



# An Alpha's Commitment : an MMM Wolf-Shifter Romance (Leongatha Pack Tales, Book 2)

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**Category:** LGBT+

**Description:** 'I trembled. I could refuse this man nothing. I was his omega, and my greatest desire was to please him.'

After being rescued by Talius and physically recovered from his trauma, Isca has formed a triad with the Alpha and his mate. But Isca struggles to accept his place. It's hard to believe you're valued, when all you've heard for years is how useless you are.

Talius and Irian have been mates for years and share a telepathic connection forged by their mating bond. Talius would like a similar bond with Isca, but Isca is still mated to the sadistic Alpha who left him for dead months ago. A mating bond between shifters is unbreakable, so despite the mating having been non-consensual, Isca will always be bound to his cruel mate.

But Talius is determined to find a way to break the bond and make sure his second omega gets all the benefits of mating.

Will he succeed or will Isca always feel the odd one out?

Content warnings: explicit MM and MMM intimate scenes, a panic attack, mild dominance and submission, shibari, voyeurism, references to a previous sexual assault/previous domestic abuse.

Note: this book is best read after 'The Sad Omega', and is low angst and contains more spice.

**Total Pages (Source):** 19

# Page 1

*Source Creation Date: July 17, 2025, 6:08 am*

“Where’s Isca?”

Irian was whisking something in a metal bowl on the kitchen bench. His beautiful brown eyes deserted the bowl in favor of meeting mine. It sent a rush through me, a thrill that resulted in a pooling of warmth in my groin. My little omega, my cherished mate, was approaching his next heat. The golden flecks scattered like stars through the brown of his irises was an early warning signal.

Get ready. Eat well. Rest up. Keep him close. Protect.

A shifter’s instincts towards their mate were always close to the surface, but never more so than when they were about to enter heat. The urge to lock him up, keep him safe, was a snaking coil of unease in my gut. I ignored it, of course. I was not the sort of alpha to control my mate that way, and Irian was not the kind of omega to tolerate it in any case.

I shook my head and huffed to myself. I might be the alpha but I was pretty sure I knew who was in control in this relationship. Irian, my mate, who knew how to smile sweetly and take everything from me that he wanted... in the nicest possible way, of course. And gladly given.

It was only mildly concerning that Isca, my other mate, was almost certainly learning all the tricks from Irian. The two of them were practically inseparable, usually to be found in the kitchen baking together or often in bed playing, which made it all the more surprising that Isca was currently nowhere to be seen. It fitted with my purpose today, however.

“He’s gone into town to do the shopping,” Irian’s sparkling smile lit up his face. He and Isca were the most beautiful omegas on the planet (I hadn’t met them all but it was obvious to me that they were). Irian had been the most wonderful, unexpected Christmas present from the Goddess (or maybe Santa Wolf, I still wasn’t sure) years ago, and Isca had joined us in a triad after his bonded mate brutalized him and left him for dead in the forest a couple of months ago. Irian and I had loved him for some time before that, but would never have made a move on him if not for the attack. That had changed everything.

“That’s okay now, right? Agelius went with him.” A faint wrinkle of worry creased that sweet face and I realized I hadn’t followed up my original question. Hmm, Irian’s heat must be closer than I thought, if I was having this much trouble keeping my thoughts together around him. This was another reason to find out where Isca was.

“Yes, of course. It’s been nearly two months since Isca regained consciousness and there’s been no sign of his pack, so I think they’ve well and truly moved on. And it’s good that he’s feeling secure enough to leave the farm.” I sighed and added, “It was a blessing that he didn’t have the mind-bond with Zarbius.”

Irian grimaced when I said the name of Isca’s old mate. Isca had shared tales with us of what used to happen to him in his previous pack, and it wasn’t pretty. I was so proud of him, the way he’d learned to trust us – especially me, an alpha, when in the past those, who should have been the ones to protect him, had been the ones to hurt him. It had taken a while for him to get beyond the shame of what had happened to him, and to realize that none of that affected how we felt about him.

“I’m so glad about that too,” commented Irian. “Imagine if he had that in his head.... Euch... he’d never escape him.”

“No, he couldn’t. And I’m almost certain he would have been able to track him down.

I know I could with you.”

“You just want the hot sex,” Irian batted his long lashes, a fake wide-eyed innocence plastered on his face.

“Naturally,” I replied, playing it cool. “But I happen to like having you around as well. By the way, your heat’s almost here.” It had to be, with the way Irian was so blatantly thinking about sex.

“I know,” he smirked. “Ready?”

“Always,” I assured him. “You know I’ll always do everything to please my omegas, even at great expense to myself.”

Irian snorted. Even that looked sexy on him. Sigh. I was so far gone.

“As if it’s a hardship,” he snickered.

“No hardship,” I agreed with a smug smile. “B-u-t that’s not why I’m here. I want to talk about something and I wanted to do it while Isca’s not here. Can you make time now?”

I peered into the bowl, sniffing the sweet smell of cinnamon and apple. “I don’t want to mess things up here.”

Irian shook his head, the strands of hair he was growing out flopping around weirdly.

“You won’t,” he said, wiping his hands on his apron and coming out to the lounge to sit with me. “What are you planning?”

He was smart, my Irian.

I leant across the distance between us, and with my index finger pushed the neck of his t-shirt out of the way to reveal the mating mark on his neck. The silvery scar consisted of two raised marks – barely noticeable to human eyes, but which delivered a clear message to a shifter.

Our eyes met, brown to blue. Irian's eyebrows raised.

"I want your opinion," I started cautiously, feeling my way. I was pretty sure I knew the answers, but I didn't want to hurt Irian. "You know how we have our bond?"

The slow bobbing of his head told me Irian was listening.

"And I think you know I'd like to be able to share that with Isca too," I chose my words particularly carefully. I wanted us to be a full triad, nothing less would do.

A ray of sunshine drifting in through the skylight at that moment caught the blonde highlights in Irian's light brown hair and turned them into shimmering waves as he nodded in agreement.

"You know I'd like that too, especially if... imagine if it was a three-way bond!" he exclaimed, breathlessly.

Clearly he'd thought about this. Did he already know what I was going to say?

"But of course, I can't claim him since he's already been claimed by Zarbius."

"Oh, I thought you were about to say it was possible after all." He slumped like the air had been knocked out of him and the smile vanished at the reminder of our little impasse.

"Not in the usual way of things," I added, hastily moving on. "But what if I could,

what if we could achieve it some other way? How would you feel about that? Would you want me to pursue that, if it was an option?"

"YES!" Irian was out of his chair and on his knees in front of me in an instant, grasping my thighs with a grip as arousing as it was tight. "Is it possible? Can we do it?"

He must have known I wouldn't bring this up if I didn't have a plan.

I gently removed his hands from my thighs, cradling them tenderly in my larger ones. I looked into his earnest face and saw only eagerness and love. Love for Isca, love for me, love for this unconventional family we had formed.

"Firstly, I am your Alpha and you should treat me with respect!" Irian responded by giggling, showing all the respect. I smirked; he knew I was joking.

"Secondly, you should know better than to put your hands near my groin when you're this close to heat. I am part wolf, I will remind you." I couldn't help the groan that slipped out. Irian's smile was sweet and a bit shamefaced. He knew the effect he was having on me. He might even have been doing it on purpose.

"And lastly," I sighed. "The truth is, I don't know. I have a few ideas, but I wanted to check with you first. If you don't want this, I won't pursue it."

Irian stretched up on his knees, his eyes bright with hope. "I would love it! I hate that Isca doesn't have the same connection we do. It's not right. And I know he wants it, he just doesn't say anything to you because he doesn't think it's possible. He doesn't want you to feel bad about it if there's nothing you can do. But if there is..."

"I'm not sure yet and I don't want to get his hopes up, so don't say anything to him until we're sure." I hesitated as something occurred to me. "You can keep a secret

from him, can't you?"

"Yes, of course. I wouldn't want him to get hurt... if it didn't work out, he'd be devastated. He loves you so much!"

I stroked Irian's chin with my thumb, "And he loves you just as much."

"What are you planning?" Irian's eyes were very golden, another telltale sign.

Before I got lost in those eyes, I told him, "I need to contact the Council, to see if there's another way to do it. But I can't do it officially. You know as well as I that not everyone on the Council is entirely trustworthy. If word of this spread, it wouldn't be too hard for someone to work out which pack was asking, and lead a trail back to Isca."

"Meaning Zarbius might find out."

"Yes, exactly."

"We can't let that happen," Irian asserted. His breathing was ragged. Fast and shaky. His eyes were wide, his pupils blown with alarm. Or was that his heat? It was getting hard to tell the difference. My nostrils quivered, catching the first traces of his heat scent. It wouldn't be long before we wouldn't be having any more conversation for a while.

"We won't," I assured him. "Get up here on my lap."

As Irian, face flushed, obeyed my request and settled himself straddling my thighs, the warmth emanating from his body burning up against my skin, I hurried to finish. "I have to ask someone I can trust."

“We could ask my mother,” suggested Irian, wriggling his butt into my thighs.

I groaned. He clearly wasn’t thinking straight if he thought we could trust his mother with this. “Your mother already doesn’t like me,” I gasped. “This would be the last straw. She’d never forgive me if she knew I wanted to make our relationship into a threesome...”

“We already are,” murmured Irian, brows straightening in thought, “but you’re right. She’d probably find a way to interfere.”

“There’s one guy I know on the Council. I think he can be trusted. I’ll reach out quietly to him and see if he knows of a way around this. I’m hopeful there’ll be something. Someone must have tried it before. Maybe there’ll be some information in the archives.”

“O-kay,” gasped Irian, leaning up against me and throwing his arms around my neck, running the flattened muscle of his tongue along the soft shell of my ear.

“Shit! This is coming on fast. Text Isca,” I ordered, my voice tight with the effort of controlling myself. “Tell him to get back home ASAP and to come straight to the bedroom.”

Irian’s hands trembled as he keyed the message into the phone. The phone slipped out of his hands, slid off the edge of the couch and clattered to the floor.

“That’s it. We’re not waiting,” I growled. At this rate, Irian was going to be howling in pain before we got to the bedroom. I maneuvered him around until I could slip my arms under him and sprang to my feet, lifting him in a bridal carry and striding towards the bedroom.

“H-hurry!” Irian begged, perspiration trickling down the side of his flushed face.



## Page 2

*Source Creation Date: July 17, 2025, 6:08 am*

This was my first heat since we'd become a triad. I'd had plenty of heats before, but never one that had come on so fast and so hard. All my senses were heightened, burning bright like a supernova.

I could feel the pounding of my heart going like a jackhammer as if it were going to burst out of my chest at any moment, but even more alarming was the sound of Talius' heartbeat booming louder than a drum in my ears. Why so loud? The sleeve of his shirt rasped painfully against my bare forearm, and I was sure it'd drawn blood, but when I glanced down the skin was intact, unmarked. I tensed in his arms, each tiny movement causing a slide of skin against fabric, sharp as a knife, my skin unnaturally sensitive. I felt like I was on fire.

Before we made it to the door, I groaned as an internal cramp hit me. Slick gushed from my body, but I barely noticed the discomfort of my soggy underwear and jeans above all the unfamiliar and terrifying sensations.

Thank the Goddess, I'd been at home and that Talius had recognized the signs straight away.

A small howl erupted from my lips before I could clamp my jaw shut.

The only comfort I had was the overwhelming sense of reassurance reaching me from my beloved mate. His alpha pheromones were rushing instinctively to enshroud and protect me, and I felt safe even if the pain were almost unbearable.

My sensitive nostrils flared, inhaling the glorious scent of my alpha's arousal, but at the same time, part of my soul was keening, aching, feeling the absence of my other

mate.

Talius lay me gently on the bed.

“N-need you,” I gasped, between spasms.

I felt his hands at the waistband of my jeans, struggling with the button. The sound of the zip ripped through my ears like a bandsaw, then he tugged the jeans and wet underwear off together. I screamed as the fabric tore across my flesh.

“I’m sorry, I’m sorry,” muttered Talius as I lay there sobbing, eyes closed.

There was a dreadful moment where nothing seemed to be happening and then his warm naked body was pressing down on mine and the rounded head of his dick was pushing into me. My body softened around him as he thrust in, and I pushed back against him straining for relief. As his knob slipped past the ring of muscle, I moaned. This was what my body needed.

“...’s better,” I gabbled, chest heaving, drawing in massive gasps of air. Low in my abdomen, I felt a tightening as another cramp began to form.

“Go!” I shouted. Talius, my magnificent alpha, thrust deeply, withdrawing and thrusting, pounding into me as if my life depended on it. And in truth, in that moment it felt like it did.

My cock was hard and weeping, rubbing against Talius’ hairy abdomen as he thrust. It hurt, but Goddess, I wanted more! I bucked against him and he ground down into me. The room filled with the sounds of gasping and the squeaking of the bed.

Talius leaned down and sucked a nipple into his mouth, grazing it with his teeth, and with a scream I erupted, a stream of hot cum spilling between us.

“Like that, do you?” Talius’ voice was harsh and guttural, tight with the effort of holding himself in check.

It wasn’t enough. I needed... I moaned. “More...”

I thrust my hips up urging him to get going. Talius thrust into me hard and fast. Faster. Over and over. It felt like forever. Then with a low rumble that rose from deep in his chest, he gave a final thrust, holding himself still as he began to spill inside me. His hot alpha cum soothed my insides, and it was such a relief that I barely felt his knot forming, stretching me, pressing into all the good places.

Talius’ knot must have been larger than usual because the stretch was eye-watering. It was hell. It was heaven. Oh, my Goddess, it was amazing.

“Thank the Goddess,” I gasped in a tumble of relief and delight, as we lay there joined. Knotting with Talius was one of my favorite things. When his big alpha knot pressed into me so hard I could hardly breath, it was mind-blowing.

“No, you can thank me. It’s my knot buried inside you,” Talius chuckled. I snickered from my position beneath him, impaled on his cock, catching my breath.

“Okay. Thanks Talius, for spearing me with that gigantic cock of yours and nearly splitting me in two with your monster knot.”

“You’re welcome,” said Talius seriously, then we both broke down into laughter. I was giggling so hard, tears ran down the side of my face. I gave a couple of hiccups, each movement causing a tug on Talius’ knot inside me, sending a sharp burst of pleasure-pain through me.

“Seriously, though, thank you. That was... unusually intense.”

“My pleasure,” replied Talius, and we both cracked up laughing again.

It was funny. And though Talius and I often laughed and joked during sex, this time I think we were mainly just relieved. This first wave of my heat had been frankly a little terrifying, and I was just so glad the usual activities had been able to soothe me as well as they normally did. And there was no denying it had been good. But as happy and sated as I was in this minute, I also didn't understand what was happening to my heat and I wasn't looking forward to when the next wave hit. For the first time, I felt as if I were adrift on a shifting sea. At least I had Talius as my anchor.

I had another anchor too, but he wasn't here right now.

Talius and I caught each other's gaze again and burst into another ridiculous fit of laughter. One of us snorted, and that was it, we were off again.

In the distance, I heard a door slam, and footsteps come running. The short rapid huffs of someone out of breath reaching the open door... The scent of... I sighed in relief. My other mate. Isca.

## Page 3

*Source Creation Date: July 17, 2025, 6:08 am*

ISCA

IRIAN: Hurry. Bdrm. (Fire emoji)

The cryptic message pinged my phone as Agelius turned the truck onto the road leading to our property.

What was going on? Was there a fire?

“You’d better hurry, Agelius, something’s going on at the house.”

Agelius looked across at me. We’d actually become good friends. Once, in the beginning, he’d shown an interest in me in a non-platonic way, but Talius had been quick to ‘inform’ him he’d already claimed me. There may have been a growl involved. And I might have been quite chuffed to be publicly claimed by the handsome Alpha.

Once Agelius got his head around the fact that his Pack Alpha had two mates, he’d let it go, and he’d been one of the shifters who’d helped me settle back into normal life after my awful trauma. I was generally wary of alphas and I had initially been a little uneasy with him, but that hadn’t lasted long. Possibly because of his youth - he couldn’t have been any older than me, possibly was younger - and what I knew of the circumstances under which he had joined the pack. He’d had a difficult life - getting kicked out of his pack as a young alpha when another alpha had taken over his birth pack, and then spending months surviving alone until Talius accepted him into our pack - and he wasn’t likely to risk getting thrown out of the pack for misbehavior. It was very quickly obvious to me that he wasn’t that sort of a guy anyway. Both

newcomers to the pack, it kind of made sense that we'd become friends.

"What is it?" he asked, not taking his eyes off the road, but already accelerating over the bumpy ground. My teeth rattled together as the truck bounced over potholes.

"Irian sent me a text saying to hurry. I think there might be a fire."

"Fuck!" Agelius swore under his breath and then said nothing more as the truck slid on the loose surface and he wrestled with the steering wheel.

We pulled into the long driveway and the truck tore up the length of it. As we lurched to a stop on the gravel, the dust we'd stirred up on the dirt road swirled over us in a choking cloud.

Leaping from the truck, I raced to the house. I was relieved that I couldn't see any smoke as I rushed up the steps and threw open the front door.

There was no smoke as I entered the house either, thank the Goddess, and I raced up the stairs heading for the bedroom. Perhaps it was only a small candle fire from some mood lighting or something? But then why tell me to rush home?

The bedroom door was open and when I got to the top of the stairs, over the pounding of my heart and my ragged breaths, I was startled to hear chuckling and laughter. It was coming from the bedroom.

"What the...?" I demanded in confusion, finally reaching the doorway and woah... my eyes went wide. I could see exactly what was going on.

Irian's flushed, sweaty face peered up at me from where he lay flat on his back on the mattress.

“Oh, thank the Goddess, you’re here!” Irian’s eyes shone and he looked both relieved and excited at the same time.

“He’s in heat,” growled Talius from his position on top of Irian, judging from which I guessed he was still inside him. With my panic subsiding, I finally noticed what I should have detected the minute I stepped in the house -the unmistakable scent of an omega heat. The house wasn’t on fire, Irian was.

Talius shifted his position slightly. Irian giggled. Talius snorted and they both started laughing again.

A sound on the steps just behind me startled me, reminding me that Agelius was with me. I swung around.

“Ah, it’s fine. You’d better go!” I spluttered, embarrassed, turning him around and pushing him away with both hands before he could see inside the room. “It... it’s under control. I’ll see you out.”

My cheeks were so flaming hot my face must have been beetroot red, and that combined with the noises coming from the bedroom, must have clued Agelius in.

He grinned, wolfishly. “Don’t worry about me. I’ll shut the door on my way out,” he called over his shoulder, as he took off down the stairs, leaving me behind. “I think you’re needed in there.”

I stood frozen for a couple of seconds after hearing the front door close, chest heaving, sucking in deep breaths. I couldn’t calm down, though. Barreling in here burning with adrenaline, and now knowing what was going on inside that room, the scent of Isca’s heat in the air, and the smell of arousal and sex...

My heart pounded as I walked towards the bedroom. The laughter had faded to the

soft hum of intimate voices. I stood in the doorway, watching as Talius slipped his hand between their bodies where they lay together. When he withdrew it, he offered a wet and glistening finger to Irian. Irian's gold-flecked brown eyes flicked to the finger, then back up to Talius. The finger disappeared between his plump lips with a slurping sound.

I saw the look that passed between them at that moment. Irian looked up at Talius with utter devotion and complete trust, and the alpha gazed down at him with all the possessive majesty of his designation and a look of pure love.

It was the most intimate moment I had ever witnessed, and I immediately understood that Talius would give his last breath to protect his mate.

I shivered, overcome by the beauty of the moment.

Then a small sick feeling formed in my belly as my old self-doubt raised its ugly head again. I knew that Talius loved me, but would he ever love me like that? Irian and Talius had been together many years before I came along. I was just an addition.

I watched Talius trace a line along Irian's jaw as he retrieved his finger, a soft smile dancing around the corners of his mouth. He slid his upper body off Irian and onto the mattress beside him, resting some of his weight on his elbow. Their hips remained joined. They must have been knotted. I licked my lips, my jeans too tight.

Leaning on his elbow, Talius turned to me. He was still smiling. His hair was damp from his exertions, and it stuck up at all angles. A large swatch of hair fell over one eye as it always did.

"Isca." His eyes were mesmerizing, pinning me there. Emotion swirled in their blue depths. I felt I could lose myself in them forever and still be safe.



He was looking at me with the same passion and affection as he had done with Irian. I choked out a little sob, almost brought to my knees by this realization.

“Come here,” his husky voice was gentle.

I trembled. I could refuse this man nothing. I was his omega, and my greatest desire was to please him.

He ran a finger across Irian’s slippery belly and held it out to me, the sticky liquid glinting in the light. I opened my mouth and let his finger slide between my lips. I tasted the salty tang of Irian’s cum, felt the rasp of Talius’ rough finger against my tongue.

Irian and I were very close, and the taste of him wasn’t new to me, but when combined with Talius’ finger feeding it to me... a single tear, a tear of joy, slipped from one eye. I didn’t bother to wipe it away.

Talius crooked his finger and drew me to him, kissed away the tear, and replacing his finger with his tongue, plundered my mouth. I squeezed my eyes tight, savoring this union of the three of us, the slide of his tongue against mine, the taste of Irian, and the knowledge that Talius was still deeply buried within him.

When Talius ended the kiss, I was dazed, floating happily on a sea of endorphins. I leaned down and kissed Irian, a sloppy affectionate melding of lips and tongues. Irian hummed happily.

Then he broke the kiss, a satisfied look on his face, and promptly fell asleep.

“Isca. Clothes off,” although Talius spoke quietly, there was no doubt this was a command. It was one I was happy to comply with. When I’d stripped, I went to fold my clothes and place them on the bedside table, but Talius grasped my wrist gently.

“Leave them,” he said. “Come lie with us while you can. It’s going to be a long night.”

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A day and a half later, I understood what he meant. The alpha was wrecked. He had given his all to ease Irian through his heat, and he must have had nothing left. He’d come and knotted Irian so many times, I’d lost count. He couldn’t have a drop left in him. Each time a wave of the heat had started, Talius had eased into Irian before the tension morphed into pain, but he’d exhausted himself in the process.

I’d helped where I could. Talius had instructed me at the start, but I learned quickly, and though Talius had remained in control of the whole encounter, when he grew too weary to speak, I’d been able to interpret his wishes from his nods and grunts.

I’d lived through one heat since joining this family, but that had been all about me. This one was the first where we truly functioned as a triad.

At one stage, at Talius’ request, Irian had lain in my arms, his back to my naked chest, held captive while his mate thrust into him, driving him over the edge screaming in his ecstasy. It had been hard holding off my own orgasm as Talius’ thrusts repeatedly rubbed Irian’s lower back against my hard cock which was trapped between us. I’d bitten my lip and distracted myself by watching the alpha. The expression of total concentration on Talius’ face as he worked hard to bring his mate to completion, the sweat dripping freely over his skin, tanned from the outdoor work he usually did... my Goddess, he was magnificent in those moments. Powerful, intense.

