

Epilogue

Author's Note:

Since I don't want anyone to hate me, I'm giving you guys a choice here...

If you want the happier ending, then stick with stopping at chapter 34.

If you want to see the true ending, then continue reading the epilogue :)

Snow falls down from the grey sky. The sun is absent, smothered by heavy, electrified clouds. Each white flake dissolves upon hitting the ground, soaking into the rain puddles that had come hours before.

In the mud that was created, rogues still fight Visarian wolves— the few of them that are left. Amidst a clearing in the street of the tribal village, a girl is on her knees. Her clothes are sodden with rain, sweat, and blood. Her hair is just the same. Various shades of blonde strands hang limply around her face and shoulders.

She holds her hands up, palms facing the stormy sky as she stares at them. Not at them, but rather what's on them. Her hands are wet, stained with the crimson essence that came from the body laying in front of her. The body is a boy's, only one year older than the girl.

They were raised together. They were trained like Alphas together. They shared the same father until that father had to choose one of them, and he chose the one he had made.

Now that one lies dead, his blood on the other's hands.

Gage. That was the name written in marker on the palm of an abandoned baby. Now here she is, a baby no longer.

"Adrienne!" The girl's head snaps up at the sound of her name. Another girl is running towards her, tight brown curls bouncing on her head as she does.

"Aimee..."

Aimee drops to the ground beside Adrienne, crushing her in a forced hug. It's been well over a year since she last saw her best friend. Last winter, when the tyrant paid visit to their pack.

Now it's winter again, and so much has changed.

"I told them not to hurt you," Adrienne breathes into her friend's shoulder. Aimee only hugs her tighter.

"They didn't. I may have broke one's nose, but it's all good," she smiles, trying to lighten the grave situation. Her smile quickly falls when she acknowledges the body.

"So the narcissist is finally dead. What were his last words?"

"My father won't forget this. He'll do worse than lock you up," Adrienne recites, recalling the words from only moments ago.

Aimee snorts. "Even in the face of death he expected his daddy to solve his problems. Speaking of which, Alpha Andre... he ran."

Adrienne's slumping shoulders are suddenly pulled up straight. "He ran? That fucking cowardly bastard ran?" Her fists ball in her lap, claws extending. She chuckles bitterly, lividly, "I hope the wild rips him apart."

She senses a presence approaching. When she turns to find it, her eyes land on the very tyrant that made this all possible. He taught her what freedom is. Freedom beyond the gratefulness for the downtime between punishments.

Aimee grins in the satisfied way she always used to when she was proven right and Adrienne wrong. "What was it I said?" She feigns ignorance, flaunting her victory for all it's worth, "That Adrienne Gage would find somebody attractive one day?"

"Who says I find him attractive?" Adrienne asks, failing to hide her smile.

"Yeah okay," Aimee says as she stands back up, "I'll leave you two alone then. Come find me later." With an ornery smirk plastered on her face, she turns on her heel and goes.

Adrienne gets to her feet to meet her mate. Relief floods her chest like a broken dam. He's okay. He may be blood splattered with the face of a walking massacre, but he's been worse. Having singlehandedly conquered an entire pack twice before, he's more than experienced by the third occasion. He takes her head in both hands, pressing a kiss to her forehead once he reaches her.

"It's yours now," he tells her, looking into her eyes with an unreadable deepness in his own. The same deepness that hides all the thoughts she can never decipher.

Her brow furrows, confusion growing on her countenance. "What do you mean 'mine'? I'm not the tyrant here."

He shakes his head. "This is your pack, Adrienne. Your shit excuse of a father figure may not have meant for you to be the Alpha of it, but whatever ancestors or gods it is you look up to do."

Her face falls blank, mouth falling slightly open. Those aren't the words of a wolf who has just secured himself a new pack, nor the tone of an exile gaining back power once lost. No. It's the tone of someone who doesn't want to say what they have to next.

"Spit it out," Adrienne demands, driven mad by his silence. Anticipation isn't something she values, especially when caused by the person in front of her. His hands find their way to her waist before he obeys her order.

"I'm leaving."

She blinks at him. That simple phrase registering into her brain is like water mixing with oil: it doesn't. They have went everywhere together, from the day he took her away from the people who caused her so much abuse to the day they gave those people what they deserved. Leaving doesn't exist between them. The world turned on them both, so they become one.

"It's for your protection," he explains when her gaping mouth fails to form words, "You know what happened in Khopeski. People hunt tyrants. I'm not putting their attention on you. This place is small enough and hidden enough to keep quiet. If I'm not here, it should stay that way."

