

Rise of the Forsaken

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Lisa Vanegas

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About the Author

Lisa Vanegas is a passionate storyteller with a love for emotionally driven narratives, wild worlds, and unforgettable characters. With *Rise of the Forsaken*, she delivers a haunting and powerful tale about loss, loyalty, and the untamed hunger for justice.

Inspired by nature's raw beauty and the complexity of bonds between friends, family, and enemies, Lisa brings depth and intensity to every page. When not writing, she is often imagining hidden kingdoms among the mountains or crafting stories where even the fiercest creatures have hearts worth fighting for.

Rise of the Forsaken is her debut novel — but it won't be her last.





STEP INTO THE WORLD OF HONOR

The story doesn't end on the page.

Scan to explore the world of Rise of the Forsaken, meet the characters, and discover more about the story.





CHARACTERS OF HOLLOWFANG PEAK

EVERY TERRITORY HAS ITS
GUARDIANS.
EVERY PACK HAS ITS STORIES.
AND EVERY SOUL CARRIES A
PATH OF ITS OWN

MEET THE DIREWOLVES AND
CREATURES WHO WALK
AMONG THE MOUNTAINS,
FORESTS, RIVERS, AND
VALLEYS OF THE WORLD

~CAIUS~

AGE: 10 YEARS OLD

HEIGHT: 6'5 AT THE
SHOULDER

WEIGHT: 625 LBS/
283 KG

GENDER: MALE

SPECIES: DIREWOLF

TERRITORY:
GREYWILD VALE

ROLE: ALPHA/
LEADER

PERSONALITY: LOYAL,
PROTECTIVE, WISE,
COMPASSIONATE,
COURAGEOUS

STRENGTHS: LEADERSHIP,
COMBAT, TRACKING,
PROTECTION, STRATEGY

WEAKNESSES: PROTECTIVE
OF HIS FAMILY, WILLING TO
SACRIFICE HIMSELF, CARRIES
THE BURDEN OF HIS PACK

FAMILY: EYOTA, CLEO
SHILOH



~EYOTA~

PERSONALITY: CARING,
BRAVE, WISE, PROTECTIVE,
DETERMINED

STRENGTHS: HUNTING,
TRACKING, SURVIVAL,
MATERNAL INSTINCTS,
AGILITY

WEAKNESSES:
PROTECTIVE OF HER
PUPS, EMOTIONALLY
ATTACHED TO HER
FAMILY, WILLING TO TAKE
RISKS FOR OTHERS

FAMILY: CAIUS, CLEO,
SHILOH

AGE: 9 YEARS OLD

HEIGHT: 6'3 AT THE
SHOULDER

WEIGHT: 550 LBS/ 249 KG

GENDER: FEMALE

SPECIES: DIREWOLF

TERRITORY: GREYWILD
VALE

ROLE: HUNTRESS/
MATRIARCH



~SHILOH~

AGE: 4 YEARS OLD

HEIGHT: 6'2 AT THE SHOULDER

WEIGHT: 530 LBS/240 KG

GENDER: FEMALE

SPECIES: DIREWOLF

TERRITORY: GREYWILD VALE

ROLE: SCOUT/HUNTRESS

PERSONALITY: INDEPENDENT,
RESILIENT, OBSERVANT,
PROTECTIVE

STRENGTHS: TRACKING,
STEALTH, HUNTING,
COMBAT, SURVIVAL

WEAKNESSES:
DISTRUSTFUL, CARRIES
GUILT, PROTECTIVE OF
THOSE SHE LOVES

FAMILY: CAIUS, EYOTA,
CLEO



~CLEO~



AGE: 4 YEARS OLD

HEIGHT: 6,4 AT THE SHOULDER

WEIGHT: 600 LBS/272 KG

