

Chapter 143

When Cullen and Aislinn finally woke up they cuddled some more and then got dressed to go downstairs and say good-bye to their guests. They had a few things they needed to do and then Cullen was taking Aislinn up to a little cabin high in the mountains. It had belonged to his grandfather and wasn't nearly as big, nice, or convenient as the pack cabin. It was wear his grandparents had hid from the human population and raised his father, aunts, and uncles. Cullen never took anyone there and even Keith and Sarah didn't know where exactly it was. But that was part of the point.

Cullen and Aislinn came down the stairs hand in hand. When they got into the great room there was a lot of congratulations and hand shaking and smiling. Part of the generally happy and excited atmosphere had to do with the fact that the night had gone so well. Cadifor was already gone. He had used the satphone earlier that day. Jenna had been spotted. As much as Cadifor wanted to stick around and find out what Cullen was going to do to him for playing with Aislinn the way he had the night before Cadifor had a lost prisoner to recover and was taking the loss more than a little personally.

Aislinn was watching Celia and Mack cuddle on the couch. Celia was only a couple weeks ahead of her and was obviously pregnant. She wasn't huge by any means. But her stomach showed an bulge that couldn't be mistaken for fat. Celia got up and came walking over to them. She smiled warmly at Aislinn. It was such a strange look coming from the woman. Celia actually leaned in and hugged Aislinn.

"Congratulations," Celia said. Then she stepped back from the hug and looked at Aislinn happily. "I was just wondering when you and Lord Arnauk would be back?"

Aislinn shrugged and looked over at Cullen. "I'm kinda just along for the ride. He hasn't even told me where we're going."

Cullen smiled mischeviously. "Probably a week. Maybe two. It depends. I had originally planned a month alone. But," he looked at Aislinn with a goofy grin that had Celia and the others watching curious what the secret was, "I don't think that will be a reasonable possibility now."

Celia couldn't help a little jealousy. She had never seen Lord Arnauk look at any woman the way he looked at Aislinn. She smiled at him. "I really am happy for you," she said. "I can't help but wonder what the grin is all about."

Cullen didn't answer. He just grinned some more and Aislinn shook her head. There'd be no keeping it secret if he kept looking like that. Oh well, it's not like I can hide it much longer anyway. "Why were you curious when we'll be back?" Aislinn wanted to change the subject. She wanted to tell her grandmother first.

"Mack and I want to wait to be mated until you both return," she said still looking curiously at them both. "So I have to admit that I'm happy it will be sooner," she said and stroked the bulge on her stomach. "I'm going to look ridiculous enough as it is. And that's only going to keep getting worse."

Aislinn grinned. "But you're going to have babies," she said excitedly. "That doesn't look ridiculous. Just consider it extra incentive."

Mack was sitting on the couch listening. He chuckled when Celia groaned.

Cullen and Aislinn excused themselves and headed into the kitchen. They grabbed something to eat. There were tons of great leftovers from last night's banquet. Cullen kept touching her. She couldn't keep his hands off of her, especially her stomach. "Well even if you don't announce it, people are going to figure it out if you keep this up," she hissed and playfully batted his hands away.

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"Then go out there and tell Brinah," he said softly. "Quickly," he added. She knew that he'd never be happy with her going into the stone circle where he couldn't get to her. There was something about it that unsettled him. "Then I'll tell everyone. We're leaving in the morning. I want to deal with saying our good-byes tonight so that we don't have to stop in the morning." He kissed her neck and cuddled her some more.

"Hey now," an older omega said in a grandmotherly tone. "The kitchen is for eating. If you both intend to play some more then take it into the other room. Pups," she growled in exasperation.

Cullen stayed in the great room to talk to everyone and Aislinn snuck out the front door. She walked down the path toward the stones. When she got there she was surprised to find Nora there. Aislinn had been introduced to the woman the night before. But it had been brief and hectic.

The older woman watched Aislinn approach. "It's good to see you survived the mating. You certainly are a remarkable young woman. But truly that is to be expected of Brinah's offspring."

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Aislinn stared at Nora uncertainly. "I've just come to see her."

Nora nodded. "I'd been told you were capable. Do you realize what a rare gift that is?"

Aislinn shook her head. "I don't know much about that side of myself. Now that there will be time I was going to spend time with my grandmother here and try and figure it out."

"I'm glad you've decided to embrace that part of yourself. I'm sure it would be easier to continue to ignore it and make your life with the lycans."

"I've never been good at ignoring anything," Aislinn said.

"But we make you uncomfortable," Nora said.

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Aislinn didn't answer. Of course they made her uncomfortable. She had trouble trusting people. Cullen made her nervous at first.

Nora smiled gently as if she understood. "Brinah is only capable of so much. And you will find that as the length of time since she has died increases it will become increasing more difficult to speak to her. When you decide that you are ready. We'll still be there and if you wish to learn more. I believe I will take my leave of you now." Nora looked around. "This is a beautiful place. I'm glad that one of ours will be watching over it. Too many of our places have been lost to time and what humans call civilization." Nora didn't say good-bye. She just headed down the path away from the stone circle.

Aislinn looked around and then took a deep breath. She closed her eyes and thought of her grandmother. She felt the energy run through her and then there was a sense of calm and change. She knew that when she opened her eyes she'd be in the still place with her grandmother. There was a strange sense of accomplishment that ran through her as she realized she was starting to be able to tell the difference.

Aislinn opened her eyes and saw Brinah standing there. She smiled sadly. She wished she could hug her grandma. But she figured that at least she could see and talk with her. Aislinn didn't like that Nora has said this would get more difficult in the future.

Brinah smiled at Aislinn. She wished she could have played a role of some kind in her granddaughter's mating the night before. She walked up to Aislinn. "I'm so happy for you child."

Aislinn blushed a little. "Did you see what happened last night, Grandma?"

Brinah grinned. "You didn't think I'd miss it, would you?"

Aislinn's blush increased. "I guess I didn't think about it. But you're okay with it?"

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"As long as you're happy, I'm happy for you. He certainly seems to make you happy. And he appears to be a good guy." Brinah's eyes were full of love and pride. Aislinn almost cried. "Is there anything else," Brinah asked in a knowing tone.