His face lined with fatigue, Talius still kept going. He wasn’t going to allow Irian to be in pain if he could prevent it, and his endurance was extraordinary. I knew I wasn’t worthy of an alpha like this, but when our eyes caught over Irian’s bare shoulder, I

knew without a doubt that he would do the same for me.

And he never forgot me. When Irian had finished erupting and his screams had settled to soft mewls of satisfaction, Talius' large hand had sneaked between us, stroking me until I spilled all over his fist, whimpering and trembling all over.

Only then had he sought his own release.

Irian's heat broke by the end of the next day. With a soft sigh, he collapsed in a heap of worn out but happy omega. Almost instantly, soft snores rolled through the room.

I was exhausted too. Emotionally and physically. Talius had put me through the wringer to please his other mate, and I was beyond thrilled to do so. Irian was half of my heart, Talius was the other. There was literally nothing I would not do for either of them.

I curled up in the tangle of sweaty, cum-stained sheets and promptly fell asleep.

This was home.

## Page 4

*Source Creation Date: July 17, 2025, 6:08 am*

### TALIUS

In the days following Irian's heat, we stayed quiet and close to each other. I took a few days off work to allow myself to recover surrounded by my omegas. They were recuperating too. It had been an intense couple of days, much more so than usual, due to the extreme symptoms Irian had been experiencing.

The only thing that had changed since Irian's previous heat was the addition of Isca to our love nest but I wasn't sure if that was the cause. I didn't know any other alphas with two mates, so I didn't have anyone to ask. It didn't matter though, between the three of us we'd managed the situation and we'd all had a very good time.

Apart from being tired, Irian was in no way the worse for the experience, in fact he seemed inordinately happy. Adding Isca to our dynamic had changed things, but only in a good way. Isca fit right in and was a loving and willing playmate.

But... he'd been through a lot. And I hadn't missed the moment when he'd doubted his place with us. I could see it in his eyes, feel it in his hesitation. He was like an open book to me, I could almost always read his emotions.

It made me realize I was making a mistake by not telling him about our plans to find a way to claim him properly. We might still fail, but at least he would know we had tried, that we had wanted him enough to make him equal in this relationship.

Isca was such a willing little omega. All he really wanted was to please his alpha. If Zarbius, his previous mate, had asked him for anything - quite literally - he would have happily given it. He would have bloomed into the wonderful, confident omega

he was always meant to be instead of struggling with feelings of self-worth. Instead, the alpha had abused his power, abused his vulnerable mate, taken without giving Isca any choice.

The true beauty in an omega's submission was their choice.

Zarbius' behavior made my blood boil in rage, and yet... I had to accept that Zarbius' failure to protect and cherish his omega, was the very thing that allowed him to come to us. Isca's pain had led to our joy, and I harbored a great deal of shame over that. It was a difficult thing to come to terms with.

I took comfort from the evidence that he was thriving now with us. He'd learned to trust me, which was a miracle in itself, seeing how alphas had betrayed him in the past. He gave and received love freely and was becoming more and more comfortable in intimate situations and had enthusiastically participated in Irian's heat.

I knew there were mental scars, centering mostly around sex. He was honest with me about those. He found it triggering lying on his back during sex, because of the assaults. Assaults. That word somehow dressed the terrible reality up in some sort of socially acceptable terminology. There was a subtle downgrading of the culpability of the perpetrator. It had been rape, damn it! Zarbius had raped his mate, and had also been responsible for others doing so.

Isca had been distressed the first time we discovered his trigger, afraid he was going to disappoint me. Poor omega! He could never disappoint me. And it was easy to accommodate his needs.

When we played, there many other ways to have sex, and he loved it when I took him from behind, one arm wrapped around his torso, holding his body close to my heart where he lived.

As I lay there thinking, the close of day cast an orange glow around the room, the setting sun ready to slip below the horizon. Mauve shadows slunk across the ceiling. There were machinery noises in the distance, the occasional voice. Closer to the house, a frog croaked.

In the room, only the soft huffs of air expelled disturbed the silence.

I thought I was the only one awake.

Isca was sleeping peacefully next to me half-curved up in the sheets, one arm wrapped around Irian on his other side. His chest rose and fell in a steady rhythm. Behind closed lids, his eyes moved, and his shoulders twitched with whatever dream he was having.

“I can hear you thinking,” Irian whispered from the other side of the bed.

His voice, unexpected as it was in the room where the only sound had been quiet breathing, startled me.

“I thought you were asleep,” I murmured, lifting myself up on an elbow, careful not to jostle Isca.

“I was, but you were thinking so hard into the bond that it woke me.”

We rarely used our mates’ mind-bond anymore. It seemed disrespectful to Isca since he couldn’t share it. I missed it though, it was a level of intimacy like nothing else. I sighed. I must have been really disturbed for my thoughts to have leaked through the bond to Irian.

“I think I was wrong,” I told him. “I think we need to tell him. About what we’re trying to do. I think he needs to know.”

“But what if we can’t make it happen?”

“Then at least he’ll know we cared enough to try.”

“What changed your mind? You were worried about disappointing him...”

“I know,” I replied slowly, “I still am. But disappointment is something we all have to live with at times. The thing is, I’m almost certain he doesn’t feel like he deserves to be here sometimes, that he’s lesser somehow. An accessory. I hate to think he feels that way.”

“That’s crazy!” hissed Irian. “That’s not what he is at all! We wanted him even before... before that thing with Zarbius.”

“You and I know that but look at it from his point of view. Firstly, we were a couple before we met him. Second, from what you’ve told me, the whole time he was with Zarbius, that bastard kept telling him how useless and undesirable he was. Even though I think he realizes, intellectually, that’s not true, he’s internalized some of that message. He won’t let himself believe he should be an equal part of this relationship.”

“That’s so sad,” Irian looked wistfully at Isca, as he ran a gentle finger through his hair, barely touching him. “He hasn’t said anything to me. How do you know he feels that way?”

“I’m not even sure he realizes it himself, but I see it sometimes, just in the way he is...” I shrugged. “Maybe it’s an alpha thing - it’s my responsibility to look after you guys – but I sense it.”

“Okay,” Irian nodded. “If you think it’s best, then let’s tell him.”

“I do. I’d like to tell him as soon as possible. Today?”

“It’d be nice if we had some progress we could report to him, but there isn’t, is there?”

A low, throaty chuckle rumbled out of me. “No. I haven’t had a chance to put anything in motion yet. Your heat came on rather suddenly if you recall... unless I fucked your brains out and your memory doesn’t work anymore?”

“My memory works just fine,” said Irian with a smirk, and I knew what he was thinking about.

I shook my head. “You’re such a filthy omega, Irian.”

“Yeah,” he smiled. “And you’re such a dirty alpha.”

“Lucky, eh?”

“Yep, perfectly suited.”

Irian looked at Isca and shook his head. “Poor Isca. I don’t think he truly understands what he’s got himself into.”

“I think he’s probably got a fair idea by now,” I countered. Then I added, “doesn’t seem too displeased.”



## Page 5

*Source Creation Date: July 17, 2025, 6:08 am*

ISCA

It was overwhelmingly quiet inside the bedroom: no rustling of sheets, no sleepy huffs of breath. Darkness lurked in the corners of the room, held at bay only by the warm glow of the nightlight Talius had installed in the bedroom to keep my fears at bay should I wake during the night. I'd done that a lot at first.

Nightmares still haunted my sleep at times, but less often now. Maybe the warmth of my mates beside me chased the demons away.

I was grateful that someone had turned on the nightlight before leaving the room. It was in that moment between sleeping and waking that I was most vulnerable to my fears, especially when I woke alone as I did now.

The sheets were warm and silky against my skin, the combined scents of Irian and Talius strong on the pillows. I lay staring at the ceiling, luxuriating in the comfort of our over-sized king bed and the familiar scents surrounding me, checking in with my body.

Heat sex was exhausting, even when it was not my own. Not just physically, but in my case I had so many terrifying memories, that even though I enjoyed it now with Talius and Irian, I found it mentally draining. Even several days later, I was only just recovering. Talius would never have hurt me and was never anything but encouraging and appreciative of every little thing I did, but there was a tiny part of my brain that was always waiting for me to do something wrong, expecting criticism. Goddess knew, Zarbius had told me so many times how useless I was in bed. I knew he was cruel and I couldn't trust anything he said or did, but some of it had stuck

nonetheless.

Talius worked hard to make me feel loved and appreciated, so I tried to hide that tiny part of myself that didn't feel worthy. It was exhausting. I wondered if he suspected though, and if that was why they had left me to sleep and recover longer. The blinds had been pulled down, the night light turned on. It must be night, or almost.

I was fine now but I lay there a little longer, gathering my strength. I guessed Irian would be buzzing around the kitchen, as happy as a bee in spring. In contrast to my own experience, he was always totally energized after his heats. He had been the entire time I'd known him. It was one of the things that had made me realize my situation in my old pack was not normal. His delight in having his alpha take him through heat was eye-opening, refreshing. I understood it now, though I hadn't at the time.

A loud gurgle broke the silence. I clapped my hand to my belly to silence it and sat up, looking around for my pajama pants.

There they were! Someone had left them conveniently draped over the end of the bed. I pulled them on and padded barefoot down the stairs towards the kitchen and food.

"If you could look into it and let me know what you find out, I'd appreciate it," Talius' deep voice rumbled over the crackle and spit of something sizzling in the frypan. The delicious aroma of bacon and beef teased me as I rounded the corner.

Irian was standing over the stove with a spatula in his hand. He greeted me with a wide smile and happy contented eyes. Talius was leaning casually against the wall a meter or so behind him, his ear pressed to his phone, his eyes glued to Irian's ass as he spoke again.

"Yes, but you need to keep it on the down low. No-one can find out about this.

Seriously, it's no joke."

I moved in behind Irian and slipped my arms around his waist, nibbling on the base of his neck. Irian carefully placed the utensil on the counter beside the stove and turned to face me. My lips slid over his. A warm tongue eased into my mouth and I squirmed against him, pressing my groin to his, not trying to hide my hardening cock.

"How do you feel?" I asked, when eventually he pulled away to check on the spluttering pan behind him.

He chuckled. "Well used. I should be able to sit down today though. What about you? Tired?"

"Nah. I'm good now. Thanks for letting me sleep."

"We know you need it." He kissed me affectionately on the forehead.

"I'm getting better."

"I know. We can both see it." Irian's lips curved gently and his eyes softened as he cast a look across at Talius still speaking earnestly into his phone.

"It was something though, wasn't it?" I said, smirking. Irian knew what I was referring to.

"Yeah." A dreamy look crossed his face.

We shared a grin.

"What's going on?" I asked, breaking the gentle moment. I gestured towards Talius.

"That seems a bit intense for this time of night."

Irian bit his lip. “Wait ‘til he’s off the phone. I’m sure he’ll tell you about it himself.”

That was intriguing but I knew better than to press Irian. He wouldn’t give up any of Talius’ secrets, not even to me. I peered into the pan.

“Want some meat?” Irian raised his eyebrows.

I felt the heat rush to my cheeks. I looked away. “Ah... I... er,” I flailed, unable to meet his eyes. He was so much more forward than me.

He bumped my shoulder gently. “Burger? I thought we’d have these for dinner.”

“Oh, right. Yes... th-that’s great,” I stammered. I could feel the heat in my cheeks. Irian always knew how to throw me off balance. I was much more reticent than he was, particularly when it came to sex, or even flirting.

Irian tut-tutted. “What did you think I meant? Filthy mind.” He shook his head in mock disgust.

Just when I thought I’d pulled myself together, Irian leaned in close. His warm breath caressed my ear as he said, “The other comes later.”

Then he turned away and resumed tending to the cooking while I stood there with my mouth open in surprise.

“Isca.”

I jumped, startled out of my thoughts by the deep husky tone.

“H-hey, Talius.” I looked across at the handsome alpha – our handsome alpha – who was standing erect and prowling across the space between us.

“My sweet omega, I’m glad you’re up. There’s something we need to talk about.” His words were directed at me.

Something we need to talk about? I stiffened. There was nothing in his voice that suggested a problem, but the words seemed... I tried to calm my suddenly racing heart. Had I done something wrong during the heat? Or was there something I hadn’t done that I was supposed to?

Talius must have felt my panic, because he closed the gap between us quickly, his hands reaching for me.

Strong arms wrapped themselves around me, and several days’ growth of facial hair rasped across my temple, warm lips nipped my ear.

“Talius?” I murmured from within the cage of his arms, but already I felt reassured. I sighed. Damn alpha pheromones, his alpha pheromones... I could never resist them. They insisted on calming me even though I knew there was something important going on.

“You’re fine,” he assured me leaning back to look at me, his brilliant blue eyes simultaneously calming and mesmerizing. “There’s nothing wrong. In fact, I’m hoping you’ll find it’s a positive thing. Come, sit down. We can talk while Irian cooks.”

He led me to the kitchen table and pulled out a chair, waving towards the seat with his hand. I slid onto the seat, folded my hands in my lap, and waited as Talius took the one across from me.

He was my alpha and I was his omega, and he wanted to talk to me about... something. It must be reasonably serious, so I kept my eyes down submissively, allowing him to take the lead.

We sat in an oasis of silence, surrounded by a backdrop of hissing bacon and sizzling meat, while I waited for him to speak. I wanted to chew my nails, but resisted the urge to lift them to my mouth. I silently picked at my fingernails under the table instead.

Rough skin chafed against my chin and a subtle but insistent pressure encouraged me to raise my head.

I blinked, my eyes widening as Talius' intense gaze caught me in its spell. I looked into those fathomless depths and waited.

Talius hesitated. I worried. Surely, this wasn't bad?

With a sharp inhale, Talius drew himself up. He looked strong, powerful, commanding. He was a magnificent alpha, and I wanted to throw myself at his feet.

But when Talius said, "I was just on the phone to the Council", I shivered. The Council was usually only involved when there was some sort of problem. Was I the problem? Or was there a problem for me?

"Isca! Stop." Talius' brows had drawn together. His lips pinched. He looked fierce. I gulped. Then he sighed, rubbing the back of his neck with one hand.

The back of his other hand traced the curve of my cheek. "Stop worrying. There's no problem. I was simply making an enquiry. An enquiry that concerns you."

Irian had stopped tending to the dinner and was standing, turner in hand, watching us.

Talius continued, "I've asked a friend to make some discreet enquiries about whether it's possible to safely break a mate bond."

“B-break a mate bond?” I paused as my mind put things together. “You mean... my bond with Zarbius?” I’m sure my eyes must have lit up in surprise.

“Yes. I don’t know if it can be done, but it might be possible, especially as it’s only a partial bond. But I need to be sure... if it’s possible, would you want to break it, Isca?”

I was speechless as the possibility ran through my mind. I could finally be free of my old mate? What would that mean for me? Would Talius mate me properly? Would Irian be okay with that?

My failure to respond must have alarmed Talius because his voice lowered and softened.

“That would leave you free for me to mate you... if you wanted that,” there was an unaccustomed touch of vulnerability in his voice that brought me to my senses. I couldn’t bear to hear this amazing alpha uncertain, especially when he was offering me my heart’s desire.

“Yes!” I surged out of my seat, closing the distance between us and without second-guessing myself for once, smashed my lips to his.

The impact knocked him back in his seat but rather than break contact, he grabbed me and hauled me across the table until I was sitting in his lap. His arms tightened around me. His tongue slid past my lips as he claimed me in a punishing kiss. It was my perfect delight to yield to him, my body softening in his embrace, my mouth and my tongue following his lead.

A possessive growl rumbled through Talius’ chest, vibrating against my ribs.

“My omega!” he growled, pulling back from the kiss, his eyes luminous. His wolf

was near the surface. He dropped his head to the base of my neck, his nostrils rubbing along the tender skin, sniffing. He rested his fangs in the little hollow where the mating bite would go, where the little silver scars from Zarbius' bite marred the flesh. The pointy teeth dragged across the skin, bumping up against bone. I shivered. I wanted that mating bite from him. I wanted it so badly.

"Your omega," I whispered, trembling in his lap. I caught a glimpse of Irian watching us, a tender smile dancing across his lips. There were no worries there. He wanted this as much as I did.



## Page 6

*Source Creation Date: July 17, 2025, 6:08 am*

IRIAN

It was both heartbreaking and breathtaking to see the hope on Isca's face when Talius told him about his – no, our – plans to dissolve his old mate bond so that Talius could form a new one with him. I knew we'd made the right decision to tell him about it. Even if it didn't come off, the fact Talius had gone to the trouble of finding out if it were possible should go a long way to reassuring Isca that he was equal in our triad. I'd been surprised when Talius told me Isca didn't feel that way already.

I really hoped it would happen. I had high hopes for a three-way mind-bond with Talius and Isca, and wouldn't that be fun? Apart from anything else, I was sure the sex would be mind-blowing. Well, more mind-blowing than usual... things had really heated up now we'd found our stride as a triad in the bedroom.

When dinner was over and the kitchen cleaned up, I took Isca by the hand and led him back to our room. Talius had disappeared into his office, no doubt trying to catch up on some of the work that had been put on hold during the days he had been helping me through my heat.

Ten minutes later, freshly showered, and skin pink from the hot water and being rubbed down with towels, Isca settled in the sheets beside me.

"Do you really think it's possible?" he asked, bubbling with excitement. His beautiful brown eyes shone with hope and anticipation, and he seemed to be looking into the distance, as if he were already imagining the possibilities.

"I don't really know. I hope so," I told him, running my palm over the firm muscles

of his upper arm. The fine downy hairs glinted, still damp from his shower. “And Talius doesn’t either, really. He’s hoping there’s something in some of the old texts about it. He’s got someone looking into it, but he can’t ask openly or word will get out that it’s for you. There’s still a possibility Zarbius might come for you if he ever learns you’re alive.”

I winced when I saw the look of terror that flitted across Isca’s pale face. I shouldn’t have mentioned the name of his old mate. It was only a couple of months since Zarbius had raped him and left him for dead in the forest, and while his body had long since healed, the incident had left other scars that would take far longer to recede.

“Don’t worry,” I traced a finger over his scrunched up brow. “Talius has a friend on the Council. He’ll be discreet but it might take a while to get an answer since he can’t ask straight out.”

“I can’t believe Talius is doing this for me,” Isca whispered.

“Of course, he is!” I insisted, indignant that Isca would think himself unworthy of the effort. “You’re important to him. And to me... I can’t wait... well, I’m hoping it will work out. Talius doesn’t want us to get our hopes up, but it’s kind of hard not to, isn’t it?”

Isca’s smile said it all. Goddess, I hoped it worked out. He’d been through so much already.

“There’s another run coming up soon,” I blurted out, apropos of nothing, the thought having slid randomly into my brain. “Are you going to come this time?”

Isca’s eyes widened. “Ooh, yes. I want to do that. If Talius thinks it’s okay...”

In previous months, Isca had stayed home during the full moon run, but it had been hard on him. The entire pack ran together on these nights, including the little ones. Of course, the youngest ones couldn't run too far, and after an hour or so the families returned home and the pack broke up into couples and singles. Blood ran hot, and many relationships started on these nights. Talius ran a respectful pack, so any omegas claimed on nights like these had to be consenting. Sometimes other packs ran with us, but they knew the rules and as far as I knew no-one had stepped out of line.

"I'd like you to join us," I told him. "I didn't like leaving you at home the other times. It somehow didn't feel right."

It was true. Before Isca, Talius and I would have broken away from the pack and stayed out most of the night playing and mating under the full moon, but since he had joined us, it felt strange - wrong even - to run just the two of us. For the last couple of pack runs we'd declined to break away and instead headed home early to Isca, so I was excited to think Isca might run with us at last.

"I didn't like missing out either," Isca acknowledged with a small grimace. "You know, my old pack didn't do full moon runs, or any kind of pack run at all."

"Seriously? But they're wolves! How could they not? I mean, it's in our blood, it's hard to resist."

"They used to get drunk instead and then they'd go into the omega-house and use the omegas," he told me, sadly.

I raised an eyebrow. He shook his head.

"Not, not me, not on those nights. On the full moon I used to sneak out and run by myself."

"Alone?" How sad for him. The moon sang for us to run with our brothers, sisters and non-binary siblings. I thought of that lonely omega running the night forest alone, heeding the call of the Goddess. But it was better than the alternative.

A thought struck me. "How could they even get drunk? Shifters are scarcely affected by alcohol!"

Isca shrugged. "I don't know, but they did. At least, they behaved like they were drunk."

He paused. A tiny spot of pink appeared on each pale cheek.

"I think I may have seen you and Talius one full moon," he admitted.

I gave him a lopsided smile. "With the pack? Or just the two of us?"

"Just the two of you."

"I guess we gave you a good show then," I smirked.

"Um, no," Isca's cheeks were burning now. "I left before you got to that..."

"Never mind, we'll make up for it this time."

"If Talius agrees..."

"We'll ask him when he comes in," I murmured, snuggling closer to Isca and scenting at the base of his neck. He smelled of soap, fresh citrus and something indefinably him. "Mmm, you smell good," I told him. I felt his nose riffling through my hair and he pulled back, nostrils flaring. His brown eyes widened, pupils expanding, and he leaned in, tongue swiping over his lips. I had a brief moment to

note how his lips glistened and then they were on mine as he pushed me back down into the bed and rolled on top of me.

I felt his length hardening against me, my own cock filling in response. He was unusually dominant tonight – usually I was the one initiating action between us – and I wondered if Talius’ plan was already boosting his confidence.

“Ah,” I gasped, dragged out of my thoughts by a warm hand snaking between us and curling around my shaft. I shuddered as he stroked a couple of times and I hardened further. Then he thrust his hips upwards, rubbing his cock against mine. I groaned.

“Goddess, I want you. But I can’t take it in the ass tonight,” I groaned.

Isca snickered. “Still sore from your heat? I’m not surprised the way Talius was pounding into you. Still, you were begging for it...”

“I was, wasn’t I?” I felt the heat flame in my cheeks, as I remembered moments from the last few days. Omegas in heat weren’t the most bashful or decorous of creatures. I wasn’t really embarrassed though because Talius never made me feel silly, or dirty in a bad way, and truth be told, the more wanton I became, the more he seemed to love it. Come to think of it, Isca did too.

“It seemed to get you all hot and sweaty too,” I reminded him, gazing up into his eyes.

Isca’s eyes skidded away, and he squirmed. I’d turned the tables on him and he was so cute when he got embarrassed.

“Just trying to fit in with you guys,” he mumbled.

“Yep, you fit, like, literally,” I teased.

Now I wasn't the only one blushing.

"Shut up," Isca said, silencing me by kissing me. We killed off a few minutes like that. It was hard to think of anything beyond what we were doing, Isca's lips on mine, his agile tongue probing my mouth, the heat in all the places where our bodies touched. Lost in the magic of it, I started to wonder if maybe I could take a little more tonight. Isca wasn't as big as Talius, so maybe...

The mattress sagged beside me and Isca and I rolled straight into Talius' hard body. We'd been so absorbed in making out that we hadn't heard him enter the room. If we hadn't had our noses pressed so closely into each other, we would have scented him, but he'd caught us unawares.

"Don't let me stop you," he said, lying on his side, observing us with twinkling eyes.

"Isca wants to come on the next run," I told him, raising my head. "Can he?"

