

## Chapter 79

"I'm sorry. I just wanted to help," Aislinn said softly and lowered her head.

Sarah shook her head and then looked over at Cullen. She could see that he was overwrought. It wasn't like him at all. He always kept his emotions in check. Aislinn was having quite the effect on him. "What's going on between you two?" she asked confidentially.*wWw.nôVcIw0Rm.c0m*

Aislinn looked back at Cullen. He had walked over to a large window and was standing with his arms crossed staring out. She could feel the war inside him. His human half was trying to convince his wolf that Aislinn was right. Aislinn was uncertain as well. She needed to be trusted by Sarah. She was logical enough to understand that Sarah was the alpha female and if Aislinn wanted to fit in she was going to have to be friends with her. Besides, Cullen trusted Sarah and someone was going to have to help Aislinn with understanding and fitting in with the women. Cullen obviously didn't have the knack for that.

Sarah's patience was waning. She didn't know what was going on but she knew what it looked like. And so did the rest of the elders.

Aislinn finally leaned in to talk to Sarah. There was a suspicious murmur that ran through the hall when Aislinn spoke softly into Sarah's ear. The whispers were suggestions that the druid already had the alpha male and was now out to control the female alpha as well.

"Cullen and I," Aislinn took a deep breath. She couldn't believe how nervous she was. She pressed her hand to her stomach to try and stop the butterflies from bursting out. "We mated," she said so softly that Sarah almost missed it. "We just couldn't stop. It started as an apology and ended well. And now he's so worked up about everything. And we can hear each other's thoughts. It's amazing and scary. I don't really know what to do."

Sarah pulled back and looked into Aislinn's pleading eyes. She smiled gently and shook her head at Aislinn. Sarah wasn't sure what to think. She was torn between hating Aislinn and being happy for Cullen. She was positive that none of the other women he had been interested in could have threatened her position as alpha female the way Aislinn could. The girl may not be there yet. But she would be. Sarah could see it. Well, I've been Cullen's sister for so long. Maybe it's time.

Sarah stepped in and hugged Aislinn. That sent another murmur through the room. Then she stepped back. "Cullen, we need to go. Are they coming or do you want them penned up here?"

Cullen turned around to see Aislinn and Sarah standing together while Gaven and Hagan waited for sentence to be passed. "Bring them with us. They can join all the others." Cullen looked around the room. Everyone was staring uneasily. It didn't take a genius to understand the uncertainty. They had never faced an enemy like Rafe before. It was going to haunt them all for a long time.

Aislinn felt a strange calm come over Cullen and his face seemed to relax. He made eye contact with each of the men and women staring at him in turn as he spoke. "I know we've been through a great deal recently. You all have doubts and concerns. Some of those concerns involve me. I can tell you that the battle with the unseen enemy is over. The inside threat is under control. I would not say that if it wasn't true. Remember, it wasn't your family that caused the betrayal it was Rafe. And that beast is dead."

Gaven and Hagan were virtually shaking. Aislinn stepped up to the men and reached out to Gaven to brush the tears from his face. When she touched his skin a lightning shock seared through her and she fell to her knees with a cry. Her eyes were wide and she was staring up at Gaven in tears and trembling. Gaven stepped back with his hands in the air as the alpha growled a warning that sent fear through all those assembled. "I didn't touch her," he pleading in terror.

Cullen ran to Aislinn, vaulting the couch and stared into her face. The feeling he was getting from her was nothing like her being attacked. She had the same look she'd gotten at the Taigh-Oèsda when she'd had the vision about the mating ceremony. His wolf retreated, knowing that he could be of no help and Cullen was torn between trying to get her attention and waiting for the vision to run its course.

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Aislinn couldn't help wonder why the visions were suddenly so strong and so frequent. She was standing inside the Tairneach manor again. This time she was human. The room was cold and she was naked. She wrapped her arms around herself. She looked around the room. There was dim light and shadows spread eerily across the floor. There were no windows. She was underground. The floor was covered in bloodstains. The details of the room faded into view slowly as she looked around. There were people chained about the room. All of them were women, naked, bruised, and bleeding. Aislinn could feel fear and determination throughout the room. One woman drew her attention. She was heavily pregnant and lay on the floor whimpering and holding her stomach. Aislinn knew that when she returned to the Arnauk she would no longer be pregnant. A terrible sadness over came her and she began to cry for the woman.

As she watched the women disappeared and were replaced by others. These people weren't weres. They were at least allowed to remain in their clothes. One of them stood up, looked directly at her and reached for her. The people in her visions never interacted with her. Aislinn stared at the man with amazed uncertainty. The man was tall and lean. He had icy blue eyes, pale complexion, and brown hair. "Who are you," she asked.

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Cullen couldn't handle it any longer. When the tears began to pour from Aislinn's blank eyes and roll in streams down her face he reached out and touched her cheek. "Aislinn?" he said softly, but insistently. Her eyes swirled amber and the trembling grew worse. Aislinn, he insisted into her mind.

Aislinn blinked. Tears forced from her eyes and she reached for Cullen. She wrapped her arms around him and held on as if he were going to vanish. She could feel her breath catching in her throat.*wWw.NoVeIw0R@.coM*

Cullen held her tightly and the rest of the lycans in the room continued to watch. It was a rare show, seeing as Cullen usually took Aislinn into private to interact with her, aside from that afternoon in the library. "It's alright. I've got you," he said gently and stroked her hair.

*WwW.nôVEIw0rM.c0m*

When Aislinn looked up her eyes focused on Gaven and the tears came back. She shook her head trying to decide if she should tell him. Finally she pushed Cullen away and stood up, walking to Gaven. "I'm so sorry," she whimpered. "When you get her back," Aislinn couldn't continue.

*ww(w).(n)ôv@Iw0rM.com*

Gaven seemed to know what she was saying. He had been feeling it in the back of his mind for some time. "How do you know?"

"I just saw it," she said softly. "But you'll get her back. They're all coming back," she added as she looked up at Hagan.

Cullen saw the relief on the men's faces, even mixed with the pain. He stood up and went to Aislinn. "That's enough. I think we need to get going."