

## Chapter 127

Aislinn stood to shift and go with Cullen, but Malik's voice stopped them. He sounded strangely strong over all the howling and commotion. "She'll be of more help here," he said simply.

Cullen growled. He didn't really want her anywhere near the dres or what was about to happen. He looked to Malik as if he had just been given and excellent excuse. Stay, he ordered.

"Don't you dare pull that bullshit on me," she growled right back. "You're my mate not my father."Ⓢ(w)(w).ñoV&PℱⓈⓈRm.c(ñ)

Cullen growled. He looked to the woods and he could see Cadifor and Makeda charging into the woods with others. His place was in the front of the charge. He had already missed that.

Malik put his hand on Aislinn's arm. "If you help us fewer men will die," he said as he looked into her eyes.wŴW.noveIℱoℜm.cOm

Aislinn turned indecisively to Cullen and then back to Malik and she nodded. The instant he thought he could trust her to not follow, Cullen bolted for the woods. Aislinn was amazed at how fast he moved. As he entered the tree line she had a terrible fear in the pit of her stomach and a tear started in her eye for no reason that she knew of. She was terrified.

"So," she turned to Malik, "what can I do to help?"

"You'll know when it's time."

Aislinn's eyes opened wide in anger. "You did not just say that. I let him run into that alone and you're going to go all druid on me?"

Malik couldn't hide the grin on his face when she said that. He swallowed to stop himself from laughing at her. It was an odd feeling to having in the middle of the situation they were in. "He's far from alone in that fight. I can't tell you what to do because I don't know what to do. You are a strange one Aislinn. You've learned to give in to the fates enough that you can bring messages back from premonitions. That isn't an easy feat. But you haven't learned to extend the faith beyond those situations. Usually a druid learns to trust the fates in all ways before he has enough strength to surrender his will in a situation as uncontrollable as a premonition. You really are quite intriguing."

Aislinn was speechless. "This isn't the time or place for lessons. If you don't know what I can do to help then why did you stop me from leaving with Cullen. I can definitely help him."

"I just felt that you'd be of more help here," he said. "That's all."

"Fine," she growled, wondering if she'd be able to catch up to Cullen if she followed. "What are you going to do?"

"Protect the circle," he said.

"They're not here yet."

"They will be."

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Cullen could hear screaming and could smell blood before he made it to the perimeter of the actual fight. When he came through the trees and caught sight of the actual battle rage seared though him. A thing that could only be described as a monster in Cullen's mind was surrounded by eight or more lycans. The dire wolf was head and shoulders taller than the largest of the lycans surrounding him and twice as wide. The lycans threw themselves at him. They clawed at his back and face and took chunks of flesh with them when he threw them off. He didn't seem to have a neck beneath all the muscle. That made it difficult for the lycans to take his throat out.

As the shock wore off Cullen charged in with the rest to take his turn. The lycans instinctively attacked as a team. Cullen growled in rage as one of his men was thrown bodily into a tree. Even in the chaos a sickening crack could be heard and the man didn't stand back up. Cullen charged again as the beast turned to claw at another lycan. Cullen managed to knock the dire to the ground and instantly the other lycans swarmed it. The amount of damage that had to be done in order to kill the dire lycan was sickening. They all stood over the monster on the ground breathing hard and waiting to see that it didn't stand back up. Somewhere in the woods Cullen could hear gunshots. That meant that the lycans who had been in the cabin were involved if someone had managed to involve real weapons. Cullen turned toward the nearest sound of fighting and darted through the trees to the next target.

One at a time, he told himself in frustration.

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Mack caught up to Keith as they headed north through the woods. When they came across the gigantic wolf-beast Keith couldn't help himself. Which one of the human Hollywood makeup artists came up with this one? He followed his comment with the closest thing to a snicker that his hybrid form could manage through a muzzle.

Mack growled his annoyance at Kieth's attempt to be humorous. Not funny, he growled back. Together the two of them joined the group that was already attacking the monstrous lycan. There were already several bloody bodies on the ground around the thing's feet. Keith vaulted over one of the bodies and straight at the dire's head. Mack was with him but his lunge was aimed at the thing's chest. Keith hit it first and Mack's weight added to the tackle knocked it backward into a tree. Keith's claws raked at its head and Mack's jaws crunched down on its arm.

The dire roared in pain as Keith managed to take out an eye. The others were going after its legs and stomach. The dire flailed for anything and managed to get its claw's on Mack. Keith was thrown to the ground and the half blinded dire lycan lifted Mack in its grip then bit down on Mack's shoulder. Blood gushed from the wound and Mack screamed in pain.

Keith tried to stand but found his leg wouldn't hold him. Forcing himself up he tired to go to Mack's aid as the dire lycan ripped at Mack's stomach with one viscous claw. The other lycans managed to get its arms and the dire dropped Mack's bleeding form to the ground. Keith grabbed his friend by the arm and pulled him back from the frenzy just as the other lycans brought the dire to the ground.wℱ(w).nⓈⓈ(s)ⓈⓈⓈRm.cⓈm

Mack was coughing up blood. He closed his eyes as Keith begged him to hang on for just a little longer. We only need to get back to the cabin. Mack!

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Cullen busted into a small clearing in the woods. There was one monster fighting off six or more lycans while some Tairneach he recognized were herding some people around the fight. Cullen started to head for the strange group when Maon appeared in front of him. He hadn't changed yet.

Cullen knew Jenna's favorite lackey well. Maon, Cullen said. Jenna must be somewhere nearby. She never let's your leash out too far.

Maon growled but continued to smile. He nodded toward the fight with the dire lycan that was taking place nearby. "You gonna let your men die so you can banter with me Arnauk?"

Cullen's head snapped around. The dire had two men pinned under its gigantic paws and the others couldn't get in close enough to do anything about it. Without another glance at Maon he charged the dire lycan and barreled hard enough into its side for one of the men to crawl free. But he wasn't getting back up to join the fight.

Cullen tore into the dire lycan's side with his teeth. The beast roared angrily and swiped at Cullen with a blow hard enough to crack a rib or two and tear a gash in his side. Cullen ignored the pain and charged back into the fray. One of the lycans who had been thrown from the fight panicked and ran off into the woods. Cullen watched the man flee regretting the loss of number but understanding the feeling as he watched the monster's jaws tear into the lycan he was holding down. The man screamed in pain as his arm was ripped from his body and thrown into the bushes leaving a trail of blood behind. Cullen roared in rage jumped onto the creature's back and with all his strength grabbed hold of the dire's head and threw himself bodily to the ground, using his weight and strength to try and break its neck. There was a brief instant when Cullen felt the world flash as the beast swiped at his head and only barely missed his eyes, leaving a gash along his forehead and cheek. Then came the cracking bones and the beast crumbled to the ground. Cullen knelt bleeding and breathing heavily as the others ripped into the limp body to finish him off. The massacre continued long after the body stopped twitching.