
Chapter 9

"Stop." I sprinted toward them, my heart pounding like a wild animal in my chest.

Wolfgang was so engrossed in his attempt to strangle Eleanor that he didn't hear me at first. His wolf was in control, his eyes blazing with fury.

"You're going to die today," he growled at Eleanor, his grip on her unyielding. "You had the audacity to come between Aurora and me, to drive her away. I'm going to end you."

I knew words wouldn't reach him in this state, so I did the only thing I could.

Maybe it was the best thing I could have done, given the circumstances.

A warm, ember-like glow started to form in the center of my chest. I nurtured it until it was a small, glowing ball, then I pulled it out and cradled it in my hands.

But this time, I didn't throw it at them with the intention of causing harm.

Instead, I *instructed* the ball.

Show them I'm okay, I whispered to it. Show them they don't need to keep fighting this endless battle.

The glowing orb left my hands and positioned itself between Eleanor and Wolfgang. Eleanor was the first to notice it, even though her face was turning a dangerous shade of purple.

She almost smiled.

The orb split into two, and one half entered Wolfgang's heart. It relayed my message to him, pulling him back to reality.

He turned to me, tears streaming down his face.

"I thought I'd lost you."

"I'm right here."

He rushed to me, lifting me into his arms, not caring that I was soaked, and held me close.

"My Goddess, Aurora, don't ever do that to me again. I thought you were gone for good."

"Eleanor did what was necessary," I whispered into his hair, holding him tight. "I had to face one last challenge before I could truly find myself, Wolfgang."

He looked at me, confused. "She pushed you towards death, so you could survive? That's just instinct!"

I fought the urge to roll my eyes and glanced at Eleanor.

"Survival is about resisting the urge to give up," I said softly. "I didn't do that."

Wolfgang was stunned.

"So, you died in there? Aurora, what are you saying? Are you trying to tell me you're a ghost?"

"I'm not a ghost." I rolled my eyes this time. "Yes, I died in there. But I journeyed to a place where I confronted my true self, Wolfgang, and I became the person I was meant to be."

Wolfgang cradled my face in his hands.

"This is a lot to take in."

Eleanor stepped forward, a gentle smile on her face.

"Silly pup," she said, her anger gone. "It means she had to face one more trial to master the elements. This is the hardest one, because it involves clinging to the one thing most of us lose in dark times."

"And what's that?" he asked, intrigued.

"Hope," Eleanor and I said together.

"Hope?" he echoed. "What's so...revolutionary about that?"

His question perfectly captured the essence of the emotion.

I looked at him as if he were a child.

"Everything about it is revolutionary, Wolfgang. Think about it. Without hope, what would you do in times like these? Where would you turn?"

Understanding dawned on his face like the first rays of sunlight over a mountain range.

"So, you had to die, but you had to hold on to the hope that you would come back to life?"

Eleanor grinned. "For a clueless pup, he catches on pretty quick."

I laughed as he glared at her. "She's lucky I didn't kill her," he grumbled. "I still don't think you two should have done this without telling me."

"Wolfie," I said gently. "You would never have let me do this, and it was necessary. We couldn't put off this trial any longer. And now, thanks to what I've learned, I can finally control the elements."

I closed my eyes and imagined a gentle autumn breeze carrying a dandelion to Eleanor.



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When I opened my eyes, she was holding the flower, a look of wonder on her face.

"You're ready indeed, Luna," she said. "With the elements under your control, you can win any battle, as long as you stay focused and calm."

I nodded, determined that we were going to defeat Wendell once and for all.

"Eleanor, when I was researching the silver threads, I read about a hybrid race of wolves that were once very powerful."

She nodded, her attention focused on me.

"The book said these wolves tried to challenge Selene and take her powers so they could become full-bloods. When Selene found out, she banished their race forever."

Eleanor's face turned serious. "I know about this race. Our mother used to call them imíaima. They were notorious for their hatred of witches and wolves."

"There's more. Apparently, one man from this race decided the only way for them to regain their status was by killing Selene's descendants, one by one."

Wolfgang barely contained his anger. "You think Wendell is connected to this race."

"I'm certain of it, but I need more information. If it's true, it means he doesn't have any powers of his own. He's using someone or something to get them. It's suspicious."

Eleanor was already heading toward the castle's library. "I'll find what I can."