

Sirius, Book IV
A Slave's War

Comments or Questions?

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Chapter 20

The picture stared back at the former slave silently, as pictures typically do. Meager oil and pitch torches cast a soft orange glow across the large entryway and waiting area where long, low cushioned seats stretched along the walls. If there had been other furniture in the waiting area, it was not there anymore. It seemed like it would have needed tables or additional chairs for how empty the space was at the bottom of the stairs. Alps shook his head again slowly. It was, perhaps, the fourth or fifth time that evening he had come back to this entry hall. He gasped lightly when he felt a touch at his arm. It was his beloved, slipping her arm around his.

“Are you going to come to sleep, Alps? We have a long and happy day ahead of us for tomorrow, I would hate to see you worn around the edges for that.” Nita had been able to tell right away that Vhale’s words struck him hard. There was a silence as Alps inhaled deeply, and then looked back up at the picture. The image of his mother did not look much different than she looked that very day. Alps had grown up without Luna, and they were not so far apart in physical age at least. And the individual in the picture with her had been dead for more than 700 years.

“Do you think I look like him?” Alps asked, indicating the fox. Nita tilted her head a little, and blushed. She was, perhaps, recalling her words from earlier that day, her initial reaction to the picture of the fox in the image.

“I hope it would not pain you to know... that I do see some resemblance there.” She gripped her lover a little tighter. “This is not a bad thing either, since I mentioned... I was very attracted to this fox when I first saw him, but I do not know if it’s because I feel that way about foxes, or that he just reminds me a little of you.” Nita was trying to discourage Alps from going into a funk over this, he could tell, but he was having trouble relaxing, and knew if he could not get his feelings about the issue off of his chest, he might well lose a lot of sleep over it. He shook his head a bit as he considered what Nita was telling him. Of course she would not care that he was half fox. This changed nothing for her.

“I do not mind if I look a little like him, I know I took after my mother perhaps a bit more... at least, no one’s ever said, ‘hey, you look like you might be half fox’ or anything.” Alps was conflicted not in being upset about his heritage, but in that he did not know how he should feel at all. Why had his mother never thought to tell him this?

Was it something that was a problem somehow? There had to be more to it than his father just being a fox.

"You have a little longer and fuller tail than most, and your ears are perhaps a bit more... ahh... stately, shall we say." Nita kissed the back of Alps' neck. The white lupine leaned back against his queen, letting her hold him a bit in her arm. "What troubles you, my love?" Nita finally asked openly.

"It just seems odd that as the Letai were struggling against Mannus..." He paused a bit, trying to compose his thoughts. He did not want to seem silly in his contrivances. "It seems odd that my mother would have fallen for a simple Lhap islander. Even one who was, as she stated, brave and regal and dashing as this one." He nodded to his father. Nita squeezed Alps' hand.

"If her initial reaction to him was anything like mine, I imagine it was not a difficult stretch." Nita confessed. "Perhaps you should worry less about finding some special meaning in having a fox father, and just enjoy the prospective future of your Emerald Amanian life-mate." She nipped Alps on the ear, making him giggle a bit.

"I should hope that you would have no negative feelings at all about this." Luna's voice cut in. Alps looked up, blushing a bit at seeming to lament his own father. He did not want his mother to suffer from his discomfort; it had little to do with her at present.

"I'm not upset," he stated honestly, "I'm just... about the most surprised as I think I've ever been." Alps held Nita's hand, not wanting to be offensive in his mother's temple. Luna wore one of her more traditional outfits, a lightly pleated hunter green skirt and a tunic that barely covered the bottom of her breasts. It was perhaps intended to attract some attention for her first night back in her old home. Alps suspected she intended to enjoy Mytan, since she had rather enjoyed how much attention he was willing to give to her. Alps looked away from the beautiful priestess. How could he even tell her what he was concerned about?

"I imagined you would be. I've always intended to tell you, but every time I thought I might, you were getting into wars, or being snatched by crazy hyena girls, or what-have-you." She sat down on the low ledge directly under the image. "Dias was very much like you. He loved to rush in and help everybody, even if it meant his life. That is something you share very much of your father. That you held any bit of his spirit is what made you being intimately involved with royalty less surprising when I discovered this was the case." Luna seemed rather happier to have Alps know this truth about his family, at least. Nita let her lover sit by his mother and he looked to her.

"Was this kind of arrangement common then? Foxes and wolves, I mean?" he asked. Luna looked at her son curiously.