Talius gave Isca a knowing look. "Isca can come any time he likes."

Isca's face turned even redder and he ducked his head.

Fortunately, Talius decided not to draw out his teasing.

"So you feel up to joining us this month?" he asked Isca, his brows drawing up in enquiry.

Isca nodded, his eyes shining, words tumbling out of his mouth. "Yeah, I do. I'm strong enough now, and I didn't really like staying at home the other times." He bit his lip, dropped his gaze, then caught Talius' eyes again. "If you think it's okay."

"I don't see why you shouldn't, provided we make sure it's clear you're spoken for."

Let's see how quickly I get an answer back from my friend on the Council. If I can't mate you before the run, I'll have to find some other way of marking you as mine."

Isca's cheeks plumped as the corners of his lips angled upwards, displaying a dimple I hadn't noticed before. He looked as pleased as any omega could look.

"But for now, how about you two put on a show for me?" Talius suggested, stripping off. His shirt landed over the chair, and he bent down to pull his jeans off, his firm ass on display. "I don't want to interrupt what you were doing."

I swallowed. He didn't have to tell me twice. I was not shy, not in front of my alpha at any rate, and I didn't think he'd restrict himself to looking for long. I plopped back on the bed, pulling Isca down on top of me, seeking his mouth with my own. I wasn't sure how much I was up for tonight, so soon after my heat, but the feel of Isca's skin against mine was irresistible. He was soft and lean, his belly pale and almost hairless, and his arms and face tinged with color now that he was working with Talius out in the paddocks. He was all soft omega, but right now, he was feverishly working over my mouth.

It wasn't long before our erections, which had flagged while we were talking, were back at full mast. Isca chewed at my collarbone while rubbing his dick vigorously against mine, his pubic hairs rasping against the base of my shaft with delicious friction. A wet trail leaked across my lower abdomen. It was unusual for either of us to be submissive to the other, we usually just played together, but tonight I felt a strange urgency in him, a need to dominate, as though he were grasping the future he wanted with all that he had.

I was happy to go along with it. His intensity was a turn on.

I slid my hands over Isca's ass, his skin soft beneath my fingers. I squeezed his cheeks in both hands and Isca grunted into my neck, thrusting his pelvis harder

against me. His pulse fluttered in his neck and he could surely hear the pounding of my heart through my chest wall. He thrust harder, our dicks riding against each other.

I felt rather than heard Talius' enquiry through the bond and I sent him back my response immediately.

Yes! Please!

Talius' large presence loomed behind Isca, dwarfing him as he leaned over and whispered in his ear. His words sent a shiver through me.

"Do you want him, Isca? He's a needy little omega. He wants you to take him. Do you want to? I'd like to watch you."



## Page 7

*Source Creation Date: July 17, 2025, 6:08 am*

ISCA

Talius'' words, whispered low and suggestive in my ear, were incendiary.

I jolted and my eyebrows almost shot to the top of my head.

Was he serious?

Talius'' steady gaze as he patiently waited for my response, assured me he was.

I blinked stupidly while a million thoughts ran through my head. Did I want to?

As an omega, and especially coming from the pack I had, I'd never entertained the thought of being the one to do the fucking. It had never occurred to me. Did omegas even do such a thing? And yet here was my alpha asking if I wanted to!

Irian and I often messed around together, even without Talius present. Talius had repeatedly told us that he was fine with it, even that he loved that we played together. The reassurance was mainly for me, I think, because Irian was always confident that Talius was happy to indulge his every whim. That omega's self-assurance was amazing, and only something I could aspire to.

This was something different though. When we messed around, we made out, shared handjobs and blowjobs, but it was all simple fun. We'd never gone further. It would be a big step.

But Talius'' determination to find a way of mating me had given me a level of

confidence that was like a burst of sunlight on a cloudy day, and I wanted to ride that shaft of brilliance while it was there. That I could do so, with the full support of my Alpha, was the icing on the cake. I could be dominant and still fulfill the submissive side of my nature at the same time.

Yes, I decided, I did want to do this. But what about Irian? Did he want this?

But he'd said something earlier, hadn't he?

I hadn't paid much attention - any attention, really - because it just wasn't a thing. But just because it was unthinkable in my old pack, didn't mean it wasn't possible elsewhere. Goddess knew, Talius ran his pack very differently to Zarbius.

"Isca?" Talius' gruff voice gently nudged me back to the present.

I'd stopped moving and Irian had stilled beneath me, watching intently, lips parted.

"Do you wa...?" I began.

His vigorous nodding cut me off. "Yes, do it!" he urged, eyes dancing. His hips undulated under me, encouragingly. His shaft rubbed against mine. Irresistible. With a mind of their own, my hips responded, thrusting hard against him. The delicious rub of the silky skin of our hard shafts created an urgency that had had me grinding harder and faster, as Irian moaned and little grunts fell from my lips.

I picked up the pace.

"Yesss, Alpha, I want to," I gritted out, working my hips even more vigorously against Irian's pelvis.

A pair of rough-skinned hands grasped my hips on each side, pulling me down the

bed.

"Control," he murmured, gently.

Talius was right. I was getting so excited at the idea of fucking Irian, rutting so hard against him, that I was going to come before I got inside him.

I drew in a few stuttering breaths, stilling. Irian watched me, pupils blown, chest heaving, as he waited for me to get control of myself.

A couple more deep breaths. In, o-u-t. In, o-u-t. That helped.

I slid my tongue around Irian's navel, making him gasp and squirm, then licked my way down to the crease of his groin, running my wet tongue over that tender skin and nibbling with my teeth. Irian's hard cock bumped my face, warm against my cheek, but apart from sliding my tongue once down the shaft, I ignored it. I knew I wasn't going to last. The scent of Irian's slick was intoxicating and I felt a trickle running down my own thighs, heard Talius inhale right behind me.

Irian whined, bucking his hips, urging me to get on with it.

Trembling, I lifted one of his legs over my shoulder. I hesitated. Then I felt the warmth of Talius' hand on my shoulder. His support boosted my confidence. I lined myself up with Irian's slick-drenched hole and pressed in. The tight ring of muscle only resisted briefly before accepting me. I closed my eyes as I slid home and the wet warmth of his tunnel closed around my length. It was so good. He felt so good. I'd never imagined it would be like this.

Overwhelmed, my head began to buzz and black spots began to appear.

"Breathe," ordered Talius over my shoulder.

Right! I needed to do that! I dragged in a massive breath and the spots cleared.

I began to move, thrusting in and out of Irian's warm body. He smiled, and his eyes fluttered closed. His other leg came up over my shoulder and his hips lifted off the mattress. I thrust again, deeper. Irian groaned and cried out.

"That's it," murmured Talius, encouragingly. "Give him more."

My heart was racing, my blood pounding in my head, and I heard him as if from afar. Some part of me responded, pushing harder and faster into that wet heat, Irian's moans and groans filling the room mingling with the obscenely wet sounds of flesh slapping against flesh. Slick gushed down my legs.

Our combined scents filled my nostrils - Irian's slick, my slick, and Talius' arousal. He grunted behind me, and his hard cock pressed at my slick hole, driving into me until he was fully seated, his balls flush against me. He kept time with me, thrusting into me as I thrust into Irian. Talius let me set the pace, never taking over, the familiar sensation of his cock deep inside me grounding me and keeping me present.

Together we drove into Irian, relentlessly urging him on. His moans and whimpers bounced off the walls. Talius adjusted our angle slightly and on our next thrust Irian shouted out as his cock pulsed jets of cum onto his chest and chin, the white globules stark against his light olive skin. The sight tipped me over the edge and I cried out repeatedly as I emptied myself inside him, my brain fizzing out in a white blaze of sparks. I slumped over Irian, breathing raggedly but filled with a euphoria I'd never known.

Vaguely, I felt Talius' cock withdraw from my ass, though I didn't think he'd come. I was too tired to move, other than turn my head towards him.

He was standing over the pair of us, his appearance as wild and fierce as I'd ever

seen him, lust written all over his face, and an expression of deep possessiveness.

"Mine. Both mine," he growled, stroking his slippery cock aggressively.

With a grunt, Talius unleashed a shower of cum over Irian and I as we lay exhausted on the bed, marking us, claiming us.

My eyes caught Irian's. His eyes crinkled, a beautiful smile transforming his face. My lips ticked upwards in response. This was perfection.

I ran a finger through the sticky mess trickling down Irian's shoulder and offered it to him like I'd seen Talius do that other time. Irian accepted the finger, drawing it into his mouth with his tongue. He smiled again, then released my finger to pull my lips to his, his mouth taking mine deeply and intimately.

The mattress sagged as Talius joined us on the bed, rolling us over and wrapping his arms protectively around us.

I didn't remember anything after that.

### TALIUS

I watched my two sweet men playing video games together in the games room.

They were seated on the couch, controllers in hand, eyes glued to the screen. The sofa was big enough for three, but they were sitting pressed shoulder to shoulder, arms touching, laughing away at whatever was happening on the screen. Every now and then, one of them would rest their head on the other's shoulder.

They were happy and carefree when together, and so much in love. My heart thudded in my chest, nearly bursting with pride and gratitude. I was the luckiest alpha, that the Goddess had seen fit to grant me two such wonderful mates, mates that fit so well together.

A burst of heat flushed through me as I thought about the night before. It had been a good call to get Isca to fuck Irian. Irian had been hungry for him, and Isca had been so proud afterwards. And a little shocked too, I think. My jeans tightened at the memory and I thought about joining them on the sofa, but I had work to attend to.

The game ended with a loud crash! as the spaceship they were flying was overwhelmed by superior forces, and Isca tossed his controller onto the rug.

"We haven't won a single game since we got this," he grumbled. "This new game..."

"Sucks!" Irian interjected, then he pulled a face. "Maybe we should go back to playing against each other. I suck at this. I'm just holding you back."

Isca kicked back on the couch. "Nah, it's more fun to play together. You just need more practice."

Isca threw me a wink over the back of the couch. I knew my role.

"Irian already spends far too much time on that damn machine," I asserted.

"I do not!" Irian jumped to his feet, hands on his hips, glaring at me.

"...time he should be spending on the house-keeping," I continued, the corners of my mouth struggling to stay put.

"The fuck?" Irian spluttered, vertical wrinkles appearing between his brows and the muscles in his jaw tightening. His nostrils flared and his mouth opened to deliver a scathing retort, when he must have caught sight of Isca laughing silently beside him, hand over his mouth and tears streaming down his cheeks.

"What the...?" His head ping-ponged between us. "Fuckers!" he exclaimed, as I gave up my fight to keep a straight face. I wrapped my arms around myself, shaking with laughter. He was so easy to rile up, and now we were a triad I had a willing accomplice anytime I wanted to stir the pot.

Irian plonked himself back down on the sofa with a huff. Isca launched himself on top of him, pushing him onto his back and covering his lips with his own.

It was tempting to join in, but then I'd get no work done at all this morning. Sighing, I adjusted myself, and after leaning over the back of the couch to kiss both men on the head, turned and made my way reluctantly to my office. Sometimes it sucked to be the Pack Alpha.

???

After a deadly boring hour of doing the pack accounts, I pushed away from my desk and stood up, groaning as I stretched my stiff muscles. I needed to get out of the house and into the fresh air. I felt more restless than usual, and when I started to feel this way, it usually meant the full moon was near and my wolf was near the surface.

That reminded me that I hadn't heard back from my contact on the Council. Making a mental note to follow that up, I left the office and headed past the living room and kitchen, which were now deserted, and out the front door.

Johnson was usually checking the fences at this time of day. Looking around, I couldn't see the quad bike anywhere, which suggested he was still out in the paddocks.

Walk or ride?

I roamed my gaze over the distant paddocks and along the stretches of road visible between the trees. It was deserted. With my wolf already so near the surface and eager to be set free, it was tempting to shift and run to wherever Johnson was working. Easier to locate him in my wolf form, too.

But... it was a risk I didn't need to take. I didn't need someone reporting a wolf sighting in the district. Foxes were common here, but not wolves. A sighting would create a hue and cry, and a level of observation we shifters didn't need.

Not this time, I told my wolf, but soon. I'd check the calendar when I returned to the office and if the full moon wasn't soon enough, I might take a run tonight.

I found the motorcycle in the shed, and took off down the track on that. The track had been recently graded, so it wasn't too bumpy, and the fresh air rushing past my face was exhilarating. So much better than being captive indoors.



I found Johnson out in the back paddock. He was dealing with a branch that had fallen across the boundary fence. He'd already sawn it in half and was repairing the broken wires of the electric fence when I got there.

"Hey, Talius," Johnson looked up from where he was crouched twisting wires through an electrical insulator.

"Hey, Johnson. Another one of these trees down again?"

"Yeah. Happens every time there's a decent wind."

I heard the pop of his joints as he stood up, and he groaned and rubbed his hip.

"Why don't you get Agelius out here doing some of this?" I suggested. "You're not getting any younger and he's more than capable. Put those young muscles to work."

Johnson's mouth pinched and he glared. "I'm not ready for the nursing home yet, Talius."

"No, but when you are we'll have to build one on-site. Can't imagine the humans would be too happy with a wolf running down the hallways of their nursing home every full moon. Seriously though, bring Agelius out here. You could probably bring Isca too. He's interested in farm work and we need to make sure to pass on the knowledge to the next generation."

Johnson shrugged. "Jeez. How to make a guy feel old. But yeah, okay, guess you're right. I should do that. I do feel my age some days."

He gingerly knelt back down and resumed patching the fence.

"What can I help you with?" I asked.

Johnson waved a hand further along. "There's a section over there that needs a wire reconnected," he told me, "if you want to fix that."

I got to work. The day was heating up, the early morning chill of the air dispelled by the strength of the southern hemisphere sun. It wasn't long before perspiration was dripping down my back.

After a while, Johnson mumbled something to himself, settling back on his heels and checking his work.

"I presume you didn't just come out here to help me fix a fence you know I can manage on my own," he said. "Trying to escape the office?"

"A bit of that," I admitted, twisting the wires together. I looked across at him. "I really needed to get some fresh air."

Johnson nodded like he understood. "Yeah," he said quietly, "I'm feeling it too... less than a week 'til the full moon."

I thought for a bit, then I said, "Isca's going to join us for the run this month."

Johnson's hands stilled, and his green eyes met mine. His brow wrinkled.

"Do you think that's safe?"

"I think we can make it safe. Who's joining us for the run this month?"

"That I know of... only Lucius" pack, though of course they'll probably bring friends."

"They're decent wolves," I noted. Then I added, "Has anyone been out to Isca's old

pack house recently?"

Johnson wiped a bead of sweat from his brow as he looked up at me. He shook his head. "Not since the time we went looking for Isca."

"Mmm. I wonder if we should send someone to check it out."

Johnson raised a bushy eyebrow. "What are you thinking?"

"Just to see who's there, if anyone. I wouldn't like to be surprised by Zarbius returning here and us not knowing about it."

"We can send someone up there tomorrow, maybe this afternoon, depending how the work's going?"

"Yeah. I think we should. Find out if anyone's living there now, and if they are whether it's that pack or someone new."

"Sure. I'll send a couple of guys... just in case there's trouble."

I shook my head. "By all means send two, but I don't want them engaging with anyone. If they find someone there, tell them to stay well clear. I don't want anyone thinking we're interested in the place."

"Sure," Johnson grunted and we got back to work.

Once we'd finished with the fence, I hefted the massive chainsaw from the back of the trailer and we moved on to sawing up the bough and stacking it well away from the trees, ready for burning off at a later date. Now that more and more city folk were moving out to the country and panicking every time they saw smoke, it had become obligatory to notify the local fire authority prior to lighting any fires, so we tended to

prepare all the piles ahead of time and then spend a solid week burning them off all at once.

By the time we were done, my shirt was soaked and sticking to my back, my sweaty hair plastered to my forehead. I swallowed, my throat dry and raspy. My stomach growled. But I felt good. Physical work and fresh air were just what I needed to placate my wolf, make it feel closer to nature.

"I'm gonna head back to the house," I told Johnson. "Want to join us for lunch?"

He shook his head. "Thanks, but no. I've got a couple more jobs I need to finish up before I head back."

I turned to go, paused mid-step, then facing him again, said "Let me know as soon as you find out the situation at Isca's old place."

Johnson grunted affirmatively.

Mounting the bike again, I headed back to the compound.

Later that evening, I was enjoying a quiet post-dinner movie with Irian leaning up against me on the sofa, and Isca seated on the floor between my legs, when the familiar buzz of my phone hummed in the background.

I was comfortable where I was and didn't relish interrupting our evening, but Isca bounded up and grabbed the phone off the table before I could tell him not to bother.

"It's Johnson," he told me, holding the phone out.

Irian paused the movie as I grudgingly accepted the phone, my cozy evening with my omegas interrupted. However, I never refused a call from Johnson. He knew what

was important and he was unlikely to ring for anything else.

"Hey," I said into the phone.

"Hey, Talius. Sorry to disturb your evening but I've had a report back on Zarbius' pack house and I thought you'd want to get an update as soon as I had it."

I leaned forward, phone pressed to my ear, listening attentively. "What did you find out?"

"The place is completely deserted. It's as though they just packed up and left and no-one's been there since. The outside is overgrown, and inside is empty and dusty. Everything's gone, except for in one room which looks untouched. I'm speculating that was Isca's room."

"Do you have a description of the room?"

"Just a minute." I heard Johnson and some other voices conversing in the background, before Johnson came back on the call. "I'm gonna put Oscar on. He and Anders were the ones who went up there."

A deep voice spoke into the phone. "Alpha, this is Oscar."

"Hey, Oscar. Thanks for going up and checking on the property. What can you tell me about it?"

"Alpha, it's obvious no-one has been there since the pack left," he told me. "Me and Anders scented around the buildings before we went in, and there was no trace of any shifters having been there recently. Just the usual forest animal scents. There was evidence some animals had been living in the house - scats in some of the rooms, a couple of snake skins and the like - but no humans and no shifters. The buildings had

all been cleared out, except for one room in the main packhouse, and everything was overgrown, not that it means much. From what we'd seen of those guys when they were in town, they didn't seem too concerned about appearances."

"Tell me about the room that wasn't cleared out. Where was it located in the building? Can you describe it? Any distinguishing features?"

There was silence for a moment, then Oscar said, "It was in the main house, as I said. If you enter from the back door, you go through the kitchen, down a corridor and it was the first on the left. Had a single bed, bookcase, closet with one door half-broken off. Had a few clothes inside. Small window, the glass was cracked. Blue walls. Nothing else remarkable."

"Hold on a minute." I put the phone on mute. Turning to my newest omega, I said "Isca, I've just had someone go up to your old packhouse and check on things..."

Isca's eyes flared wide, pupils dilated. He sucked in a sudden breath.

"It's okay," I reassured him. "There's no-one there. They haven't been back since... since they left. Did you have your own room there by any chance?"

Isca nodded. "Yes. I... I never stayed in Zarbius' room, even when we'd..." he shrugged, a red stain flushing his cheeks, and didn't finish his sentence. I couldn't blame him for not wanting to say the words. He'd probably tried to blank those memories out; the pain, the shame, and the sense of helplessness. I felt the rage bubbling inside me at the thought of this poor defenceless omega, cast out of bed after his sadistic alpha had taken what he wanted from him. How sad Isca's life must have been back then. I gritted my teeth. There was nothing we could do about his past, but his future was with us and I was determined it would be nothing like his previous life. Nothing was too good or too much for my omegas, either of them.

"Can you describe where the room was... ah, in relation to the kitchen?"

"Um, yeah. Down the hallway, first door on the left. Why?"

It was going to be hurtful to hear this but it couldn't be avoided. Despite everything that had happened to him, or maybe because of it, Isca was a strong omega. He would be hurt, but he would be able to deal with those feelings. And we were here to help him with that.

"Is there anything you'd like to have from your room? Any possessions that you want? I can send someone to pick them up for you."

Isca stayed quiet, blinking softly. I saw the moment he came to the inevitable conclusion. His face fell, the corners of his eyes and mouth turning down, and his shoulders curled inwards.

"They left all my stuff behind, didn't they?" he said numbly. It shouldn't have come as a surprise, but it was another slap in the face for him, another sign of how little they valued him.

I tossed the phone on the bench and took the two steps I needed to reach him, wrapping him up against my body and tucking his head against my chest. I felt a patch of wet seep through my shirt, felt the tremors ripple through his body. I rubbed my hands soothingly up and down his back, buried my lips in his hair and as I kissed him, murmured, "We're your family now. We love and appreciate you. No-one's going to hurt you anymore."

He pushed his nose between the buttons of my shirt onto my skin and inhaled a deep shuddering breath. The shaking eased and he sagged in my embrace. He took another deep sniff against my chest and when he looked up at me, although his cheeks glistened, there were no more tears falling, and his eyes had the slightly dopey

expression that a good dose of alpha pheromones could give an omega.

A pair of arms slid around my back and Isca was squashed harder into me as Irian came up behind him and wrapped his arms around both of us, making an Isca sandwich.

"You have us," I heard Irian murmur into Isca's ear.

"I know. It's just hard knowing how little I meant to them. I did everything for them... I fed them, cleaned up after them..."

"Hush," I breathed against the soft strands of hair. "Some people don't know a good thing when they see it. It doesn't make you less valuable, it just makes them stupid."

Isca made a little choking sound that was half laugh, half snuffle.

"And their stupidity is our gain," added Irian. "And we get to love you forever!"

Isca sniffed and wriggled in our arms. Irian released his grip allowing Isca to stand freely, though we were all standing so close that our scents mingled. The smell of us combined was intoxicating. It was tempting to scoop them both up and take them to bed, but we weren't done here.

"So, Isca," I used my gentlest tone, but my voice had dropped to a husky growl despite myself. He shivered. "Is there anything you want from there?"

Isca's eyes blanked over as he contemplated the question, maybe running through his possessions in his mind.

A sudden gasp burst from him and his eyes refocused.



"Yes! It's been so long since I even thought about it, but I had something hidden away. There's a small wooden box, with a lock on it. It's on the bookcase, behind the books. If I could have that... and the recipe book sitting in front of it..."

"Anything else? Clothes, maybe?"

"No. That's all. I... I didn't have much and anyway I want to leave that part of my life in the past where it belongs."

"Very well. Let's get those things for you." I picked up the phone again.

"Oscar? Still there?" I asked after unmuting the call.

"Yes, Alpha, I'm still here," the beta replied.

"That room you described is Isca's. There are a couple of things I want you to bring back for him."

"Yes, Alpha. I can go up again in the morning or I can go now if you'd rather."

"Tomorrow is fine. In the bookshelf in his room you'll find a cooking book - a recipe book - and hidden behind that is a wooden box. He wants the box and the book."

"Nothing else, Alpha? While we're there, we can bring back as much as he wants."

"That's all he wants. Thanks Oscar. We'll see you tomorrow then."

"Yes, Alpha. Goodnight."

"Goodnight Oscar."

### ISCA

It was devastating to learn my pack hadn't even bothered to pack my belongings when they left the district. It shouldn't have been. I couldn't remember an occasion when anything I'd done had been good enough for Zarbius. He openly despised me. He criticized me in the bedroom and in front of the betas and his friends. Although I was supposedly the Alpha Mate (albeit reluctantly), he treated me like an object, an object he shared with his friends.

