

Sirius, Book IV
A Slave's War

Comments or Questions?

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Chapter 15

Luna looked into the seemingly unseeing eyes of Mytan Shuraza. She was flattered that her people still held such reverence, and she felt that perhaps it was now misplaced, but at the same time she could not help but be a little endeared. She also found some excitement in what she felt from Mytan when those ribbons of light, a connection to her own essence, stroked him. The emerald male's own essence practically exploded from him. There is pleasure from a lover which Luna was well aware of and of course that excitement if one has not seen their lover in a while; Luna had always favored that kind of essence, but this was something that she could not remember ever encountering.

Mytan revered her in a way that made her very touch a completely spiritual experience for him. Her presence kindled his essence into a wildfire that might have been visible at a distance to even the most novice trained Letai initiate. She did not feel selfish about wanting to draw upon him. She needed power for things which were to come, and no one on the boat was likely to yield more than he would in his current state.

"Mytaaaaann..." Luna whispered.

"Luna... High Priestess Luna..." He squeaked out, a tear rolling down his cheek again. "The Letai still live..." The priestess pulled Mytan's somewhat cushy table-chair to face her and slipped down on her knees to look up into his eyes as he had let his head drop some, keeping her lovely face in clear view.

"No, Mytan... We were wiped out. None remained for a very long time. The one you met, Alps... He has the ability to fetch us from the darkness. He alone." She wanted to make absolutely sure that Mytan never saw her son as a servant or a slave again. How could a mother be more proud of her son than she was of her Aris? Mytan seemed to snap out of his trance a little, another tear still rolling down his cheek. He was still reeling from this most capital of revelations.

"Alps... did that?" he asked. Luna nodded slowly. "I... I certainly cannot blame her royal highness for taking him as her mate then."

"She took him as her mate when she thought he was a slave, Mytan. Alps is a good person even without the power he holds." Luna stroked Mytan's face,

and he suddenly held her hands against his chest, pulling them down just a little, seeming startled, as if just becoming aware that she was touching him.

“How did he get such power? He’s not even an emerald Amanian. He’s got white fur...” he paused. “Just like you...” Luna smiled in her calm and motherly way and replied.

“He was Shadowfallen when I was, Mytan. Alps is my son. He gained the power while in the Shadowfall. Around the time you’d have been born, he escaped. He didn’t have a clear memory of that place, as he was still a child when he slipped free. Confused and alone, he ended up in an orphanage. White fur being uncommon, no adoption was made and he became a slave.” Mytan nodded solemnly, seeming to understand how such a thing could happen.

“And he released you when he got older?” the emerald wolf asked. Luna smiled warmly and began to stroke his chest, feeling his heart racing, feeling his essence positively boiling around him. She didn’t even have to try to see it; she could feel the pressure of it, like a hot desert wind. She whispered to him.

“Yes... A little over a year ago now.” Luna leaned up and touched her nose to Mytan’s neck. His body stiffened.

“Are the Letai typically so affectionate?” he asked, seeming to feel he was unworthy of her attention. Luna had not expected this sort of challenge.

“Do you know where we get our essence from?” she asked. She heard a loud contraction of Mytan’s throat. He knew. At least, he knew what Luna might have been after.

“I’m just an Amanian. I’m no Letai. My essence is not...” Luna touched a finger to his lips.

“I felt your essence when the light you saw... that felt so nice... touched you.” She smiled with a doting gaze to him. She could not help but feel attracted to his essence, and he was not hard on the eyes anyway, his emerald fur well tended, his hair drawn back in a long, braided ponytail (which was likely forbidden to guards who were not likely to have the favor of regional matriarchs because of their family). His narrow, violet eyes suggested an origin of desert-clan before the mix with the Letai so many generations ago. His clothing, a white shirt, dark trousers and a red sash tied around his middle were simple but purposeful to represent his duties.

“That light... When you revealed what you were...” he whispered. That memory would be ingrained into him forever, to be certain.