"You are concerned that your existence is taboo?" she asked. "Even if it were then, the entire society is gone. If we succeed in what we are doing, it would not matter to the public at large if you were half Slink, you'd be welcomed." She gave a coy grin.

"I am concerned that I'm the only one." Alps felt he could openly state that side of his worry, if not the other. That was at least somewhat at the center of the dilemma for him. He hated being special. Finding out that he was Letai was frustrating enough, that separated him terribly from his friends and lovers, but finding out that even among the Letai he was unusual was even more difficult for him.

"Alps, the Amanian Letai all have fox-blood. This is not such an unusual idea." Nita looked up at that.

"I didn't know that." She plaintively shrugged. Nita was well versed in the running of her kingdom, but the world of 700 years prior was not high on her list of priorities, Alps knew. Misty probably knew all about it, however. Why had she not mentioned to Alps that he was different? The former slave bit his lip a little. Of course. She would have known that sort of thing would bother him. Luna continued.

"I suppose some lore faded over time, but it's true. So let me explain. The original Letai were from the Lhap islands over the sea to the West. Being born Letai for them was not a matter of family line, they seemed to skip generations, sometimes a dozen before a Letai was born among them, but when they did show up, they were very powerful, if somewhat innocent and tender and playful." Luna stroked Alps' cheek, as if to imply that such a thing described him. Perhaps at one time it might have, but his life did not really allow for it. "They used their power for healing exclusively. They also performed powerful seals to block dark energies and the like. Their use for the power was simple enough, but believe me when I say that they had a much greater capacity for storing that power, and for summoning it up again. For a few generations the fox Letai mixed with the Amanians, but at the barest whiff of war starting up, they wanted nothing at all to do with that, and virtually overnight they were all gone. They believed that they were the cause of the Amanian suffering and in their numbers, as mere healers, could not hope to stand against the darkness. Only a few remained. Even now, the Lhap which live on the peninsula are descended only of those Lhap who did not bear that power. The ancient Letai have gone over the sea where the dark one could not reach them. If they even exist now I could not say. But one of those who stayed was your father, Alps. That is why you have the capacity for drawing as much essence energy as you do."

"I'm half Ancient Letai?" Alps asked incredulously. It was not enough to just be part fox, it seemed. This did not help him to feel less separated from those he loved. He then furrowed his brow, something else suddenly occurring to him, and he felt a heavy weight drop into his heart.

"Three quarters actually." Whale spoke this time. Luna looked up, seeming slightly startled. He leaned back against the wall by the door, clad in the simple black

and white robe that he had been travelling with for the most part. He looked well-groomed and clean, and also somewhat small and harmless in the outfit. He was not a fighter, and seemed like he would fit better behind a huge pile of books. His long hair cascaded down his back and over the front of his shoulders and chest, gleaming as if wet in the firelight. He was taking himself seriously in his grooming before the planned event.

“Good evening Vhale. This was obviously a public chat, come on in.” Nita growled. Alps was lost in thought and did not try to suppress Nita’s loathing. Luna cut in.

“No, he is correct to tell Alps. That’s fair. I don’t want him to feel I am being intentionally mysterious in all of this.”

“What is he talking about?” Alps finally asked, trying to hide his exasperation. Surely it was not what it was starting to sound like. The priestess leaned back against the wall a bit, seeming to reminisce a little.

“My mother was a fox as well. She did not have any power, but it’s believed that I benefitted from the pairing.” Luna confessed.

“Youngest High Priestess in Amani’s history.” Vhale offered. There seemed to be a bit of compliment intended to that, and his tone was amicable toward Luna, but Alps could not focus on that fact in that moment. He felt sick.

“Wait a minute...” Alps stood up, standing beside Nita.

“You really should have explained this stuff to him sooner, Luna.” Vhale stated, seeming genuinely content to just be discussing it with them like family, to Nita’s irritation.

“I don’t want to do this right now with such important things planned so soon, but it won’t do to have it come up later.” Luna sighed. Nita stood between them and Alps.

“Please stop this. Tomorrow is an important day for me. I won’t have it spoiled by dramatic nonsense. Whatever you and your family did with those adorable foxes is in the past, Alps is mine now and I intend to enjoy every part of him, fox or wolf, forever. None of your complications of the past mean anything now.” Nita pulled at Alps’ hand to lead him away, but he stuck fast. The thought that had been nagging him was all but confirmed with the situation as it had been explained. He had to know, and he had to know right then. He spoke coldly.

“It’s the same as Rios.” Alps stated flatly. He then narrowed his eyes at Vhale. “You are half-fox too.”

