



The Millennium Wolves



Book 7 - Chapter 13

NINA

The afternoon sun was high in the sky when I came to a bend in the trail and stopped under the pleasant, hanging leaves of a willow tree.

After resting overnight and rising early this morning, I was only minutes from Home Hearth.

I pressed my back against the rough bark of the tree and cast a quick glance to make sure no one was around.

I pulled the small Nokia out of my back pocket and turned it on.



My heart fluttered like a hummingbird in my chest.

Five new texts.

Thanda

Chapters



Display



Unmute



Comment



React



Five new texts.

Thanda

Idea for SD card.

Thanda

Costume ball on the night of the coronation

Thanda

They are installing giant projectors.

Thanda

I know how to get to them.

Thanda

I think we need code names.
Moose and Squirrel?



I smiled, both at Thanda's continued ingenuity and at the idea of having secret names for one another. Stumbling to type on the T9 keyboard, I thumbed out a response.

Nina

They werent spies

Nina

Nina

They werent spies

Nina

Boris and Natasha?

Thanda

Fine. I call Natasha.

Nina

Not cool! ;-)

Nina

Going dark. Will message when I can.

Thanda

Go get 'em Boris.



The willow tree I was currently sheltered under had a deep hole in it, probably made by a long-ago woodpecker. The tiny phone fit into the space perfectly.

My palms were sweating. I wiped them on the backs of my dirty jeans and continued up the path towards Home Hearth.

It was the middle of the afternoon; everyone should have been scattered about performing a variety of activities.

Instead nearly everyone was gathered around the large central firepit.

Almost as one they looked up at my approach.

Sienna and Aiden stood when they saw me. I quickened my pace. “I got it!” I said happily, then stopped.

I took in their stricken faces. Beside them I saw Lily, whose face was bruised and swollen.



None of them would meet my eyes.

“What happened?”

JOSH

My mate stormed about my office, her hands gesturing wildly as she told me about all the preparations for the upcoming procession.



Why the fuck she thought now was a good time to throw a Masquerade Ball, I hadn't asked.

Trying to speak rationally to Michelle had become a fruitless endeavor years ago.

It was far easier to just let her do what she wanted.

I took a sip from a crystal snifter of brandy, savoring its sweet warmth as it trickled down my throat.

It was only two in the afternoon, and this was my third drink of the day.

But who was counting?



“And what about those horrible tacky flowers they brought in to line the avenues of Mahiganote!” Michelle veered onto a new misfortune.

“Who the hell thinks calla lilies are appropriate for a celebration!” she exclaimed, “This isn't a funeral march, Josh!”

It was certainly starting to feel like one, but I took another sip of my drink and said nothing.

Behind Michelle, the television blared a constant stream of doubt and vitriol, much of it directed towards the East Coast and my role as Alpha.

“Hello! Earth to Josh!” Michelle waved her arms in front of my face. “Did you not just hear what I said about the music!

“Freddie Fangs is refusing to let use his song for the first dance of the ball!”

“Who the fuck is Freddie Fangs?” I asked her, but as she answered I felt my attention drifting.



“EAST COAST IN TURMOIL: MORE LEAKS APPEAR IN ALPHA DANIELS’ PACK,” read the headline above Michelle’s head.

Where are these leaks coming from? It was like the wolves of my pack had become rats instead.



All of them eager to flee a sinking ship.

I needed to demonstrate my authority over this pack.

I thought about Gregory's suggestion. A show of force.

A show of strength to both silence my enemies and rally my supporters.

The brandy burned a hot trail to my stomach.

“JOSH!”

I snapped to focus. Michelle's face was almost purple with anger.

Just like Enzo's before he had died.



She spoke in a voice of deadly quiet. The calm before the tidal wave.

“I need you to go tell your sons that their behavior is unacceptable. I need you to go tell those goddamned paparazzi to get the hell off the grounds before I disembowel them. I need you to stand the fuck up and do



something!”

Her voice rose with every sentence as she unleashed her fury.

It became a dull, soundless buzzing in my ears. I had long ago become immune to Michelle’s mercurial tempers.

I sipped my drink and stared at the television behind my mate.

A show of force.

Yep, that oughta do it.

SIENNA



On the western side of the forest surrounding Home Hearth was a large bluff, a jagged souvenir from a long-ago rockslide.

Peering out from the limestone, nearly invisible in the surrounding thorn bushes, was a small opening in the rockface.

I picked my way carefully along the scattered stones that bordered the cave.



Lily, who had suffered three broken ribs and a black eye from being thrown by Jocelyn, had directed me to this place before heading towards her cabin to sleep.

Aiden was staying with Rowan.

Shifting into his wolf form had been difficult for the still-fragile muscles in his leg, and Lily had ordered him off his feet for the rest of the day.

Nina had barely spoken a word since learning of Jocelyn's return and subsequent escape.

Her head had bowed low in defeat, a sight which filled me with fear.



This whole time, Nina had been a tower of strength. How many times in the past two weeks had she risked her life to help us?

If Nina Castillo was finally caving to despair, we were all doomed.

I needed to talk to someone. My thoughts had immediately gone to Tena.



It was odd to me that the charismatic man, who was clearly the soul of Home Hearth, chose to live isolated from the rest of the group.

