

# Hunt by January Bain

## EXCERPT

Three weeks later Alessandro Luceres crept up the steep stone steps of Rocco Maggiore Castle, listening intently. The ancient fortress was built on a rocky promontory, the tower jutting out over the valley below. The image of a great battle filled his mind. It had been between a priest and a suspected werewolf, and the man of God had struck down the beast with a silver crucifix, killing him on the spot. It was a legend not even the townspeople knew of as the priest had also died soon after of his injuries, never to regain consciousness. Their spirits lingered still, linked by mortal combat. He crossed himself, offering a whispered prayer of release in Italian, “*Possa la vostra anima trovare rifugio e guarigione in Cielo.*”

“I doubt their souls will ever find refuge and healing in heaven, brother,” Maximus said. His twin spared him a backward glance as he climbed the steps two at a time. With their mind connection, he’d caught a glimpse of what Maximus had planned for after the job, which explained his hurried actions. He had his sights focused on a certain female.

“If we find it, there will be more than enough healing to go around,” Alessandro mused. No drawing existed of the *Lupus Sanguis Chalice* they were hunting. With it made from the bone and blood of the original wolf, its legendary status had kept a handful of treasure hunters fascinated for centuries, the quest handed down from father to son. Could it really do what it was purported to do? Ease the transformation of human to wolf? If so, the House of Luceres stood on the threshold of a brand-new era, unlike any that had come before. Finally, their numbers could grow, giving them increased strength in the modern world...if care was taken in the process.

“Where’s the faith, brother? It could very well be here. The chalice has to be somewhere, right?”

Maximus had always had an excess of confidence. Some might call it hubris. Perhaps his legendary skills at anything he pursued was reason enough. “We can’t be certain. Maybe it was never meant to be found. It will change things—maybe too much. If it ever fell into the wrong hands, think of what might happen?”

Alessandro shivered, imagining a vast horde of werewolves being created and taking over the world. As it stood now, few humans survived a werewolf bite. The majority of the Luceres numbers were from an ancient bloodline from the founding of Rome, and they were blessed with the DNA of

the original wolf, guaranteeing a smooth change. They still found one of their original number on occasion, like his alpha and brother's Forever Mate, Everly Affini. But it happened so rarely now that too many males were without their mate. And moon sickness lurked for those unable to forge a permanent bond.

“Shush, I hear something.”

A slight furtive scratching echoed in the vaulted staircase. Maximus pointed ahead. In the tower. Human. A faint hint of wolf gave him pause. What was this?