“Only half here, but yes.” He admitted freely. “you are easily twice the fox I am, Alps.” He chuckled, still not seeming to understand that Alps was becoming visibly upset. Vhale was not well versed in social cues.

“I’m about to fireball you, Mannus.” Nita growled, not caring about his social ineptitude at that moment. Alps ignored it, and spoke again, looking through his mother at the wall, feeling cold.

“I’m a carefully made weapon.” He stated flatly. Luna cupped her muzzle, shaking her head. Vhale gritted his teeth as well, the light-hearted feeling sucked out of him in an instant.

“No!” His mother whimpered. Nita dropped his hand and backed up. She looked horrified. It was obvious she did not suspect where his questions were leading.

“Alps, hold on.” Vhale approached him. Nita balled up her fists, gritting her teeth. She seemed about ready to launch into a tirade against him. Alps spoke before she could, however.

“I was bred just to kill you.” He looked at the dark-furred male, his beautiful face lit with an orange glow on obsidian black by torchlight from the walls. This revelation did not even make him flinch.

“No, you weren’t.” Vhale stated loudly, but Alps interrupted him again.

“It makes more sense than anything else I can even remotely think of.” Alps growled. Nita held a hand up to touch Alps, but seemed to think better of stopping him. Luna spoke with an obvious lump in her throat.

“Alps, I loved your father. That is all that bound us. No plots, no plans, no dark intentions about you. War is a terrible thing, I would never have made you do such dark things. I hoped the war would be long over before you became even old enough to understand what war was!” The priestess seemed on the verge of tears. The former slave looked to the dark-furred male.

“Vhale, when you saw me the first time... When you saw me as a child, did you know what I was?” Alps asked point blank.

“Yes.” Vhale answered matter-of-factly. He would not lie to Alps.

“Did you Shadowfall me because you knew I was part ancient Letai?” Alps asked.

“Yes. As stated before though... that act was... beyond what my heart could stand. That was influenced the most by the darkness of anything I did.” He seemed to know this did not make it better, but he did not hold back his answer.

“But that meant the dark one knew I was a threat.” Alps stated coldly. Vhale suddenly put his nose right near Alps’ own, causing him to back up a step. He was not used to aggression from the former warlord. He spoke with a touch of fatherly scorn in his voice.

“Alps, stop this. Your mother might hide the truth because she’s ashamed of the hardship she’s brought you, and Nita might try to convince you to look away from a truth because she cannot bear to see you hurting, but I owe you no such sentiment. More than anyone here, I will tell you like it is, and your mother did not breed you with dark intent. I knew that fact without question the moment I saw the memories of the crystal heart of this place.” Luna widened her eyes at Vhale. Nita looked a little surprised too. Alps did not pay their surprise at that much mind.

“What am I supposed to think? Even if that was not her original intent, look at what’s happened. All that’s happened. Here we are, heading out to attack the dark one. I could be a weapon, just as I said. That could have happened. I cannot help but wonder if what my purpose may have always been was nothing more than what I am doing now.” He sat down and leaned back against the wall. Luna leaned over and held one of his hands. Nita took his other, sitting at his other side. Vhale spoke again.

“Alps, your life was not kept secret. You were celebrated when you were born. You were intended for great things, yes, but you misunderstand what those with your ability were originally considered good for.” Vhale spoke with a tone of authority.

“Vhale, I think he understands that already.” Luna stated.

“No, I don’t. What was my fate to be?” Alps asked. He looked up to Vhale, very much expecting the truth.

“You were, like your father, to be the temple focus of the Letai Temple of Life, here.” Vhale nodded.

“So, I was supposed to...” Alps thought a moment about that.

“Your father stood by the priestess and drew upon the energy of those who visited the temple, pleasure, joy, happiness alike, and he channeled that energy into the crystal here, Luna’s Heart. A priestess can draw from a few at a time, perhaps, but Alps, you could, if trained, draw energy from crowds. That has always been used to heal the sick and injured, sometimes hopeless. That was the future your mother had planned for you. It was never anything but that. The only ones who could think that she would raise a child to wage war are fools. Like you and me.” Vhale looked to Luna with heavy apology upon his face. Alps then just crumpled against Luna and quietly cried, hugging his mother, apologizing for even suspecting something so awful of her. Nita wiped tears away and leaned against her lover’s shoulder. The three of them rested against one another like that for a while, Vhale leaning against the wall off to the side with his arms crossed. The black-furred wolf glanced over to Alps lover.