“Where we go and what we do is dangerous... perilous, Mytan.” Luna whispered directly into his ear. “I need the energy you have. I can draw your strength, I can use it to help us, just as you have agreed to do. You will be the first of your clan in seven hundred years, if they even existed so long ago, to give the gift of your strength to the Letai... What we do may save the life of those you love... Of the town you call your home. Can you help me, Mytan?” Luna knew very well how to secure the assistance of those who were not Letai when it came to drawing power. Everyone naturally wanted pleasure, but many had reasons they could deny it to themselves. Those reasons often became moot when it became obvious that pleasure was not, for them in that moment, a selfish act. He would be helping. Luna would appreciate it. The Letai wanted him. He was important for the power he had, even if, typical to Emerald Amanian males, he had little use of that power. Luna could use that power. She could do wonderful things with that power. Not just the Letai, but the Queen herself, to who he swore his loyalty to the death, needed him, and he was being asked .

Mytan folded back his ears, his inhibitions melting away as he tilted his head slightly and pushed his warm mouth over Luna’s, kissing her long and slow. Luna wagged her tail sensually as she caressed the male’s flat tummy and chest tenderly with her fingertips, her tongue willfully pushing into his mouth. Mytan drew in a deep, sudden breath at the increase in intimacy. He pulled back, heart racing, head likely spinning from the intensity of this life-changing moment.

“What point... do you need to be to draw from me?” he asked, perhaps wondering how far Luna intended to go, fearful of offending her by expecting too much. Luna tilted his reverent head up a little to let him look into her visibly glowing eyes.

“I already am drawing from you, Mytan. I have been since I got down in front of you. You have a strong essence, perhaps just because of how happy you are to know that I exist and am here with you... But the more happiness I bring, the more of that essence I can tap into.” She touched her lips to his delicately, not wanting to push hard enough to startle him. He reciprocated, slipping his arms around Luna, as her chest rose a bit, pushing up to him as he leaned down and kissed her long and slow. His essence was not as strong as drawing from Alps, but it was certainly stronger than she’d seen with other Amanian males. Her back arched, eyes gazing up at him before moving her hands to the clasp that held on the top of her garment. His eyes widened as her robed unfurled around her, that proud motherly bosom presented to the unsuspecting Mytan openly.

“Every part of me screams at me that this is a dream.” He whispers. He seemed to hesitate in touching.

“Why do you pause, even if it might be a dream?” the priestess asked melodically. She enjoyed bedroom parlay.

“If it’s a dream, I fear I shall awaken with my fur bound to my bed-sheets, m’lady.” He made sure to sound polite and reverent, despite how intimate his reference was. The lady wolf slipped her hand down over his lap, her other pushing his chest back to make him lean back in his chair. There was a low and tense sound, a bit of resistance.

“You fear I shall request of you something which violates a previous promise?” Luna asked calmly. She was not unreasonable. The temptation of his essence was strong, but not so much that she would violate his convictions.

“It’s not like that. She’s not that kind of friend.” The guard and riverboat pilot swallowed loudly, his throat apparently going dry. “I had a friend in Jalana who went to work in Diera. His sister lives in Luca. I promised him I would look after her when I got here. I had to make sure she was okay. Maybe one day I will be that close to her, I might like that, but... For now...” He was lightly panting.

“But you are nervous...” the priestess whispered.

“How do I hope to please you? You are ...” He could not think of the words.

“To you I should have an impossible standard, I understand.” Luna whispered, slipping her hands together and undoing the heavy belt that was around the guard’s waist, laced through the touch and tight belt-loops on his trousers. She began untying his trousers along the front, finally just pushing her dexterous fingers in, making the quivering green-furred Mytan arch his back. “But fortunately for you, what I am after is exactly what you are already giving me in very appreciable amounts, Mytan. So just let go.” Luna whispered.

“This can’t be happening.” Mytan huffed, his knees up, toes pushed out the floor, legs shaking. Luna pushes his thick dark phallus between her heavy bosom, squeezing her hands on either side to ensnare it there, pulling at his twitching muscular flesh.

