

Calming the beast

by Jennifer Governo Created on: April 03, 2012

All of my life, I have felt like a stranger to those around me. I have been someone who stood just outside, looking in. At times surrounded by others, and yet achingly alone. There has always been an unseen barrier between myself and those who would hurt me, a wall between myself, and those that I loved. A strength and protection at times, but as the years passed, I saw it in a different way. It was also an obstacle, a stumbling block. My greatest weakness and it kept me from what my heart longed for.

I had promised myself that finally, I would set it aside. I would forgive myself for my mistakes. I would let go of fear and regret, and embrace the life that I had been given. For the first time in my life, I would attempt to love someone else without hesitations or anxieties. I had dwelt alone and in darkness for far too long. The question I had yet to answer, though...was how.

My mind was troubled as I made the arduous climb alone to the volcanic cliffs in the West. The more I pondered that question, the less I felt I knew any answer to it. When I reached the summit of one of the peaks, I sat on a rock near the edge and let out a deep breath. I looked up over the horizon, and I felt his presence before my eyes found him. The quarry I had been tracking for weeks without a glimpse was finally in my sights.

He was waiting for me.

The huge panther was pitch black, his dark outline highlighted by the ash and soot swirling about him. The flames in his eyes were far brighter than the embers around him. He made no sound, no movement at all. His gaze met mine, and I stood to face him. I put my daggers on the ground, and leaned my bow against the rock.

I did not approach him. I merely closed my eyes, and began to whisper the words. The ancient song of my kind, the only true magic I had ever been able to wield. It

was an invitation to the animal before me, to come and commune with me. I opened my eyes and found myself in darkness. He had accepted my invitation.

~I have been watching you, huntress.~

"I have been seeking you."

~What is it you seek?~

"Completion."

He paused. He was not sure what to make of my answer, I thought.

~Why do you feel you are lacking, Huntress?~

"I am lacking one like you."

~One like me? What am I, do you think?~

"A weapon."

~And against what enemy would you wield me?~

It was my turn to pause. It was a question I had never been asked by one I sought a spirit bond with. "All of them."

~You need more than a weapon, Huntress. You need a shield. For you, I shall be both.~

I felt him draw closer in the darkness, the soft words that even now I still chanted faded away.

~You will call me Thorian.~

The darkness faded as his mind left mine. I found myself kneeling upon the ash-covered ground, and he was beside me. And within me, I could feel his presence still. I had been successful. For the first time since the death of Serrar, I had forged a true spirit bond. Sudden tears filled my eyes as the aching voids in my mind, my spirit, and my heart were suddenly filled. I rested my forehead against

his back. His hide was smooth, appearing almost metallic. And even in the oppressive heat, he felt cold to the touch.

Not just a weapon, but a shield...

Perhaps with such protection, my own walls could finally come down.

When I left the mountains that day, I was no longer alone.