“See there? It was not so bad letting them get this out of the way, Nita.” Whale rarely spoke directly to the queen in front of Alps. The former slave looked up, wiping his wet nose-pad on a sleeve. He opened his mouth to speak, but it was the queen who spoke first.

“I will promise to you both, that Alps’ parentage, his bloodline, makes absolutely no difference to me.” The queen stated this solidly. Whale smiled to her.

“You say this now, but I would like to remind you... Your children may look far more like Alps’ father than he does. The ears are known to skip one generation before being diluted out by the bloodline.” The manner in which Whale said this made it seem a lot like he spoke from experience. Nita snapped a glance to Luna, who shrugged and nodded.

“Possible, yes.” Nita’s lip quivered a little. Her eyes were round. Alps tensed up a bit, having not even considered the effect of his heritage on his children. Was that going to cause a problem for the royal family?

“There’s a chance they won’t...” Alps stated hopefully, fearing Nita was considering this complication. He didn’t have long to fret.

“They would be so adorable!” the queen squealed loudly, and took Alps by the hands, bouncing up and down on her heels, looking up at the picture of Alps’ father. Alps bounced a bit with her, a little surprised, but was finally simply led away by the queen. She would not take no for an answer, they had already been up far longer than she had intended to allow him to be. The evening had brought too much complication already, and she wanted to be well rested for the new day. This would be the last night they would spend as mere slave and mistress. The following sunset would have them as one, together at last. Alps may continue to serve her, but it would be as her life-mate.

As they moved away, Luna looked back to Whale, as she still sat on the cushioned ledge that ran along the wall in this entryway where the picture hung. He seemed quiet as he looked at the image as well. The priestess inhaled deeply, realizing she was alone with him again, but her feelings were greatly magnified by a new revelation.

“Did you really look into Luna’s heart?” she finally asked softly.

“Did you ever know me to have the ability to regrow a forest blighted by the darkest essence blast imaginable before that day?” Whale asked. Luna recoiled a little, having not even considered it before that point. That was not the kind of thing Whale was known to be able to do. He was originally researching crystal-smithing and exotic essence. The prospect of what Whale was telling her had her complete undivided attention.

“She let you just look in?” Luna asked. “The spirit of the original?”

“After all I had done, she left me no choice. You awakened her with your attack, and she was not happy. I was severed, for a time, from the dark one. I had that time to reflect on what I had done. At the time, I did not understand. I thought I had merely gone mad. His voice was gone. Her voice commanded me then. And hopeless and wretched, I obeyed.”

“And you felt her love?” Luna asked knowingly.

“I did.” Vhale whispered.

“So that is why the dark one lost control of you...” Luna cupped her muzzle.

“I did not wish to tell you this earlier. I am sure you understand why.” Vhale spoke softly.

“Because so many of my own very personal memories are there. You thought right, I might have been angry. Not so much now, but if you told me the day you got out of your Shadowfall, Alps would not have been able to save you.”

“Luna, I know that you never intended Alps to be a weapon, but do you think somehow fate did? Do you ever feel that we are playing parts that we cannot help but play?” Vhale asked thoughtfully.

“You will not find solace in thinking that you never had a choice, Vhale.” Luna murmured softly. “The only comfort left for you is that which you do now, not in who is to blame for what was done before.” Vhale inhaled deeply at that, and then sighed out with a long, slow breath.

“So, what is it I am to do now, if that is to be the salvation of my tortured essence?” he asked. His wounds were obviously deep, self-inflicted, and to him, hideous. Luna leaned toward him and whispered,

“In this moment, for now... It is not what you do, but what you cannot do.” Her whispered tone was right in his ear.

“What can I not do?” Vhale asked.

“Escape...” Luna gripped his wrist, pulled it up to the wall above his head, and slipped herself fully into his seated lap, mouth sealing against his own as her other hand cupped against his collarbone, holding him back against the wall. Vhale tightened up hard in shock initially, and then his form softened a bit, the black-furred wolf relaxing his muscles a little and giving in to Luna’s deep, passionate kiss.

The dark hall of the forgotten old temple was cool and quiet, and the only action outside of the two of them was the silent flickering of the torches on either side of the image silently gazing from the wall. Luna's heart hammered. She could hardly believe that she was getting right back to this moment. She had trouble thinking of anything but this for days after the first time, but it was so easy to let it happen again. The few worries that she had about Vhale's intentions, weak as they already were, faded faster with the revelation that he had touched the sealed crystal in the base of the temple. It made perfect sense to Luna now why Vhale had abruptly been useless to the dark one after that. The damaged part of his essence that bound him to the darkness would have been healed, or he'd have died the moment he touched the crystal. No doubt remained in Luna's heart.

