurt sweetheart, but it will be ok, when it starts try to focus on being a wolf... its hard the first time as you don't know what that is like... that is why those first few shifts hurt more... but it really is worth it. She will help you too as much as she can I am sure. But it will be ok I promise" she grabs my hand and squeezes it.

I know she means well but now I feel even more nervous about the pain..... I am not good with pain..... good job my arm is healed now.....

"Right lets go" my dad smiles at me.

The walk to the forest is peaceful, obviously at this time of night everyone in pack is in their houses, if anyone is out it would be the guards at the pack gates which we wont be close to, or those on border patrols which are regularly ran and checked by our warriors as part of pack security. But I imagine my Dad will have made them aware we are out so we shouldn't need to worry about them either, so it will just me us out in nature, enjoying the peace and quiet.

The sky is dark, though at the moment with us being close to the houses it is lit by the few street lights, though the further we walk away from the houses out into the pack toward the forest the less lights there are so the sky feels darker, naturally lit now by the stars and the large moon , not quite a full moon, but it is still big and bright, quite low in the sky I think, a big silver grey orb in the deep dark sky. Almost tranquil looking when you look up at it.....

We head into the edge of the forest, it is now darker still with the cover of the many trees, I am walking slower now, being careful of where I am standing as the floor is less even, with many roots and branches over the forest floor. thankfully the floor is dry today, as I imagine it is quite dangerous when wet and slippy. I love walks in the forest, but not too keen at night I have to admit....yeah I am a scaredy cat! Haha. Not very good for a wolf I guess. Though when I have my wolf, I will have my improved senses, especially vision in the dark so that may make walks like this somewhat less intimidating...... Well that's my excuse and I'm sticking to it!!

I felt my mum reach for my hand "You ok sweetheart?" she asks.

"Yeah, just a bit nervous. It's quite dark" I admit.

I hear her chuckle "It wont be as bad once you shift Del. There is a small clearing up here too, we will sit there, we can enjoy the peace, the moon and stars.... and wait... I hope she makes an appearance for you sweetheart"

So do i.....

I continue to follow my Mum and Dad, assuming they know where they are going, plus knowing they can both see much better than me. I only nearly trip upabout ten times, which brings many chuckles from both my Mum and Dad, they had long since got used to the fact their daughter seemed to walkaround like her feet had been put on the wrong way.....

We finally reached the small clearing, and it was lovely, dimly lit by the small area where the light from the moon was able to shine in through the gap in the trees.....this might make a nice picture.... I think to myself..... quickly drawn out of my thoughts by my Dad throwing down a bag he had carried up here with us, full of clothes for us to put on after we shifted, because as amazing as being able to shift is, unfortunately we had yet to find a way to shift from wolf to fully dressed human and still shift to being stark naked, which is somewhat embarrassing.....

Well I say that, most shifters are quite used to it and aren't particularly bothered by being naked around one another, it being part of what happens, something we can't change, but the thought of it for some, including me finds it cringey – I really don't like the thought of seeing random people's bodies! I mean, imagine a pack run..... you're out and there is an old guy from pack been on a run in his wolf form and he shifts back... you think you want to be seeing some old guys bits dangling around? Hmmm no, didn't so! Always been a case of avert the eyes for me! Slightly less obvious than running away.....

We sit down in the clearing, the night is actually quite mild, though it is summer so I'd expect nothing less, I look up to the sky, from up here away from the artificial lights of the houses and street lights the stars seem so much clearer and brighter, much like they do at Indie and Aunty T's houses, that is something I love about being out in the dark at night. A few light clouds float across the silvery grey of the moon, doing very little to dull its shine.

It is so peaceful up here it is lovely. Away from all the crap of pack, all the idiots, all the stress, almost perfect...... almost...... only thing is I know I have to go back to it.....

"It's almost midnight sweetheart so we will shift now, in the hopes it may encourage your wolf forward, we will communicate through mindlink if you need us." My Dad grips my hand in his.

