

Sirius, Book III
The Essence

Comments or Questions?

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Chapter 15

The horrible flash of pain that Lyat thought would end his life, and his sister's, never happened. He looked up from a flinch he would later vehemently deny ever happened, and saw a green haze in front of him. Stunned, he looked around himself. Were they dead already? He then spotted a figure in the haze with them. The white-furred priestess had her hand out, and a dome of greenish fog had wrapped around the pair of Asuna. It had stopped the fireball from sending them as charred meat and bones out into the hall. Lyat sighed heavily, realizing that he had not started breathing again right away and finding with some surprise that the mist smelled kind of like honeysuckle. On top of saving his life, it smelled nice too? The mist faded, and he saw Nita on the throne, and everyone else looking stunned. The queen clenched her fists, fuming at the priestess.

"Gah! Why would you do that?!" the queen shouted at Luna. The white lupine female waved her hand and the mist dispersed like smoke in the kitchen. The priestess looked at the trembling Reika, then back at Nita.

"If Alps did send them here to give us his crystal, if they are telling the truth, he would probably be unhappy to learn that you vaporized the two he sent." The priestess spoke softly, her voice still calm. Lyat made a mental note to wash this lady's feet or something to show his gratitude if he were given the chance. The force of that fireball was equal to any his Empress could have thrown, so to stop it with that kind of ability certainly verified the white-furred female's power. Nita clenched her fists, seeming to think about that hard. Reika leaned in, whispering into Lyat's ear.

"Reika is nearly ruined her clothes..." Her words were whispered, seeming to suggest that such a thing really had very nearly come to pass. He could certainly understand.

"Luna, you believe them?" Misty asked the priestess, still trembling. Lyat looked back up at the priestess. She was still incredibly level-headed and calm. This was a heavenly blessing for the Asuna.

"If they had intended to harm Alps and Nidaja, the Asuna would not have put them in a Shadowfall crystal. Based on what Lyat already said, they already know Alps can get out, and when he gets out, he'd possibly bring very powerful help with centuries of grudges to work out on the likely ill-prepared Asuna people." The priestess explained.

"Besides, I have no trouble believing that Alps would do that if it meant even saving himself and Nidaja, let alone a whole city of uninvolved people." She looked over to Nita with an expression that was a bit scolding. Nita should certainly know what Alps would do in such a situation. Luna moved over to the crystal, but seemed afraid to pick it up or touch it. Lyat could not blame her, if she really had been stuck in there for so long. "I am sure he will get back out eventually. I don't know how he did it last time, but we can't lose hope for him now. It is certainly more of a chance than the Uruk would have given him." Lyat sighed softly, grateful that her calm seemed to prevail. Lyat spoke in gratitude.

"Thank you Priestess. Yes, Alps is trusted us to do this but he is having other reasons for sending Asuna to you. He and Nidaja is wanting an unofficial agreement between Asuna and the Amani. That we is finding some way to work together to slow Mannus down. Maybe together we find some way to stop him from destroying our people completely. This is for good of both our people. Mannus is divided us to make us fight, maybe fears our unity. Our strength. We is having no chance alone. He knows this. Alps was hopeful." Lyat backed up a little again after this speech, and Luna approached him, standing beside him and looking back to the queen. The councilor at the queen's side spoke up, leveling her anger herself.

"Can you afford to throw this away if it is genuine? Think hard, your majesty." Misty was trying to sway the queen's logic, and pull her from despair, showing that she was very similar to the priestess in her level-headedness. The queen finally spoke in a wavering voice.

"Luna, if he can't get out again, if it was some rare fluke due to the power you and the others had or something of that nature, what then?" she asked. "Priestess, you won't even get to tell him who he is... who you are... could you live with losing that opportunity because of the selfish Asuna?" she asked. Lyat arched a brow, thinking there was something that he had not been told concerning the priestess.

"I won't lose that chance. We now know that he *can* get out. I won't stop until he's out, even if he can't get out on his own. You would not either, I know this. There is a way and we will find it even if he cannot." Luna stated. "But, please don't darken the world he's destined to come back to... sooner rather than later, I hope." The priestess was very sincere and planned in her wording. Nita seemed to reflect on this a bit, her eyes closed as she pondered all the things in play. Lyat did not envy her. Being a leader and having to set aside ones emotions for everyone else must have been terribly stressful. The Asuna male hoped that Alps would not take long to return. The queen could certainly use his attention to recover from the stress. His purpose, at least initially, was becoming more apparent. The queen finally spoke up.

"I will accept your will on this, for now..." Nita sat back down heavily in her throne. Reika breathed a sigh of relief. Lyat leaned back a little as well, rubbing the back of his head.

"Well done in bringing him home, Asuna." Luna said. "However, don't think that your kidnapping him is so easily forgiven. There is still that matter. You still have to answer for why it was exactly the Asuna felt the need to borrow Alps and put him in such a dangerous situation to begin with."

"Rios is needed him..." Lyat then cringed, realizing what he was about to explain to the one who might well fireball him again for it. He swallowed again. "...Is being rather complicated." He said softly.

"Tell us." Nita growled. The male Asuna's mind raced, trying to think of the most intelligent, non-selfish way to explain the matter. Tragically, Reika spoke up, seeming to realize that her brother was struggling with it and he could not silence her in time, looking on in horror as she yammered away.

