



GREEDY  
GODS

WOLF REBORN BOOK THREE  
LUCY AUBURN

# Greedy Gods

Lucy Auburn

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## Author's Note

Sinful Shifters does not have violent scenes between the heroine and her mates, but it does contain violence, including sexual violence. Reader discretion is advised.

# Chapter One

The wellspring swallows me whole, its magic curling around my body like wisps of smoke as everything fades to black. I feel a stomach-dropping sensation like I'm falling or drowning. When I open my eyes, I'm no longer in the physical world.

I'm in a place of soft shadows and glimmering light. Stone walls arch high above me, carved with ancient symbols I can't decipher. A soft bubbling sound fills the cavernous space. I glance down to see a gently swirling pool of clear water at my feet, its surface reflecting the soft glow around us.

This must be the wellspring itself. This is where the ancient power that fuels my pack came from. It's where my mates spent centuries, guarding the powerful magic from harm.

"So you're finally here," says a voice behind me.

I whirl around. There's a woman standing there, watching me with dark, assessing eyes. She's petite, with a heart-shaped face, delicate features, and wispy blonde hair that reflects the glowing light of this place. Her clothing reminds me of paintings I've seen of our werewolf ancestors.

I know immediately who she is, even though we've never properly met.

"Fern?"

She inclines her head. "And you're Caterina. The one who now carries my soul."



It's strange to hear my full name spoken aloud. Everyone has called me Rina for as long as I can remember. But she's right—the soul that resides within me belongs to the last omega, Fern. The one who sacrificed herself to end omega bloodshed and save the First Alpha from his brother.

I've glimpsed her my entire life in dreams and nightmares. Now she's right in front of me in the flesh. Or whatever form we have in this place, since we're clearly no longer in the physical world.

“The wellspring brought me here,” I say slowly, still getting my bearings. Glancing around the shadowy cavern, I add, “Where exactly are we?”

“The wellspring exists between worlds,” Fern explains. “It's a place of ancient magic and sacrificial magic, where werewolf souls come to rest so they can feed the magic of our bonds.”

Her dark gaze bores into mine intently. “I've called your soul here many times, but your conscious mind was never ready. Now, circumstances have forced you here. We have a lot to talk about.”

I swallow hard. The memory of General Teller and his plans are still fresh in my mind. He wants to use werewolves for his army and take over the packs. And he showed me visions of omega torture, like in the old days. It chilled me to the bone.

“Is this about Teller?” I ask Fern nervously. “And the omegas being in danger again?”

She nods, her expression grave. “With your return, all the souls I bound to myself risk being reborn. I sacrificed everything to end that torment. But Teller seeks to bring it all back.”

I shiver, hugging my arms around myself. The thought of anyone suffering the way I saw in my visions makes me feel ill.

“What can we do?” I ask softly. “I'll do anything to stop him and protect my people.”

Fern studies me for a long moment before answering. “To stop Teller, you must sever your bonds with the four gods and return their power here to the wellspring. It will weaken them, but it’s the only way.”

I recoil instinctively. The thought of losing Thale, Lucian, Adar, and Everett feels like a knife twisting in my heart. They’re everything to me now—friends, mentors, and lovers.

“There has to be another way,” I protest. “I can’t give up my mates.”

Fern’s eyes flash with sympathy and regret. “I wish there was. But your ties to them open the doorway from this realm to ours. It lets their magic—and all the souls I bound—flow freely again.”

I wrap my arms around myself more tightly, feeling suddenly cold. I can’t accept what she’s suggesting. There has to be another solution, one that doesn’t involve sacrificing the men I’ve come to love.

“Let me think about this,” I say slowly. “There must be something else we can do.”

Fern sighs. “I feared you would resist. Perhaps it will help if you better understand why I sacrificed everything to seal the omegas away.”

She motions for me to follow her towards the pool of water. As we approach, images begin to shimmer across its surface like memories.

“Watch,” she instructs. “See what I experienced, what I sought to prevent from ever happening again.”

Unable to tear my eyes away, I watch the visions play out across the dark water:

*Omegas chained in dungeons, crying out during their heats with no relief. Alphas in a frenzy, fighting over them violently. Omegas forced into mating ceremonies, screaming and begging for mercy. The torture goes on and on, each scene more horrific than the last.*

I press a hand over my mouth, choking back bile. It's too awful to comprehend.

When it finally ends, I turn to Fern with tears in my eyes. She looks back at me sadly.

"This is why I sacrificed everything," she says quietly. "Why I had to seal them all away, even at the cost of my own soul. I couldn't let this happen again."

"It's so awful," I murmur, tears rolling down my eyes. "I can't imagine going through that and surviving."

"Now you understand why I did what I did," she says. "The only way to make sure those horrors don't return is to seal off their souls in the wellspring forever."

I swallow hard. "I can't give up my mates. I don't know what I'd do without them."

Fern's eyes flash with sympathy and regret. "I know it is a difficult choice. But if you do not sacrifice those threads, the souls I sealed away will be freed again. And untold suffering could return to our kind."

Tears fill my eyes as I wrap my arms around myself. The thought of losing the four men I've come to love fills me with anguish. But allowing the horrors Fern showed me to resume seems equally unthinkable.

"There must be another way," I plead desperately. "Some solution where no one has to be sacrificed."

Fern sighs, her expression full of sadness and compassion. "If there was any other way, I would have taken it long ago. This is the only path that leads to lasting peace."

She steps closer, taking my hands in hers. "I know how much they mean to you, Caterina. But the lives and souls of all omegas hang in the balance."

Her dark eyes bore into mine intently. "You must find the strength to do what is right, as I once did. The lives of many depend on it."

I tremble, tears slipping down my cheeks. The thought of losing the gods fills me with anguish. But allowing the

omegas' suffering to resume seems equally unthinkable.

I don't know how to choose between two impossible options. But I have to find an answer—one that prevents evil without requiring me to sacrifice those I've come to love.

“Giving up my mates is too much to bear,” I finally say shakily. “There must be another way, even if we can't see it yet.”

Fern studies me for a long moment, then nods. “Let me show you more.”

## Chapter Two

“So there is another way?” I ask her, hopeful.

“Perhaps. If you’re willing to pay the price.” Fern motions to the gently rippling pool. “First, you should understand where you come from, and how your destiny came to be entwined with mine.”

As she speaks, images begin to coalesce on the surface of the dark water. Scenes from the past, ready to reveal their secrets. I step closer, compelled to watch the story unfold.

The vision shows a younger version of my mother, Talon. Her long hair streams behind her as she runs through the woods. She glances back nervously, as if afraid of being followed.

When she reaches a secluded glen, a lone wolf steps out to meet her. He has reddish fur and intelligent blue eyes.

My breath catches. Somehow I know this is my father. The mysterious wolf I inherited my jet black hair from.

I watch, riveted, as my mother shifts into her wolf form. She rubs affectionately against the lone wolf, nuzzling and licking his muzzle. He returns her gestures, nipping her neck and shoulders playfully.

Their intentions are clear. My parents, defying pack law, mean to mate.

Talon leads the lone wolf to the Mating Circle, walking up the steps to it. My parents shift back to human form and begin preparing for the illicit mating ceremony. Talon pulls a vial of

glowing magic out of her pocket and pours it onto the runes, making them light up despite the lack of a pack alpha's presence.

My heart pounds. I'm witnessing my own origins, learning secrets no one ever told me.

As the ritual begins, power builds between them and makes the elder statues come to life. The mating cords between Talon and the lone wolf glow bright. But suddenly the light turns ominous, flashing red. A rumbling shakes the stones beneath them.

The wellspring itself intervenes, refusing to allow this unsanctioned mating of an outsider. Its magic lashes out, wrapping around the interloper, my father. He cries out as blinding light envelops him completely.

When it fades, he's gone. Sacrificed by the offended wellspring.

"No!" My mother's agonized scream pierces the vision. She falls to her knees, clawing at the stones where my father vanished. "Give him back," she sobs, face twisted in grief. "Please, I beg you..."

The gathered magic surges violently, the circle's stones cracking under the pressure. My mother bows her head, shoulders shaking with sobs.

Then her body goes rigid, back arching. A glowing orb emerges from the crack in the mating circle and shoots toward her. It hits her abdomen, right where I grew inside her.

Fern's spirit. Entering the unborn child—me.

The vision fades, returning me to the present. I stand frozen, stunned by what I witnessed. Finally I find my voice.

"That was..." I trail off, shaking my head helplessly.

"Your origin," Fern finishes. "A rogue wolf, secretly mating with a pack daughter. Their recklessness sacrificed your father's life...and brought my soul to reside in you before you were even born."

I wrap my arms around myself, chilled. My father dead and gone before I could even know him. And my body inhabited by Fern all along, destined to play some part in her unfinished business.

“If you hadn’t shown me, I never would have believed it,” I murmur.

Fern nods solemnly. “But now you understand where you come from. Why your fate has always been entangled with the wellspring...and with me.”

I take a deep, steadying breath. “So where does that leave us? Now that I’m here too?”

“Now, we find a way to protect the souls under my guard. But the ritual required will not be easy.” Fern’s mouth presses into a grim line. “Are you willing to make a sacrifice to prevent untold pain and torture?”

I straighten my shoulders and lift my chin. Witnessing my past has shaken me. But it’s also strengthened my resolve.

“I’m ready for whatever is necessary,” I tell her firmly. “This is my destiny. I can feel it.”

Fern studies me a moment, then nods. “There may be a way to save the omegas and keep your mates. But it will take tremendous sacrifice—from us both. And from your mates.”

She steps closer, the wellspring’s waters rippling between us. “We must perform a ritual to make me the anchor that binds all souls here. My spirit will become one with the wellspring...and you will be freed.”

I frown, confused. “But how? Your soul resides in me.”

“That’s where the difficulty lies. We will use old magic—very dark magic—to sever my spirit from yours.” Fern’s eyes bore into mine intently. “It will leave you wholly yourself again. But it is no simple spell.”

My heart pounds. To finally be free of Fern’s spirit, after all this time...it seems impossible.

But if that’s the price to protect my people, I will find the strength to pay it.

“Tell me what we must do,” I say steadily.

Fern nods. “First, we will need my remains. The bones I left behind when I joined the wellspring.”

She grips my hands tightly. “They rest where I died, on the Sky Pack’s highest peak. You must retrieve them.”

I shiver at the thought of climbing the treacherous mountain. But I force myself to nod.

“Once you have my bones, return here to the wellspring,” Fern continues. “The next full moon, we will perform the ritual. My remains will anchor me as guardian, while my soul is finally separated from yours.”

Her eyes shine with fervor. “It is the only way. You must complete the journey...no matter the cost.”

Apprehension twists inside me. The task seems impossible. But Fern is right—this is the sole path before us.

I straighten my spine and meet her intense gaze steadily. “I understand. I’ll retrieve your bones from the Sky Peak and bring them here.”

Fern’s shoulders relax slightly, tension easing from her face. “You are a brave girl, much like I was, Caterina. Together, we will make sure the omegas’ souls stay safe.”

She grips my hands once more. “Now go. Hurry to the Sky Pack’s territory. Time isn’t on our side.”

I nod, filled with determination. With a deep breath, I turn away from the wellspring and its guardian. The magic releases me from its grasp as the cavern’s shadows fall away.



## Chapter Three

I take a deep breath as the wellspring releases me, expelling me back into the world. The dark, rushing current around me vanishes, replaced by solid ground beneath my feet and fresh air in my lungs.

Blinking, I look around. I'm in the center of the Mating Circle, right where I was when the wellspring's magic grabbed me.

My four mates—Thale, Lucian, Adar, and Everett—stand around the circle's edge, worry creasing their handsome faces. Ali is with them, her brown eyes wide. Even the First Alpha Eli is here, though he keeps his distance from the others, his shoulders hunched submissively.

Seeing my guys waiting for me fills me with relief and love. Especially Adar—his jaw is tight, arms crossed over his broad chest, tapping one foot impatiently. As soon as our eyes meet across the circle, he crosses the space between us in three long strides.

“Precious,” he breathes, engulfing me in his strong arms. I melt against him, breathing in his smoky scent.

“I'm okay,” I tell him, tilting my head back for a kiss. His full lips meet mine hungrily, making my body flush with heat. I've missed this—missed him. Missed all of them. However long I was in the wellspring, it felt like far too long away from my mates.

Adar keeps an arm wrapped firmly around my waist as the others join us.

“You’re back,” Thale rumbles in his deep voice, relief softening his stern face. He squeezes my shoulder gently.

Lucian’s clever fingers brush my hair off my forehead. “What happened in there, darling?” His voice is light, but his blue eyes are troubled.

Everett just folds me carefully into his massive arms, surrounding me with his solid strength. “Missed you, sweetness,” he murmurs against my hair.

I cling to them, breathing in their varied scents of earth, sea, and sky. Their hands soothe me, stroking over my back and arms, re-memorizing my body.

Finally I take a small step back, though Adar keeps me tucked against his side. “I met Fern,” I tell them simply.

Ali inhales sharply, brown eyes wide. “The last omega? The one who sacrificed herself?”

I nod, remembering the wellspring’s rushing darkness, and Fern’s spirit within it. “She’s connected to the wellspring now. But...” I hesitate.

Do I tell them everything? About the omegas Fern sacrificed, my father’s sad fate, the difficult solution Fern offered?

No, I decide. Not yet. One crisis at a time.

“She gave me a way to fix things,” I say carefully. “To heal the crack in the Mating Circle, and stop the omegas’ souls from being reborn. But it won’t be easy.”

I meet each of their eyes in turn.

“We have to find Fern’s bones, and use them to sever my connection to her soul. Lucian—“ I turn my gaze to the Sky Pack alpha. “That means going to the peak just outside your pack’s territory. Where we’ll face vampires, and likely General Teller.”

Lucian’s jaw tightens, but he nods. “We’ll manage, darling. Anything to keep you safe.”

The others murmur agreement. I feel a rush of gratitude for these powerful, devoted men.

“What do we do in the meantime?” Thale asks pragmatically. “The wellspring still needs a guardian. With Fern’s soul tied to yours, she can’t take over that role yet.”

I bite my lip. He’s right—the wellspring needs a guardian to stabilize it until I can sever my connection to Fern.

Which means another sacrifice.

My eyes drift to Eli, lurking silently at the circle’s edge. He meets my gaze, then looks down, shoulders hunching further.

When we tried to sacrifice him before, the wellspring rejected him. But with Fern’s soul now in control...

“Eli could try again,” I say slowly. The others turn to look at the First Alpha. “To be guardian. Now that I’ve spoken to Fern, it might work this time.”

Eli’s head snaps up, hope flashing across his face. Before he can speak, Adar growls.

“No. Absolutely not.” His grip on me tightens. “We are not trusting that traitor anywhere near the wellspring again.”

Thale lays a calming hand on Adar’s shoulder. “Peace, brother. Let us discuss this.”

The four gods move away, bending their heads together, voices lowered. I wait anxiously.

After a long, tense minute, they return. Thale nods gravely at me.

“We will try again with Eli,” he rumbles. “But we will take precautions.”

Relief courses through me. Precautions make sense—we can ward the wellspring against Eli somehow, after he becomes guardian. This could work.

Thale turns to Eli, massive arms crossed. “Submit to our restraints, and you may have your chance, Alpha.”

Eli nods rapidly. “Anything.”

At Thale’s direction, Everett binds Eli’s hands behind his back with rope. Lucian mutters a spell and draws a glowing sigil on Eli’s forehead—a ward against lies and deception. Finally Adar forces a scrap of black cloth into Eli’s mouth as a gag.

“Just in case you get any ideas about tricking anyone,” he growls at Eli. “If Fern decides she doesn’t want you there, I’m sure she can throw you out.”

The bound alpha wisely stays silent.

With Eli restrained, we return to the crack in the center of the stones. I shiver as we approach its strange light; being pulled back into its depths is the last thing I want.

But with my mates at my side, I know I’m safe.

Thale and Everett take up positions holding Eli’s arms. At my nod, they bring him to his knees.

I move to join Ali at the smooth plinth etched with the alphas’ paw print. As I step into place, power thrums through me, resonating with the Mating Circle’s ancient magic.

Ali stands tall across from me on the other plinth, etched with the witch’s crescent moon symbol. She meets my eyes and nods.

Together, we begin the ritual words:

“Ancient magic, we call to you...”

As our voices ring out in unison, the wellspring stirs. I feel its endless power focused on us, drawn by the ritual. The crack in the stones begins to glow again.

The words pour from Ali and I, echoes of rituals performed here for generations:

“Let the willing guard your ancient halls, and let us keep what once was...”

Wind whips my hair as the wellspring’s energy grows. The crack glows brighter, beams of light shining into the sky. I clutch the edges of the plinth, fighting the urge to flee.

At my side, my mates brace themselves against the rising magical force. Even they look uneasy.

But Eli stands calmly as we reach the end of the incantation, gazing yearningly into the wellspring's depths.

I scream out the final line:

“To the earth, the sea, the wind and fire—let them remain, so new power may awaken!”

The wellspring erupts.

A blinding amount of magical power erupts into the air. The force of it knocks Thale and Everett back from Eli. The First Alpha gets down on his hands and knees, ropes falling away, his hair ruffling in the wind of the power.

“No!” I cry out. But too late—the magic snatches Eli, dragging him down into its depths.

I stand frozen, watching the foaming surface settle. My heart pounds. Did it work? Is Eli now the wellspring's guardian?

A moment later, the crack begins to heal. The stones stretch towards each other, runes glowing as they close off the dangerous rift.

Relief crashes over me. We did it. The wellspring is stable again, with Eli as its new guardian. Fern helped us, after all.

Now we can focus on finding her bones, and setting both her soul and the omegas' free.

Adar crushes me against his chest. “Well done, precious,” he murmurs in my ear.

I cling to him, letting his strength support me. We have a long journey in front of us, but with him and the others at my side, I know I can face it.

Thale gently takes my arm. “Come on. Let's get ready to leave.”

Casting one last glance back at the healed Mating Circle, I let my alphas guide me away.

## Chapter Four

The beacon of light shines like a star fallen to earth, marking the location where Fern's bones rest at the top of a mountain peak. My heart pounds with anticipation as I stare into the distance, imagining the difficult trek.

Beside me, Ali lowers her hands, the glowing spell dissipating from her fingertips. She sways slightly and I reach out to steady her. Magic always takes a toll, even for someone as gifted as my best friend.

"It worked," Ali says, a note of pride in her voice. "Now you'll be able to find the bones no matter what."

I hug her gently, breathing in the soothing lavender scent that always clings to her skin and clothes. "Thank you. I know that wasn't easy."

She smiles, brushing back a lock of white-blond hair that's escaped from her braid. "You're my best friend, Rina. Of course I'll help any way I can." Her dark brown eyes meet mine, filled with warmth and understanding.

A throat clears pointedly behind us. I turn to see the four elemental gods watching us with varying degrees of impatience.

"Are we ready to go, darling?" Lucian asks, lifting one pale brow. "Daylight is wasting, and it's quite a trip to the mountaintops just north of my pack's lands."

"Soon as we gather supplies, we can head out," I confirm. Excitement and nerves churn in my stomach.

But with my powerful mates at my side, I know I'll make it through this trial.

Thale's deep voice rumbles instructions, sending the others moving to gather travel packs and rations. Though my massive earth god isn't one for unnecessary words, he has a natural air of authority I find reassuring. Under his direction, preparations are swift and efficient.

Within minutes, we're ready to depart. I hug Ali one more time, breathing in the comfort of her familiar scent.

"Stay safe," she murmurs. "And call if you need me. I'll come right away."

I nod, blinking back the sheen of tears that fill my eyes. No matter how chaotic my life becomes, I can always count on Ali to remain right there at my side. My extraordinary best friend.

With a deep breath, I turn and join hands with my mates. Earth, wind, fire and sea—together we can achieve anything.

Lucian gives me a sly wink, eyes glittering. "Ready for an adventure, my wild one?"

Before I can respond, wind bursts around us, snatching away my breath. The world blurs. I cling to my mates' hands, trusting Lucian's magic to carry us safely.

In a blink, the wind dies. My feet hit solid ground. I stumble, ears popping from the abrupt transition.

"Steady, sweetness." Everett's big hands grasp my waist, steadying me. I lean back against his broad chest, anchoring myself.

When the dizziness passes, I take in our new surroundings. We're halfway up the mountain slopes, evergreen trees towering around us. The icy bite of altitude stings my nose and cheeks.

We've arrived in Sky Pack territory.

Lucian inhales deeply, face turned up to the cloud-streaked sky. "Good to be home," he murmurs. Turning to us, he adds,

“I can tell that the Sky Pack wellspring has been missing me. It may be a bit before we can head out again.”

As we hike up the winding trail, I study Lucian. Being back in his own lands has changed him, erasing the tension that usually tightens his shoulders. He moves with easy grace, as if the mountain air gives him energy. He’s the wind god through and through.

Before long, we reach a clearing dotted with tidy log cabins. Sky Pack members pause in their tasks to stare as we pass. Word spreads swiftly through the remote pack that their alpha has returned.

A tall, slender woman with silver-streaked hair separated into two braids hurries forward to greet us. Lucian clasps her arm warmly.

“Well met, Edith. I’m pleased to see you all again.”

The woman returns his smile. “And we’re glad of your swift return, Alpha. The pack has urgent need of you.”

Lucian’s brows draw together. “Has something happened?”

“No, no.” Edith hastens to reassure him. “Quite the opposite. We’ve received four requests from lone wolves to join Sky Pack. All young and strong. They’re just waiting for your approval.”

“That’s good news. We’ll need the new blood.” Relief flashes across Lucian’s angular face.

Thale nods sagely, massive arms crossed over his broad chest. “Just make sure you’re certain of their loyalty. We don’t want any of Teller’s lone wolves getting in.”

“I’ll use my ability to influence emotions to check them out,” Lucian assures him. “The last thing we need is a traitor in our midst.”

Edith bows her head respectfully to Thale. “Of course, I would expect nothing less. We wait for your approval.”

She hesitates, then adds, “Let me know if you need to rest from your travels, Alpha. We’ve kept the Alpha lodges ready for you and your mate.”



