

The Pack's Doctor

Chapter 1: Scent - The Pack's Doctor

Yara

It's been too long since I've let Annika out to run. With the number of classes that I'm taking and the heavy schedule I'm keeping at the university, there isn't a lot of time to eat, much less let Annika run. But I have to let her out. She's becoming more and more restless.

'School is boring. Humans are boring. I want to do something fun,' she grumbles in my head.

'We're going for a run, Annika. Calm down.'

'Next time, don't wait so long.'

It's been a couple of months since I took her out. She's right, it's been too long. But I know how the packs fight, and I haven't wanted to risk getting in the middle of a battle, or worse, getting caught by Simon.

'I'm too smart for him to catch us. Besides, he has no idea that we're still so close to the pack.'

By 'so close' she means two hours, but it is too close. A wolf can run nearly as fast as a car, and when that wolf is on the hunt? Goddess forbid anyone gets in their way.

In the past, when I've taken Annika out to run, I've taken her in the opposite direction of Simon's pack. Well, technically, it's not his pack, it's his father's pack. Alpha Solomon has been the Alpha of my previous pack for as long as I can remember. His son, Simon, is a nasty piece of work. He loves to fight and he loves to kill. The two of us couldn't be any more different. I like to heal, and I like to save.

For whatever reason, Simon set his sights on me. I don't know why. I'm an orphan, I'm not ranked. My parents were warriors and while I can fight, I prefer to use my biggest strength, my brain. Simon much prefers to use his strength, his Alpha strength. He doesn't have to work for it, being genetically predisposed to being larger and stronger than most wolves in the pack, so he doesn't appreciate what he has, in my opinion. Me, on the other hand, I've had to work for everything I've achieved in this life, with the help of Alpha Solomon.

My parents were killed in a pack war when I was young. Alpha Solomon took over as my guardian and made sure that I was cared for all my life. Maybe it's because he never had a daughter, or maybe it's because I'm more like him than his own son, but he's always looked after me, even to the point of sending me away from the pack when he realized that his son had taken an interest in me. He knows Simon is no good, and he didn't want me to suffer with his son's infatuation.

When we get to the spot where we like to run, I stop, sniffing the air, making sure there are no other wolves around here.

‘Annika?’ I ask, making sure she’s not smelling something I’m not.

‘No other wolves,’ she says, almost sadly. She misses the companionship of being in a pack. I look around once more, then make my way into the forest before stripping off my clothes and tucking them onto a tree branch, high enough that someone would have to look up to see them. I have a spare set of clothes in the car, just in case anyone steals these. It doesn’t happen often, but it does happen. Rather than assume that someone was being malicious, I choose to believe that they needed the clothes more than I did. They’re only clothes after all.

I let Annika pull the shift, feeling my bones snapping and reshaping after so long of not shifting. It’s more painful than it should be, but soon enough, Annika is shaking out her reddish-brown fur and taking off into the woods.

Even though I’m in the background while Annika runs, I can feel how good it is to stretch her legs, to feel her muscles flexing in her body as she runs. It’s quiet tonight, thankfully, and Annika’s paws on the ground are nearly silent as she runs, giving both of us a chance to enjoy the sounds of the forest around us.

I’m not sure how long she’s been running when we smell it, blood. She slows, lifting her nose in the air.

‘There was fighting nearby,’ she says in our shared mind space.

‘Do you hear anyone?’ I ask.

‘I’m not sure. I hear rustling, what sounds like a wolf in trouble. Do you hear it?’ she asks as she tilts her head from one side to the other.

I do hear it. It does sound like a large animal who is struggling.

‘Annika...’

‘I’ll be careful,’ she says, knowing that, if I can, I will want to help this animal, even if it is a werewolf. It may not be possible, they may not let me get close enough to help. But I’m going to school to become a doctor for a reason. So, I can help wolves in just this type of situation.