"Rios is not able to have family with other Asunas because Rios is being part Letai herself, like queen of Amani is part Letai, yes? All strong Empress Asunas is part Letai. But! But! Is no other boy Letai Asunas left! Mannus killed *all* of them. All! Regular Asuna is not Letai blood enough to give Rios her family and this is made her sad and afraid for our people. We fall into chaos without strong leaders. She is needed strong boy Letai so she is having her family." Misty and Luna shared a look of distress, though Nita was again expressionless. The girl Asuna continued. "Alps is causing big rumor then and Empress is learning of him, and finding that there is maybe hope! Hope for her and all Asuna people. There is not being sad any more because of Letai boy for her! She just borrows him for this, and she is not keeping him. Not hers to keep, she says, but she needs him just for a bit, so we is send to go find him while the time is right. Time is *perfect*. Future is hopeful for Asuna people again!" Reika said this last happily, nodding. There was certainly nothing unhappy about having a family, after all. Lyat wilted at Reika's rapid, careless explanation of what he knew might be a very sensitive kind of subject. His sister was not likely to understand the emotions that might have been tied to what she had just said.

"So she took him to..." Misty started.

"Have him sire a child for her." Nita finished, that blank expression still on her face.

"Ayup!" Reika barked, wagging. "I helped." Lyat inwardly groaned.

The male Asuna flinched again as he saw a green bubble pop around them. Luna had thrown up her shield quickly, but when he looked up, Nita was just standing there. There was a short, awkward silence.

"Nothing?" Luna asked curiously, seeming a little embarrassed about her quick reaction. "Nothing for that one? Okay." The priestess lifted the shield, fanning the sweet-smelling essence away. Lyat hung his head a little. He was glad for not being vaporized, but Reika had not been at all gentle about the explanation.

"I can't be mad about that." Nita said to Luna. "I am a leader for my people just as she is a leader to hers. If I thought I could not give my people a future, and that my inabilities would cause everything to fall to ruin, on top of not even getting to enjoy the most principle function of being alive... I don't know that I would care what other people thought of what I was doing either. I would do everything to ensure the survival of my empire and my family. I can actually completely understand her feelings on that." Lyat blinked in quiet admiration at the level of understanding Nita showed in that regard. He had not expected her to be alright with it because Alps had seemed to feel she would not be. Perhaps the slave was simply afraid for her feelings a little too much. Or perhaps she saw an opportunity in the situation that he was not thinking of. It did put the Asuna and Amani in a better position to be amicable to one another. If it were something that Nita showed as being permitted to Rios, the Asuna would understand that she wanted their empire to remain strong. One of the greatest hurdles for a lasting peace would be the perception of the Asuna as having surrendered to the might of the Amani Empire. This might relax those fears. The hyena could not be sure what the queen was thinking, however.

"I wish they had just asked then, instead of endangering him." Misty said softly, finally speaking up.

"I don't think that would have occurred to the Empress as a possibility." Luna stated, rubbing her temples. It was a lot to take in.

"Did he do this for her?" Nita asked. Lyat tensed up a bit. They had not actually told the queen yet that Alps had completed the task.

"Not willingly." He answered. This was a bit worse scenario, he thought. She might be genuinely mad that he was forced.

"I had suspected he might not, no." Nita said, frowning.

"But he is understood eventually, seeing how life was being for us Asuna. How we want better lives." Reika offered.

"But he had to be forced first?" Nita asked.

"Yes." Lyat answered. "Is begging that you please forgive our trespass upon him. Rios is knowing that what is at stake was too grave, and time was important." Nita and Luna were both silent, the priestess looking to the queen to measure her reaction, perhaps to decide if she had to keep the hyena from being torched again.

"Mother's moon was growing short." Reika added. The male Asuna rolled his eyes, not needing Reika to further illustrate the timing. He was sure the queen knew that part.

“Did Alps forgive her?’ Nita asked calmly, after a quiet pause.

“Yes.” Lyat answered promptly. “He understood her reasons, and could not disagree, even if the means were somewhat... stressful to him.”

“Then she is forgiven.” Nita’s words were still soft, but rather resigned. Lyat sighed again, relaxing a little. He had not expected this conversation would go well at all, originally dreading that it would be Alps explaining it, not him. However, Lyat actually felt better that he had been the one to say it, because it relieved Alps of the discomfort of bringing it up. He was sure it would not have been easy for the young slave. The queen continued. “Though he’s a slave and might not agree, it’s Alps’ body, not mine. He’s not been given to me just yet, though I have made my intentions known to him. He’s not made any transgressions against me in all this. I am sad that he must worry that he has until he is free.” Nita sat back down on the throne and picked up the crystal, Luna cringing at the queen even touching it. “Guess I will be putting this somewhere less... explodable this time.” The green-furred lupine looked up at her repaired throne, which had been blown apart when Alps escaped the first time. She looked up to Luna and rumbled, “It will be a long wait perhaps, but we will wait however long, as you said. I believe in him too, and now we want both him and my sister back.” The queen glanced back over to Lyat. “You were brave to come, knowing what you were going to have to tell me. You are a credit to your strong, courageous people, Lyat.”

“Reika came too.” The girl Asuna barked. Nita smiled at her, and nodded, acknowledging her bravery too. “Yay! I get Bone back!” and the girl bolted, almost falling on the smooth tile on the other side of the door as she took the corner too sharp, thumping against the wall and thundering down the hall to get her bone club.

“What in the world?” Nita asked, dumbfounded.

Lyat stood in the rooftop garden that Nidaja had described as one of her favorite places in the castle during their travels. He could see why. It was very decorative and peaceful, and this high up, the scent of the city below that were worth having were magnified, rising and carried on the wind. Bakeries and restaurants, incense shops and perfume stores, all those lovely scents were lifted up, as the less savory scents tended to cling to the ground. There were rows of hedges with flows that offered their sweet scents in chorus with those of the city, and the lovely trees that were neatly placed in their planters towered more than three times his height, despite being confined to their trenches of loamy soil in the roof. It was a marvelous treasure to the castle. He would have to tell Rios about it when he returned.

