

## Into the Reach, pt. 4

by Cerine Hero

Cerine held her swim top in front of her bare chest, one eyebrow cocked as she tried to envision how she could force it to fit. Beside her, sitting on the log next to the pit of ashes in the middle of camp, Sienna smiled sheepishly up at the vixen. The tigyote had her paws knit together between her knees, wearing a loose, folded shirt and dark shorts over her own swimsuit.

“Did it shrink in the wash?” the tigyote asked, trying not to giggle.

The extra-buxom dairy fox gave her a smirk. “More like someone was playing with my cowbell a few minutes ago...”

“I stopped when I realized I was doing it.”

“Of course.” Cerine pat a paw underneath her even bigger than usual breasts and then tossed the bikini top onto the log at her feet. “I guess I'll just stuff myself into a shirt until later.”

Sienna dug into the fox's pack, just behind her, and pulled out a light green shirt. She handed it up to the vixen and watched from below as she fed it up her arms, tucked her head in, and then *pulled* down until she was able to knuckle her heavy boobs into the fabric. Even with the shirt fitting as well as could be, Sienna swore there was barely any fabric left to cover the vixen's belly beneath the ballooned swell of her bust.

It was a beautiful sight.

Cerine sat down on the log beside the tigyote, pulling a chocolate bar from her pack and unwrapping it. She broke off a square and handed it to Sienna, who happily took it and gave the vixen a kiss on the cheek as payment. They were waiting on their partners to finish getting ready so they could all head to the natural pool nearby. It was well into morning now, with warm and bright sunlight glittering beautifully through the treetops.

On the other side of the camp, just out of ear-shot, Rachel was doing some kind of high-energy exercise, punching the air and leaping back and forth. It looked exhausting to the vixen and tigyote sitting on the log.

“What is she doing, again?” Cerine asked, curling her tail around them both.

Sienna shrugged. “Some kind of martial art exercise thing. Fad of the week. Supposedly Old World stuff, but I think that part is BS.” She finished her chocolate and leaned her shoulder against Cerine's arm. “I love her but sometimes it's hard keeping up with her energy.”

“She's always been like that,” Cerine agreed. “She got it all and left none for Gray.”

Sienna covered her muzzle with a paw to muffle a snorted laugh. “Well, it's nice having someone to chill with,” she said, giving the quiet and deliberate fox a smile.

The vixen reached up and gently teased her ear, and the tigyote's tail swept back and forth behind her. A few minutes later, Rachel finished her exercises, panting heavily. She wandered back across the campsite and tossed herself down on the log at the tigyote's opposite hip. The coyote had on a white t-shirt – that was going to be her swimwear, too – with an obvious lack of anything underneath. Dark green swimming trunks covered her thighs, and she wagged her tail as the tigyote leaned over to kiss her.

Rachel made a playful noise after the kiss. “Where's Megan? Is she still getting changed?”

Cerine leaned back and glanced towards the tent. “I suppose so. She hasn't come out yet.” She sighed and frowned. “Probably anxious. Give her a few minutes, she'll be okay.”

“Gotcha.” Rachel teased Sienna's chin, running her thumb along the fur and drawing a chuff out of the tigyote. Her thumb claw teased some dried milk still on the hybrid's chin fur. “I see you've already had breakfast.”

Sienna blushed and ran her tongue across the spot on her fur. “Hard to resist...”

“Want some?” Cerine asked, hugging her bust with her arms until her nipples pressed into the fabric. Her tone was so neutral and ordinary that Sienna was a little taken aback. “Thanks to *somebody*

I've got plenty to go around.”

“I'll be good, I've got a coffee drink in my bag,” Rachel explained. She gave the tigyote's full belly a playful squeeze, saying, “Besides, I don't think I could get a muzzle in edgewise.”

“Hey,” Sienna protested, laughing. “I'd share...”

It wasn't much longer before Megan finally poked her muzzle out of the tent. With three paws motioning for her to come out, the chubby wolfess finally stepped out of her hiding place, hair tied up in a purple ponytail behind her ears and a long pajama shirt covering her swimsuit and her soft figure. With her extra clothes tucked under one arm, she walked over to the log and stood beside everyone, blushing. The tigyote sat upright and smiled.

“Hey,” she said, “you look wonderful.”