"What if we're caught?" Vhale asked with some worry. Not everyone had cause to trust him so much.

"Then it will appear awkward." Luna stated as she pulled Vhale's robes open in front rather roughly. She remembered very well how she had been interrupted the first time. Whoever might be so foolish as to interrupt again would be bound to the wall by their essence and forced to watch the entire thing. Luna looked down in Vhale's bared lap, that twitching dark flesh bouncing against his belly.

"I have no experience with this kind of thing." Vhale stated flatly, seeming to try to make excuses for how shamefully aroused he was in such a short amount of kissing. Luna smiled warmly, actually somewhat enchanted by his near innocence. In all he did, this was the only innocence he had left.

"You will soon." Luna replied.

"You won't regret such things?" Vhale asked, seeming suddenly more concerned about the weight of his actions in the past.

"Not likely." Luna whispered, and slipped a hand around that thick spire of hot flesh. Vhale gave a sudden groan, arching a bit to Luna's touch. She stroked his cock slowly against her own tummy, bare at the midriff in the skirt and short tunic she wore. Vhale was positively shaking in seconds. Luna slowed the motion of her hand, but then moved it to her mouth and licked it a few times to wet it with copious saliva, getting it good and slick and warm, before pushing it back down over the dark wolf's twitching cock. She remained upon his lap, facing him, as she wetly stroked him, slow and even, loving how he tightened up and shook like a leaf.

"Oh Luna, please don't regret this..." his tone was a whimper.

"I promise." Her words were sincere. The wet slick tone of her hand slipping up and down his thickly swollen masculinity remained steady as she pulled his head to her tunic-clad chest, letting him breathe heavily against her cleavage, still completely dressed as she stroked him.

"I'm gonna ruin your clothes, Lunaaaa...." Vhale's tone gained pitch and volume suddenly, making it plain that he was surprised by the rapid onset of his virgin release. His thighs parted a bit, feet braced, and he leaned back a bit, hands on the edge of the padded ledge along the wall where they were sitting. Luna growled out hotly,

"Not a chance, Vhale." And with that, she pushed her hips up and forward, slipping his thick member under her slightly pleated hunter-green skirt which spilled around Vhale's lap. He tensed up heavily with a gasp, and then a surprised shout as Luna's steamy, soaking sex engulfed his thick cock in a single hard downward stroke. He embraced the wolf priestess with a cry, and then shook violently, feet patpatpatting against the stone floor as he utterly failed to hold it back. Vhale called out,

"Ngah! Luna what are you! Haaahh!!" Luna cooed softly, in gentle whispers into Vhale's ear.

"Every bit of it, let it all out, Vhale, you've been holding this way, way too long..." Even as she spoke, she could feel his cock jumping and jerking inside her tightly clutching depths, spraying his heavy, untamed load relentlessly into her grateful channel. She held herself tightly down into his lap so that he could not slip out, forcing him to indulge her in every drop that this new and exotic experience would pull from the young dark male. Vhale struggled with Luna for a little bit as she somewhat forcefully relieved him of his virginity, but finally, his hands came to her hips and he began to guide her up and down in her already slow, even, nursing motion in his lap, and he leaned back again, panting out in pleasure at the feel of her there upon him.

"Can't... believe... we are doing this..." he panted helplessly.

"Stop thinking, Vhale. It's not helping." Luna panted, riding his lap slowly. Vhale finally growled a warm, somewhat feral and needy tone before pulling open Luna's tunic, baring her heavy breasts, and cupping his mouth upon one, a hand rolling that flesh lustfully as the other pulled at the dock of her tail to make her ride his lap a little more heavily. "That's better... there you go, good boy..." she whispered.

"I cannot believe... you let me do that..." Vhale panted dizzily, pulling Luna up and down in his lap. The lean male leaned back, watching her skirted lap rise and fall over his thighs. Each sinking motion took him in deep, a heavenly sensation that he surely was not used to.

"Let you? Oh Vhale, I would have forced you." Luna growled. She pitched her thighs a little harder against his, and he clutched her lower back, pulling at her to encourage that motion. She closed her eyes, satisfied by the fact that, not unusual for Letai males, he had the ability to continue to make love even after a strong climax. Even without much experience, he was very much willing. There was obviously still some sensitivity, but the enjoyment of pleasuring another was so strong that it was easy to work his way through it. His hips rose up sharply to meet her own, heavy strokes,

and in a few moments, passion and eagerness inflamed them. Rather suddenly, Luna found her body hefted up, and her back pushed against the wall. She held Vhale's shoulders and leaned back, puffing hot breaths with each solid impact of his body to hers as he began to fuck her with the eagerness her steamy loins truly longed for.