“But it is happening.” Luna murmured, those ribbons of white fanning out from behind her, as if sprouting from her back like Alps’ little wings. The room was bathed in white light. Luna pushed those bands of light to Mytan’s core, tapping heavily into the energy flaring off of him like light from the sun. The moment those bands connected with them, he arched back, and Luna grinned, pushing her absolute love of her family, her friends, and her new chance to live into him. “Taste my happiness, Mytan. Feel my love. Know what it feels like to find yourself free and among friends after being alone for seven hundred years... and know first hand that I am happier than you are in this moment.” Mytan’s

head tilted back, his body shaking, tears streaming down his face as he felt those things that Luna wished for him.

In that moment of emotional heaven, Luna lowered her head and took Mytan's willing, pulsing flesh into her hot mouth, stroking him slow and delicate, swirling her tongue around that aching tip with fevered lust, as if for her own equal pleasure.

"Ahh-nuh!" He tried to warn Luna, but he erupted forcefully over her tongue, painting it with short, heavy squirts of salty, musky seed. He leaned forward, face twisted in a horrified gaze as perhaps he felt he'd dishonored the priestess in just spraying his seed right in her mouth, but she cupped his sack and pushed her mouth down harder over him, then back up, suckling hard to get every drop he could yield. The lupine male shuddered heavily as he relented, realizing that the priestess wanted that, and his legs shook as he eagerly gave it to her. She leaned back and looked lovingly into his eyes, those ribbons still locked in his heart as it pounded rapidly in his chest, fluttering like mad as she drew his energy almost greedily. She stroked his wet, twitching cock with her hand, not another drop rolling from him after her thorough mouth was through with him. His legs shook in hypersensitivity as Luna's hand did not relent, the emerald Amanian making desperate little squeaks with the continued attention from the priestess.

"Oh by the essence, P-Priestess Luna, I – " He was silenced as her mouth took him again, tongue battering his most sensitive point to shut him up. She was not done with him. He had just a bit more to give. Luna's mouth worked over him with religious zeal as he writhed and twisted in the chair, finding out in that moment that he really was completely under her power. Her ribbons didn't hold him down, but the shocks of pleasure that she sent through them in waves made it so he could not actually struggle free.

Luna's body was an inferno. She was not unaffected by such an act under normal circumstances, but she could not remember the last time she had such intense energy flowing from one person. Alps had more essence, but it was not as easy to draw. This wolf had a healer's essence and it was perfect for the healer priestess to draw from. She found herself desperate for more, and pulled his thick cock between her breasts, trapping that wet flesh there, making a bridge over the top of that channel formed by her mammaries with her strong, graceful fingers before heaving her heavy bosom up and down over Mytan's lap. She used heavy breeding strokes with her whole upper body, tail thrashing and flagging the scent thickly to her willing victim.

"I am getting close..." whispered the male. It had not taken a lot of work, but Luna was fine with that. She held still and panted out,

“Yes... Give it to me, Mytan!” She pushed her breasts tighter together, looking up at him, her mouth wide and tongue out so that his tip slipped into her muzzle just a bit, mouth wide enough for him to see where his thick release would soon be going. Her multicolored eyes gazed longingly up to him. He held her shoulders and began bucking his hips hard, rump coming up off the seat finally. He was squatting down a bit as he pumped those heavy mammaries from slightly underneath, but he didn’t have to do that long.

“Ahhaaahn!” He cried out, toes gripping the floor, hips shaking as he gave a few short hard thrusts, and Luna felt hot wetness pulse right to the back of her throat. She enjoyed so much watching his face, contorted in agonized pleasure as, with half open eyes himself, he watched those opalescent ribbons of spunk fling hard from his twitching tip over her pink tongue, cradling and gathering that fluid essence, pooling it in her muzzle for him to stare at before she closed her mouth around him, suckling hard as she made sure he could hear the heavy, guttural contractions of her throat, swallowing all of it down. Her ribbons glowed ever brighter as she drew from him so gratefully.

