

## Epilogue 1: Living

Tereshan

Immediately after the battle, I found out that when Keegan heard we'd been attacked, he had called the alliance members and they had come to fight with us. After Keegan's and Weston's packs arrived, there wasn't much of a fight, but Elio, Adam and Nicholas had come anyway, ready to help if needed. And of course, that had given Emine a chance to get revenge on her brother.

I let her decide the fate of her old pack members that had survived the battle. There were some she knew were good wolves and had only been following their Alpha's orders, but there were others that needed to die. She gave the ones she trusted the option to join her pack and once they agreed, Alpha Nicholas had them taken to his pack. They were still punished for their role in the battle, but after they proved themselves, they were brought in as pack members.

After checking on my pack members and realizing that I hadn't lost a single one, I sent the ones with injuries to the pack hospital, and I found my ranked members. I heard the stories of Roman's and Ivy's deaths and then I declared that everyone should stay overnight and tomorrow it would be time for all of our packs to celebrate.

"Tomorrow, Claire and I will celebrate our 19th birthday! Let's clean up the mess of battle tonight and then tomorrow, I declare an entire day of rest and celebration. Everyone is invited!" I say.

The packs cheer. I send Claire in to get cleaned up and let the rest of the pack out of the safe rooms. While she and the other she-wolves go to collect the pups, the males begin collecting the dead and piling them into a spot far away from the packhouse.

"You're going to burn the bodies, right?" Keegan asks, coming up to me.

"Yes. I'm debating on taking Roman's and Ivy's bodies and leaving them in the area between our three packs and letting them rot, but I don't want to have to smell it and remember them any longer than I have to."

"Why not put one in each of the tunnels and blow the tunnels. You can bury them there."

"You want me to blow the tunnels?" I ask him.

"It would be an easy way to get rid of the bombs," Weston says, walking up and hearing us.

"I'll ask Claire, see what she thinks. She's the rational one in our mate bond. If she agrees, we'll end tomorrow night with a bang. Literally!"

When we're finally done, we head back to the packhouse. Our mates are standing there, waiting for us, our pups in their arms. I feel the pack's overwhelming sense of love and pride at being part of our pack, having defeated the enemy to so many, and the hope, so much hope, for a bright future.

Like the other males, I stop only briefly to kiss my mate and son. I have blood and guts from the battle, and I smell like burning flesh. I don't want them to get any of that on them. I take a deep breath of my mate's lemon scent mixed with my son's blueberry scent.

I make sure that everyone has some place to stay for the night before walking with Claire to our room. When I walk in, I see my mate has plans for us tonight.

"What's all of this?" I ask her.

"I want to stay up until midnight. I want to know that this time, it's real. That our life is now ours, that we won."

I turn and look at my sweet mate. "I won the moment I agreed to take you as my mate. Even if my life had ended tonight, I would have won. One year with you was worth everything I endured to get here. But, if we're being given more than a year, I'm going to take it and I'm going to enjoy every moment that I have with you, my mate, my greatest love."

I kiss the top of her head before going into the bathroom. She takes Salvatore to his room, putting him to bed before coming into the bathroom with me.

When I get out of the shower, Claire is naked, looking at me in a way that I've grown used to, but will never get enough of.

"Make love to me, Tereshan. Let's ring in our birthdays as we should have done in the last two timelines. Let's finally end this repeating year and begin our lives anew."

I go to my mate, lifting her up and carrying her to our bed. I lay her down making love to her well into the early morning hours, worshiping her body, savoring her taste and listening to her scream my name multiples times before finally wishing her a happy 19th birthday and curling up around her to sleep.

The next morning, we both wake early, excited to finally start our lives for what feels like the first time. First, I make love to my mate again.

"A birthday boy gets his favorite treat on his birthday, and my favorite treat is right here," I tell her, burying my face between her thighs. I lick and suck on her, reveling in her taste and her screams until our son demands his own breakfast.

While Claire feeds Sal, I get dressed and feel around to see who's up already. To my surprise, nearly the entire pack is awake. I look at Claire, frowning.

"Are you able to hear the pack?"

She looks thoughtful for a moment. "Yes....and no," she says.

As soon as she's done feeding Sal, I take him, burping him while she gets ready. I'm getting antsy, not sure what's going on with the pack and not liking that I can't get a good feel of what's happening. Is this some new thing? A new timeline?

When we finally get downstairs, I understand. Claire, Sal and I walk into the kitchen and the entire pack yells, "SURPRISE!" making Sal wake up and begin crying.

I look around seeing all of our pack members and our friends.

"Oh, thank goodness! Do you know how hard it is to block you when you're pushing to hear the pack?" Dane says, coming up and giving me a quick hug.

"It's our Alpha's and Luna's birthday, and the entire pack wanted to celebrate. We've been up all night preparing. We, that is, your pack members, allies, and friends, wanted you to know how much we appreciate you and everything you've done for us."

I look around the room. There are hundreds of people here to celebrate our birthday. The entire back of the packhouse and the outside have been decorated.

We sit, having a huge breakfast provided by Keegan and Elio, then music starts playing outside and Claire and I begin walking around, talking to everyone, introducing anyone that hasn't met our son, meeting others' pups. We spend time with our allies and their pups.

True to her word, Emine let Nicholas mark her last night. Something about becoming his Luna, being officially mated, has softened her overnight. Not that she is soft, she's not, but it's like being mated has smoothed out her rough edges.

As the day goes on, and the celebration continues, I look around my pack.

Everyone is laughing, talking and showing off their pups. Our pack has never been stronger and our alliance has never been as powerful as it is today.

I pull my mate into my lap and she holds our son in hers. The two most important people in my life are in my arms as the sun starts to set.

I lean in, kissing Claire's head. "Well, I didn't get you jewelry this year, but I did get you a different kind of fireworks," I tell her.

I look at Weston and he nods. I checked and he and Keegan put Ivy's body in one tunnel and Roman's in another.

I get the attention of everyone and let them know that we have one more celebration item for today. I take my mate's hand, carrying my son in a baby carrier and I take us to a place that is far enough away that it shouldn't bother Sal, but where we can see the explosions.

As we get to the spot where I want Claire to stand, I turn to the pack.

"Many of you suffered at Roman's hand, Ivy's hand or Eason's hand. As you know, they were not part of the pyres that we built last night. That's because we have placed Roman in one tunnel and Ivy in another. Eason was in two parts, so his head is with Roman and his body with Ivy. If you will all turn and watch with me, we will mark the end of an era. An era that I will never allow again in my lifetime," I say and turn, nodding to Weston.

A moment later, the bombs go off in first one tunnel and then the other. We hear the sound then see the earth move where the bombs were placed. The explosion causes the ground to collapse in on itself and in the last rays of the setting sun, all you can see is glittering gold.

Everywhere.

"Oh my goddess, Tereshan. We're filthy rich," Claire says.