"Hope.. I'm not.. hurting..." Vhale tried to comfort the priestess, but she bit his ear sharply.

"Harder, Vhale, don't hold back. You've needed this a long time. It's yours..." She gave a grunt as he pinned her tighter to the wall and his hips slapped rapidly, that thick dark cock pulling at her clutching inner flesh with its wet, desperate pistoning. The priestess felt her body sink into that familiar sensation of physical need, utter willingness. She was not used to being picked up and so eagerly taken. It's something she would have expected from Lyat, but not the somewhat lean and harmless-looking Vhale. He seemed to have suffered his frustrations far too long, especially as he was well aware of how much fun the others tended to have.

"Nnmmp... Ahah... Luna, this is..." Luna bit him again, not wanting him to try to think to talk, she was enjoying the animal in him, and the animal in her. She held his shoulders tight as her back was forced against the wall, keeping her legs looped around his waist as her wet sex took the beating that his most eager thrusting could deliver. She tightened up. There were taboo things that she had done through her life, but this by far took the cake, and the priestess muffled her own scream into Vhale's shoulder as she exploded around him, soaking his lap as his feet braced against the threadbare old carpet. Vhale shook a bit as well as he launched copious volleys of his deeply delivered seed all over Alps' mother's cervix. She buckled against the former enemy and bit him savagely, shaking hard as her climax intensified from the feeling of his seed blasting her depths so intentionally this time.

Vhale's legs gave out and Luna barked out in surprise as they both slid down the wall, bounced off the seating ledge, and then crumpled a little jarringly, painfully onto the floor. The priestess did not have long to complain about the treatment, however, before she was rolled onto her back, her breasts bouncing as Vhale took her hands up above her head and started ferally screwing her on the floor in front of the painting of her centuries-departed lover. She braced her feet against the floor, squeaking loudly with those impacts of his hips, that thick cock not softening in the least even as those last rivulets of his seed were spent into her somewhat foaming sex. She cupped both moons of his rump as he grunted, tail tucked a bit in the force of his determined thrusting as his chest pushed against the lady's own.

"Yes, yes keep going, Vhale! That's it, get it all out..." He bit Luna this time, making her bark out intensely. She arched her back, stifling her own sinking moan as her sex clamped tight around him again. He growled darkly through the intense sensations of pounding Luna well past his climax, but it was finally his back and legs that seemed to give up from the sheer burning exertion. Luna seemed to realize immediately that it was simply his muscles giving out, and she rolled him hard,

slamming him back down to the carpet as she rode him as if on the back of a wild slink, her body rising and falling hard, and both her hands were on his chest for stability.

Vhale put his hands on Luna's backside, pulling her down upon him with each heavy stroke she made, letting her feel each hard pulse of that needy cock as she drove herself faster upon him. She could not even make herself think of someone catching them, loud as they were. Her back hurt from the fall a bit ago, her knees her from grinding them into the carpet in that moment, and her chest burned from the panting, and she could not stop. She gripped Vhale's shoulders and felt him jerking and twitching under her, suddenly pushed over the edge into climax again, and she pushed herself down over him, crying hot and hard into his shoulder as her wetness spilled over his lap, mixed with the foamy remnant of his previous two climaxes.

Finally, Vhale groaned as if agonized as her hips stirred a little longer, and he pulled Luna off to the side, letting her flump onto the carpet beside him and rolling her back onto her back, hips pushed tight to hers, and letting him rest, finally. Vhale then grunted loudly.

"Shit." Luna looked up and saw him looking away. She looked in that direction. There, holding Bone low as if just casually walking around with it, was Reika. She watched the pair with narrow eyes. She was adorned in her normal short leather skirt and wrap-around leather top. Like Vhale had been a half hour before, Reika was pristine, having bathed carefully for the event the next day. Vhale gritted his teeth in surprise.

"Uhh..." Luna felt bad for him, knowing that he was unnerved by the particularly dangerous and unpredictable hyena.

"Reika, this is ... this is complicated." Luna panted. Of all the ones to catch them, she was the one Luna felt would understand the least. The priestess could not catch her breath; her heart was hammering so hard. Reika answered slowly and calmly.

"You two is ... crazy." She nodded at that. Luna looked blankly at the hyena. Vhale and the priestess appeared crazy to the hyena. Somehow that really gave her pause, even as she felt the wolf-cock still twitching inside her. Reika approached, and even that thick spire of flesh stilled instantly. Reika moved close, leaning down, and she put the handle of Bone under Vhale's chin, lifting his head.

