

Chapter 163: Burning

Claire

We meet outside the packhouse at 5pm. All of the rogues and all of the people that we have rescued from the brothel want to join us. I go to say hello to the parents of the children that we rescued. I haven't had a chance to meet them yet since I had been in heat then with the baby news, it just hadn't happened.

Tereshan gets everyone loaded into vans and we head to the building that once was a hellish prison to many of them. When we arrive, we are greeted by Keegan and his pack members. I immediately go to Zoey and Amelia and hug them. I know this is as hard for them as it is for everyone else. They may not have had to live here, but the prison was still the same.

Tereshan moves to the warriors he sent here earlier. They have created a fire pit that we can use to light the torches and anyone who would like to can toss the burning torches into the building, helping to light it on fire.

Jesiah and another couple of warriors come out with boxes of torches and oil that will be used to maintain the fire on the torches while they burn. They set them in front of the fire pit and Tereshan turns to face the group who has become eerily quiet.

"I know this place holds a lot of bad, evil memories for most, if not all, of you. Tonight, I want you to feel empowered, empowered to help burn it down, empowered to scream your anger, empowered to howl your pain. Whatever you need or want to do tonight, even if it's just to stand and bear witness to the end of a horrible era in our lives, you are free to do that here, tonight."

He gestures to the boxes beside him. "If you choose, you may take a torch, dip it in the oil, light it in the fire pit and toss it into the building. I intend to stay until the building falls to the ground and burns itself out. You are welcome to do the same, or if you choose, someone will take you back to the pack. Again, this evening is for you. You do what you need to do, for yourself, to put this horrible place in your past."

Tereshan steps back, coming to stand beside me. It's quiet a moment and then Zoey steps up, Amelia a step behind her. They each take a torch, dipping it in oil and lighting it on fire. They stand together, side by side and toss their torches into the windows of the brothel. The smashing of glass is almost as satisfying a sound as hearing the whoosh of the fire as it catches inside.



"Fuck you!" Zoey screams.

"You fucking bastards!" Amelia screams.

And it's as if they opened a gate, allowing the flood of emotions from everyone else to come. The women begin stepping up, taking torches, tossing them into the building, some scream, some cry, some show nothing but hatred. Most of the mates step up, also tossing torches into the fire that has started to blaze inside the building, hating the place that they couldn't save their mates from, knowing the torture they endured every day.

Some people begin screaming, many begin howling, especially the rogues that have yet to be able to shift into their human form. There are only a few left, but they are still struggling with having become feral and haven't completely regained their humanity.

I look around at the people gathered here, watching as mates cling to each other, holding each other as the fire rages higher, taking over the second floor. No one leaves, everyone stays to watch.

I feel the pain and regret from my own mate, and I look up at him. He has his own demons from this place, a place he used to frequent. A place where he would come to abuse women. But that's not who my mate is any longer.

I take his hand, snapping him out of his memories and tug him to the torches. I pick one up, dipping it in oil and hold it out for him.

"This night isn't for me," he says quietly.

I answer him through the mind link. 'This place is your past, Tereshan. I am your future. These people are your future. You need to forgive yourself for the person you used to be and recognize that you aren't that person any longer. You are a good and honorable man. You are making better lives for your pack members and the others around you. Take the torch, Tereshan, and burn away your memories, just as you have asked your pack members and the others here to do tonight.' I tell him.

He looks at me with so much anger and pain in his eyes, anger at who he used to be and pain that he was that man.

'Will you come with me?' he asks in the mind link, taking the torch. It's the most vulnerable I've ever heard my mate sound.

Instead of answering, I turn, picking up another torch and dipping it in the oil before turning back to him.



"Together?" I ask out loud.

The relief in his smile and in his eyes makes my heart ache for him. "Together. Always."

We light our torches and step forward, tossing them into the burning building. Tereshan's flies through a second story window, causing a burst of flames and an explosion as the fire finds a new oxygen source to fuel itself. We hear a floor collapse and then the flames are burning past the third floor and through the roof.

We step back, standing and watching the house burn. The cries and howls of those around us have stopped and the only sound in the night is the fire crackling and walls and ceilings collapsing.

I reach out beside me, taking the hand of the person nearest me. It's a rogue and he looks down at our clasped hands before turning and taking his mate's hand. Slowly, everyone begins holding hands and as one, we stand together watching as the building finally gives way and in a rush of dirt, debris and heat, it collapses to the ground.

Cheers go up around us and clasped hands fly into the air as we all feel relief at the death of this horrible place.

Slowly, people begin heading back to the packs. One by one, they leave, until it's only me, Tereshan and the warriors that will stay to guard the area until the heat dies down.

Tereshan wraps his arms around me, pulling me in front of him and leaning down, putting his face by my ear.

"Thank you. I didn't know how much I needed this."

I lay my hands over top of his, leaning back against him and watching the burning embers of what's left of the brothel.

"We all did, Tereshan. We all needed to let go of our past in one way or another," I tell him.

We stand there a bit longer before he pulls back, taking my hand.

"Come on, let's get my mate and my pup back home. I want to start living that future that looks so much brighter than anything I could have ever imagined."

He kisses my nose. "Together?" he asks.

“Together,” I agree.