The overweight wolfess stiffened and turned her gaze away. Her ears flattened down to her head. But when Cerine cleared her throat, Megan flushed redder and answered, “Thank you.”

“C'mere, cutie,” Rachel offered, holding out her arms and guiding the wolfess back onto her lap. The coyote let out a slight grunt as Megan settled on her lap again, tail wagging rapidly behind her.

Sienna looked over at Cerine, then down at her huge bust, and made a show of frowning. “No fair. Your lap is already full.”

“I could sit on yours,” Cerine suggested with a grin.

The tigyote's ears flicked and she hesitated just long enough before answering that all eyes turned on her, and she nervously licked her nose. Rachel broke into a laugh.

“Can we head over to the pool now, please?” the tigyote whined.

It was a bit of a hike over to the stream and the natural pool that formed in a basin beneath a cleft in the landscape. The girls paired up on the walk down the barely-clear trail, with Rachel and Sienna in front and Cerine and Megan behind. The fox and wolfess held paws as they brought up the rear, despite Rachel's attempts to get everyone to hurry.

“How are you feeling?” Cerine whispered, bumping the wolfess's plump butt with her tail playfully.

“Fat,” Megan instinctively answered. She pawed at her belly through her long shirt and screwed her lupine muzzle.

The taller fox rolled her eyes and smiled. “You look good. Like a dairy fox takes good care of you and keeps you fed.”

Megan blushed brightly. Licking her muzzle, she angled herself closer in against the fox, feeling Cerine's mostly-bare hip bounce against hers. She closed her paw tighter around Cerine's fingers and kept walking, mumbling to herself. “But I'm feeling... I don't know. I went from terribly anxious to mildly anxious to moderately anxious in like, a day. Rachel's the same person I used to know, even if I feel totally different. But she welcomed me back like nothing had changed. And Sienna is very nice, even if I haven't gotten to know her. But then today is just-” she jiggled her belly fat- “the same old stuff.”

“I'm glad you got down to mildly anxious for a while,” Cerine told her. “You and Rachel having fun?”

Megan nodded, her lips curling into a smile. “Yeah... I think I may just need a little more calm for a bit, though. She's a lot.”

The fox made an affirmative noise in her muzzle and went quiet again, her gaze turning out towards the forest around them. They were far enough from their camp now that the trees around them were almost completely alien – some in a literal sense, unlike any seen anywhere else in the Wolfsmark – with only the trail itself a visible landmark of where they were headed. A warm breeze blew through the leaves, tugging on their loose coverings and fluffy tails, especially Cerine's. The vixen turned her muzzle upwards to the canopy and pivoted her ears forward, listening. She could hear the wind, the rustle of leaves overhead, the gentle crunch of feet against dirt, and the ruffle of cotton over fur. But as

she listened, she heard nothing else. They were in a bubble of silence.

It took a minute for the fox to realize that the tugging on her arm was growing more insistent. Blinking, she looked down and saw Megan trying to pull on her. The fox had stopped walking to listen to the forest.

“Hey,” the wolfess said, waving at her, “you’re spacing out again.”

Up the trail, Rachel and Sienna had stopped and were watching them. Cerine looked at all of them in turn and reached up to adjust her glasses with a crooked smile.

“What’s the matter?” Rachel asked, paws on her slender hips.

“Sorry,” Cerine told everyone. “I got distracted. The forest is really quiet.”

The coyote and tigyote shared a glance, and walked back towards the others. “So that’s good, right?” Sienna asked once they were all huddled up again. “I mean, it’s better than some *thing* roaring way off in the distance, right? Because I didn’t appreciate that.”

“We’re gonna be fine, babe,” Rachel said to the tigyote.

“Well, you got me all worked up bringing your spear along,” Sienna reminded her, her voice taking on an irritated twinge. She turned towards Cerine. “And you talking about wild animals and stuff, so I’d just like a little bit of a better answer than ‘don’t worry about it.’”

“She’s got a point,” Megan added.

“*Thank you*, Megan,” Sienna told her, and the wolf’s tail wagged behind her. “These two can be a handful, can’t they?”

The plump wolfess squinted and wriggled indecisively before answering. She glanced sideways at the pink fox beside her, who had gotten lost staring into space *again*. “Uh... yeah... I think we’ve lost her.”