The priestess finally let Mytan come down from his spiritual high, those ribbons of light snapping back from his chest, releasing his heart, and fading away as her eyes just glowed quietly. She caressed in a tender, casual fashion that wet, softening masculinity as she pushed the green-furred male back into his chair, his braided hair resting over his chest as he tilted his head back, possibly dizzy in his afterglow as he relaxed, the attention less aggressive on him at that point.

“That... was the single most incredible thing that’s ever happened to me.” Mytan rumbled exhaustedly.

“It gets better. Loyalty and hard work are rewarded, Mytan. Remember that.” Luna gathered up her garments, gritting her teeth as she realized her honey had run down to her knees. She had, at one time, better control of her body. Mytan nodded blankly, drunkenly.

“When you can stand again, you will want to find a bed and get some rest. I would suggest not crawling in bed with the Asuna girl, or I will have to waste that energy you gave me healing you.” She grinned at him and padded calmly from the room.

As soon as she had ascended the stairs to the sleeping cabins of the riverboat, she dropped back against a wall, shivering, pushing her hands between her thighs, gritting her teeth. Her hands pushed under the folds of her robes and fingertip achingly stirred her swollen, burning clit. She did not wish to force Mytan too far in their first encounter, as she would be able to capitalize if she had another chance to draw from him by escalating her attention on him. But oh how that left her burning. She staggered to the first room on her right and

pushed the door open. Whale looked up from a book he was reading, shirtless and achingly approachable as he sat so availably upon his still-made bed.

“Hello Priestess.” He offered nicely. Luna’s abdominal muscles tightened gleefully at the opportunity there before her. She gritted her teeth tighter.

“Wrong... door.” She forced herself to say. She pulled his door shut.

“Thank you, visit again.” came a muffled reply from inside. She was not quite that desperate, even in her essence-provoked heat. She staggered to another door. It was locked. She was not going to break a door down for this. If she kept going, her body would yield, she assumed. She just needed to busy herself a moment. She pushed open the next door.

Reika lay on her bed, thighs parted wide, four fingers pushed to the knuckles into her wide-spread honey-pot, thumb wiggling back and forth over her dark little bud as her toes gripped unkempt sheets. In her other hand, Bone, clutched to her chest. Reika spoke just loud enough to be heard in raspy, breathless lust.

“Yus! Yus, you is biting Reika, Bone. Is good strong bite, yes? Large teeth and strong claws, hold Reika down... Bite when Reika cuummmss...” she growled out that last part passionately. Luna could not move. She could not force herself to look away, her hands gripping the frame of Reika’s door. She was aware from what Alps had told her that Bone and Reika could communicate with it. What was he saying to her? Was there really something between them across the void? Despite Bone being part of an unknown creature? Luna shook her head a little as she found herself on all fours over Reika, the girl hyena looking up at her, quivering with pleased heat, teetering on the edge of release before Luna so suddenly appeared over her knocked her back from her peak.

“I...” Luna was rarely at a loss for words, but she could not even remember traversing the room to get here. Her body wanted very much to be involved.

“Bite.” Reika said flatly.

“What?” Luna asked in something of a daze.

“Bite Reika. Bone talk, you bite.” Luna blinked at that, and then pushed her body over the Asuna’s, her mouth clamping where her neck and shoulder met. Her body was making it impossible for her to resist this interaction, even though she was very skeptical of the hyena’s stability. She pushed her teeth hotly to her flesh, and Reika groaned lustfully.

“Sorry to interrupt, I – “ Luna tried to explain herself.

“No talking – Biting!” Reika demanded. “Biting Reika harder!” Her voice rose to a squeak at the end, her arm flexing against Luna’s front, making it obvious she was pistoning that pussy with all four fingers hard. She clutched Bone tighter. Luna promptly shut up. She was not going to get herself clubbed by a frustrated girl right on the edge for not following directions. Luna bit harder, worrying that she’d have to heal Reika from it. The soft slapping sound of Reika’s palm over her sex was loud enough to remind the priestess that she had showed up at perhaps the only time that the girl might have requested the assistance of a priestess like this. She seemed to have absolutely no inhibition in that moment.

