

## Chapter 147: Tunnel

Claire

I can feel that Tereshan is overwhelmed. It's a lot to take in all at once. The gold mine that is underneath our pack lands is huge, well, huge by my standards. I have no idea how large gold mines usually are.

As pack lands, these lands would have been handed down for generations. Because of that, these lands were never available to survey for gold. It's possible someone tried to buy them at one time, but since the surrounding area is all owned by packs, it's unlikely.

There's definitely excitement in Tereshan's emotions, but mostly the fear has been increasing the more we discover. Fear for me and fear for our pack.

"We need to talk to the packs again, Tereshan," I tell him. "Or, at least, we need to talk to the ones that we trust and then see who they trust. There are definitely some packs that I'm not sure about, and obviously we won't be speaking to Eason."

"I wonder if he actually knows about our lands. Eason isn't exactly the brightest bulb. Franco could have easily swayed him just because he's greedy. But Roman definitely knows and I'd guess that Ivy does as well."

"Maybe Roman won't defeat Holden in this timeline, Tereshan," I tell him.

He gives me a look. Yeah, that's definitely wishful thinking.

"We need to head back to the packhouse. We have a brothel to buy and then shut down," he says.

"What do you want me to do here?" Keegan says.

Tereshan and I look at the dirt that has been dug up.

"Sift through what you've found. Sell it and use it to buy the equipment that you need to do that phytomining. If you would, I'd appreciate it if you'd look into a larger scale alluvial mining operation for me too. This," he gestures to the small table they have set up, "is nice for a small scale, but not for the large scale I'm going to need."

"Will do. I'll keep an accounting of how much I make on the gold and how much everything costs," Keegan says.

"That's fine, but just keep the difference or if you need more, you know where to find it. I'm going to be needing your services quite a bit in the future."

"Not just mine, my friend," Keegan says.

"After Claire goes into heat, I'll call a pack meeting with the three we trust, your two and Alpha Elio," Tereshan says.

As they've been talking, I've been searching the area. I'm almost positive one of the tunnels is in this area. We're on the edge of our territory and in the area of the empty land behind us. Knowing that it belonged to Franco makes me nearly positive that this is where we'll find the tunnels. Not only do I want to see if I'm right about the gold, but, if these tunnels are here and we don't know where they are, and

Roman does, he could use them to sneak onto our pack lands. It's probably how he and Franco were able to get in before. Something to think about and talk to Tereshan about once we find them.

I've just spotted something that looks off in the ground when I hear Tereshan call out to me.

"Claire, are you ready?"

"One minute," I call back, squatting down and looking at the area. I reach out and tug on some weeds that have grown over a small outcropping. When I pull it away, I frown. It doesn't look right. I reach my hand in and find something hard, something metal.

"Tereshan, can you come here, I think I found something."

"I'm right here," he says, startling me. He has walked up behind me, and I was so engrossed in what I'm doing that I didn't hear him.

"There's something metal here, can you move it." I say.

He squats down next to me and searches until he finds the edge of the metal, then he begins to pull. I step back. Tereshan is strong, very strong, and he is having to use a lot of his strength to pull this metal free.

As soon as it gives way, he falls backward, the metal covering landing where I had been sitting. Keegan bends down.

"What is it?"

Tereshan scoots over to the opening and looks in before turning to me, smiling.

"Looks like my mate found a tunnel." He looks at Keegan. "Shall we?"

"Oh, we shall!" Keegan says excitedly.

I move forward to enter too. "Let me check it first, Claire. If it's safe, I'll let you know and you can join us."

He looks at Keegan. "Do you have a flashlight?"

Keegan jogs over to the table where his guys are washing through the dirt. He gets a flashlight and returns, handing it to Tereshan. Tereshan flashes the light down into the opening.

"It's wider than I was expecting. It looks like there's a ladder here. I'm going in," he says before climbing in feet first, then grabbing the flashlight. He looks at me and winks before climbing down.

A few moments later, he calls out to Keegan that it's safe to descend. Keegan heads down and it's quiet for a couple of moments.

"Tereshan?" I call down.

"Yeah, baby. Come on down. Go feet first, I'll be at the bottom to catch you if you fall."

I do as he says and begin to crawl down the tunnel. The smells in here are definitely of earth but also of minerals. It's a very different smell.

I feel strong hands grab my waist and Tereshan lifts me off the ladder, putting me on my feet.

"Well, my love, look what you found," he says, and Keegan begins panning the flashlight around the tunnel.

The tunnel is high enough that Tereshan can stand without stooping and everywhere Keegan flashes the light, the earth glitters with gold.

"I know we're in a hurry, but I want to see where this tunnel ends up. Claire..."

"I'm coming with you Tereshan. No argument."

We don't know where it will go, but we do know that we're better together.

"Here, take my knife. Just in case," Keegan says.

I take the knife and Tereshan turns, squatting in front of me.

"Hop on. I'm faster than you are."

I tuck the knife away and climb onto Tereshan's back. I know from being in his body that my body barely feels like any weight, and I know I'm too small to keep up with him. This way, I won't slow him down.

He begins racing through the tunnels. I'm holding the flashlight and we both notice that the glimmering of gold decreases the farther we get into the tunnel.

"Franco must have been mining in this area, or at least, he found some gold and followed the source to our pack lands. Once he got close enough, he would have had to stop. The

noise would have alerted us," Tereshan says quietly.

When we begin to see light at the end of the tunnel, Tereshan slows down, listening intently. He turns, looking at me, putting his finger to his lips.

I nod and he moves to the edge of the tunnel. When we get to the end, he puts me on the ground, keeping me behind him. He pokes his head out, sniffing the air and listening before stepping out of the tunnel.

I follow him and look around. We're in the middle of nowhere. There is nothing for miles except a little log cabin and a bunch of machines.

"Well, I guess we found Bryson's hut," Tereshan says.