

## Tereshan

Claire and I follow the river even after crossing out of our pack lands. The farther from the lake we get the thinner the riverbed gets and the muddier it looks.

"Wouldn't you think the water would be clearer here than in the lake?" Claire asks.

"I guess it depends on the soil beneath it." I look around, realizing that Claire is right. Most of the land here is sandy and rocky. The water should be clearer.

"It's almost like rust. But I didn't see that anything had been dumped in the water as we were walking," Claire continues.

I lean down, looking at one of the stones lying around this part of the riverbed. It's white color standing out against the grass, dirt and rust color of the water.

"What is that?" Claire asks, coming to squat down beside me.

"Some sort of rock," I say, looking around the riverbed. We're near the end of the riverbed here and there are several of these white rocks lying around.

"Should we take it to Keegan? Maybe he'll know what it is."

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"That's a great idea," I say, putting the rock in the pocket of my shorts. "We should start heading that way. I'm not seeing anything out of the ordinary here other than this white rock, are you?" I ask her.

"No, but we might want to make sure that isn't rust in the water."

"It doesn't smell like rust," I say, lifting my nose and sniffing the air.

"You're right, it doesn't."

"But it's worth checking out," I tell her, not wanting to disregard her thoughts.

I take her hand and we begin heading in the direction where we will meet Keegan. I look out over the expanse of empty land beside us.

"I wonder who owns this property," I muse. It's gorgeous land, rugged. It might be worth seeing if I could purchase it and expand my territory.

"Can we find out?" Claire asks.

"Yeah. I have to call my guy today to find out about buying Franco's brothel. I'll have him look into this piece of property as well. It's possible the government owns it, or that it's protected land for whatever reason, but I can find out."

Claire looks out over the land. From here to the



mountains, it's mostly flat. "It would be a good area for our wolves to run. Although, it does look a bit rocky, so we'd have to check it out first."

I smile. Of course my mate is worried about the pack members getting injured. I follow her gaze, looking at the mountain.

"I wonder how far the land extends," I say.

"And what's on the other side of that mountain," Claire says.

"I think there's another pack on the other side, so their land probably borders that mountain."

"Which pack?" Claire asks.

"You know, I'm not sure. I'll have to see if my guy knows."

"Your guy," she says, making air quotes, "seems to know a lot. Does he have a name?"

I smile. "Eric. And we pay him a lot to get answers for us. Especially when it's something like the brothel that we want to keep quiet. This way, Franco won't know it's you and I that are looking to buy it out from under him."

When we get back to our pack borders, I can see Keegan and a couple of his men taking soil samples. He's got some sort of contraption set up and it looks like they are putting soil into different containers, before capping

them off and putting them into what looks like a portable cooler. Another guy looks like he's testing the soil right here.

"Alpha Keegan," I greet him as we walk up.

"Alpha Tereshan, Luna Claire. I thought we agreed to not be so formal."

"We did," Claire says walking up to him. "How is Zoey?"

He smiles the smile of a man in love. I'm pretty sure I get that look now too.

"She's wonderful. Yesterday was a lot, but I think it went a long way to showing her that I mean what I say about wanting her for my mate and Luna."

"Well, I'm pretty sure it was clear to everyone else at the table," I say wryly looking at the guy that seems to be testing the soil.

"What's all this?" I ask.

Keegan looks at the guy who continues to add drops of liquid into the tubes that already have some liquid and dirt in them. He shakes them and Keegan waits before answering.

"So, this is our initial test of your soil. Since we don't know exactly what we're looking for, I have my team doing a field test, just to see if anything stands out." He looks up at both of us.



"Since we know that Alpha Franco has been attacking you on multiple fronts, I tested for poison first. We didn't find any, so that's good."

I nod, looking at Claire. There wasn't any last time either, but better to be safe than sorry.

"I looked at the pH levels of the soil too. Four to 7.5 is about where you want your pH levels for growing berries and your levels are at 5-6, depending on where the sample was taken, so that's good."

He looks up at us and sighs. "But, we haven't found anything that stands out to us, and the ground is good for planting. We're taking some more soil samples to do a deeper study on, but if those results come back fine, I'd like to start planting. We want to give the crops a chance to start growing so they will be ready in a few months."

"We were starting to wonder if maybe the issue is with the water, not the soil," Claire tells him.

"Oh yeah, do you know what this is?" I ask, pulling the rock from my pocket. I hand it to Keegan, who shows it to the guy that was testing the soil.

"That's quartz."

"Quartz?" I ask.

"Yes. Very common and depending on what you find, you

could make some jewelry for your mate. Amethyst, Citrine, Onyx and there are more, but they are popular styles of quartz that are used to make jewelry." He says.

"Worth enough to, say, start a pack war over?" I ask.

"I doubt it. As I said, it's very common." He shrugs.

"Some people even put them in their gardens believing they have healing powers or will help their gardens grow. So, it might be a good thing if your soil here has quartz in it. Personally, I don't believe in all of that, but some do. And it won't hurt the plants, so if we find any, I'd say leave it in the soil."

Claire looks at me. "Maybe that's why the field around the lake and riverbeds has so many flowers blooming! Maybe it's the quartz," she says excitedly.

"You might be right, Claire."

The soil tester guy just shrugs. "Like I said, I don't believe it, but others do. And it could work."

The other guy packing the soil samples looks up. "I believe in it, and so does my mate. Her garden at home always looks great."

I look at Claire. "Quartz. Who knew?"

Keegan hands the rock, or quartz, back to me. "You could take that to a jeweler and have them cut it into a stone for your mate to wear. As big as it is, and



depending on how well the quartz holds up, you could make her a necklace and matching earrings." Keegan says to me.

"A gift for my Luna. I like it," I say, pocketing the stone.

"You don't have to, we could just put it in our room," she says, blushing.

"If you want one in our room, we can go back and get another one. But I want to show off my Luna and what better way than to shower you with stones that came from our pack lands?"

I pull her to me, tilting her head to look at me, not caring who sees me showing my love for my mate.

"When we have time, we'll go hunting for all the different colors. I'll have sets made in every one we find. It will be a constant reminder of my love for you and our pack," I tell her.

She reaches up to touch my face. "If that's the symbolism, then we need to go hunting for stones very soon."

I lean down to kiss her and even though we're in front of several other people, she kisses me back as if she doesn't care.

Every day our bond is getting stronger.