“Harder!” Reika barked loudly, shaking. Luna winced a little as that familiar coppery taste spilled on her tongue. Reika jerked hard and then gave a groan that the priestess was absolutely positive could be heard elsewhere on the ship. The lady wolf was so started by the sudden turn of events that she had not even thought to draw from Reika. The dull thumping of Reika’s hand under Luna’s thighs turned to wet, sloppy slapping, Reika shaking all over. “Bone!” she whimpered, “Hold Reika down!” Luna took Reika’s cue and pushed her hands on the girl’s shoulders, teeth staying tight, pulling a bit ferociously, and she kept pounding, writhing and fighting the white wolf female’s grip. Luna bit harder, making Reika squall with pleasure, her legs wrapping around Luna’s thighs and grinding her fist into herself. She then pulled that wet hand free, holding it on Luna’s lower back, panting raggedly, letting herself cool down slowly. Luna considered drawing on her afterglow, but decided not to. The Asuna’s essence was likely more valuable to someone with Nidaja’s tendencies than the priestess’ healing powers.

“Feel better?” Luna asked, looking into Reika’s half-closed eyes.

“Bone is saying nice things about Luna. He is right, Luna is nice to Reika. She bites nice for Letai girl.” Reika caressed Luna’s cheek with a wet, sticky hand.

“I broke the skin. I can heal that for you.” Luna murmured. Reika shook her head, still softly panting.

“No no... Reika is liking to feel it. Is good. Asuna is strong. Bites not bad.” Luna nodded dizzily at that, her body still burning. She would have to get used to pain being a pleasurable thing to Reika, and wondered if she should have been far more rough with the girl’s brother. Reika tilted her head back a little, nostrils flaring at the air a bit. She grinned and moved a leg up between Luna’s thighs. Her knee made contact with the priestess with an audible squish. The motherly priestess went scarlet.

“Sorry. I was essence-drawing from Mytan, and it got me a little...” She tried to think of a word. Reika looked at Bone with a drunken gaze then grinned. She gave a display of her deceptive strength, rolling a shivering Luna onto her back, her thigh pushed between the Letai’s own tightly. The white lady wolf’s heart raced. She had certainly not expected this. Reika slid down Alps’ mother’s body, kissing all the way down, even over her robes. Luna arched her back hard as the Asuna girl’s mouth cupped tight to Luna’s sex. She was not even aware that Reika was willing to do such a thing, and her body drew in a hot thrill of pleasure from the first touch of that tongue upon her burning clit.

What happened next she was even less prepared for. Reika pushed the more slender, bare and smooth bottom nine inches of Bone deep into her body, grinding her tongue hard over the priestess’ clit. Having Bone inside her felt somehow like a completely unimaginable taboo. This was the bone of a creature from the Nether. A monster by any normal standard, he was held in deep, pushed up against Luna’s cervix, violating her in a way that Luna had never, ever thought she would.

She might have shooed Reika off of her and asked that she keep Bone for herself, and just use her tongue, which would have worked just great, except she was really painfully riled up and there was no denying how incredible it felt to have Bone jammed in deep while a very gifted and speedy hyena tongue abused her clit. Luna groaned out gladly, knees falling apart, giving in to Reika’s bone club. Her mind touched on the curiosity of whether or not Reika used Bone like that. Luna also tightened up a little as the memory washed over her that Bone was aware, across the void, of what was going on around him if Reika was near him. He knew he was being used to pleasure a Letai priestess. Did he like that? He was apparently talking to Reika to get her off when she was alone with him, was he telling her what to do?

Luna tightened up, jolted a bit as Reika began to piston Bone in and out of her soaking wet sex. Her naughty mind wandered into scenarios where she was caught in such a predicament, and she remembered briefly things she had done to this girl’s brother, and the hard, tireless pounding he’d given her.

