

Rebellion

"Do you believe us now?" Kennedy asked the crowd sadly after the witnesses, Lily, Charlotte, Marcus, and Dorothy included, had told their stories. "How many more stories like this do you need to hear before you believe that the Council was built on death and lies and that its Masters have continued to kill without consequence? How many more?"

Hundreds of Council members filled the space, all of their eyes fixed on Greg's father. They'd just heard Dorothy tell the story of how her mate, Master Gold, killed a woman and a young girl and while almost everyone in the room looked horrified and angry over what she'd said, the Masters standing at the front of the group looked furious. Greg looked over to where Master Gold was standing, his hands bound and his mouth gagged. The man looked like he was ready to kill his mate for opening her mouth. It was no wonder that Liam hated his father.

"I still believe that the Council's original goal is a good one," Liam said from where he stood beside Kennedy, drawing the crowd's and Greg's attention. "And I think it could still do good, but not with men like my father and the other Masters leading it. Not while its goal is to get rid of anyone that holds more power than they'd like. Not when it's willing to kill women and children. I still believe that."

Liam stopped mid-sentence when a ripping sound filled the space and gasps rang out through the gathered crowd. Greg's eyes immediately shifted to the source of the tearing sound to find the space where Master Gold had just been now occupied by a wolf with pale near-white gold fur. The wolf bared its teeth and let out an angry growl before jumping toward Dorothy and Liam. He moved quickly but Charlotte was already standing between him and his target as if she'd been expecting the attack somehow. She had a knife in her hand but it, and she, seemed so small next to Gold's large wolf.

A scream built in Greg's throat as he watched the wolf barrel towards Charlotte and he started running towards his sister even though he knew he'd never reach them in time. He'd been standing too far away, too far back. He'd barely made two steps forward before Charlotte's arm was sweeping out and she was spinning out of the wolf's path, the blade slicing through Gold's face deeply enough to hurt but not enough to take him down. With a snarl, the wolf turned toward her again and charged.

Greg was still too far away but Charlotte widened her stance and had her knife ready again. He knew she could handle herself—he'd helped train her after all—but all Greg could think about was how big the wolf's teeth were, how easily they would rip through her flesh. Gold was so close to her now and Greg could see he was preparing to leap at her. Charlotte lifted the blade, ready to cut him down but something flew past from behind Greg and landed in the wolf's front leg. When Gold fell to the ground, Greg could see the hilt of a knife sticking out of the wolf's shoulder.

Surprised, Greg looked behind him and his eyes landed on Lara.

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Lara had thrown the knife out of instinct. She'd seen her friend in danger and a sort of calmness settled over her as she grabbed the knife from where it was tucked into the waistband of her leggings and had it unsheathed within a second. As if she'd done it a thousand times before, Lara grabbed the blade of the knife between her thumb and the upper part of her pointer finger, bent her elbow, took aim, and then threw the knife towards the wolf hurtling towards Charlotte. It struck exactly where Lara had been aiming, hitting the wolf in the shoulder and causing him to fall to the ground.

Lara blinked, feeling as if she were coming out of a daze, and looked down at the hand that had just released the knife. She'd never done something like that before so how the hell had it worked? How the hell had she just hit a running wolf? She looked up to find Greg's eyes fixed on her, his face reacting surprise as he stared at her lifted hand. A low and ferocious growl had them both turning toward Gold again. He'd gotten back onto his feet and Lara shivered as he shifted his hateful glare towards her, his amber eyes holding a promise that she would pay for what she'd just done.

Ripping sounds filled the space as more wolves shifted and stormed onto the platform but Lara dared not take her eyes off of Master Gold's wolf. She'd just thrown her only weapon and she knew her wolf was too small to ever manage to take a Master down. She was defenseless as it stalked toward her.

"s**t," Jackson muttered.

Lara had forgotten that her mate was standing right next to her but he did nothing but stand there as the wolf took another step toward Lara. Both of them did nothing but stand there, and Lara had never felt so fucking useless in her life as she did during those few seconds after Gold had fixed his sights on her. The realization had her preparing to shift into her wolf form so that she could at least go down fighting but a black wolf darted between her and Gold before she could. Marcus's wolf leaped at the pale wolf and the two of them rolled across the floor in a mangle of teeth and claws.

Pack warriors from Seattle, Hood River, and Tacoma had formed a circle around everyone on the platform and with the threat of Gold gone, Lara looked around to see them fighting in their wolf forms against the Masters and a few Medials who must have sided against Liam and Kennedy. The pack warriors were holding their own but Lara noticed a big problem—Lily hadn't gotten out of the room like she and Finn had been planning. Finn, Matt, and Sam had surrounded the pregnant Luna but her presence in the room still had Lara's stomach tied up in knots.

"Everyone fan out! We're the second line of defense," Liam yelled, and Lara and Jackson followed the others in forming a second circle behind the pack warriors so that Lily, Finn, Dorothy, and the other witnesses were surrounded.

"Here," Jackson said, handing Lara the pocket knife that he always carried around with him. It wasn't much but it was something.

Lara wasn't sure which wolf in front of her was the enemy as she watched a light brown and blonde wolf fight, their teeth snapping at each other viciously and their snouts covered in blood. When the blonde wolf snapped the other one's neck and turned to Lara, she swallowed and readied herself to shift but he simply nodded at her and joined in another fight. He clearly knew who the enemy was as he worked with another wolf to take down a dark-haired wolf.