"I... I..." The black wolf stumbled on what to say to prevent his skull from getting cracked if that was what was coming.

"Former naughty Vhale is good to Luna always now. *Always*." She reiterated, sliding Bone against his throat and up along his muzzle. Vhale winced a bit, shaking slightly and then nodded quickly. Reika leaned down and kissed the bridge of Luna's

nose, resting Bone on Vhale's shoulder, and then getting up and unceremoniously trotting off. Luna exhaled heavily, dropping her head back.

"Whoo... That went better than I thought it would. Secret's out now though, not even a minute old. I think I should have liked having a secret romance with you, Vhale." She teased. She looked up and saw a look of utter horror on her unexpected lover's face. She looked around and saw no one else. "What's wrong?" she asked with concern.

"It was wet." Vhale whined. "The bone was **wet**."

Alps and Nita were shown around the temple a bit before they were shown a bedroom where they could stay. Luna and Mytan had cleaned a room just for them. Alps felt that the bed had been unnecessarily huge, but the fabrics and the bedding itself had stayed together remarkably well for it being seven hundred years old. It made Nidaja question that it had even been there that long. Perhaps a hundred years or so before, someone had tried to repurpose the temple but later left because of the unusual nature of the woodlands around the place. Still, it was very welcoming and cozy for the pair, and even the thought of lovemaking was not enough to keep them awake. Besides, it was decided that they would do better to save that energy for the following night. So they slept.

Nidaja was having a less easy time of getting to sleep as she explored the temple. It was a truly massive temple and despite the hour growing late and the drafts cutting through the corridor keeping her uncomfortably chilled, the general could not help but explore. Fortunately, she did not have to go alone. Lyat happily offered to explore with her. He wished to learn as much about the place as he could for his ever-growing report for his empress. It was this subject they spoke of as they arrived outside in the courtyard for the sixth time, being deposited out another exit they had wandered to. There were lots of ways in and out to deal with crowds it seemed. Nidaja got the feeling that this place had been a serious social hub at one time.

"When this is all over, do you think the empress will know before you tell her?" the general asked, speaking of Lyat's now likely very noticeably pregnant ruler. The large hyena male sat down with his hip against Nidaja's, happy to stay close and share her warmth. He was not a cold-weather kind of guy. He answered in his calm, low voice.

"Is maybe likely she finds out from spies before we get back, as Uruk stop working in the mines, and hyena there break them to bits, she will know. She will know before Misty is told, I guess." He nodded to that. The Asuna had not originally planned for things to move so swiftly with their new alliance with the Amani empire, but Nidaja was fast to praise the fact that the Asuna had made the trip survivable. The fighting

they had seen so far would have been the end of them without Lyat's heavy blade and Reika's rapid brutal attacking. Nidaja put her hand in Lyat's and looked into his eyes with a smile.

"Are you looking forward to going home? What waits for you there?" she asked. She had spoken a great deal about all that she did for the Amani empire but asked quite little about Lyat. The hyena fighter looked down into her eyes and touched noses with her.

"Lyat's duties are what awaits. Family is not close to Lyat as he is close to his sister, who family is shunning. Her nature reminds families of war of the past. Lyat stays by her side. It is why Rios is nice with Lyat." Nidaja looked at her feet.

"You and Rios are close?" she asked.

"Yes. Very close friends." He nodded.

"Intimate?" she asked.

"When we can." He offered.

"Will she take you as her mate when you return?" the general asked, feeling somewhat sullen suddenly. She had not given much thought to it, but when all was done, and peace returned, what purpose would Lyat have to leave his home again, especially if an empress who loved him was waiting.

"Nidaja is not wanting Lyat to go?" he asked with an uncanny sense of what the general was feeling. Nidaja flinched a bit on the fast uptake. Alps was usually a little less blunt. She liked the direct approach better, and that directness had a lot to do with how close she had started feeling to Lyat, as frowned upon as her closeness might have been. The weight of the things they were doing for both kingdoms made the emerald general feel a lot less stress about that taboo. Who would dare deny them this small thing they wanted after all they had done. Or was it just what she wanted? She suddenly felt her youth upon her, and very silly.

"I've no right. I am sorry for stating such. I have enjoyed your company a great deal. I shall be very sorry to see you go." She tried to say it as professionally as she knew how. Yes, they shared a bond on the battlefield, but this was a symbol of the unity they wanted for their people, which might not happen if they did not make it happen in their own countries.