The hyena padded quietly, barefoot over to the edge of one of the balconies that overlooked the courtyard below. He could see, in the garden behind the castle, the place Nidaja said she used to go to train. He saw the sandy circle she described. Lyat had found himself actually rather missing the general, and he wished she had been here to give him a tour. No one else seemed particularly interested. Nita, while not outright nasty to him, did not seem to want to get to know the hyena better. Lyat could not blame her. He had stolen her love away and made the kind and loving wolf do the unthinkable to himself and the queen's own sister. There was not likely to be a lot of love coming from that direction any time soon.

As he contemplated this, Lyat heard the soft crunch of a foot upon the gritty roof walkway, thin stone lining it to make it sturdy for foot traffic. He turned around, expecting to see perhaps Misty or Lunariss there to ask him more questions, or perhaps to ask that he not let himself be seen by those outside of the castle. His presence was still not being advertised. They didn't want to cause confusion in the city below. Lyat could agree. As he turned around however, he did not see a face he recognized. He saw a creature he'd never before encountered.

The black-furred, white-haired female fox stood, hands behind her back, looking casual, but observant, as if trying to figure out what Lyat was. He looked back trying to figure out what she was. Finally, he remembered some of his lessons from Rios, and the description of the Lhap people. Her eyes haunted him as he gazed back at her. They seemed to lack pupils, and stared right through him. Was she blind.

"Good morning." The hyena was not sure how else to announce his presence to the possibly blind fox. Were there many of her kind in the castle? He had not seen any others. She looked back at him emotionlessly, and he finally spoke up again. "Is I being somewhere I should not be?"

"You will like where you are." Her answer was pure silk, and her words seemed planned, if not absolutely rehearsed, like she was always supposed to come up here, find him, and say that. This made the hyena a little nervous, which to him was not an overly familiar feeling, especially concerning an otherwise not at all threatening smaller creature like this.

"I have found it quite pleasant, yes." The hyena softly admitted his overall impression of the place. He was not sure why it would matter to her. Was she aggravated about the intrusion of the Asuna in her home? Was this her home? She walked over to the balcony and looked down into the garden below.

"You will find it more pleasant soon. The visitors here are rather delightful." Her words seemed almost teasing to the hyena. Lyat walked away from the balcony a bit, looking back in the direction of the crisscrossing hedges and shrubs, not sure if there were other visitors or not.

"Is you being on high council here? I not meeting you yet. Asuna is supposed to

be not talking to many people. No one is knowing we are being here.” He tried to explain the sensitivity of his presence so the fox didn’t spread it around.

“I knew you would be here, or I would not have come.” The fox spoke very softly, but the hyena did not turn. He didn’t want to seem spooked by that, and did not want to seem like he was staring at those eyes, just in case she actually could see him. She continued. “Rios’ instructions for you to bring him here are law to you, yes? So you will stay until he is out of the crystal?” Lyat widened his eyes at that and turned, seeing her perched casually on the stone ledge of the balcony, swinging her feet in relaxed and calm demeanor. A slight lean the wrong way would prove fatal, but she seemed fearless.

“How is you knowing about that?” he asked. She had to be in some way linked to the queen or to Alps. But the white wolf had not said anything about this lady.

“I heard her tell you in the palace when you were wrapping up that crystal. Your sister made such a fuss about it, and yet, I think Reika is having a delightful time here. It’s like a vacation to her, really. You should stay longer. There are still many things to be done.” Her words sent a chill down the hyena’s spine.

“You is not possibly being there at Asuna palace. Is being a private place with many guards.” The Asuna male gestured a bit. The fox chuckled and rumbled lightly,

“Your afternoon guest approaches.” Her words were almost teasing again. Lyat looked up, turning around just in time to see Luna appear from behind one of the hedges. She had some kind of little lizard on her fingertips, letting it squiggle from one hand to the other, marveling at the life that she found in the garden. She looked very elegant and demure there in her flowing green and white robes, her body meticulously groomed. The torches in Nita’s throne room did not do her justice. She spotted Lyat and smiled, transplanting the lizard from her fingertips to one of the shrubs, where it happily took station to wait for its miniscule prey. Lyat bowed to Luna and said in his deep, strong tone,

“Good morning, Priestess Luna. Asuna is being grateful to you for helping, and for saving lives before. Is not being able to thank you properly before.” His spiky crimson hair bounced a little as he leaned back up. “Lhap here is seeming to know you was coming.” He noted, motioning behind him to the vixen.

“Lhap?” she asked curiously, continuing to walk up to him.

“Yes, is lady fox right...” He turned, but the balcony was vacant. He felt a bolt of horror go through him, padding quickly over to the balcony and looking over the edge. Had she fallen? That would be tragic! It was four stories up! No one was in the garden below. Where had she gone? He looked back to Luna, who smiled at him. “She was just here. Black fox lady in robes with white eyes. You is knowing who it is?” he asked.

"Yes, I know who she is. Well, not very well. I haven't seen much of her since she got out of the crystal." Luna stated casually, leaning by the balcony by the hyena. So that was it. She did know Alps, but it didn't explain why she would know what was said in the Asuna capitol. Had she been following Alps, and then followed him back? Lyat looked back up to Luna. Her voluminous and luxurious tail swayed seductively side to side. The shorter-tailed hyena could scarcely keep his eyes off of it. Rios would do that with her tail for him. She knew he was attracted to it. Her Letai blood had gifted her with such features, and Luna seemed to almost intentionally call attention to it. He swallowed softly as the lady wolf explained. He interjected softly,

"So, Lhap is being priestess too? In the crystal? Alps is saved her as well?" He stood reverently before the priestess. She was, in his opinion, even more deserving of his submission than the queen herself. There was real power here, and real hope for his people. He was glad that the story of Alps freeing other Letai had not just been a rumor. It was hard to believe until the moment that Luna had saved him. At that time he knew exactly what she was.

