

CH 7

That drop-off point west of Nightingale that Varn and Tony had taken her to was nearly another full day's walk, and it was under the scorching heat of the Wolfen Realms sun, where she had taken off her cloak and packed it away into her bag. She'd tried to give it back to Varn only to have him tell her it was hers now. "You might need it later on," he had told her simply. "Best that you keep it."

That enlistment camp had not been her nal destination, only the beginning of her very long journey. This place was just the military registration point. She'd handed over her scroll to the man sitting in the tent behind a desk, who'd opened it and read it.

Then she was given a new scroll. After that man had spent an hour writing up a new one, translating it into Wolfen, she had been told, then that wolf had then resealed it and given it back to her for her to give to someone else.

It had taken him an hour to translate it and that meant for her that she was to sit outside by the tent in the sun waiting for him to complete his task. There was no shade here, and she'd pulled that cloak out of her bag and pulled it on, pulled the hood over her head to protect herself from being sunburned.

She'd been on the verge of sleep when she had been called back into the tent, and two very large warriors named Chatham and Elcom had been called to the tent. She'd gotten to wait the ten minutes for them to arrive, inside the tent out of the sun.

Where they had been told to take her to a place called Western War Encampment, and to hand her directly over to one General Harkem Larimer and no one else. That she was to come to no harm, was now ranked as MFRM. She'd asked what it stood for and had been told "nothing to you. It is a specic division within the encampment she was to be allocated to was all."

Then she'd been hauled away with no further answers, but both those warriors had looked at her curiously, before telling her it was a long journey. They had not been wrong either; it had been a very long, painful three-month journey to that military camp, and they'd passed many others on the way.

She'd noticed the difference in each one of them, as they had walked on by or seen them from a distance. They were allowed to sleep inside those encampments if it was right there when they needed to stop for the night. Shown to a tent and given a meal as well. Then they were up at dawn and walking once more.

Ryder had huffed after a week and asked just how long till they got there to her destination.

"A couple of moons." She'd been told by Elcom.

"Isn't there a better way to travel?" she'd asked. They had been walking solidly for a week, and she was tired of it. Her feet hurt, and she was sunburned and dehydrated. A mild constant headache lingered all day every day, even Thorn wasn't feeling well.

"No, we walk everywhere, get used to it now. Only the highest of high ranks get horses, or those from wealthy longstanding human packs that send their heirs to do military service. Show loyalty to the king."

"I'm from one of those." She'd stated, "My future Alpha, Lauchlan, just returned home from service."

"You have no future Alpha anymore, and you are not an heir to a pack, so you don't get that privilege." She'd been told by Chatham curtly. "Suck it up princess." He stated and turned away from her.

"Be quiet and learn to hold your tongue," Elcom had muttered. "Speaking out of turn will get you punished inside the encampments."

"Right." she'd muttered.

"Learn to be quiet and to go unnoticed. That is the best thing you can do out on the western edge." Chatham had nodded, and they'd walked on, where she was then shushed many times on that journey, until she had learned not to speak or ask questions. Learned to hold her tongue.

Two months of walking in the scorching heat of the wolfen realm from sun up to sundown, with no rest days at all, she'd stopped talking, mostly because she no longer had the energy to talk to either of them.

Those two warriors never stopped. They walked at a set pace at all times. Military walk, she thought; how they were trained, she supposed. She had tried to follow along but fell behind at times. Those two could just walk nonstop and clearly were used to it, whereas she was not.

She had never walked this far in her lifetime. She drank water from the rivers and streams that they crossed, and she threw up many times from drinking it over those rst few weeks, as well as having severe stomach pains and then loose bowel motions.

Neither of those warriors said anything, just looked at her, stopped walking and waited for her to return from her dash to the nearest shrub or tree in her desperate need to relieve herself. They did not embarrass her or even seem to be annoyed by it. Though Chatham had stated, "Human realm wolves don't handle things so well at rst here," after that rst bout "That will happen a lot, you'll get used to the water in a few days or weeks."

She'd not been given rest to recover from it either, just handed a canteen of that river water that was making her and her wolf sick, to drink or rinse and spit. Something she knew was actually making her sick, but there was no other water here, so she had no choice but to drink it and become sick once more.

There was no bottled or clean water here from what she could tell, or at least not out here in the wilderness of the wolfen realm. It took eight solid days for her to stop being sick, and she was just exhausted by that and the constant walking that they made her do, even though she needed to lay down.

She slept like the dead when they settled for the night, in an encampment or out in the woods, on a bare part of the road, which to her was just like a re trail that gave re trucks and emergency responders access to the forests back home.

Nothing here inside the wolfen realm that she'd seen was at all like the human world. This place kind of reminded her of the Middle Ages. A horse and cart or on foot was all she saw. Everyone, even large groups, travelled on foot.

She'd seen a few wolves all chained together and by silver, being walked somewhere, and her eyes had lingered on them only to be told "They are slaves for the king's mines."

"Slaves?" she blurted out, horried at the thought of s****y still going on.

"Yes, criminals of the worst kind, not regular wolves sold to others. Criminals only, strict laws here and punishments are dished out harshly to those committing heinous crimes against our own kind."

This place she had a feeling was going to take some time to get used to. She'd seen more than one chain gang being hauled around by wolves on horseback. They were made to keep up with those on horseback, walk, trot, canter or full gallop. She didn't much like it at all, but there was nothing she could do about it.

This was not her world. Well, she supposed it was now, but it hadn't been her life. It seemed the human realm was much more civilized than the wolfen realm, but she put that down to humans evolving and the wolfen realm seemed to be stuck in the Middle Ages; likely didn't want to evolve, she thought. Because they could all go to the human realm and take back ideas, mechanisms and bring themselves into full civilization, they just opted not to from what she was seeing.

It took three months to get to their destination. They crested a long hill and both Chatham and Elcom stopped and looked down at the steep hill before them, at the view laid out down there.

A large encampment and a very large dirt and what looked to her to be muddy ground stretched out on the other side of it until it reached the tree line way off in the distance. "Your new home, Ryder," Chatham told her.

It didn't look like a nice clean camp, or at least not like some of the ones she saw along the way. Though she had noticed that the further from Nightingale they walked, the less clean the military camps were. She'd not know what to expect coming here.

Though her Alpha had told her she'd be looked after by the man that had trained his own heir, she now doubted that very much. She didn't think that Lauchlan had been in this camp. She saw no horses here and hadn't seen any in over a month now; that weren't trailing chain gangs.

This place didn't look all that good, had from up here what she thought were clear lines of rank. She thought that because of the rows of tents, how the further from the largest building near the road, they were less clean and less structured looking.

It was laid out with all those tents in large triangular formations, with dened roads between ranks of barracks, ve clear divisions, she supposed. What looked like to be four training grounds, and there was a large wooden building on the edge of the road and ve smaller wooden structures in front of that; they were all ten times that of each of those other tents down there.

She wondered how many soldiers there were in a tent. She wanted to ask the question, but these two didn't like to talk and shushed her still at times. Though at other times they did answer her questions or unspoken curiosity that they could see.

They rested at the top of that hill for only 15 minutes; stopped and sat, had a drink and something to eat, before getting up and making their way down to the encampment and her new life, the awaiting general she was to be handed off to.