“We appreciate your hospitality,” Lucian tells Edith. To us, he adds, “Come on. You lot need some time to adjust to the altitude before we keep going.”

The Alpha’s lodges are rustic but cozy, with a crackling fireplace, thick fur rugs, and a canopied bed piled high with blankets. Ever practical, Thale immediately begins checking our provisions and planning the next part of our trip.

But Lucian draws me onto the plush furs in front of the fire, nuzzling my neck. “We have a few hours before we must depart, darling. Allow me to enjoy you here in my own lands.”

His long fingers slide under my shirt, tracing delicate patterns on my skin. The heat in his icy blue eyes warms me more thoroughly than any fire.

“Of course,” I breathe, tilting my face up for his kiss. Our lips meet hungrily, all the sweeter for the rare time alone together.

Lucian lavishes attention on me, his touches worshipful yet teasing. He goes down on me right there on the fur rug, lavishing my slick folds and throbbing clit with attention until I crest against him, crying out with pleasure.

As I come down, I start to offer to return the favor, only for him to place his fingers on my mouth to hush me. “Just for you, this time, my wild one. A little moment for my omega to receive pleasure without having to give it.”

After, he holds me close, our breathing gradually returning to normal. I trace the corded muscles of his forearms, enjoying his wiry strength. My unpredictable wind god.

A knock interrupts our quiet intimacy. Adar enters, raising one red brow at our disheveled state.

“If you two are finished, we’re ready to depart.” His gravelly voice holds a note of envy. Adar always wants more of me than he gets.

Lucian meets his gaze unflinchingly. “I’ll be along when I want, Flame-Keeper.”

They stare at each other for a tense moment. Then Adar nods and leaves, a small growl in his throat. I know he respects Lucian claiming time alone with me in his own territory, but I also know that he wants his own alone time with me, preferably more than the other gods get.

With a sigh, Lucian gets up, helping me to my feet. “Come, my wild one. Our task awaits.”

The five of us make good time climbing higher up the steep mountain slopes. I’m grateful for the cold air rushing into my lungs, invigorating me. The packs and gear feel feather-light with my mates taking turns bearing the bulk of the burden.

Cresting a rise dotted with spiraling evergreen trees, Lucian pauses, sniffing the wind. I halt beside him, inhaling deeply myself. An unfamiliar scent lingers on the breeze—something earthy yet wrong.

“We’re not alone,” Adar rumbles, flames flickering to life on his palms. Thale and Everett move closer to me, their powers at the ready.

A woman steps out of the trees ahead. Even at a distance, the power radiating from her raises the hairs on my neck. Her beauty is otherworldly, with ivory skin and waves of silver-blond hair. When she smiles, the sight of her glistening fangs makes me recoil.

Vampire.

“Peace, friends,” she calls out in a melodic voice. “I mean you no harm.”

Lucian stalks forward, magic swirling around him in agitation. “These are Sky Pack lands, vampire. Your kind isn’t welcome here.”

The woman halts, raising her delicate hands in a conciliatory gesture. “Please, I only wish to talk. I know your quest, Wind God—and I wish to aid you.”

I exchange a startled glance with Lucian. How could this stranger know about our mission for the bones? Unease twists my gut. Something about her makes my skin crawl. I get the

feeling Teller is involved in this, in which case he's far more likely to want the bones for himself. No doubt so he can use them to manipulate Fern's connection to the wellspring's power—something I won't allow.

Lucian continues approaching warily. "If you know why we're here here, then you know we're not going to allow your intrusion. What makes you think we'd let you stick around?"

The vampire's ruby lips curve in a sly smile. "I can show you how to use the bones of the dead one you seek to gain more power. To free yourselves from your bonds to the wellspring, and defeat your enemy."

Snorting, Adar asks, "Not that we'll believe you, but how do you plan on doing that?"

"Destroy them," she says simply, "and the world's last omega will no longer be able to control the wellspring's power. Which means its four true guardians—the werewolf gods of each element," she says, motioning to them, "will be able to harness the wellspring's power fully. Just imagine what you could do with it... once I give you the dark spell that will unlock its power."

I don't have to ask my mates to know they disapprove. I can feel it through our bonds.

Lucian meets Sybil's gaze steadily. "No thanks, bloodsucker. Fuck the fuck off or get slayed."

Sybil's polite mask slips at his blunt rejection, eyes flashing with rage. In a blur, she vanishes. I cry out in warning as she reappears behind Lucian, white fingers grasping, fangs bared—

A wall of earth erupts between them. Thale's doing. The vampire crashes into it with a feral hiss.

Lucian whirls, magic lashing out. But Sybil is gone again. This time she materializes directly in front of me, hands grasping for my throat.

Heat explodes against my face. Adar unleashes a torrent of flames, driving Sybil back with an ear-piercing shriek. She burns as no natural creature could, skin crackling and peeling

away to reveal bloody muscle beneath. The stench makes me gag.

“Enough!”

The authoritative command rings out into the air from everywhere and nowhere, making my hackles stand up. Sybil freezes, bleeding and panting. Her bloodshot eyes fixate on me with disturbing intensity.

Slowly, her charred flesh begins to knit itself back together, healing unnaturally fast. The vampire straightens, inclining her head with a smile, and speaks into the air.

“As you wish, Master.”

Unease twists my gut. She has a master? Who controls this absolute psychopath?

Sybil’s gaze bores into mine. “You can’t keep ancient souls bound forever, Caterina,” she hisses. “And you can’t stop what’s coming. My Master will see to that.”

With those chilling words, she blurs away into the woods. This time, she doesn’t reappear.

We stand in tense silence a moment, processing the bizarre, unsettling encounter. Lucian turns to me, jaw clenched.

“She knew too much,” he mutters. “And she reeked of Teller’s stench.”

I shudder. If Sybil is connected to the general, it’s even more vital we get to those bones before he does.

We push forward, my mates clustered protectively around me. The sun sinks toward the horizon as we climb. Exhaustion weighs on me, but I force my aching legs to keep moving. We have to reach our the bones before nightfall, and before someone else gets to them.

I’m struggling not to stagger when Everett grasps my arm. “There,” he rumbles in his deep baritone.

I follow his pointing finger up the steep trail ahead. At the mountain’s summit sits a small stone altar, so weathered it

blends into the rocky peak. But there's no mistaking the power thrumming from it, even at this distance.

Fern's bones. We've found them.

With renewed energy, we hike up the last stretch. I can't tear my eyes from the ancient altar ahead, our goal finally in sight.

When we reach the summit, the gods use their powers to search for lurking threats. Finding none, they gesture for me to approach.

My heart pounds as I step up to the altar. In the center sits a weathered bowl filled with what looks like pebbles or shells. But I know they are Fern's remains, glowing with the magic of Ali's guiding spell.

I lift the bowl reverently, warmth tingling through my palms. After endless obstacles and sacrifices, we've finally gotten what I need to sever my bond to Fern. I'm one step closer to being free.

As I hug the precious bundle close, exhilaration surges through me. We did it.

I turn to my mates, joy lighting up their tired faces. Lucian grasps my shoulder, pride shining in his icy eyes.

"Well done, my wild one. Let's get you safely back home."

As we descend the mountain with our prize, new energy propels my aching legs. We're halfway down the shadowy trail when Lucian pauses, tilting his head.

"Listen."

I strain my ears. Through the whispering wind, a faint sound carries. A mournful, haunting howl, quickly cut off.

My skin prickles. Every werewolf knows that sound—the howl of a lone wolf, calling out for others of its kind.

Lucian's eyes narrow, glowing faintly with magic as he scans the darkened forest. "Something is very wrong."

We creep silently through the trees toward the origin of the lone wolf's cry. My nerves thrum with tension.

Lucian motions for us to hang back. He prowls ahead alone, a barely visible shadow.

After long, tense minutes, he returns to us. His expression sends a chill through me.

“A cave where lone wolves were known to shelter is just around the corner. But now it reeks of blood and death.” His lip curls with disgust. “And Teller’s stench lingers there too.”

Rage kindles in his icy gaze. “They’ve taken the lone wolves. Slaughtered any who resisted. The others will become his unwilling soldiers.”

Sickness twists my gut. Stealing and killing lone wolves, trying to build an army...Teller’s depravity knows no limits. And we played right into his hands, leading him to fresh victims.

Lucian grips my shoulder, reading the guilt on my face. “This is not your fault, Rina. The blame lies with Teller alone.”

I blink back helpless tears and nod. “We have to stop him. Before he can hurt anyone else.”

Grim purpose settles over my mates’ faces. Our quest is far from over.

## Chapter Five

The bones are heavier than I expect as I carefully place the ancient bundle into the iron safe in Lucian's cabin. It took immense effort and sacrifice to retrieve them from the Sky Pack mountain peak, but now Fern's remains are finally secure.

Lucian spins the combination lock and the safe clicks shut, sealing away the precious cargo. He straightens, icy blue eyes meeting mine.

"The bones will be safe here until we need them again, darling. For now, we have more pressing matters." His angular face is grim.

I nod, the familiar anger coiling in my gut as I think of General Teller. That deranged soldier is still out there, seeking to destroy all packs. And his monstrous experiments with the stolen lone wolves weigh heavy on my conscience. We have to stop him before he can hurt anyone else.

"Let's go take down that bastard once and for all," I say fiercely.

Lucian's eyes glitter with satisfaction. He enjoys seeing my rebellious spark.

"Too right, my wild one."

The others are waiting outside, features etched with similar determination. Thale's broad shoulders are tense, his powers on edge, making the plants and animals around us vibrate with tension.

“The bones secure?” rumbles Thale. At my nod, he relaxes minutely.

“All that’s left is to find the bastard’s nest,” Adar growls, cracking his knuckles. His blazing eyes promise violence.

Lucian lifts his head, scenting the wind. After a moment, he points south. “Teller’s stench leads that way. He’s set up camp at the base of the mountains.”

“Of course. He wants the wellspring,” Thale mutters. “He’s going to try to get at least one of them back now we’ve secured them. But the Mountain Pack wellspring is his ultimate goal.”

I shudder at the thought of Teller’s corrupted hands on the wellspring’s power. “We have to get there first and stop him.”

Lucian nods, icy eyes glittering with anticipation. “Too right, darling. Let’s go roast that bastard.”

Flames ignite on Adar’s fists as he pounds one hand into the other. “Past time we ended him.”

Just as we turn to head for Teller’s camp, the air in front of Thale shimmers. A small portal opens, and a piece of paper floats out.

Thale snatches the paper from the air, scanning it quickly. “A message from your witch friend Ali,” he rumbles. “The federal army has sent envoys looking for me in my territory.”

I tense. If army officials have come seeking Thale, it likely means they’re ready to make a move regarding Teller’s attacks on the packs. But will they support us against the rogue general, or blame the packs for his actions?

“They have impeccable timing,” Lucian says dryly.

“We can’t afford to ignore a summons from the army while their treaty with the packs still holds,” Thale says. “Much as I would rather tear out Teller’s throat this instant.”

I lay a hand on his massive forearm. “You’re right. We have to deal with them first.”



As Mountain Pack's alpha, Thale has little choice but to answer the army's call. If he ignored them, it would give them an excuse to break the treaty completely and strike openly at all packs.

"Very well." Thale's shoulders slump briefly before squaring with resolve. "Let us go and see what these government dogs want."

The army envoys are waiting at the pack border when we arrive. I count a dozen men and women in formal uniforms, armed but trying not to look it. Their sharp eyes assess our approach.

Thale takes the lead, radiating authority. The rest of us fan out slightly behind him in silent support. I lift my chin and stare down the officials, daring them to challenge us here on our own lands.

But when the apparent leader steps forward, he nods respectfully to Thale. "Alpha. Thank you for agreeing to parlay. We have much to discuss."

Thale inclines his head slightly. "Speak your purpose."

The envoy clears his throat. "Firstly, we are here to officially repudiate the actions of General Teller and his rogue battalion. Their attacks on your packs violate our treaty and do not represent the policies of our government."

I bite my tongue to keep from scoffing in disbelief. As if they don't secretly approve of Teller trying to subjugate werewolves.

But this song and dance is familiar. The army must distance itself from Teller now that his coup is failing.

Thale's eyes bore into the nervous envoy. "Your government has supported Teller's ambitions in the past. Why should we believe now is different?"

The man tugs at his collar. "Teller persuaded certain short-sighted parties his plans had merit and swore he wouldn't be breaking the treaties. He lied, obviously. When we recognized the, ah, flaws in his methods, he broke from our command structure."

Lies, of course. But this is the dance of politics between their kind and ours. If we point that out, they'll only attack further.

“Of course,” Thale rumbles. “What does your government propose to make amends for this unfortunate... misunderstanding?”

The envoy relaxes slightly at Thale's diplomatic tone. “First of all, we're willing to give you supplies and tactical support for any actions your pack takes against Teller. And perhaps more importantly, consideration of”—he glances at his notes—“territorial concessions.”

I blink in surprise. Land concessions are not a small offer. Teller's failure seems to have frightened them more than I realized.

Thale strokes his beard thoughtfully. “Specific concessions?”

“We are prepared to cede a significant portion of forested areas adjacent to your current territory.” The envoy meets Thale's gaze steadily. “In acknowledgement of...unmet obligations. And the need for more secure borders.”

It's a solid offer. Thale could expand Mountain Pack lands substantially, and with them, the magical wards that protect our territory. Teller would be forced out of the foothills he's claimed as his new base.

Thale eyes the envoy shrewdly, then nods. “Very well. Your concessions are accepted as a gesture of good faith between our peoples. Provided they are enacted swiftly.”

Relief flashes across the envoy's face. “Of course, Alpha. We will begin surveying the new boundaries today. You have my word.”

He knows Thale could easily take far more land than they've offered. But the army will be rid of Teller, and the packs prefer peaceful relations when possible.

Thale clasps arms with the envoy, sealing the deal. “Then we shall let you proceed with your work. Safe travels.”

The envoy bows again. “And to you, Alpha. Please send word if we can assist against the traitor Teller.”

But we all know any “assistance” will be token at best. As usual, the packs stand alone against those who wish us harm.

Still, it is something to have forced the army’s hand, increasing our territory and resources.

We watch the envoy and his people depart, keeping our body language neutral. Only once they are out of sight do we relax and turn to each other.

“Well played,” Lucian tells Thale, clapping a hand on his shoulder. “That was subtly done.”

“A substantial gain for our pack,” rumbles Thale. But his eyes remain troubled. “But Teller is still a threat. And new land comes with the responsibility to defend it.”

“We’ll be ready for him,” Adar growls. Flames dance along his knuckles.

I glance south toward the mountains where Teller lurks. “At least he’ll be forced to abandon his camp in the foothills now.”

It will limit Teller’s options, and give us time to shore up the pack’s new defenses. Thale can use his magic to fortify the expanded borders.

For now, Teller will have to retreat and regroup. But we all know the rogue general will be back. And the next time our packs clash, only one side will be left standing.

Thale takes my hand, reading my troubled thoughts. “Do not fear, dear one. United, we are strong.”

I cling to his steady strength, breathing in the reassuring scent of fresh earth. Together, we will protect our people from anything.

The work of securing our new territory begins swiftly. Thale wastes no time utilizing his magic as Mountain Pack’s alpha to fortify the expanded borders. I can feel the thrum of power each time he sinks his hands into the earth, murmuring ancient words to awaken the land’s guardian spirits.

The forests and hills hum with energy as the new wards take shape. Our territory has nearly doubled overnight, creating a formidable natural barrier around the heart of Mountain Pack lands.

Teller will have a difficult time attacking us again. But I know better than to underestimate his magic or tricks.

“Will the new wards be enough to keep Teller out?” I ask Thale as we survey a section of dense woods he recently awakened.

“They will not stop him indefinitely,” rumbles Thale. “But any attempt to breach them will require considerable power. Power he does not currently possess now that he no longer has access to a wellspring.”

I nod, taking comfort in his confidence. Thale understands the land and its magic better than anyone.

Still, unease gnaws at my gut. Teller managed to get through our wards before. If he finds a way to counter our new defenses, the consequences would be dire.

Almost as if reading my thoughts, Thale squeezes my shoulder. “Do not borrow trouble, dear heart. Focus on the present. Teller is weakened and in retreat.”

I force a smile, pushing down my worries. “You’re right. We should be celebrating our gains.”

Thale’s stern face softens. “Go spend time with your other mates. I must continue securing the borders, but that is slow work. They will help keep your spirits up.”

I lean up on tiptoe to kiss Thale’s bearded cheek. “Thank you. Don’t overexert yourself, my oak. The wards can wait one night.”

He huffs amusement. “I promise to rest soon. Now go.”

With a wave, I head off to find the others. Thale is right—I need distraction from fretting about the future.

I discover Lucian outside the cabin we’ve claimed as our own, gazing up at the stars coming out overhead. He glances over with a smile as I approach and holds out an arm.

I tuck myself against his lean frame, soaking in his crisp scent. “How are the borders?”

“Thale is working himself to the bone, of course,” Lucian murmurs. “But the new wards are strong. Even Teller will have difficulty slipping past unnoticed.”

I shudder at the thought of the rogue general trespassing on our lands again. “Is there no way to drive him off for good?”

Lucian’s angular face turns grim. “Men like Teller do not stop until they are dead. Our only option is to kill him.” He bares his teeth. “And I look forward to delivering that blow.”

Sensing my unease, he squeezes me gently. “But let’s not talk about dark things tonight. We’re mated now, and we’ve barely gotten to celebrate that. Come.”

He leads me inside the cozy cabin, where Adar and Everett are waiting. My fiery warrior has kindled a blaze in the hearth. Everett sits whittling some small piece of wood, but sets his work aside when we enter.

Lucian presses a glass of rich red wine into my hand as we join them. “To our victories,” he declares, lifting his own glass. We echo the toast, drinking deeply.

The wine warms me, kindling a spark of anticipation. After the long, difficult journey here, it’s a luxury to share quiet time together. Just the five of us, without threat looming.

Tomorrow the work continues. But tonight, I intend to indulge in my mates’ passion and leave all worries outside.

Adar’s mouth claims mine hungrily, his fangs grazing my lower lip. The taste of him mingled with the heady wine makes me dizzy with need. I kiss him back fiercely, my omega instincts rising to the surface.

Being surrounded by the rich, woodsy scents of my powerful alpha mates has arousal building steadily within me. The journey here was long and grueling, with little opportunity for intimacy. Now my body craves their claim.

Sensing my need, Adar deepens the kiss. His hands trail down to grip my hips, pulling me harder against him. I can

feel his rigid length pressing into my belly, separated only by the thin fabric of our clothes.

Lucian presses up behind me, deft fingers working at the laces of my shirt. “I think our wild one is eager to be reminded she belongs to us,” he murmurs, nibbling the sensitive spot beneath my ear.

I whimper agreement, tilting my head to give him better access. My skin feels hyper-sensitive, desperate for their touch.

With Lucian’s help, Adar makes short work of my clothing. His blazing amber eyes take in my naked body possessively.

“On the bed, precious,” he orders. “We’re going to take you apart tonight.”

Anticipation coils hotly in my core. I recline back on the luxurious furs, watching through heavy-lidded eyes as my mates disrobe.

It’s a mouthwatering sight. Lucian’s leanly muscular frame radiates restrained power. Adar’s physique is honed for speed and aggression, all coiled strength under golden brown skin.

But it’s the rigid evidence of their desire that makes me bite my lip and squirm with need. My alpha mates are generously gifted in that regard, their substantial arousal apparent.

Lucian’s elegant cock stands proudly from his lean frame, long and thick with a subtly flared head. A prominent vein traces along the underside, disappearing into a nest of pale curls.

Adar’s rigid length is darker, with more pronounced bulging veins along the shaft. The broad head flares out sharply, the barbs and knot designed to catch and swell inside an omega. His heavy balls are drawn up tight with lust.

My mouth waters imagining how Everett’s massive endowment will feel, entering me again. His cock is proportional to his huge body, astoundingly thick. The head alone looks almost too large to fit inside me.

Seeing my alphas' powerful arousal has my slick arousing in anticipation. I can't wait to feel them buried deep within me, claiming my omega body thoroughly.

Lucian joins me first, bracing himself above me. His cool facade finally cracks, icy eyes burning with lust.

"You have no idea what you do to us, darling," he rasps. "The restraint required not to take you like animals."

His words make me shiver. These dominant alphas constantly leash the wildness in their nature, for my sake. But sometimes, I crave seeing that beastly side of them unleashed.

Sensing the direction of my thoughts, Lucian smiles wickedly. He captures my wrists in an iron grip, pinning them above my head. I test his hold instinctively, but can't break free.

"Is this what you want, little omega?" he growls. "To be reminded who dominates you?"

I bare my throat in submission, heart racing. "Yes, Alpha."

Satisfaction flashes across Lucian's angular features, his icy eyes burning with lustful intent. Keeping my wrists trapped together in one strong hand, he uses the other to firmly grasp his rigid length.

I watch avidly as he rubs the broad, flushed head through my slick folds, coating himself in my arousal. My inner muscles clench instinctively, eager to be filled.

Lucian positions his cock at my entrance, the wide head nudging between my sensitive lips. Below the prominent crown, I can see the beginnings of the swollen knot at the base of his shaft. Just the sight of it makes me shiver in anticipation.

I gasp as he begins to push inside, stretching me open around his considerable girth. Despite my readiness, there is still a sharp bite of pain as my body struggles to accommodate his size.

Lucian doesn't pause, driven by alpha instinct to fully sheath himself. I know once his growing knot presses past my

entrance, I'll be utterly helpless and at his mercy. The thought sends a thrill of submission through me.

Inch by inch he fills me, until finally his hips meet mine. I can feel the bulge of his knot catch on my rim, not yet swollen enough to lock us together. Lucian holds himself there for a moment, throbbing hot and huge inside me.

When he pulls back to thrust powerfully in again, I cry out at the overwhelming sensation of his barbs raking my channel. The promise of what's to come has slick flooding my core, my inner walls clinging to every ridge and vein. The mingled pleasure and pain is dizzying.

He sets a demanding pace, taking his pleasure from my prone body. One hand still pins my wrists overhead, restraining me completely. The other grips my hip with bruising force as he drives into me again and again.

"You feel incredible, my Rina," Lucian grits out. "So tight and wet for me."