I wasn't sure why he'd insisted on mating me. The physical abuse was excruciating, but the mental abuse was soul-destroying. He made sure I knew I was less than nothing, and he'd insisted he was doing me a favor any time he bestowed his sadistic attention on me.

The other omegas in the pack weren't treated any better - we were simply chattels for the convenience of the alphas and betas - but his particular brand of cruelty was a privilege reserved for me, his mate. Somehow that gave him pleasure, which was my responsibility as the Alpha Mate. And so I endured it, thinking this was the life of an omega. It wasn't until I met Irian that I realized not all packs operated this way, that in some packs omegas were cherished, loved even.

That had been my life before my new life began in Talius' pack, so I shouldn't have been at all surprised that when the pack left they didn't give a second thought to me, or considered I might have anything worth keeping. They'd left as if I had never been there at all.

I felt it like a blade slicing through my heart which was only held together by the love

of my two current mates. Current mates. Forever mates? Was I really a permanent part of this triad? My fears threatened to rise up and drag me down the rabbit hole of my insecurity again.

Except... a nostril full of reassuring alpha pheromone (why did Talius' scent have this unconscious effect, when Zarbius' never had?) buffered my worries, giving me the space to think. Talius had encouraged me to top Irian. Now that my emotions had calmed and I was thinking more clearly, I realized that had been a clear demonstration of my position in the relationship. I was not the unworthy add-on that I feared being. It was the clearest signal they could give me that I belonged with them, short of being mated.

I relaxed into the two sets of arms around me.

"You have us," Irian's gentle voice assured me. I did. And I needed to communicate with them. Make sure I told them how I felt. No-one had cared how I felt before, so this was new to me, expressing myself.

"I know. It's just hard knowing how little I meant to them. I did everything for them... I fed them, cleaned up after them..."

I felt naked, laying my feelings bare like this. And yet, all I got back was warmth and reassurance. No judgement. Well, no judgement of me... Zarbius and his crew were stupid, apparently.

That forced a wet chuckle out of me. I didn't think Zarbius would appreciate the sentiment.

Talius' prompting brought me back to the question at hand. I thought about it... when I'd run off, I'd accepted that everything I owned was lost to me. Some of that had hurt, but survival had been the higher priority and I'd blanked my loss from my

mind. But now...

So I told Talius what I wanted to retrieve. There wasn't much, but it held a wealth of meaning for me. A kernel of hope and anticipation nestled deep in my chest.

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When I carried Talius' morning coffee and treats into his office the next morning, he handed me a small bag.

"These are yours, Isca, Oscar brought them down this morning."

I held my breath as I opened the bag, scarcely daring to believe this twist of fortune. When I saw the familiar items inside, I let out an embarrassing squeak of relief and gratitude.

"Thank you!" I rushed to hug Talius, moisture prickling at the corners of my eyes.

"I take it that's what you wanted," he said warmly, giving me a squeeze.

"Yes!"

"Then I'm glad we could get it for you."

Later, when I had a private moment, I opened the back cover of the book, and slid the key out from the plastic sleeve. Heart pounding, I unlocked the box and eased the lid open.

For a moment I stood there, staring at the contents. They were there, unharmed, and now back in my hands for safekeeping. I ran my fingers over them, the textures familiar and comforting. When I had my fill, reconnecting with them on a spiritual

level, I locked the box and tucked it away on the bookshelf in my room, the room that used to be the guest room, but which Talius and Irian had made mine as a sign of my permanency, I guess. Now I really only used it to store my few belongings as the three of us always slept together in the main bedroom.

I didn't know when, if ever, I would need these small treasures. Maybe one day I'd bring them out and show them to Talius and Irian. Until then, they'd continue to keep their silent vigil behind the old recipe book.

???

Two nights before the full moon, Talius still hadn't heard anything back from the Council. It seemed that trying to locate the information we wanted was a slow and difficult process. Or maybe the information didn't exist at all. It was disappointing, because I seemed to live each day in a state of suspended excitement, waiting for... well, something to happen.

There had been huge changes in my life over the last few months, turning everything in my world upside down. On the one hand it was exhilarating, having a new-found freedom to do so many things I hadn't been able to before, the love of two amazing men and a pack I was happy to call home. But having so much after having so little, also meant I felt a little out of control. I was allowed to go to town whenever and for whatever I wanted, I was going to learn to drive, I was looking up courses to enrol in, I was working on the farm as a farm-hand, not just as an omega expected to cook, clean and service as in my previous pack. By the Moon, I'd even been allowed - no, encouraged - to top one of my mates! Eek! I had to shake myself every time I thought of that.

But... I worried it was all so crazy and fast and... wild, that it could just as easily crumble to the ground. I joined this new life so easily... I could be let go as easily too. It was hard to feel truly secure in my good fortune, when all I'd had in the past was

bad. I needed to feel boundaries, something locking me in to this new life, so I could relax and enjoy it without worrying about what might go wrong.

And I wanted to go on the run with the rest of the pack. I needed to belong.

We were sitting on the lounge after dinner talking, while Irian finished cleaning up the kitchen. We'd returned to the topic of whether or not I would run that month.

"I'm not concerned about our pack or even the Inverloch pack who are running with us this month. Lucius runs a pretty tight pack – they won't step out of line. It's the plus ones I'm concerned about. Some of them come from the city and they don't always show the respect that we expect out here." Talius frowned, looking thoughtful.

"What do you mean?" I asked him. "What are you worried about?"

"Well, Isca, they'll know you're a mated omega because of your scar, and well, your scent, but they'll also be able to tell your bonded alpha isn't nearby or running with us. In that case, given it's the full moon, if they don't have control over their wolves, they might not respect the mate bond."

I huffed. "Irony, isn't it?"

"What do you mean?"

"Well, I know you're talking about the mate bond not being respected, but if it was, then the thing keeping me safe would be the bond created by the alpha who hurt me the most."

"Huh, that's true." Irian had wandered into the living room while we were talking. He'd obviously been listening in on our conversation from where he'd been working

in the kitchen. That wasn't surprising. Shifter's hearing was exceptional and anyway we weren't keeping secrets from each other. Irian leaned against the back of the couch.

"How much of a risk is it likely to be?" I asked. I didn't want to take unnecessary risks but I was fed up with missing out on the full moon runs. It was a normal part of pack life and being the only one to sit it out left me feeling isolated, apart, like I wasn't really a full pack member. My old pack was so decadent they hadn't kept up the tradition of full moon runs, so it was a very long time since I'd been on one with a pack.

Talius nodded, as if he guessed my thoughts.

"There is some risk depending on who turns up," he admitted. "Irian used to spend a bit of time down in the clubs in the city, and while most of the alphas were fine, there were a few that weren't. Right, Irian?"

Irian moved to stand behind Talius, leaning over the back of the couch and pressing up against the alpha's upper body. I wasn't sure he was even aware he was doing it. They were such perfect mates, he always wanted to be as close as possible to Talius. Come to think of it, he was always touching and pressing into me as well. Maybe that's why the lovemaking was always so spectacular between us three. We had such a strong desire to be close.

"Yeah. It sucks but it's true." Irian turned his eyes on me. "Like he said, most of the guys were fine, great even. But there was always one or two that wouldn't take no for an answer. The other alphas always pulled them into line, but I can see how it could be a problem if someone like that came on a run."

"I wouldn't be able to keep eyes on you all the time," explained Talius, "as I have to move around the pack. I would have preferred to have mated you before this, and

then it would be a non-issue.”

“Isca and I could stick together,” Irian suggested.

“That”s a start, but we”ll need something more,” Talius said, musingly. “I”m the lead Alpha on the run, so that should count for something. If I mark you strongly with my scent, that will be enough to deter anyone that gets ideas about you. They”ll realize you”re under my protection even if they find it confusing with another alpha”s mating mark on you.”

“So, can we do that... please? Can I run?” I begged, and I might have widened my eyes plaintively, and drawn my brows together in a pleading sort of way. Irian had been showing me how to do it. Talius was a strong and powerful alpha, but he was putty in the hands of his omega. Irian knew exactly how to get what he wanted... most times anyway. And I was his willing student.

“Well...” the alpha hesitated. He passed a hand over his face, shaking his head slightly, whether to clear his thoughts or because he could see through my tricks or he recognized Irian”s hand in this.

“Yeah, you can run,” Talius finally agreed with a sigh. “We”ll just have to be careful.”

There, I knew it, A+ student right here!

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Of course, on the night of the run, I was considerably more anxious. There was a lot riding on this, and despite our precautions, things could still go wrong.

“Come over here,” Talius told me when I stepped out of the shower in the early



evening. “I’m going to mark you with my scent now.”

My feet padded over the carpet to where Talius stood by our bed.

“Drop the towel,” he ordered, and I released the fluffy grey towel I’d had tied around my waist. I felt suddenly awkward and exposed, which was weird given all we’d done together already, but here his focus was firmly fixed on me, and without hormones running amok, I felt self-conscious under his scrutiny. I didn’t know where to look, so I kept my eyes on anything but him, until the sound of fabric rustling alerted me to Talius pulling his shirt over his head, exposing his well-sculpted torso - a sight that was too good to miss for the simple cause of shyness.

Then I couldn’t turn my eyes anywhere else. Talius without clothes – even if he was only half-naked - was always enough to make my mouth go dry and my cock pay attention. He was a stunning alpha, the most magnificent one I had ever encountered. I shivered a little with anticipation.

Talius’ jeans joined his shirt in a pile on the floor and he stepped up close. I could feel the heat emanating from him, smell his musky, masculine scent, feel the whisper of his breath on my face. Goosebumps rose along the skin of my arms.

Talius closed the distance until only the smallest gap separated our bodies. He bent his head and ran his nose behind my ear, snuffling around my hairline, and running a wet trail down the back of my neck. The warm, wet slide of his tongue over my skin sent shivers down my back, and I shuddered. He continued down to my collarbone, nuzzling and laving the tender skin with his tongue. He spent a lot of time hovering over the mating gland, licking the silvery scar again and again as if he might lick it away.

A finger tipped my chin up, and the licking continued up along my throat. I squirmed, ticklish. Half a giggle fell out of me before I clamped my lips tight to hold the rest in.

Talius repeated the process on my other side, then he picked me up and tossed me onto the bed, following me down, his larger body covering mine, his firm lips demanding entry to my mouth, tongue licking and plundering inside.

I felt his cock against my thigh, warm and hard. As he moved against me, a wet trail smeared across my leg. Talius rubbed himself on me, covering me with his scent. Flipping me onto my stomach, he did the same to my back, slotting his erection between my ass cheeks and rubbing it up and down my crease, his copious precum easing the way.

I wondered if he would come on me. I wouldn't have minded, but he didn't. I guess it made sense. He was trying to make it look like I belonged to someone, not to make me look like a slutty omega or one that could be taken without any consequences. Hormones ran high on full moon nights, after all. I briefly wondered, as an unwelcome finger of fear ran down my spine, whether joining the run was a good idea after all.

Though the memories were locked away in a part of my brain I never wanted to access again, I knew what it was like to be taken without consent. I had proven I could survive it, but I never wanted to go there again.

"Talius..." My voice trembled.

"What is it, Isca?" Talius' muffled voice rumbled from behind my ear where he had his nose stuck in my hair again.

"I... I'm having second thoughts," I admitted.

"About running tonight?" Talius' voice was gentle.

"Yeah."

“You don’t have to, if you don’t want to.” Talius broke from what he was doing, rolling me over so he could search my face. “I won’t make you.”

“I do want to,” I insisted. “It’s just... I’m scared.”

Talius’ face softened, the lines around his eyes and mouth easing, his expression warming. “You’ll be safe, Isca. By the time I’m done, you’ll be covered with my scent and it’s very unlikely anyone will bother you. And Irian will be running with you, he’ll call me if he thinks there’s a problem. I might not be beside you, but I won’t be far away. I can get back to you in seconds.”

He stroked the hair back from my face with a gentle hand. For an alpha, he could be incredibly tender. He had a reputation as a fierce fighter, though according to Irian it was many years since he’d had to fight, but with Irian and myself he was unfailingly kind and forbearing.

He slid his hand over mine, entwining his long fingers with my finer ones. He lifted our joined hands to his lips and kissed the back of my hand while fixing me with an earnest look.

“It’s your choice, my omega. No harm will come to you. I’ll make sure of it. I’m your alpha, and it’s my responsibility, mating bond or not. But you absolutely don’t have to run if you’d rather not. No-one will think any less of you for it.”

“Thank you, Talius,” I whispered. His conviction was reassuring, and I was fairly certain it was his words and not simply his pheromones that were making me feel secure. “I want to do this. I don’t want to let fear rule my decisions. I’ll run.”

“Good,” he nuzzled me. “It’ll be fun. Now, it’s still early, so let’s get under the covers. We can rest for an hour or so before we need to get up.”

“What about Irian?” I asked. “Isn’t he joining us?” We always slept together.

“Not this time. I don’t want there to be any confusion with scents. I want you to smell of no-one but me. Now rest, you’ll need your strength later.”

IRIAN

“Oh my Goddess you stink of him!” I exclaimed. I loved how the pink flush crept up Isca’s neck, and the two pink spots that formed in the middle of his cheeks. He was so much fun to tease.

“Oh,” he said, eyes fixed on the floorboards, embarrassed. Then suddenly he looked up, eyes locking on mine, brows raised in concern. “Is that okay? You’re not upset, are you? It’s just to keep me safe...” his voice trailed off.

I loved getting him flustered, because it was just so easy to do, but I didn’t want him feeling bad... especially when I had no objections at all to what Talius was doing with him. Isca was my mate as much as he was Talius’, and Talius was keeping him safe for us all.

“You know it’s fine. I want you to run with us. And we can run together. It will be awesome!”

I wanted to hug him, but I knew Talius didn’t want his scent mixed with anyone else’s tonight, so I held back. Talius came out of the bathroom at that instant, which saved things from getting awkward.

He had been resting with Isca, making sure Isca was thoroughly covered with his scent. I hadn’t minded. I’d been in the kitchen preparing food for after the run. Two of the betas had been helping me and we’d laid it out in the large mess hall attached to the beta house. It would be waiting there for people to graze on over the course of the evening as they straggled in after running.

Talius dropped his towel over the back of a chair, revealing his perfect V-shaped torso, slim hips and the dark thatch of hair that nestled his half-hard cock. His pubic hairs were every bit as wild as the hair on his head, which had clearly been towel-dried and was fanning out around his head with a life of its own. His dark bushy eyebrows and the startlingly dark blue eyes gave him a fierce and dramatic vibe.

I licked my lips. It wasn't intentional, but this was my alpha and I couldn't wait for the part of the evening where we got to fuck.

He pulled on his jeans, not bothering with any other clothing. There was no point when we'd be shedding it again in minutes.

"Let's go," Talius nodded his head towards the door.

"C'mon," Isca turned to me, rocking from one foot to the other. He had hurriedly put on jeans, having recently slipped out of the bed he'd been sharing with Talius. He was eager and clearly full of nervous energy, his pale skin flushed pink.

"I'll be right there," I dragged my t-shirt over my head, folding it quickly and dropping it on the chair, before slipping my socks and shoes off. I hurried to the door, grabbing Isca's hand and pulling him along with me.

"C'mon, whatcha waiting for?" I teased.

Isca stumbled after me, and Talius followed more casually, letting us rush ahead in our eagerness. Or maybe it was just me that was super-eager. I could tell Isca was nervous and I wasn't giving him time to change his mind. But when we got to the front door, we stopped and waited for Talius to catch up and pass us.

It was customary for the Alpha to lead the way, probably a throwback to when wolves weren't shifters, when there were dangerous threats in the wild, and the

biggest and the strongest went first.

The full moon runs were more social than anything else these days. We ran for the sheer pleasure of being close to our wolves and our pack, feeling the power of the moon surge through our veins. It was a freedom that the human form didn't allow. We'd be primal and wild, though we'd still retain a sense of ourselves. New unions often began on these nights, when the wolves were more animal than human, and the night was filled with adrenaline and the intoxicating scents of familiar and unfamiliar wolves.

But we were safe. Both Isca and I smelled of the Alpha leading the run, and I had his mating mark as well. Talius would be nearby. As long as we ran together, Isca had nothing to fear.

???

When we arrived at the clearing where the packs assembled, everyone was busy stripping off in preparation for the run and stashing their clothes under trees and bushes. I snickered to myself, imagining the chaos if a bunch of humans tried to do this. With such a large group, they'd never find their own clothes again, whereas we shifters could do it easily by scent.

There were a lot of unfamiliar faces.

"I don't know all these wolves," I murmured, looking around the crowd.

There were more unfamiliar wolves on this run than I would have expected, more than we normally had. I saw several who were friends of members of our pack, who'd come up from the city. I saw Talius talking to them, watched them bare their necks to him. I didn't think we'd have to worry about them. It was the mass of others standing off to the side looking out of place that bothered me.

“The Inverlochs have brought a lot of strangers with them tonight,” I observed to Talius, when he came to check on us before the start.

His bushy brows drew together, lines creasing his forehead.

“There’s a festival down on the coast this weekend,” he told me, “and they had a lot of visitors on their land. I’ll make sure Lucius knows to keep an eye on them. Stay as close as you can to me during the run, and if you need me...” he broke off and tapped the side of his head with his index finger. I understood. I nodded.

Talius left us to go say something to Johnson, the head beta and Talius’ second-in-command for our pack. Technically, Lucius was second for the pack run, being a Pack Alpha, but Johnson would be keeping a supervising eye on our members. I knew he’d be keeping watch over us too. Although Talius would stay as close as he could, he wouldn’t be right beside us all the time. Johnson was large for a beta, and his wolf was almost as large as Talius”. I had no doubt he would defend Isca and myself with his life if he had to, though it was hardly likely under these circumstances. Still it was reassuring knowing he was there, given Isca’s undefined status in the pack.

Talius made his way through the crowd that was now packed into the clearing. He was taller than most, and I saw him reach Lucius. The two Alphas inclined their heads together, a discussion taking place. Probably Talius was warning Lucius to keep his plus ones under control. Lucius was nodding thoughtfully.

Talius moved to the edge of the clearing, jumping up onto the remains of an old tree trunk that had been felled years before we took over the farm and which he used as a kind of podium. He put two fingers between his lips and a piercing whistle rang out across the clearing. The ensuing silence allowed him to address the assembled shifters.



“Welcome everyone to another night run. Most of you know me, but for those that don’t, I’m Talius, Alpha Wolf of the Leongatha pack, your hosts for tonight.

Tonight we have the Inverloch pack running with us, many of whom you already know.”

A murmur of approval rippled through the gathering and there was much nodding of heads. We all had friends in the Inverloch pack.

”...and we also have some additional guests as well.”

He turned towards where Lucius was standing near the log.

“Welcome Lucius, and welcome Inverloch wolves and guests.” Talius’ voice rang out over the assembly.

Lucius inclined his head in acknowledgement.

Talius continued, “Leongatha wolves, I expect you will all be on your best behavior – to all other designations and to our guests. Other than that stipulation, have a wonderful night. As customary, refreshments will be available for everyone back at the pack house, whenever you choose to return.” He paused and with a wry grin added, “A word of warning to our guests - if you come in too late the pups will have eaten everything. Our pups have voracious appetites.”

Loud chuckles greeted this statement. The younger pack members always finished earlier than the rest of us, and they usually put a big dent in the feast before the remainder of the pack returned. But I’d prepared extra this time, with the help of the betas, and I was sure there’d be plenty for everyone.

At a nod from Talius, Lucius stepped up beside him. He addressed the crowd in a

strong, growly voice.

“Thank you for your welcome, Talius and Leongatha pack. It’s not the first time we’ve run together, and we appreciate your hospitality. Many friendships have already been formed between members of our packs. That said, I’d remind my pack that some of you have brought friends along with you tonight and I expect you will ensure they treat our hosts with the respect that is due. You will be responsible for the conduct of your plus ones.”

Silence fell. The evening breeze rustled the leaves in the trees. Dark shadows flickered around us, solitary witnesses to our gathering. If any humans had strayed into the forest tonight, they would have been startled to stumble across a hundred or more naked people milling around in this clearing. But no-one came. Just the wind, and the moon.

Then Talius shifted. One moment he was a man, and a few moments later his dark grey wolf stood proudly on the massive log, muzzle pointed to the sky where the full moon was rising over the trees. He was majestic. The breeze ruffled the long hair around his neck and ears, tossing it every which-way. As a wolf, his appearance was just as wild as it was when he was human. I loved it. His devil-may-care appearance, savage and free, made him all the more attractive in my eyes. Watching him there, wind ruffling his fur, I thought ahead to the end of the night and a secret smile curled my lips.

I took a sideways glance at Isca. His big brown eyes were glued to Talius with a look of adoration and pride.

I gave him a nudge. “We’ll have him later,” I whispered. “Right now, he belongs to the pack. But tonight he’s all ours.”

Isca’s pink tongue glided over his bottom lip, leaving it glistening in the moonlight,

his eyes never leaving the Alpha we both adored. I grinned and turned back to watch the Alphas.

Lucius had shifted into his wolf. His was a large pale grey wolf, almost as large as Talius, with striking light blue eyes that glinted, reflecting back the shafts of moonlight that were now piercing the glade.

The atmosphere in the clearing was electric, buzzing with anticipation. I loved this moment. It always felt like I was on the precipice of something really big. As if I was on the point of throwing myself off a cliff, a touch of fear mingling with the excitement, knowing I'd be in freefall before the tug of the "chute lifted me up and wrapped me in the warm currents. I was about to give myself over to my wolf, and it was terrifying and exciting in equal parts, to loosen my grip on my humanity and let the wolf's instincts take over.

Talius lifted his head higher and began a long, low howl that rose in strength and crescendo. Lucius joined in and the wolves' song filled the clearing, bouncing off the smooth bark of the trees around us and echoing in our ears.

It was the signal for the rest of us to shift, and in moments the clearing was a confusion of sprouting hair, tails and ears, snouts sniffing, bodies half-human half-wolf, which became a sea of fur of so many colors, black, grey, every shade of brown, and splashes of white, the night filling with whimpers and grunts and whines as everyone completed their shift.

Talius howled once more, then bounded away, signaling the commencement of the run.

ISCA

We start together, a huge pack loping through the forest. Talius leads, his dark head and ears visible as he bounds ahead, larger and stronger than the others. His powerful Alpha scent laces the air and even though we're meters behind, it fills our nostrils: he is our Alpha and we follow him.

Over the uneven ground, twigs and stones, dead leaves, we run. Warm pads sinking into cool ground, connecting with the earth, at one with the nature that lives and breathes around us.

At one with each other.

Stride after stride after stride, we run on. The blood pounds in my ears, beating a tattoo in synch with the heartbeat of the moon. As in a dream, my paws brush over the damp soil, over the leaf litter and twigs, dodging branches and around rocks, the trees thinning out the further up the mountain we go, the moon casting slivers of light between the tree trunks as we race over the ground, higher and higher, the wind stronger up at these heights, howling through the branches. Trees flash past, a kaleidoscope of silhouettes in the night.