GENDER: MALE

SPECIES: DIREWOLF

TERRITORY: GREYWILD VALE

ROLE: HUNTER/WARRIOR

PERSONALITY: LOYAL, PROTECTIVE, DETERMINED, RESERVED

STRENGTHS: HUNTING, TRACKING, COMBAT, SWIMMING, ENDURANCE

WEAKNESSES: PROTECTIVE TO A FAULT, CARRIES GUILT, STRUGGLES TO TRUST

FAMILY: CAIUS, EYOTA, SHILOH

~ZARKO~



AGE: 2 YEARS OLD

HEIGHT: 6'0 AT THE SHOULDER

WEIGHT: 500 LBS/ 227 KG

GENDER: MALE

SPECIES: DIREWOLF

TERRITORY: GREYWILD VALE

ROLE: SCOUT/WARRIOR-IN-
TRAINING

PERSONALITY: CURIOUS, PLAYFUL,
CHEERFUL, DETERMINED, LOYAL

STRENGTHS: HUNTING,
AGILITY, SWIMMING,
COMBAT, ADAPTABILITY

WEAKNESSES:
IMPULSIVE, EASILY
DISTRACTED,
INEXPERIENCED,
OVERCONFIDENT

~THISTLE~

AGE: 3 YEARS OLD

HEIGHT: 8 INCHES

WEIGHT: 1.5 LBS/ 0.7 KG

GENDER: MALE

SPECIES: CHIPMUNK

TERRITORY: TALONROOT
REACH

ROLE: SCOUT, COMPANION



PERSONALITY: CHEERFUL,
TALKATIVE, CURIOUS,
BOLD,
OBNOXIOUS, LOYAL

STRENGTHS: SPEED,
CLIMBING, STEALTH,
OBSERVATION, QUICK
THINKING

WEAKNESSES: SMALL SIZE,
IMPULSIVE, EASILY
DISTRACTED, TALKS TOO
MUCH

~DJANGO~

AGE: 8 YEARS OLD

HEIGHT: 6'0 AT THE SHOULDER

WEIGHT: 500 LBS/ 227 KG

GENDER: MALE

SPECIES: DIREWOLF

TERRITORY: ASHENHOLD RAVINE

ROLE: HENCHMAN, SCOUT

PERSONALITY: FIERCE,
COMPETITIVE, AGGRESSIVE,
DISCIPLINED, IMPULSIVE

STRENGTHS: COMBAT,
STRENGTH, ENDURANCE, SPEED,
INTIMIDATION

WEAKNESSES: IMPULSIVE, EAGER,
MANGY, OVER CONFIDENT, ACTS
BEFORE THINKING



~MALAKAI~

AGE: 10 YEARS OLD

HEIGHT: 6'6 AT THE
SHOULDER

WEIGHT: 650 LBS/ 295 KG

GENDER: MALE

SPECIES: DIREWOLF

TERRITORY: ASHEHOLD
RAVINE

ROLE: ROUGE LEADER

PERSONALITY: RUTHLESS,
AMBITIOUS, DOMINANT,
VENGEFUL, MANIPULATIVE

STRENGTHS: COMBAT,
TRACKING, INTIMIDATION,
ENDURANCE

WEAKNESSES: PRIDE,
OBSESSION,
OVERCONFIDENCE, BLINDED
BY REVENGE

FAMILY: VLADIMIR



~VALDIMIR~

AGE: 10 YEARS OLD

HEIGHT: 6'6 AT THE SHOULDER

WEIGHT: 650 LBS/ 295 KG

GENDER MALE: MALE

SPECIES: DIREWOLF

TERRITORY: ASHENHOLD RAVINE

ROLE: WARRIOR, ROUGE

PERSONALITY: QUIET,
GUARDED, LOYAL,
INTELLIGENT, CONFLICTED

STRENGTHS: COMBAT,
TRACKING, ENDURANCE,
STRENGTH, EXPERIENCE

WEAKNESSES: GUILT,
DISTRUST, STUBBORNNESS,
FEAR, OF BETRAYAL

FAMILY: MALAKAI





Prologue

Hollowfang Peak did not stand alone.

From its towering spine, the land split outward like claws across the earth, dividing into five distinct territories—each shaped by the mountain’s reach, each carrying its own dangers, resources, and history. Ancient trails, worn by generations of wolves, stretched from the heart of Hollowfang into these lands, forming a fragile balance between them.

