

Chapter 56

Brinah sat thinking. "That will allow me to make a compound that will counteract the one he's using. But that won't stop him. It will only make it harder for him." She thought some more. Cullen could see her mind working over what she had been told earlier. "If he's making weres then he has to have recreated something ancient. When I was still with the Circle that kind of alchemy wasn't practiced any longer. I know that in ancient times, when Rome threatened the Celts, the Circle created a compound that when mixed with animal blood and ingested over a period of time would give the person who drank it the characteristics of the animal that the blood came from. It was a lengthy and painful process. When it was completed the person was able to change into that animal. Hence all of you. It was done by a small group within our number that thought we should fight back. Seeing as we weren't fighters and Rome was so powerful they theorized that the only way for us to protect ourselves was to have guardians that were stronger than the Roman legions."

Sarah shook her head. "I always thought that was a story told to us when we were children to make us more sympathetic to the druids. I thought that the druids started that story because they wanted to guilt us into protecting them. Make it seem like we should show them respect and loyalty."

Brinah smiled. "In the end all creatures with a brain assert themselves. We watched the lycans grow and move on to create their own identities and we were pleased to see it. Humans who didn't understand us or what we had done turned it all into stories about druids being shape shifters, able to speak to animals, and things like that. Everyone creates their own legends to make what they don't understand make sense. I'm sure that even our stories about that time have become tainted over the years. Believe what you like about your origins. The truth about history isn't what the current dilemma is about. Right now, if Rafe is using ancient alchemy to create weres there is nothing I can give you to stop that. Once it's done then it's done. I can only tell you that it is possible."

Cullen nodded. "If it takes a long period of time to do, are there stages? Does it just stop if you stop drinking the compound?" He was trying to ask the questions without bringing up Aislinn. She had obviously not told her grandmother about what Rafe had done to her. So he didn't want to make things worse between himself and Aislinn by saying something she didn't want said. He had a hope that Aislinn would understand and not leave there hating him. The thought of her leaving ripped through him and he lost track of the conversation momentarily.Brinah's answer snapped him back into the moment.

"I don't know for certain," she said. "It was taught as history when I was a child. But the details of the compound and how it worked weren't included in the lesson. There were some, like Rafe, who tried to find the old compounds and spent a great deal of time researching our past. But I was never one of them."

"You talk like you knew him," Cullen replied in a despondent tone.

"A long time ago. He wasn't a very friendly child. But I was on my way out of the Circle at that time. He was still very young. He just had... cruel tendencies. There wasn't a member of our group that didn't know who that child was."

Cullen nodded. "So then what about the stones. Apparently he wants them for some reason."

Brinah didn't really want to explain that one. But she had come this far. "The stones aren't what he wants. The stones are just a marker. He could find what he wants in any number of places. The stones are just an indication that he definitely found the right spot. We used the stones to demark the location of an intersection of ley lines. It's a point of power. If you know how to use the power it can be a very dangerous place. We held rituals there. The site could be used to make compounds stronger, if that's what he's doing. It's hard to say what kinds of things he might be up to if he's determined to take possession of that location. You'd be better off dealing with him in a different place."

"Is there anything else significant that you might be able to add to this?" Cullen wanted to be done with the meeting.

"I'll keep thinking. But from the sounds of things, he has you outnumbered, with stronger fighters, and he's using alchemy to undermine your ability to fight him. It doesn't sound very promising."

w(w)w.nov@lwo™.coM

Cullen nodded. "No it doesn't he said." And at that moment he just didn't care. He got up from his chair and headed out of the office.

Keith and Sarah looked at each other. This wasn't good. Sarah was the one who spoke. She was completely unable to hide the frustration in her voice, "Brinah. I totally sympathize with you wanting your granddaughter back. But it seems to me that someone who left her own family or Circle or whatever you had behind, to marry someone and cut yourself off from everything you knew, might understand what's going on between them."