Not wanting to startle him, I gently called out his name.

His brown-horned head popped out of the entrance at the sound of my voice.

The thicket of tangled thorns unfurled to create a small doorway that remained open as I entered the high-ceilinged space.

Afternoon sunshine poured into the cave, which was larger than I would have expected, extending at least one hundred feet back into a sloping wall.

I blinked in surprise, taking in my surroundings.



It looked like a disco club from the '70s, with long mirrors and velvet-covered chairs surrounding a central lounge.

Sure, some of the mirrors were cracked and the velvet on the armchairs was shiny.

and the velvet on the armchairs was shiny with age, but the overall effect made me momentarily forget that we were surrounded by stone.

At least until I looked up.

“Aren’t you afraid of it falling in?” I asked him, glancing up at the rows of pointed stalactites that hung like menacing chandeliers from the stone ceiling.

Tena shrugged dismissively. “This cave has stood for longer than I’ve been alive, which is saying something.

“Someday it may crumble, at which point it’s highly unlikely I’ll be in a position to care too much about it.”

I wasn’t sure whether to feel reassured or nervous by this pronouncement. “How old are you?” I asked instead.

There was a small ring of stones arranged in the center of the cave, in the middle of which burned a small fire.

It was freezing cold in the cave, and I sat



It was freezing cold in the cave, and I sat next to it gratefully.

Tena sank down across from me. “Old enough to know better,” he said.

“I would have liked to help your friend, but there are some things that are...frowned upon by certain higher powers.

“Intervening in matters such as these would only have invited further trouble.”

His normally cheerful face was drawn.

“Lily said there was nothing any of us could have done.

“She said that their spirits were so tangled up in Jocelyn’s body that the medicine ending up weakening Jocelyn instead of strengthening her.”



Tena was silent for a long time.

“Your son is a very special child, Sienna. Did you notice anything unusual when you were carrying him?”



“I’m unable to have children,” I told him, knowing I could trust him with my sorrow. “I have Deity blood in me. We were made infertile.”

“There are more kinds of fertility than just the ability to produce children.”

Tena raised a snake-green hand. As I watched, a purple flower sprouted from his palm.

He plucked it gently and handed it to me.



“I suspected as much from the moment I saw you. Your powers are new, and untested, but there is much that you could learn.”

I took the violet from him and held it to my nose. “There are so many questions, so many things I’ve wanted to know the answers to, but right now my main concern is my son.”

Tena nodded soberly. “I haven’t seen power like that spirit-wolf in longer than I can remember. Do you know anything about his parents?”

“Not really. They were murdered by



“Not really. They were murdered by vampyres.”

“Well, I think you’ll find that he is quite an extraordinary boy.”

“No need to tell me,” I thought of Rowan’s handsome face and smiled.

“As for yourself, if you remain here, I can show you a few tricks,” Tena said.



He waved a gentle hand towards a glass structure along one wall that I hadn’t noticed at first. It was a small greenhouse, bursting with life even in the chilly December months.

“If I learn how to grow things like you, will my skin turn green?” I asked with a grin.

Tena burst out laughing. “No, Sienna. I’m afraid that particular gift is reserved for me alone.”

Tena and I spent the next hour or so

gardening. Up until now, I had used my Deity abilities only when provoked in a fight.

It took a lot of practice to summon the same energy when I wasn't filled with adrenaline, but I was finally getting the hang out of it.

Being able to relax with my strange new friend, knowing that my family was safe, was definitely helping to put me in the right frame of mind.



“There, just like that,” he said as I struggled to bring a tiny green shoot out of the damp earth. “Bring it forth gently from the soil. Coax it with your energy, don't pull it.”

I concentrated, a bead of sweat welling on the tip of my nose. I clenched and unclenched my hands, trying to direct the power.

A single delicate leaf unfurled from the seedling.

I felt a tingling sensation in my core, before it drooped to one side and the fragile stem snapped in half



snapped in half.

“Damn!” I sighed in frustration.

“Don’t worry. It will come. Soon you’ll be able to use your abilities without so much effort. And you may find yourself facing other changes as well,” Tena said.



“What kind of changes?” I said, wincing as a familiar pain settled into my joints.

“No one can really say until they happen. If they ever happen. Some enjoy a longer lifespan. Others have the ability to survive things that would kill a normal man.”

“Am I interrupting?” came a woman’s voice.

I desperately wanted to question Tena further, but then I looked up to see Nina standing in the light shining through the opening to the cave.

Her eyes were horribly red and swollen, as if she’d been crying all afternoon.

How could I blame her? After searching for Locelyn for six days, she had missed her by



How could I blame her? After searching for Jocelyn for six days, she had missed her by less than six hours.

Under her blotchy cheeks, however, Nina's face was set in stone.

She came to the raised garden where I had been practicing my Deity powers and withdrew from her pocket a small blue rectangle.



Tena just looked at it curiously, but I recognized it immediately for what it was.

“Nina...how?” I asked, dumbfounded.

“I’ll explain everything. I think I have a plan. And I have someone on the inside who can help us,” she said with a grim smile.

At the determined look on Nina's face, I felt a tiny spark of hope reignite in my chest.

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