Rolling hills stretched wide beneath the mountain’s shadow, broken by rivers and tall grasses that swayed like waves in the wind. The other territories stretched in all directions—dense forests, jagged ridges, frozen waterways, and shadowed ravines—each with its own place in the balance of the mountain.

To the south lay Greywild Vale, the most open and fertile of the territories. Vast forest stretched wide beneath the mountain’s

shadow, broken by rivers and tall trees that blew with the wind. It was here that packs of massive canines roamed—creatures unlike any others in the range.

They were not ordinary wolves.

They were larger. Stronger. Built like living storms. The size of Equines.

They were the Direwolves.

Unlike other canines, direwolves were larger, built for endurance and power, their bodies heavier with muscle, their jaws stronger, their senses sharper. Their paws were broader, with subtle webbing between the toes—allowing them to move across snow, mud, and even water with surprising efficiency. Their fur grew thick against the cold, layered to withstand brutal winters and freezing winds.

But it wasn't just their size that set them apart.

It was their intelligence.

Their structure.

Their bonds.

Direwolves lived in organized packs, guided by loyalty, hierarchy, and deep-rooted tradition. Every movement, every hunt, every decision carried purpose. Leadership was not just claimed—it was earned, protected, and, if necessary... fought for.

They were not just survivors of the wild.

They were rulers within it.

And Hollowfang Peak was where their story began.

The wind drifted softly through the pine-lined cliffs of Hollowfang Peak, carrying with it the quiet harmony of a land untouched by bloodshed. The sun warmed the rocky slopes, casting golden light over the dens and shaded groves tucked into the mountain's ribs. Birds called overhead, and the occasional crack of a twig echoed through the brush—but nothing broke the peace.

Not yet.

Three young direwolf pups tumbled through a patch of tall grass near the ridge, yipping and growling in playful competition. Their paws kicked up dust, claws scraped harmlessly against the earth, and their teeth flashed in mock attacks.

Caius was fast—faster than most direwolves his age—and clever too. He ducked and rolled out of reach just as Malakai lunged for him. Valdimir clumsily tried to join the chase but tripped over his own oversized paws, falling flat on his side with a grunt.

“Ha! You’re never going to catch me, Malakai!” Caius barked, tumbling and rolling around in the grass.

“We’ll see about that!” Malakai snarled playfully, scrambling after him.

Valdimir shook himself off and trotted over to them, panting. “You two are crazy.”

“That’s ‘Leader Crazy’ to you,” Malakai said proudly, marching over to a small boulder. He lifted his chin, eyes sweeping across the vast valley below. “One day, all of this will be mine.”

Caius flicked an ear. “Ours, you mean.”

Malakai scoffed. "You're too soft, Caius. You'd share it with every pup in the den."

"And you wouldn't?" Caius asked, voice calm but firm.

Valdimir stepped closer, tail low. "I don't care who's leader. I just don't want to get stuck with patrol duty for life."

Malakai barked out a laugh and shoved his brother lightly. "Of course not. You'll be at my side, same as Caius. You two are all I need."

Caius looked at him, thoughtful. "You can't rule with pride alone, Malakai. It's not about who's the strongest, it's about who the pack trusts."

"They'll trust me," Malakai said. "They'll have no choice."

There was a pause—small, but heavy. Caius held his friend's gaze, unreadable. Then he turned his eyes to the horizon.

"We'll see," he said.

Malakai didn't reply.

Behind them, Valdimir looked between the two, tail twitching uneasily.

The breeze picked up again, rustling the treetops and brushing through their fur. The sun sank lower behind the crags of Hollowfang, casting long shadows over the young wolves. The distant calls of their pack echoed faintly through the trees—summons for dusk patrol or perhaps the elders were gathering near the sacred stone.