“Lost what?” Cerine asked, looking down. Everyone was staring at her. She cleared her throat, flattened her ears down, and fixed her shirt. “Sorry. I don’t think it’s a problem,” she explained, proving she *did* hear them. “Just weird. The forest is usually weird.”

“So we’re good to go?” Rachel asked, hopping backwards and clapping her paws together.

“Come on, I am throwing whoever is last into the water myself!”

Cerine was the last one to reach the pool, but she was the least ‘throwable’ of the three. She also nixed any attempt to throw Sienna in instead because the water wasn’t deep enough. Rachel instead received a raincheck coupon to throw the tigyote into Cerine’s backyard pool later, which Sienna did not agree with.

The secluded basin was picturesque, one of Cerine’s finds on a scouting trip she’d done the year before. A wide, flat terrace of rock flanked a crystal-clear pool, filled with water from a semicircle-shaped waterfall plunging from higher up the hill, where a spring broke through the rock. There was even a small cove carved out behind the falling water that Sienna pointed out as a beautiful place to take photos. And in the basin itself, the pool was wide and four feet at its deepest, enough to come up to Cerine’s chest or Sienna’s neck. The trees were far back, allowing the space to be bright and sun-lit, and the group laid out their towels on the warm stone, piling up their dry clothes beside them. The sound from the waterfall was loud, forcing them to raise their voices if they were close to it, but not have to yell.

As the most eager and already in her swimwear, Rachel leapt into the water first. She plunged into the clear pool, thrashed under the surface as she kicked her way back up to the surface, and let out a full-throated coyote yowl. Between the ear-piercing vocalization and the diamond-hard nipples poking into the coyote’s now soaked t-shirt, the rest assumed the water was very cold.

“You look excited, babe,” Sienna teased, pointing at Rachel’s chest.

The coyote looked down at herself, pulling on her wet shirt. Then she looked up and grinned.

“Cerine, you wanna hop in?”

“In a minute,” the fox replied, crossing her arms under her bust.

Rachel winked at the others before dunking her head under the surface and sweeping it back, slinging her wet blonde hair behind her ears. A fan of water sparkled in mid-air before hitting the pool again.

Sienna took her attention off her girlfriend's antics for a moment as she untied the folded shirt around her waist. She let it fall open, and then unbuttoned her shorts, pushing them off. Under her outer clothes was a gorgeous blue one-piece, the back of it made out of criss-crossed straps over the tigyote's striped fur. Then, at Rachel's urging, the tigyote knelt by the edge and hopped in, also letting out a mild shriek at the temperature.

"Megan, come on in," Rachel called, bobbing in the water as Sienna got used to the temperature.

The wolfess bit her lip, dragging toe claws across the rock beneath her. She needed a hiding place for a little bit. Cerine took a step forward and set her paw on the small of the wolf's back. "She's my wolf for a little bit," she explained, taking her over to go sit on the towels. Together, the wolfess shed her overshirt, tossing it aside, and then snuggled into the fox's fur, wrapping arms around her thigh and relaxing for a few to rest her nerves. Cerine ran her fingers down the wolf's scalp for a minute before going down to grab her love handle, making the wolf wriggle and whine as she snuggled in deeper.

They whiled away the day at the pool, with the four of them taking turns climbing into the water, swimming, playing, sunbathing, and enjoying the time together. The anxious wolf's nerves relaxed after her short recharge, and she quit worrying about her weight. Rachel pulled her over to a shallow island in the center of the pool and the two of them lay side-by-side, with the coyote rubbing her soft belly and kissing at her muzzle. That left Cerine and Sienna to retreat into the grotto behind the waterfall, calmly listening to the roar of the water as the tigyote gave the buxom dairy fox's back a well-needed massage.

When the sun got up to high noon, Cerine climbed onto the stone ledge of the basin, her legs and tail still in the water, and opened up the lunch bar. She peeled her soaked shirt upwards with some effort, until her huge breasts burst free from the wet fabric and rest atop her lap. Warm milk dripped from her nipples and landed in the water, forming little clouds that quickly spread out into a thin fog. She got her first customer fairly quick, with Megan eagerly swimming over and bobbing up to her with a smile.

"Milk-hound," the fox teased, rubbing the wolfess's ear.

