

Epilogue 1 - Auri

We stood gathered on the Italian countryside. It was cloudy but there would be no rain. For the first time in a long time, everyone stood together. Werewolves, witches, vampires, and fey stood side by side to pay their respects to the Alpha King. Vale was encased in stone now. A sarcophagus that stood on the hill of the memorial spot we had chosen. It was carved with running wolves following the one wolf, their king. People came forward and spoke. Spoke of how Vale touched their lives in some way or another. Not just for him though. For Jax, for the wolves we lost in the battles and the ones who went back to their own packs. For Wendy and in my heart all the ones who had lost their lives to Oran's sick and twisted desires.

Hector was sitting on my right, his hand on my knee. Both my hands though were clasped in Zeke's. Reagan and Rowan were sitting behind us with our kids. Luckily, all four of them made a complete recovery. Only certain things came up, sometimes being alone in a dark room, or a small space could you see the memories and flashes of fear. However, they had a foundation.

We moved into the castle just outside the pack territory permanently, so Rowan and Reagan always had someone with them. They took their Dad's death roughly but we did our best to be there for them as much as possible. Zeke was doing a wonderful job of continuing being a pillar for everyone. Far more than I could have ever asked of him.

"Auri..." Hector squeezed my knee and I looked up.

No one was standing in front of the memorial. Closing my eyes, I took a deep breath. My hands slid out from Zeke's and I stood. The slight chatter stopped as I stepped

Epilogue 1 - Auri

forward a few steps. I stood, looking at the white marble he was now forever resting under. It hurt to swallow as I tried to hold back my tears.

Taking a deep breath, I began to sing. My voice shook but I balled up my fists and squeezed my eyes shut. A singular deep breath allowed me to find the voice I needed. It was decades ago but it was the same song I sang for the first memorial I had ever done. It was also Max's favorite. A song Vale picked up on without knowing it. Letting my power free, my eyes I knew changed to gold but my back was turned to everyone.

Out of the ground erupted spirals of roots that wove their way over Vale's casket. They came together above it and the tree became thick and branched off in multiple directions. There were audible gasps from behind me but I paid them no mind. I focused on the tree manifesting to my power. It branched out wide before the green filled the bare limbs. At the song climaxed, white flowers erupted within the foliage and suddenly the area was surrounded in white petals. A hand touched my shoulder and I covered it with my own.

My eyes closed as I finished the song, letting my power dissipate. The words at the end of the song were lost as I turned and sobbed into Zeke's shoulder. He was shaking as well but he held me tight.

"This fits much better. Thank you, Auri. Vale would have been happy." He choked out the last sentence.

I just nodded, trying to gather myself before I faced the crowd behind me. Zeke let me go and I looked out into the crowd. Their eyes split between me and the tree that now towered over the area. Everyone had tears in their eyes or evidence of them on their cheeks. Hector reached out and pulled me to him. His arms encompassed me completely and he held me tight.

Epilogue 1 - Auri

"That was beautiful, my love. A send off only you could provide. His soul can rest with the goddess now."

I turned my head slightly to see Zeke, still standing before the tree, looking up at the flowers that continued to bloom under magic.

He was quiet for a moment before he turned to the crowd.

"He would be pissed at the sorry state we all are."

This brought out a few chuckles.

"Vale was a mate who was kind and considerate. He took care of me even when I didn't want him to. He protected me while trying to be the best king he could possibly be. Vale didn't even know what that meant but he followed by example of the pervious king." Zeke's eyes met mine.

"Vale put everyone first. He always did. He always thought about how his people would be better off. Be protected. Be saved. At the same time looking to the other races for guidance, protection, and also peace. He knew in order to do that and bring peace, sacrifices had to be made. So he made it himself. Now, we must turn and not let his sacrifice be in vain."

Zeke took a deep breath. "We will work towards peace. A peace everyone can enjoy. A peace that our next Alpha King, who is here today, can continue and help nourish our way of life. Vale would want us to work towards a future of inclusion and love. I just hope to help follow in his footsteps as everyone else should as well."

I was so proud of him. He'd been holding it together in front of others so well. One more than one occasion, I'd listened to him fall apart. Listened as he tore through Vale's clothes only to collapse in a mess on the floor. Feeling your mate's death was one of the worst possible things you could feel and while Vale did spare Zeke, that

Epilogue 1 - Auri

pain was still there.

The destruction of his world, his support, his love was torn and I know he blamed himself. I didn't have room to talk. I blamed myself as much if not more. Hector squeezed my arm and I looked up at him. He had a sad smile on his face and I nodded. Closing myself off wasn't an option anymore and so he could feel everything pouring out of me. The hate, the blame, the loathing, the pain but Hector bared it all for me as he helped me to step away from the darkness that I would find myself falling into.

After Zeke spoke, he sat back down next to me and other brought forth flowers, placing them in-between the roots of the tree. We sat in the front row, watching the garden bloom and Zeke finally rested his head on my shoulder.

"I don't know how to move forward from here. Setting this up, making the plans, its the only thing that kept me going. Now what do I do?"

I rested my head against his. "Well, the next single step. You can think of the pack. You are Alpha now. Or you can focus on the small things."

"Like?"

Chuckling, I squeezed his hands. "Like the twins starting school. Or the fact the the downstairs bathroom sink leaks. Or that there is going to be a storm this weekend and we need to bring all the toys in."

He chuckled but it turned into sobs and his head turned into my shoulder. "How am I supposed to do this without him, Auri?"

I pulled an arm out from Hector and wrapped it around Zeke. "You just take it a step at a time. It seems impossible now, but you're not alone. You won't ever be.

Epilogue 1 - Auri

We will take every day as it comes. Some days are going to be bad, some good, some worse. But at the end of the day, being there for your family is all that matters. All that you can do, as a leader and as a parent."

Looking up at the tree, I smiled a genuine smile. "He would have wanted it that way. For you to continue cooking even though you can't handle anything spicy."

Zeke let out a snort.

"He'd want you to be happy too. No matter what. Not today. Not tomorrow. But I know, one day, we will be able to hold all those times with him as happy memories. Ones that we tell stories about and laugh. One day, it will come. Not yet. But one day."

Hector kissed the side of my head and I looked at him, nodding. He brushed the tears away and just sat with Zeke and I. The procession finished and I turned to who was left. The kids were still sitting in the row behind us, all holding hands with Reagan and Rowan. Behind them, near the back, Logan sat with Týr, Syf, and Freya. I let out a sigh and slipped my arm from Hector.

"Zeke, why don't you get the kids back. I made some things special for when they got back. Everything is in the fridge, you just need to take it out."

Zeke looked back and then up at me. "You sure?"

I nodded. "Yeah. Take Hector with you to wrangle them. They've been sitting for a while, so I know they might be a little antsy."

"Love, if..."

My glare shot right through Hector. "I'm not having you start a fight with Logan right now. Please. Just take the kids and go. Let me talk to them."

Epilogue 1 - Auri

He nodded and picked up Herr, Sammy, and Sir. Zeke took Reagan while Gale, took hold of Rowan's hand and Bast had his other hand. The rest of the kids filed down the aisle of the chairs. I walked behind them, stopping at the last row.

SURPRISE GIFT: 100 BONUS FREE FOR YOU

GET IT



Comments



Vote (22.6K)

