

TOWERS AND TITHES Excerpt #2

Fairy Tales of the Magicorum #8

Dex

“Owoooooo!”

High-pitched howls echo in through my bedroom door, along with the click-clack of tiny paws racing across the outer hallway. I wake up and smile.

The shifter pups are racing through my palace again. Fifth time this week.

I'd love to join in right away. Still, as pack alpha I must set a good example. I slide out of bed and into my formal kit as leader of Wulfhelm. That means a black leather jerkin, along with matching pants and boots. A short cape hangs over my shoulders. I have long black hair, pale skin, and a lean body that's roped with muscle. Once I'm ready, I open my door and step into the corridor beyond.

Wulfhelm territory includes a castle-city and acres of woodland. My little corner is called Thornfield. It's a medieval-style building that mixes dark wood, stained-glass windows, and ancient tapestries.

“Owooooo!”

The pups are only few hallways away now. A minute later, twenty of them tear around the corner, coming to a skidding stop by my opened door. The smallest pup is named Ulliver. Like me, he's one of the few shifters who can speak while still in wolf form.

“Will you run with us?” Ulliver positions his little wolf self so he stands directly under the opened doorway across from my own. Not sure if this is because he's six, but Ulliver mimics everything I do. It's beyond endearing.

I put on my most mature face. Once the pups see I'm tempted, they'll never let up.

“Shouldn't you be in lessons?” I ask.

“It's the girl's turn,” explains Ulliver. “We have to wait.”

Wulfhelm is a unique pack. We're all orphans and runaways, either from Faerie or Earth. For thousands of years, we've had female teachers for the girl shifters, but our population keeps declining. As a result, the boy's teachers have been doing double duty lately.

"Don't you want to run with us?" asks Ulliver. All around him, the pups yip and jump with excitement. "Please, Alpha?"

I pretend to consider this request. In truth, part of me made my decision the moment I heard the high-pitched howls. I nod slowly. "I'll give you a head start."

"Yay!"