Megan had no argument for that, so she just nuzzled her nose in against the vixen's breast and got to work. Cerine closed her eyes and inhaled deep, feeling that delightful tingle and deep satisfaction that came with feeding. While she leaned her head back, she felt fingers caress her other breast and the slosh of water against stone as someone else came up to the "bar." A tongue dragged slowly over her nipple, making the wet fur down Cerine's spine struggle to rise up, and then lips closed around her nub. The fox opened her eyes as her guest began to drink, expecting to see Sienna, but it was the blonde and gray coyote at her breast. Rachel ran claws along the vixen's thigh fur, nuzzling in deeper and sucking harder after that first exploratory taste.

Sienna was sitting on the little island in the pool, cross-legged, her muzzle propped on her paws as she watched, her tail slowly sweeping back and forth. Cerine knew what was going through her head, and she winked at the tigyote. Sienna smiled, patiently waiting her turn until Rachel got her fill and hopped onto the stone ledge to stretch out and clasp her paws on her belly.

"Alright," she admitted, burping softly, "better than expected... You never told me it was strawberry. How do you do that?"

"If I knew, I'd have thirty-two flavors," Cerine quipped, laying her paw on Sienna's shoulder as the tigyote swam in to take her place.

"I remember when you were worried about your boobies blowing up," Rachel said, still laying on her back, wet hair laying on the stone around her. "Now you've gone full dairy fox."

“Saves on packing snacks,” the fox replied.

Rachel slid her shirt up to her chest, patting her bare belly. Cerine reached over and ran her fingertips over the coyote's middle, feeling the slight bulge from the milk filling her stomach. Licking her muzzle, the coyote laid back and basked in the sunlight while the others had their fun.

With lunch handled and a resting break afterwards to let tummies settle, they were back in the pool until the sun began to set. Orange light glittered off the surface of the water and shimmered through the waterfall. Cerine was finally able to fit into her bikini top again in the afternoon, though the sight of the fox in her swimwear didn't get to be enjoyed very long before the hour grew late, and the four of them started to haul themselves out of the water and dry off.

“I don't know about you,” Rachel was saying, laying belly-down on her towel while she let the sun dry her clothes – which were laying beside her and not on her, “but I would like something a little more substantial for dinner than just milk. And all our non-fox-related foods are back at the camp.”

Beside Rachel, Sienna was pulling up her dark shorts, trying to make them slide up damp fur. It took some shimmying and bouncing, but the curvy tigyote eventually got them up, though she left them unbuttoned for now. They weren't going anywhere. Her folding shirt was left hanging open for now above her mostly-dry swimsuit. She reached up and put her white hair, the dye beginning to fade slightly from all the time in the water, into a loose bun behind her head.

“That sounds good to me,” the tigyote replied, picking at the loose sleeves on her shirt. She glanced over at Megan, who was squeezing into some stretchy purple shorts and a matching top. The wolfess blushed as she pulled the top tight around her torso, trying to make it not-so-obvious she was fighting with a little bit of pudge around her middle that the elastic band was doing its best to emphasize. The tigyote just tried to offer her a friendly smile. She still hadn't had any time to talk to Megan alone yet and actually get to know her. Maybe she'd try that tonight.

After all, they had a common interest, who was trying to haul herself out of the water...

Cerine rest her fat boobs on the stone shelf at the edge of the pool to take their weight off her and then pushed upwards, trying to lift her body out of the water. She'd done it earlier, but she must have been getting tired. She gave up, propping her elbows beside her chest and panting, her muzzle practically sitting on her cleavage. Sienna walked over and knelt down in front of her.

“Need a paw?” she asked, holding out hers. “Those things must be trouble.”

“It's my tail this time, actually,” Cerine explained, taking one of Sienna's paws and then bracing herself as they hauled her up enough to get a knee on the rock together. Cerine pulled herself up and out the rest of the way, and then Sienna saw the problem: seven feet of waterlogged, limp tail dragging on the rock behind the vixen. Water poured down Cerine's fur, but it was nothing compared to the spreading puddle forming around her tail. “It's going to take a little while for me to dry.”

“How long?” Rachel asked, propping her muzzle on her palm. “I'm starving.”

As Cerine just gave a non-committal shrug, Sienna sighed. She grabbed the loose ends of her shirt and tied them closed over her swimsuit. She was the driest and the only one fully dressed, so it was her job, apparently. “Alright, I'll go get some things and we'll have a picnic here. It'll be fun.”