Brinah stood up and met Sarah's anger head on. "I was in love with my husband. What happened between us is totally different from an alpha lycan adding an additional female to his numbers."

Sarah's eyes shifted and swirled with amber as her wolf tried to surface out of loyalty toward Cullen and this ignorant woman's words against him. "Eistigi liom. I have never seen Cullen Arnauk in love with a woman the way he is with your granddaughter. I had always been given the impression that druids were observant and intelligent. I would have thought you should have seen that."

Brinah stood her ground and waited. She refused to perpetuate this argument. If the man was in love with Aislinn then that was yet to be seen. Brinah couldn't believe he'd give her over so easily if he were really in love with her.*w(w)w.nov@lwo™.coM*

Keith was the one who broke the battle of silence. "Do you women think that we can deal with this in the morning? I don't know about both of you but I've had a long day. And tomorrow promises to be longer. The women agreed without a word and Brinah was escorted to her bedroom. She thought about looking for Aislinn, but decided to give her some space and find her first thing in the morning. When Aislinn had been a child she had always preferred to be upset by herself and would come looking for comfort when it was wanted.

Cullen went up to his room. He waited for a time trying to think of what he would say. He lay on his bed feeling how empty it was and thinking that if he could fall asleep then he might wake up to find her in his arms and have this evening be just a bad dream. Well aside from the afternoon in the library. He closed his eyes and smiled painfully as he remembered how it had felt sitting in that chair with her lying on his chest. He could almost hear the soft purr-like sounds she had been making. There was no way he could sleep.

When Aislinn didn't come up he started to get nervous. It took some effort but he decided to go looking for her. Keith's comment about chasing after a woman echoed in his brain again. The longer he was away from Aislinn the more Cullen's resolve to let her go was breaking. He was thinking that he should just apologize or tell her it was a misunderstanding. Maybe he should try the truth and say he had thought it would be what she wanted. Then he could ask her to stay with him instead. Depending on how angry she was with him maybe he'd beg her to stay.

When Cullen had searched the entire building, including the casino and every other room she had never been in he began to panic. He virtually threw a couple customers out of the elevator and hit the button for the basement.*w(w)w.nov@lwo™.coM*

Cullen stormed into the security suite. There were computers and monitors along all of the walls. One of the monitors was even monitoring the security suite that monitored the casino. That was the room that the human cops saw if they ever needed into the Madadh-Allaidh Saobhaidh surveillance system for some reason. This room contained the system that monitored the rest of the building.

Cullen violently pulled the chair out from under the man who had been watching the monitors with disinterest. The poor guy landed on his butt on the floor and then scrambled to bow his head to the angry alpha standing over him.

"Find Aislinn," Cullen ordered. "I need to know if she's anywhere in this building. If she isn't I need to know when she left." Then he stood there with his arms crossed, waiting.

It took a second for the lycan to realize that Cullen meant for him to do it instantaneously. He jumped and fidgeted as he played with buttons and moved cameras and checked monitors. After enough time to cause Cullen to begin pacing the man said, "I don't think she's here General. It'll take me a little bit to find out when she left." There was an intimidated tremor to the man's voice. He knew that was not what Cullen wanted to hear.

Cullen growled menacingly. Fear boiled up in him. He knew she was in danger. He just felt it and his instincts were rarely wrong. "When you find her, call me immediately." With that Cullen stormed out of the room and back to the elevator.

He paced in the elevator as it headed up. He didn't know what to do. He had no idea where to start looking. It was incredibly late and everyone was already in bed. She may have just taken off and was fine. He kept trying to reassure himself but he couldn't shake the feeling that there was something terribly wrong.*Ww(w)w.nov@lwo™.coM*

When elevator doors opened on the 13th floor, he stood there a moment looking down the hall. It was mostly empty. The carpet was well worn from all the people in his pack that came and went on this floor. He could hear a television down the hall where all the insomniacs were currently getting their fix of some bad horror flick. He walked down the hall like a zombie. He was the alpha. He was supposed to know what to do.