

Maura and Tarak

The gray wolves, more than a dozen this time, melted in and out of the darkness, whining, urging him to come with them, to leave this place that made them so uneasy. Their tongues licked the air nervously. He felt their pull, wanted to go with them. But she came to him, nude. His lover with bright green-blue eyes, long wavy black hair, pale dove-soft skin and no name. She quieted the wolves with a slender hand, then slid beneath the black furs to lay on top of him. A warmth like no other comfort he knew.

Her fingers, playful claws dragged over each of his nipples. Soft lips, quick to follow, putting out the flames with feather-soft kisses. Long locks of black hair tickled as she moved lower. She was beneath the black furs. His cock twitched, swelled. Her wet mouth enclosed over the tip. He whimpered. His knobby old fingers were tangled within her hair.

He pulled her in.

Sliding, gliding inside her... Thrusting his hips. Penetrated her small tight mouth. Rocked faster. Her mouth released his cock. She emerged from beneath the black furs. Messy hair framed a blushing face. Her mouth open. Lips glistening from his cock.

The wolves began to whine again, agitated, driving him mad. He lifted her until she straddled him. Slender pale thighs squeezed his ribcage. Breasts, so round and quenching as he brought them to his lips. Pink pearled nipples toyed with his tongue. Something squeezed his cock, her hand. He positioned her over his cock, so swollen, pulsing with urgency, ready to penetrate her. The wolves howled, called to him, pleaded with him. He begged them to be quiet.

There came a rumble. The ground beneath his back vibrated. The wolves cried now, their howls splitting his eardrums. Their claws digging at the earth. Teeth snapping at shadows. He prepared to thrust. Needed to be inside her. She tilted her head. A silent question on her lips. She pointed to his heart. He screamed over the wolves' howls that she could have it. She smiled. Her blue and spruce eyes changed, became swirling storm clouds, rain spilled from them, trailed down her cheeks. His desperate fingers dug into her thin hips as the wolves paced, howling.

Tarak thrust with one powerful burst of muscle, his cock penetrated her with a loud bang

Starlight faded as the orange glow of the morning sun poured onto the eastern plains of the Colorado Territory. On a distant ridge, Maura stood against the frigid, late November breeze. Her mouth was open, her chin upturned toward the cloudy sky. Her eyes were closed in

concentration. A gust of wind disrupted the shawl from her shoulders, chilling the light sweat that had formed on her skin, broke her focus and pulled her from his mind, making her dizzy. Then it came; the rolling thunderous sound of hooves. Horses; bearing soldiers clad in bedraggled uniforms. Their formation; descending columns—like the devil’s own hand was reaching over the lowlands, upon the sleeping camp tucked so neatly in the horseshoe bend of the creek.

The legion of hooves beat against the sand-flats at a stunning pace. Her hands trembled. The man she loved was down there. Seeing him age over the years was both difficult and beautiful. She loved the Hunter utterly and prayed he would survive. There came the bone-chilling boom of a howitzer and then another. Their noise rent the air like claps of thunder. Maura’s stomach turned at the speed and efficiency in which the soldiers were attacking. Even the horses contributed with shrill neighs, their muscular animal bodies rearing at the violence they were forced into. The distant pleadings of terrified people being awakened and dragged out into the cold made her want to fight. To sink her teeth into flesh. But it would be pointless. She knew.

The sounds of the macabre echoed across the ravine to where Maura stood, naked. Waiting. She swallowed as the wind already carried with it the scent of new death. She bit down and readjusted the shawl, set her shoulders against the icy wind, postponed her lustful craving. Neither the cold nor the sight of death gnawed at her the way it used to. She wasn’t unaffected, only more disciplined now. Her new beginning was within sight. So close she could taste it. Soon. She cupped her elbows and shivered. *Maybe she was cold.*

A large wolf quietly padded to her side and sat on its haunches. It lifted its nose and whined. Its ears perked, alert. Its eyes, round and golden brown, mirrored her dismay.

“Hush, brother. There is nothing we can do.” She wiped away a tear and sighed, “It looks the same, doesn’t it. No matter where we go. Blood is always red.”

The Gray wolf whined again and then silently sent his response: *Yes. But, his blood is our only chance. If he survives.*

She offered a small smile and scratched the wolf’s ear. Maura nodded, “He will.”

Thomas always made her feel safe, but after today he would no longer be the only man in her life, and it worried Maura. Would he ever find the other half of *his* soul? Would his wolf’s spirit allow it? Thomas’ wolf was so eager to go to battle that Maura wondered if there was room in its heart for peace. Of course there was. Thomas was as weary of death as she. At the sound of cannon fire Maura cleared her mind of its old worries and prepared it for what lay ahead. Their future with the Old Hunter. The man that she knew so well, but didn’t. The man she’d made love to countless times but never once touched. She scanned the growing carnage below with an unflinching eye. Her chest still felt tight with misery at her own helplessness, but she gathered her strength and nodded her head as much for her brother as for herself, “He will survive, Brother. Because our blood is his only chance. And... I love him.”