Caius hopped down from the boulder and padded toward a stream that cut through the ridge. "Come on," he said over his shoulder. "Let's wash up before we head back." Valdimir followed quickly, but Malakai stayed where he was, still staring out across the valley with an intensity that no longer matched their earlier game. His eyes narrowed slightly, calculating.

"You think the pack won't follow me," he muttered.

Caius flicked his ears but didn't stop walking. "I think the pack follows strength and heart. You have the first. I hope you find the second."

"I don't need to find it," Malakai snapped, jumping down and trotting beside him. "They'll follow me because I'll give them something no one else can—power. No more hiding from the lowlanders. No more begging prey to return each season." Caius dipped his head to drink from the stream. "You sound like the old rogues. The ones who got banished for thinking the pack owed them something."

Malakai's lip curled-but only for a moment. He shook his head and forced a grin. "You're too noble for your own good, Caius. That's why I need you beside me." Valdimir crouched beside the water, lapping quietly. His ears swiveled nervously at the sharp tension forming between his brother and Caius. Caius stood again and looked Malakai in the eye. "If leadership ever comes to you, Malakai... I hope you learn what it truly means."

Malakai didn't answer this time. He turned away with a flick of his tail, heading back toward the dens in silence. Valdimir stayed a moment longer, eyes downcast. "He's... not a bad wolf," he said hesitantly. "He just... thinks everything's a challenge." Caius gave a quiet sigh and walked beside him. "That's what I'm afraid of." As the three figures vanished into the trees, the sun dipped fully below the mountain ridge, and shadows swallowed the valley.

The peace of Hollowfang Peak would not last. And neither would their friendship.

The morning air clung cool and clean to the slopes of Hollowfang Peak, the mists curling around the trees like whispers from the mountain itself. Birds scattered at the sound of steady pawsteps pressing into the earth below—calm, firm, unwavering.

Caius moved with the grace of a seasoned leader, head held high, eyes sharp as he descended into the valley below. His coat, once wild and unkempt as a pup, now shimmered with the maturity of his years. Muscles rolled beneath his fur as he made his way through the forest path that led toward his territory—Greywild Vale.

Peace had reigned in Hollowfang under his leadership. Disputes were settled. Hunts were fair. The pack was strong.

And soon, it would grow stronger.

He thought of Eyota, resting in the heart of the vale, her belly full with the pups they had long waited for. A warmth filled his chest—hope, purpose, and love all wound into one. The time was near. His bloodline would continue. His legacy would live on.

The wind shifted.

He caught the scent a moment before the sound—a soft crunch of leaves, too deliberate to be a stray animal.

Caius slowed.

From the fog ahead, a figure stepped into view. Scarred, tall, and brimming with cold tension.

Malakai.

The two wolves stared at each other, the silence between them thick with years unspoken.

"Well," Malakai drawled, his voice low and sharp, "the mighty leader returns."

Caius didn't flinch. "This land is not yours, Malakai."

"And yet," Malakai said, stepping closer, "I still walk it."

"You walk where I allow you to," Caius warned. "You've been spared banishment, but not forgiveness."

Malakai's eyes narrowed. "Spared? You mean shackled. I've been leashed to the outer rim of Hollowfang like a rabid dog while you wear the crown that was meant for me."

"The crown is a burden," Caius replied. "One earned through loyalty, not ambition."

Malakai chuckled bitterly. "Loyalty? Is that what you call it?"

The fog curled tighter around them. Neither moved.

"I know about Eyota," Malakai said suddenly, voice dropping to a dangerous hush. "I heard the whispers. She's due soon, isn't she?" A cunning grin came across Malakai's face.

"Congratulations," he sneered.

Caius's ears twitched, but his expression stayed still. Guarded.

"Leave," he ordered quietly. "Do not step into Greywild Vale. You'll find no welcome there."

Malakai's grin faded. "I'll be watching, Caius. Your peace won't last forever."

Caius stepped forward, towering, every inch the leader the peak had chosen. "No. But while it lasts, you will not be the one to end it." For a moment, the old shadows of their youth passed between them—bonds broken, paths split.