The thick drag of his cock hits the most sensitive spots deep within me, sending sparks of heat swirling through my core. On every thrust, his swollen knot tugs at my rim before pulling free again.

I wrap my legs tightly around his waist, striving to take him even deeper. I want to feel that knot swell and lock us together at the height of passion.

Lucian's eyes blaze with feral satisfaction at my surrender. His hips snap harder into mine, the growing knot at his base catching on my entrance with each brutal thrust now.

The promise of being tied to this powerful alpha has me right on the brink of ecstasy. All I can do is take it, overwhelmed by the sensations as Lucian ruts between my thighs.

His swollen bulge grinds against my rim, so close to swelling fully and locking inside. I'm helpless beneath the onslaught of pleasure, ready to come apart on his knot.

When I feel my peak approaching, Lucian slows his pace. I whine in protest, inner walls clenching around him greedily.



But he withdraws completely, leaving me aching and empty.

Adar is there to take his place, gripping my thighs and spreading them wide. His amber eyes burn with lust and love.

“Need to be inside you, precious,” he rasps. “Need to feel you come on my knot.”

Desperate to have him, I reach down to position his thick cock head at my slick entrance. As I guide the tip inside, I can feel the hard bulge of Adar’s knot at the base, not yet swollen.

Just the promise of that swelling fullness has me shivering in anticipation. Adar sinks into me with a groan, his ridged length stretching and filling me exquisitely.

He gives me a moment to adjust to his girth. Then he begins driving into me with powerful strokes. I cling to his shoulders, nails digging in, as he takes me right to the brink of ecstasy.

With every thrust, his growing knot tugs at my rim, catching before popping free each time. The stimulation has me racing toward the edge, desperate to finally take the whole swelling tie.

“Please, Alpha, I’m so close,” I gasp out.

In answer, Adar grinds his hips against mine on the next thrust. His swollen bulge presses past my entrance, knot swelling rapidly to lock us together.

The steadily growing pressure triggers my climax. I shatter around him with a scream, inner muscles clamping down rhythmically on that hard swelling.

Adar’s swollen knot finally pops past my rim, swelling rapidly to lock us together. I cry out at the intense stretch, hovering on the brink between pleasure and pain.

“That’s it, take my knot,” Adar grits out above me. “Take it all, precious.”

His broad hands grip my hips, holding me still while his bulge swells impossibly larger, ensuring the tie. I’m helpless, pinned in place by his massive girth, stretched wide around the swollen base of his cock.

When I feel Adar begin to pulse, his release flooding my clenching inner walls, it triggers another intense orgasm. I shudder and convulse beneath him as ecstasy crashes through me.

“Yes, milk every drop,” Adar rasps, prolonging my peak with steady pulses of his hot seed.

We remain tied together for long, blissful minutes, his heart pounding against my chest. I float in peaceful satisfaction, reveling in the connection of our bodies joined by his swollen knot.

Eventually Adar’s knot deflates enough for him to slip free. Before I can feel the loss, Lucian pulls me into his arms.

“Such a good girl, taking us both so well,” he croons. His clever fingers slide between my legs, gathering the slick evidence of my arousal and his fellow alpha’s release.

I whimper as he presses two digits into me, thrusting lazily. My inner muscles are hyper-sensitive, hovering on the brink of another peak.

Lucian’s thumb finds the swollen bud of nerves at my apex, rubbing slow circles. Sparks skitter across my skin everywhere he touches.

“You’ll come for me like this, won’t you darling?” Lucian murmurs. “I want to watch you fall apart again.”

Between his stroking fingers and the relentless pressure on my clit, he soon has me writhing mindlessly. My peak crests again, wringing a hoarse cry from my throat.

Lucian works me through it until I collapse limply against him. He kisses my sweat-damp hair, withdrawing his fingers.

“What a good omega you are, Rina,” he praises. “But we’re not done with you yet.”

Anticipation licks through me. I know what comes next. What I’ve been craving most.

## Chapter Six

Everett is waiting patiently nearby. At Lucian's nod, the massive sea god joins us on the bed. I shiver at the raw hunger in his sea-glass eyes.

"Tell me if you need me to slow down, sweet thing," Everett rumbles. I nod eagerly.

He lays me back against the pillows, covering me with his powerful body. The broad head of his massive cock nudges my slick entrance, and I gasp.

I can feel the hard swell of his knot already forming. After taking two alphas already, the intense stretch of him is almost too much.

Everett goes slowly, allowing my body to gradually adjust around his massive girth. I can feel his growing knot catch on my rim with each shallow thrust.

When he finally seats himself to the hilt, I let out a shattered moan. The bulge of his swelling knot locks us momentarily before he pulls back, tugging it free.

Everett surrounds me entirely, his much larger frame engulfing mine. I know once that huge swelling pops inside and ties us, I'll be utterly helpless in the grip of his rut.

He gives me a moment to acclimate to his size, thrusting shallowly. Then he begins moving with deeper, steady strokes. Each one nudges his swelling knot against my entrance.

I wrap my legs tightly around his waist, striving to take his huge girth. Everett is unhurried but thorough, gradually

stoking me higher until I'm writhing and pleading for more.

"Please, Alpha," I sob, "I need to come, I need your knot..."

Everett responds by quickening his pace slightly, just enough to bring me to the brink. His thumb finds my clit, adding just the right pressure to finally push me over.

My climax crashes through me like a tidal wave. Everett continues working me through it until the base of his cock swells rapidly.

His massive knot locks us together, pulsing against my spasming inner walls. The intense swelling pressure triggers another mind-shattering orgasm that whites out my vision.

I'm only distantly aware of Everett grunting his own release, flooding my clenching channel with heat. We remain tied together, his huge swollen bulge ensuring his seed takes root deep inside me.

When I float back down from the heights of ecstasy, I become aware of Lucian's scent enveloping me. He presses close, caressing my face as I blink up at him dazedly.

"You're so beautiful like this, darling," he murmurs. "Tied on Everett's knot, stuffed full of his release."

Lucian captures my mouth in a heated kiss, his tongue mimicking the rhythmic pulsing of Everett's cock within me. I can't move, can only take the dual stimulation of knot and kiss.

I whimper when Lucian finally breaks the kiss, only to gasp as he straddles my chest instead. His long, elegant cock bobs before my lips.

"Suck me, Rina," Lucian commands. "While Everett fills you, I want to feel that sweet mouth."

Dizzy with arousal, I obey, licking the beads of fluid from his tip before suckling him deep. Lucian groans, tangling his fingers in my hair.

Between my legs, I feel Everett's huge swelling begin to deflate slowly. But Lucian quickly has me moaning around his

length, his subtle thrusts nudging into my throat.

When Lucian finally pulls back with a bitten-off curse and spills himself across my breasts, I whimper at the warm splatter coating my sensitized skin.

Lucian strokes my face tenderly. “My perfect, beautiful omega,” he praises. I drift in a haze of blissful satisfaction under the gaze of my devoted alphas.

Eventually the swelling deflates enough for Everett to slip free. I feel his absence like a tangible loss, my core aching and empty.

But Lucian pulls me close, pressing gentle kisses over my face. “You did so well, darling. We’re all here.”

The reminder of my mates’ presence settles me. I bask in their combined scents and the warmth of their bodies bracketing mine.

Later, we share a bath, my alphas taking turns washing me with reverent hands. Their tender caresses are a balm on my pleasantly sore body.

After we dry off, Adar insists on carrying me back to bed. I let him fuss over me, secretly thrilled by their protectiveness.

Safe in their arms, I drift towards sleep, utterly spent and satisfied. The looming war seems very far away right now.

Tomorrow I’ll worry about Teller, and the future of the packs. But tonight, I’m exactly where I belong—claimed by my devoted alphas.

I awake slowly, blinking against the sunlight streaming in through the cabin windows. For a moment, I simply bask in the cozy nest of furs, breathing in the earthy scent embedded in them.

A warm weight shifts behind me, and I feel the tickle of Thale’s beard against my shoulder as he nuzzles into me. His strong arm tightens around my waist, enveloping me in his reassuring bulk.

I lace my fingers through his, marveling at the contrast of his massive hand against my own. Thale could crush stone in that grip, yet he holds me as gently as if I were a fledgling bird.

“Good morning, dear one,” he rumbles, voice still rough with sleep.

Rolling over to face him, I trace the rugged lines of his beloved face. “Hello, my oak.”

Thale’s features soften, forest green eyes glowing with affection. We share a slow, sweet kiss, simply savoring the reconnection.

I’ve missed having my sturdy oak beside me at night. Warding the expanded borders kept him away from me last night. But now with the territory secured, he is finally able to rejoin me.

As the kiss deepens, I feel Thale’s hands begin to wander, tracing reverent paths along my body. I sigh encouragement against his mouth, my own fingers tracing the thick cords of muscle in his arms.

When we finally draw back, Thale’s gaze is heated. “Forgive me, dear one. After so many hours apart, having you in my arms again stirs my blood.” His big hand cups my cheek tenderly. “I have missed you more than words can express.”

My heart swells with emotion. “And I you, my god. But you don’t need to apologize for wanting me.” I cover his hand with my own. “Please, make me yours once more.”

A rumble escapes Thale’s chest. With infinite care, he lowers me back against the pillows. I open my arms in welcome as he covers me with his powerful body.

We undress one another slowly, hands roaming newly bared skin. Thale’s hot mouth trails kisses down my throat and over my breasts, stoking the flames building within me.

When his fingers find my slick folds, I gasp his name. Thale growls approvingly at the evidence of my arousal. He takes his time preparing me thoroughly, until I’m writhing with need.

“Please, my alpha,” I finally beg, “I need you.”

Thale rumbles reassurance, settling between my thighs. He keeps his forest green eyes locked with mine as he guides his thick, rigid length to my slick entrance.

I gasp as the broad head nudges my sensitive folds apart. I can already feel his knot beginning to swell with arousal.

“Breathe, dear one,” Thale murmurs. “I will go slowly.”

The first press of him breaching me makes me moan. The thick slide of his shaft stretching me open is almost too much to take. But I focus on relaxing as he sinks inside by inches, allowing my body to gradually adjust around his considerable girth.

When Thale finally seats himself to the hilt, I let out a shattered cry. I’ve never felt so perfectly filled and completed.

He stills, jaw clenched with restraint. I know it’s taking every ounce of his control not to start driving into me.

“Please,” I gasp, “I need to feel you move.”

I wrap my legs tightly around his waist, urging him deeper. With a groan, Thale begins to move—deep, powerful strokes that light every nerve within me.

“Yes, just like that,” I cry, nails raking down his broad back.

Thale captures my mouth in a searing kiss, muffling my cries of pleasure. We cling together, mouths joining as our bodies join again and again.

The steady glide of his thick length strokes my inner walls perfectly. And each time he withdraws, his swollen knot tugs deliciously at my entrance before popping free.

Thale gradually quickens his pace as our shared pleasure mounts, stroking into me with deep, powerful thrusts. I wrap my legs higher around his waist, opening myself fully to his claiming.

“Yes, Thale, more!” I cry out, teetering right on the brink of ecstasy.

In response, he begins snapping his hips harder into mine. I feel his swollen knot catch and tug at my entrance with each plunge now. The stimulation has me racing toward the edge.

“Please, I need your knot!” I beg desperately.

With a growl, Thale drives into me one final time. His thick knot pushes past my lips and begins rapidly swelling larger, locking us together. The building pressure triggers my climax and I scream his name, inner walls clamping down rhythmically on that hard swelling.

Thale’s muscular arms tremble with the effort to hold back his own peak as my climax ripples through me, my inner walls spasming around him. I cling to his broad shoulders, gasping his name in ecstasy, fully lost in the storm of sensation.

As I start to float back down to earth, Thale finally lets go of his tenuous control with a ragged roar. I feel his throbbing length pulse within me as he finds his own shattering release.

I gasp and arch into him at the feeling of liquid heat flooding my core in potent bursts, prolonging my peak deliciously. In this moment we are one, our pleasure and passion intertwined.

Thale collapses over me, spent and sated. I stroke his sweat-slick back as we catch our breath, still joined together intimately. When he lifts his head to meet my gaze, the emotion shining in his forest green eyes steals mine.

“My Rina,” he rasps fervently. “My everything.”

Overwhelmed by the power of our bond, I can only answer by pulling him down into a tender kiss. No further words are needed.

We remain tied together, his massive knot ensuring I take every drop of his seed. I cling to Thale, overwhelmed by the intensity of our joining. Thale nuzzles into my hair, rumbling contentedly

Eventually, Thale’s knot deflates enough for him to slip free. I feel the loss of connection like an ache in my soul. Sensing this, he gathers me close.



“Hush now, I am here,” Thale soothes, raining gentle kisses over my face.

His tender devotion brings tears to my eyes. “I love you,” I whisper fervently. “My true mate, my alpha.”

Thale’s expression turns fierce. “And I you, dear one. More than the earth itself, you are my world entire.”

After we’ve caught our breath, Thale begins pressing tender kisses over my face and throat. I sigh blissfully at the affectionate attention, running my fingers through his tousled hair.

Slowly his kisses trail lower, worshipping every inch of my body. He takes his time, determined to show me just how cherished I am. Thale’s big hands caress my skin reverently as his mouth follows their path.

I lose myself in the sensuality of his unhurried exploration, awash in the love shining from his forest green eyes. My body comes alive everywhere his lips touch, craving more of this exquisite torment.

When he finally joins our bodies again, it’s with gentle passion. We move together unrushed, simply savoring each gasp and sigh drawn from the other. The intensity of our emotional connection eclipse even the physical pleasure.

Afterwards we collapse in a tangle of sated limbs, trading tender kisses and whispers. My heart overflows with love for this complex, steadfast man who sees me as his entire world. I drift off curled against Thale’s chest, his heartbeat strong beneath my cheek.

## Chapter Seven

**W**ith Lucian's help to swiftly transport us there, I take Fern's ancient bones from the safe and bring them to the Mountain Pack's magic wellspring. My four devoted mates accompany me, along with my best friend Ali, whose witchcraft will be needed for the ritual.

My hands tremble slightly as I hold the bundle of bones close to my chest, feeling their power and familiarity. So much sacrifice went into reaching this place. Now we must complete the final step—returning Fern's remains to the wellspring that put her soul in my body.

Ali helps me lay out the bones in a circle around the Mating Circle. Strange symbols glow to life beneath them at her murmured incantation. Together we kneel beside the makeshift altar.

“Are you ready?” Ali asks, squeezing my hand. I take a deep, steadying breath and nod. With her guidance, I begin the ritual chant, calling on the wellspring to receive its trapped spirit once more.

The very air seems to still around us as magic builds. Then I feel it—a familiar, beloved presence enfolding me. Fern's soul brushes mine like a bittersweet caress.

“Rina,” her whisper fills my mind. “You've done it. You've brought me home.”

I'm swept up in a swell of emotions—Fern's joy, grief, and bone-deep weariness mingling with my own tumultuous feelings.

“I’m here,” I tell her. “I won’t leave you alone this time.”

Fern’s consciousness surrounds me as she draws nearer to the spell’s light. “Dear one, you’ve done it. You’ve brought me home. Now the souls I tethered to mine can finally rest... thank you, Caterina.”

Fern’s gratitude washes over me. Then scenes from her life begin to unfold—glimpses of joy and sorrow, passion and sacrifice. I witness her tragic end and the violent alphas she condemned as she brought the omega souls to the wellspring’s depths. Her last memories of the world above, tinged with sorrowful hope for the future.

A vision coalesces before me—a petite woman with kind eyes and long dark hair. Fern’s lost omega sister, Calli. My heart aches at the reminder of my own sister-in-spirit, Ali.

The images come faster, centuries of memories pouring out. Fern shared this life with me when she first came to the wellspring, but now the full force of it threatens to sweep me away.

I cling to my connection with her, determined not to let her face this alone. Fern’s spirit wraps around mine, bolstering me. The torrent slows to a trickle, then fades away.

“Thank you for staying,” Fern whispers. “I wasn’t sure I could bear to remember it all again.”

My throat tightens with emotion. “That’s what sisters do. Now rest, Fern. Your sacrifice will finally keep all omegas safe for eternity.”

The wellspring is activated as we speak. A light bursts from the ancient stones of the Mating Circle, beckoning Fern’s soul back to the guardian role she sacrificed everything for.

I feel our connection severing as she withdraws into the light. Her last words echo in my mind, full of love. “Guard your packs well, dear one. Your future is bright.”

Then the light flares once and winks out. Fern is gone, her broken remains all that remain. I bow my head, overflowing with bittersweet emotion. It is done.

Gentle hands help me to my feet. I blink up at my worried mates through a sheen of tears. Their beloved faces swim back into focus, grounding me.

“Did it work?” Thale rumbles. “Is she at peace?”

I nod, not yet trusting my voice. They gather close, offering wordless comfort. I cling to their strength, breathing in their familiar scents until the lingering ache of Fern’s loss eases.

Finally I find my voice again. “It’s over. She’s where she belongs now.” I manage a watery smile. “No more hitchhikers in my head.”

Lucian presses a fierce kiss to my hair. “Then our path is clear, my wild one. We finish Teller, sever our own bonds to the wellspring, and then...” His icy eyes glint with promise.

“Live happily ever after?” I suggest impishly.

Adar chuckles. “Something like that, precious.” His expression turns serious. “But Teller first. He won’t stop until he’s dead and burned.”

“Too right,” Thale rumbles. “We end the bastard for good, then claim the future we desire.” He cups my cheek tenderly. “You have been so brave, dear heart. Soon you’ll have all you’ve dreamed of.”

I lean into his steadying strength, allowing myself to picture that future we’ve sacrificed so much for. A home here with my mates, my pack bonds strong, new life growing within me. Hard-won peace.

We’ve taken the first step by laying Fern’s spirit to rest. Now we finish this fight, once and for all.

## Chapter Eight

A brisk knock at the cabin door startles me from my brooding. Before I can react, Lucian flashes to answer it, ever wary of potential threats. His tense posture relaxes when he glimpses our visitors.

“Lady Talon, Elder Calliope—this is a surprise.” He steps back to allow them inside.

I get up from my chair from my chair as the two women sweep inside, trailing Thale and Adar in their wake. My mom’s blue eyes are bright with excitement, her usual cynicism absent. Calliope wears a similar eager expression that seems out of place on her wizened features.

My gaze darts between them in surprise. “Is everything alright? Did something happen?”

“All is well, dear one,” Thale rumbles reassuringly. But curiosity glimmers in his pale eyes.

Talon clasps my hands, giving them an enthusiastic squeeze. “Better than well, actually. Calliope and I have discovered something incredible!”

The elder nods, smiling broadly. “Oh yes, such fortunate news! We’ve found a ritual to free your gods from the wellspring’s bonds.”

For a moment her words don’t register. Then the meaning hits me like a blow, forcing the air from my lungs. “Truly?” I gasp. “We’ve been looking for a way now that there’s a new guardian—is it really possible?”

“According to the text I found, it is,” Talon confirms. “The details are complex, but it describes a previous guardian sacrificing their lesser abilities to retain only their core powers. Your gods should be able to do the same.”

I sway on my feet, dizzy with disbelief and tentative joy. Lucian’s arm encircles my waist, steadying me. “Easy, my wild one. Breathe.”

Thale strokes his beard thoughtfully. “Sacrifice our secondary gifts, but keep command over the elements? That may satisfy the wellspring’s bargain.” His gaze sharpens with interest. “You are certain this ritual will work?”

Calliope nods. “I have studied it extensively and believe so, Alpha. Combined with the waxing moon tomorrow eve, the timing could not be better.” Her expression grows fervent. “This ritual can free all four of you. I am sure of it.”

I glance between them, hardly daring to hope. “You really think so? We can finally be free of this?”

Lucian takes my hand, icy eyes warm with promise. “It seems fate has finally favored us, my wild one. This was the next part of our plan. It seems we’re getting to it faster than we’d hoped.”

His faith bolsters me. The gods don’t get their hopes up for nothing.

Adar crosses his arms, brow furrowed. “I don’t like relying on rituals and moon phases. Action gets results.” He frowns impatiently. “Still, if this works...”

“We must try, brother.” Everett’s deep voice rumbles like distant thunder. “The wellspring’s claim on us cannot continue.” His sea-glass eyes meet mine. “For Rina’s sake, and the pack’s.”

I cling to his massive hand, hope and fear warring within me. After so many disappointments, part of me fears getting my hopes up. And yet...this time feels different. The atmosphere fairly crackles with possibility.

Sensing my roiling emotions, Thale draws me close. “All will be well, dear heart. Have faith.” His earthen scent and the

brush of his beard against my cheek soothe my doubts. Thale's strength flows into me, calming my anxious spirit.

Tomorrow night we will know for certain if this ritual holds the key to our freedom. But tonight, with victory so close at hand, we have earned a celebration.

After profusely thanking Talon and Calliope for their discovery, I lead my eager alphas away to properly express our gratitude. Their hands begin roaming my body hungrily as we retreat to our cabin's spacious bedroom, shedding clothes along the way.

Everett pauses to collect a bottle of aged whiskey and four glasses from the kitchen. "A perfect liquor for a happy occasion," he rumbles. I smile, touched by his thoughtfulness.

Inside the bedroom, Lucian uncorks the bottle and pours a generous amount into each glass. The sharp, complex aroma of oak and vanilla fills the air. We raise our drinks together in a wordless toast before sipping the smooth whiskey.

The heat of the alcohol kindles the growing fire in my blood. I set my half-finished glass aside and turn my attention to undressing my mates the rest of the way. They reciprocate eagerly, until we stand naked in front of each other, skin flushed with anticipation.

Everett captures my mouth in a searing kiss, letting me taste the whiskey on his tongue. At the same time, Lucian presses up behind me, his clever hands cupping my breasts as his lips graze the sensitive spot beneath my ear. I moan softly, awash in sensation.

We have so much to celebrate tonight. And I fully intend for us all to be thoroughly satisfied by the time the sun rises.

Lucian presses me up against the closed door, cool palms skimming my flushed skin. His clever mouth claims mine, tongue delving aggressively to tangle with my own. I yield to him with a moan, craving his intensity.