Adrienne scoffs, shaking her head in disbelief. Ever since he conquered Visari for the first time, she's been trying to analyze him. To sit in a front row seat and figure out the mystery behind him which the rest of the werewolf world never could. Now she's come to her final conclusion. "Riot, you're fucking insane."

Half of a smile cracks his lips. "Maybe. But you'll be safe. A Visarian rules Visari."

She wants to argue with him. She wants to call him names, to tell him that he doesn't have to leave. But she knows he's right. The world doesn't pay attention to Visari, and wherever the Exiled Alpha goes, a spotlight follows.

The distance between them evaporates as Adrienne pulls him into a crushing embrace. Her arms lock around his midsection and her face presses hard against his chest. She holds onto him tightly, like she never wants to let go. Because as soon as she does, he'll be gone.

"Stay. Please." She's never begged for anything before. She's held her ground and taken whatever punishment is to come. But this is worse than any punishment she's received. This is an exception.

Riot's copper eyes soften. He hugs her tighter, pressing a tender kiss to her lips. Even without words, Adrienne has learned to read what he's saying.

"Promise me you'll be back." Her voice is muffled against his body, but he hears her plea perfectly.

"I promise. I'll be back," he says, and he's never meant anything more. He knows the separation won't be long, but changes are always excruciating. It's painful; when the second half you've towed everywhere with you can no longer come.

"How long?" She asks.

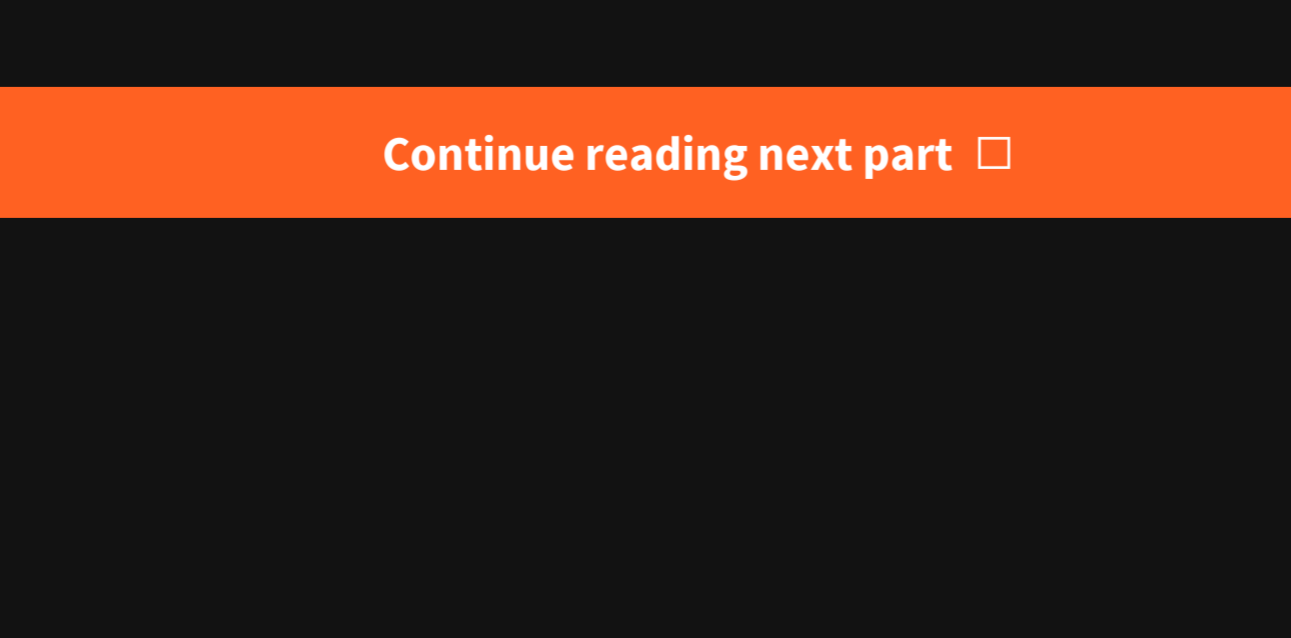
"A month."

"Where?"

His answer this time makes her heart ache with longing. "The cabin."

It's the exact same cabin that acted as their refuge. The one where they would have had under a narcissist's watch. He gave her a pack to lead, one taken from her before she was even born. He's touched every living and late werewolf's existence, either directly or otherwise.

And he doesn't notice any of it as he walks away from yet another life he's shaken. Except this time, he plans on walking back.



Continue reading next part