"The fox? I don't think so. I have no idea why she was in the crystal. After getting out, she made herself scarce. I haven't seen her in weeks, to be honest." The priestess shrugged at that. "I had assumed that she went home, wherever *that* would be. There would not be anyone left that she knew, after so long though. Are you feeling alright?" Luna asked. Lyat blinked at that. Her tone suddenly showed a deep caring, almost a worry, her words having been so light and casual just seconds before.

"Feeling... okay?" He was not sure how to answer. He was feeling fine. Was she suggesting that he was not?

"It was a very long trip. Do you need any healing? Were you accosted by guards or Uruk along the way? I am a very capable healer. I rather enjoy the chance to bring physical and emotional peace. It's my most sacred duty as a Priestess." Luna's words were artful and almost serenading. Lyat flicked his round Asuna ears a little. He was fine.

"Asuna is uninjured. We is having very little trouble in our journey. It was being uneventful at worst." The hyena looked back up into Luna's eyes, appreciating their beauty, one green and one violet. They stared at him, seeming anxious. Seeming tense and worried. Was he bleeding or something? He stated softly, adding to his admission that he was not hurt, "Asuna is rugged people. They is being able to take a lot of damage." Luna seemed to relax a little, and then she looked around seeming almost suspicious for a moment.

"This is good, Lyat, this is so very good..." She spoke in her gentle, soothing, motherly words. The hyena felt so safe and comforted in her presence. It was almost hypnotic how gentle she was, and how inviting her company was the moment she was near him. He found it easy to trust her with his very spirit if she needed to hold it for some reason.

That was probably why he didn't predict at all what was coming. She slipped a heavy-looking cudgel wrapped in soft leather from her robes, and he only got to catch a glimpse of it as it moved in a slicing crescent to the side of his head. Fortunately, there wasn't much pain. He was blissfully unaware of pain or anything else after that.

The spotted Asuna male arched a bit, a little stunned. He was waking up. He was not aware of having fallen asleep. He reached up suddenly, remembering. Luna attacked him! Why in the world would she have done that? Was she really angry about what happened with Alps, and just unwilling to strike him in front of others because of the image that she was trying to maintain? As his hand came to the point where he'd been hit, there was something applied to the side of his head. It was warm and firm. Oh, it was someone's hand. He opened his eyes, a little light-headed. Luna looked down over him.

"Are you alright?" she asked. The hyena didn't answer. She had hit him. Why would she be asking if he was alright? "You lost consciousness due to a slight knock on the head. Fortunately, I am a capable healer." The priestess seemed very proud in saying this. Her tone was back to being motherly and tender, instead of that worried, fretful tone he heard before. She had spoken before with an air of regret, but after hitting him, seemed to have none. What kind of game was this? A capable healer? She hit him. Why was she bothering to heal him?

"What happened?" he asked point blank.

"You were hit on the head." Luna murmured. Her eyes seemed just as kind and soothing and caring as if nothing bad had happened.

"Who is hitting me?" Lyat asked in follow up. He knew, but he didn't know a good way to bring it up at all.

"I do not know. You just went down like a sack of grain." Lyat listened to that answer in stunned silence. He was right there! Why would she deny having done it? He reached up where she had hit him. It didn't hurt. She had healed him already, perhaps while he was unconscious. It still didn't explain why she did it. He sat up a bit. They were still in the garden, but he seemed to have been dragged in between one of the hedgerows. Luna placed a hand on his chest, easing him back down.

"Lyat is being okay." Luna's 'patient' felt well enough to get up. And he was interested in getting away so he could find out what exactly just happened. The motherly priestess whispered softly,

"No, rest. You will get dizzy and fall if you try to leave so soon. I used quite a bit

of my own essence to help you. It would tire me terribly if I had to patch you up again." Her words seemed so genuine. Did she really think someone else hit him? What was wrong with this priestess? She did not seem harmful at all.

"Asuna supposes he can stay a bit. You truly is not knowing who is hit Lyat?" he asked. He kept telling himself she did it, she did it, but the words didn't even make sense now.

"Not a bit. I came up onto the roof garden and found you laying there. I fear not everyone likes the Asuna, so you might have gotten blindsided by a particularly zealous guard. But, I will make sure Nita knows, and you won't have so much as a scar to remember this by." She caressed his chocolaty muzzle and along his brow tenderly and slowly. It was so soothing. Lyat was nearly startled more by the fact that he was slowly not even caring that she hit him, because the healing itself was so pleasant. He swallowed. Essence. She was using essence to calm him. It would certainly explain why he was not thinking about escaping anymore. He found this very curious. The tactically minded Asuna warrior knew that if Luna had meant to really harm him, she had plenty of time while he was out cold to do it.

"Asuna is sorry to have drained more of your power, High Priestess." Lyat decided to resume expressing his gratitude at least to the priestess who saved him and his sister both. He could not afford to make her think she was not appreciated if she were genuinely unstable. "You is being very kind to always help Asuna who is causing so much troubles for the Queen." There was a short silence there as he found himself actually just enjoying the way that Luna stroked his cheeks and his bare chest. He blinked. Bare chest? The hyena lifted his head a little. His shirt had been removed at some point after he was knocked out. He was thankful to see his pants had not been as well. As he dropped his head back, he realized that his shirt was now a pillow. Well, that made sense, kind of.