Our kisses grow heated, hands roaming eagerly. But I'm aware of our other mates nearby, waiting their turn, and it intensifies my desire for Lucian.

“My ferocious goddess,” Lucian rasps when we finally break for air. “Tomorrow you shall be wholly mine. Or I wholly yours.” His icy eyes burn with possessive need.

The thought of finally belonging fully to one another, bound by love and unbound by supernatural forces, kindles a fresh wave of arousal low in my core. Unable to resist, I capture Lucian’s hands and guide them purposefully between my bare thighs.

I press his elegant fingers against my slick, aching flesh. “Feel how ready I am for you,” I whisper.

Lucian’s nostrils flare at the unmistakable evidence of my desire coating his fingertips. His icy eyes blaze with sudden hunger. I know I am playing with fire, provoking the formidable wind god’s lust. But I cannot help craving the wildness I unleash in him.

“Take me as though I’m already yours alone,” I challenge Lucian boldly. To my other mates I say, “Let Lucian have this first turn. Yours will wait.”

There are growls from throughout the room, but none stronger than the growl of my wind god mate. A fierce growl rumbles from his chest. Deftly he grips my thighs and lifts me effortlessly. I automatically lock my legs around his lean waist for balance. The rigid length of his cock presses hot and eager against my core, even through the barrier of clothing still separating us.

Lucian carries me the few steps to our spacious bed. Gazing down at me, his expression promises untamed passion tempered by adoration.

“With pleasure, my Rina.”

True to his word, Lucian makes good on his sensual promise, claiming every inch of my body with fierce passion. He begins by stripping away the last barriers of clothing separating us.

Once I am bare, his hands skim reverently over every curve and hollow, stoking the flames higher. I arch into his cool palms, craving more contact.



Lucian's clever mouth follows the path blazed by his hands, lips and tongue worshiping my sensitive breasts until I am gasping. He suckles each tight peak before continuing lower.

I jump and clutch at the furs beneath me as his tongue delves between my thighs to taste my slick evidence of arousal. The sight of Lucian's golden head buried there has my inner muscles clenching with need.

He works me into a frenzy with lips and tongue until I am mindless, teetering at the brink. Only then does he finally cease his exquisite torture.

Lucian surges over me, pale eyes burning with lust and love mingled. "I need to be inside you, Rina," he growls.

In answer I wrap my legs around his lean hips, locking my ankles at the small of his back. I lift my hips in blatant invitation, desperate to feel him fill me.

Bracing himself above me, Lucian aligns our bodies in one smooth stroke. We both cry out as he sinks into my slick depths. The sensation of his thick length stretching and filling me is indescribable bliss.

Lucian pauses to collect himself, muscles corded with restraint. "Tell me if I hurt you," he grits out.

I caress his beloved face tenderly. "You could never hurt me. Please, Lucian, move."

At my pleading words, his control shatters. Lucian begins driving into me with powerful thrusts. I cling to his shoulders, rocking my hips up to meet each plunge. We find our rhythm swiftly, moving as one. The other gods watch from around the bed, at just enough of a distance, waiting and hungry.

The tension coils tighter and tighter within me until finally it crests, exploding through my senses. I can feel the jealousy and possession of my other mates as Lucian takes me solo, and it only crests me higher. I shudder through my climax, inner walls spasming around his rigid length.

Lucian continues working me through every aftershock, prolonging my pleasure. Only when I go limp beneath him

does he finally let himself go.

With a ragged shout, Lucian buries himself to the hilt inside my slick sheath. I feel the thick swelling pressure as his knot pops past my entrance, locking us together.

His cock pulses against my inner walls as he spends himself in hot, potent bursts. The sensation sends me over the precipice once more.

I rake my nails down his back at the exquisite feeling, writhing against him. Lucian groans, another spurt of seed filling me at the stimulation.

We remain tied together, bodies thrumming with sated bliss. I revel in the closeness, combing my fingers through his sweat-dampened hair. Lucian's pale eyes shine with passion tempered by adoration.

"You are everything to me, Rina," he murmurs fervently. "My heart, my life, my mate."

I cradle his beloved face, overcome with emotion. "As you are mine, Lucian. Now and forever."

We trade tender kisses, content for now just to be wrapped up in each other. But soon I notice Lucian's spent length beginning to stir and swell again where he remains sheathed inside me.

I gasp as his growing erection tugs at my sensitive inner walls. Our gazes lock, fresh hunger kindling.

Still joined, Lucian rears up onto his knees, lifting my hips to meet his tentative thrust. We both moan at the spike of sensation.

"Again," I plead, locking my legs around his waist, the needy omega rising inside me. "Again!"

Lucian begins rocking against me, gentle at first but quickly building speed. The friction of his thick length sliding in and out rekindles the fire in my blood. I move with him as best I can, urging him on breathlessly.

When I shatter again around him, Lucian follows me over with a harsh groan. His second release pulses hotly to mingle

with his first deep inside me.

After, we collapse in a thoroughly sated tangle of limbs. We will remain tied for a while yet, but I don't mind. I never want this exquisite closeness to end.

We trade tender kisses as we wait for his swollen knot to subside. I feel the room slowly come into focus around me, my body relaxed and spent, my core flooded and aching.

But my insatiable mates are far from finished with me.

## Chapter Nine

Once Lucian's swollen knot finally recedes, allowing him to slip free, I am left aching empty. But Everett is already there to take me next.

My gentle giant gathers me close, the brush of his calloused palms like a balm on my sensitized skin. I revel in the contrast of his work-roughened hands against Lucian's elegant fingers.

Everett lavishes affection on my spent body, worshipping me unhurriedly with lips, tongue and hands. He maps every dip and curve as though determined to memorize me. The rasp of his short beard scruffing my inner thighs makes me shiver.

By the time his mouth finally reaches my slick folds, I am writhing and begging wordlessly for more. My fingers twist in his long hair, urging him on. Everett acquiesces, licking and sucking the evidence of Lucian's passion from my core.

Only when I am once again teetering at the brink does Everett finally cease his sweet torture. He kisses a heated path back up my body until our gazes lock. The raw need in his sea glass eyes steals my breath.

"Please, Everett," I gasp, wrapping my legs around his powerful waist in blatant invitation.

With a rumbling groan, Everett aligns our bodies and sinks into my slick heat in one long, smooth stroke. We both cry out as he fills me perfectly, his thick length stretching my inner walls.

“Everett,” I gasp, digging my nails into his shoulders at the overwhelming sensation of him buried so deep.

My inner walls stretch and cling to accommodate his formidable girth and length. Everett pauses once fully seated, jaw clenched with restraint. “Tell me if it’s too much, sweetness.”

In answer I dig my heels into the small of Everett’s back, urging him deeper still. He swears under his breath, muscles corded with restraint.

“I need to feel you, Everett,” I plead. “Please make me yours.”

With a groan of surrender, he begins moving within me. We quickly find our rhythm, bodies moving together effortlessly.

Everett takes me with deep strokes that seem to reach my core. I meet his thrusts eagerly, craving that sweet friction.

As the pressure of his swelling knot pops past my entrance, it sends me hurtling over the blissful edge. I cry out his name, inner walls spasming around him.

Everett follows me into ecstasy with a harsh groan, his hot release pulsing within me. We cling together as wracking shudders of bliss course through our joined bodies. Everett continues rocking into me, prolonging the exquisite sensations until we are both utterly spent.

Still joined, Everett gently rolls us onto our sides. His strong arms cradle me close as we catch our breath. I nuzzle against his broad chest, surrounding myself in his earthy scent.

Everett presses tender kisses to my hair, my temple, my lips. “You are a wonder, Rina. Thank you for choosing me.”

I smile up at him, eyes shining. “I will always choose you, my love. All of you.”

No supernatural force could compel the way our souls unite when we come together. Our passion flows from the deepest wells of our hearts.

We trade leisurely kisses as we wait for his knot to subside. For now, we are content just to be wrapped up in each other, our boundless love requiring no other bonds.

After Everett withdraws, leaving me achingly empty, Adar is there to draw me into his lap. I settle back against his chest, surrounded by his smoky, campfire scent.

Adar nuzzles my throat, nipping gently. "I hope you have some passion left for me, little flame," he murmurs, voice rough with need.

In answer I take his hands and guide them purposefully to my sensitive breasts. Adar swears appreciatively, clever fingers tweaking and teasing my tight peaks. I arch into his touch, craving more.

As one hand continues its sweet torture on my breasts, Adar's other trails lower, fingers gliding through my slick folds to circle my swollen clit. I gasp and grind shamelessly against his hand, already so close to the edge again.

Adar groans, feeling my readiness coating his fingertips. "So wet for me," he growls. His rigid length grinds against my backside in promise.

The blunt head of his cock catches at my entrance, slipping through my slick arousal. We both moan at the tantalizing sensation. I tilt my hips, trying to draw him deeper, but Adar holds back.

"Not yet, little flame. I want you desperate for me first." His fingers quicken their relentless rhythm, stoking the fire ever higher.

Soon I am mindless, pleading and writhing in Adar's lap as his clever fingers work their magic. "Please, Adar," I gasp, teetering on the brink.

He nuzzles my throat, nipping lightly. "Tell me what you need, little omega."

"You. I need you inside me," I beg shamelessly.

Adar groans, his thick length grinding against my backside. "Not just yet. I want you desperate for me first." His

fingers quicken their relentless rhythm, stoking the fire ever higher.

When I feel I might combust from sheer need, I finally sob his name. “Adar, please!”

At last he relents, his control fraying. With one powerful stroke, Adar buries himself to the hilt inside my slick heat. We both shout at the intense sensation.

For a moment he stills, letting me adjust around his thick girth. “Are you alright, my Rina?” Adar rasps. His muscles tremble with restraint.

In answer I roll my hips, drawing him deeper. We moan in unison. No more words are needed. Adar’s hands grip my hips firmly as he begins to move, finally giving us both what we crave. His powerful thrusts strike deep, wringing cries of ecstasy from my lips.

I match Adar’s powerful rhythm as best I can, rolling my hips to meet each deep thrust. I purposefully clench my inner walls around his thick, pistoning length.

Adar swears at the added sensation. “Just like that, little flame,” he encourages breathlessly. His fingers dig into my hips, angling me to take him even deeper.

The sweet tension coils ever tighter within me until I feel fit to burst. Sensing how close I am, Adar snakes a hand around to circle my swollen clit.

“Come for me, Rina,” he commands. That proves my undoing.

I shatter around him, coming hard and screaming his name. My inner walls clamp down greedily on Adar’s cock just as his own climax crashes over him.

With a harsh groan, he drives his swelling knot home, locking us together. I feel him pulsing hotly within me as he empties himself in endless streams.

“Adar!” I gasp, writhing against him. The feeling of his release mingling with the others’ deep inside sends me over again.

We collapse back against the furs in a thoroughly sated tangle of limbs, still joined. Adar presses tender kisses across my shoulders, his hands stroking my sides.

“You are a goddess, Rina. And you are mine, as I am yours.” His words warm me to my core. I twine my fingers with his, overflowing with love.

“Yours, Adar. Just as you are mine.” No supernatural force could compel what we share. Our passion flows from the deepest wells of our hearts.

Through the pleasurable haze, I am vaguely aware of Thale waiting his turn, eyes burning with lust. But Adar is not ready to relinquish me yet.

Even after Adar’s release ebbs, he keeps us intimately joined, not yet ready to let me go. His strong arms wrap around me, holding me close against his broad chest. I revel in the feeling of belonging.

Adar nuzzles into my hair, his fingers trailing lightly over my skin. He maps every curve and dip, relearning my body as though determined to commit me to memory.

I sigh contentedly at his unhurried exploration. Beyond the haze of spent passion, I am aware of my other mates nearby, patiently awaiting their turn to love me.

Their heated gazes follow each caress of Adar’s hands, burning with promise. A pleasurable shiver runs through me. This night is far from over.

Adar chuckles, his warm breath tickling my ear. “Eager still, my little flame?” His hips shift suggestively against my backside.

I gasp as I feel his length already stirring to hardness where we remain intimately joined. My oversensitive flesh clenches around him instinctively.

Adar groans. “I suppose we have time for one more round before I share you.” His clever fingers slip between my thighs, stoking embers into flames anew.



Soon he has me writhing and pleading in his arms. With a satisfied grin, Adar finally claims me again, more gently than before. We move together slowly, savoring each sublime sensation.

When ecstasy crests over us once more, it comes softly as the sea meeting the shore. I cling to Adar through each blissful aftershock, whispering my love.

Only then does he withdraw, leaving me achingly empty.

Adar cradles my face tenderly. "You are my light in the darkness, Rina. Thank you for choosing me."

I smile up at him, eyes shining. "I will always choose you, Adar. All of you."

We share one last lingering kiss before I turn to accept the passionate worship of my other mates.

## Chapter Ten

I have been taken over and over again, but I am far from sated. I need my stalwart earth god now to ground me.

Thale reads the hunger in my gaze. With an approving rumble, he pins me down onto the bed and enters me swiftly.

My legs wrap around his waist, welcoming each powerful thrust. When Thale's knot swells to seal us together, I fly apart once more, shuddering through wave after wave of intense pleasure.

We remain tied as one, Thale's broad body sheltering mine. He murmurs praise and devotion, green eyes shining. The comfort of his closeness fills me with joy and contentment, despite the lingering bliss still thrumming through my veins.

Tomorrow night we will see if the ritual works and our fate is finally our own. But for now, surrounded by the warmth of my mates, I let myself believe our happy ending is at hand. One way or another, our future starts tomorrow.

I float in peaceful satiation, anchored by Thale's steady presence. He continues rocking into me gently, prolonging the ecstasy of our joining. The thick slide of his cock stroking my sensitive inner walls keeps me balanced on the brink of another peak.

"You feel incredible, dear one," Thale grits out, muscles corded with restraint. "So warm and tight around me."

I caress his bearded cheek tenderly, conveying without words how cherished he is to me. Thale turns his head to press

a fervent kiss to my palm.

We move together slowly, unhurried, simply savoring each gasp and sigh drawn from the other. No rush, just intimacy.

Eventually I feel Thale's swollen knot begin to deflate, allowing him to finally slip free. I mourn the loss of connection, but Thale is quick to gather me close.

"Hush now, I am here," he murmurs, brushing gentle kisses over my face.

I cling to him, overcome with emotion. "I love you," I whisper.

Thale's expression turns fierce. "And I you, Rina. You are everything to me—my heart, my life, my mate."

His passionate words warm me to my core. I cradle his rugged face in my hands, hoping he can read the depths of my devotion in my eyes.

Thale covers my hands with his own. "After so many nights apart, having you in my arms again is a gift," he says fervently. "I wish to worship every inch of you, show how cherished you are to me."

"Please," I breathe, body already stirring to life again beneath his heated gaze.

With infinite care, Thale lowers me back against the pillows. I surrender completely as he begins to relearn my body with hands, lips and tongue.

He starts by capturing my mouth in a searing kiss, stoking the flames anew. I open for him eagerly, tasting myself on his tongue as it tangles sensually with mine.

Thale takes his time kissing a meandering path down my throat, finding each sensitive spot that makes me shiver and sigh. His big hands trail reverently over my curves, thumbs brushing my tight peaks.

I arch into his touch, craving more contact. Ever attuned to my reactions, Thale closes his hot mouth over one breast, suckling firmly as his fingers continue plucking and teasing the other.

My nails bite into his shoulders at the exquisite sensation. The pleasurable ache gathering low in my belly intensifies with each clever flick of his tongue.

Just when I feel I may combust from sheer sensation, Thale begins kissing his way lower. I jump and clutch at the furs as his tongue delves between my thighs, licking up every drop of slick evidence.

The sight of his dark head buried there, beard scruffing my tender flesh, has my inner muscles clenching desperately.

Thale growls approvingly, the vibration sending sparks skittering across my skin. His hands grip my hips, holding me open as he feasts.

I twist my fingers in his hair, urging him on breathlessly. The man is far too talented with that wicked tongue.

When he seals his mouth over my swollen clit and sucks firmly, I shatter apart with a scream. My peak goes on and on as Thale works me through each cresting wave.

Only when I go limp with repletion does Thale finally cease his sweet torture. He kisses back up my body until our gazes lock. The raw need in his forest green eyes sears me.

“Please, Thale,” I gasp, wrapping my legs around his waist. I’m desperate to feel him buried inside me once more.

Thale complies with a groan, sinking into my slick depths in one long smooth stroke. We both cry out as he fills me perfectly.

This time Thale drives into me with more force, taking us both rapidly back to the brink. I meet his powerful thrusts eagerly, nails raking his back.

When his swelling knot pops past my entrance and I fly apart again, Thale follows with a roar. His hot release fills me in endless streams, hot and thick as it spills out of me.

As we remain tied, his broad body sheltering mine, Thale begins murmuring fervently against my ear. “My Rina, my mate, my everything. How I have longed for this.”

His big hand splays across my lower belly, thumb stroking reverently. “One day I want see you round and full with our child growing within you.”

My breath catches at the promise in his words. The thought of carrying Thale’s baby thrills me to my core. It’s impossible now, as the wellspring’s ties to the gods have made them impotent. But tomorrow, he will be virile again, as an alpha is meant to be. The thought is enough to make me clench around his knot with a sigh of longing.

“I want that too, my love. Give me your seed.”

Thale’s eyes blaze with primal satisfaction. He seals his mouth over mine in a searing kiss, his tongue mimicking the pulsing of his cock as he spills every last drop of his essence within my fertile womb.

We remain tied, Thale still gently rocking his hips to milk every last tremor. I cling to him, gasping praise and devotion. This steadfast man is my entire world.

Eventually Thale’s knot deflates enough for him to slip free. Before I can mourn the loss, he moves down my body once more.

“I am not finished worshipping you yet, dear one,” he rasps.

I can only moan agreement as Thale begins the whole exquisite process again, worshipping my body with hands, mouth and cock in tandem to pull every last shred of pleasure from my willing flesh.

His calloused palms skim my sides, tracing each dip and curve as if mapping me by touch alone. Thale’s hands have cultivated the very earth, yet they caress my skin as gently as a spring breeze.

When his fingers find my breasts, plucking and rolling the tight peaks, I arch into his touch with a shattered gasp. The shocks of sensation shoot straight to my core, stoking the flames higher.

Thale’s clever mouth follows the path blazed by his hands, trailing open-mouthed kisses along my throat and sternum. His

lips close around one nipple, suckling firmly as his fingers continue their sweet torment on the other.

I twist my fingers into his dark hair, holding him to me as he feasts. The pleasure-pain of his teeth grazing that taut bud has my inner walls clenching desperately.

Just when I feel I may combust from the stimulation, Thale begins kissing lower, over the quivering plane of my stomach. His beard scruffs my sensitive flesh, wringing another throaty moan from my lips.

Thale settles between my splayed thighs, inhaling deeply of my arousal. I shiver at the primal satisfaction in his eyes. This formidable alpha delights in reducing me to incoherence with desire for him.

When his mouth descends to my slick folds, I bow off the furs, fingers clawing for purchase. Thale holds my hips pinned, keeping me open for his eager exploration.

His tongue delves and circles my entrance, lapping up every drop of slick. The obscene sounds mingling with my breathless cries fill the room.

The exquisite torture goes on until I am mindless, pleading wordlessly for the peak hovering just out of reach. Only then does Thale seal his mouth over my throbbing clit, sucking rhythmically until I shatter with a scream.

My alpha keeps me suspended in endless climax, working me through each cresting wave. I can only take it, writhing and sobbing with ecstasy beneath the onslaught of his mouth.

As my peak finally begins to ebb, I become aware of another presence beside us. Everett's big hand smooths my sweat-damp hair back from my face. I blink up at him dazedly through the pleasurable haze.

"Easy, sweetness. Let me take care of you," Everett rumbles. His sea glass eyes shine with love and lust mingled.

Thale presses a last tender kiss between my thighs before moving aside. I reach for Everett desperately, still trembling in the aftermath of my climax.

Everett stretches out beside me, engulfing my smaller frame with his powerful body. I revel in his earthy scent of cypress and sea salt as it envelops me.

“Tell me if you need me to slow down,” Everett murmurs against my throat. I can only shake my head frantically and wrap my legs around his broad hips in encouragement.

With a groan, Everett sinks into my slick depths in one smooth stroke. We both cry out as he fills me perfectly once more. I dig my nails into the thick muscles of his back, urging him deeper still.

Everett sets a steady pace, rocking into me with deep strokes I rise eagerly to meet. The thick drag of his cock hits every sensitive spot within, already stoking the flames higher again.

I cling to him, gasping praise and pleas. The contrast of his rhythmic thrusts with Thale’s passionate intensity is dizzying. My two devoted alphas, as different as earth and sea, yet both treasured halves of my heart.

The pressure of Everett’s swelling knot catches on my entrance with each plunge, sending sparks skittering across my skin. I wrap my legs tighter around his waist, desperate to take the whole of him.

Sensing my need, Everett quickens his pace until he is driving into me with force. I feel his knot swell rapidly, locking us together as ecstasy crashes over me.

Everett’s release fills me in endless hot bursts, his hips pumping to prolong my peak. I rake my nails down his back, writhing and sobbing with euphoria.

We remain tied together as our heartbeats gradually calm. Everett nuzzles my throat, murmuring praise and devotion. I bask in his warmth and the comfort of his closeness.

When Everett’s knot finally recedes, he slips free, leaving me empty and aching once more. But Thale is there to fill me again, sheathing himself to the hilt with a satisfied groan

But before Thale can move, eager hands grasp my hips, rolling me onto my side so his cock slips free. I gasp as Adar

presses up behind me, his rigid length nudging my slick entrance. Thale growls, but my fiery alpha won't be moved.

“Need you again, little flame,” Adar rasps in my ear. His arms lock around me, holding me close as he drives home in one powerful stroke.

I cry out, arching back against Adar's chest. His teeth graze my shoulder, nipping possessively as he begins thrusting into me from behind. Each plunge reaches new depths, wringing whimpers of bliss from my lips.

We move together urgently, Adar's fingers finding my swollen nub to rub tight circles in time with his demanding rhythm. When my peak crashes over me, his name tears from my throat.

Adar's climax follows mine, his release scalding me from within. We collapse in a thoroughly sated tangle of limbs. But another mate is already there to take his place before his knot even fully slips free.

