

Chapter 70

The girl beamed at Aislinn as though nothing else in the world could have made her as happy as having brought Aislinn these clothes. The girl was being so sweet that Aislinn thought to take advantage of it. "Do you think you might be able to help me with one more thing?"*wvw.Novellwor@cóm*

Milis nodded happily. "Of course."

"Well I was wondering where the bathroom is," Aislinn said hastily. "But when I get done with that." She paused and tried to think of how to put it. Fuck it, Aislinn thought angrily. There is no delicate way of saying I'm ignorant and don't know how to control this curse that's been dumped on me. "I don't know how to change this back to normal," she said uncomfortably.

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Milis' happy look turned to uncertainty. She shifted and seemed to think about how Aislinn had said that. "Normal?"

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"Human looking," Aislinn responded. But that didn't seem to help Milis return to the happy helpful girl she had been moments before.

She nodded and looked at Aislinn sympathetically. "I'm sorry. I think you're asking me to help you learn how to shift. That's really kind of a personal thing. Parents teach it to their children privately. It's rather a-

Aislinn had the overwhelming fear that she would be like this forever. She interrupted Milis. "Well I don't have parents or anyone else to teach me anything," she said angrily and teary eyed.

Milis lowered her head again. "I am sorry, Miss. But perhaps one of the betas or Lord Arnauk-

Aislinn interrupted her again and the anger in her voice increased and a note of sarcasm filtered into it. "Lord Arnauk has more important things to do than deal with me."

Milis raised her eyes at that. Obvious confusion and disbelief marred her face. "Miss, Lord Arnauk brought the entire pack out here looking for you. He risked and lost a lot of lives to get to you. Not the least of which was his own. It may not be my place to say, but the tone you used when speaking of him wasn't what I would have expected from that. He wouldn't have done this for anyone else that I know of." Milis looked personally offended.

Aislinn could see from the near fear in the girl's eyes that mingled with the rest of her emotions that normally Milis would not have been quite this bold. But she doesn't know about what happened in the office. "Fine. Thank you for your help," Aislinn said shortly. "Just point me toward the bathroom."

Milis returned the snippy tone and sent Aislinn down the hall. After getting cleaned up Aislinn headed outside. She wanted to clear her head. As she walked across the lawn she started to rethink the day in Cullen's office. She thought about how little was actually said. She thought about how they continually seemed to be misunderstanding each other. But there wasn't anything to misunderstand. He was getting rid of me, she thought. When she looked up she found that she was standing in the clearing just outside the standing stones.

Horrible memories raced into her mind. She had to work hard to block the image of her grandmother's body lying on the ground out of her mind. She wrapped her arms around herself and shivered.

Cullen watched Aislinn head across the lawn toward the woods. He instantly got up and headed out of his office, down the hall, and through a side door. He'd be damned if he was going to let her take off without a word. He didn't trust her to stay put for an instant. When he got out the side door he saw a pretty little brunette following quietly from a distance. Keith's idea of a guard. If Aislinn wants to leave that little thing isn't stopping her. Cullen scared Milis as he came up behind her. "I've got her. Go on back to the cabin."

Milis nodded gratefully and disappeared back inside. She had looked frustrated. Cullen wondered what Aislinn had done to upset Milis. Hard to say with Aislinn, he thought angrily. She seems to have a gift for that. By the time he caught up with her, she was standing in the clearing outside the stones and holding herself. Cullen felt his anger melting when he saw the obvious signs of her upset. She had lost her grandmother and everything else that had happened. He was compelled to go to her, but he didn't think he could take it if she pushed him away again.

Aislinn heard the footsteps coming up behind her. As a breeze filtered passed her she caught his scent and knew Cullen was watching her. Her heart was thudding in her chest. She was so tired of feeling like this and now she wasn't even positive that she was thinking straight. What I wouldn't give for a premonition now. But her dreams lately had all been nightmares reflective of her day life. She waited to see if he would do something or if he intended to just stand there watching her. Well, I suppose it's encouraging that he isn't just letting it go. I suppose I'm going to have to talk to him eventually. When he didn't do or say anything she walked toward the standing stones. The one that had been toppled in the fight the night before still lay flat. "Is someone going to stand it back upright?" she called out to him to see if he would respond.

Cullen let her voice sink into him. At least she sounds willing to talk, he thought as he stepped out of the edge of the woods and approached her. He noticed she was still in her hybrid form and wondered if she liked it that well or if she was having trouble controlling her change. When she tried to hide her face from him, he figured the later. Everything left of his anger ebbed away and was replaced with guilt for not having been able to keep her safe.

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"Someone will probably stand it back up. There have been other concerns to this point." He managed to get up next to her without her trying to get away. Something about her demeanor made him a bit braver and he let an arm slide around her back. When she didn't pull away he put his other hand beneath her chin and made her look at him. He smiled at her, reading the hurt and confusion in her eyes. "Besides, it's awfully heavy," he said softly, trying to sound light and make her smile back. There was a long pause. He stared into her amber eyes and felt a terrible ache as he took in all the cat-like features of her face. "Tá tú hálainn," he said breathlessly.

She dropped her eyes from his and moved to bury her face against his chest. She just couldn't keep looking at him.

"You don't believe me?" he asked gently.

"How could a wolf find whatever the hell I am beautiful?" she asked with annoyance.