The mob ebbs and flows, closing in around me, hot bodies and sweat surrounding me, pounding over the damp earth, then drifting apart, cool air swirling around us briefly, before they close in again all fur and heat, lolling tongues and panting breaths. The rhythm of the packs' paws drums a soft cadence in my head. There's energy in this mob, excitement. Our wolf's blood pulses with the pull of the moon, rushing through our veins like an aphrodisiac. It's overwhelming, exhilarating. I haven't felt this in so

long, the collective psyche of the pack. Thoughts drift away, replaced by instinct: hunting, mating, self-preservation, the desire to run free over the bare earth...

My tongue lolls, the air rushing to fill my lungs, replacing what's exhaled in great heaving gasps. My brain is lost to the wolf, running stride after stride, minute after minute, each paw touching the ground only briefly, there's nothing but the earth beneath my paws, the ragged exhale of the wolves running near me...

As the night wears on, the pack spreads out, stragglers falling behind or turning back. The crush of bodies thins out around me, falling away or rushing ahead, every wolf manifesting their own personal response to the call of the moon.

The pungent scent of a young alpha, virile and aroused, envelopes me. My heart skips a beat, I stumble, my skin prickling, hackles rising.

He's close.

From the corner of my eye I see him, a wolf with brown fur, a stranger with dark focused eyes - eyes fixed on me! All my hairs stand erect. He's so close! He disappears behind me, his hot breath hitting my haunches. Is he urging me away from the pack? Irian presses closer to my flank, shutting him out. Over my rasping breaths, I hear the snort of annoyance behind us. Then the stranger appears at my other side, muzzle reaching for me, nostrils flaring, inhaling... and then grunting, he turns away, lips curling back, a low growl of dismay rumbling through the night.

My heart races, blood thundering in my ears. My hackles don't go down, the sensitive hairs erect and alert.

Lower down the mountain, wolves howl.

Memory stirs. My heart stutters. Something snaps in my brain.

They're coming!

I have to go faster, get away. I have to escape. They're coming for me. I extend my stride, speeding up, running flat out now, ears flattened against my head, tail straight as an arrow. Faster, Faster! Heart pounding, chest heaving, vision blurring. Higher, higher! I have to go higher. Ears buzzing, cold air rushing over my face, my eyes stinging, drops of moisture leaking from the corners.

I veer away into the trees, avoiding the fallen boughs littering my path, aware my silver coat shines like a beacon in the moonlight, drawing my hunters after me. Branches slap my snout, scratch my face.

I'm alone, racing up the mountain, my heart pounds against my ribs, my heaving sides drag in painful gasps of freezing air. My chest constricts in an agonizing vise. My vision tunnels down to the narrow spot in front of me as I force myself to go harder, faster, each shadow, each dark shape a threat, perhaps an attacker, perhaps an ambush that I might not see until it's too late.

I have to escape!

Suddenly a warm body presses up against my right flank. From the corner of my eye, I catch a glimpse of golden-brown fur keeping pace with me. At the same time a dark shadow looms over my other side, a large dark grey wolf running beside me, so close that our ribs rub as we breathe.

We breathe.

I breathe in. I breathe out. Scents permeate the fog in my brain. They hint of familiarity, of comfort. I breathe in. I breathe out.

I breathe slower, straining for those comforting scents. The pounding in my ears

eases. The scents in my nostrils grow stronger. The brainfog whirls, breaking up, clearing. These... these are... these are mates. My mates. Yes. Keep me safe. Yes.

Clarity strikes: my Alpha is keeping me safe. I'm running with him, not from him.

The wolves beside me slow and I throttle back to stay with them. As my pace slows, something settles inside. Reassurance washes over me in a calming wave. My heart is still pounding but it's slowing. The tight grip around my chest eases. My vision clears.

A little spark of lightness starts deep in my core, spluttering uncertainly, then growing stronger. Relief. The muscles of my legs feel weak, shaky, and I wobble, but I keep going, slower now. I take notice of the night, the darkness of the trees around us, the moon above, the way ahead of me and heat from my companions beside me.

Peace envelopes me and a different kind of awareness seeps through me.

I begin to feel a subtle joy in these solitary mountains, in the stark shapes of the trees silhouetted against the moon, the damp musty smell of the earth and the decaying vegetation. In the wind that howls in the treetops and swirls to ruffle the hair on my Alpha's neck, his coat rippling in the ethereal light, the hairs pushed flat along his coat as he lopes beside me. In the one bright star shining in the south. In the hot gasps of air forming puffy clouds in the cool mountain air. My silvery coat gleams with the joy of running free beneath the full moon with my mates. I'm running with the moon and this time I'm not alone.

I'm not alone.

It's just the three of us and we run for the joy of it, Talius leading, Irian and I close on his tail. When we reach a small clearing at the top of the mountain, Talius stops. Irian yips and rushes at him, darting away at the last minute. Talius gives chase. I

watch. I can see Talus is letting him get away, it's the game that counts, not the catching, so I join in, snapping, teasing, playing.

Later we race off through the trees, and as the moon shines down benevolently, we joyfully fulfil our primal need to mate.



IRIAN

"Are you all right?"

I was worried about Isca. His mad panicked dash in the middle of the run had frightened me, and though Talius and I had managed to calm him - mainly Talius with his alpha pheromones, I suspected - and we'd romped happily after (including some of the best wolf mating I had ever experienced, I have to say), I wasn't sure if Isca was truly okay.

"Yeah, I'm fine," Isca managed to look a little sheepish as he slipped his pants up over his ass and zipped up. We were back in the clearing and judging from the scarcity of clothes lying around, must have been almost the last ones to return. Apparently there were still one or two others out there having fun. I hoped they were enjoying themselves as much as we had. "I just had a moment."

I rolled my eyes. "That was some moment. I was worried. What happened?"

"I saw that alpha come up beside me." He stopped moving, frowning, hand coming up to cover his mouth, as if he were reliving the moment. "Irian, I could smell how aroused he was. I was sure he was after me."

I nodded. I'd thought the same thing. His focus had been wholly on Isca and I hadn't failed to notice when he tried to come between us and cut Isca away from the group. I'd closed in on Isca, and the alpha had come up on the other side of him, but he'd turned away shortly after, his nostrils snorting his disappointment when he'd realized the omega he'd set his sights on had been marked by the Pack Alpha.

"But he turned away. Talius" scent warned him off," I ventured.

"Yeah, but it unsettled me, and then I heard the wolves howling further down the mountain, and it was just like that... like that other night," Isca tripped over his words. I saw his chest expand as he struggled for control of his emotions. "It was the same as that other time, and I don't know... it just triggered me. I wasn't really thinking, I just freaked out."

"You had a panic attack," Talius stated, coming up behind us. I'd scented him of course, so he didn't startle me, but I was pleased to note Isca wasn't surprised either. Just another sign that Isca was well integrated into our triad.

"I... I guess," Isca responded vaguely, eyes drifting over Talius. His pink tongue swiped distractedly over his upper lip. I couldn't blame him. We'd just had the most fabulous wolf sex in the forest, but Talius was a sight to make even the most satisfied omega drool, standing there bare-chested in his tight jeans, package prominent, denim hugging his thick thighs and taut calves, bare feet with a dusting of dark hair across the toes. Yeah.

Oh, fuck. I felt the trickle.

My throat went dry. "Perhaps we could skip the feast," I suggested, hoarsely.

Talius' nostrils flared. He laughed, which was unfair given I was now dealing with wet jeans.

"I don't think so," he smirked. "Pretty sure we're going to need all the fuel we can get."

Isca was watching us, eyes widening. He looked vaguely uncomfortable.

Aha. I suppressed a laugh. I wasn't the only one with soggy pants. "Let's hope everyone else has finished eating, I don't really want to be seen like this." I twisted so Talius could see the problem.

The smug bastard just grinned. "I don't mind if everyone sees how horny my omegas are for me," he chuckled. Then, more seriously, "Isca, how are you feeling right now? I know it was a shock for you up there."

"I... I'm g-good," stammered our other mate, cheeks flushing pink. He shifted from foot to foot.

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, Talius, I-I'm fine." Then he whined, "Alpha, can we go home now?"

"Is there something you want, Omega?" Talius teased, nostrils flaring.

"Mmm...", Isca mumbled, noncommittally, refusing to meet his eyes.

"C'mon," I said, linking my arm with Isca's and hauling him along with me. I tossed what I hoped was a haughty look over my shoulder at our smug Alpha. "It's your job to protect us. That includes our modesty."

Talius huffed. I'm sure I heard the words do you actually have any? But he prowled close behind us as we made our way home and when we entered the food hall, he shadowed us so closely that no-one could notice our predicament. At least, no-one could see the evidence, though they could surely scent the slick.

Isca held two plates and I had one, using my free hand to pile selections of food onto our plates. When we'd made our choices, I looked around for somewhere to sit, but Talius shook his head, nostrils flaring.

"Let's take these back to the house," he suggested, glaring at a passing shifter, "where you can be comfortable."

"Ha!" I snorted, noting how our slick-laced scents were making his possessive instincts surface, "you mean where you can be more comfortable!"

"Oh, Goddess," groaned Isca. "Do you really want to provoke him like that? He's your alpha! You are so going to be in trouble when we get inside."

"You know that's kinda the point, don't you?" I leaned across, whispering in his ear. Shifter hearing was exceptional though, and out of the corner of my eye I noticed the tightening of Talius' jaw and the slight uptick of the corner of his mouth. Yep, pretty sure I was in for a hell of a night.

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As soon as we entered the house, Isca and I placed the plates on the table. I began pulling out a chair, ready to sit down.

"Stop!" ordered Talius, the huskiness in his voice sending a shiver down my spine.

Isca's eyes widened, pupils enormous. He froze.

"We can eat later," Talius growled out the words. "We've something more urgent to attend to. To the bedroom, both of you," he added in a voice that brooked no disobedience. In that moment, he was absolutely the dominating alpha. For all that I liked to push the limits, when he was like this I would never think to challenge him.

Isca and I glanced at each other as we headed for the bedroom. I smiled at him reassuringly, trying to let him know everything was alright. He'd probably never seen Talius so demanding.

"Get naked," Talius instructed, following close behind us.

I slid my jeans down and kicked them off, glad to be rid of the uncomfortable damp mess. I found Talius' dominance a huge turn on and slick dripped copiously from my hole, my inner thighs already glistening and sticky.

Isca stripped off hurriedly, but he picked up my jeans and tossed both pairs into the washbasket.

"Now... I seem to recall someone needs to learn a little restraint," Talius said, gravely.

Isca stiffened but I just grinned. I knew who was going to be restrained and I was 100% on board with the idea. Despite his fierce demeanor, I knew Talius wasn't angry... he never got angry at me, and he wouldn't get angry at Isca (who had, in any case, not done anything to antagonize him... the same could not be said for me, of course). Talius was an incredibly indulgent alpha and mate, though Isca had not had the opportunity to experience the full extent of it yet.

"Isca, fetch the rope from the top drawer please," instructed Talius, motioning towards the chest of drawers against the far wall.

Isca cast an anxious glance towards me, his shoulders tensing, but when he saw me grinning, his posture relaxed.

It took him a moment to locate the coil of red jute and bring it to Talius, who snapped the coil apart with a flourish.

"Irian, on the chair. Now!" he commanded.

A shiver of anticipation ran down my spine... Talius and Isca playing with me while I was restrained? I was definitely up for this. I hurried to comply, seating myself on the

chair.

"Hands behind the backrest."

Isca bit his lip, blinking rapidly, watching as Talius bound me to the seat, the red jute running across my torso and arms in a complex pattern of knots and lines.

When he was done, Talius adjusted the knots so none were pressing on me uncomfortably, and made sure I could reach the emergency release slip knot.

"Okay? Comfortable?"

"As comfortable as I can be, given I can't use my hands," I leered at him.

Talius smiled, a wolfish grin, a dimple appearing in the center of his chin. "Precisely," was all he said, but his eyes were bright with anticipation. I sighed, happily. It was probably going to be a long evening...

Talius stood up, nodding and humming as he admired his handiwork. He arranged the chair, with me firmly strapped to it, closer to the bed, facing towards it. I frowned. This wasn't what I was expecting.

Oh, fuckity fuck, he was going to make me watch, wasn't he?

He'd remembered my recently discovered kink. Tied up and unable to participate, I'd bet I was going to be edged until I lost my mind.

Fuck me! I drew in a deep breath, willing my rapidly beating heart to calm the fuck down. This was what I got for taunting my mate. Ugh! Maybe I'd rethink that next time.

With me restrained and clearly going to be playing the role of voyeur, my traitorous cock was already half-hard. I closed my eyes and prepared myself for a frustrating night. I hoped Talius would let me come before the night ended, but I couldn't be certain he would.

Talius stepped up close to Isca, whose wide eyes flittered around uncertainly. He grasped Isca's jaw firmly in one of his large hands and brought his lips down hard on the omega's lush pink ones, swallowing Isca's groan as he sagged into the alpha. Talius' other hand slid down to grasp Isca's ass. Isca whimpered into the kiss.

Fuck, they looked hot together.

Isca's pale form pressed tightly to Talius' strong body. Talius turned slightly, ensuring I got an eye-full of Isca's hard cock, swollen and red, pressed hard against Talius' jeans. Talius gently rocked his hips, and the coarse fabric dragged against the tender skin. In my mind I felt the abrasion on my own dick. Precum bubbled from my tip, as I witnessed the display of dominance and submission.

My nostrils flared, drawing in the scents of slick and arousal that clouded around us. A small moan fell from my lips. I struggled against my bonds, trying to free my hand. Seeing their display, I wanted desperately to stroke myself. I couldn't, not without pulling the emergency release and I wasn't going to give in and do that. I whined, frustrated.

Talius broke from his deep and passionate kiss with Isca, swiping his tongue down the omega's throat in a blatant display of possession. Isca elongated his neck, eyes closed, moaning softly. Talius licked his way down to Isca's collarbone, then down over the hairless chest, turning his head to look at me as he sucked Isca's nipple into his mouth.

"Fuck!" I groaned. I jiggled my leg. I wanted to be a part of it. I wanted him to touch

me like that, I wanted to touch Isca like that.

Talius lifted his head. "See something you want?" he taunted, eyes dancing.

"Fuck you," I murmured without any heat in it. Even closing my eyes I could still see the image in my mind. A half-clothed Talius sucking a naked Isca's nipple. Goddess, now this seat was wet!

I opened my eyes for another look. Talius continued to pleasure the nipple, then turned his attention to the other one.

"Fuck, you're gorgeous," he breathed against the pale skin. Goosebumps dotted Isca's hairless chest. His head was still extended back, eyes closed, pulse fluttering in his neck as Talius worshipped his body.

He swayed and Talius caught him, lowering him tenderly to the mattress. Isca's erect cock curved upwards, the head swollen and glistening. Talius leaned over and swiped his tongue over it. I watched hungrily. I struggled, my hands flailing helplessly in their bonds.

Talius took a step back, gazing down at Isca with a fond expression. The corners of his mouth curved up, and the lines around his eyes softened.

"He's beautiful, isn't he?"

I nodded, my voice failing me.

"Do you want to touch him?"

I nodded eagerly.



"Unlucky for you," teased Talius, "that your hands are tied. You certainly look like you want to touch something."

His eyes swept over my weeping cock as he took a step towards me and I thought he was going to take pity on my situation. Instead, he leaned down and ran his tongue along the underside of my cock from the root to the tip, lapping up the droplets of clear viscous fluid. My hips bucked. When he reached the head, I waited for him to take me fully in his mouth, but after using his tongue to play with the ridge under the glans, he pulled away, waiting for me to make eye contact.

When I did, he just smirked and shook his head, before moving away and climbing onto the bed, and over Isca to settle on his far side, where he lay watching me over Isca's body as he played with him.

Fuck.

Isca rolled towards Talius, but the alpha shifted him onto his side so Isca's ass was tucked up against Talius' jean-clad groin, his back to Talius' chest.

Talius whispered something in his ear, so softly I couldn't hear it. Isca smiled and nodded.

I watched fascinated as Talius rubbed his palm over the head of Isca's erect penis, where the precum glistened and slid his sticky hand down his length, fingers wrapped around his girth. Isca made a mewling sound and wriggled his ass harder against Talius.

The alpha's eyes bored into me as he released Isca's dick and slowly brought his hand up to his mouth, licking each finger one by one, sliding his tongue up each digit and smacking his lips as he tasted Isca's essence.

Involuntarily, I licked my lips. My cock, which had softened slightly when Talius had backed away from me, thickened again, eager for action. My balls felt tight.

Talius resumed his stroking of Isca's cock, lazily at first, making a show of it and ensuring I was properly wound up. Then as Isca's little moans and grunts fell more rapidly into the silence of the room and his breathing grew rapid, Talius sped up, working Isca's cock furiously until with a sharp cry and a thrust of his hips, the omega erupted sending a stream of the creamy liquid over the sheets. Talius swiped his hand over Isca's pulsing dick, smearing cum on his palm and fingers.

I whimpered, cock hot, hard and ready, balls aching.

Talius licked at his sticky hand, then offered a couple of fingers to Isca, who sucked them clean. Talius closed his mouth over Isca's, in a kiss that made my heart flutter to watch.

I squirmed as I watched them making out, slick soaking the seat beneath me, precum dripping onto my belly.

I whimpered again, louder. "Guys," I moaned, trying to get attention.

Talius extracted his tongue from where it had been plundering deep in Isca's mouth, and deposited a sweet peck on the swollen lips.

He got off the bed and came towards me, offering me his thumb. I took it in my mouth, the burst of flavor on my tongue, the familiar taste of Isca's slightly tangy cum. Eyes closed, I hummed my appreciation. Then I felt a hand around my cock, gliding up and down, creating a beautiful friction over my hard shaft. My hips thrust upwards, seeking more friction. Talius tightened his grip and sped up. My heart pounded, little gasps and moans tumbled from my lips, beads of sweat formed on my hairline, as I reached for my orgasm. I felt my balls tighten and begin to draw up,

then suddenly there was nothing but cold air buffeting my heated cock.

"Talius!" I wailed. He couldn't just leave me like this!

That gorgeous, sexy, wonderful... evil man, leaned in and kissed me chastely on the lips.

"My love," he said, "you seem to forget who's supposed to be in charge here. Such a shame I have to keep reminding you."

"Talius, please," I begged. "You know I can't help myself!"

"That you can't," he agreed. Turning towards Isca, who was lying on the bed watching us, glowing and happy from his orgasm, he asked, "What do you think, Isca? Should we let him come now?"

Isca's eyes flicked from me to Talius and back again. To be honest, I wasn't sure which way he was going to go - play Talius' game, or side with his fellow omega. I gave him a frantic, desperate look.

"I think we should," Isca said eventually, a vague smile dancing about his lips.

Yes! I mentally pumped the fist I couldn't physically move. Omega solidarity!

Talius offered Isca his hand, and helped him up from the bed. He slipped an arm around his waist when Isca wobbled, still half-dazed, and gently led him the couple of steps to where I was tied, panting and desperate, to the chair. Isca slid to his knees in front of me. My dick quivered, leaking again. Talius took Isca's hand in his, spat in it, and placed it around my cock. Then he covered it with his own, and they began to stroke me together.

Fuck, it felt amazing. My eyes fluttered closed, wanting to give myself over to the sensation. I was so on edge, it was only going to take a couple of pulls to tip me over and make me spill. It would be so easy to just let go and I wanted it so desperately, but I forced my eyes open anyway. I wanted to watch them.

They were an amazing sight. Isca naked and on his knees between my thighs. Leaning over him, still in his jeans, the large muscular form of Talius. The implied dominance of his clothed state compared to our nakedness was hot as fuck and made me shiver to my core.

I looked down at my cock, being worked over by one slender hand and the larger darker one. My thighs trembled. My hips bucked. I closed my eyes and threw my head back, the tension building in my groin. Just one or two more strokes and I'd be there...

They stopped. They fucking stopped! My eyes shot open and my jaw dropped.

"N-O-O-O-O!" I howled, anguished.

Talius smirked. Instead of helping like he had been, his hand was now stopping Isca's from moving, preventing him from bringing me release.

Talius gave me a knowing grin. He was enjoying this way too much. He enjoyed the power he had over me a lot, if the bulge in his pants was anything to go by.

"Please," I whimpered. "I'll be good."

Talius snorted, he knew I'd say anything to get what I wanted. But finally, finally, he gave Isca's head a gentle nudge. The warm heat of Isca's mouth enveloped my over-stimulated cockhead and I began coming even before he swallowed me all the way to the root, the warm puffs of his breaths tickling my pubic hairs.

Straining against my bonds, I came in great shuddering spurts, almost sobbing with relief. Isca gulped it down, until Talius dropped to his knees, nudging Isca aside, and taking my cock in his mouth, accepted the last remaining spurts my body offered.

I collapsed back in the chair, a mess of quivering, jelly-like muscles, floating on the most euphoric high. I don't think I'd ever come that hard before.

Warm drops landed on my thighs and chest and I opened my eyes. Talius' fly was open and he was fisting his cock, unleashing long ropery jets of cum over Isca and myself, marking us.

There was no doubt, this was where we belonged.

### TALIUS

“It did what it needed to do, but it’s not enough.”

I growled low in my throat, remembering the moment Isca had reverted to being that frightened omega running from his mate in the forest. As wolves, our brains worked on instinct and past memories were powerful drivers. I should perhaps have realized the run might trigger flashbacks – it was the first one he’d been on since the night he’d run from his sadistic alpha – and there was definitely an element of pursuit in a pack run. I was just glad I’d been nearby when I saw the onset of the panic attack and had reached Isca before he’d disappeared in the forest. With Irian on one side of him and me on the other, we’d been able to bring him back to himself.

So, we’d done our best to make the run safe for him, but it wasn’t enough. He needed to be properly claimed and mated to me. That was the only way he would feel truly secure.

“What can we do?” asked Isca. It was the day after the run, and he was remarkably calm after the events of the previous night. Maybe it was the wolf sex or the fucking we’d done as humans once we’d arrived back in our room afterwards, or maybe it was the relief that nothing bad had actually happened and that we had been there when he needed us.

“I received a message from the Council this morning – or rather, from my friend on the Council, so it’s unofficial,” I told the omegas. They were both sitting cross-legged on our bed, and two pairs of soft brown eyes watched me intently. Irian’s eyes were bright and wide with hope, Isca’s were more subdued, narrowed, interested but wary.

A small frown creased his forehead.

“It wasn’t good news,” I sighed. “He hasn’t been able to find any documented case of a successful breaking of the mate bond, other than one case where the alpha renounced the mating and the bond was broken without harm to either party. But that’s not particularly helpful as I can’t see Zarbius – if we could even locate him – agreeing to that.”

“I don’t want to see him ever again,” Isca said quietly.

I laid my hand gently over his. “Don’t worry. You won’t have to.”

“I don’t suppose an omega could renounce the mating, could they?” Irian said, eyes flashing, his tone decidedly snarky.

