

Book One of the
Forest Wolves Collection



FROM ASHES

written and illustrated by
Anika Baloun



From Ashes, a Fantasy/Fiction book for tweens to adults, was written by Anika Baloun, a truly gifted teen from Las Cruces, NM. The book follows a pup as he fights to survive. He goes against the odds, the elements, evil pack leaders, rogues, and betrayal from inside the pack itself. However, that's only the beginning. Threats of dark magic, a prophecy, and his family's dark past will threaten the entire wolf kingdom...

From Ashes: Book of the Forest Wolves Collection

Order the complete book from

[Booklocker.com](http://www.booklocker.com)

<http://www.booklocker.com/p/books/8607.html?s=pdf>

**or from your favorite neighborhood
or online bookstore.**

Enjoy your free excerpt below!

The Forest Wolves Collection

Book One: From Ashes

Written and Illustrated by
Anika Baloun

Copyright ©2016 Anika Baloun

ISBN: 978-1-63491-209-9

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form, or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without prior permission of the author.

Published by BookLocker.com, Inc., Bradenton, Florida.

Printed on acid-free paper.

The characters and events in this book are fictitious. Any similarity to real persons, living or dead, is coincidental and not intended by the author.

BookLocker.com, Inc.
2016










First Edition

Book cover and illustrations by Anika Baloun

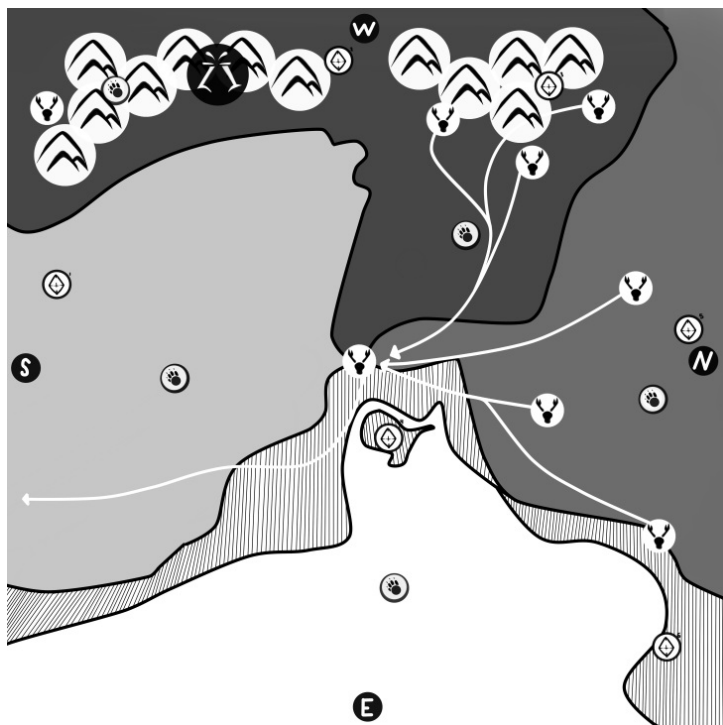
PROLOGUE

The land was black and charred from the mountains all the way to the horizon. The she-wolf watched the sunset outlined by the skeletons of trees that had made up her home. Each gust of wind whistled between their trunks and seemed to carry their shrill calls of pain. Not a single bird was in the sky, for the black clouds kept them at bay, obscuring the sun. No rains came, only showers of soot. Her white coat was now stained black by the many months of darkness and ash. Her pups were lost one by one until only the black pup remained. The rest of her pack had been among the unfortunate as well, though she refused to give up. She knew that even in this new world of death and uncertainty, one thing was for sure, if anyone was to survive, it had to be her pup. She would do everything she could to aide him, but he would have to lift himself and the forest from the ashes. As the sullen moon rose above her, she looked over her shoulder at her sleeping pup and howled.



	Glacier Kingdom territory
	Mountain Kingdom territory
	Forest Kingdom territory
	Pack Dens
	Chrail Sacred Sites
	Good deer hunting
	Volcano
	Mountains
	Marsh land

MAP KEY



MAP OF THE FOUR KINGDOMS



CERBERUS AND SHADOWFUR

CHAPTER 14

Courage

A couple of weeks after arriving at the new camp, Shadowfur awoke in the middle of the night to the sound of distant howling and many voices outside. He recognized the leader's familiar voice rising over the noise of camp. Hawkclaws was a constant presence around camp and was quickly becoming a wolf for which Shadowfur felt admiration. He had been surprised time and time again, by how much respect the pack showed for their leader.