The large wolf nodded solemnly, then rose from his haunches, shook the layer of frost from its thick gray fur and studied the scene below. Together, they waited.

Tarak was exhausted. From one moment to the next he expected to die, but didn't. It was a fast-paced emotional exchange that was beginning to take its toll. He was naked, shivering from the cold and the terror of his own mortality. His exposed cock making him feel more vulnerable than his age. He sweated from exertion, a dangerous thing in the cold of winter, his back sometimes against the temporary corral fence or flat against the ground; but always he was fighting. Fighting for his life. Fighting for his people's lives. But thinking of her. Wanting to live in his dreams, safe and warm beneath the black furs with her. He was forever out of breath, his tired limbs too heavy, clumsy, as though he were an infant again learning to walk, and it felt like he was always looking through the end of a dark tunnel, unable to see who was coming for him next. Catching his breath, he looped the leather strap back around the corral post, both angry that it was his simple pride that drove him to protect the horses within it, but grateful that he could continue to do so. It had become a cleansing process. He'd fight, then loop the strap back around the post. Fight. Stand. Loop. Breathe. And then do it all over again.

As he looped the strap for the fifth or sixth time, there was a lull in the gunfire and almost in a whisper, between the screams, there came a neighboring bubbly wet sound of someone being disemboweled. He'd somehow grown accustomed to the death-screams, the pleadings for mercy, but this was different. He turned and his eyes widened as he watched a hairy cavalryman withdrawing his saber from a woman's stomach. Tarak clutched his own stomach with both hands as though he could feel the sharp blade being pulled from his own body. His testicles tightened, his cock shriveled. He stood in dumb horror at this intimate moment, unable to react as the woman's body slumped to the ground in a heap, like a rain-soaked blanket. She was free. When his eyes met those of the lawless cavalryman, Tarak forgot all about keeping the ponies in the corral.

By the time his thoughts caught up to his body's motion, his toes were already kicking through tufts of blue stem grass, his feet light over the winter prairie. Winter's wind blasted against his bare chest as he ran. He could see his fingers, like talons raking through the air and *missing* as he lunged for the soldier. His chest collided, hard with the cold packed earth, air was pounded from his lungs and he let out a throat cutting grunt. His old mind went swimming until his eyes found the dead woman lying next to him. Her dark lifeless face glistening with spilled tears. There was a heavy step next to him and then a flash caught his eye. Tarak turned just in time to see the blood-soaked saber's deadly point cutting through the air. It snagged on something as he twisted over and over, his left ear blazed with pain. He let out a high-pitched squawk and rolled again and again.

Another howitzer blasted and Tarak exploded to his feet, scrambled for the handle of the saber. It was a brief struggle and he took several blows to the side of his face before he finally wrenched the weapon from the shocked soldier's hand. Tarak couldn't help enjoying that he'd impressed the younger man. He might have been old now, but he was still filled with a Hunter's blood. Using his entire upper body, he thrust. The blade went in easier than expected, and Tarak's lips spread in a sickening grimace. He released the handle and watched the soldier slump and then stagger two steps before falling hard to his knees, and then, at last, to his back. The saber was forced back out of the dead man's midsection, its narrow blade painted thickly with blood.

And... suddenly he was choking now. Thick rope tightened around his throat. His vision swam once more, with bright dots of light floating before his eyes. His feet left the ground and the sound of hooves echoed in his ears. He struggled for air, tried to fight, to free himself from being dragged like a dog by a mounted cavalryman. His heels kicked, skidded over the ground too quickly to find any footing. Tarak coughed, twisted, tried to spin out of the man's rope. He felt the horse's belly swell with heavy breathes as it cantered away from the encampment.

"Thomas! He's coming!" her nipples tightened into hard pebbles as she felt his presence grow stronger, closer. Her skin goose-bumped with excitement and her belly fluttered with the echoes of unfulfilled lust. Maura let her arms unfold and the woolen shawl fluttered away from her shoulders. The wind carried it down the other side of the small ridge. Her Hunter was coming.

She stepped out from the small rock hollow where she'd been waiting, unable to watch the events below. Her bare skin dusted from the near full day's wait as the early morning battle had carried on into the late afternoon. She'd remained naked for when the time came for her to change. Clothes didn't fare well when she shifted, and a wolf suddenly finding itself constricted by layers of clothing was easily set to panic. But, also she wanted to offer him something familiar.

Another dispassionate gust attempted to force her back behind the small shelf of sand-rock. She felt it, but it didn't bother her. She stepped into it. Letting the cold bite refresh her skin with its nutriment. After today, their lives would be forever synced, and that thought alone brought heat to her flesh. For the first time in her life, she would be able to touch him. Smell him. Finally, make love to him.

