



Christmas Moon

By

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ISBN: 978-1-60088-207-4

Cover Artist: Sable Grey

Editor: Leanne Salter

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## Dedication

To the people who keep me sane—Crystal, Dayna, Jen, and RG. Thanks ladies! Wouldn't have finished this one without you!

## Chapter One

“I don't think we have a choice, Jackson.”

“Yeah, maybe. But I hate bringing in an outsider. It would be different if this woman was from our world.”

Crossing his arms over his chest, Abel Williamson leaned against the wall and watched the verbal volleying between his Alpha and Beta. They'd been at it all morning, and he resisted the urge to grin. As the pack's new Enforcer, witnessing the spectacle was becoming a regular occurrence.

The matter on the table was whether to hire an accountant for the pack or not. No doubt, they needed one. The real dilemma was where to get one. Such a sensitive position would normally be filled by a were or a were's mate. Unfortunately, there wasn't anyone qualified for the job. So the search had been extended, a few interviews conducted.

He was in charge of security, and his backgrounds checks had ruled out all the candidates. Save one.

“What do you think, Abel?”

About damned time they asked him. He met his Alpha's gaze and nodded his head. "She'll do."

Oh yeah, she'd do all right. Probably would work out just fine as the new accountant, too. That was the least of his concerns though. Both men's gazes sharpened on him. Damn. Something in his tone or his eyes or his bearing must have given away his intent. Maybe he should have stuck with Hunting.

Jackson grinned and leaned back in his chair. "It's like that, is it?"

Abel shrugged. What could he say?

"What does Cain think?" Billy asked.

"He hasn't met her, remember?"

How could he? His twin was still a Hunter. And in the end it didn't matter what his brother thought. You didn't pick your mate. Fate did that for you.

Jackson sighed. "This complicates things. First, she knows nothing about werewolves, and there's no way to bring her here without her discovering us. Then when she gets here, it'll be to not one but two mates. You'll have to tread very carefully there."

He wasn't so sure. She didn't strike him as the *spooks easily* type. But he'd been wrong before and had the scars to prove it. Time would tell.

"Summer liked her, and Chloe's known her for years," Billy said. "I'd trust their instincts any day, and they both think she'll be a good addition to the pack."

Jackson nodded again, and Abel recognized the look on his face—a cross between defiance and acceptance. He spoke to Billy. "Make the arrangements. She can have the old Wilkes cabin." He cast a look at Abel. "Until the other arrangements are made."

Abel squashed his sense of triumph, his Hunter training still ingrained enough that he loathed to reveal his thoughts, his emotions. The conversation continued, changed, went on to other business. He forced himself to stay still when his body wanted to fidget. To concentrate when his mind wanted to wander. Finally, it was over, and he was free to leave.

Striding out of the house, he walked around back to the path that led to the old Wilkes' cabin. Billy had given him the key, and he shoved it in the rusty lock, twisting it till the door gave way, and stepped inside. The rush of air disturbed what looked like a century's worth of dust, and he sneezed through the swirling dervishes. This wouldn't do at all. As he walked through the small house, a plan formed in his mind, and by the time he left he was smiling.

It would take a cleaning crew weeks to make the place habitable, and the furniture all had to be replaced. Other sleeping arrangements would have to be made, and he just happened to have a five-bedroom house right down the path. He flipped his phone open as he walked in that direction, dialing the number from memory.

"Yeah," came the clipped response on the other side.

He grinned. Sounded like he'd disturbed Cain's beauty sleep. "Late night?"

A snort. A laugh cut off so quick it was more a bark. "A completed mission at least."

"Good. You can head home then."

There was a long pause. Abel had retired a few months ago. Cain had insisted he wasn't ready, yet. Things were different now.

"Did you get that picture I emailed you?" He walked into the house, down the hall to his office, and opened the folder sitting on his desk. Staring down at her photo, he waited for his brother to answer.