Lucian grasps my thighs, spreading them wide and pushing Adar aside. His icy eyes blaze with lust and love. “My turn again, darling,” he rasps. “My cock needs another release.”

And so it goes on, my four devoted mates alternating to pull every last ounce of pleasure from my willing flesh until I am utterly spent, floating in peaceful satiation.

Safe in their arms, cherished and claimed, I drift toward sleep, dreaming of the future we will build together once our fate is finally our own.



## Chapter Eleven

Sunlight streams in through the bedroom windows, rousing me from a deep, sated sleep. For a long moment, I simply bask amongst the ruffled furs, breathing in the lingering scents of passion.

The warm bulk at my back shifts, and Thale's strong arm tightens around my waist. His beard tickles the back of my neck as he nuzzles into me with a contented rumble.

I lace my fingers through his, marveling again at how such powerful hands can be so gentle with me. Thale could crush stone, yet he holds me as if I'm made of the most delicate glass.

Rolling over to face him, I trace the beloved lines of his stern features. "Good morning, my oak."

Thale's pale eyes glow with affection. "Good morning, dear one."

We share a slow, tender kiss, simply reveling in each other. No matter how many times we've come together, waking in Thale's arms feels like a gift.

When we finally draw back, Thale strokes his knuckles down my cheek. "I hope you rested well. You were magnificent last night, as always."

Heat blooms under my skin at the praise. "Thanks to you and the others. I feel thoroughly loved and claimed."

Thale smiles, the expression softening his craggy features. "Good. That is precisely how you deserve to feel."

His gaze turns serious, thumb brushing over my lower lip. “But I sense a shadow remains behind your eyes. What is bothering you, my Rina?”

I hesitate. After last night’s passionate haze, harsh reality feels jarringly out of place. But the time has come to share my secrets, before our fate ritual later. Thale and the others deserve to know the full truth.

Taking a deep breath, I meet his pale eyes steadily. “There are things I need to tell you. About where I really come from.”

Thale frowns, but nods for me to continue. I grip his hand like a lifeline as the words spill out.

I tell him everything—my mother’s secret mating with the lone wolf, their reckless attempt to bond, and the wellspring’s violent rejection that ended my father’s life before I was even conceived.

Thale listens silently, his thumb tracing soothing circles on my wrist. When I describe the glowing orb that entered my mother—Fern’s spirit seeking refuge in her unborn child—his brows draw together thoughtfully.

Finally, voice hoarse with emotion, I share the rest. The forgotten friendship between Fern and her fellow omega, Calli, that my vision revealed. And the full weight of Fern’s decades of memories, pouring into me when she returned to the wellspring.

When the last words fade, I drop my gaze, nervously awaiting Thale’s reaction. Will he be angry I kept these secrets from him? Disappointed I’m the child of a rogue?

Gentle fingers tilt my chin up. Thale’s expression holds only compassion. “You should not have borne these secrets alone, dear one. But I understand why you did.”

Relief crashes over me. I cling to him, breathing in the earthy comfort of his scent. “I’m sorry I didn’t tell you sooner. I just didn’t know how.”

Thale presses a kiss to my hair. “You have nothing to apologize for. The past is behind us now. What matters is the future we will build together.”

But a shadow remains in his pale eyes. My stalwart earth god feels Fern's loss as deeply as I. She sacrificed everything for our people, yet was forgotten. It's a tragedy we both mourn.

On impulse, I take Thale's hand and place it over my heart. "She's still with us. Her memories, her spirit—they shaped who we've become. She lives on through us."

Thale nods slowly, his expression thoughtful. "You're right. Though Fern is gone, her legacy remains." His thumb brushes over my skin. "But from today, we walk our own path."

I lean up to kiss him fiercely. Tonight, if the ritual succeeds, we'll be free. But whatever comes, we'll face it together.

## Chapter Twelve

The waxing moon rises, full and bright, illuminating the ancient stone circle. I stand between Thale and Lucian, their steadying hands on my shoulders. Everett and Adar flank us protectively, while Ali makes the final preparations for the ritual at the altar.

My heart pounds with anticipation and no small amount of fear. Tonight, if all goes well, my mates will finally be free from the claim the wellspring has over them. Then we can turn our focus to defeating General Teller once and for all.

I glance up at the four powerful men surrounding me, these gods who walked the earth for my sake. “Are you ready for this?”

Lucian squeezes my shoulder, pale eyes glinting. “We’ve waited a long time for freedom, darling. Whatever the sacrifice demanded, it will be worth it.”

The others murmur agreement, resolve etched on their handsome faces. My brave alphas. I reach for Thale and Everett’s hands, taking strength from their solid grip. Together, we can weather any storm.

At last Ali joins us, brushing her long pale hair back over her shoulder. “The altar is prepared. We can begin whenever you’re ready.”

I meet her steady brown gaze. My sister-in-spirit, who helped me discover my true omega nature. With Ali guiding the ritual, I have faith it will succeed.

Drawing a deep breath, I step forward into the circle between the ancient elder statues. Their weathered surfaces glimmer as latent power awakens in response to our presence. The very air hums with gathering magic.

My mates follow me into the circle. As one, we turn to face the stone altar where Fern's ritual bound their souls. The four elemental gods kneel and bow their heads, placing themselves fully in Ali's hands.

She begins murmuring the spell, moving clockwise around them. Strange symbols glow to life beneath each man as she passes. The power builds slowly, like a wave gathering force.

I watch anxiously, hands twisted together. Thale and the others remain still as statues, eyes closed. Only the subtle rise and fall of their chests proves they live and breathe.

Ali completes her circuit and steps back. As one, the men lift their heads and get to their feet. The ritual symbols blaze brighter, fueled by the offering about to be made.

"Powers of earth, wind, fire and sea," Thale intones, voice resonating through the circle. "We renounce all claims upon us but our core gifts. Let our ties be severed."

The light flares blindingly bright for an instant. A shockwave of power bursts outward, nearly driving me to my knees. Ali's spell has worked.

As my vision clears, I see the gods standing tall and steady. But there is something changed about them. Their larger-than-life presence has diminished to a more human scale.

Lucian helps me to my feet, brushing his fingers over my cheek. "All is well, Rina. It's done."

Though he looks the same, his icy blue eyes hold new vulnerability. My wind god has sacrificed part of himself for this freedom. I cling to him, overcome with emotion.

Adar pulls me into his strong embrace next, surrounding me with his smoky scent. "No regrets, little flame," he murmurs. "You are worth any price."

Everett's massive hand engulfs mine, sea glass eyes warm with love. Thale wraps me in his sheltering bulk, beard brushing my hair. "At long last, we walk this path together unbound, dear one."

I can only nod, blinking back tears. After so much struggle and sacrifice, we stand on the brink of the future we've dreamed of.

A soft glow coalesces before us, forming into a petite, familiar shape. Fern's spirit smiles sadly, her dark eyes full of memory.

"It is done, then. The last alphas have shed their bonds, and I remain as guardian." Her gaze takes in each of the gods in turn. "Tread carefully with your gifts now. You are still gods, but mortal. Time will catch you as it does all mortals."

Thale bows his head respectfully to the guardian spirit. "We understand the cost, and accept it willingly. Thank you for carrying this burden, so that no one else needs to."

I cling to his steady strength, drawing courage from it. Fern sacrificed everything to protect our people. Her burden has passed, but she will never be forgotten.

Another form flickers into view beside Fern—the First Alpha, Eli. His solemn face holds new peace.

"I am glad to know my brother's troubled spirit can rest now," he says quietly. "All I wanted was to lead our people into the light. Perhaps at last, that dream can be fulfilled."

I step forward, meeting his gaze. "The packs have been too long in shadow. With Fern guarding the wellspring, and you at peace, we can begin again."

Eli's stern features soften. "Then I go to my rest with hope in my heart. Guard your packs well, Rina." He turns to Thale and Lucian. "And you as well, alphas. Lead them wisely."

The two gods bow their heads in grave promise. Fern reaches out as if to embrace Eli's spirit. Their forms blur, fading into wisps of light that drift away on the night breeze.

I bow my head, mourning their loss even as I celebrate Fern finally finding peace. A large hand engulfs mine. I look up into Adar's amber eyes, full of purpose.

"They've played their parts, little flame. Now it's our turn to shape the future." His thumb brushes over my knuckles. "Starting with ending Teller for good."

The others murmur agreement, resolve etched on their handsome faces. The rogue general's days are numbered. With my mates freed from the wellspring, we will finally fulfill our destiny.

Everett draws me close with one massive arm. "You've been so brave through all this, Rina. But the hardest battles are still to come."

"We'll face them together," Thale rumbles. Lucian and Adar step up on either side, presenting a united front.

Hope and determination rise within me, eclipsing the lingering ache of loss. I have everything I need right here.

Lucian tilts my chin up, pale eyes burning with passion. "No matter what comes, we will never leave your side."

His mouth claims mine fiercely. I yield, welcoming the distraction of his kiss. For tonight, we've earned this victory. Tomorrow the war continues, but Teller doesn't stand a chance against us now.

Adar sweeps me into his strong embrace next, his smoky scent enveloping me. "My fierce little flame," he murmurs. "The packs will sing stories of your courage for generations to come."

I smile up at him impishly. "They'd better get my good side."

Adar's rich laughter warms me like sunlight after winter's chill. He whirls me in an impromptu dance under the waxing moon. For now, the circle is simply ancient stones again, its power dormant.

But tomorrow it will thrum with new life, binding my mates and I together as the first true pack in centuries. The end

of one journey, and the beginning of another.

There is much work yet ahead. But tonight, we celebrate this victory and the bright future opening before us. Together, we will bring light back to the packs, and forge a new path into tomorrow.



## Chapter Thirteen

Our small group gathers in the candlelit basement of the witch's coven house. The room is cool and damp, with stone walls lined with shelves full of mysterious ingredients—jars of dried herbs, vials of viscous liquids, boxes of powdered minerals and animal bones. A large wooden table dominates the center of the room, its scarred surface stained from years of magical experiments.

At the table stands Rhea Storm, the leader of the coven. Her hair is pulled back in a tight bun, and her wrinkled hands work steadily as she measures and mixes ingredients. A small cauldron bubbles over a low flame, filling the shadowy chamber with tendrils of fragrant steam.

Rhea lifts her head as we file down the narrow staircase. Her sharp eyes assess each of us in turn before she nods in satisfaction.

“Come. We have prepared what you will need for tonight's work.” Her voice resonates with quiet authority.

She beckons us over to examine the items laid out on the worktable. I run my fingers over the spell components, marveling at the variety. Dried leaves and flower petals, animal bones, vials of oils and essences, powders ground from minerals. Each ingredient pulses with latent magic.

Rhea lifts a small glass vial filled with shimmering silver liquid. “This will make you invisible for fifteen seconds. A few drops on your skin or clothing are enough.” She passes the vial to Lucian. “Use it to slip past enemies unnoticed.”

Constance Moon steps forward next, handing me a soft leather pouch. “Crush a pinch of this powdered bone and blow it out to create a shadow double of yourself, as a distraction.”

Finally, Cassandra Moon approaches us. She holds out several smooth black stones etched with glowing runes. “Speak your message into these stones, and it will be carried to any in the pack who hold its twin.” Her voice rasps like wind over stone. “Call on us if you get in a tough spot.”

I accept the precious gifts, warmed by the support of these gifted women. With their magic to help us, I know we could win against Teller tonight.

“Thank you all,” I tell them sincerely. “We wouldn’t be able to do this without you.”

Rhea clasps my shoulder, her shrewd gaze searching my face. “Trust in your pack and in each other. The spirits of those who came before lend you their strength.”

Her solemn words resonate through me. Tonight we fight not just for ourselves, but for all the generations of werewolves who came before us. With our entire lineage standing behind us, Teller will fall.

Next we seek counsel from the werewolf elders. We find Vira seated by the fire, her ancient bones warmed by the flickering flames. Though time has bent her frame and clouded her sight, her keen mind remains sharp.

Vira reaches out as I approach, grasping my hands in her gnarled ones. Her milky eyes search my face, seeming to gaze directly into my spirit.

“Remember, child, your pack’s greatest strength lies not in walls or wardings, but in its wellspring and warriors.” Her aged voice resonates with quiet authority. “Trust in those, and you cannot fail.”

Beside her, Calliope nods agreement, her silver hair shining in the firelight. “Our magic flows from the ancient wellspring,” she intones, “and our might comes from the bonds between us. Remember this, and triumph will be yours.”

I drink in their wisdom, letting it steady my spirit. Vira guided generations of Mountain Pack alphas before me. If she and Calliope believe in us, then the spirits of all who came before lend us their strength tonight.

“Thank you, elders.” I bow my head respectfully to them. “Your faith gives me courage. With our pack standing united, Teller will soon be nothing but dust.”

Vira squeezes my hands, her lined face creasing into a smile. “You have grown strong, child. Lead our people well, as I know you will.”

Her pride kindles warmth in my heart. I will not fail this woman who mentored so many of my ancestors. Her legacy lives on through me.

Strengthened by the elders’ trust, I turn with fresh resolve to face the night’s coming trials. The full moon already climbs the sky, silvering the woods that conceal our enemy. But under her light, we shall be victorious.

The elders’ wisdom bolsters me for the trial ahead. With our pack united behind us, Teller will fall.

Under the moon’s bright light, we travel quickly through the woods in our wolf forms. The night air is crisp, carrying the scents of pine and loam. Our footsteps make no sound as we run, fleet and phantom-like.

At the border of our territory, we halt. Power thrums beneath my paws where Thale’s wards are carved into the earth. As we all shift back to our human forms, I feel trepidation at the task before me. Even the coven’s magic spells may not be enough to keep me safe tonight.

One by one, my mates draw me into a fierce embrace before our paths diverge.

“Stay safe, my wild one,” Lucian murmurs, his angular face etched with grim purpose.

Thale’s massive arms surround me, his earthy scent steadying my nerves. “Have faith in yourself, dear heart,” he rumbles. “Our strength goes with you.”

Adar crushes me close, eyes blazing. “Make that bastard suffer, little flame,” he growls. I cling to him, letting his heat temper me like a blade before battle.

When we reluctantly part, Everett braces my shoulders, his sea glass eyes solemn. “Trust the moon to light your way,” he intones. I cover his broad hand with mine, drawing courage from his steadfast spirit.

Alone now, I slip into the darkness between the trees. The rocky foothills rise ahead, dotted with canvas tents—the enemy’s camp.

I creep silently upward, a ghost drifting ever nearer its target. The tents sprawl haphazardly across the hillside, banked fires casting flickering light on the sleeping soldiers.

But not all of them are asleep. Two betas pace a sentry path around the perimeter, eyes reflecting the fire glow. I freeze behind a boulder until they pass, then slink onward into the camp.

The discontented murmuring of the stolen betas reaches my sharp ears as I dart between tents toward the large command pavilion at the center.

“...promised us territory. But we’ve won nothing but more battles. We’ll never be a real pack.”

Their resentment is palpable. Good—let doubt take root. Their leader’s failure will be his undoing.

At last I reach the central tent. Crouching in shadow, I spy the vampire Sybil going inside to confer with Teller. Their closeness confirms he is the Master who commands her.

One step closer to ending this. I head back to plan our next move. Teller’s life is measured in hours now.

I creep close to a campfire where a group of Teller’s stolen betas are eating and drinking. Their resentment simmers beneath the surface as they speak.

“General promised us land and mates when we joined him,” one grumbles. “But we’ve seen nothing but more blood.”

“It’s fucked up,” another spits. “While the mountain wolves get new territory and power.” He tosses back a swig of liquor. “We’re owed what he promised us.”

Their discontent is palpable in the air. Good—let doubt take root. Their leader’s failure to deliver on promises will be his undoing.

I steal away, heart pounding. Then from the shadows behind Teller’s tent, I learn something even more valuable: the secret behind his stolen power.

“Bring me the draught,” Teller commands someone within. “It’s time.”

A beta emerges carrying a smoking cup. Teller drinks deep, then sighs in satisfaction. “Go, and tell the witch woman to make another. I don’t want to lose my knot when the full moon rises.”

So that is how he maintains his dominance; his stolen knot needs power to maintain. Cut off the source, and the general will fall, as he’ll no longer be an alpha and his betas will turn on him. This may be our path to victory.

I head back to talk with my mates. We have intel. Now to form our plan of attack.

Once we are far enough away, I share my most important discovery.

“Teller takes some sort of potion nightly to retain his stolen alpha power,” I tell them. “If we can taint it somehow...”

I see understanding light their eyes. Sever the source of the general’s might, and his illegitimate reign ends. He’ll be cut off from his stolen pack bonds and any ability to draw on the wellspring’s ancient magic. After so much struggle, final victory is within reach at last.

Thale strokes his beard thoughtfully, pale eyes glinting. “I can use my magic to change the draught. It’ll mean touching the potion, but a few changes in its nature will stop his heart swiftly and silently.”

Hope and fierce satisfaction rise within me. After so much struggle and sacrifice, Teller will finally fall tonight.

“We must tell the witches, so they’re ready to stabilize the packs when Teller is gone,” Lucian says urgently. “The lone wolves will seek new land.”

I pass the word to Rhea through my communication stone. But as I speak, a cold hand closes around my wrist in an iron grip.

I look up with a gasp into the red eyes of Sybil. The vampire witch hisses, her sharp fangs bared.

“Clever girl,” she sneers. “But your plan will fail.” With casual strength, she crushes the stone in her grip.

My mates leap forward, but Sybil moves in a blur, reappearing further away in the darkness. Her piercing gaze bores into me.

“You cannot stop what is coming. My Master will see you dead, Rina.” Her voice drips contempt.

Then she vanishes into smoke before my mates can seize her. I sag into Thale’s steadying embrace, heart pounding.

The vampire witch knows our plans somehow. We’ll have to act quickly before she can warn Teller.

But Sybil’s chilling words echo in my mind, seeding doubt. What other tricks might Teller have planned?

Sensing my unease, Adar tilts my chin up. His amber eyes blaze with determination.

“We’ve faced worse odds, little flame. Have faith.”

His unyielding confidence buoys me. One way or another, tonight we’ll kill Teller.

## Chapter Fourteen

The full moon rises, bathing the forest in silver light as our small group gathers. After Sybil's dire warning, we know Teller will be on high alert tonight. Our window to eliminate him undetected is vanishingly small.

But Everett may have found a solution. "Poisoning his draught directly is too risky now," the big man rumbles, brow furrowed in thought. "But now that I know he has magic in his blood, I can use my water magic to poison the blood in his veins instead."

I frown, not following what he means. But Lucian nods as he gets it. "The draught makes him vulnerable and he probably doesn't even know it. We couldn't use our magic on him before because of his wards, but that kind of dark magic opens up a hole that'll let your water element in."

"Do it," Adar growls, cracking his knuckles impatiently. Sparks dance along his fingertips. "I'll cloak the camp in smoke and chaos to distract that leech Sybil."

Hope rises within me, tentative but growing stronger. By sunrise, Teller's bloody reign over the packs will finally end.

We share grim nods of agreement and resolve. The time for attack is here. We melt into the shadows, moving swift and silent beneath the moon's bright light.

At the border of our territory, we halt. Power thrums beneath my feet where Thale carved ancient wards into the living earth. Ahead, only speed, stealth, and skill stand between us and being discovered.

One by one, my mates draw me into a fierce embrace before we head out on our own. Lucian's angular face is taut with grim purpose as he presses a swift kiss to my hair. "Stay safe, my wild one. We shall celebrate victory when the sun rises."

Thale's massive arms surround me next, his earthy scent steadying my anxious nerves. "Have faith in yourself, dear heart," he rumbles. "You are stronger than you know. Our strength goes with you tonight."

Adar crushes me fiercely close, eyes blazing with anticipated violence. "Make that bastard suffer before the end, little flame," he growls. I cling to him, letting his searing heat temper me like a blade forged for battle.

Lastly Everett enfolds me in his sheltering bulk, calloused palms impossibly gentle. His solemn sea glass eyes meet mine. "Trust the moon to light your way through shadow," he intones, "as you guide us all from darkness."

I grip his broad hand tightly, drawing courage from his steadfast spirit.

Too soon, the moment ends. My mates melt into the concealing forest, diverging along different paths according to our strategy. Now I stand alone between the trees' towering trunks, the enemy's camp sprawling ahead.

I creep silently upward through the rocky foothills, drifting closer the canvas tents like a vengeful ghost. The structures sprawl haphazardly across the hillside, dotted with banked fires that cast flickering light on the slumbering soldiers.

But not all of the pack are asleep tonight. Two brutish betas prowl the perimeter, their wolf forms huge and rimmed with moonlight and the fire's glow. I freeze behind the jagged rocks until the pair pass, then slink onward into the camp, my black fur rendering me nearly invisible.

The discontented grumbling of the stolen betas reaches my sharp ears as I dart between tents, drawing steadily closer to the large central command pavilion.



“I was supposed to have a mate by now,” one says, a common complaint I’ve heard in Teller’s camp. “But nothing.”

“A mate, land, what of it—we all know the general is overpromising. All we can do is hope that he gets the wellspring’s power again.”

“How? Now that the werewolf gods hold it—”

“He’s more powerful than the gods, you’ll see.”

“Is he?” One challenges. “Because he wouldn’t have to drink that damned potion if he were *really* an alpha.”

Their simmering resentment and doubt are palpable poisons in the air. I bare my teeth in a silent snarl. Let faith in their leader rot—his failure to deliver on his promises will be his undoing.

At last I reach the imposing command tent positioned on a low ridge. Crouching in the shadows, I observe that it’s empty. Good—this is part of our plan. I move swiftly under the moon’s concealing veil, turning my steps toward the location Everett and I selected upstream.

I find my gentle giant standing waist-deep in the rushing water, facing away from me. His broad palms skim the foaming surface, head bowed in concentration as he wields his formidable magic over the racing currents. Though night has leached color from the world, I can picture his intent sea glass eyes vividly.

I shudder despite myself, reminded again of the immense power leashed within this man, this god who can summon the very tides to do his bidding. Yet those same calloused hands touch me with infinite tenderness, holding me as gently as a newborn chick cradled safe within the nest. Everett, my fierce, tender guardian.