I was sorely tempted to roll my eyes. It wasn’t a very mature thing to do, but Irian was predictably feisty when it came to omega rights. I agreed with him, but there were other ways to make changes. He was cute though, when he got snarky.

“So there’s nothing we can do then?” Isca’s voice was small and resigned. I hated seeing my omega just give up like this. Goddess knew he had a right to, he’d been put through the wringer in his short life, but he had Irian and myself now and we were going to fight for him.

“I’m not done trying yet, Isca. There might be other ways we can do this.”

“Such as?” piped in Irian.

“Well... I’ve thought about this. I wonder if a mage might be able to help us.”

“A mage? You mean, magic away the bond?” Irian sounded doubtful. And I had to

admit, now that I'd voiced it out loud, it did sound absurd. Still, I wasn't going to back down until I'd tried every option.

"I don't know if that's exactly what I'd call it, but there might be something a mage could do."

"Where would we find one? A mage is.... they're not very common, are they?" Isca was macerating his lower lip. I was fairly sure he was scared to let himself be too optimistic.

"My mother would know," Irian jumped in. "She's on the Council, so she'd have access to one for sure."

I groaned. "Not your mother. I really don't trust her. She loathes me."

"She's just annoyed because you're so much more handsome than the guy she wanted me to mate with. She didn't like that I could organize better for myself than she could." Irian preened.

I huffed. "You organized me, did you?"

He had the decency to shrug. Then spoiled it by adding, "Of course."

"Well, I'm flattered, but I suspect it has more to do with her wanting to achieve a good political connection with the mating. Luckily Marius was just as interested in going along with her plan as you were."

A somber look clouded Irian's normally cheerful face. His eyes narrowed and his lips thinned as he pursed them together. I knew he was probably remembering the terrifying moment when he'd realized Marius could have forcibly mated him and no-one would have faulted him for it. It would have been a politically favorable match



for both families. Fortunately, Marius wanted another omega he had fallen in love with more than he wanted to play politics, and he'd helped Irian escape from where he'd been locked up. The experience had left scars though, emotional scars, and Irian hadn't spoken to his mother for a very long time after that.

"That's all in the past," I reminded him gently, and he rewarded me with a half-hearted smile. He was a strong-willed omega and the impotence he had felt that day had been devastating. I knew this because we'd talked about it a few times over the years. We were also in love by then too, and it had crushed him to think he might lose me forever.

The truth was, he wouldn't have lost me. I would have killed Marius if he'd taken my future mate from me, and I would then have claimed Irian as mine. There was no doubt in my mind that I would have been successful – I was one of the better fighters of my birth pack, and I knew full well I would have obliterated the other alpha. Anything that was his would have become mine, according to pack law. Fortunately, it hadn't come to that.

"Anyway, not your mother. One of my old packmates used to have a mage in his pack. And he's Pack Alpha now. I'll find out if he's still with them, and if he is, see if Darius will ask his mage to help us."

"Ooh, Darius? We haven't seen him in ages!" Irian exclaimed, eyes lighting up.

"He's had his hands full since becoming Pack Alpha. There were some problems within the pack which took some sorting out. I still talk to him on the phone from time to time, though."

"He wasn't Pack Alpha when I last saw him," observed Irian. "What happened to Marius? Wasn't he supposed to take over the pack?"

“Yes, he did. Darius joined another pack.”

“A new pack? I bet there’s a story there...” Irian looked at me expectantly.

I shook my head. “Not my story to tell,” I told him.

Isca’s head was ping-ponging between Irian and I as we talked. Finally he blurted out, “But do you think he’ll help us?”

“I’m sure Darius will if he can. We used to be very close. It’s probably more about whether his mage can or will even agree to.”

Mages were fickle things. I hadn’t had many dealings with them myself, but I’d heard from people who had.

???

A couple of hours later I was on the phone to my old packmate Darius. We’d grown up together. He’d been there when I first met Irian as an underage wolf holidaying with his family as guests of our pack leader. And he’d been the first of my friends to be welcoming and accepting of him, even though Irian was several years younger than the rest of us. At 17 and 18 years old, three years had seemed like a big age difference to most of my peers. It didn’t now.

“Hey, Darius! How’s things?” I greeted my old friend when he answered the phone.

“Talius! It’s been a while,” Darius recognized my number so he must have had me in his contacts.

“Yeah, I could say the same to you.”

“True. But you know what it’s like, right? Packs don’t just run themselves. Especially mine with the mess I inherited.” Darius’ sigh was a little weary, a little wistful.

“From what you’ve told me, I think I’ve got it easy with mine.”

“Yeah, well, you started from scratch. I inherited problems. Still working through them. Anyway, that’s old news. How’s Irian?”

“Irian?... well, Irian’s Irian. He hasn’t changed. Cheeky as ever. Keeps me on my toes.”

A deep chuckle rumbled through the phone.

“I can believe that.”

“How about you, have you heard anything...?” my voice trailed off, he knew what I meant. We’d talked about this the last time we spoke several months ago.

The pain in the sigh was palpable over the phone. “...my mate? No, nothing. I’m starting to think... I’m starting to think I never will.” Another despondent sigh.

“Don’t give up.”

“I won’t.”

For a moment, we sat with silence at each end of the phone, both wrapped in our respective thoughts.

Darius cleared his throat and spoke with an attempt at an upbeat tone.

“So, tell me, what’s going on? I assume there’s a reason you’re calling me right now. Not just to shoot the breeze?”

“Yes, you’re right. I have something that needs the help of a mage and I know your pack has one, so...”

“And so you remembered your old friend, Darius.” He sounded curious rather than put out. “What do you need a mage for?”

“Before I tell you, I need your word this won’t go any further than us, okay? My omega’s life may depend on it,” I told him, somberly.

Darius’ voice was laced with concern. “Of course, but... Irian? What’s happened to him? You just said he was fine!”

“Um. Don’t get this wrong. I’m still with Irian, but this is not about him. I have two omegas now.”

A long silence ensued. I waited, letting him process what I’d just said.

“Two omegas. You’re not just talking about your pack omegas though, are you? Are you saying...?”

I cut him off. “A second mate. And yes, Irian is perfectly fine with this. In fact, he was the one that brought it up first. Isca is a friend of his. We’re a triad now.”

A hearty laugh echoed out of the phone. Darius sounded amused. “Irian always was a handful. How did this end up happening?”

“It’s a long story,” I told him, “but the short version is Irian made a friend. It turned out this friend was being abused by his mate. His mate came close to killing him and

then abandoned him. The fucker left him to die in the forest! I found him and brought him home. It was touch and go for a few days whether he would survive.” I shook my head, remembering, though of course Darius couldn’t see. “But he did and he joined us as our third.”

“Hang on a minute! You’re saying you’re involved with a mated omega? Someone else’s mate?” The incredulity in his voice was clear.

“Yes. And that’s why I need your mage. Isca wants to break his bond with his alpha. I won’t tell you the things that he did to Isca, but I can promise you, it was unthinkable. Even if he hadn’t left him to die. And it wasn’t as if Isca wanted to mate with him in the first place, but, well, as you know, sometimes alphas don’t respect the choices of omegas.” I paused in my diatribe. “So... will you help us?”

There was a long silence.

“I’m not sure it’s even possible,” Darius said, finally. “I’ve never heard of it being done. Have you spoken to the Council about it?”

“I have a friend on the Council who looked into it for me on the down low, but he couldn’t find anything to suggest it had ever been done or that it could be done. He couldn’t look any further than that without risking word getting out.”

“And that’s a problem, specifically, why? Apart from the fact this guy is someone else’s mate?”

“At the moment, Zarbius – that’s Isca’s old mate – doesn’t know he’s alive. But as soon as we start asking questions publicly, word might get around, and it wouldn’t take too much for him to figure out his mate is still alive. I’m 100% certain he’d come back and either kill him or take him back just to torture him. The guy is an out and out sadist. I can’t let that happen. Isca is the sweetest, gentlest omega you could

ever wish for. I don't know how he survived his life in that pack."

Once again, there was silence. Then Darius said, "How about you pay us a visit? I'll explain the situation to Xeres, our mage. If it's at all possible, he'll find a way to do it. He's an exceptional mage. I don't know how we managed to get him to stay with us, but he has."

"Is he... discreet?"

"Yeah. You won't have to worry about that. He keeps to himself, doesn't say much to anyone. I half suspect he's hiding a ton of secrets himself, but he's never let me into his confidence. You know how mages are."

"Sure. And thanks. But please emphasize how important it is that no-one hears of this," I pleaded. I hated that more people than just Irian, Isca and myself had to know about it, but there was no choice.

"Of course," soothed Darius. "And anyway, I don't think I'd want it to get out that my pack was helping break mate bonds. I've got enough problems without that one. Now, I assume it's urgent. When can we expect you?"

We spent the next few minutes making arrangements and then ended the call. Later this week I would be spending a few days visiting with Darius' pack. Hopefully, his mage would be accommodating.

You never knew with mages, they often seemed to have their own agendas.

### TALIUS

Xeres was a mysterious creature. He wore a dark robe with a heavy cowl over his head that kept his face in shadow. Though I'd never met him before, I'd caught glimpses of him when I'd visited the pack not long after Darius took over as Alpha. He always had that damn hood down. I'd never seen him without it, so I really had no idea what he looked like.

Mages were strange individuals; they kept to themselves, and though a few shifter packs had one associated with them, it was never quite clear who benefited the most from the association. It seemed to me the mages got protection from the mortal and physical world while they fiddled about with their private magical endeavors, but I'd yet to see what benefit there was for the pack.

Nevertheless, I was sufficiently desperate to try anything, so here I was sitting in the rather dark, squashed room that was Xeres' study.

The walls were lined floor to ceiling with books, old books to judge from their faded covers and the spines labeled with strange scripts. A few of the tomes closer to hand looked newer – the covers were brighter and the titles in a familiar language, even if the words seemed excessively long and pretentious.

A small amount of light curled around the edges of heavy drapes, peeking into the room from a window high up on one wall.

The overall effect was somber.

I'd arrived in Darius' packlands after two days of travel and Darius had greeted me warmly. We spent a pleasant evening catching up over dinner and I'd slept the night in a guest room in the main lodge. The next morning he'd introduced me to the mage, who had simply nodded under his hood, and then Darius had left me alone with him. The mage had yet to speak a word to me.

"I believe Darius explained my situation to you?" I broke the awkward silence that followed Darius' departure. The hooded figure gave a small inclination of his head but remained silent.

"I need to find a way to break the old mate bond, so I can replace it with a new one."

Silence stretched from corner to corner of the dimly lit room. A few dust motes drifted past, caught in the hazy beam of light sneaking around the curtains.

I waited, my heart thudding in my chest. Tension gripped my muscles, though I tried to maintain a relaxed posture, outwardly calm. If this reticent mage couldn't help me, then I had run out of options. How many centuries had they been practicing their craft? Sometimes these mages were so ancient that they lost their connection with the real world, the world of humans and shifters. Perhaps they wouldn't care about my problem...

"I can't help you break a mate bond," the words hit me like a hammer. It was so unexpected, like a slap across the face – Darius had assured me his mage would help. My heart sank and I felt my stomach clench. I felt sick.

There was nowhere else to go.

"Tell me about this omega," said the mage, startling me from the dark recesses my mind sought to go. It was only then that I noticed how youthful he sounded. This was no crusty old mage. If his voice was anything to go by, he was probably not much



older than my own two omegas.

I couldn't help the smile that softened my lips as I thought about my sweet Isca.

"He's gentle and sweet, quite shy although he's starting to come out of his shell. He was badly mistreated by his first mate, so his life hasn't been easy, but he's learning to trust me. And he's young, only 24. He has a chance at a good life."

"I see." A pause. "What made you think you could break the mate bond?"

Was there judgement in that question? It was impossible to tell.

"I hoped that we could... because he had no choice about that mating in the first place - he didn't want to be mated, and he didn't return the bite... Since the mating was incomplete, I thought maybe it would be possible. His old mate is a sadist, he shouldn't have to be tied to him forever."

"Mmm. Does he want this bond to be broken?"

"He does."

"Or is it that you want the bond to be broken?"

"Well, that's also true. I want it broken. As does my other mate."

The covered head lifted and I caught a glimpse of the face beneath the hood – a youthful chin, clean-shaven, a small sharp nose, dark eyes, a curl of dark hair.

"You already have a mate," he stated, flatly. "Why do you want another? What of your first mate?"

“He wants this too. We’re... a triad. But Isca can’t share the bond with us while he’s mated to another, and I need it to keep him safe.”

”A wolf-shifter triad. That’s... unusual.”

There was a soft amused snort from beneath the hood. I thought I caught a twinkle in his eyes, though there was surely not enough light in the room for that.

“Your mate is Irian, is he not?” he almost chuckled.

“He is.”

The soft almost-chuckle repeated itself. “Of course, he would be the one causing waves.”

“You- you know him?” I asked, surprised.

The mage sighed. The hood flipped back off his head, and he shook out a mass of curls as if glad to set them free. Oh my Goddess, he really was young. Would he even have the skills to do what we needed?

Oblivious to my doubts, the young mage leaned forward, pale arms resting on the table.

“Yes, I know him. We kind of grew up together. Not pack. But his mother was on the Council as was mine, so we ended up spending a lot of time together.”

He gave me a shrewd, appraising look. It seemed out-of-place on one so young. Perhaps he was an old soul.

“So you’re the Alpha he was so enamored with,” he mused, drumming his fingernails

on the wooden desk. “Tell me... who found this other omega you have in your triad? Yourself or Irian?”

“Uh, well, Irian made friends with him first,” I admitted.

“Of course he did,” it was said with a sigh of fondness, like a mental shaking of the head.

Silence fell between us, interrupted only by the rhythmic drumming of fingernails on wood.

A faraway look brushed across the young mage’s face, his eyes blank.

He blinked and brought his focus back to me.

“I can’t break the mate bond,” he repeated, “but I can help you forge another.”

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“He’ll have to submit to you... completely and permanently. So the question is, does he have the personality to do that? And would he be willing?”

I got stuck on the first statement. I wasn’t sure how I felt about this.

It was different with Irian and I, there was never any ‘having to’ anything. Although I was his Alpha, and he my Omega, he wasn’t afraid to argue with me if he thought I was wrong, or if he had a point to make. But always, if I refused to budge, he would submit to me with a grace and good-nature that was astounding. And he acquiesced in the best possible way. I never used my alpha compulsion with him, he just... submitted, and by the Goddess it was so damn sexy that I always wanted to take him to bed straight after. Given Irian’s enthusiasm for sex, maybe that was part of the

reason he submitted so freely.

But he always had that choice. He knew if he truly objected, I would not force the issue. It sounded like Isca would not have the choice.

“I... I don’t know about that. That’s not how I operate. Irian stands up to me on the regular,” I told him.

“Maybe that works for Irian and you. But this is a different relationship. I ask you again – does he have the personality to do this?”

“But it’s unfair,” I protested, again not answering the question, “for Irian to have freedoms that Isca doesn’t. The whole point of this is so they’re equal in the relationship.”

Xeres gave me a look that suggested this was taking a great deal more of his patience than it needed to.

“He’ll still be an equal partner. Just because you’re in a triad doesn’t mean the relationship between each of you has to function the same. It depends on the personalities and needs of both parties. Even if they’re very similar in many respects – and from what you’ve told me, they are – there will still be differences between them... otherwise they’d just be clones of each other. This omega will have different needs from your relationship than Irian does.”

“Oh.” I thought about that for a few minutes. It made sense. Although Isca was gaining in confidence every day, he was much quieter than Irian and he was very submissive. He may well have been naturally submissive. And he often seemed unsure of himself. Maybe he would be happier in a completely submissive role.

“I’d have to ask Isca how he’d feel about it,” I decided. “I wouldn’t feel comfortable

forcing something like that on him.”

For the first time since we’d sat down, Xeres’ mouth twisted into a half-smile. His eyes glinted, whether with amusement or just good nature I couldn’t say. He was an enigma, this mage, and yet somehow I felt I could trust him.

“Of course. I wouldn’t expect you would do otherwise.” Then he surprised me by winking, and adding, “Irian told me a lot about you.”

I wasn’t sure how I felt about that.

ISCA

I quivered with barely contained excitement as I heard the familiar sound of Talius' vehicle coming up the driveway.

I was hanging around the front door, peeking through the screendoor. I didn't want to rush out and make a scene. Although I was anxious to find out if he'd been successful, I didn't want Talius to think that was all I cared about. I was delighted to have him home again, and if I never got the chance to be officially mated, I would still be happy as long as I was still in a relationship with Talius and Irian.

I bit my lip, shifting from foot to foot as I waited for the car to come to a halt in front of the house. Irian and I had literally danced around the house all morning, buzzing with excitement knowing Talius would return today, and hoping he brought good news. But now the moment of truth was here, I was edgy.

A whirlwind tore past me as Irian emerged from somewhere in the house, running for the front door. He must have had a sixth sense or something that alerted him to Talius' arrival. They had the mind bond, of course, but Irian had told me they didn't use it much anymore since I couldn't join in. That was sweet and oh, so considerate of them, but I did feel a little guilty that my presence disrupted what they had going together.

"C'mon!" he urged, throwing the screendoor wide and tugging my hand as he flew out onto the porch, and down the stairs.

I lagged behind, ever cautious. Irian let go of my hand and a moment later was

launching himself at Talius. The alpha caught him, one arm around his waist, the other supporting his ass, as Irian unashamedly wrapped his legs around Talius' waist and smashed their lips together.

A month ago, I would have averted my eyes at this public display, but although I felt a little shy seeing their exchange, it also turned me on. I wasn't sure where to keep my eyes – on the passionate kiss between these two gorgeous men, or the place where Talius' hand cradled Irian's pert ass. My mouth went a little dry.

Irian pulled back slightly, and I saw his lips move. Talius laughed and shook his head. Then he looked around and when his eyes met mine, his mouth spread wide in a dazzling smile of white teeth and dark red lips. He looked every inch the wolf, strong nose, hair wild and tumbling over his dark but luminous eyes, muscles stretching his t-shirt. He was, as always, breath-taking. It set my heart pounding.

Irian slithered to his feet, releasing the alpha, and Talius took two large strides towards me. The next thing I knew I was enveloped in his strong arms, pinned close to his body. As I took stock of all the places where our bodies touched, sighing and melting into the comfort of being held by my alpha, Talius pressed a kiss to the top of my head. I hugged him tightly.

“Welcome home,” I murmured, burying my face in his chest.

“Did you miss me?” Talius teased.

“You know I did. We both did,” I boldly pressed myself even closer against him. I could feel his hard length through the fabric of his jeans and my own dick had plumped up too. A little slick dampened the back of my pants. Again. Honestly, I'd produced more slick in the last couple of months with Talius than I had in the previous 24 years of my life.

I looked up at him, and nearly fell into the mesmerizing pool of those dark orbs. Nothing was more intense than Talius' eyes when he zoned in on something or someone. Right now, that someone was me, though I felt one arm loosen its grip from me and from the sweet fresh scent that drifted over me, I guessed Talius had pulled Irian close too.

I turned in the circle of his arm. Irian was beaming, cheeks flushed pink. I knew why, too. It was obvious where this afternoon was heading. Maybe we wouldn't get around to discussing the results of Talius' quest until later, but it seemed like a win however the afternoon went.

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Afterwards we showered, spending more time than we technically needed to, but it's not every day you get to welcome home your alpha who's been away for several days, so why rush?

I was the last to get out of the shower and was surprised to find Talius waiting for me with a fluffy, fresh white towel in his hands. He was only wearing a pair of tight-fitting jeans, his magnificent torso on display, the fine trail of dark hairs disappearing under his waistband. His dark hair was still damp, but clearly had been towel-dried as it flew in disheveled wisps around his head, the off-centre part leaving a massive mop of hair flopping across one eye. He must not have shaved since he left us several days ago, because he had that sexy short beard and moustache that I loved so much, and which made him look so dominant it literally sent shivers down my spine. Damn! I was leaking slick again.

I imagined the coarse hairs abrading the skin of my inner thighs and I trembled.

Talius' nostrils flared.



“Come here,” Talius’ deep rumble broke me from my daydreaming, and I realized I’d just stopped where I was standing.

When I moved towards him, he surprised me by ignoring my outstretched hands, and began drying me off with the towel himself. I stilled, confused. This wasn’t part of our normal dynamic.

Talius continued to pat and rub me with the fluffy towel, taking care to dry all the difficult places, my armpits, between my thighs, gently patting the fabric around my cock and balls. He didn’t play with me, though my dick started to swell in response to his caretaking.

I looked up, warmth rushing into my cheeks. I shouldn’t feel embarrassed, after all we’d shared many intimate moments, but this was... different. There was something about this that somehow seemed more intimate than anything sexual we had ever done.

I saw Irian watching us from a chair near the window. I cocked my head at him, questioningly, but a small shake of his head told me he didn’t know what was going on any more than I did. His eyes were bright and his expression relaxed but interested, so I assumed he had no objection to Talius’ ministrations.

My teeth worried at my lip, as Talius straightened up and got to his feet.

“There,” he said, “That’s a start.” He chuckled when he saw my confused expression and taking my hand led me to sit on the end of the bed. He sat beside me, holding my hand in his and placing it on his denim-covered thigh.

“It’s time to talk.” Talius looked first at me, and then across at Irian. We were both watching him and waiting to see where this was going. I began to feel light-headed.

“Breathe,” urged Talius gently. Oh, right, I needed to do that! I hadn’t realized I was holding my breath. Ever since my assault, I’d had a tendency to hold my breath when I became anxious. The relief as the air filled my lungs was intense.

Talius rubbed a hand over my back, soothingly.

“Relax,” he instructed. He wasn’t using his alpha voice exactly, but it was a clear command. My instinct was to obey. My shoulders relaxed, the tightness draining away. I hadn’t even realized I was holding so much tension in my body. It felt good to obey him.

“Look at me,” his words were just a breath of air, no compulsion at all, but I raised my eyes to meet his. He smiled softly.

“There,” he said, affection creasing his face. Then, softly, almost to himself, “So easy. We can do this.”

After a while he broke our gaze, lifting his head up. A moment later, Irian joined us on the bed, looking earnestly up at our alpha as if he had as much riding on this as I did.

“So I have some good news and some not so good,” began Talius. “As you know, I went to see Darius” pack mage. Darius had already explained our situation to him and the mage’d done some research. The bad news is that he didn’t find a way to break a mate bond. It isn’t possible for him to break Zarbius’ bond with you...”

I whimpered. Talius pulled me closer and reassurance washed over me.

“... but he found another solution – it’s not perfect, it’s not permanent, but it’s possible to create a second bond between us. There is a price though, which, Isca, you’ll have to decide if you’re willing to pay.”

I felt moisture prick at the corners of my eyes. I would pay any price for the privilege of a mating bond with Talius. I gazed up at him, waiting...

“What’s the price?” Irian burst in, unwilling or unable to wait for Talius to tell us in his own time.

Talius hesitated. He looked at Irian. He looked pained. Then he looked at me.

“This isn’t how I would normally do this,” he said, grimacing.

I waited patiently, looking up at him, my alpha. I trusted him. Whatever he asked me to do, I would do it.