"Sir, a male rogue has been sighted due east," said a wolf outside.

"With the scouts on the Glacier-wolf border, we'll have to send warriors," he heard Hawkclaws say. "Send only a few and send them in pairs, but keep most of them here in camp. If they see the rogue, have them come back and report on it. Do *not* have them confront it without a proper team, we don't have enough warriors to lose even one, or feed any more injured wolves than we have."

"Speaking of which, sir..." said the other voice, "one of the scouts didn't make it."

"Was it the Glacier wolves?" Hawk Claws asked. "I hope they haven't started falling to Desert wolf standards! Killing scouts is not something I thought they would resort to."

"By what was left of him, it was definitely rogue," the other wolf said. "There was barely anything left to bury."

Shadowfur peered out of the den. A thin wolf, bearing a rather nasty looking bite on his shoulder ran limping up the path to the group of wolves and spoke to a larger wolf. "Sir," the smaller wolf said, "there's a pup missing from the nursery and the mother, as you can see..." he paused to lick his shoulder, "...is determined to go after it herself. I've positioned guards to keep any of the mothers from going after her."

"Her? Which she pup is it?" Hawkclaws asked.

"I'm sorry Sir, but I think it was Leaf-tail," the smaller wolf said stepping back and lowering his head.

"Change of plans, he heard Hawkclaws say. Keep the warriors out looking, but give them orders to watch for pups. "Blizzard Fur, Dovepaw, and Sundance, come with me. You too Foxfur, though I hope we won't need a medic, and for goodness sake, take the guards off the mothers. We need the guards on the camp

perimeter. The mothers are the pups' best line of defense! I'll never hear the end of it. Just tell them to protect the remaining pups while we finish the hunt for Leaftail."

As soon as they had mentioned the rogue, Shadowfur remembered the promise he had made when his mother died. For a moment, he almost volunteered, but something told him they wouldn't bring an apprentice after a rogue. Perhaps Hawkclaws was right? He considered the idea for a moment before he shrugged it off. This was his pack, and he owed it to them. Ashwood saved him as a pup! He saved Icefire as well, even though the rogue was right there and he didn't even know who they were. There was no way he was leaving the pup to die when he could help, he decided. Sitting here wasn't doing any good.

Shadowfur waited until the wolves ran off into the darkness before he followed them. He ran as silently as he could, practicing the skills Ashwood and the new apprentice training had given him. His black fur helped him blend in with the darkness around him. In the night, the forest was oddly quiet compared to the bustle of wolves he had grown accustomed to. It seemed to bring back memories; the ghostly birdcall in the ashy forest, and the flash of yellow teeth flew

across Shadowfur's mind. He pushed it aside and continued after the warriors. The only light was near the lava stream, which cast an eerie orange glow on the surrounding trees. As he picked his way carefully along the path, he noticed that there were more rocks in this part of the forest. Perhaps they were nearing the border separating them from the mountain. He walked around a boulder and quickly jumped back as he spotted the group of wolves he'd been tracking. A rogue with jagged teeth and scars along one of its sides, stood before the group. As Shadowfur watched, the rogue lifted his head and sniffed the air, turned, and took off in the opposite direction. It looked as though he'd found something more interesting than warriors. Shadowfur swiveled his ears trying to pick up any sounds. He had almost given up when he heard a distant call. A pup was calling for help! Shadowfur took off in the direction of the sound. He whizzed past the warriors. "What's that fool doing going after the rogue by himself?" he heard one of them say. Shadowfur took a detour to avoid the rogue. As he ran, the sound of the pup's calls got louder. Shadowfur knew if he didn't get there before the rogue did, she would be torn to shreds.

When the pup came into sight, he whispered, "I'm here!"

The pup having seen him said, "Stupid fix I've gotten myself into," with a note of frustration in her voice.

It was then Shadowfur noticed the pup was upside-down, and stuck in-between two of the tree's branches. As Shadowfur got the pup down, he said, "I'll want to find out how you managed this later. I don't think I could do it if I tried."

"I really don't want to talk about it anyway," the pup replied, sighing. "Do I know you?"

"No. I'm Shadowfur. I just joined the pack about two weeks ago, give or take a day and I hate to break it to you, but we need to hide before the rogue gets here."

"You're not breaking anything new to me. I smelled him a long time ago. Duh, that's why I was yelling for help", she said indignantly.