Sensing me there, he looks up. The moon outlines his chiseled features in silver and shadows. “It’s done,” he says solemnly. “The poison’s flowing strong in our enemy’s blood.”

Hope surges fiery and bright within my breast. We stand so close now to ending Teller’s bloody reign over the packs. I

ache to run into Everett's sheltering arms, to feel his strength surround me, but there's no time.

"Be safe, my love," I tell him anxiously instead. "Don't take dumb risks. We'll finish this and celebrate victory together under the stars."

Everett's nod in response is promise enough. I know I carry his heart with me just as surely as he bears mine. For now, that's enough.

I race back through the moon-washed forest toward the sprawling enemy encampment. I am still some distance away when a swirl of wind brings Lucian's crisp scent to me. Seconds later he coalesces from the shadows beside me, matching my swift pace with his long graceful strides.

The wind god's angular face is taut with purpose, his lean frame thrumming with leashed power. But his cool demeanor fractures for just a moment when his wintry gaze meets mine. Lucian's strong hand engulfs mine, our twin magics sparking between us like mingling streams meeting at a fork.

"The camp's in chaos, like Adar promised," Lucian says briskly. "Teller's tent is wide open. It's time, my wild one." His icy eyes glint like moonlight on steel, cold and unbending. "Tonight we end this."

Together we creep into the enemy encampment, shrouded by the smoke and confusion Adar has caused with his chaotic fire magic. We slip inside the central command pavilion unseen, all attention focused on quelling the spreading inferno on the far side of camp.

The interior is empty, to my relief. But Teller's cloying scent lingers fresh and strong within the enclosed space. Lucian inhales deeply, reading the traces left on the swirling air currents. "Our enemy is near, but not inside. Are you ready, my heart?"

At my determined nod, Lucian lifts his hands and begins adeptly weaving his magic through the invisible currents and eddies surrounding us. I feel the winds shift, carrying new

scents to every corner of the camp. The sharp metallic tang of blood and fear now permeates the interior of Teller's tent.

Our work here is done. We withdraw swiftly to the sheltering forest to watch our meticulously laid trap unfold. Scarcely five minutes pass before Sybil appears, blurring across the camp toward the central pavilion in response to the irresistible lure Lucian orchestrated.

She pauses at the entrance, peering into the hazy interior, her lithe body coiled with tension. Even at this distance, I can see raw hunger blaze crimson in the vampire's eyes. With a satisfied hiss, Sybil ducks inside, following the scent trail directly to her doom. Or rather, to Teller's.

## Chapter Fifteen

Chaos erupts through the enemy camp as Adar's fires spread. Soldiers shout and scramble to contain the inferno, even as fresh blazes ignite in all directions. Thick smoke billows, masking our escape.

In the confusion, no one notices the vampire Sybil blurring with unnatural speed toward General Teller's central tent. Lured by the irresistible scent trail Lucian wove through his wind magic, she's utterly fixated on her prey.

We converge in the shadows around the tent, ready to watch his downfall. I meet Lucian's icy gaze through the haze, steeling my resolve. After so much struggle and sacrifice, the bastard finally ends tonight.

Within the tent, Sybil finds Teller slumped on his cot, visibly weakened by the tainted blood flowing through his veins. Even now, Everett's magic works to transform the general's blood into a deadly poison.

"What's...happening..." Teller rasps, struggling futilely as the vampire witch descends.

Sybil's smile reveals her fangs, crimson eyes burning with hunger. "Finally, I will feast tonight! You've denied me too long, 'Master.'"

Ignoring his protests, she grasps his head to bare his throat. We hear the wet sounds of her feeding greedily on his poisoned blood.

It's over swiftly. The tainted blood proves too virulent even for Sybil, a witch-vampire hybrid. With a gurgling

shriek, she collapses on top of Teller's drained corpse. The tent billows as she dissolves into ash.

The flames encroaching on the central pavilion provide convenient cover for the general's demise. None will be left living to tell of what transpired here.

Lucian's hand engulfs mine, icy eyes hard with satisfaction. "It is finished," he pronounces. The finality in his words resonates through me. After so long, our enemy is no more.

The sounds of screaming and panic rise from the lower camp as the fires spread. Our window for escape is vanishing. Sparing one last glance for the smoldering tent, we melt into the smoke and darkness.

The scent of pine envelops me, sharp and clean, as we race beneath the sheltering trees.

Once safely distant, we pause to catch our breath and plan our next steps. Adar pulls me close, surrounding me with his smoky, crackling scent. His heat tempers the lingering chill from witnessing such calculated violence.

"You did beautifully, little flame," Adar murmurs, pride and love mingling in his blazing eyes. "Now leave the rest to us. Go safely home."

I bristle instinctively at the thought of being ushered away like a helpless pup. But Thale's massive hand settles on my shoulder, calming me.

"Let us protect you and our lands, as is our duty," he rumbles. "You have played your part tonight." His stern expression softens. "Rest, and let us care for the pack."

The thought of retreating to the comfort and safety of home is admittedly tempting after so much chaos and death. And I cannot deny the value of keeping our people calm using my omega powers and ability to strengthen the pack's bonds.

"Very well," I acquiesce. I know when to compromise. "But I expect to be consulted matters going forward. We lead together now, as equals."

My mates nod solemn acceptance of my terms. Lucian pulls me close, brushing a swift kiss over my hair. “Wild thing. When this is settled, all the packs shall know your name as a hero.” His words kindle warmth in my heart.

With Everett and Thale flanking me protectively, Lucian uses his wind magic to swiftly transport me back to the heart of Mountain Pack territory. The familiar sight of the dense forest and rocky slopes soothes my lingering unease.

I’m relieved to find the pack lands peaceful, my people unaware of the night’s events. Adar’s distraction prevented any of the angry betas from reaching our territory. As I head home, I reach out to any bonds and threads I see, strengthening them so the pack can grow.

The witches meet me on the path to our cabin, alerted by now that Teller is dead. Ali rushes to embrace me, her bright eyes brimming with relieved tears.

“Thank the spirits you’re back safely,” she whispers.

I cling to my dearest friend, the chaos and fear of the last hours crashing over me. But there will be time enough later to process it all.

Rhea’s face creases in a smile. “Well done, child. With the general gone, his hold over the packs will crumble. Stability can return.”

I nod wearily. “My mates are handling the aftermath. All I want now is rest.”

Ali keeps an arm wrapped firmly around me as she guides me the rest of the way home. I’m asleep almost before my head hits the pillows, emotionally and physically spent.

Over the next week, my mates work constantly to stabilize the Destiny Packs and lone wolf packs in the power vacuum left by Teller’s demise. Fortunately, most are relieved to have the cruel general gone, and the process is peaceful.

Once the packs are secured, my mates finally return to me for good. I run into Thale’s arms, breathing in the earthy comfort of his scent. He holds me close, big hand stroking my hair.

“All is well, dear heart. The packs are calm and our borders strong.” His pale eyes shine with quiet joy. “We have won, for now.”

Lucian embraces me next, spinning me in an impromptu dance. “No more looking over our shoulders, darling. You’re free.” His words loosen a tight knot inside my chest. Free, and safe, with my mates beside me.

Adar lifts me effortlessly, his fiery scent and heat surrounding me. “No one will ever threaten you again, my little flame,” he vows fiercely. I cling to my ferocious guardian, finally allowing myself to feel protected.

Everett’s strong arms engulf us both. He presses a kiss to my hair. “The packs will heal, and we’ll guide them into a new era.” One massive hand splays over my still-flat belly. “And now that we’ve broken our bond with the wellspring, we can finally have pups. Our children will grow up in light, not shadow.”

Hope and joy well up within me, eclipsing the lingering darkness. We’ve passed through the crucible into a new day for all our people. Tonight we celebrate, and tomorrow, we begin building the future we’ve dreamed of.

That evening, the witches prepare a great bonfire in the sanctuary grove beyond the Mating Circle. Musicians play lively tunes, and the air fills with laughter and merriment. My people are ready to leave the shadows of the past behind.

I dance until I’m breathless, passed between the arms of my grinning mates. Adar whirls me so fast my feet barely touch the ground. Everett’s steady hands support me as we spin. Lucian dips me dramatically at the crescendo of the music, his ice blue eyes warm with joy.

Watching my pack revel together, bonds of family and friendship glowing bright, I’m overwhelmed by a surge of love for these people, my kin. Thale’s arm settles around my shoulders, squeezing gently.

“Thanks to you, dear one, our people will thrive,” he rumbles. “Tonight we celebrate, and tomorrow, we begin

anew.”

I lean into his sturdy frame, blinking back tears of joy. The future lies ahead of us, bright with promise.



## Chapter Sixteen

The clearing in the heart of Mountain Pack territory buzzes with celebration. Long wooden tables groan under the weight of roasted meats, baskets of fresh bread, platters of cheese, and barrels of beer and wine. Lanterns hang from the trees, bathing the festive gathering in warm light as the sun sinks below the horizon.

Elders and warriors from all the major regional packs are here, mingling together with easy camaraderie. For the first time in too long, our people stand united, the threat of Teller's violence no longer looming over us. Tonight we feast together and look forward to brighter days ahead.

My mates and I move through the lively crowd, greeting friends old and new. I cling to Thale's steady strength as eager hands clasp my shoulders in heartfelt congratulations. My people are in high spirits, their joy at being free of Teller's menace palpable.

We come upon a small group of wolves I don't recognize. Their lean, rangy builds and scarred skin mark them unmistakably as former members of the rogue pack Teller dissolved. Their alpha gives Thale a wary nod.

"Well met, wind god. We owe you and yours a great debt for removing that rabid beast."

Thale returns his grave nod. "You owe us nothing, friend. All wolves deserve to be free, including lone wolves, especially now that you've turned to the packs. Tonight we celebrate our shared victory."

The former rogues relax, relief flashing across their weathered faces. With Teller gone, they'll be able to build new lives in the sanctuary of the Mountain Pack. My heart swells at this proof of our growth, and I use my powers to reach for their bonds, weaving their shining pack threads together.

At last we reach the head table. As we take our seats, a hush falls over the gathering. All eyes turn expectantly toward Thale.

My steady mate rises gracefully, commanding the attention of the crowd with his innate presence. His angular features are somber, but satisfaction glints in his icy blue eyes.

"Elders, warriors, witches," Thale begins, his deep voice carrying effortlessly across the hushed clearing. "Tonight we come together in celebration. But it was not so very long ago that we lost those we loved to reach this victory."

Murmurs of solemn agreement ripple through the assembly. We can all think of those we lost, including the pack's former alpha, Morgan.

Thale continues, "General Teller wanted to divide wolf from wolf, pack from pack. They sought to poison our bonds and turn us against one another." His pale eyes flash with remembered rage. "They were going to destroy our people entirely and plunge us into chaos.

"And they very nearly succeeded. But when the threat loomed, we came together. The Destiny Packs rose to strength once more. And united, we prevailed."

A smattering of cheers and applause greet this statement. Thale allows it to continue for a moment before raising his hands for silence.

"What we accomplished together seems little short of miraculous. The packs have been separate for generations, arguing over territory and fighting lone wolves." His piercing gaze sweeps the crowd. "But no longer. We stand today not as Mountain, River, Sky, or Fury. We stand as one people, one pack."

The applause this time is deafening, the gathered wolves howling their agreement. I find myself blinking back proud tears. Tonight we are reforged.

Thale waits again for quiet before continuing solemnly. “Our unity came at great cost. Brave warriors fell so that we might have this peace. Without their sacrifice, today would not have been possible.”

His expression turns grave, chin lifting in defiance. “So tonight, my brothers, my sisters—tonight we honor our dead. Let their names and deeds live on in memory and pack history, so they are never forgotten.”

Howls ring out once more, but this time in mourning. The eerie, beautiful chorus raises the hairs on my nape, resonating through my very bones. I join my voice to the tribute, letting my grief and gratitude flow out.

We came so far, through so much darkness and pain. But we persevered, and will not squander this chance to begin anew.

As the last notes fade, Thale retakes his seat beside me. I squeeze his hand in silent praise, pride for my steady mate swelling within me. He played no small part in bringing us to this peace.

On my other side, Everett rises solemnly. His features are etched with quiet purpose. The gathering stills in anticipation of his words.

“Thank you, brother, for that moving tribute.” Everett’s deep voice rumbles across the glade. “Now, as Thale said, we celebrate life even as we honor death.”

His stern gaze sweeps the crowd. “Tonight, we toast our bonds of fellowship. Tomorrow, the real work begins. There are wounds yet to bind, homes to rebuild, trust to regain.”

A few nods of agreement answer him. Everett massive shoulders straighten, confidence radiating from him. “But we won’t fall again. Our packs persevered through incredible threats and multiple enemies. The future can only be brighter.”

The answering cheer is deafening. Adar raises his hands, howling to get attention. “Enough emotional speeches and bullshit. Tonight, we need to celebrate as only wolves can! Let the party begin!”

Among enthusiastic shouts and howls, the music strikes up to a fever pitch. The tables are soon covered with venison, fowl and fish from the pack’s hunters. My mouth waters at the mouthwatering spread.

For a while, conversation stops as we indulge. The rich smokey flavors burst over my tongue, perfectly complemented by the hearty bread and sharp cheese. My nerves thrum with pleasure at the simple joy of sharing a good meal with my pack mates.

Too soon, my mates begin nudging each other, their gazes turning expectantly my way. I realize what they are waiting for. What we rehearsed earlier, though I hoped it would be forgotten in the festivities.

Everett’s deep voice rumbles encouragingly in my ear. “It’s time, sweetness. Go on now.”

I shoot him a half-hearted glare, knowing I can’t refuse. With a defeated sigh, I rise, clearing my suddenly dry throat. Gradually the lively conversations around us taper off.

“Um, hello everyone,” I begin awkwardly, acutely aware of all eyes turning my way. I resist the urge to duck behind Thale’s broad shoulder and hide.

“I want to thank you all again for being here tonight, celebrating together. It means the world to me—to all of us.” I force myself to meet the gazes of the wolves closest to me, heartened by the warmth and encouragement I find there.

Taking a deep breath, I continue more steadily, “I know Everett and Thale have already said most of this, but I just want to emphasize—none of this would have been possible without you. Without every wolf from every pack standing shoulder to shoulder when it mattered most. You all showed such incredible courage.”

My voice shakes slightly with emotion. I still can hardly believe I stand here among heroes. These wolves fought and sacrificed to protect their packs and families, prevailing against impossible odds. Humbling does not begin to describe it.

“So thank you,” I tell them sincerely. “Thank you for fighting with us. For believing in me when I needed it most. Your faith gave me strength.”

I have to pause and blink back the tears welling in my eyes. Everett’s steadying hand engulfs mine, bolstering me. When I continue, my voice resonates with conviction.

“Tomorrow, we start building a better future, together. It won’t always be easy. But united, we can accomplish anything.”

I raise my glass high. “To the Destiny Packs!”

Amidst enthusiastic shouts and applause, we drink to our newfound unity. The feasting resumes, but I sense a shift in mood. There’s purpose in the packs now as they think about the future.

Gradually, as the moon climbs high overhead, the gathering begins to disperse. Representatives depart in small groups to begin the trek back to their own lands or to stay with a member of the Mountain Pack who’s welcomed them in.

More than a few stop to clasp my hand or shoulder on their way out, echoing their alpha’s parting words.

“Well done, Rina.”

“Lead us to brighter days.”

“The packs owe you for all you’ve done.”

I can only smile and nod, their faith warming me. It’s a balm to the wounds of being rejected and cast out. I’ve come so far that I can hardly believe it.

Soon only our inner circle remains. Lucian draws me close, pride gleaming in his wintry gaze. “You did wonderfully, darling. They already see you as a hero.” Mischievous delight sparks through our bond. “Imagine what

they'll say when they find out that the way we got Sybil to come for Teller is by bottling one of your farts. There's nothing like omega farts, you know."

"That is the stupidest joke I've ever heard," Adar complains. "Very, very stupid."

Laughing at the god's childishness, I lean up to kiss Lucian soundly, conveying without words my overflowing love for this exasperating, wonderful man.

Still chuckling, Lucian sweeps me into a dance around the nearly deserted clearing. The musicians play a werewolf dancing song that has me breathless and grinning. Dancing under the stars with my beloved mate, the rest of the world fades away.

Too soon the music ends, leaving us flushed and panting. As we catch our breath, I become aware of Thale waiting patiently nearby, his strong features softened by affection.

I reach for my sturdy oak, drawn like a flower turning toward the sun. His earthy scent envelops me as I nestle into the shelter of his arms.

"You honor us all, dear one," Thale rumbles, pride resonating through our bond. His massive hand splays over my still-flat belly. "Soon our child will grow strong within you."

## Chapter Seventeen

**M**y breath catches at the promise in his words. We haven't spoken of children, but now the possibility quickens my pulse. To carry Thale's babe, nurture a new life from our love...

Overcome by emotion, I pull his bearded face down to mine in a fierce kiss. Thale responds ardently, big hands gently framing my face as if I am infinitely precious. This steadfast man is my rock, my heart—my mate.

Eventually we draw back just enough to catch our breath, still clinging together. Thale's earthy scent and solid strength surround me. As long as I have this, I can weather any storm.

By unspoken consent, we begin walking hand in hand between the shadowed trees toward our cabin. The sounds of lingering celebration fade behind us. Tonight we seek a different intimacy.

Within the cozy cabin, Thale builds up the fire until warmth and golden light fill every corner. The flames cast flickering shadows over his powerful frame as he turns to me, forest green eyes glowing.

He crosses the room in three long strides and gathers me close once more. I revel in the feel of his muscular body pressed to mine, separated only by the thin barrier of clothing. My nerves thrum with anticipation.

“My Rina,” Thale murmurs, voice rough with emotion. “Let me worship every inch of you tonight.”

“Yes,” I whisper. “I want that, Thale. I want to have a baby with you.”

His big hand splays possessively over my still-flat belly, thumb stroking reverently. “Soon our child will grow strong within you,” he promises solemnly, bringing his hands up to my face.

His big hands frame my face so tenderly. I cover them with my own, blinking back sudden tears. This formidable man could tear the very earth asunder, yet he cherishes me as the most precious thing in his world.

“Please, my love,” I whisper. “Give me your seed and make me swell with your babe.”

No more words are needed. Still cradling my face, Thale lowers us both gently down before the fire. I surrender completely as he begins unwrapping me like a priceless gift, calloused fingers surprisingly deft.

Soon we’re naked, skin rimmed by firelight. Thale’s heated gaze takes in every hollow and curve of my body, desire kindling in his pale eyes. I shiver pleasantly under that intense scrutiny, craving more.

Dipping his head, Thale begins laying reverent kisses along my throat, my collarbone, the swells of my breasts. I arch into his touch, nails biting crescents into his shoulders. Each press of his lips brands my skin.

When his mouth finally closes over one tight peak, I cry out, electricity arcing straight to my core. Thale suckles firmly as his fingers continue plucking and teasing the other into an equally taut bud. My back bows, wordless pleas falling from my lips.

Just when I feel I might combust from sheer sensation, his kisses begin wandering lower, following the quivering plane of my stomach. I jump and clutch at his hair as his tongue dips briefly into my navel.

Thale’s big hands grip my hips, pinning them in place as he settles between my splayed thighs. I am utterly exposed to him, but feel no embarrassment, only blazing need.



He takes a moment just to look his fill, primal satisfaction kindling in his gaze. I know my arousal is evident in the flush of my skin, the glistening pink folds peeking from between my thighs. But I cannot bring myself to feel shame. My body's responses prove how deeply I want this man.

Mercifully, Thale doesn't tease me for long. When his mouth finally descends to my slick, I arch off the furs, keening. He is forced to use his considerable strength to keep me pinned as his tongue delves and circles my entrance.

The obscene sounds mingling with my choked cries echo through the room. I am distantly aware my nails have broken skin on Thale's shoulders, but if my alpha minds, he gives no sign. His entire focus narrows to feasting on my slick evidence of need for him.

When Thale's lips seal over the swollen bud at my apex and suck commandingly, I shatter apart with a scream. My climax goes on and on as he works me through each aftershock, wringing every last tremor from my willing flesh.

As I float back down from the heights of ecstasy, Thale kisses his way back up my boneless frame. I blink up at him dazedly, still trembling with occasional tremors. His eyes glow with alpha satisfaction at having pulled me so thoroughly apart.

"My Rina," Thale rasps, voice gravelly with lust. "You are exquisite in your pleasure, as in all things."

I caress his beloved face, hoping he can read the depths of my devotion in my eyes. My stalwart earth god. With him I am safe; with him I am home.

Thale's expression softens, tension easing from his massive frame. He brushes a tender kiss over my sweat-damp hair.

"Hush now, dear one. Let me love you."

His big hands begin mapping my body once more, tracing each dip and curve as though determined to memorize me. I sigh blissfully at his unhurried exploration, muscles going lax.

When Thale's fingers quest between my thighs to test my readiness, they find me slick and swollen once more for him. I cannot resist rocking shamelessly against his hand, wordlessly begging for more.

A pleased rumble escapes Thale's chest. "So eager still, my Rina."

Thale moves above me, muscular frame emanating restrained power. The blunt, flared head of his rigid cock nudges against my slick folds, seeking entrance. I grasp his hips desperately, trying to draw him closer, deeper.

With infinite care, Thale begins working himself inside my sensitive channel. Beneath the ridged crown, I can feel the hard bulge of his swelling knot at the base of his shaft. Just the promise of that intense fullness has me shivering in anticipation.

Slowly, he fills me, allowing my body time to gradually accept each thick inch. I focus on relaxing around his considerable girth, though the thick slide of his cock stretching me open borders on too much. When Thale is finally seated to the hilt, we both release shuddering breaths.

The sensation of being so perfectly filled and completed is indescribable bliss. I can feel my inner walls rippling helplessly around his throbbing length, trying to draw him even deeper. Thale stills above me, muscles corded with restraint, determined not to hurt me.

"Does this please you, my little omega?"

"Yes, Thale, yes," I sob, nails raking down his back. My inner walls ripple helplessly around his rigid length, trying to draw him even deeper. "Please, I need to feel you move."