"It is alright. I was happy to help you. You brought Alps back with considerable risk." Luna resumed sliding her hands over the hyena's strong, broad chest. "I appreciate that, though I will need to draw upon more life essence soon." She smiled at the prone warrior. "Might I have a strong, recently healed and healthy volunteer?" she asked. Lyat widened his eyes a bit. He felt heat rush through his body. Rios, his lover, was an essence user, and he was very plainly aware of how she drew upon life essence in his presence, and the thought of offering the same to the priestess lit his senses on fire. He would be allowed, particularly given that she saved his life, but she had injured him, so it was still not making sense. Still, she had also healed him which did take her own essence energy, and it would not be acceptable etiquette to not replace it in such troubling times. If there were really people in the castle who might wish him harm, having a healer able to help him or his sister would be invaluable. Lyat gave a wandering glance at the priestess, covered elegantly in her robes. They were not exactly revealing, but given the beauty of her visible features, that waving, full and beautiful tail and her youthful but wizened face, he had trouble believing that the body beneath those robes was anything but exquisite.

“For all you is doing to help Asunas,” Lyat spoke finally, “We is certainly in your debt enough to be proud to be assisting you in drawing of essence. Lyat is willing, yes.” He gave his stubby hyena tail a wag of agreement, should the priestess be looking at it. If the pair could make their way back inside, he might at least be able to think of a reason why all this had transpired. Was she crazy, or did she know already how he would react to everything? Was this the only way she might have accomplished what she was after? She glanced around the roof top garden, and then murmured softly,

“Perhaps a bit of cover from prying eyes... such things are a little odd to those who don’t understand...” She held a hand up to the shrubs that lead into the little pathway where they were lying. “Gilrenarthunartir mirelda curosvaldaren...” she practically softly sang in her native tongue, and her fingertips glowed in a soft green light in the waning afternoon sun, barely noticeable, but Lyat could see it. That is when he got another lesson in the potency of Luna’s magic. The shrubs shuffled softly, and then spindles of vine-like growth rapidly erupted from them on both sides, the tendrils meeting in the middle of the path and forming a wall as if the shrubs were supposed to end there all along. The color was a little different as the growth was new, but it offered a concealing green little room for them. Lyat sat up a little. Here? Right in the garden? His dish-like ears swiveled a bit. Had she planned to draw upon his essence all along? Was that what all this was about, or was there something larger going on here?

He did not get very long to try to consider that. He found himself being relieved of his trousers. Luna, on her knees alongside him busied her hands gracefully on the binding of his belt, slipping it free of its snug loops with ease. She worked his pants down casually, hooking her fingers at the waist and shimmying them down his legs. He kicked them away easily enough, and looked back up to the priestess warily. This was very sudden. It was almost alarming not because she was moving so eagerly, but because he could not force himself to be anything but utterly allured. There was no distrust now, no alarm or misgiving. Was he supposed to feel it, or was Luna taking those feelings away from him somehow? Would it matter? He thought he might very much like this even without essence being used to draw him along with the priestess’ will. He gazed up at her again, propping himself up with his hands slightly behind him as he watched. He didn’t say a word as the priestess slid her hands back and forth along his chest, smiling in a very doting and affectionate fashion. She was still so utterly disarming.

“You is okay doing this with Asuna male? Lyat is not being Letai or Amani like others here.” He looked down his body as Luna bared him, his already slightly thickening shaft bouncing against his tummy as the priestess pushed him back. The lupine female looked at her captured prone hyena again with more confidence and affection than the doting motherly expression she had moments ago.

“I am very okay with this, Lyat. Asuna have a lot of energy. They are particularly well suited to this. Now just relax, stop squirming. I have not had a chance to do this in a while, and I have been looking forward to it for weeks. You are scarcely aware of how

nice a treasure strong Asuna happen to be to Letai priestesses if they are so agreeable like yourself.” She gave a delighted chuckle, and softly straddled the hyena. She didn’t have to take off her clothes. She had no trouble providing him with what she had intended. The pleasure of her company would cause his life essence to rise and release, just as his body did. Lyat shifted a bit as he felt his already burgeoning masculinity pinned between him and the velveteen mound of the priestess. His heart leapt at the feel of it. He had assumed this was what she intended from what he knew of his lover at home, but he hadn’t fully considered how intense she would feel against him so immediately. Her beauty and her sensuality, the Letai were suited for it. Perhaps she was even using the essence to make herself more alluring, trapping his senses. Lyat could not be sure. He was sure that it didn’t matter. She would have her way, and he would not argue. She deserved it. She saved both him and Reika, and if this was the payment, he was getting one hell of a deal.

She untied her robes at the middle, and her draping fabric spilled open, letting the hyena have a good look at her motherly form, her proud bosom bouncing a bit as she arched up, leaning back to mish her warmth against his turgid shaft, grinding herself against it softly. She was not immediately wet, but her careful, rolling motion seemed trained to stoke his senses. She murmured softly to her spotted companion.

“I wish to feel your hands upon me, Lyat. I wish it because it is what you long for as well. I watch your eyes. I see where they linger. I know what you want...” her words were so truthful and knowing, and yet, so instigating and provoking. The hyena nodded softly, his hands slipping from his sides to drift up along her own sides inside her parted robes. He moved them up just before her bosom, letting his palms feel the tensing nubs of her nipples trace beneath them. The woman’s eyes closed slowly as he slipped his hands to her shoulders and pushed her robes back, letting them spill down her back to reveal her gorgeous upper body. Her form was perfectly healthy, her shape rounded and curved in an almost artistically perfect fashion. She seemed to be designed very specifically with the Asuna’s idea of a beautiful woman in mind. Was this the case, or did her essence enhance what he saw? He again found himself not caring, and somehow he trusted his eyes. After all, as his hands drifted back down to her chest the weight of her round, firm mammaries reinforced the reality of that perfectly appealing form. Her let her nipples slip between his splayed fingers, and then pinched them softly as he watched her muzzle part with a soft, wistful ‘ohh’ that only made him pulse between her thighs as she pushed herself down harder against him so intimately.