“Priestess is friends with Bone now, yes? Liking Bone? Even Asuna Empress is not getting to be with Bone!” The hyena laughed a bit at that, and Luna suddenly felt dirty and ashamed of her searing lust for perhaps the first time in her existence just from the way that was said. And that shame caused her to suddenly gush around that stroking length of bone-club. Reika cheered loudly, and pulled Bone free with a wet pop, cupping her mouth hard to Luna’s convulsing sex and suckling and lapping and grinding her tongue with inexplicable skill, rocking Luna hard, right to her core, quenching that heat in a beautiful washing of wave after wave of pleasure. The priestess cried out twice, long and high, body arched, legs shaking as she suffered through a deep and powerful climax over charcoal hyena muzzle. As the intensity of that waned, and

Luna's whimpering and writhing calmed, Reika just held her mouth against the priestess' sex, seeming to just enjoy the heat and her taste. Finally, that hot, capable mouth parted from her soaked sex. Luna slumped back, panting heavily as Reika sat beside her, almost comically touching and teasing the wolf's pink, swollen nipples. The priestess was finally able to answer that shameful question.

"Yes... B... Bone is quite nice. Thank you for... Thank you for letting him help." Luna's head was spinning a bit. She could not decide whether all of this was a good thing or a bad thing. Reika was unstable, certainly, but she seemed highly loyal. Reika was quiet for a bit, and then spoke.

"Bone is happy too." Luna sat up a bit, pulling her robes back down and letting herself recover and look a little less disheveled on the bed with the entirely bare Reika.

"He... Is aware you do these things with him?" the priestess asked.

"He is knowing, yes." Reika leaned back and Luna blushed a little as she watched the girl licking the somewhat tapered length of Bone before the hand-wrapping where Reika normally held him.

"Does he mind? I mean, he's okay with it?" Luna asked curiously. Could it be that Bone didn't care what was done with a part of him shorn off ages ago that he simply used to communicate?

"Bone is happy to be using for pleasure. He is feeling it." Reika seemed calm about that.

"Bone feels... pleasure?" Luna did not know if she liked that prospect.

"No, Bone is feeling your pleasure. And Reika's." She focused on the weapon a bit, and then looked up again. "He is saying Letai is doing the same, but they is making others feel. He is feeling. He knows Reika's pleasure, and likes feeling Reika happy. We is good, good friends." She nodded simply. Luna looked curiously at the weapon. Bone was able to feel the pleasure and essence of others? Her original misgivings about Bone's true nature melted a little bit. Something truly dark would savor those darker feelings, not what Reika said Bone liked. Still, she might later avoid situations where Bone was driven to her cervix and she was forced to peak around him. That was not the kind of reputation even a younger, more adventurous priestess wanted!

"Thank you for helping me then, both of you." Luna said softly, giving a weakened smile.

"Is okay, Reika likes." The priestess did not doubt that. Luna stood up and stretched.

“I am glad we have you with us, Reika.” Luna stated, wanting to make sure that the Asuna girl did not feel used.

“Reika is having fun fighting and being with friends. These are best days of Reika’s life. Reika may go home one day, but she is hoping that day is not soon.” Luna grinned at the girl, ruffling her short red hair a bit.

“We will enjoy your company as long as you like, Reika. Amani and the Letai are both happy to have the help of the Asuna, particularly a valiant and strong Asuna like you. Your empress is well represented by you and your brother. She would be extremely proud.” Reika pulled her wrap-around top on, and wriggled a bit happily on the bed.

“And Empress Dominis would be very happy to see the quality of blood that she now bears with her own.” At first, Luna was not sure of what Reika meant, but then she remembered, with a start, that Rios had actually borrowed her son for the purpose of producing an heir. Her bloodline would be a part of the top of the Asuna empire. She had not given that much thought, but Reika’s statement made it a hard reality. Luna kisses the top of the girl’s head and murmured,

“I shall go and rest. You should too.” Luna stated.