With a groan, Thale begins rocking into me. We quickly find our rhythm, our bodies perfectly attuned to one another's needs and responses. I wrap my legs tightly around his hips, clinging to him as our passion mounts.

Thale starts with a steady, unhurried pace, allowing me to adjust to the thick slide of his cock stroking my hyper-sensitive inner walls. Each glide reaches new depths, lighting

sparks of pleasure behind my eyelids. I rise eagerly to meet his gentle thrusts, craving more friction.

Gradually, Thale increases his force, driving into me with deeper, more powerful strokes. I dig my heels into his back, urging him on as the sweet tension builds within me. The thick drag of his length hits every sensitive spot, wringing choked cries from my lips.

I can feel the hard bulge of Thale's swelling knot catch and tug at my entrance with each plunge, sending shocks of sensation skittering across my skin. The promise of that intense swelling has me racing toward the edge.

"Please, Thale," I gasp, teetering on the brink. "I need your knot, I need to feel you swell inside me!" My inner walls clench desperately around his pistoning cock, trying to draw him deeper.

With a growl, Thale drives into me harder, his swollen knot grinding against my entrance with each rhythmic thrust now. I'm helpless beneath the onslaught, my climax so close I can taste it.

When I feel myself about to crest that peak, Thale reaches between us to circle my aching clit with clever fingers. The added stimulation finally pushes me over the edge.

I wail his name, inner muscles clamping down rhythmically on his driving cock as ecstasy crashes through me. Thale continues working me through each pulse and tremor, expertly prolonging my climax.

I'm only distantly aware of scoring his back with my nails, lost in the storm of sensation as he draws every last shred of pleasure from my writhing body.

Only when I go limp and spent beneath him does Thale finally let himself go. With a ragged shout, he drives his swollen knot home, locking us together. I feel him pulse hotly within me as he empties himself in endless streams.

"Thale!" I cry out, arching into him. The scalding heat of his release triggers another intense orgasm, rippling through

my core. I cling to my mate, overwhelmed by the intimacy of our joining.

We remain tied together, Thale's heart pounding against my chest as we catch our breath. The feeling of his hot seed flooding my womb fills me with primal satisfaction.

I know the purpose of his swelling knot is to ensure his seed takes root deep inside me. The thought of carrying this devoted man's child one day thrills me to my core.

As if sensing the direction of my thoughts, Thale begins murmuring fervently in my ear. "My Rina, my mate, my everything," he rasps. "One day I want to see you round and full, carrying our babe within you."

His big hand splays possessively over my lower belly, thumb stroking as if he can already picture my womb growing ripe with his seed.

Emotion swells within me, tightening my throat. I cover Thale's hand with my own, conveying without words my longing to make that dream real. To nurture new life created from our love.

Thale's eyes blaze with primal, possessive satisfaction. Still buried deep inside me, he starts gently rocking his hips again, intent on spilling every last drop of his essence into my fertile womb.

I gasp as I feel his half-swollen knot catch and tug at my entrance with each subtle thrust. The friction reignites the simmering flames of my desire.

"Yes, my alpha," I plead, tilting my hips to take him deeper. "Give me all of your seed. I want to swell with your babe."

My nails rake down his muscular back, urging him on. Thale increases his pace, driving into me with renewed purpose. I wrap myself around him, clinging tightly.

The pressure quickly builds again, stoked by Thale's thick length stroking my hyper-sensitive inner walls. When I shatter this time, my alpha follows me over the precipice with a roar.

His hot release fills me in endless streams as his swollen knot locks us together once more. Thale's teeth graze my arched throat, biting down just enough to break skin as his seed pours into me.

I cry out at the sharp pleasure-pain, writhing beneath him. I can feel the spark in my womb as my omega body responds. His bite ensures my womb is fertile for him, bonding us together irrevocably as mates.

We remain tied, surrounded by the mingled scent of our passion. Thale nuzzles against my throat, lapping the small wound as it heals. I float in peaceful bliss, cherishing the closeness of our entwined bodies.

As the shudders wracking our entwined bodies finally ebb, Thale collapses over me. I hold him close, combing my fingers through his sweat-damp hair. Our hearts gradually settle into a matching rhythm, and contentment steals over me.

This steadfast, passionate man is everything I could desire in a mate. With him, body and soul, I am complete.

Thale nuzzles into the crook of my neck, his warm breath tickling my skin. "My Rina," he whispers fervently. "You are my heart, my life. With you, I am home."

His words kindle warmth in my core. I cradle his rugged face between my palms, blinking back tears.

"As you are mine, Thale," I tell him softly. "My true mate."

We trade tender kisses, simply reveling in the closeness of our entwined bodies. I run my fingers through his tousled hair, feeling his solid strength surrounding me. As long as I have this, nothing else matters.

Eventually Thale slips from my body with a sigh of regret. I mourn the loss of connection, but he quickly gathers me close again.

"Hush, dear one. I'm here," he soothes.

Thale begins pressing gentle kisses over my face and throat, relearning my body with his hands. Though spent and

sated, I crave his touch, his worshipful attention. I will never tire of this man's passion.

When Thale's caresses rekindle the flames between my thighs, he takes me again with exquisite care. We move together slowly, each subtle sensation magnified. My fingernails trace his straining muscles as pleasure carries us higher.

This time when we find our peak, it comes softly as the sea meeting the shore. I cling to Thale, whispering my devotion as bliss rolls through us. His deep rumbling answers me, our voices mingling.

After, we remain entwined by the dying fire, trading tender words and touches. Thale's big hand splays over my belly, thumb stroking reverently. The promise in his touch brings tears to my eyes.

Someday soon, I will carry our child within me—living proof of our love. The thought fills me with indescribable joy. My stalwart mate, my heart...with him, I am home.

Curled safe against Thale's chest, his steady heartbeat beneath my cheek, sleep gradually claims me. I dream of our future, bright with hope. Dark times may come, but together, we will build something lasting.

Tomorrow dawns a new day. And whatever it brings, with my pack and my devoted mates at my side, I know we will prevail. Our story has only just begun.

## Chapter Eighteen

Sunlight streams through the windows of the cozy cabin, rousing me from peaceful dreams. For a long moment, I simply bask amongst the rumpled furs, breathing in the lingering scents of passion.

The warm bulk at my back shifts, and Adar's strong arm tightens around my waist, surrounding me with his smoky, crackling scent. His heat envelops me as he nuzzles into the crook of my neck.

"Good morning, my little flame," Adar rumbles, voice still rough with sleep. His lips graze my shoulder, nipping lightly.

I lace my fingers through his, marveling at the contrast of his battle-roughened hands against my own. Adar could crush stone in that fiery grip, yet he cradles me as gently as he would a hatchling bird.

Rolling over to face him, I trace the beloved lines of his rugged features. "Good morning, my warrior."

Adar's amber eyes glow with affection. We share a slow, heated kiss, simply reveling in each other. No matter how many times we've come together, waking in Adar's embrace feels like a gift.

When we finally draw back, Adar strokes his knuckles down my cheek. "I hope you rested well, little flame. I heard you last night. It sounds like you had fun."

Heat blooms under my skin at the praise. "Thanks to Thale, I feel thoroughly loved and claimed."

Adar's gaze sharpens with interest. "Is that so? Then perhaps you need reminding who else you belong to."

Before I can respond, a wave of nausea washes over me. I press a hand to my mouth, willing my roiling stomach to settle.

Concern flashes across Adar's face. "Rina? What's wrong?"

I take a deep breath before answering softly, "Thale and I mated last night. That's part of the reason for our passion. I'm carrying his child now."

Adar goes very still, emotions warring on his handsome face. Then his expression clears, a tentative smile breaking through.

"Truly? You're having a pup?" At my nod, he crushes me close. "Why didn't you tell me right away, little flame?"

I return his fierce embrace. "I wanted to be certain before I said anything. Are you upset?"

Adar cups my face in his big hands. "Upset? No, Rina. This is good news." His thumb brushes over my still-flat belly. "Our pack will grow stronger."

But I sense a flicker of jealousy in his fiery amber eyes. Adar has always craved more time alone with me. Now someone else's child grows in my womb.

I cover his hands with my own. "Thale may have planted his seed first, but this child will need his other fathers too."

Hope kindles in Adar's gaze. I continue softly, "When the time is right, I would be honored to carry your babe. Our children can grow up together."

Adar makes a primal noise of satisfaction, crushing me close again. "Yes, Rina. I want that—for us to build a family together." He captures my mouth in a heated kiss. "You'll give me a strong son, won't you?"

"Or daughter," I counter with a smile.



Adar just laughs. “As long as they’re ours, I don’t care.” His hands frame my still-flat belly possessively.

Then his expression turns serious, hope kindling in his blazing amber eyes. “Rina, if we mate now, I may also get you with child. Omegas often release multiple eggs when their mates tie and bite the. We could have two little ones grow together, as close as twins.”

My pulse quickens at the thought. “Really? I can carry your babe and Thale’s?”

Adar nods. “It’s rare, but possible in the early days. If my seed takes root alongside his…” His gaze bores into mine. “Will you try, little flame? Will you give me that gift?”

I caress his beloved face, seeing the vulnerability he reveals to no one else. “Yes, my warrior. I would be honored to bear your child too.”

Adar’s expression turns fierce with satisfaction. He crushes his mouth to mine, kissing me passionately. I can feel his rigid arousal pressing insistently against me.

When we come up for air, Adar rasps, “Then let me fill you with my seed, Rina. I want to see you round and ripe with our pups growing inside you.”

Before I can react, he grasps my hips and effortlessly flips me onto my stomach beneath him. I gasp as Adar presses his muscular frame along my back, surrounding me in his smoky scent. The rigid length of his cock grinds against my backside through the thin barrier of the furs.

Adar gathers my wrists together above my head in one strong hand. “Keep these here,” he orders. When I obey, he makes an approving noise low in his throat.

“Good girl. Now don’t move.”

Anticipation skitters down my spine. I remain still as commanded, senses hyper-aware of each subtle shift of Adar’s body against mine.

He takes his time relearning my form, tracing every dip and curve with his free hand. I have to force myself not to arch

into his touch, craving more contact.

When Adar's fingers slip between my thighs to test my readiness, they find me slick and aching for him already. He chuckles darkly.

"So eager, my little omega." Two fingers slide through my folds to circle my swollen nub. I bite my lip to muffle a moan, determined to take my teasing stoically.

Adar continues his relentless stimulation until I'm writhing mindlessly, wordless pleas falling from my lips. Only then does he finally take mercy.

"You've been such a good girl. I suppose you've earned a reward."

In one smooth motion, he lifts my hips, positioning his thick cock at my slick entrance. I whimper, trying to press back and draw him in, but Adar's grip keeps me pinned helplessly in place.

"Tell me what you need, Rina," he orders. When I remain stubbornly silent, determined not to beg, Adar rubs the thick head of his length through my soaked folds. We both groan at the tantalizing sensation.

"Ask nicely, and perhaps I'll give you what we both want," Adar rasps. I can hear the tenuous control fraying in his voice.

My own stubborn will finally breaks. "Please, Adar," I gasp. "I need you inside me. Please!"

With a satisfied rumble, Adar drives into me in one powerful stroke. We both cry out as he fills me, his thick cock stretching my inner walls exquisitely.

Adar gives me a moment to adjust to his considerable size. Then he begins thrusting, taking me with deep, demanding strokes. I'm helpless to do anything but take it, pinned beneath his bulk.

"Just like that," Adar praises as I clench desperately around his length, working my inner muscles to increase his pleasure. "Such a good little omega for me."

He continues driving into me relentlessly from behind. The pleasure-pain is dizzying as that ridged length reaches new depths. I can feel Adar's heavy balls slapping my sensitive nub with each plunge, adding an edge of sensation that has me racing toward the brink.

When my climax crashes over me, I scream Adar's name. His own release follows, scalding me from within as his cock pulses. We collapse in a thoroughly sated tangle, his knot swollen to seal his seed deep inside me.

Adar keeps us locked together, his body draped over mine possessively. As we catch our breath, his fingers trail lightly over my skin. I revel in his warm, solid weight pinning me down.

"My fierce little mate," Adar rasps, nipping my shoulder. "You'll look so fucking hot round with our child." His hand splays over my lower belly. "You'll give me a strong pup, won't you, Rina?"

My breath catches. "Yes, my flame. I want that too," I tell him softly. "Do it, Adar. Bite me now."

Adar makes a primal, satisfied noise. He rolls us onto our sides, keeping us joined. "You'll be a fine mother to our pups," he praises. "I can't wait to see you ripe and full, belly swollen with the seed I put in you."

His vivid words kindle heat within me, despite my repletion. Adar feels my response, his spent cock already stirring back to hardness where he remains sheathed inside me.

"Ready?" he asks, hope and hunger mingling in his rough voice.

"Yes, please," I whisper. I will never tire of this man's passion.

Adar needs no further encouragement. He begins driving into me again, hands gripping my hips to hold me in place against his powerful thrusts. This time he takes me hard and fast, like he's claiming his mate.

I'm helpless to do anything but take it as Adar uses my body for his pleasure. The thick slide of his cock pummeling

my slick channel soon has the pressure building again, white-hot and intense.

Sensing how close I am, Adar reaches around to rub tight circles over my swollen nub in time with his demanding rhythm. The added stimulation hurls me over the edge again with a wail.

My climax triggers Adar's own release. He buries himself to the hilt, swelling knot sealing us together once more as I feel him pulsing hotly inside me. His fangs bite down on my neck and I cry out at the white-hot mix of pleasure and pain.

"Adar..." Tears prick my eyes as I feel the pulse of my womb, just as I did last night for Thale. "It's happening."

He growls, his cock pulsing inside me as he fills me with his cum. "Yes, my sweet little flame," he says, palming my abdomen and licking the healing wound on my neck. "Take my seed and give me a pup."

I can only whimper in response, imagining two laughing children growing up side-by-side, one with flame-red hair and the other with hair as dark as the earth.

We collapse in a thoroughly sated tangle again. Adar keeps us tied, not yet ready to relinquish his claim on me. I float in peaceful bliss, surrounded by his earthy scent.

As we catch our breath, Adar begins nuzzling and nipping lazily along my throat and shoulders. The pleasurable sting makes me shiver. When his teeth graze the faded mark of his fertile bite, I gasp.

Adar stills, then does it again more purposefully. Fresh sparks shoot down my spine. Even with his knot swollen huge inside me, I crave more.

"Please," I beg shamelessly.

Adar needs no further encouragement. He sinks his teeth fully into the mark on my nape, breaking skin again. I cry out at the sharp bite of pain mingled with pleasure, arching back into him.

As he laps the small wound, I feel Adar swelling impossibly larger within me, his release scalding my clenching inner walls. His bite ensures I take every last drop of his seed into my fertile womb, right next to Thale's recent release.

We collapse together again, spent and sated. Adar withdraws just enough to gently roll me onto my back so he can see my face. I blink up at him, still dazed from the intensity.

Adar's eyes blaze with satisfaction at having thoroughly claimed me. He brushes sweat-damp hair back from my face. "No matter who else you take as mate, you're mine. Promise me that, Rina."

"I promise, my warrior. And one of my first children will be yours," I vow.

Adar seals his mouth over mine in a fierce kiss. I can taste my blood on his tongue as it tangles sensually with my own. Marked inside and out by this powerful, passionate man. I am his, just as he is mine.

Eventually Adar's swollen knot deflates enough for him to slip free. I mourn the loss, but he quickly gathers me close again, keeping us pressed skin to skin.

Adar's clever fingers trail over the bite mark on my throat. "I've staked my claim now. You'll swell beautifully with our pup."

His amber eyes take on a faraway look. "I hope they have your spirit. We'll teach them to hunt and fight as soon as they can walk. They'll be strong and fearless."

Adar's words paint a vivid picture in my mind—a little boy or girl with his father's golden skin and my dark hair, tumbling playfully with Adar in our meadow. My heart clenches with longing.

"He'll have your clever hands and loyalty of heart too," I say softly.

Adar smiles. "And your wisdom and courage." He brushes a tender kiss over my hair. "Our child will change the world someday."

His belief warms me. Our children will grow up safe and cherished, not fearing the discrimination Fern battled. They will lead the packs into a new era of openness and light.

Adar's hands begin wandering again, unable to resist relearning my curves. I sigh blissfully under his unhurried attention.

When his fingers quest between my thighs and find me still slick and swollen for him, Adar growls approvingly.

“Ready for more already, my insatiable mate?”

Before I can respond, he rolls me beneath him again, amber eyes burning with lustful intent. I welcome Adar's passion gladly, wrapping my legs around his hips. After so long fighting to survive, I crave feeling claimed by this formidable man.

Adar enters me swiftly, both of us groaning as he fills me in one smooth stroke. He sets a forceful pace, taking me with powerful thrusts that wring shattered cries from my lips. Now that I've promised him a child, Adar is utterly focused on spilling his seed as deep as possible.

I meet his demanding rhythm eagerly, nails raking down his back. The pleasure-pain of his cock pummeling my slick channel soon has me racing toward the edge again.

Sensing how close I am, Adar drives into me brutally hard. “Come on my knot, Rina. Milk every drop of my seed into your fertile womb.”

On cue, I shatter apart, inner walls clamping down rhythmically on his swollen bulge as ecstasy crashes through me. Adar shouts harshly as he follows me over, grinding his knot in deep.

We remain tied as his essence fills me in endless streams. I cling to Adar, letting the blissful sensations roll through me. Already I feel our bond deepening, strengthened by the promise of new life to come.

Eventually Adar's swollen knot deflates enough for him to slip free. Before I can mourn the loss, he moves down my body to press a tender kiss over my still-flat belly.

“Rest now, little flame. Our child needs a mother’s strength.”

Adar draws me close, one powerful arm curled around me possessively. I nestle into his embrace, surrounded by warmth and the heady scent of our passion.

With my fierce warrior beside me, I surrender to exhaustion, dreaming of the child we created. The future is uncertain, but together Adar and I will weather any storm.

Our love burns bright as the heart of a flame, lighting the way forward. As long as I have this man’s passion and protection, I am home.

## Chapter Nineteen

I 'm relaxing at the kitchen table of my mom's newly rebuilt house, sipping a mug of fragrant tea, when a knock sounds at the door. Before I can rise, Ali flashes me a smile and bounds over to answer it.

"I'll get it, Rina. You stay put."

I nod gratefully, settling back in my chair. My petite best friend has barely left my side since we defeated General Teller, fussing over me like a mother hen. Not that I can blame her, after everything we've endured. And especially now, with me carrying not just one babe, but two.

Ali swings the door open, surprise flashing across her pretty features. "Lucian! Come in."

My clever mate steps inside with his usual feline grace, brushing a swift kiss over Ali's cheek in greeting. "Thank you, little witch. I hope I'm not intruding." His piercing blue gaze finds me. "Just wanted to check on our girl."

Warmth spreads through me at his concern. I beckon Lucian over with a smile. "You're always welcome, darling."

He joins me at the table, angling his chair close so our knees brush. Lucian captures my hand, long fingers threading through mine. I marvel again at the contrast between his elegant hands and my own calloused ones.

"How are you feeling today?" Lucian asks, sharp eyes assessing me for any sign of discomfort. "Any nausea or fatigue?"



I consider before answering. “The morning sickness seems to have passed, though I do get tired more easily these days.” I smooth a hand over my still-flat belly. “But both babes are doing well, as far as I can tell.”

Lucian’s mouth quirks. As an air elemental, he can read the subtlest currents and changes around my body. If anyone knows how our children are, it is him.

“Your daughter and son flourish, my wild one,” he confirms. “Thale’s seed took root, as did Adar’s. You carry both a little she-wolf and a young wolf within you now.”

Joy wells up inside me at this confirmation I carry not one but two precious lives. Lucian sensed it before even I did—Thale’s earthy brown daughter and Adar’s fiery red son.

Ali presses a hand to her heart, dark eyes shining. “Rina, how wonderful! We must start planning a double baby shower!”

As she begins musing over possible themes and favors, I meet Lucian’s wintry gaze. “Have you told the fathers yet?”

Lucian shakes his head, satisfied at having given me this gift first. I lean over to kiss his sharp cheek in gratitude. My clever mate knows me so well.

“Let’s call the others to celebrate,” I suggest eagerly. Telling Thale and Adar about their children with our family around us will make it perfect.

Lucian agrees enthusiastically. While Ali scurries off to prepare refreshments, he summons our mates with his wind magic. I settle back, anticipating their arrival.

Soon enough, Adar bursts through the door, sweeping me into his fiery embrace. His broad hands splay over my belly. “How fares my future son today?”

I laugh indulgently, laying my own hands over his. “Both your son and Thale’s daughter flourish, my love.”

Adar’s grin turns fierce with satisfaction. I know he hoped his seed would quicken alongside his fellow god’s. He crushes me close, surrounding me and our babes in his protective heat.

When gentle Everett arrives next, he too cradles my still-flat stomach with infinite tenderness. “Two little ones for us to cherish,” he rumbles. “Our family grows.”

My eyes prickle with happy tears. With these devoted men at my side, our children will want for nothing.

A deep, familiar voice rumbles from the doorway. “Do I hear congratulations are in order?”

Thale steps inside, forest green eyes immediately seeking me out. Joy lights his features as I fly into his open arms.

“Thale, Lucian has wonderful news,” I tell him excitedly. “Our daughter grows strong within me!”

Wonder and pride fill Thale’s face. He cradles me close, one big hand splaying over my still-flat belly with new reverence. “Truly, dear one?”

At my eager nod, he laughs—a full-throated, delighted sound I’ve rarely heard from my solemn oak. Thale presses fervent kisses to my hair, my temple, my lips. “A daughter,” he whispers between kisses. “Our precious girl.”

I cling to him, overwhelmed by emotion. With Thale’s steady strength beside me, I know our children will thrive, safe and cherished.

Eventually Thale releases me, only for Adar to sweep me into his own fierce embrace. “You’ve made me the happiest wolf in the world, little flame,” he vows. “My son could have no finer mother than you.”

Pride and love shine from him. Adar has always craved a true family of his own. Now, that dream is within reach.

As if reading my thoughts, he adds softly, “Our boy will grow up feeling wanted and secure. I swear it.”

I caress his beloved face, blinking back tears. “With his father’s courage and passion, how could he not?” Adar’s past wounds run deep, but our son will help heal them.