“Xeres can...” Talius started to explain, but Irian cut him off.

”Xeres! I know him.”

”So he said,” a smile danced around Talius lips. Obviously there was something more there, but he didn’t elaborate. ”He’ll weave a spell for us that will mimic the mating bond, but it will require you to submit to me, completely... in all ways...” Talius’ voice trailed off, his brows forming a line across his face that made him appear fiercer than ever. ”If I ask you to do something, you’ll have to do it to keep the bond intact.”

“That’s so unfair!” interjected Irian, angrily, eyes flashing.

“Yes.” I kept my eyes on Talius.

“See! He thinks so too. He’s not going to do it!” Irian insisted vehemently. I shook my head. He misunderstood.

“Yes.” I repeated, ignoring Irian and keeping my attention firmly fixed on my alpha.  
“I trust you. I want to.”

”What?!” squawked Irian. He started muttering, but I barely heard him. The handsome alpha held all my attention.

Talius” dark eyes searched mine for ... something. I was dimly aware of him placing a restraining hand on Irian, who finally fell silent. Then Talius’ expression softened, the lines around his eyes easing. He looked younger.

He lifted my hand to his mouth. I felt the warmth of his lips on the back of my fingers. It matched the warmth in my heart. There was nothing I wanted more than to submit to this wonderful man. I wasn’t like Irian, feisty and free. I don’t think I’d ever been that way, but if I had been, it would have been knocked out of me by the life I’d led with Zarbius and before. I wanted to be held close and loved, I wanted to feel safe and protected, and I could have all that by handing control over to Talius. It might not be right for Irian, but it was right for me. I wanted this more than anything.

I got up, moving around until I was between Talius” thighs, and slithered to my knees. The towel fell away as I did so, leaving me kneeling there, naked and trembling, head bowed. I heard Talius’ sharp intake of breath, then a pair of gentle fingers tipped my chin up.

“My Omega,” Talius said softly, eyes luminous.

“My Alpha.”

Talius leant down and kissed me, then indicated I should stand. He turned to Irian who was frowning, clearly not happy. Goddess, my pack mate was feisty! He looked like he was going to go into battle for my rights! The rights I didn’t want to claim. Talius was offering me what I wanted.

Talius pulled Irian close, so the three of us were in a huddle.

“Every relationship is different,” he explained to the agitated omega. “I struggled with this myself,” he admitted, “I wanted to model my relationship with Isca on the one we share. But Isca’s a totally different person to you, so it makes sense that my relationship with him will be different. Still equal, just different.”

“But Talius...” Irian whined, clearly wanting to argue. Yes, I knew he was a staunch believer in omega rights, and I was too. But that included allowing omegas to choose what sort of dynamic they participated in. I thought submission suited me perfectly. I craved the direction that a strong loving alpha could give me. I knew my earlier life was not a good model for how omegas should live, and I also had no frame of reference that told me how I should behave. I knew Talius could give me that. I wanted him to guide me and I wanted nothing more than to reside safe in the circle of his protection. Standing at his side, or kneeling at his feet, it didn’t matter to me, though if I was honest, there was something about the more submissive position that appealed to my very nature.

“Irian,” I spoke softly, “I enjoy submitting.”

Irian gaped at me, mouth hanging open, eyes blinking. “O-okay. Are you sure?”

I gave a few rapid nods, raising my eyebrows for emphasis. Irian looked skeptical, but just shrugged at Talius. “As long as I don’t have to,” he mumbled.

Talius chuckled fondly. “I wouldn’t even dream of asking you to, my love,” he said, his fingers running through Irian’s short hair.

My insides felt all bubbly, like someone had shaken a can of soda and popped the lid and the bubbles were starting to escape. It started slowly and began to build. This was the lightest I’d felt in a long time. It seemed like all my dreams could come true. Yes,

I already (now) had the most marvelous life. I had a magnificent alpha who loved me and I shared him with the mischievous and playful omega who had befriended me and with whom I was also in love. I didn't doubt my place here, but they'd been a couple before I came along, and with no formal tie to bind us, I was afraid to be the third wheel, the one that would be jettisoned if things fell apart. By seeking to bind me to him this way, Talius was showing me that wasn't the case.

"How will he do it?" Irian asked the question that I wasn't willing to ask.

"I'll let Darius know we're going ahead with it and he'll come here with his mage to perform the ritual. He's gone over the basic details with me, but they'll tell us more later." Talius turned to me. "Basically, Xeres will set up a location where he can weave his spell. While he's performing the spell, you submit and I bite you over your other mating gland."

"That's all?" Irian's eyebrows nearly hit the roof.

"Well, I don't think it's easy. I know for a fact Xeres has never done this spell before. He had to hunt through some old spell books to find it."

"What if it goes wrong?" I asked, unable to keep the tremor from my voice.

"We turn into pumpkins," Talius quipped. Then he laid a reassuring hand on my arm. "You don't need to worry. Xeres may be young but he's apparently a very talented and serious mage. He wouldn't try this unless he was absolutely certain he could do it."

"He is pretty smart. If anyone can do it, it would be him," admitted Irian.

"And would it... what about the mind bond that you guys have... would it create one of those?"

“I don’t know. I asked about that but Xeres didn’t know either. We’ll just have to wait and find out.”

Irian caught my attention. His eyes were bright. He looked as hopeful as I felt.

### TALIUS

It was at my weekly meeting with Johnson, the beta who was my second-in-command, that I broached the subject of my upcoming attempt to mate Isca.

"...and it was only when we started using the high-pressure pump we hired from McLeavens that we finally got the water flowing." Johnson was detailing the problems he'd had sorting out a blocked water pipe from one of the dams. The water fed the troughs in some of the paddocks containing livestock, and was also used to irrigate some of the small crop paddocks. A blockage was a serious problem and needed to be resolved quickly.

"Did you work out what was blocking it?" I asked.

"Nah. Maybe the pipes were floating too low in the dam and mud got in. There's also a lot of algae in that dam, so it's possible some of that stuff got stuck in there. I'll get one of the guys to clean off the surface and I'll check how the pipe sits myself. I'm not sure we'll find out exactly what caused it."

"Take Agelius with you when you go... I think it would be worthwhile training him as your backup. He's bright and he's settled in well with the pack. Although he's an alpha, I have a feeling he won't be leaving us anytime soon. He was without a pack for so long, I think he'll want to stay here for a while. If you're agreeable, I'll talk to him about it."

Johnson nodded. "I like that idea. This place is a lot to manage when you aren't here, and you need to take a break from time to time, and I mean something more than a



few days off to take care of your mate... sorry, I should say mates.”

A sly grin crept over the beta’s face. ”Gotta say, you must have some stamina, Talius. Not everyone could keep two omegas happy.”

”Yeah, well, about that. I wanted to talk to you about where I went last week.” I hesitated. Although it was a private matter, matings affected the pack as a whole, and especially so in this case where what I was intending to do could be considered, if not exactly taboo - since no-one thought it could even be done - then wrong. Mating another alpha’s mate? And a Pack Alpha’s mate at that. Some might be understanding, if they knew a little of Isca’s history, but even if the pack were accepting, if word got out there could be serious ramifications for the pack itself. They needed to know.

Johnson’s kind brown eyes settled on mine, his face implacable. He liked Isca, I knew, and I didn’t think he’d judge me for this, but you never knew. Sometimes you thought you knew someone, and then you found they had little triggers you would never have guessed. I figured I was about to find out.

”I...”A tap on the doorframe interrupted me before I could get any further, but when I looked up there was no-one there. Giggles sounded from out in the hallway. Light, bubbling sounds in two different pitches. Both of them, then. What were they up to?

Johnson and I exchanged a look. I shrugged. I didn’t know what was going on.

The soft, happy sounds continued outside the office but no omegas came into sight. I sighed.

”Come in, you two. We know you’re up to something!”

The giggling stopped. There was some shuffling. Scratch! Followed by the sputter of

something flaring to life.

Then Irian and Isca stepped around the doorframe and into the room carrying a tray between them. In the middle of the tray, flames danced on the little colored sticks stuck into what smelled like cake.

Two sweet omega voices burst into song. "Happy birthday to you! Happy birthday to you!..."

I didn't often blush, but I felt the heat rush to my cheeks. This display was sweet and a little embarrassing. To be honest, I'd forgotten it was my birthday. Once I'd passed 22, with all my key dates met, a birthday held no significance for me, so I rarely remembered it. Birthdays, other than the important ones for passing the different stages of majority, were more of a human thing. Irian never forgot though. And now Isca. It gave them an excuse to indulge their hobby of baking and Johnson and I would happily benefit.

Who was I kidding? I was inordinately touched that my omegas remembered my birthday and wanted to make a fuss.

I pulled them close as they approached my desk with the carefully balanced cake wobbling slightly.

"Careful!" cried Irian, as he and Isca steadied the tray and placed the cake on the desk in front of me.

"Happy birthday!" Johnson grinned, as much for my discomfort as for the anticipation of a tasty sweet treat. It was no coincidence the cake had arrived when Johnson was here... he was always very appreciative of sweet treats and my mates loved showing off their culinary talents.

I rolled my eyes at him. "Did you even know?"

"Nope," Johnson replied, unapologetically. "I never remember that sort of thing. That's what you've got mates for. And two, so there's no way your birthday will ever be forgotten now."

I groaned, covering my face with my hands.

"They're aging me... I wouldn't remember to add on the extra year otherwise."

"I don't think that's what they do that's aging you," he snickered.

I paused. Looked at him from between my fingers.

Did he really say that? Had he really meant what I thought he did?

"No. That's what keeps me young."

Before the conversation deteriorated, Irian gave me a little nudge. He was bouncing with excitement. From the other side of me, Isca watched with a fond smile dancing across his lips, his eyes shining.

"Happy birthday, Talius," Isca said in his melodic voice. Then he added hesitantly, "Your candles are burning low."

I turned my attention back to the cake. Little blobs of melted wax pooled at the base of the candles, small splashes of color bright against the white icing.

"I huff, and I puff, and I..." The flickering pinpricks of light sizzled and snuffed out as I exhaled a long draught of air.

The next thing I knew, I had a warm body seated on each of my thighs. Plump lips met my own in a chaste kiss. Even Irian would behave himself in front of my second-in-command. Isca leaned in and feathered a gentle kiss on my cheek, but I wasn't having that. I took his chin gently between my thumb and index finger and brought his lips to mine. Two mates, two equal mates.

Irian jumped up and hurried out of the room with the tray and returned shortly holding four steaming mugs. The bitter tang of coffee perfectly offset the sweetness of the cake and when we were done there was less than half the cake remaining.

"Do you want to take a piece with you, Johnson?" Irian asked from where he sat perched happily on my knee again. I was finding it hard eating and drinking with the two omegas pressing up against me. I loved having them this close, but I didn't know where to put my arms and still get my food and drink to my mouth. I opted to wait until they'd gone to finish my cake, but Isca saw my predicament and began feeding me mouthfuls, giggling softly as he swiped the crumbs between my lips.

"I'm not sure I'd want to deprive Talius of it," replied Johnson, wistfully eyeing the remaining cake.

"Oh, you'd better have more now then," I mumbled as I chewed.

Johnson helped himself to another piece and finished the dregs of his coffee. As he set his mug back down on the desk, Irian got up and signalled to Isca with an almost imperceptible tilt of his head. Isca understood and disentangled himself from me.

"We'll leave you to your meeting," announced Irian, as he and Isca gathered the remains of our morning tea and left the room.

"How's Isca doing?" asked Johnson, once the omegas had left.

"Amazingly well given what he's been through," I replied. "It helps that he has Irian with him most of the time, but he's really starting to develop some confidence. He's signing up for an online university course and wants to learn to drive. I guess I'll be the one getting a few grey hairs from that."

"He doesn't know how to drive? That's unusual for a country boy."

"That's his old mate's fault. He apparently didn't think omegas should be allowed to drive... he had a lot of other dubious ideas too." I shook my head, scowling.

"But, that sort of segues into something I wanted to talk about." I paused, drew in a steadying breath, trying to find the right words.

"You know how Irian, Isca and I are a threesome, right?"

Johnson nodded, watching me intently.

"But it's informal, since Isca already has his mating bond with Zarbius. So... I found a way to form a bond with him myself."

I fell silent, waiting for his reaction.

Johnson blinked, a couple of lines creased his brow. Then he surprised me by saying, "Well, I didn't think that was possible, but I'm happy for you if it is." The lines deepened. "But how? I've never heard of such a thing."

"Magic. It's a magic bond. We've found a mage who says he can do it. It doesn't get rid of the original mate bond though, and there are certain stipulations for it to stick, but yeah, it's possible."

"Congratulations," Johnson was beaming. "That's great news. I'm very pleased for

you all. When is this taking place?"

"Thank you. I'm hoping to do it before the next full moon run," I told him. "Isca wasn't comfortable at the last run and I'd like to make sure he's mated before he comes out with us again. That way he'll feel more secure."

"I need to let the pack know ahead of time, and I'm also going to have to insist it's kept confidential. I can't risk Isca's old mate finding out and coming back to disrupt his life."

Johnson nodded. "I don't think anyone will have an issue with any of that. Everyone's fond of Isca and wants to protect him. Rumors have circulated about what his old mate did to him, so the pack will definitely support you."

I relaxed back in my chair with a loud exhale. I hadn't been sure. I knew my pack was loyal to me, but this was a very unusual situation, so it was a relief that Johnson was convinced I'd have their support.

### TALIUS

Xeres had sent word that he wished to delay our binding until the blood moon because this would be auspicious and add strength to the tie we formed. Despite the impatience all three of us felt, I had agreed to the delay. It was worth the small sacrifice if it increased our chances of success.

Both omegas sat out the next pack run, waiting for the proper timing, which came the following month.

Tonight was the night of the blood moon, coincidentally also a full moon, so we planned to do the binding immediately before the monthly pack run, so that Isca could safely and comfortably run with us after the ceremony.

It was 10pm. It was time.

“I’m ready,” murmured Isca, stepping out of our bedroom, barefoot and dressed only in jeans, his hairless chest glistening with the few remaining drops of water from his shower. He took a deep breath, the pale skin stretching tight over his ribs. I noticed the way he straightened his back and lifted his chin, steadying himself. Nervous, but trying to be brave. It flayed my heart knowing how desperately he wanted this to work.

“Me too!”

Irian’s energy preceded him out of the room. I shook my head. That omega was irrepressible, the perfect foil to Isca’s quiet gentle nature. Irian had almost as much

riding on this as Isca, but he wasn't showing any nerves. I knew he longed for Isca to be fully part of our triad. As far as I was concerned, he already was, but Irian was a stickler for fairness, and he found it grossly unfair that he could be mated to me but Isca couldn't. I knew he had every confidence that we would pull this off. My omega always had confidence in me. I chuckled to myself. No pressure at all.

The two omegas were very similar in appearance, slim built and pale, though Irian's complexion had a pale olive hue. Both wore jeans and Irian also wore a t-shirt since he wasn't officially a participant in the ceremony. Isca's low-hung jeans hugged just below his hipbones and the glimpse of his V disappearing into his pants had me unconsciously swiping my tongue over my lips.

So hot! I couldn't help the thought flashing through my brain. I squeezed my eyes closed, trying to control myself, but my jeans tightened anyway.

When I opened my eyes again, I swept them over my other omega – his calves and thighs fondly caressed by the washed-out blue fabric, his package prominent. A low groan forced its way out of my lips.

Goddess! Two hours 'til we ran. Three hours or more 'til I could fuck the living daylights out of them. But then I remembered what would take place at the mating ceremony. So, not three hours then. Maybe I could last, after all.

Maybe.

These men were going to be the death of me.

"Let's go." I tried to pretend I hadn't just had the filthiest of thoughts. Irian's lips twitched upwards as he stared unashamedly at my crotch. Yeah, okay. We'd been together so long he knew exactly where my thoughts had been. Not that his would have been any less dirty.



The two men followed me out of the house. As I stepped out the door, I came to an abrupt stop, startled by what I saw. The entire pack had gathered outside, lining up on each side of the path leading to the forest where the ceremony would take place.

A mating was a private matter, and no-one would be present for it except for Isca, Irian and myself, and necessarily Xeres, the mage, since he needed to weave the spell, but here was the entire pack turning out to show us their support as we departed. When I'd informed the pack of my intentions about a month ago, they'd accepted my announcement without even a murmur of protest, but I hadn't expected them to turn out to actively support it.

I blinked away the moisture in my eyes, touched. It meant a lot to me that my pack supported my decision to formally convert my existing relationship into a triad. As much as it demonstrated their respect and affection for me, it was also a sign of their acceptance of Isca. The sweet young omega had captured the hearts of the rest of the pack. Although the pack was not privy to all the details of his previous mate's attack on Isca, they were aware his mate was not only responsible for it, but had left him for dead.

Although it was pretty much taboo for an alpha to take another's mate, not one voice had been raised in protest or expressed any reservations for what I was doing. It was testimony to the pack's loyalty to me and the affection they bore the young omega.

Eager face after eager face followed our progress down the makeshift guard of honor until we reached the tree line. I saw nothing but joy and happiness in their faces. I turned my head for one last look at my pack, my family, standing there in quiet support. Irian and Isca continued past me into the forest. I dipped my head in acknowledgement of the pack's support before turning and disappearing amongst the trees.

Irian, Isca and I wound our way through the trees to the place selected for the

ceremony to take place. Xeres had chosen a clearing set three or four hundred meters deeper into the forest than the one where we gathered for our pack runs. Though smaller, it was still sizeable but with the tumble of broken down trees and overgrown bushes around it, was considerably more intimate.

The grass had been flattened in preparation, and when we stepped out of the trees, Xeres and Darius were waiting for us, standing in the middle of a complex shape that had been mapped out on the grass in a dusty substance, possibly charcoal or ash.

When we stood in the centre with them, the black lines resolved into recognizable shapes – a pentagram inside a large five-pointed star. The star was inside a circle, the points touching the circumference. A couple of meters beyond, the circle was surrounded by a larger one that ran around the perimeter of the clearing. Short, squat, white candles were placed every half meter or so around the outside circle, each sitting on a dark metal saucer.

“Brother.”

Darius greeted me with a warm embrace, then nodded to my two omegas, keeping a respectful distance from them. Xeres, hooded and somber in his black robes, stood silently beside him. I nodded respectfully at the mage. His eyes flashed deep within the shadow of the hood, but there was no acknowledgement from him other than that.

“Everything has been prepared,” Darius said. “Xeres is ready to start as soon as you are. Are you clear on what you have to do?”

“Yes. Xeres went through everything with us last week. We’re as ready as we can be.”

“If you forget anything, he’ll guide you through it.”

I looked doubtfully at the mage standing stonily at his side, barely acknowledging us.

“I hope so,” I muttered. He didn’t seem that interested, and not for the first time, I wondered if this was a task he was performing reluctantly, only doing it at all because his Alpha had requested it. How much did he actually care how successful this was?

As if sensing my doubts, Darius laid a hand on my shoulder. “Don’t worry. He’s the best there is. It will work,” he said confidently.

My eyes snapped to the mage, catching the slightest movement of his head as he acknowledged Darius’ comments. It was the first movement he’d made since our arrival.

“I’ll leave you to it,” Darius suddenly grinned toothily, a flash of his wolf in his eyes. “I really don’t need to see any of this.”

He walked away, careful not to tread on the meticulously laid out markings. Once he’d stepped outside of the circle, he turned back briefly.

“I’ll see you all at the run,” he said. “Good luck.”

Xeres muttered something that sounded like luck has nothing to do with it.

Without another word, Darius slipped between the ghostly tree trunks, as graceful as the wolf he was, and disappeared from sight.

For a long moment, we stood still and silent. When enough time had passed that Darius would surely have left the forest, Xeres glanced upwards. The blood moon hung heavy in the sky, skirting over the tops of the trees, eerie and other-wordly. He nodded to himself, seemingly satisfied.

“Take your positions in the pentagram and we will begin,” he intoned, his voice formal and monotone. Despite his solemnity and the mysterious figure he presented, hidden as he was in his hooded cloak, his voice betrayed his youthfulness.

His voice cracked slightly as he spoke. He was not as impassive as he was trying to appear. Maybe he was even a little unsure as to whether he could do this. It was a big task, even for a very experienced mage. As I understood it, the incantation was an old and unused one he’d found forgotten in the archives. And here he was, a very young mage, attempting to perform a spell that hadn’t been used in centuries. And... his hands were shaking.

He was nervous.

Strangely, rather than make me anxious about his ability to pull this off, I found the tell-tale signs comforting. He was more invested in this than he wanted to show, and that made me certain he was going to put everything he had into it. Mages were not just secretive, they were also proud. He would not want to risk his reputation by failing at this. My confidence grew with the realization.

Isca and I moved into position, facing each other. With a wave of his hand, Xeres indicated Irian should follow him as he moved towards the edge of the circle. I saw him halt Irian just inside the final circle, and he bent his head in closer. I heard the murmuring of voices as they discussed something.

None of the discussions so far had included Irian as anything other than an observer but I figured the mage knew what he was doing, and if there were any changes I needed to know about, then he’d have told me.

I kept my focus on Isca.

He stood in front of me, his bare chest pale and covered in goosebumps, from the

cool night air or anticipation, I wasn't sure.

Big brown eyes looked up into mine, soft and trusting. My omega. Soon to be my mate. My second mate. Second, but equal. My lips quirked up. I was a lucky bastard.

With a crackle and the faint acrid smell of sulphur, the candles burst to life, as Xeres performed the first step in his spell-weaving. Flames flickered gold, with the greenish tinge of magic lapping at the edges.

Isca didn't flinch. He continued to watch me. I had memorized the steps, Xeres would only step in if it looked like I needed prompting. I could hear him murmuring his spell in the background, but my entire focus was on Isca. The air seemed to crackle around us like a living thing. I took a deep breath.

"Strip," I instructed.

His hands reached for his waistband and the button was undone almost before the word was out. Eager. The slide of the zipper was harsh in the stillness of the clearing. Without taking his eyes off me, Isca pushed his jeans down over his ass and kicked them off, ignoring where they landed.

Then he stilled.

I flicked my eyes down. And waited. A moment passed. Then his lips tweaked into a half-smile. His features softened, his eyes crinkled at the corners. With his eyes still on me, Isca sank gracefully to his knees. His slim torso held erect, shoulders back but relaxed as he assumed an upright posture. His body was almost entirely hairless, ethereal in the dim light with just the wash of candlelight casting faint shadows across his skin.

He folded his arms behind his back, his knees positioned in a perfect V. Holding

himself in position, his eyes held mine. Trusting. And more confident than I had ever seen him. Heglowed with belonging.

His smile widened into something glorious... before he dropped his head in submission.

A tremor ran through me. His trust was humbling. I drew in a fortifying breath.

“Beautiful omega,” I breathed.

The silence of the night wrapped around us, creating our own private world. Beyond, as if at a distance, the monotonous chanting of the spell mingled with the night song of the forest’s insects. But here, where Isca knelt before me, the world was composed of my ragged breaths and Isca’s soft huffs. The sight of my gorgeous omega kneeling naked before me was breathtaking... and arousing.