“Reika is just taking a break. Watching is now and sleeping is later. Nidaja is giving Asuna’s time to eat and rest and play with Bone.” Luna flattened her ears, feeling fairly certain that Nidaja had not been asked if it was okay to head into one of the rooms to fuck a bone-club. But she padded out, lost in thought. Alps and Nita would likely someday produce an heir as well. Luna had to make sure that they all survived at any cost. The world was shaping up to be an interesting place if they could pull it off, and Luna looked forward to spending time with a large, wonderful family. It was these thoughts that she took to slumber, fantasizing about happy days and beautiful memories for the first time since long before she had even been Shadowfallen. Despite the danger, there was a glimmer of wonderful, bright hope for Alps and Nita. She wanted to make sure she was a part of it.

Leal munched on part of a fish that had been shared with everyone on the raft. Ceriss had snagged it with her essence and pulled it aboard, and then carefully cooked it with an essence fire while Lunaris and Leal held either end. His hands were a little toasted, but not intolerably by any extent. This was the fourth of fifth fish they had shared like that, and it was starting to feel routine. The thick, unrelenting fog was still all around them. It seemed as if it travelled

with them like a curse to make sure they never made it home. As he munched his left over piece of fish, he watched Neit. She was on her back, her legs wrapped around the thighs of a shuddering Lhap islander. His hips were ground deep into hers as he gave out a final, hot, happy bark, and Neit giggled a little as the feeling of being violently flooded by the slightly smaller fox. This was their third time together as they were trapped on the raft. Ceriss drew from them, hands glowing a lighter violet than before. As she had noted, each time in succession the yield would be less. This had gone on for three days, one encounter with the pretty thief each day for a lucky and happy fox. Neph leaned down, panting softly, and snuggled with Neit. He seemed to have genuine affection for her, and they had talked a lot in between sessions. Neit was excited to find out that Neph had been a treasure hunter, and that's how he ended up in Amani. Treasure hunting was like legal, sometimes sanctioned stealing! It was a fun idea. She had not realized there were so many islands, and that so many were abandoned due to storms, illnesses, or a myriad of other causes.

For now, the topic of discussion was their share of the fish, as they had been nice enough to give a nice showing of affection for the priestess (and everyone else). They were given the best and largest portions of that catch to enjoy, as everyone else was doing far less physical work on the raft. Over three hours each day they had collected enough water to share between them for another two days, a nice reserve, so they felt a little more positive, and that gave rise to a bit more passionate play between the fox and thief. Leal had enjoyed watching them, and had been given some manual attention on one such occasion by an idly playful Ceriss. Kaji reminded the priestess that he intended to collect on her offer when they reached land, and she teased and taunted him a bit more.

All in all, despite being disastrous, the journey still held a fairly light mood, which comforted Leal a bit. There was not the sense of dread that there had been initially. The vulpine and wolf girl dressed again and finished their meals. It was meager, to be sure, but it would certainly be enough to survive, and it tasted great cooked by essence. Leal even teased that Ceriss could make a decent living at that, only to have the teasing reflected by being told that some Letai actually drew essence best from those enjoying delicious cuisine, and they often ran inns with that specifically in mind. Kaji cursed the dark one for costing him the opportunity to try that food.

It was amid some bantering of that nature that Kaji finally perked up and held up his hand. Everyone continued to talk until he specifically called for silence. Leal listened carefully, as if thinking something had found them on the open sea. He shook his head, replying softly.

"I just hear the ocean." Neit nodded too, kicking her feet a little in the water. Putting her feet in the water seemed to refresh her nicely after sex.

Ceriss seemed to read more into what the captain was saying. She spoke up clearly.

“No, he’s right. You are hearing the ocean. You are hearing waves.” Leal nodded back to her.

“Right, that’s what I said.” He was not certain why this called for silence.

“There’s no wind really. The weather’s calm.” Lunaris pointed out, seeming to understand the riddle of Kaji too. Leal looked at him blankly, then widened his eyes.

“Waves! On a shore!” He got on his knees and focused on the direction, but Ceriss had already figured it out, and was pushing the craft rapidly toward it.

“Land! Land!” cried Neit as the raft leapt and bounced on the ocean a bit as they pushed toward the sound as it got louder and louder. Ceriss’ tail wagged frantically as she pushed a lot of essence to finally get them off that raft. Three days pushing them sometimes faster than the wind could when they were not three days out had made Leal worry a lot, but they could finally at least be in a stable spot with some hope to rest and recover.