“Lyat not sure which of us is being done more favor.” The hyena murmured softly, his little tail drumming between his thighs in the dusty pathway. He let his head rest on the pillow as he looked back up at those luscious breasts, smished hotly in his hands, pushed together to show her proud cleavage as he kneaded and massaged her chest. The lady wolf willfully pushed herself heavier into his hands and stirred her hips as she uttered a breathless and lustful answer,

“You are unsure... because you don’t know what it feels like... to draw your kind of essence, Lyat.” Her words were very genuine and her expression tense and anxious,

desperate and excited. She did not just want what Lyat was about to give her, she needed it. Perhaps enough to risk violence to put him on his back and make sure he didn't slip away? He could not be sure, but he had long since stopped regretting that knock on the head. He nodded to the priestess' heated words, and rolled his hips back up against hers enough to lift her light but motherly padded frame up off the ground a little, her knees leaving the walkway a little as he bared upward into her letting her smear her petals open on the ridge of his fat, aching cock. He was already fully aroused, and more than ready to give what Luna wanted to take. The lovely lady lupine then slipped back, freeing his hot masculinity to the cooling late afternoon air. She slipped a hand down, cradling his thick length, as she leaned down. Lyat's eyes widened, the priestess about to do something very submissive to someone who suddenly felt very undeserving.

"Oh Luna..." his words were hardly able to break his lips before her sucked in a hot gasp for breath. Her mouth cupped his thick, twitching cock-tip, and her tongue spread around the tip like a cloak, concealing, coating, stroking around in a slow, rolling motion as her hand slipped down the base of his length, rubbing in a slow, methodical motion. Lyat's head dropped back as pleasure he had absolutely not been ready for tore through him, paralyzing him. Luna was pushing essence through her tongue, she had to be. Rios had done this once or twice to him through her fingertips, but she could not do it with her tongue. It sent shockwaves up his spine as her tongue seemed to slap the tip of his pulsing member with each stroke, her hand just working slowly, undulating and milking at him lower. Another hand slipped to his heavy sack, cupping and encouraging as she worked him up.

Lyat propped himself up to watch her, wanting to see if he could tell what she was doing, maybe something he could let his lover know when he returned home. If he brought her news, tales of the capabilities of the Letai priestesses, the genuine article, she would be most pleased with him. And he would not consider it suffering if she were to learn something like this. His legs tightened and relaxed heatedly. He could not help it. She was drawing the very desire to flood her muzzle to the surface of his mind and he could not get it out. As he watched, her hand pushed down to his groin, and her head sank down, her tongue slipping around his length like a tube, not able to close more than half way around his thick cock. She sank her head down, her muzzle taking unbelievably every inch of his cock, her throat widening and not forcefully contracting at all to the intrusion as she took him until her nose pushed into the fluff of his groin. His eyes widened. He had never seen anyone do that before. He didn't think one could do that. She drew back, exhaling as she did so, and swallowing down his salty pre spread thickly at the back of her throat and tongue. She drew her head back slowly, suckling his length until just the tip remained in her capable muzzle, before freeing her dark, supple lips with a little sweet pop.

"Now then, sweet spotty boy..." the matronly wolf murmured sensually as she rose up on her knees again. "I think we have an understanding here..." her words were a near whisper. His thighs parted a little as she got herself into position. The hyena gazed up at Luna wide-eyed as she nestled the tip of his thick, throbbing erection at her

puffy, now slickly aroused and puffy folds. He whined in spite of his desperate attempt to control his reaction. If that understanding was that she would make the hyena cum embarrassingly easily if she wished, then yes, there was definitely an understanding. This was as intense as an outright attack, even more so than the blow to his head before. He felt powerless to Luna, just as much as with Rios.

The hyena groaned deeply as Luna pushed herself wetly down his spire, the Asuna male throbbing hard inside her the moment her felt her slick inner walls glide down to his base with ease and determination. She pushed her motherly hips to his hotly, rolling them back and forth slowly. This motion only caused Lyat's toes to spread a bit, and he leans back, trembling at the sensations that tore through him. At least she had relented on the streaming sensation of blinding pleasure her tongue had allowed. She was just using her body now, but that wasn't anything to ignore.

"You feeling so tight... hot..." Lyat marveled, his muscles flexing tightly as he pushed his hips upward to meet her rolling stroke. She gripped him almost virginally tight inside, her muscles trained to hold him, to milk the essence from him, one way or the other. He gritted his teeth. He was losing it.

"You know why Rios took Alps." Luna whispered hotly, huffing.

"Whuh?" huffed the hyena. "...To produce heir." The hyena barked out in a puff, his hips pushing hard back to hers. His hands pushed back to her perfect, heavy, round mammarys. He delighted in rolling their impressive weight in his eager hands, as his sack tightened up longingly. He was so close to just spilling his seed, and he had no reason to resist it, knowing that it was not her pleasure specifically the priestess was after. She wanted his essence, which would pulse from him with each rush of pleasure that rippled through him when it finally happened. Luna spoke again, puffing out a happy breath each time her hips collided with his, now bouncing slowly but evenly over his lap.

"So you know... Asuna are compatible to Letai. That's how the bloodline of your Empress began, yes?" the priestess panted. Lyat dizzily nodded. Yes, he knew that, he understood. His eyes then shot open, the hyena freezing, and planting his feet on the dusty rooftop path.

"Wait, what?" he barked, looking up in sudden grave seriousness. Luna continued to stroke him in a heavenly fashion deep in her suckling, cock-worshipping honeypot. She had a loving smile spread upon her lips. Lyat's mind burned brighter, beyond his pleasure a moment, the hyena tightening up to control himself. Why would she bring that up? Did she have intentions on more than his essence.

