

-WolfSong-

By Barbara Raffin

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ISBN: 1-58749-052-8

Epilogue

It was one of those late spring nights when the breezeless air hinted of summer yet was still scented with new growth.

Madison stood on the front porch of the cabin sipping hot cocoa, watching the quiet waters of the river slip by, and listening to the chorus of night chirpers. Walker stepped up behind her and draped a blanket over her shoulders.

She smiled at him. "I'm not chilly."

"But it's damp out," he said, wrapping his arms around her and drawing her back against his chest.

"It was a soft rain and it's done now," she said.

He settled his chin on her shoulder and stroked her belly. "I still want to protect my little packages."

Her smile stretched and she tipped her head against his.

"What's in the cup?" he asked.

"Your favorite," she said, handing him the cup. "Hot cocoa."

He released her long enough to drain the cup and set it aside before wrapping his arms around her once more. "Just like you. Strong and sweet."

Madison's heart swelled in spite of the memories of all that had transpired through the long winter--all that had happened since revealing one of Walker's oldest friends was a rapist. At least all the bad was behind them now; the trial, the regrets, their silly guilts.

She leaned back into his chest--into the safety of his arms. "I love you, Walker."

He nuzzled her ear. "I love you, too, Mrs. Armstrong."

Behind them also was an autumn wedding, a simple affair held on this very porch as was their choosing. He'd worn a ceremonial shirt his mother had hand-beaded herself. She'd worn a gauzy peasant blouse of white belted over a skirt to match and wild flowers in her hair. But Walker's favorite part of her wedding *ensemble* had been the knee-high boots she'd worn, his mother's ceremonial boots of soft leather and blue beading. Walker couldn't have been more pleased when, upon seeing them in the storage box with his shirt, she'd all but squealed that they'd *perfectly* finish her outfit.

Okay, he could be more pleased. Like right now this very moment.

Walker slid his hands inside the blanket he'd draped over her shoulders--slid them low over her ripe belly.

"Hey," she said, playfully swatting at his wayward hands.

He brushed his lips across her ear. "You're carrying low tonight."

"My term is nearing its end."

He could almost feel the smile pulled across her lips.

"Do you think our lady wolf has had her litter?" she asked.

"If not, she's close, according to the electronic tracking," he said, smiling when his own pup inside his own lady moved beneath his palm. "She's been sticking close to her den."

"Nesting," Madison said.

He thought of the cradle beside their bed, of how Madison had lined it with soft fabrics.

Her hand settled over his on her round belly. "You crafted the most beautiful basinet I've ever seen. I love the colors of the birds and flowers you painted on it."

"Don't forget the pair of wolves."

She pressed her temple against his forehead. "They may be my favorite of all. I expect they'll watch over all our babies."

Walker's heart jumped. They'd spent so many months living in the moment they hadn't discussed how many children they wanted. "All our babies?"

She peeked up at him without her body tensing with the reticence of their earliest days. "You do want more than this one, don't you?"

"I want a house full," he said.

"Me, too," she said, turning in his arms and meeting his ready lips.

Off in the distance a wolf howled, not the howl of a lone wolf this time, but of one perhaps making a declaration.

Walker and Madison lifted their heads and listened.

"Do you think he's announcing the arrival of his first litter?" Madison asked.

Walker grinned. "Whether that's what he's doing or not, the moment our first child enters this world I will sing her name from the rooftops."

Madison stroked his cheek, the love in her eyes deep and true. I can't speak for our soon-to-arrive Laurel Wolfsong Armstrong, but, much as you perched on our rooftop calling out her name makes for a great story, I'd rather you be at my side, feet solidly on the ground, where I can sing her into this world with you."

Reverently, Walker kissed her forehead, the tip of her nose, and her chin; and against her lips he whispered his vow.

"Always and forever at your side."

The End

For more information about the author, visit her at her web site. www.BarbaraRaffin.com