A horse and rider were quickly approaching, and Maura's eyes widened when she saw her Hunter, a rope tight around his neck, trailing behind the galloping horse.

That hadn't been part of the vision. Maura couldn't stop the growl that issued from her throat, she bared her teeth and knotted her fingers into fists. Thomas, hidden among a few large tufts of blue prairie grass, crouched and listened. Timing the hoof-beats as the horse approached.

Maura's heart leapt into her throat when she saw the Hunter suddenly cease his struggle. His tanned face, his beautifully lined face was turning a pasty grayish-blue.

Maura ran, startling both horse and rider as Thomas timed his attack. Teeth bared, forelegs extended, he leapt toward the soldier, atop the chestnut-colored stallion. Wolf collided with man and they both sailed toward the ground. The wolf landing smoothly, the soldier's frightened scream ringing aloud and then silenced.

The Old Hunter was nearly trampled when the stallion reared with a frightened whinny, disliking the scent of wolf so near. It bolted back down toward the creek with its ears laid back, its thick neck arching, its mane flowing.

Maura fell beside him, tore the rope from his neck with trembling fingers, holding her breath until she could see the slight rise of the old man's chest. Relief washed over her. His bare body a map of abrasions from rock and dirt. She felt like sobbing when she noticed blood too, sticky, over his neck and down his shoulder. Thomas trotted past, eyes alert for anyone else that might be coming up the ravine. His muzzle stained red. The scuffle between soldier and wolf didn't last as long as Maura felt it should.

Maura took a deep breath lifted her lover's head onto her bare lap. His heartbeat was picking up to a normal steady pace, she could hear it, beneath her own. He looked older than her by... many years, but when her eyes fixed on his so familiar masculine face, her excitement suddenly sobered. After today, the Old Hunter, would age immeasurably, but she would bring back his youth.

Dark lashes lay softly against tanned, weathered cheekbones. Those lines endeared him to her. She adored each one. His forehead wrinkled, the lines deepening as he groaned. His heavy eyelids fluttered open. She saw two perfect eyes, the color of worn leather staring up at her. Maura smiled.

The first thing he realized when he came to, was that his cock was still exposed and that he was still alive. He didn't think he'd make it. His throat was raw, swollen, still felt like the rope was choking him, but with every slow beat of his heart he was grateful to be alive. He listened, couldn't hear any screams, no more earsplitting gunfire, and no more horses. He slowly opened his eyes. Squinted against the bright cloudy sky and then he saw a woman leaning over him—*her! Maybe he was dead...*

Relief washed over him instantly, staunching the fire emanating from his entire body, the wounds he'd accumulated while being dragged. He reached for her out of habit, pulled her to him the way he always had, so relieved that she was here with him. He let out a scratchy sob as her bare breasts, cool and rising, pressed against his chest. His heart beat against hers. He met her eyes, touched her long black hair that hung over her slender shoulders in waves. Her

beautiful skin, that dove-white smoothness he'd tasted in his dreams so many times—was smudged with dirt. Then he noticed her cheeks, dirty also, and streaked by tears. It confused him, made him angry that something had upset her so much. He pulled her on top of him, closed his eyes, kissed her, tried to make her feel better. Lost himself in the heat of her lips—if this was a dream he didn't ever want it to end. He closed his eyes tight, resisting his tired reality.

"I have come for you, Hunter." Her voice startled him and he froze. Looked into her green-blue eyes. Blinked. A hand, dirty, slender caressed his worn cheek. His chest rose as he pulled the biggest breath of his life into his lungs. He watched her soft lips as she spoke again, unable to believe she was really there, "You've waited so long, been so patient."

Tarak let out a great breath and then swallowed. His throat hurt, but he nodded slowly. "Who are you?" he croaked.

That smile that he'd come to love, returned, "I am Maura. I am your chance, and you are my hope."

Tarak couldn't help himself, his arms tightened around her slender, bare waist. Her smudged breasts swelled against his chest, tempting his lips, tongue and teeth. He still wasn't certain that he wasn't dead, not really, but he accepted her words. As though he'd always known them. He nodded again, kissed her, hard, not wanting to breathe anything but her breath ever again. The weight of her body on his was comforting. Though his old bones were exhausted, his cock swelled with blood, and he felt ashamed, but the touch of her skin was so warm and soft... he wanted to bury himself deep inside of her, fill her.

"My love, my protector. You must fight one more time. Remember what it is that you desire most. What do you want, in all the world, that you would die to protect?"

Crushing her to him, he answered fiercely, without any hesitation, "You!"

She smiled, knowing what he would say, "I know, and we will be together, soon. You will know in your soul what carried you to me. You must not give in to the pain."