"A picture doesn't tell me anything. You could be wrong."

He smiled. "I'm not."

Another long pause. Cain was thinking; Abel felt it over the distance between them.

"What if she can't accept two men? If I come home...you know there's no going back from that."

He trailed one finger over the photo, down her cheek to the elegant line of her throat, then traced the long, curly hair that blew free in the wind. Determination rose in him. She'd accept them.

"We'll convince her," he answered softly, feeling conviction and strength of purpose sweep through him. She was theirs. They'd have her. What alternative was there in the end?

There was a long, soft exhalation on the other end. Cain hadn't met her, but he felt how powerfully Abel wanted her. The bond between them had always been strong, and distance didn't temper it at all.

"I've already accepted another assignment. It'll probably be a couple of weeks before I can get there."

Just in time for Christmas, and it was a Christmas moon year—a full moon on Christmas night. A good omen, and an excellent time to take a new mate.

"Good. I'm not sure when she'll start the job. Probably no sooner than that."

Cain growled. "What job? No mate of ours needs a job."

Abel grinned. He had a feeling this mate of theirs would push every single one of Cain's buttons. Should be interesting to watch.

"We're offering her the accountant job." He paused, letting it sink in. He'd kept his brother informed of pack happenings.

Cain didn't disappoint. He growled again. "That's too much exposure, Abel. Tell Jackson no."

He laughed. "How do you propose I get her here then? She doesn't know anything about us."

The wind howled, and he looked out the window to see snow flurries. The promised first snow of the season had arrived.

"Shit."

Yeah. He considered the differences between him and his twin. Deep down they weren't very different. Hard men. Well-trained fighters. Fiercely loyal to each other, family, pack. But superficially they were night and day. Where Abel was good-natured, Cain was broody. Abel was open, and Cain was reserved. This could be a serious problem.

"You might need to work on that temper of yours some. She's a mate, not a subordinate. I didn't get the impression she'll take to orders well."

"She'll get over it. Talk to Jackson about that damned job."

He snorted. Not likely. But before he could reply, Cain hung up. He shook his head. He'd deal with his brother later.

\* \* \* \* \*

Delilah opened the SUV door and shivered against the cold. When Jackson made her the job offer two weeks ago, she'd leapt at it. She wanted out of the stifling corporate world. What she'd neglected to consider was the climate difference between Orlando and the Appalachian Mountains. Her thin sweater did nothing to protect her against the cold, night air.

At least she'd experience her first white Christmas. She was taken aback when they insisted she make the move so close to the holidays instead of waiting until after the new year. But anticipation trumped surprise, and she'd jumped at the chance to spend the holidays with friends, something she hadn't done in years. Usually she spent the day by herself.

Billy rushed around the Tahoe to help her out, and she smiled her thanks. Words wouldn't have been heard over the howling wind, and she was distracted anyway. The door to the house had been thrown open, and a dark figure rushed down. Who was this? *Where* was this? They'd promised her a house as part of the job, but Billy said it was still being cleaned and upgraded. She'd expected to be taken to a hotel. Instead, they'd left the small airport and driven up the mountain to this house.

The stranger reached them as they rounded the front of the car. It was dark, and she was hunched over against the cold. She didn't get a good look at him except to note he was huge. He seemed broad as a wall towering over her. Pulling off his coat, he draped it and his arm around her, effectively taking her from Billy's care into his own.

She was bemused and charmed when he pulled her forward, placing himself between her and the worst of the wind. Inside, he left her on a couch before a roaring fire and disappeared. When he returned, he handed her a cup of hot tea. She smiled, charmed even more.

She was an orphan. No one had cared for her since the long string of foster homes she'd escaped years ago, and care wasn't exactly the word she'd use to describe them. Once, she'd thought she'd find her own place in the world, create her own family. That hadn't worked out, and she'd accepted there was just something missing in her, something that never really fit in. Or maybe there was too much in her. Her strange affinity with animals had freaked out more than one boyfriend.