“There's an idea,” Rachel purred.

“Will you be alright?” Cerine asked, raising her eyebrows and brushing wet hair off her shoulders. She turned and waved towards the wolfess nearby. “Megan, can you go with her?”

Sienna rolled her eyes. This topic *again*. Either the woods were safe or they weren't, and she was getting tired of everyone giving her the runaround every time it came up. With a snort of breath through her muzzle, the tigyote said, a bit more forcefully than she probably meant, “You both said it was fine. It's just a walk. I think I can do it myself.”

Standing with a pair of capris pulled halfway up her thighs, Megan looked back and forth between the vixen and the tigyote, unsure if she should answer or not. Cerine leaned back in rebuke and blinked. Slowly, she just nodded to the hybrid, and Sienna spun on her paw, walking past where Rachel

was laying on her towel and stepping off the bare rock and onto the dirt trail again.

“Babe?” Rachel asked, leaning herself off the towel and watching the tigyote storm away.

Sienna just put one foot in front of the other, following the trail back towards the camp. She probably snapped too hard at Cerine, and she felt guilt burning in her chest. But she was getting annoyed at the condescending tone that they kept giving her. It was okay. Don't worry about it. Megan's here. Whatever that meant. She wasn't a child; she just wanted to be clued in on what all the Northenders kept talking about, because they knew and she didn't.

The trek back to the camp *was* an easy path, a straight line even if it had some curves and twists in it. But it didn't look as familiar to Sienna now as it had this morning. The sun was getting low, and the light was shimmering through the canopy at a deep angle, mixing the trunks together with spears of orange radiance and long, gnarled shadows. Sienna kept her head lowered, watching the ground in front of her feet to keep the trail in her view. She made a mental note to definitely get some the light bottles Cerine made, because it would be evening before they were done eating at the pool, and dark on the path again afterwards.

But before she actually made it back to the camp, the tigyote brought herself to a stop. She sniffed, and rubbed her face with the back of a paw covered in her big sleeve. The fabric came away wet. She wanted to turn around, go back, and apologize. Cerine was just trying to look out for her, and she snapped at her for it. The tigyote tried to tell her feet to turn around, but they wouldn't listen. Rachel was hungry, and she promised to get some food. So she stood in place, stuck in the dumbest impasse.

A crack of wood in the forest made her look up. Sienna turned around, expecting to see Megan catching up with her on the trail, but there was no one behind her in the darkening light. She squinted, pivoting her ears outwards, and focused on the sound. It hadn't come from behind her. It came from off to her... right.

The tigyote slowly tipped her head in that direction, feeling her pulse quicken. Just a dozen yards into the thicker woods beside the trail, there was a black void among the twilight. It was shifting and moving towards her, its frame bloated with heavy muscle and shaggy fur. Twisted horns topped its head, held down low to the ground as it snuffled and snorted, clawed forelimbs quietly grasping the ground as it approached. The thing smelled the air, swinging its head slowly over towards Sienna. In the gloom, a pair of glowing eyes, like smoldering red stars, stared at her. And it began to lumber directly towards her, picking up speed.

Faced with a monster of the Reach, Sienna did the only thing she could do: She screamed.

Panic seized her and she broke into a run. But instead of running either up the trail back to the pool or towards the camp, the tigyote ran directly away from the beast, into the thicker forest behind her. The ground became uneven beneath her paws, muddier and rockier, and she weaved between trees as she ran. Behind her, the forest beast bellowed, and she got an earful of the roar she'd heard the night before. The bass vibration rattled her gut and sent her blood pumping even harder. She could hear the creature loping behind her, trying to keep up with the thicker forest getting in its way.

But Sienna didn't get too far before she took a step in the dark and found that the ground sloped away faster than she expected. Shrieking again, the tigyote plunged downwards, feeling her shoulder hit the soft earth as she began to roll. She tumbled downhill, rolling head over heels until the sleeve of her shirt caught on a low-hanging branch and snagged, leaving her dangling on the side of the steep hill. Panting, she looked up and saw the beast looming above her, crown of horns illuminated in the dying light and its glowing red eyes glaring down at her. It was trying to figure out how to slide down the hill after her, slamming its paws on the earth and sending small rocks tumbling her way.