A chill rolled through him. Didn't know if it was from the cold wind intruding on their closeness or Maura's solemn words. Maura... he loved her name. Loved her. Would protect her until the end of his life. But why hadn't she come sooner? Why had she come now, when he was old and weak?

Maura lowered her lips to his for a slow, delicate kiss. When their lips parted, Maura looked over her shoulder, "Thomas..."

A gray wolf walked toward them and Tarak tried to move Maura off of him to sit up, but she placed a hand on his chest preventing him. He looked at the wolf again, and heard a man's voice, calm and reassuring.

You need not fear me, Old Hunter.

Tarak looked around to see who else was there, but the wolf stepped closer.

What is your name, Brother?

Maura brushed a finger over Tarak's lower lip, "Tell him, my love. I want to finally feel your name on my tongue."

Tarak looked into the large wolf's golden-brown eyes, saw something in their depths; kinship. His skin shivered as Maura adjusted, shifted her weight. His tongue felt thick as he answered the wolf, "Tarak."

He turned back to Maura but, she was... gone. Another wolf, much smaller than the gray, with fur the same color as the bed furs from his dreams stood at his other side. Tarak nearly jumped out of his skin. But something about this wolf's eyes prevented him from getting to his feet; he recognized them. Pale green-blue, the color of the spruce trees. Maura's voice whispered inside his head, *Tarak, my love. My protector.* The sound of his name on her breath was musical, soothing as he raised a tentative hand to touch her.

Remember... the pain will subside, but you must be strong.

She wouldn't bite his hand. They'd touched her so lovingly over the years, she couldn't bear to ruin them. She lowered her nose, through the dirt and blood, she smelled for his heart. Found it, beating low and steady, pumping vigorously at the center of his chest...

On his back, Tarak screamed and then screamed some more. He bore down, drooled and spat as his cries penetrated the clouds. He closed both fists, hard as iron, over black fur and wolf flesh, felt the wolf's muscles bunch at her shoulders as she bit through *his* muscle, the bones of his chest. He screamed until all that came from his raw throat were hoarse voiceless wails. His eyes closed in agony. His blood continued to pump, coated the wolf's muzzle, dripped from her fangs. Tarak felt a sensation, like he was floating, and then he felt sick to his stomach.

Hold on to me Hunter! You must not let me go!

Tarak tried, but his fingers didn't seem to obey. He felt his mind slipping. Dreamed of warm black furs, lying beneath them as a young man again, virile and full of strength—life! Those black furs had brought him everything pleasurable, peaceful in his hard life. His arms were heavy now, he felt cold. With the last dredges of strength that he could summon, Tarak pulled the black she-wolf closer, fed his barely beating heart to Maura's gnawing fangs...

...and then he was cozy, no longer in pain. Bed furs tickled his nose. Maura, beautiful, soft Maura, lay atop him. Her mouth so sweet and hungry for his kisses. Her pearl-pink nipples lightly brushing his chest in time with the hand she used to stroke his cock. It only took her touch to make him hard and ready for her. He stared into her pale green-blue eyes, then looked down at his chest. His muscles were strong again, full of tireless potential. He palmed one round breast, and then the other, his young, strong fingers flexing, squeezing so easily. Maura's soft cries in response to his touch washed over his skin. He felt invigorated again, no longer achy and stiff. He couldn't seem to get enough of her at once. In a flurry, he pulled her hand from his cock and lifted her with newborn strength, as though she weighed nothing. He flipped her over, kneeled behind her (a painful task he hadn't done in years), gazed at the roundness of her amazingly white backside, the inviting pink slit, wet and aromatic. He slid his hand over each supple mound, slowly, feeling her for the first time. He didn't hesitate for her acceptance as he brought his cock to her entrance. He shoved, deep inside, thrust his hips until he could go no further.

For nearly fifty years she'd visited him, seducing him in his sleep. An ethereal beauty; his ever youthful, black-haired lover; still as young as when he'd first dreamed of her, still as ripe to his leathery touch, fresh to his now unwrinkled lips. He thrust, held onto her, rutted like an animal—his renewed heart pounding in his chest. The wolves returned, surrounded them, settled and slept as he rammed. He reached for her hair, wrapped a ribbon of black length around his fist and pulled. He pumped. Grunted and bellowed. A man reborn. He leaned forward, ever pumping, reveling in how strong his cock was, grabbed for her breast, nipped at her soft shoulder. Thrust ever harder. Maura's passionate, open-mouthed cries carrying him further into bliss. His cock erupted, released again and again in great muscle-draining waves.

He slowed his thrusts, slid to his shoulder and brought her with him. The hard, cold ground a distant sensation. He kissed the sweat from her lips. Slid a hand slowly, up her thigh, grabbed her waist possessively and looking into her loving eyes, the color of blue and spruce, he slid his cock into her again. Savoring each slow thrust and her familiar, coy smile.