She wrapped her hands around the cup, letting its heat sink into her. This place was different. She

wasn't sure how she knew that, but she trusted her instincts. Chloe had hooked her up with Jackson, recommending her for the job. When she'd come to the interview, she'd been surprised how much she wanted it, how much she'd liked Jackson and Summer and Chloe's new husband, Billy. And the mountains. They'd seemed to call to her. Weird for a kid from the arid desert and Las Vegas' neon lights. Then again, she'd escaped that place to attend college in Florida and had never looked back. Never felt like she'd left home.

Feeling started to return to her fingers, and she wiggled them, shrugging off the heavy coat a few seconds later. Warmth and comfort seeped into her bones.

"Feel better?"

Blinking, she looked up. She'd forgotten she wasn't alone. There was no sign of Billy, only the stranger. She should be alarmed, but was only curious. God, he was gorgeous.

She studied him as blatantly as he studied her. Nothing subtle in that look. He was tall and broad shouldered, but her first impression was a little off. He was well muscled, but more lean than bulky. His eyes glowed silvery grey. It took her a minute to figure out why he looked so familiar. There had been a man around for her interview that looked just like him, except where he'd had a tight, military haircut, this stranger's pale blond hair brushed his collar. She had an urge to run her fingers through it. To see if it was as silky smooth as it looked. It was beautiful, and a striking contrast to her own black locks.

The other man came in then, arms loaded with wood. He dropped it next to the fireplace and took up position next to the first stranger. She looked back and forth between the two of them. Brothers. Twins, unless she missed her guess. If it weren't for the differences in hair cuts, she would never have been able to tell them apart.

The short-haired one spoke. His voice was deep, his tone disapproving. "You cut your hair."

Feeling a pang of loss, she lifted her hand to finger the ends that fell just past her shoulders. She didn't know what had possessed her. Last week she'd walked past a hair salon, spun around, gone back, and when she came out her hip length hair was gone, replaced by this shorter cut that left her feeling naked. Some women didn't care about their hair. Some didn't care for long hair. She wasn't one of them. She'd cried for days but finally decided it would grow back. No point in continuing to stay upset over something that was done.

She felt their gazes on her and jerked her attention back to the present. They stood next to each other, stances a perfect mimicry of each other. Feet planted hip width apart, arms crossed over their impressive chests. She wondered if she'd get to try one of them out, if one of them liked sex the way she did. On the rough side. Intense and carnal. Arousal spiked her temperature as she considered it, and she hoped no one noticed how her nipples had hardened. Thank God they wouldn't realize her panties were now damp.

The quiet stretched, and she suddenly realized her escort had disappeared. Alarm, belated and sharp, filled her. "Where'd Billy go?"

The long-haired one arched a perfect eyebrow. "Probably home to his mate."

Mate? What an odd choice of words. She ignored that and digested the information. Billy had left her here, so he must trust these two men. Since he was married to her only real friend in the world, she was inclined to trust his judgement.



“Who are you two?”

The long haired one grinned at his brother. “Not a y’all in sight. She definitely isn’t Southern.” He turned back to her. “I’m Cain. This is my brother, Abel.”

She snorted. “Cain, Abel, and Delilah. You couldn’t have planned that better if you tried.”

They laughed, and she was bizarrely pleased. Another oddity. They were strangers. Why did it seem so important she amuse them both? Her stomach growled, and she tried to remember how long ago lunch had been. The laughter was cut off as if they had a switch, and the long-haired one, Cain, held his hand out to her.

“Let’s get you fed.”

She stood but hesitated, watching him. Them. Silver-grey eyes, silvery-blond hair. They were beautiful, unearthly. And yet, she felt as if she knew them. She’d never experienced anything like it before.