I couldn’t afford to get distracted. I couldn’t mess this up.

I tried to focus. I drew myself up to my full height.

“Undress me,” I commanded, not allowing a shred of uncertainty to leach into my voice.

Isca reached across. With unsteady hands he undid the button of my jeans, unzipped, and gently tugged the waistband down until the pants pooled around my ankles. My cock, already half-hard, was right in front of his face, caressed by his warm breath. I suppressed a moan, even as I hardened further.

I stepped out of my jeans, ignoring how close his lips were to my dick. Isca waited, motionless. Perfectly composed except for his short, rapid breaths, and the rapid beating of the pulse in his throat.

“Ready, Omega?”

“Yes, Alpha.”

“I’m going to shift now.”

Isca knelt motionless until my wolf sat before him, resting on its haunches. I was an imposing wolf, or so I’d been told. My coat was coarse, a mix of colors, mostly dark greys and some lighter shades. I had a long muzzle tinged with dark hair and black whiskers. And I was large. Sitting like this, on my haunches, my eyes were at the same level as Isca’s.

Isca flicked a glance up at me, then lowered himself prone on the forest floor, tilting his head and exposing his neck to me.

I leaned down, running my warm, wet muzzle up his neck and around the back of his ear, nostrils flaring as I drew in his scent. The short strands of hair fluttered and fell as I huffed into them. My muzzle trailed a wet stripe from his ear to the hollow of his collarbone where the mating gland was located. I lapped over the site, the silky smoothness of his skin catching on my raspy tongue, tasting his unique flavor, marking it in my brain. My canines lightly grazed the skin but it was not time yet.

Scenting done, I drew back and watched him, unblinking. When he didn’t move, I let out a low rumble.

Isca shifted, the beautiful young man replaced by a splendid silver wolf. His soft, silky coat shimmered with every inhale and exhale. He crouched on the ground, paws out in front, head resting on them, tilted, exposing his vulnerable throat. Just the slight flicking of his tail betrayed any emotion.

A rumble started low in my throat and Isca sprang to his feet, racing for the trees. He

was smaller than me, but lithe and nimble. He made a good start, but I was a powerful alpha, all muscle. I chased after him and leapt in front of him, spinning to face him before he could escape the circle and disappear into the forest.

He spun away and tried a different course.

And so the game went on; we raced and leaped and every time Isca almost escaped the circle, I was there in front of him. He would bound away again, trying another direction, then duck and weave as I came after him, feinting to one side then going the other. He was quick and he was clever, but I was more experienced, and I was always one step, one leap, ahead of him.

I was hunting my mate.

Wherever the dance took us, part of me remained aware of where my other mate stood. I did not want to knock him over in my attempts to subdue our new mate.

The chase went on for what seemed a long time. I would have my omega, but he was going to make me work for it, he wasn't going to give up easily. I respected him all the more for that.

My ears were loud with my heavy breathing, sides heaving as they dragged in great lungfuls of air, when Isca, struggling to catch his breath, sought refuge at Irian's feet.

It was a clever move. He knew I wouldn't tackle him there. I stood in front of him, puffy white clouds escaping my nostrils as my warm breath hit the cool night air. I felt powerful, virile, towering over my future mate.

One minute he was quietly whimpering at Irian's feet, and the next he was streaking across the clearing. He made it to the first circle before I pounced on him, paws on his shoulders, driving him into the ground. With a surge of strength, he rolled us over,



and we continued to struggle, teeth grasping mouthfuls of fur but never breaking skin, powerful legs kicking and struggling but claws retracted. I was much larger, and if I had been trying to hurt him, this would have been over quickly, but that wasn't our purpose here. He was smaller, but strong and determined. He twisted and turned and did his best to escape.

Finally, I pinned him down, belly to the ground, my larger, heavier body covering his. I could have taken him like this, it wasn't unheard of, to perform the mating ritual in wolf form, but then we wouldn't have said the words, so... I shifted. For a moment his soft fur tickled my bare flesh, and then Isca shifted also.

We were skin to skin, slippery with sweat. It was hard to hold him. I slipped my hand around his throat before he thought to slide out from under me. I arched his head back, just a little. His eyes rolled back, searching for mine.

"Submit," I demanded, panting.

"Yes," he gasped, breathless, repeating the words we'd rehearsed. "I... I submit to you, Alpha."

"Mate with me?"

"Yes... Yes, Alpha." It was almost a groan.

"Will you be my bonded mate?"

"I will, Alpha," replied Isca, then he added, completely off script, "It will be my pleasure."

A guttural sound tore from my throat. I let go of his neck, and pulling back, pinned him down with a hand in the middle of his back. I slotted my knees between his legs,

urging them apart. He spread his thighs and lifted his ass, offering himself to me. His thighs were slippery and glistening, and I could smell his arousal. I couldn't resist, leaning down and swiping my tongue up his inner thigh, collecting his sweet omega slick with my tongue, until I reached his hole. I ran my tongue over it, lapping at his juices, the scent of his arousal filling my nostrils and driving me crazy. I stiffened my tongue and drove it inside. He howled. It was too much, I couldn't hold on. I withdrew my tongue and placed my cockhead against his opening, pressing against him. He pushed back and I slipped inside past the tight ring of muscle. He groaned. I stilled, waiting for him to adjust, but there was no need, his slick was so copious...

"Please, Alpha..." he begged.

I thrust.

Again and again and again, I pounded into him. I slipped my hand beneath him, scooping some of the moisture from his thighs. I wrapped my hand around his cock and gave a couple of strokes. Moments later, Isca's hot cum spilled over my hand, and he cried out as his channel clenched around me. My knot began to form and with a mighty roar I spilled inside him, still thrusting, giving him every drop I had.

I dragged in a gasping breath. I ran my tongue across my teeth. My canines had descended.

Leaning forward, I rested my teeth over his mating gland - reminding myself at the last minute to go to the other side - and bit down hard. A metallic taste flooded my mouth, and I sucked some more, swallowing the taste of Isca, my mate. I hummed in satisfaction, savoring him. Isca whimpered. I withdrew my teeth and licked the spot clean, threw back my head and let loose an animalistic cry of possession.

Isca was mine, mine, MINE!

We lay there panting, Isca still sprawled on the ground, me covering him, resting on an elbow to prevent myself from crushing him. My eardrums pounded with the rush of blood pumping through them, gradually slowing, and my harsh gasps as I dragged air into my lungs. Beneath me, Isca sobbed for air, hauling in great lungfuls, his small frame expanding and contracting beneath me, pressing into my belly. We lay there gasping.

Since I'd knotted him, we had no choice but to wait here until my knot went down and we could complete the ceremony.

As my breathing and pulse slowed, I became aware of other things; Xeres chanting in the background, the silver sliver appearing around the edge of the dark moon. I noticed the silky skin of the omega lying pliant beneath me. The combined scents of Isca's slick and our sex. And faintly, the very familiar scent of Irian's arousal.

I rolled onto my back, pulling Isca on top of me, and we lay there panting, looking up at the blood moon and the stars together. It was magical.

When my knot began to subside, I maneuvered him around until he was facing me, my semi-hard cock still inside him. I slid a hand behind his head and brought his lips to mine. His mouth was warm against mine, his lips parting to accept my tongue, his sweet omega breath on my face...

Gently lifting his head away, I looked into his eyes. They were hazy and unfocused, pools of various hues of brown and gold. He looked dreamy, like he was floating away.

"Claim me," I told him.

He blinked. Then his eyes cleared and focused. Perfect white teeth flashed in a dazzling smile. He leaned down. I felt two points of pressure in the skin over my

unmarked mating gland. Sharp pain shot through me and I felt the rush of my essence as it flooded his mouth. He gulped and retracted his teeth, licking over the two small holes he'd made, lapping up any traces of blood.

He lay his head down on me, sweetly. My arms closed around him. A high-pitched buzzing began to resonate in my head. My head spun and I blinked rapidly, feeling disorientated. Then as abruptly as it started, the buzz silenced, replaced by clarity as awareness snapped into place. Awareness of him. We had a bond!

My Omega. My mate.

He lifted his head, eyes wide, moisture pooling in the corners.

My Alpha.

A tear rolled out of one of his eyes, landing with a splosh on my cheek. I felt the rush of emotion from my new mate flood into my mind through our newly established bond. Love, elation, gratitude.

I didn't have to do it, because we'd already established the bond, but I wanted to.

The words of commitment. They usually accompanied a shifter mating ceremony but they hadn't been required because our mating had been forged by magic. But I wanted to say them. And I wanted to say them out loud, so our other mate would hear them too.

I gazed at Isca, letting my sincerity shine in my eyes for him to see.

"Omega, I am your Alpha, your bonded mate. I bind myself to you and will protect, defend and honor you. Until the end of days."

This caused a stream of tears to leak from Isca's eyes, and he blinked furiously to get rid of them.

"Isca?"

His Adam's apple bobbed as he swallowed hard, trying to compose himself.

Did he remember the words?

He cleared his throat.

"Alpha, you are... my bonded mate. I will come to you for protection. I am honored to be your omega. Until the end of days." His voice trembled a little as he completed the exchange. He gave a little sniff as he finished, then the sweetest smile curved his lips as he looked shyly at me.

The candles flickered violently around the circle, and I heard voices. When I tore my eyes away from my new mate, I saw Xeres speaking to Irian, gesturing towards us.

To be honest, I'd been so absorbed with Isca, I'd forgotten Xeres was even there.

Irian nodded and walked towards us, into the center of the circle. Xeres resumed chanting, louder now.

The flames changed color again, flaring yellow then blue and finally green. They soared higher. Xeres' voice rose in pitch, the words unintelligible, powerful and dramatic, but I paid him no heed. My gaze was focused on my gorgeous mate heading towards us. I didn't know what Xeres had told him to do. That hadn't been part of the plan.

Irian stopped beside where we lay, Isca plastered to my chest, my knot deflated but

my half-hard cock still buried inside his warmth. Irian looked at me with his big brown eyes asking a question.

I nodded. I didn't need to know the details to give him permission. I knew my mate well enough to know he wouldn't attempt to do something I wouldn't approve of. He might have been feisty but some part of that was an act, and he was a most loving and respectful mate.

Irian stripped off his clothes. He was already more than half-hard, which wasn't surprising since we'd already established he had voyeuristic tendencies. Watching Isca and I mating would have been a massive turn on for him. And I'd already scented his arousal.

Once he was naked, Irian kneeled astride me, facing away from me, with his knees on either side of my neck, and his dick pointed towards Isca. It gave me a wonderful view of his glistening hole, ripe with slick, and ready access to his balls. As Irian lowered himself down, Isca raised his head and opened his mouth. Irian slid the swollen head of his cock past Isca's pretty pink lips, gave a great sigh and began moving his hips back and forth. I caught one of his pale furry orbs in my mouth with each pass, sucking on it, and letting it tug gently before releasing it as he moved his hips forward. I repeated it with the other one.

Letting go of Isca, I brought my hands up and grabbed Irian's ass, opening him up but also giving him support to make it easier for him to fuck Isca's face. Irian groaned. Isca gurgled as Irian's length reached the back of his throat.

I scented the musky, male scent that was unique to Irian and rubbed my nose along his perineum. I left my nose in place, his thrusts running my nose back and forth across his taint as he effectively pleased himself. He whimpered. I felt his legs tremble, the movement making his ass cheeks wobble in my hands.

He thrust harder. Isca gagged. I slid my tongue up to Irian's hole and teased it, licking and sucking, and slurping up the slick. Irian's breathing grew ragged, almost gasping, little moans and whimpers erupting from his throat.

Stiffening my tongue, I pressed inside him. Now his movements had him fucking himself on my rigid tongue. He thrust faster and faster, and then his movements stuttered as with a cry he filled Isca's throat. I curled my tongue inside him and he keened, and I felt an extra pulse shoot out of him.

He stilled, panting, kneeling over us with his head hanging down, glistening with sweat. Isca, lay on my chest, licking the residue of Irian's orgasm from his lips. My face was sticky with slick, and I ran a finger through it, before sucking my finger into my mouth, savoring the taste of him. I was so turned on by his unexpected performance that my knot had reformed. I huffed. That wasn't terribly unusual when I got together with my two omega mates.

The buzzing in my head was back, or maybe it never stopped. It was louder and more annoying than before. In the stillness the followed our lovemaking, I heard Xeres' voice in the background, his monotonous chanting, seeming to reach a crescendo. I wanted him to go away.

The clearing was bright with the flames from the candles which were dancing and flickering with renewed energy.

A loud pop! reverberated through my head, and I lost awareness.

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When I came to, the clearing was dark, the candles extinguished. There was no sign of Xeres. I started, then relaxed. I was certain he wouldn't have left us unprotected in such a vulnerable state. I assumed he'd set up protective wards around the clearing.

My knot had gone down, and Isca had rolled half off me and was lying sprawled over my chest. Irian was slumped over him.

I knew the moment Irian came awake, the mind bond snapping into crystal clear clarity. I felt him sigh down the bond, deeply sated.

Neither of us moved, unwilling to disturb our little mate sandwiched between us.

However it wasn't long before Isca stirred too. I felt him wake up. He was there in my head, the mate bond that had been established between us before Irian did - whatever it was he did - still intact.

For a moment there was perfect silence. Then... a hiccupping sob from Irian. Tears streamed down his face but a radiant smile stretched his lips and plumped his cheeks.

Talius? Isca?

I felt rather than heard his thoughts, streaming through our telepathic bond. Isca twisted his head to look at Irian.

I can feel you. Both of you.

Irian launched himself back down onto us, his arm wrapped around Isca, squeezing tight. I wrapped my arms around both of them, holding us all together. My eyes prickled, and I blinked quickly a couple of times, almost undone.

Finally, we'd done it.

Both Irian and Isca were my bonded mates.

We were a committed triad, with benefits.



### TALIUS

As we made our way through the trees towards the clearing where we usually started our monthly pack run, the hum of conversation seeped between the trees, increasing in volume as we approached. As we got closer the buzz broke up into individual voices that I recognized, the conversations tumbling over each other in a confusion of words.

We stepped out of the trees, and a hush fell over the assembled shifters as one by one they noticed our arrival. Sounds, scents and sights stood out in stark relief: the brush of fabric against fabric, sweat, breaths and quiet snorts, the crickets trilling in the background, the sounds of the forest settling, the stars sparkling so brilliantly it felt like I could reach out and pluck them down with my fingers... the loud thump, thump, thump of my omegas' heartbeats beside me.

Pale faces, darker faces... all watching, wondering, waiting to find out how things had gone.

With Irian on one side of me, and Isca on the other, I grasped each by the hand and raised our joined hands high.

Cheers and whoops erupted across the clearing, and one by one the pack came up to us offering congratulations. The omegas in particular gathered around Isca hugging him and kissing him on the cheeks. Irian watched them greet our new mate, smiling indulgently, the corner of his eyes crinkling, cheeks plumped and round, smile lines creasing from nose to mouth. One of the omegas pulled him into the group hug and he was temporarily lost to my sight.

"I gather it went well, then," said a gruff voice at my shoulder and I turned to find Johnson.

"Very well indeed," I told the beta. "Better than we expected. Xeres is a true miracle worker."

I glanced across to where Xeres and Darius were standing aside from the group, isolated at the edge of the clearing. Johnson's eyes followed my gaze.

"Who'd have thought," he murmured, voice low. "A mage doing something that wasn't for himself or his coven."

"He's a friend of Irian's. And he has Darius' respect. And mine now too. What he's done... well," I shook my head in disbelief, "there's no record of it having been done before. It's amazing!"

"So... a very powerful mage, then."

"Yes, and that despite his age. He's actually very young... I don't know how he could have built up that level of expertise so quickly," I mused.

"Ah, these young things," Johnson shook his head. "They live in a different world to what we grew up in!"

I gave him a filthy look. "Speak for yourself!" I snorted. "I'm not that old!"

A shuffling sound in front of me made me swing my head to see Agel waiting in front of me. As usual when he spoke to me, he kept his head down, his shoulders rounded, reducing his profile. Always trying to fit in. Always making sure I knew he was submissive to me and wouldn't challenge me. I knew he wouldn't speak without permission, so I didn't leave him waiting.

"Hey, Agel. Did you want to talk?" I asked.

"Alpha," he acknowledged. "I wanted to offer congratulations. You have two very fine mates." He hesitated, then drew a deep breath, "If I may say so... you deserve them, Alpha."

I couldn't keep the smile from my face. "Thank you, Agel. I'm proud to be their mate. Just as I'm proud to be Alpha for everyone in this pack. And I do mean everyone, Agel."

I looked at him meaningfully.

He'd been working on the farm and had progressed to helping with our computing needs. As far as I was concerned, he'd assimilated well. Even as an alpha, he didn't need to constantly express his submission to me however. Was he still afraid he'd be kicked out of the pack? Maybe. His early life experience of that had to have been traumatizing. We'd taken him in on a trial basis, and he'd fitted in almost seamlessly, but I realized with everything going on in my personal life, I hadn't spoken to him about his permanency here. It was time to rectify that.

"Are you happy here, Agel? In our pack, I mean?"

"Oh, yes, Alpha. Very much. It's a wonderful pack. Everyone has been welcoming and yes, I like it here a lot."

"I'm pleased to hear it. Because I was thinking that if you were planning on staying, it might be time to delegate some leadership activities to you... what do you think?"

"Oh!" he looked dumbfounded.

I hesitated. "Are you planning on staying with us, Agel?"

"If... if I- I can, y-yes, I'd like that, Alpha," he was having trouble finding his words. His eyebrows had risen high on his forehead, eyes so wide I could see the whites of his eyes. I'd swear he hadn't seen this coming.

"Good. Johnson and I have been discussing getting you to help him out with some of his tasks. You can learn how he does things and be his backup if it works out. How does that sound?"

"Alpha... I'm honored," Agel blinked rapidly, as if he couldn't believe what had just happened. "That would be... amazing."

A few lines I hadn't taken note of before disappeared from his face, softening his features. He had been feeling insecure.

"Can you get everyone organized for the run then, please? We'll start just as soon as I've spoken to Darius and his mage." I inclined my head in their direction to show him who I meant.

"Y-yes, Alpha," he nodded.

"Thank you... Agelius."

The young alpha smiled, straightened his shoulders and hurried off to complete his first leadership task.

"That was a good thing to do and it'll do wonders for his confidence." I'd forgotten Johnson was still standing there. "And he's well liked by the pack. He'll do well. He'll be an asset to the pack."

"I think so. I'm going to talk to these guys now and then we can get started. You'll be second for the run tonight?"

”Of course.”

I left Johnson and made my way over to where Darius and Xeres were watching the activity.

”Thank you,” I said simply, addressing Xeres. ”I can’t tell you how much this means to me, to all three of us.”

He dipped his hooded head solemnly in acknowledgement of my words, but said nothing.

”Did you know...? That we’d form a three-way telepathic bond?” I asked him.

After a brief pause, he wagged his head sideways.

”Wasn’t sure,” he admitted. ”Thought it might.”

I turned to Darius and opened my mouth to speak.

”Oof!” yelped Xeres, and I was surprised to see him staggering under the weight of an enthusiastic Irian, who had crashed into him and was hugging him madly.

”Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!” Irian enthused, bouncing and dragging the mage around with him.

”Get off me!” protested Xeres, his aura of solemnity and mystery totally disregarded by the irrepressible Irian.

The two of them began bickering while Isca, who had also materialized here, watched in surprise.

I turned back to Darius who was having a hard time stopping himself from laughing out loud. The corners of his lips were twitching as he struggled and his eyes twinkled.

"Xeres really is amazing," I said. "Not only did he successfully complete the mating bond, with a mind bond between Isca and myself, but he somehow managed to link Irian in as well!"

"I told you he was good," chided Darius, his eyes still on Irian and Xeres mucking around like adolescents. Then his brows drew together and down, his eyes losing their merriment as he frowned. "I just haven't figured out why he's stayed with our pack this long."

We both observed the young men, who had stopped their shenanigans long enough for Isca to approach and with a shy smile, say something to the mage. Xeres spoke softly to Isca, who nodded, momentarily serious. Then to my surprise, the mage gave him a gentle hug.

"Are you running with us?" I asked Darius, tearing my eyes away from the sweet spectacle.

"Tempted," he admitted, "but no. I'll head home with Xeres. Goddess knows what new drama has been going on while we've been away. My second is leading our run tonight, but I'd like to try and get back there before it's over."

"Well, I won't hold you up. And thank you. I owe you more than I can repay."

Darius shrugged. "There's no debt. I'm just glad it all worked out. Keep your omegas safe," he added, then he went to disentangle his mage from Irian and Isca and they disappeared into the forest.

"Ready to run?" I asked my omegas. Their faces were flushed with excitement, white

teeth flashing, eyes shining.

"Yes!" they chimed together, then giggled at each other. Apparently they were already having fun with their telepathic link.

Oh my Goddess, what had I done? They were going to be trouble, weren't they?

I sighed and smiled fondly.

Trouble or not, they were mine now. I would happily deal with this sort of trouble for the rest of my life.

ISCA

Bathed in the light of the full moon, my silver grey coat is endowed with a brilliance broadcasting my existence to any watchful eyes for many kilometers. Once I would have cared, would have been fearful, afraid my luminous fur would attract the attention of those that would hurt me. As it had, in the past.

But not tonight. Tonight I start a new existence. Tonight I have an alpha who protects me, a pack that will protect me. I have finally found my place. I am the bonded mate of the Pack Alpha and his mate. I, too, am the Alpha Mate.

This joyous realization sweeps through me as I break from the pack and stand atop a rocky outcrop, overlooking the mountains and valleys of the forest spread out serenely before me. Behind me, along the barely discernible trail, huffing breaths signal the passage of wolves, as I pause from our pack run to relish this unfamiliar sensation of belonging. I lift my muzzle to the moon, and a joyful howl erupts from deep inside. For all that I suffered before, the Goddess has been generous, and I send my thanks in the only way I know how.

Soft footfalls pad over leaf litter and though the pack is elongated and spread out now, I don't want to be left behind, so I bound into the fray again and run beside my packmates, shoulder to shoulder, chests expanding and contracting, puffs of warm breath forming tiny clouds in the cool of the night. We run together, we belong together. One pack, and on the nights of the full moon, one psyche.

Come, come!



I feel Irian's call in my head.

Wait! I send back to him.

This is amazing. Any time I want to, I find him, or Talius, in my head. This mind-bond we share, which I knew nothing about until I met them, is a revelation.

I am never alone, unless I want to be.

A shiver runs through me. Zarbius. I don't want to think about him now, but I can't help the clenching of my chest when I think how devastating it would have been had we been bonded in this way. He could have found me... now I understand Talius' concerns when first I woke from my trauma.

You didn't want him, it could never have happened.

Irian's cheery thoughts reach me at the same time as Talius' reassurance washes over me. All of this through the bond!

Come, waiting for you.

Talius.

And when he calls me, I have to obey, though I do so willingly, joyfully.

Still, I'm mindful of Xeres' last words to me. The strength of the magically constructed mating bond is dependent on my compliance to the one rule.

I have to remain submissive to Talius.

Right now, I can't see how that would ever be a problem.