

Claire

The shift into Damara's form was painful. In this body, I haven't shifted very often. But Magnor was great, encouraging both of us and helping to ease the pain of the shift. Once it's done, the pain recedes quickly.

I'm not sure if Magnor was giving us time to recover, or if he really wanted to take his time to look over Damara, but by the end she's strutting and posing like a model.

'He likes the way I look,' Damara says.

'You're beautiful, Damara, what's not to like,' I tell her.

'He's just so big and strong, and now....'

'Magnor has always loved us, Damara, no matter what. Don't go getting shy on me now,' I say.

Apparently, she takes my words to heart, because she barks at Magnor and takes off running, stretching her legs.

Magnor lifts his head and gives the howl of the hunt

before grabbing my dress and giving chase. He would probably have nipped at her heels if he didn't have my dress in his mouth, but instead, he nudges Damara's hind quarters, making her yip and bark excitedly as she runs, trying to stay ahead of him.

When she finally wears herself out, she slows and he trots up to her, rubbing himself on her. He chuffs, indicating that we need to follow him and leads us to the lake where we took him and Tereshan when they were in our body.

Damara drinks some water then lays down, catching her breath. Magnor drops my dress and his shorts in the grass, then gets some water and comes to lay beside her.

'We'll let them catch their breath, then we can shift and walk to meet Keegan from here. It's not too far and will give us some time to see this area again. Maybe we missed something the first time.'

'The area is at our northwest border. There's nothing behind the border, it's just open land moving out to the mountains.'

'The lake has a riverbed that flows out there, too. There are several, but there is at least that one that goes off of our pack lands,' Tereshan says.

'Yes. Maybe we should look at that. We didn't check the water source last time. Maybe the issue has to do with the water, not the soil,' I say.

Magnor stands and shakes out his fur before pushing the shift back into Tereshan. Damara stands, walking over to him. He stays kneeling reaching out to run his fingers through her fur.

"So beautiful, just like your human," he tells her, stroking his fingers down her sides and making her body shiver. "And your fur is as soft and silky as Claire's hair."

He rubs his face against hers, before she pushes herself against him, trying to get into his lap. He chuckles, wrapping his arms around her as she licks his face.

"Yes, I love you too, Damara. I love you both. And we will get you stronger. We'll come out to shift more often and let you run. Claire needs to strengthen her human body, but you need to get stronger in this body as well. Okay?"

She lays her head on his shoulder, doing the wolf version of hugging him. He keeps his arms wrapped tightly around her, holding her to him.

"My beautiful girls. This time will be different. I

promise. I'll do everything I can to make sure that we survive."

Damara sighs and he holds her for another minute before I pull her back. It's time to go meet Keegan.

The shift is hard again, but not as hard as it was the first time. This time it's Tereshan rubbing his hands over Damara, whispering in her ear about how brave and strong she is, until the final bone shifts back into place.

I'm panting with exertion and pain when the shift finally ends, and Tereshan pulls me into his lap.

"Give it a moment, just rest."

He wraps his arms around me, and I lean my head against his chest, listening to the sound of his heart beating, following his breaths and slowing mine.

"Thank you," I say, when I calm.

He kisses the top of my head. "No need to thank me. Come on, let's get dressed and take a look at our land."

I pull the dress over my head. "Since you mentioned the river, why don't we follow it and then cut back to meet Keegan." I say.

"Works for me," he says and takes my hand.

I never really had time to explore our pack lands. The most I did was when I was in Magnor's body was run through the forest. During those time, I was mostly fighting, so I didn't really have a chance to explore the lands. I let Feena handle the arrangement with Keegan, so I only came out here a couple of times and I wasn't looking at the land itself, more looking at it from a space and farming perspective.

Now, I look around, seeing how gorgeous our pack lands actually are. It's rugged, but there are wildflowers growing all over. The lake is surrounded by yellow flowers, blooming all around it. I stop looking out past the lake. The entire area is full of these yellow flowers. They're stunning. It's almost as if they are shimmering in the sunlight.

"Is it always this beautiful here?" I ask, looking out of the land.

"Honestly, I've never stopped to 'smell the roses' as they say. So, I've never noticed. But you're right, it's almost magical."

"Did you ever hear that human song, Fields of Gold? That's what it reminds me of, a field of golden

colored flowers. I wonder what kind of flower they are."

Tereshan looks at me. "How do you know human songs?"

I smile, looking up at him. "Vivienne. She loves them, and she's got a really good voice. One of the warriors gave her his digital music holder. He had upgraded and put the music on his phone instead and he knew that she liked to sing. Dane got her a speaker so she can listen to the songs. When we would clean together, she would sing. It made the day go by faster." I shrug.

"Well, now I know what to get her for her birthday. When is her birthday, by the way. It's soon, right?"

"A couple of months. She'll turn 18." The thought makes me sad.

Tereshan's finger goes under my chin. "What's that look?"

"What if she finds her mate and leaves?"

Tereshan's lips press together. "Then we'll have her come visit. Or we'll go visit her. But she didn't find her mate in any of the last timelines, so let's not worry about that now. For now, let's focus on finding

anything that we missed and then we can see if Keegan finds anything in his soil samples."