Time to play the 'I'm not stupid game', thought Shadowfur. "Well, if you want the rogue to find you faster, then by all means, howl loudly," Shadowfur scolded. "Now, get behind this rock." The pup stepped into a patch of moonlight and Shadowfur saw that she had leaf patterns on her tail. "You're Leaf-tail."

"How'd you know?" she said, stepping behind the rock. "I haven't told you my name."

A growl sounded from behind Shadowfur, sounding strangely familiar. He spun around to see what was left of the wolf he had known as Froststep. It was now thinner, though no less muscled, and advancing on him quickly. It attacked, charging forward. Shadowfur stepped aside as quickly as he could, but pain shot through Shadowfur's ear and warm blood trickled down his face. Shaking it off, he spun and leapt forward onto the rogue's back. Before he could break its neck, it threw him against a rock, and started towards him again, drooling and snarling. He thought about his first training with Sundance. I can use the rock again, but what happens after that? Too late! It attacked again, but Shadowfur leapt backward, using the rock he'd been thrown onto to launch himself onto its back. Digging his teeth into the spine of the rogue, all he could taste was rotten and foul, like sulfur and something sour. The rogue twisted his head, biting Shadowfur's foot. Shadowfur rolled off the rogue's back, frantically searching for an advantage, but the rogue dove in, ripping its claws over Shadowfur's back. Now, only using three legs, Shadowfur attempted an attack to the neck, but failed and his head slammed into a tree. Everything blurred.

The rogue, sensing his advantage, slammed into Shadowfur's side. A loud 'CRACK' echoed through the forest. Shadowfur fell into a heap.

He felt and knew nothing but pain for what seemed like an eternity. His muscles refused to cooperate, and in this moment of pain, confusion, and fear, Shadowfur unconsciously prepared to die. He had saved the pup, and that was all that mattered. After the first rogue had killed his mother, it had ignored him.

"Hey ugly, I'm over here!" came a small voice from behind the rock. Shadowfur twitched, the little voice, full of courage, guiding him back to consciousness. He opened his eyes in time to see the rogue turn. Shadowfur suddenly spurred on by his instinct to protect the little pup, gathered up the last of his strength, and took his chance. As he forced himself to stand, adrenaline pumped through him as he saw the rogue moving toward Leaf-tail. Ignoring his own pain and knowing it was his last chance, he leapt onto the rogue's back, sank his teeth into the top of its head, and twisted it as he'd seen the first rogue do to his mother. The rogue was skinny, and his fur hung loosely on him, causing him to slip before he could finish the killing move. As the rogue turned on him, he remembered Ashwood's lessons. He moved weakly

away, like a mother bird distracting a cat to get it away from her nest. To the rogue he was running away, but he used a tree to turn tightly, suddenly bouncing off it into the air. He sank his teeth into the rogue's neck, and this time, he broke it. As he and the rogue fell to the ground, another wave of pain hit him...blackness!

Images of wolves crowded around him. "Is he dead?" one of them asked.

"No, I don't think so. It looks like he's still breathing." Firefur said.

"I told you he was a fool when he rushed past us alone after a rogue."

"He's not a fool! You're a fool!" Leaf-tail said hopping in anger, fur on end, and appearing from behind the rock. "He knew the rogue would get to me first if he didn't hurry. He saved me. *You* didn't even listen for me calling. *You* were too busy calling names. *He* has more of a right to be a warrior than *you* do. Fool!" She was tensed and prickly from tail to snout. "Besides if you *knew* he was in danger then why didn't you go after him or try and stop him or something? Why did it take you so long to get here?" She broke down in tears.

"Settle down little one, no need to be rude. You're right..., and I'm sorry. Now let's just get him to the medics quickly, and get you home to your mom in one piece."

Shadowfur, finding it painful to breathe or move, submitted to the blackness once again.



From Ashes, a Fantasy/Fiction book for tweens to adults, was written by Anika Baloun, a truly gifted teen from Las Cruces, NM. The book follows a pup as he fights to survive. He goes against the odds, the elements, evil pack leaders, rogues, and betrayal from inside the pack itself. However, that's only the beginning. Threats of dark magic, a prophecy, and his family's dark past will threaten the entire wolf kingdom...

From Ashes: Book of the Forest Wolves Collection

Order the complete book from

[Booklocker.com](http://www.booklocker.com)

<http://www.booklocker.com/p/books/8607.html?s=pdf>

**or from your favorite neighborhood
or online bookstore.**