"... We'll see." Malakai murmured, then, without another word, Malakai turned and disappeared back into the mist. Caius remained still for a long while, the breeze tugging gently at his fur. Then he turned toward Greywild Vale, toward Eyota, toward the life waiting to be born.

The mist thinned as Caius neared his territory. Here, the air smelled richer—of pine, moss, and the faint sweetness of flowering brush. The sound of the stream that curved through Greywild Vale reached his ears like a song calling him home.

And there, nestled between two tall stone ridges, lay the den.

Eyota rested just outside it, belly round and heavy with the coming litter. Her fur glowed in the dappled sunlight, and her eyes lit up the moment she spotted Caius.

"You're back," she said, rising to her feet with effort.

Caius pressed his forehead against hers gently. "Of course. I said I wouldn't be long."

She licked his cheek, then leaned into him with a tired sigh. "They're restless today. I think they know you're near."

A soft chuckle rumbled from Caius's throat. "They're strong. Like their mother."

Eyota gave him a look. "And stubborn. Like their father."

They both smiled.

For a moment, the world was still—warm, safe, and untouched by the cold shadows of the past. Caius looked down at her swollen belly and felt his heart swell. Soon, his pups would be born. He would teach them the ways of the Peak. He would raise them to be kind, to be strong, to protect and lead, not through fear but through honor.

But deep in his chest, something stirred.

The look in Malakai's eyes, the words he'd spoken—Caius had spent seasons guarding the borderlands, ensuring Malakai and his few followers remained outside the Vale. But something had shifted in him. A coldness. A hunger.

A warning.

He didn't share the encounter with Eyota. Not yet. He didn't want her to worry—not now, when she needed rest and calm.

Instead, Caius curled up beside her, resting his chin gently across her back. The sky above was clear, and the sun spilled down over the Vale like a blessing. His eyes closed.

The moon hung high over Hollowfang Peak, silver and solemn. Crickets chirped in the stillness, and the wind whispered gently through the trees, brushing over the slopes like a lullaby.

Within the hollow of the den, all was calm. Eyota lay curled in the soft bedding of moss and feathers, her breathing deep and steady, but alone.

Just beyond the den's entrance, Caius sat in silence—his broad frame silhouetted against the pale moonlight. His ears twitched at the night's sounds, but his mind wandered far beyond the valley.

Back to the path.

Back to Malakai.

He hadn't seen that look in Malakai's eyes since they were young—a storm building behind those sharp red irises. The bitterness hadn't faded. It had grown. Festered. Twisted into something darker than ambition.

He could still hear his words.

"I know about Eyota."

"Your peace won't last forever."

"No. But while it lasts, you will not be the one to end it."

"...We'll see."

Caius's claws dug slightly into the earth beneath his paws.

He should've banished him long ago. Exiled him from the Peak entirely. But the bond they once shared, fragile as it had become, had held him back. Maybe foolishly. Maybe dangerously.

A quiet rustle behind him broke his thoughts.

He turned to find Eyota emerging from the den, her steps slow but careful. She walked to him and lowered herself beside his

flank with a quiet groan. "You weren't there," she murmured, her voice laced with sleep. "The den felt... empty."

"I didn't want to wake you," Caius said softly, nuzzling her gently.

Eyota blinked up at him, searching his face in the moonlight. "You're troubled."

Caius didn't answer at first. His gaze drifted toward the distant mountains, where the mist pooled like a waiting breath.

"I crossed paths with Malakai," he finally said.

Eyota stilled.

Caius continued. "He was on the old ridge, not far from the border. Said he knew about the pups. He didn't threaten, not directly... but it was in his eyes."

Eyota lowered her head, resting it against his shoulder. "He hasn't let go of the past."

"No," Caius said grimly. "And I fear he never will."

A long silence followed between them. Only the wind spoke.

"Do you think he would come here?" she asked quietly.

Caius didn't respond right away. His jaw clenched. Then, in a voice as low as the wind: "I can't say, but if he does... I'll be ready."

Eyota leaned against him tighter, drawing comfort from his strength.