I look at him, biting my lip "I'm scared Dad" I whisper. My stomach is full of knots, I feel a little sick, though there is still that underlying feeling of excitement that hopefully soon I would get to meet my wolf but knowing to do that was going to hurt scared me.....

He gripped my hand tighter "Lilah, it will be ok, like your mama said, when or if the shift starts try to imagine yourself as a wolf, that may help push the shift forward, it will hurt until you learn to get used to adjustments your body has to make, but once you have done it it is really worth it, trust me, I'm your Dad, you know you can trust me right?" he is looking right into my eyes, ttrying to reassure me.

Yeah I know he is trying to reassure me but I am still nervous as hell.... I nod.

Both my parents stand up, coming to lean down and kiss me on my head, my mum sweeping her hand gently through my long blond hair as she does.

Then I hear the cracking, and twisting as my Dad shifts swiftly into his wolf, Pax is now stood to the side of me in place of my father, and heaffectionatly rubs his snout into my hair. I hear the similar clicks and grinding noise of bone against bone as my Mum too shifts from her human self into her wolf Nisha. Her big blue eyes are looking curiously at me, I wonder if she knows what today is for me?......I find myself thinking.

Before she too comes up to me and begins to rubs her snout into my hair, finding her way to my head. I giggle. Pax goes to nip at his mate affectionately, wanting to play but Nisha brushes past him to come and sit beside me, I'm assuming knowing tonight is her duty to be there for her daughter.

I am sure she would find time for Pax later once I had got through my shift, assuming it happened of course. We came out at midnight as our seventeenth birthday began on the hope of encouraging the shift, knowing how eager we are to finally meet our wolves, hoping having family members there will encourage a shift, but for some people it does not work and they don't shift until later in the day or even night....

It all depends on their wolf and when they decide to appear. I just hoped mine wouldn't keep me waiting too long. Mama had said we would wait a couple of hours at most, I know she was as desperate as me to meet my wolf, telling me excitedly I was her little girl and she couldn't wait to meet the wolf who would be supporting her baby girl. She had made me smile just listening to how enthusiastic she had sounded talking about it all.

Pax had now chosen to sit alongside me now too, clearly realising that he wasn't going to get very far with Nisha while I was still waiting to see if I would shift yet. Though I did notice the looks he kept giving to his mate, who would have thought after over twenty five years together as mates they would still crave attention for each other as desperately as they clearly do.

I look up to the sky again, more clouds are slowly passing over, giving a heavier coverage now to the moon, making the clearing we are sit in less lit than before, certainly giving it an almost eerie feel.

Anything yet from your wolf sweetheart? My Mum linked me.

No...I sigh, laying myself down to watch the stars passing over the clearing above. Finding it almost hypnotic watching the movement of the sky above me. I could easily fall asleep, but did my best not to, trying to focus on the stars.

I used to love watching the stars with Logan..... he would try to sound clever by learning the names of some of the constellations to impress me, I am pretty certain he didn't have a clue though..... but I didn't care, just laying there with him, in his arms, looking up at the sky together felt good.....

I miss him I realised I did miss him, even if it was just as my friend, I missed him. We'd spoken about sharing our experiences of our shifts together.... How excited we'd be to meet each others wolves for the first time..... yet now we just don't feel that close now... I don't think we ever will again.

Oh get over it. A voice suddenly said in my head.

Wait..... What?! Was that?

"Are you my wolf?" I ask the voice.

Ooohh you're quick! I like that. Happy Birthday Lilah, I am Sky. The voice replied. Who this felt so weird having a conversation in my own head... if you described this to anyone they'd think you were insane.....

"Thank you. Can we shift now?" I ask.

Soon...she said then it was like a radio silence....

"When?" I ask.

Nothing.....

"sky?!" I ask.

Nothing.....

Great.....

Mum, Dad... I link them both my wolf spoke to me, but now she has stopped.... I know she is called Sky... I keep trying to get her to talk again but there is nothing. I asked her when we can shift all she said was soon and hasn't spoke since.