"Would you be sure that a Letai priestess was not in her mother's moon, Lyat?" Luna spoke almost mirthfully, rolling her hips with longer, more pronounced strokes, slipping the throbbing hyena cock almost fully from her pouting folds, only to push him back in with that hard, lustful counterstroke. Lyat put his hands up to Luna's hips, trying

to hold her still. If she kept that up, he'd cum, no matter what she was saying.

"Luna, ahah... Is priestess... In mother's moon? Is she?" Lyat winced as her hands were suddenly tugged away from her hips, her thighs pumping harder. He looked up, expecting to see the treacherous hands of another priestess holding his wrists tightly, but was shocked into a dread realization of just how powerless he was by what he saw. His hands were held away from the priestess not by another person, but by coiled vines that had busts thick and strong from the ground in the planter, roots of some kind. He pulled on them, flexing tightly, and found himself unable to easily budge, the bushes shuffling a little, quaking from the force of his struggle.

"The Letai are nearly gone... just a few of us remain, freed from the crystal..." the priestess spoke wistfully, dreamily, seeming in deeper pleasure than the physical stroking of that throbbing organ inside her might allow in her even, heated pace. "We must waste no time in renewing our numbers Lyat. You of all people know the importance. You of all people know how the personal fears and misgivings of another are unimportant in the light of the survival of an entire race." The Asuna male winced in agonizing pleasure, writhing under the Priestess as he fought against the bonds of his shrub captor. How could these roots possibly hold a full-grown, fully trained Asuna warrior? He closed his eyes, trembling, feeling that welling heat in the pit of his belly. He could not hold it much longer. He understood what Luna was doing, though. It finally occurred to him, and to him, not a moment too soon. She wanted him to understand that Alps' hesitation to help the Asuna was a real fear, and he should not ignore it, or think him weak, even if the matter was too important for Alps to have a choice in the eyes of the Asuna.

"Lyat is understanding Priestess Luna. Alps is not having choice, and is scary to Alps, yes? Lyat knows this already, is not being necessary to... too... Ahha.. Luna, Lyat is pleading... Is apologizing to Alps for not giving choice... He is not being wrong to be unhappy before... Luna... Lyat is sorry for putting wolf in so complicated problem!" Luna huffed hotly, looking down at the pitching, writhing, moaning hyena with a joyful expression. Her hips slap-slap-slapped hotly at his own, her thick tail bouncing and bobbing behind her as she rode his lap heavily.

"Ooooooh, but I want you to cum Lyat... I want it so much... I burn all over... do you honestly think I can stop when I feel you inside me, so ready to quench that burning inside me?" he raspy voice whispered, those long, suckling strokes strumming up and down Lyat's pulsing cock. Her breasts, free of his hands now, bounced before him, letting him see their perfect round weight thump against her chest as she put her hands on his tummy, holding steady as she jerked her hips harder and faster.

"I'm gonna cum!" cried the hyena, flexing. She was kidding, right? She wasn't doing this! She was not in her mother's moon, that would leave so much conflict in his mind, and he understood all too keenly what Alps really worried about. Responsibility for more than just himself. His body tightened. It was too late. Fight it though he may, he could not stop it.

Luna popped him from her soaking wet slit, and gripped him in both her hands, sliding back between his thighs as she knelt over him, taking his cock back in her mouth again in one engulfing gulp, her tongue pushed out and over his sack. His pulsing, throbbing tip was quite a bit down her contracting, swallowing throat, kneading him phenomenally, and her tongue spread wide and hot over his tightening balls, ready to blow their load that very second. What came next was something Lyat could only later describe as sexually devastating. She pushed that intense essence right through her tongue and into his aching balls right as he finally exploded. Lyat screamed like a girl, back arched, hands clenched in tight fists, the bushes shaking violently as he pulled tightly on his restraints.

The hyena had been brought to a few rough climaxes in the company of a lover before, but this climax was as painful as a savage punishment for his insolence with the one who saved the priestess from a fate worse than death. And yet, it was pleasure he could not possibly deny. She began to pump her hand and muzzle over him rapidly, through the middle and into the end of his climax, forcing the hyena to squirt his load in a long, rolling release. She swallowed loudly, claiming that potent boiling load of his seed for her own, having only been a half second away from having it spill inside her in a more classic intimacy. He could not tell if she was gathering his essence or not, but it honestly did not matter as he cried out again and again in those almost painful waves of his personal beautiful torture at the hands of someone who probably knew more about pleasure than his entire race could ever imagine.

His body finally relaxed a bit, and he sagged, the roots still holding up his hands, but his body going limp as he just rested, mind spinning, dizzy, delirious, rocked to the point of nearly feeling ill from it, breathless and feeling abused and ravaged. That was not what he was used to when hearing about what the Letai healers were known for. They were more like what he saw before from Luna... gentle, sweet, tender... apparently a woman crossed was the same no matter what race. She was beautiful but terrifying. Those roots finally unwound from his wrists, which were likely bruised, and at least sore from the strain. Bands of mud were still around his wrists as proof of the priestess' dominance over him. The coiling vines, done with their purpose in answering to their mistress, slipped quietly, harmlessly back into the rooftop planter.

"You have... spectacular control... for an Asuna, Lyat." Luna panted happily, smearing some of his release off of her muzzle and onto his tummy. She seemed perfectly happy to do whatever she felt like to him. Lyat nodded dizzily. "I am glad we have a complete understanding, please share Alps' feelings on the matter with your Empress." Luna stated, moving to the side. Lyat sat up a little and looked back to the beautiful priestess.

"Is you... being in need of your pleasure... priestess?" the hyena panted. Luna smiled at him, licking her lips softly. She panted out, breathlessly,

"Oh I will get mine, don't you worry, but for now... I got what I wanted. If I get lost

in my pleasure right now... aheh... I shall lose control, and commit you to more than you are willing." Luna's tone was dizzy and heated as well, pleasure showing in her eyes. Lyat widened his eyes.