Was it the Christmas wish? Her heart skipped a beat. No way. It was a stupid tradition she’d picked up from one of her foster mothers. Make a wish on Thanksgiving for what you wanted for Christmas. Why she’d kept it up she had no idea, and usually she kept it to something so simple she knew it would be a possibility if not a probability. Hedging her bets. The scholarship she’d been all but told she’d get. The purse she couldn’t resist buying herself. Her first job out of college that she knew she’d get an offer for because, really, how much could one man ogle your legs? A few weeks ago, in a moment of insanity and intense loneliness, she’d wished for a home, for a man that was hers, who accepted her, weirdness and all.

“Delilah?” Abel stretched his hand out next to Cain’s.

Was this it? The wish? And if it was, which one? It would be damned near impossible to choose between them. She didn’t take either hand but smiled, hiding her confusion, feeling like there was a world of conversation going here that she’d missed.

“Dinner would be wonderful.”

Cain turned and walked into a hall. She followed, and Abel brought up the rear, his hand resting on the small of her back. Her body tingled in awareness, and she wondered if she’d be able to eat. They walked a short distance to the kitchen, and Abel guided her to a long table where she sat on a stool.

The brothers worked together gathering bowls and spoons. They ladled out spicy smelling chili and set it before her. They poured glasses of tea before sitting, too, one on either side of her.

“They sent it down from the big house,” Cain said. “Chloe’s probably. She does most of the cooking up there.”

Abel winked. “Her cooking is the most edible.”

Delilah picked up the spoon. She remembered Chloe’s cooking from their college roommate days. It was more than edible, and she knew it was Chloe’s from the first bite. She moaned her pleasure. Awesome. She’d never known anyone who could cook as well and had spent hours trying to learn from her. She loved food, and her ass showed her devotion to it. Cooking was a joy, a way to relax at the end



of the day. But she'd never matched Chloe's skill.

"Definitely Chloe's," she said, sighing when she finished the bowl.

Cain turned to her and, lifting his napkin, wiped the corner of her mouth. His face was serene, but his eyes were hot, scorching. Her pussy clenched, and she wondered what it would be like to have him. No, for him to take her. Because as liberated and independent as she was, she longed for something else. Someone to take charge, someone she trusted enough to whom she could give over all control. Because she was all alone in the world, she had no one to count on but herself, sometimes she longed for the freedom to just let go. And what better way to get it? She'd met few people—few men—who understood that longing.

Instinct told her Cain would understand, but she didn't trust it. She pulled away, jerking up, out of her seat, and backing several feet away.

To hide her nervousness, she picked up their bowls and moved to the sink, losing herself in the simple ritual of washing up. When she was finished, she set the dishes in the drainer and turned back around to face the strange, alluring men. Both watched her steadily, as if they saw right through her. She wondered what would happen next, and thought it was her vagabond upbringing that allowed her to consider it without freaking out. She wanted to belong but didn't want the risk of the process. Wanted to know from the get go it would all work out. Needed reassurances and promises that were impossible to give.

Better to keep your distance, Delilah. She'd never been a risk taker.

It was a lot to consider, and it wasn't like either had given any indication they wanted her on a personal level anyway. She couldn't begin to justify the strange conversation with herself. Why was she so drawn to two complete strangers? She'd been up long before dawn, anxious and excited to get on with her new life. It was long past dark now, and she found herself fighting a yawn. They noticed. Was there anything they didn't notice?

Abel motioned with his head for her to follow him and walked back out into the living room. He picked up her bag and went up a flight of steps she hadn't noticed earlier, stopping at the first door on the left and pushing it open. He walked in and set her things down on the bed.

"You'll be staying here for a few days. The cabin isn't ready, and with this snow it will be a little while before the crew can get back into it."

She nodded acknowledgement, keeping her questions to herself. Why wasn't she staying with Chloe and Billy? Who exactly were these guys? She approached the window and stared out, wondering not for the first time what drew her to this place.

"Well. I'll let you get some sleep."