She may be building up her strength sweetheart, give her chance... she's getting ready, I'm sure....my Dad linked me back.

I'll see if Nisha can speak with her sweetheart...Mum added.

So I was back to watching the clouds swirling by overhead, making strange shadows over the moon as they did. Time seemed to be dragging, the sky was lightening lightly slightly which made me think that we were heading to the early morning hours already. Maybe Sky didn't want to shift just yet.....

Did Nisha manage to speak to her Mum? I ask.

No sweetheart. She can sense her though.... Maybe we should think about going back now. We've been here a few hours, she doesn't seem ready to come out to meet us just yet. Mum explained.

I sighed, standing up, oh well, will have to try again later and see if she wants to come out then. I move to start walking, feeling a little despondent about the fact I hadn't met my wolf like I had hoped when suddenly I feel a strange sensation come over me, then feel an agonising crack in my leg, I drop to the floor with a squeal.

I notice Nisha's head flash round to my direction, concern clear in her big blue eyes.... another hellishly painful crack this time in my arm as some beyond weird sensations come over my body, my eyesight blurs for a second then is suddenly crystalized, so much clearer and enhanced, I can feel my body trembling as the pain is there again as more cracks and twists as my limbs change shape, I remember what my mum had told me and try to think of myself as a wolf, strong legs.... Pointed ears.... Sharp teeth....

OWWWWWW!!!! that fucking hurt!!!! A sharp crack as I seemed to finally shift, I looked down, and there was no longer hands, but feet, black feet, well paws. Dark black too. Looking out of Sky's eyes, everything seems so detailed, everything seemed louder too.

Wow you are beautiful sweetheart....Mum said

Shall we go for a run? Dad suggested.

Ok I agree.

Pax and Nisha first come and greet Sky, sniffing around her, and Nisha gently nips her ear affectionately. Sky seems to like it as she does it back too. Pax looks to be getting inpatient and sets off running quickly through the forest, I know Nisha won't be far behind as she is ever so competitive. She is soon giving chase to Pax.

Sky is soon running, and feeling her running through the forest, picking up her speed to catch up with Pax and Nisha, the sensation of running is exhilarating, the air is whistling past, as tree by tree flies past, the speed Sky is running is disturbing the leaves below her feet. Ahead I can hear Pax and Nisha howling to Sky for her to join them, I recongise we are near the lake now.

Sky picks up her speed again, I think she was enjoying her freedom though, dodging between the trees, pouncing here and there, so took a little while to get to them. She slowly approached them with a little howl back. Trotting gently to the water for a drink. As she was drinking I was able to catch a glance of her reflection through her own eyes, she was beautiful, a pure black wolf, with eyes like my mum's wolf, but almost similar to my aqua blue eyes I have in human form!! That was amazing! I loved her!! She was beautiful!!

Why thank you... you're not to bad yourself I hear Sky say to me and I can't help but giggle at her. She clearly has a cheeky sense of humour, I can see us getting on ok....

We ran through the forest chasing one another for a while, until the sky was lightening... it felt so free and fun... so calming.... Having this part of me free now... I loved Sky.... She seemed to get on well with the wolves of my Mum and Dad too. Playfully chasing them and nipping them. She was fast and able on her feet. I couldn't wait to train and be able to shift into her now..... she was definitely a wolf to be proud of...

Right shall we head back sweetheart? My mum linked me.

Ok. How do I get back to me though?! I link back as I realise I don't know how to do that with a panic.

Think of yourself in that form like you did to help the shift before and it should happen she links back with a chuckle clearly hearing the panic in my mink. But wait until we get back to the clearing as that's where we left clothes as I'm sure you don't want to walk through the forest naked...

Of course... if I shift back now I'll have nothing on. This is all new to me, though I still should know that....

Lets go sunshine Sky said to me. As she bolted off at a sprint again through the trees dodging here and there again, she was certainly quick on her feet and the speed she was going would take some getting used to, but I loved having my wolf....