“Land! Land!” cried the fox, gripping the side of the raft.

“Yes!” cried Neit happily.

“No! Land!” screamed Neph.

“Shit! Land!” Kaji barked.

Leal looked up just in time to see the shore and the raft meet. Ceriss was focused entirely on making the craft move toward the shore, so she could not see that when the limited visibility through the fog revealed the sandy shore only sixty feet from the raft. The moment the raft hit, everyone was launched forward into the sand quite hard. Leal got a mouth full, and struggled to get onto all fours and expel it. The sputtering, coughing Kaji seemed to suffer the same.

“Perfect disembark!” Ceriss barked as she stood on the beach. Just like when she had gotten onto the raft, he had no idea how she got off without being hurled. She looked at everyone and grinned. “The fog is thinner here. It seems to lift further up the shore.” She helped Neit up, who was trying to get sand out of her ear. The fox’s pants came off as he had not secured them yet, so he was trying to get them back on. Lunaris and Kaji moved up alongside Ceriss.

“We’re on land. You promised.” Kaji rumbled. Ceriss laughed at him.

“Keep it for now, Kaji, we need to make sure we are *safe* before we consider ourselves survivors. There should be plenty of time for that and I will be very thorough if I have a chance to rest a little. Come on.” Lunar is laughed heartily and Kaji grumbled a bit as he fell into step behind Leal and Ceriss. Ceriss took Leal’s arm in hers, feeling happy to be on solid ground at last. But she began, as they marched up the shore, further out of the fog, to lean on the guard a bit more. She was very tired, and he knew it. Her happy face was in spite of this.

“Hey, at least it’s not a desert island!” Neph chirped as he pointed to the more distant forest that was revealing itself. As they went up the rather steam and sandy embankment, that gave way to tall beach grasses and little shrubs and finally to the larger trees where the fog seemed to completely terminate.

“We should find fresh water first and foremost, if this forest is here, there will be some, I am sure.” Ceriss moved toward the forest.

“Any idea where this is?” asked Neph. Kaji looked around, then looked up.

“Well, the sun is there, it’s afternoon, our shadows are...” He looked back and forth and then rubbed his chin with concern.

“We are not where we were hoping to be.” Ceriss said for him. “Based on the position of the sun, we are on an Eastern shore.”

“What’s that mean?” Neit asked, seeming worried again. Kaji answered.

“It means that we went the opposite direction of home. This is a place I have no knowledge of.” There was a collective gasp between Neit and Leal. That was very bad news.

“We survived. There is water, probably food here too. Time is all we need to be able to figure out a way back. Let’s focus on the necessity first, then we can worry about the getting back part. The best shot of the dark one to get rid of us failed.” Ceriss seemed quite proud of that. Leal considered that quietly a moment and then realized with a nod that this was the second time the best the dark one could do had not been enough to stop her. She was perhaps feeling cocky after this bit of survival. Leal grinned, letting himself feel that too.

“Remember though, you promised.” Kaji stated flatly. Neph shook his head and laughed. The fog slowly retreated from the shores as the group pushed into the forest a bit to find a good source of food and water. For now, their survival was assured and that gave them some comfort. Things might be hard ahead of them, but at least they were not a wind-storm away from certain death on a tiny shattered piece of boat deck. They had some time to work out

the details of their survival, and they were at least successful in a mission intended to save the entire city of Diera. Even if they never made it back and had to live out their days on a distant shore, they would be remembered as lost heroes back home. This was a fair exchange for a castle guard, Leal thought. Most of what they ever did was kick out folks that did not know that it was time to leave at the end of the day. This was an adventure his friends and family would certainly be jealous of. It was enough for him, even if he never got to tell any of them about it.

They explored the dense, natural forest together, unaware of where they were, what they would find, or what treasures or dangers awaited them in an entirely unknown land. Was it an island? Could it be another large continent like Amani? All they knew for sure was that they were alive, and that made this land, for the moment, wonderful.