

Chapter 146: Mining

Tereshan

I'm staring at the chunk of gold in Keegan's hand, then I turn and look at the dirt with streaks of rust color in them. As the clouds move and the sunlight shines down, I can see the dirt begin to shimmer.

"Alpha Keegan, Alpha Tereshan, you should come see this," one of Keegan's team says.

We walk to the table where they had been washing the dirt, sifting through it. There are small pieces of gold everywhere.

"Holy fucking shit," I say, shocked to my core. It's one thing to think about being on top of a literal gold mine, it's quite another to see it right in front of you.

Keegan looks at the gold, touching it before turning around and looking behind us, back at the drill and field where his berry plants have started to sprout.

"Alpha, Luna," he says gesturing for us to step away from his team. Everyone is standing around in awe.

"Claire, you said I called you well into your last timeline about the plants, right?"

"Well, you didn't say plants, you said you knew why Franco wanted our land," she tells him.

"But I didn't drill, right?"

"No, I wouldn't have even known to ask you to do that and not only that, but we were also at war. I had other things on my mind."

He's staring at the crops of berries, deep in thought.

"Keegan, what are you thinking?"

He blinks another moment before refocusing on me. "You said the riverbed from the lake had rust colored run off?" he asks.

"Yes."



"Do you mind taking me there?"

"It's about a mile walk from here," I tell him.

"That's okay, I'd like to look at your lands while we walk."

"Okaaaay," I say, having no idea what is on his mind.

I take Claire's hand and we begin walking toward the lake. Keegan is silent, looking around, periodically stopping to pick up some plants, or inspect them.

We're near the lake when he stops, his mouth dropping open. He's looking out over the field of flowers that Claire and I had seen when we first walked out here.

"Field of gold," he says softly.

"Oh, you know the human song too?" Claire asks him.

He frowns, turning to her. "What?"

"There's a song in the human world, Fields of Gold. I said the same thing when I saw it."

He looks back out of the flowers. "I've never heard of the song, but it's an apt description. You two have an actual field of gold."

Now it's our turn to frown. "Keegan, you're going to have to be more clear. I have no idea what you are talking about."

"Have you ever heard the term phytomining?" he asks.

Claire and I look at each other before shaking our heads. "No."

"In layman's terms, phytomining is the mining process where you extract minerals or metals from the ground through plants. The plants absorb the metals through their roots and into their stems and flowers. Then, you can mine the plants, extract the metal, and regrow plants again, continuing the process. In your case, your field of gold is exactly that. Your gold mine runs this far into your pack lands."

"You're saying that these plants aren't just gold colored? You're saying that they are gold colored because they actually have gold in them?" Claire asks.

"That's exactly what I'm saying." Keegan tells her.

I turn, looking in the direction from where we mined to here, then out over the huge



area of land covered in gold-colored plants.

"Do you think that there is that much gold all the way through this land?"

"It could be. The plants will only pick up the smaller bits of gold, not the chunks that we found in the last pile of dirt we drilled. Do you have other riverbeds on your pack lands?" he asks.

"Yes, two more. I've asked Dane and Jesiah to check them out too."

"That should give you an idea of just how extensive your gold mine is, Tereshan, but based on what I'm seeing, it's extensive. You, my friend, are a very, very wealthy man."

"Only if I mine the land, though, right? I can only get to the gold if I destroy my pack lands to dig it up." I say, unwilling to destroy our home no matter how wealthy it will make me.

"Well, that's the interesting thing about phytomining. You can harvest the plants and then grow again. So, if you choose not to mine into the ground, you could just continue to harvest the flowering plants that already grow on your pack lands. If you'd like, I could get my people out here and we could harvest say, one quarter of this area. I need to buy some equipment to mine from plants. I'm not set up to do that, but I can get it and then we could see how much it yields."

"Let's do that," I tell him, still reeling from this new information.

"Would you mind showing me the riverbed you spoke of, I'd like to see that too."

"Sure, this way," Claire says, when I don't respond.

She takes my hand, tugging on me until I begin following her.

Keegan looks at me. "It's a lot to take in."

"You think?" The shock and stress of learning about this has my tone much sharper than I mean for it to be.

"Hey," Claire says softly to me.

"Claire, don't you get it? You're not safe, I don't know if you'll ever be safe. How many other packs will come for me, for us, if they realize what we have here?"

"You have allies, Tereshan. Good allies, ones that don't care about money, ones who

appreciate what you've done to help improve our society. You've already made an impression on many of them. And, even if you decide to not drill into your pack lands, the phytomining alone could bring work to the packs. Your gold mine could make all of us wealthier, strengthening our little corner of the world against possible invaders like the ones that took over Zoey's parents' pack. I'm not saying you don't have to be careful, of course you do. But you've already changed how the packs get food. You already have a lot of control over the packs, Tereshan. In truth, this would just seal you as the leader of us all."

I blink. "You're saying I would be something like an Alpha of Alphas?"

Keegan shrugs. "You're the strongest of all of us, you've brought down Franco, and from what Zoey mind linked on my way here, it sounds like you're shutting down the brothel, giving those people a new chance at a better life. Now, you have the opportunity to provide work for most, if not all of the packs. The income will improve everyone's lives. They will fall in behind you, Tereshan, because they won't be able to live without the resources that you are able to supply to them. And now, since you met Claire, you're a different person. Personally, I would be glad to follow your lead. I believe others would too."

I look at Claire, overwhelmed with the news and this conversation.

"There's time to figure all this out, Alpha. For now, let's just get the information," she says, putting her hand on my cheek. I close my eyes and let her calming nature settle me.

"You're right, of course, baby. We don't have to figure everything out today."

We arrive at the riverbed and Keegan squats down at the edge, digging his hand into the dirt and pulling up a handful. He sifts through it, letting some water wash away the sand. What's left, is small pieces of glittering gold.

He looks back up at me. "If I had to guess, I'd say your lake is surrounded by your gold mine and this is the runoff coming from it. Depending on how much you are willing to do, you could do some alluvial mining here and in the other riverbeds."

"Alluvial mining?" I ask.

"Phytomining is with plants, alluvial mining is with stream and riverbeds, basically doing what I just did, but on a larger scale," he says.

"So, there are ways to get to the gold, without digging up my pack lands?" I ask.



“Yes, it won’t be as lucrative, but based on how large your gold mine seems to be, you could have years, maybe decades of gold production.”