Sienna's lungs were burning. Rolling herself over onto her back, she reached up with her free arm and grasped her sleeve. She gave a tug, pulling until the fabric ripped around the splintered bit of tree branch. Immediately, she came loose, tumbling the rest of the way down the hill until she landed at the bottom on her paws and knees. But her escape was short-lived, because she looked back over her

shoulder at the hulking mass of fur and muscle coming down the hill behind her.

Fighting for breath and the energy to keep running, the tigyote scrambled away from the hill. The sun had no reach here, blocked by the rise in the earth behind her, and she was grasping for anything in the almost complete darkness. Sienna tripped over a root or a rock and fell face-first into the earth, leaves clinging to her fur. She spun herself over and pushed herself backwards until the trunk of a tree blocked her escape, and she watched as the glowing red eyes of the forest beast stalked closer and closer to her. She smelled its rancid breath from here, and threw her arms in front of her face as it reared up, inhaled, and then wheezed in surprise as a second creature slammed into it from the side.

The beast stumbled and fell, rolling onto its back and flailing at the air around itself. It roared and huffed in anger, righting itself and turning to face the challenger. The other creature was huge, walking on two legs, and bristling with swollen muscle and fur along its tighter, sleeker figure than the hulking, rotund beast. Long fangs and sharp claws glittered in the light from the Mother moon above, and the creature let out a full-throated howl as the first beast charged towards it.

The two monsters clashed, with the challenger grasping the beast's horns and jerking it aside, slamming it hard into the trunk of a tree. Sienna felt the impact through the earth, and whined at the incredible strength. She swore she saw a glitter of yellow-gold light from the second monster's eyes as they wrestled. Again, the red-eyed beast was slammed into a tree, shaking leaves loose from the canopy. Roars mingled with growls in the dark, and the first creature whined and grunted in frustration. Its decided to relinquish its prey to the new beast, cutting its losses before it got any more hurt. The red-eyed monster stamped its paws as it backed away, offering a warning roar before it finally turned and fled into the dark.

Quiet descended on the valley. Sienna could hear her blood pumping in her ears and the rattle of breath in her lungs. In the moonlight, she could just barely make out the figure of the clawed and fanged beast standing just a few yards away. Then, to her surprise, the monster sagged down onto its knees, letting out a strained whine. It dropped to all fours, head hanging low between its arms. And then it began to gag and wheeze, desperately struggling to catch its breath.

The monster didn't look so threatening now. Sienna wasn't even sure it knew she was there in the dark. She could just quietly climb up to her feet and start trying to get away while it was winded and distracted, but where would she go?

Despite that, she couldn't take her eyes off of the monster. Its thick fur was lined in glowing moonlight, bulging muscles twitching from exertion. A couple heartbeats later, that immense musculature was beginning to shrink right in front of the tigyote's eyes. Mass evaporated from the monster's frame, though it remained huge and powerful compared to, well, her. But now it looked like... a person, anyways. Just a really *big* one. Curiosity was getting the better of Sienna. Licking her muzzle, she pushed herself upright, and crept on trembling, jelly-like legs towards the monster. She could hear it still panting, the gasps of breath mixed with plaintive whines. Was it hurt?

Sienna got closer in the dark, and her eyes began to acclimate to the gloom. She was a pace away from the creature and noticed that amidst its shaggy, thick fur were *clothes*. Purple, elastic clothes. It was wearing a tight sports top and shorts, sunken so deep into the thick fur that she could barely even tell from a distance. And around the clothes, the tigyote began to make out the dark shades of a midnight wolf's fur, as well as the purple tips in the black hair laying across the wolf's shoulders, just like-

“Megan?” Sienna gasped.

The huge wolf sat upright on her knees, cracking her eyes open a bit and looking over her muscle-bloated shoulder. Within her eye sockets glowed two brilliant, golden stars, illuminating the fringe of her muzzle and the ridge of her brow. It *was* Megan, just... transformed. She was gigantic, her head practically level with Sienna's even as she rest on her knees, and her physique thick and swollen with muscle beneath a pleasant layer of plushness and shaggy fur. But belying her dangerous, powerful appearance, the wolfess's paws were shaking uncontrollably, and tremors rolled up through her

shoulders.

“S-sorry,” Megan replied, her teeth chattering in her muzzle, “I feel s-sick...”

Sienna stumbled in front of the wolfess, laying her paws on her shoulders. “Are you hurt?”