Annika slowly and carefully makes her way to the sound of the struggling animal. As we get closer, I can tell that it is a wolf by the soft sounds that it’s making. I can’t figure out what it’s doing though. Maybe it’s caught in a snare of some sort and trying to figure out how to get out. Or maybe it’s just stuck in a hole that one of the packs dug to capture other pack members so they can interrogate them for information.

‘Please be careful, Annika. We can’t afford to get caught.’

“I’ll be careful, Yara.’

When we get close, she begins to belly crawl, slowly making her way closer. When the wind shifts, her whole body goes rigid, the scent of teakwood filling my nose and making my body tingle with unwanted desire.

‘Mate,’ she says softly.

‘WHAT?’

‘That’s our mate, Yara. Our mate is injured.’

This is terrible. This isn’t just an injured animal, it’s our mate. I can’t leave him out here to die, but I also can’t have him trying to take me back to his pack. I have school, and I’m still in hiding from Simon.

It takes me a moment too long to realize that the wolf, my mate, has stopped moving around.

Annika barely breathes, waiting to see what he’ll do.

He chuffs at us, letting us know that he knows we’re here. I’m not sure how I know that he’s not going to hurt us, but something in his chuff seems more like a request for help, than a threat of violence.

Annika slowly and carefully makes her way through some bushes until we can see him. SHIT! He’s caught in a bear trap. No wonder he’s still in wolf form. If he shifts, it will rip his leg off.

‘I can’t believe he’s not howling in pain,’ Annika says.

She’s right. His leg, where it’s caught in the trap is shattered, no question.

‘You have to help him, Yara. He’s our mate. You have to,’ Annika practically begs me.

‘I know. I will, if he’ll let me.’

As much as I hate the idea of being naked in front of this unknown man, even though he’s my mate, I have no choice if I’m going to talk to him and try to help him.

I pull the shift, standing in front of the midnight black wolf who is watching me with his beautiful, intelligent green eyes.

“Hey, big guy. I see you’re caught in a trap. I want to help you. I know you can’t shift, or you’ll rip that leg off and that looks really painful. Your bones are probably shattered but I want to help you, if you’ll let me,” I say softly, keeping my tone gentle.

I slowly approach the wolf. Mate or no, this wolf must be in terrible pain and he's going to be feeling vulnerable, unable to escape. I extend my hand, letting him sniff me and see that I mean no harm.

"I'm a doctor. Well, I'm studying to be a doctor, to both humans and wolves. I don't want to hurt you. Will you let me see if I can help you?"

The wolf sniffs my hand, then nuzzles me. I gently run my hand through his fur, stopping when I come to stiff fur that smells like blood. I don't want to know what else is in this wolf's fur, but I can guess that guts and bones are stuck in there as well. He's obviously been fighting and whether he got separated from his pack, or he was part of a group that intentionally separated out trying to cut off the other pack's escape, he's now out here alone without anyone to help him. Well, anyone except me.

I look up, trying to see where the moonlight is so I can get a better look at the trap.

"Okay, big guy, are you able to move to your right a bit? I need the moonlight to help me see how I can spring this trap and set you free."

He moves to his right, keeping an eye on me as I carefully look over the trap. "Nasty piece of work," I mumble to myself. "Stupid idiots doing this to each other."

I look back up at him. "Okay, I think I've figured it out. Before I spring this trap, you need to know that when I release this, it's going to hurt, really bad. But then you'll be free and I can take a look at how badly your leg is broken," I tell him. I already know it's shattered. I can see bone splinters sticking out of his skin from above the trap.

I move my hands in position. I'm going to need Annika's strength to help me open this trap. "Try not to bite me and if you can, try not to howl. I have no idea if there is anyone else nearby that might hear you, or try to come hurt you," I tell him. He chuffs at me again, letting me know he understands.

"On three, ready? One... two ... three!" I say and push the release with all my strength, Annika pushing with hers as well. I feel the spring give and the trap snaps open. The wolf yelps but it's quickly cut off as he moves away from the trap, keeping his injured leg off the ground.

He turns, looking at me a moment before his bones begin to snap as he shifts back into his human form, his ridiculously gorgeous, tall, muscular form.