“Come, everyone!” Ali calls brightly. “I’ve made tea and snacks to celebrate.”

I'm reluctant to leave the shelter of Adar's arms, but the aroma of freshly baked cookies and sweet tea is impossible to resist. Ali knows my cravings all too well.

We gather around the kitchen table, chatting and laughing together. Everett pours tea while Lucian and Adar eagerly steal cookies as soon as Ali takes them from the oven. Even Thale indulges his sweet tooth, winking at me over his sugared biscuit.

Watching my family revel in this simple joy, I feel fit to burst from happiness. Our struggles are far from over, but this moment is perfect.

As Ali leans over to refill my teacup, something catches my eye—a thin, shimmering thread wrapped around her ring finger. My breath catches in realization.

A mating bond! Ali has found her fated mate at last.

I grasp her hand excitedly. “Ali, look! Why didn't you tell me?” Joy for my dear friend bubbles up inside me. She will finally know the bliss I share with my mates.

Ali's eyes go wide at the sight of the delicate, glowing thread. “I didn't even notice it until now,” she admits, awe in her voice. “But I don't even have a wolf form, just like my father.”

“You could still be destined for a wolf,” I tell her eagerly. “You're a member of our pack, too.”

“Who do you think it could be?” Ali clasps her hands, practically vibrating from anticipation. “Oh, I can hardly wait! I wonder if I know them already?” Her dark eyes sparkle as she turns possibilities over in her mind.

Watching my dearest friend glow, I feel I may burst from joy. She above all deserves fated love.

“We must celebrate this too!” I declare. Impulsively, I pull Ali into an exuberant dance around the kitchen, laughing. She follows my lead gracefully, even in her faded blue jeans.

Breathless, we eventually collapse back into our chairs. I lift my teacup in a toast. “To Ali and her future happiness,” I

proclaim.

“Here, here!” my mates chorus. Ali ducks her head, cheeks pinking charmingly. I know she feels the same fierce love for me and our strange little family that I do for her. With this bond revealed, our happiness is complete.

Later, as we relax by the fire, our discussion turns to the future. Ever practical, Thale spreads a map on the table to discuss expansion plans for our territory.

“If we extend patrols here and here,” he explains, tracing proposed boundaries, “it will allow space for new families within our protections.”

Lucian nods thoughtfully, keen strategic mind working. “An excellent notion, brother. And perhaps we could establish regular envoys to visit the other packs, to maintain connections.”

Diplomatic tasks suit Lucian’s talents well. He was born to build bridges between factions. I squeeze his hand in encouragement.

“All that can wait.” Adar’s impatient voice interrupts our planning. He pulls me onto his lap, stroking my hair. “For now, Rina should focus only on rest and taking care of herself.”

His protective streak is endearing, if mildly exasperating. I twist around to face him. “I’m pregnant, my heart, not helpless. I can still contribute to discussions.”

Adar huffs, but concedes the point with good grace. He knows better than to try and wrap me in wool. I settle more comfortably against his chest, content for now to listen as the conversation swirls around me.

“With Teller gone, now is the time for building,” Everett rumbles thoughtfully. He gazes into the flickering hearth, strong face etched with purpose. “We must raise up the next generation to carry on Fern’s legacy.”

Thale nods solemnly. “Well said. We will create a world that’s different than the one we left behind.” His eyes find

mine, pale and intent. “Our packs will be free and peaceful, thanks to you, dear one.”

His words resonate through me. We have been gifted an opportunity to bring true change after so much struggle. The future lies open before us, bright with promise.

Later that night, as we prepare for bed, I find myself watching Ali. She moves through her familiar routine in a glow of giddy anticipation.

Tomorrow, her life may change forever when fate reveals her destined mate. I pray whoever it may be recognizes the treasure they’ve been gifted in my dearest friend.

Strong arms enfold me from behind, and I lean back into Thale’s solid warmth. Our future path stretches out ahead too, filled with endless possibilities. But tonight, I am content.

## Epilogue

Sunlight filters through the canopy of vibrant green leaves overhead, dappling the forest floor. I pause in gathering herbs, lifting my face to the warmth with a contented sigh. It's a beautiful spring day in Mountain Pack territory, rich with the scents of life and new beginnings.

The sound of childish laughter draws my gaze to the meadow just beyond the trees. My four children—Thalia, Raim, Ada, and baby Evan—are tumbling playfully with their fathers in the grass.

Eight-year-old Thalia has her arms wrapped around Thale's neck as he pretends to stagger under her slight weight. Though she takes more after me in looks, with dark hair and eyes, my oldest daughter shares her father's steadfast spirit. Thale adores her utterly.

Her twin, eight-year-old Raim, is napping in the sun. He takes after his father in looks, but is more calm and steadfast, with a mischievous streak that rarely pops up. With bright red hair and cinnamon brown skin, he fits right in standing next to Adar.

He isn't the only child my fiery god gave me. Rambunctious Ada is putting up a valiant effort trying to wrestle Adar to the ground. Though only six, my feisty redheaded girl has her sire's fiery temperament. Adar flips her over his shoulder, eliciting delighted squeals.

Gentle Everett cradles one-year-old Evan to his broad chest, keeping the toddler safely away from the roughhousing.

Evan bumbles happily, pudgy hands grasping at his father's long hair. He is the image of Everett in miniature, already with his sire's thoughtful nature.

Joy wells up inside me watching my family. The shadows of the past seem lifetimes away now. Here there is only peace, and promise.

“You're getting that look on your face again.”

I turn with a smile to see Ali approaching, my fifth child—a sturdy, blond-haired four year old named Luca—holding her hand. Her rounded belly, just starting to swell with new life, speaks to the happiness she's found too since fate revealed her destined mate.

“What look is that?” I ask innocently, though I know very well what she refers to.

Ali snorts delicately. “The moony, sentimental one.” But her eyes are warm with understanding. She knows as well as I that we are blessed beyond measure.

Luca begins squirming eagerly in Ali's hold, little face lighting up when he sees his siblings playing. Ali lets his hand go with an indulgent smile.

“Go on then, little love. Try not to get too messy.”

Luca scampers off happily to join the others. Ali slips her arm through mine as we amble after our brood at a slower pace. Though not bonded by blood, she is as much a mother to all my children as I am. We share everything.

As we draw nearer, Evan catches sight of us and begins straining in Everett's arms, chubby hands reaching out. “Mama! Auntie!”

Laughing, I hurry over to scoop my youngest into my embrace, smothering his round cheeks in kisses until he squeals. “There's my beautiful boy! Have you been good for your Da?”

Evan babbles cheerful nonsense, one pudgy fist tangled in my hair. My heart clenches just looking at him. Everett's namesake, and his father's son through and through.

I glance over to where Thale is tussling with the girls now, Ada clinging fiercely to his back. Their happy shouts and laughter lighten my spirit. After so many years of darkness, this joy and light feel like an undeserved gift.

“You’ve made quite the paradise here.”

I turn, a pleased smile breaking over my face as Talon approaches. Though much changed from the bitter, broken woman I knew as a child, some of my mother’s cynicism remains. It’s a sign of our healed relationship that she voices the sentiment at all.

“Mom, you’re early!” I exclaim, embracing her.

Talon returns my enthusiastic hug. Her once lank hair is neatly styled now, shot through with dignified strands of silver. Sobriety suits her.

“I wanted to help you set up for the celebration,” she explains. Her keen gaze sweeps over the sprawling meadow dotted with colorful tents and tables. “It looks like you have everything well in hand already.”

Pride swells in my chest. It took many long days of preparation, but seeing it come together is deeply satisfying.

“Tonight will be wonderful,” Ali assures her, squeezing Talon’s shoulder. “Everyone is so excited.”

She isn’t exaggerating. When Thale sent out word of this gathering to commemorate the decade of peace between packs, responses poured in swiftly. Representatives from all the major packs, along with many lone wolves, clamor to attend the momentous event.

Tonight the meadow will be filled with old friends and new come together in celebration. Music, feasting, and dancing to last until dawn. And tomorrow, talks of the future.

But more personally, this also marks a milestone for my family. Ten years to the day since we defeated General Teller and found our fate as true mates. Much has changed in that time, but what matters most remains—our love, and the future we build together.



I glance to where my mates are now sprawled in the grass, children clambering over them. Lucian's silvery laugh rings out as Thalia tries to stick flowers in his hair. The sound warms me like sunshine. My wind god has found true joy here.

Sensing my gaze, Lucian glances up. His angular face softens, ice blue eyes glowing. In a blink, he's at my side, brushing a swift kiss over my lips and knuckles over Luca's downy head.

"All proceeds well, my wild one?" At my happy nod, he smiles. "Good. Tonight will be one for the ages, thanks to you."

Lucian whistles sharply. At his summons, our children come scampering eagerly over. He catches Thalia about the waist, swinging her up onto his shoulders. Her delighted laughter makes my heart sing.

"Come, little ones, let's give your mother a hand." Lucian flashes me a wink as he sets off toward the bustling meadow, our brood trailing behind.

I watch them go with a full heart. Ali links her arm through mine again. "He's so good with them," she remarks fondly.

It's true. Though Lucian wasn't sure for years that he was ready to be a father, he cherishes our daughters and sons. His patience and cleverness make him an excellent teacher. And as Luca's blonde hair can attest, in time he came around, and decided he was ready to give me his bite and his babe.

"They all are," I agree, smiling as I take in the scene. My mates dote shamelessly on our children, relishing this second chance to guide young lives. It's a gift we never take for granted.

As the afternoon wanes, more guests begin arriving. I'm kept busy greeting old friends like the Sky Pack alpha Edith, and new allies like Hazel, spokeswoman for the nomadic Fury Pack.

I've just finished embracing Hazel when two small missiles barrel into my legs. I look down into the grinning faces of my twin "nieces", Sophie and Eliza, daughters of one

of my packmates, Callie. Laughing, I sweep them up into my arms.

“Let Aunt Rina breathe, you rascals,” Talon scolds without any real heat. She takes Sophie from me, kissing her plump cheek.

Other young pack members trail behind, along with Callie, who’s pregnant with a second set of twins. Our pack has healed and grown together, and now we have more young than we can count.

The band starts to warm up as the sun begins to set. I sway absently with Luca in my arms as I survey the festive gathering, then hand him off to his father as the night grows long. Werewolves of all ages mingle, sharing food and drink. My heart swells at the sight.

This—this peace, this unity—is what we fought so hard to achieve. What Fern and all the others sacrificed for. We will not waste their gift.

Strong arms slide around my waist from behind. I lean back into Thale’s sturdy embrace with a contented sigh. His earthy scent envelops me, his bearded cheek warm against my hair.

“You’ve outdone yourself, my love,” Thale rumbles. “Our people are joyful tonight thanks to you.”

I twist in his arms to face him. “It was a group effort.” I gesture around us. “Look at all we’ve built together.”

Thale’s stern features crease into a smile. He sweeps me effortlessly into a dance, spinning me across the grass. I cling to his shoulders, giggling like a girl.

When the song ends, Thale draws me close, forest green eyes intent. “Ten years ago I was allowed to walk this earth again for you. I had no notion fate would grant me so much more.” His massive hand splays over my heart. “A true home, and a family beyond imagining.”

Emotion clogs my throat. I reach up to caress his bearded cheek. “We are both blessed beyond measure.”

Thale seals his mouth over mine in a tender kiss. My heart swells, overflowing with love for this steadfast, passionate man. He is my rock, my oak—my mate.

When we finally draw back, Thale keeps me tucked close against his side as we rejoin the celebration. Across the meadow, Lucian is enchanting a crowd of young ones with colorful illusions spun from wind and colorful banners. Their delighted laughter warms my soul.

I lean into Thale contentedly as we watch our pack celebrate together. The mouthwatering aromas wafting from the tables remind me it's been hours since I last ate.

Ever practical, Thale procures two heaping plates of roasted meat, fresh bread and cheeses. We settle together on the soft grass to enjoy our meal.

Between bites, I glance around curiously for the others. My gaze soon lands on Adar, surrounded as usual by an eager audience as he recounts some daring exploit. His strong voice carries easily across the distance as he acts out a battle scene.

Though Adar plays it up theatrically for his enraptured listeners, I know each tale is based on truth. He has never sought to hide the violent deeds of his past. But here, with our children grown up safe, that bloody history seems lifetimes away.

As if sensing my thoughts, Adar pauses mid-scene to shoot me a roguish wink. His love kindles an answering warmth in my core. No matter how much time passes, seeing Adar still makes my heart beat faster.

Nearby, Everett keeps a watchful eye on the youngsters chasing fireflies in the gathering dusk. His big hands clap encouragement when little Evan catches one, beaming proudly.

My gentle giant was born to be a father. His protective nature found new purpose shielding our son and daughters. Though Luca takes foremost after Lucian in looks and temperament, all our children adore their steadfast father.

I smile softly, imagining the new little one nestled safe in Ali's womb that will call him Uncle. Though not bonded by blood, Everett already cherishes his unborn babe, often pressing a gentle hand to Ali's belly to feel it stir.

As the moon climbs overhead, painted faces begin appearing at the edge of the firelight. Representatives from the witch covens have come to bless this gathering. I spot familiar faces like Cassandra and Constance, along with newer arrivals, weaving between revelers to bestow good fortune.

Rhea Storm finds me amidst the crowd, her face creasing into a smile. She cups my cheek fondly. "You've done well, Rina. Fern would be so proud."

I lean into her praise, blinking sudden tears from my eyes.

On impulse, I draw the witch into an exuberant dance. She follows gamely, dark hair flying. Rhea has been a great coven leader. Having her here tonight fills me with joy.

The music and dancing stretch long into the night. My feet are sore and my cheeks flushed from exertion and laughter by the time I take a break. I sink down beside Ali at one of the banquet tables, gratefully accepting a cup of cool water from her.

"I don't know how you keep up with them all," Ali remarks, amusement glinting in her dark eyes. She rubs a hand over her gently rounded belly. "I'm ready to nap just watching."

I laugh, nudging her shoulder playfully. "Just wait until this little one arrives. Then you'll know real exhaustion."

Ali's answering smile glows with anticipation. She already loves her unborn child fiercely.

Across the meadow, I spot Calliope in deep discussion with the Sky Pack's elder Edith. Silver heads bent together, their lively gestures speak to rebuilding connections between our packs.

Watching them, I'm reminded suddenly of Fern, her spirit alight with passion as she spoke of the future. I wish she could be here to see what we've built from her sacrifice.

“Do you think she would be happy?” I ask Ali softly. “With how far we’ve come?”

Ali doesn’t need to ask who I mean. She grasps my hand, brown eyes warm with understanding. “Oh Rina, of course. We owe so much to her.”

I nod slowly, comforted by my friend’s steadfast faith. Fern gave everything so that others wouldn’t suffer the way she and other omegas did. I have to believe she’s at peace now, her spirit living on through us.

A commotion draws my gaze back to the gathering. Laughter and lively music fill the air again as Lucian pulls Thale into an impromptu jig, to the delight of our packmates. My earth god’s hard face splits into a grin as he gives in and dances with wild abandon.

Adar sweeps a laughing young witch into his arms next, spinning her so fast her feet leave the ground. The joyful chaos is infectious. Soon the whole glade is up and dancing again beneath the moonlight.

I exchange an exuberant smile with Ali. As one, we run to join our family, letting the music and love carry us into the small hours. Tomorrow there will be time enough for talking. Tonight, we celebrate all we’ve survived and everything yet to come.

Here, surrounded by kin, with my mates and children close, I am home.

## Excerpt: Rejected Exile

Feeling sorry for myself, I put enough bottles of liquor into my cart to eat away half a paycheck. The bar cabinet in the dining room is empty, I tell myself. People will want to come by to have drinks and reminisce about the dead alpha. I'll need to have something on hand. Truthfully, I'm just aimlessly searching for something here that will make me forget what happened to me.

As I stray near a section in the back with strange, small bottles of clear liquor, a voice startles me. "Yuja is the best chamisul flavor. Some people like the plum, but I think it's too sweet."

Whirling around, I blink up into cool brown eyes that light up a face curved with a wicked smile. A tall man with honey brown skin stands in front of me, his fashionably-cut black hair shiny and sleek as it curves behind his ears. He has slightly delicate features and a strong jaw, his monolid eyes topped with thick black brows.

Plus he's absolutely fucking gorgeous. A stunning lovechild of Jesse Williams and Henry Golding. He looks like he should be wearing a suit and posing on the red carpet, not standing in a liquor store in the middle of Juniper. In fact, the seemingly casual outfit he's wearing, of dark-washed blue jeans and a black button-up, somehow screams style in its simplicity. I get the sense that he knows the difference between a single and double-breasted suit jacket.

I can't seem to find words to say to him. Especially when I realize I'm standing here with seven—no, eight, for fuck's

sake—handles of liquor in my cart.

“This isn’t all for me,” I blurt out, like some kind of goddamned idiot. For some reason this makes the man grin so widely I nearly fall over in stunned attraction to him. “I’m, uh, having a party. Well, more like a wake. A—a respectful wake! Err, or, well, a drunk one...”

Stop now, Delilah. He’s never going to want to see you naked. Hell, he probably didn’t before you opened your mouth. The man is just being nice to you—he knows you’re having a mental breakdown in a liquor store.

Or if he didn’t before, he does now.

“Don’t worry about it. I never judge how much a lady is purchasing in alcohol sales.” Turning to the shelf, the man draws his finger across several bottles covered in writing I don’t recognize, and stops at one with a painting of a blueberry and brush script on it. “If you’re looking for something that’ll get you fucked up without you even noticing you’re drinking alcohol, this is the stuff. Just be warned—it’s not that alcoholic seltzer they sell around here. It’s far more potent.”

“What... is it?”

“Soju. A Korean rice wine.” He grabs two of the small bottles and places them in my cart, where they clink against all the other bottles. I cringe and wish for a trap door to open up in the ground beneath me. “That should get your respectful wake going quite nicely.”

“Uh—thanks.” Lamely, I admit, “I’m not really having a wake. Well, I probably will—whether I want to or not—I’m just kind of prepared for it to happen one way or another.”

“Gotcha.” He rocks back on his heels, watching me idly, until I start to wonder if there’s something on my face. “Sorry for your loss? Or congratulations, if it’s your mortal nemesis whose wake you’re holding.”

I burst into laughter at his joke. Loud, embarrassing laughter that’s way more enthusiastic than the joke called for.

Mortified, I slap my hands over my mouth and wish again for that trap door in the ground.

“It’s complicated,” I tell him, my blush spreading even as his eyes dance with mirth and his grin widens. “Everything about this is complicated.”

“Well, if you need some help planning a few mortality-themed complicated cocktails, I’m your man.” He winks at me, and somehow it comes across as charming instead of slimy. Probably because of the handsomeness. “I’m Finn Barber, by the way—you are?”

“Delilah.” I wince at the sound of my own name, and at the flash of recognition that slides across his face in response to it. “Yep, *that* Delilah. And the wake is for—”

“Your father. Oh shit.” He pushes his hair back from his face, though it still slides forward to flop in his forehead, a tiny flaw in his exquisitely handsome exterior. “I’m so—wait. I won’t say that. Since you said it’s complicated.”

Relief fills me. “Thank you.”

“No problem.”

“It’s just—I never know how to respond when people say that.” Staring into the cart, I admit, “I probably got too many bottles. It’ll take forever to put them back. I hate just leaving them anywhere—when I worked retail, customers like that drove me crazy.”

“No worries. I’ll just—ah, yes, that one.” Reaching into the cart, he nabs the big bottle of cheap vodka I threw in on a whim, and gives me a winsome smile that makes me feel like a teenage girl again. “That’s just what I was looking for, anyway. No need to put it back on the shelf.”

I smile back at him, feeling a little less like a crazy lady, and even more like I should get the hell out of Juniper before I lose my panties in some kind of panties-melting hot-werewolf-men related accident.

“I should probably go,” I tell Finn.

“Of course.”



“See you around?”

I don't mean to word it like a question, but it comes out like one.

“Oh, I'll be seeing you again for sure, Delilah.” The look in his eyes should scorch metal; it nearly melts me. “That much I know.”

I'm so unbelievably flustered by his words that I nearly dart out of the store without paying. Thankfully by the time I'm through the register, he's somewhere on the other side of one of the aisles. Because I get the sense that if he looks at me for one more second, talking to me in that voice, I'll explode into a thousand pieces.

All that'll be left is a scorch mark on the ground.

Here lies Delilah. She got so turned on it straight-up killed her.

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Here I thought I was a normal college girl with a high libido. Turns out that's wrong—I'm so much more. I have powers, and if I don't learn how to control them, I'll wind up killing someone.

Baton Rouge has never been so hot as it is when I meet Leon and Naomi. And Tae Min, Petyr, Elah, Vincent: all fae. Here to guide me into my new life.

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I know you've heard my name. They're all talking about what I've done. But no one really understands why I did it. And no one understands *me*.

Except for the other killers at Cain University.

The Cain graduate program for killers is the only safe place left for me. But it comes with a catch: leave, and the consequences are deadly.

I need to stay. I have powers to train, and someone to kill next: the man who murdered my mother in cold blood. To get him, though, I'll need to survive the first year program.

Easier said than done. Especially when I find out the four men I loathe, who hunted me and petitioned to kill me, are somehow connected to my powers. If we don't learn to get along, it could spell doom—for them and for me.

*First Kill is a brand new university-age first in a series, similar to The Magicians and Villain Academy. It has blood, gore, mature scenes, laugh out loud comedy, and a reverse harem enemies-to-lovers romance that will scorch off the pages. For readers 18+ only; please read the trigger warning inside.*

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# About the Author

Lucy Auburn is an urban fantasy/paranormal romance writer who lives in New Orleans with six cats, two dogs, and a man who makes her laugh. She loves writing about strong women, supportive men, dumb puns, dick jokes, and her favorite foods. Some of the writers who inspire her include Lily Gold and J Bree.

When she's not writing, she's usually gardening, making ceramics, or enjoying all the good food New Orleans has to offer.

She'd love to hear from you! Writing is a solo art, but reading doesn't have to be, so let her know if you like her work.

(Please, let me know!)

*Catch up with her...*

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