The light between them dimmed as Megan closed her eyes and shook her head emphatically. She immediately regretted the motion, huffing and leaning forward onto her paws again. The wolfess – the werewolf – was trembling. Sienna frowned, dropping down to her own knees in front of the huge wolf, and wrapped her arms tight around Megan's thick neck. She buried her face into her fur, clinging tight to her. Slowly, powerful paws enclosed around her, too, and pulled her closer into the embrace.

“You saved me,” the tigyote mumbled into the wolfess's fur.

Megan's heart rate gently slowed, and the shivering in her muscles faded as she let her breath roll in and out through her lungs. The stress and tension from her struggle against the forest beast ebbed away, and she built up her composure again.

“I'm glad,” she whispered, letting Sienna climb to her feet and step back a little. The tigyote was still between the werewolf's large paws, which was not unwelcome. Golden eyes looked up at her. There were pure light, like shining beacons in the dark, but still, Sienna could just sense where they were looking. “Are you okay?”

The tigyote looked down at her ripped sleeves, muddied and wrinkled. But she was not really any worse for wear. “Just some scratches. I'm alright.” She ran her paws over Megan's face and down her neck, feeling her corded traps and the top of her pecs. “How...? What happened to you? You were gigantic.”

Megan smiled and licked her nose. “Long story, just... Cerine did it.”

“Never would've guessed,” Sienna replied, laughing. It felt good to laugh. The tension in her body flowed out of her with her breath. She looked up at the stars and the Mother moon overhead, the faintest sliver of the Child peeking around its horizon. Looking down at Megan again, she asked, “Are you feeling better now?”

“Mmhhh. Thank you.” The wolfess braced her paws on the ground and pushed herself up to her feet. As she stood up, she towered above Sienna, standing almost a full three feet taller than the tigyote. The hybrid almost fell over trying to crane her head all the way back and stare up at the werewolf's glowing eyes.

Megan turned and looked back in the direction of the hill that Sienna and the huge beast had slid down. Her eyes flicked left and right, skimming over things in the dark that the tigyote couldn't see. “I don't think we can get back up that hill. It's too steep.”

“What do we do?” Sienna asked, pulling her tail tight around her thighs.

The wolfess looked around, uncertainly, and she tensed and her muscles bunched. Sienna immediately recognized that despite her massive new physique, Megan was still *Megan*, and she was coiling up with anxiety again. The tigyote squeezed her paw reassuringly, inhaled, and tried to think. She'd listened to Rachel talk about hiking plenty of times. The best thing to do was stay in one place, but right now, that didn't make her feel very safe. The forest beast could come back for them.

“Do... you think we could go around?” she asked, pointing blindly into the dark. “I'd rather not sit here.”

“We can try,” Megan said, wrapping her fingers around Sienna's paw. “I can see pretty well.”

Clinging close to the werewolf, the tigyote walked forward into the dark. She trusted Megan to lead her, because moonlight and glowing wolf eyes weren't enough. The hybrid stumbled in the dark a couple times, but Megan kept hold of her forearm, gently pulling her back up to her feet. They went around the hill, trying to find a shallower grade to climb back up and find the trail again – if they could even see it in the dark – but they weren't sure what direction they were really heading. They tried to follow the contour of the land, but eventually it felt like they were going in circles, hemmed in on all sides by high earthen walls. Sienna almost got the sense that they were being hemmed in and funneled someplace.



Then she saw a flicker of light in the distance. Megan saw it, too. It was an energetic, mobile light, like a campfire. Even if it wasn't Cerine and Rachel, it was somebody, and that was good. Megan went first, getting closer and pushing the thick foliage aside for Sienna to follow. But as they drew nearer, they realized it wasn't a campfire at all.

It was a gate in a mortar wall ten feet high, with lit braziers flanking the open portal and the firelight reflecting off the painted wall. The wall surrounded a strange house with architecture Sienna had never seen before, its covered, elevated veranda leading to a pair elaborately-carved doors depicting unfamiliar-looking peoples entwined in dance. More braziers were hung from the corners of the sweeping roof, burning merrily in the night.

The werewolf and the tigyote stood side-by-side, staring in awe at the bizarre house in the middle of the forest.

“What the fuck,” Sienna whispered.

\* \* \* \* \*

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