Lara was so focused on their fight that she didn't notice the wolf coming toward her from the other side until it was almost too late. She heard a growl behind her and she spun in time to see a grey mass bounding at her. She thrust the blade of the pocket knife into the wolf's chest as it hit her and a whine echoed in her ears as the weight of the wolf took her to the ground. All Lara's breath left her lungs and her blood-soaked hand slipped off the small knife. She lifted her other arm instinctively to protect her face as teeth snapped at her. Pain ripped through her forearm as teeth dug into flesh and a scream tore from her throat as she grasped for the handle of the knife.

Her bloody hand met metal and Lara twisted until the wolf released her, a whimper sounding from its throat. She knew she hadn't done enough damage though so Lara pulled the knife from its chest intending to stab the wolf again—this time maybe in its eye where the small knife might actually do some serious damage. Before she could do it though, a dark brown wolf had leaped into the grey one, knocking it off of Lara. The brown wolf's teeth tore into the other one's neck, and within seconds the grey wolf had slipped lifelessly to the ground. Brown eyes met hers and she couldn't mistake them as belonging to anyone else but Greg.

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"Finn!" a voice that Greg recognized as Lily's screamed.

He tore his gaze from Lara's pale face to find Finn's black wolf fighting in an unfair match against two others. With a final glance at Lara to make sure she was okay, Greg's wolf ran towards the fight. Blood gushed from a wound in Finn's side and one of the wolves was about to bite into his back leg when Greg lunged at him, his teeth tearing into the wolf's back and cracking its spine. The wolf was no longer breathing as it crumpled to the floor.

Greg watched from the side as Lily and Charlotte ran up to Finn's wolf who had collapsed to the floor. Fear spread through him as Finn's eyes closed and didn't open again but then Charlotte was there, her hands pressing against the wound in his side. It took less than a minute for the bleeding to stop and the wound to stitch closed.

Only when Finn's eyes had opened again did Greg let his eyes stray around the large meeting room which had gone quiet. The tightness in his chest eased as he spotted his father standing next to Dorothy but his gaze snapped to the side when he heard a low growl shattering the silence. A black and pale gold wolf—Marcus and Gold—were the only ones left fighting, and Greg and everybody else in the room watched as Marcus nished off the last of the Masters. It was over.

Greg's eyes tracked back to where he'd left Lara and a pang of disappointment went through him when he saw Jackson hugging her to his chest. When he released her, Greg saw she was cradling her arm to her chest and rage tore through him knowing he hadn't been in time to keep her from being hurt. She was alive though and that was what was important—not the fact that Jackson was the one with his arm wrapped around her and not the fact that jealousy was ripping through Greg's chest. Lara, Charlotte, Kennedy, and all the others were alive, and that was all that mattered.

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Lara's thoughts kept drifting back to how useless she'd felt when Master Gold's wolf had been approaching her as the doctor sterilized and bandaged her arm, and the sting of pain wasn't enough to distract her from feeling a bit pathetic knowing that she might have died had Greg not come to her rescue. She felt... weak.

"All good?" Jackson asked as Lara walked into the hospital room where Lily and Daniel were lying in beds, all of their friends surrounding them.

Daniel had been close to death's door when Charlotte had healed him and Lily had nearly lost her baby after the stress of the fight. The doctor had advised that Lily not travel until the baby was born, so she and Finn would be staying in Boston for the next three months or so.

"Yep," Lara replied to her mate. "It'll heal in the next two days apparently."

"Too bad it was your throwing arm," Dean teased her as she moved to stand next to Jackson.

"Why didn't you tell us you could do that?" Marcus asked. "I would have given you more than one knife if I'd known."

"It was bloody impressive," Greg agreed in a murmur, and his comment more than anybody else's had Lara's cheeks pinkening.

Lara swallowed and her gaze flickered briefly over to Greg before she explained, "I don't even know how I did it. It was just beginner's luck I guess."

"It's kind of funny," Matt, Finn's brother, mused from where he sat on the foot of Lily's hospital bed.

"What?" Finn asked. He was sitting next to Lily, his hand resting on his mate's stomach.

"You and Daniel nearly died from your wounds but you don't even have a scar or a scratch left on you. Meanwhile, Lara got a love bite and she'll be the only one with proof that she was even in a battle."

"It was a bit more than a love bite," Lara said defensively. It hadn't exactly been a walk in the park to have a wolf bite down on her arm like it was a chew toy.

"I thought you were going to faint when you saw all the blood on your arm," Jackson said, nudging Lara's shoulder playfully.

"Are you sure you don't want me to heal it?" Charlotte asked, not for the first time.

"It's okay," Lara replied. "I know it took a lot to heal everyone else."

"I'm feeling better now," Charlotte said with a wave of her hand.

"Are you sure?" Lara asked skeptically. She knew her friend had used a lot of energy already and she didn't want Charlotte to use her powers unnecessarily.

"I'm sure," Charlotte replied with a grin, gently taking Lara's wrist and lifting her injured arm up.

Lara felt a strange tingling and slightly uncomfortable sensation in her arm and then any pain she'd been feeling was gone.

"All done," Lara's friend said happily as she let go.

"Thanks, Charlotte," Lara replied gratefully as she started to unwind the bandage on her wrist and looked down at her now smooth and unmarked skin.

"Good as new," Jackson whispered to her before wrapping his arm around her waist.

"Yeah, good as new," Lara repeated in a murmur.

She looked up to catch Greg watching her but he looked away before she could mouth the words 'thank you' to him.