"I would be given leave to return, I am sure." Lyat stated.

"I would enjoy a visit from you." Nidaja admitted.

“No, Lyat means to come to stay. To work with the Letai and the Amani. Someone is needing to.” He nodded. Nidaja felt her feet go numb. He was offering to come back to stay with her?

“I cannot ask this of you.” She stated selflessly and very much hating selflessness right then.

“Can I ask it of you?” Lyat murmured softly.

“What?” Nidaja asked.

“Can Nidaja come to Puranassa and stay with Lyat then?” The general was surprised that he could even ask the question.

“I’m a general, Lyat. I will be needed here.” She looked at his hopeful face.

“Even with no war?” he asked. That struck Nidaja. She had not really thought much about what she would do if they actually defeated the dark avatar. While they would be ruining most of his army in one move if all worked, he would still be alive. However, he would lack the services of the Asuna to make more soldiers and would likely be increasingly pushed into a corner until they could find a way to crush him or make him surrender at last.

“Even without war, there is the general security of our nation. There are evils within our own nation. You know that already from the Sons of Sorrow.” She stated sadly.

“Then you should let Lyat stay to help defend.” Nidaja widened her eyes again, her heart hammering. Was he really asking this? Was he really intending to stay by her side? She had not allowed herself to seriously think of this.

“Would your Rios not be cross with you if you should desire instead to settle in Amani?” This she was worried about most of all.

“Empress is having entire nation of Asuna who is belonging just to her. Nidaja is only having the one.” The way Lyat said it, Nidaja thought, might not have been how he meant it, since the language was still a little difficult for him at times, but what she got from it was everything she was afraid to admit that she wanted. She pushed Lyat back and kissed him deeply, her tongue pushing into his mouth ardently, her hands clasping behind his shoulders as her tail wagged furiously back and forth. What could she have said to that? Could she have asked one more time if that was what he meant? She did not care. She wanted that moment to last. The light of the endless stars visible in the night sky over a small island on a large lake, cold air whipping around them, Nidaja felt warmth that she had not thought to allow herself, and a sense of hope and determination renewed beyond what Alps alone had already made her feel. Yes, she would always have that love she had for Alps, and she suspected that Lyat enjoyed that

she had that love for him, but if Nita and Alps were to have a family and that rightfully took his focus, Nidaja would perhaps have had to take a step back and watch from amid her duties. This was a future she had not considered for herself. Sure, it was likely not perfect because there would be some dissent about it, but it was not something that could discourage her. Lyat smiled that broad, slightly dopey and kind smile to his emerald lupine lover.

"I will be patient for your return then, Lyat." She whispered to him.

"This is a yes then? You welcome Lyat back, and he stays for defending the Amani, and the castle?" Nidaja nodded, tears in her eyes.

"Reika will be okay with this?" Nidaja asked. It was Reika's voice which answered.

"You is not getting between Reika and her brother." Nidaja's blood ran cold. The general looked up and saw the smaller female hyena perched up on a tree a short distance away. Had she heard the whole thing? "Reika is okay sleeping on left side, and Nidaja has right side. Bone sleeps on right side too though." Lyat shrugged meekly. No, it would not be perfect, but Nidaja had kind of grown to like Reika, and she had improved in her manic behavior a bit with the realization that folks now believed she could talk to Bone who she now clutched in her hand.

"You should be sleeping already, Reika. Are you too excited?" Lyat asked warmly. He appeared to be feeling as happy as Nidaja did and that made her feel better.

"Reika was sleeping, but Priestess and black wolf Reika is not allowed to kill is being too loud with each other." She stated this pretty blandly.

"Wait, what?" Nidaja asked in a flat tone.

"Reika, you is talking about Priestess Luna and Vhale?" The larger hyena stood with concern, as did Nidaja.

"Were they fighting?" the general asked.

"No, they was fucking." Reika's words were terrifically crude and base. Nidaja sat back down with a thump.

"You... You may not have seen that right." Nidaja stated. That made the least sense of anything she'd ever heard.

"Maybe." Reika stated, carefully touching up the markings on Bone's face as she swung her feet back and forth where she was perched in the tree.

“Maybe?” Lyat asked. Reika nodded and spoke again.

“Maybe is just that Vhale’s cock is getting somehow stuck in the priestess and they is struggling for half an hour to get it out, but then they gave up and hugged for a while instead.” Lyat looked blankly at his sister, cupping his charcoal muzzle. Nidaja put a hand on her head.

“Oh my...”