"Wait, you is really in mother's moon?" the strong warrior's tone was suddenly rife with panic. She would not have taken that kind of chance!

"A Letai Priestess is known for her relationship with her lovers, her relationship with her family, and her relationship with the truth. I would not tease you about something like that, Lyat." Her words were a little more measured as the healthy, capable woman regained her breath a bit.

"What if Lyat is not controlling well? What if he warns nothing and you feel him spilling... what is priestess doing with inexperienced Asuna if Lyat is that?" he put his hands by his sides, looking dumbfounded at the priestess. That was a very odd thing to take a risk with to make a point, the hyena felt.

"If you had popped inside me before I could slip you free... or maybe if I had lost to my needs and was suddenly very selfish with you?" the priestess asked, slipping her muzzle by his ear, embracing the strong Asuna.

"Yes! What if?" Lyat repeated in exasperation.

"Asuna children are adorable, Lyat." Luna stated, and then, rather effortlessly, she hopped up and slipped her robed back up over her shoulders, and tied it around her middle, looking terribly unkempt, but decent. She held a hand up, and the shrubs parted. "Don't you foolishly believe that I didn't want it spotty boy. And don't think I have truly decided not to take it." The priestess said this last part with a somewhat darker tone, casting a playful, admiring glance back at the warrior. She laughed softly, melodically as she padded away, leaving Lyat to simmer in his thoughts and the glaze of her honey over his soaking lap.

"She is surely being joke-telling." The hyena rumbled to himself softly after she had gone, pulling his trousers on, but not bothering with his shirt at that moment. It was obviously jumbled and not presentable enough to wear from his laying on it.

"A curious person, Luna..." came a soft, gentle voice from above Lyat. He jumped up, turning. Standing on a post that was used to help originally direct the growth of the shrub when it was young was that strange black fox. She was perfectly balanced, but standing almost casually on the ball of one foot, the other resting quietly against the back of the ankle of the first as her hands rested clasped behind her back. She seemed confident beyond anything someone her size should have been around an Asuna, he thought.

"You! You is startling Asunas. Wait... You is not seeing that." He stated with insistence, the intent being that she knew it was private and not to be spread around.

Luna was not someone he wanted to get angry at him. Not after that display of not only her power, but her ability to get into his head.

"Your saying so does not make me see it any less now than I did for the last half hour. Odd that she would strike you and then heal you, don't you think?" the fox asked. Lyat recoiled a bit, and then rubbed his head. Oh yeah. Luna knocked him out. He wasn't mistaken. Why had he started to think he was?

"You is seeing that then..." he stated. "She is attacked Asuna. Very bold." Lyat noted this as if in realization again of that transgression.

"Asuna are vengeful and defensive. They are very powerful, capable warriors." Ellis stated, her tail coiling back and forth in casual thought. Lyat nodded at this proudly. Lhaps knew what the Asuna were at least. This was another good thing that he would be able to report to his Empress. "That was, however, a most interesting reprisal. Luna will think twice before striking an Asuna again, I am sure." Lyat narrowed his eyes. The fox was insulting him.

"Lyat is wanting that. Is repaying Priestess for saving Lyat before. You is not there to see that." He called this out to Ellis firmly.

"I was there. She saved you twice, once unnecessarily." The lady fox hopped off her perch, and stepped over to Lyat. He considered that she might attack him as close as she was, but then again, he might attack her. He stood motionless. She was so odd in her intensity.

"So you is knowing this. Why is Luna hitting Lyat then?" he asked.

"To state one's knowledge is to admit ones limits." Ellis said softly. "But to ask is to show ones wisdom, so I will answer this, lest you hold against Luna that which is entirely beyond her control or fault." Lyat widened his eyes. The fox spoke wisdom, this was worth knowing. He drew back consideration of attack, as what might be said could well be valuable to him in understanding the complexity of things going on around him. He might be in the castle a while, and didn't want to overstay his welcome due of ignorance.

"Yes, please. Telling Lyat what is Luna thinking to attack an Asuna in such a way?" He leaned against the balcony again. Ellis spoke.

"Luna is a powerful healer from a time of intense war. She was known for healing her way through half a devastated town in days, tirelessly giving of herself, and taking of others, not unlike she showed you, but this was traumatic to her. To pleasure someone gives pleasure, and this you can understand. It's not uncommon for Letai to become addicted to merely bringing happiness. They often do. Luna, however, found her pleasure, her addiction, somewhere else. She found her addiction not in pleasure, but in the easing, the removal of suffering. It's an even more potent allure for the

priestess, and I could see it in her eyes when she spoke with you. She longed to ease your suffering when she asked if you had been hurt.” Lyat listened to the vixen as she continued to explain. He spoke up softly,

“Lyat was being fine though. Lyat was not being hurt. She is finding someone in maybe city below. She is helping others, surely.” The Asuna tried to understand. Ellis resumed her interrupted explanation.

“No. She could not. The presence of the priestesses is still a carefully kept secret here in the castle. Luna cannot leave, and you will find it very rare that someone *here* is injured and needs healing. It was only a matter of time before the priestess could no longer wait. Just your good fortune, Asuna.” The black-furred vixen chuckled at Lyat as she moved toward the balcony again. “Thank you for delivering Alps back to his home. He will not be in the crystal long. He’s getting stronger. You should go back inside before they lock you on the roof.” Her words were very ominous. Lyat looked at the door behind him past the hedgerows, and saw it was still open, so he was not too late. He looked back to Ellis to thank her.

But she was gone.

“Lyat maybe doesn’t tell Rios about that part.” Lyat said, and then moved hurriedly back to the relative sanity of the inside of castle Diera. He’d stay off the roof, he decided.