Realizing how rude she was being, she turned and forced a smile, hoping it looked grateful instead of tired and ungracious. "Thank you. I'm sorry to put you and your brother out like this." Her smile was closer to real this time. "I really appreciate the room. And dinner."

He blinked. A long slow down sweep of his eyelids. Amazing how sexy that was. When he moved, the motion was so smooth, so lithe, it took a moment for her to concentrate on his face. What she saw there made her gasp. Hot. Hungry. Territorial. She knew she should move, put herself in a better position than her back to the wall, but his eyes held her frozen in place. He stopped right before her, close enough that

his chest just grazed hers, but the contact was enough to make her nipples pebble and her cunt clench. His nostrils flared as if he knew, as if he was inhaling the scent of her arousal. He lifted one hand and lightly caressed the side of her face.

“You aren’t putting us out, Delilah. You’re no inconvenience at all.”

His gaze held hers, filled with a silent demand that made her knees weak. As quickly as the contact had come, it was gone, his hand back at his side. He was across the room and holding onto the door before she could blink. She’d never seen a man move so fast. He gave her one last, long look before pulling the door shut behind him.

“We’ll see you in the morning.”

## Chapter Two

Delilah opened her suitcase and pulled out her sleep clothes—a thin-strapped tank top and pair of flannel pajama bottoms—and the small bag that held her personal items. There were doors on the far wall, and she opened both, relieved to see one was a bathroom. The other led to a huge bedroom.

She decided to take a quick hot shower, hoping it would banish the lingering chill in her body and help her sleep. She was out in minutes, toweling her hair as dry as possible and yanking on her pants to ward off the cold. After hanging the towel to dry over the shower curtain rod, she climbed between the sheets of the king-sized bed and closed her eyes.

After several minutes, she sighed and punched the pillow. She wasn’t sleeping any time soon. She was tired but too hyped up, excited about her new job, and curious about the brothers she’d ended up with until her cabin was ready. Getting up, she walked across the room to the window and leaned against the sill, rubbing the goose bumps on her arms. She’d better adjust to the cold weather soon or it was going to be a miserable winter.

It was still snowing, but the wind no longer buffeted the house. Despite the cloud cover, the yard she

looked down on was well lit. Lights from the downstairs rooms poured out and illuminated the area surrounding the long back porch.

A howl rent the night air, and she jerked upright, searching the shadows at the edge of the yard. A wolf burst from the trees with a second one right on its heels. The pursuer leapt, landing on the back of the first wolf, and she clamped her hand over her mouth to stifle a yell of warning. They landed in a heap and instantly sprang back up, rolling across the yard together, nipping and scratching.

It took her a moment to realize there was no blood, and it finally occurred to her to use her strange ability. She reached out to them mentally, expecting to feel anger or aggression. She frowned. Their minds weren't right. Instead of the open emotion she usually felt from animals, these two were mostly closed off, like humans when she tried to read them. She did get a sense of play, that neither intended to harm the other. She wrote the differences off to being wolves. She'd never encountered wolves in the wild before. Maybe that explained it.

She watched for a few more seconds, smiling as she became more convinced they were playing. Wanting to see them up close, she slipped her shoes on and grabbed the quilt from the bed to wrap it around her shoulders. She moved as quietly as possible down the hall and steps. Something told her Cain and Abel wouldn't approve of her going outside to watch the local wildlife play. She felt a pang of sadness at that. Best not to get attached to either of them. Most people didn't like different, and she was definitely different.

In the living room, she turned toward the French doors she'd seen earlier and opened them, relieved when there was no squeak. The wind was no longer blowing constantly, but occasional gusts blew the treetops around in big sweeps against the dark sky. It was bitterly cold. Much colder than when she'd arrived. She pulled the quilt up around her head, covering her still damp hair, and edged toward the steps. She sat down carefully, quietly, not wanting to draw their attention.

Confidant in her abilities, she had never feared animals, domestic or wild. When she'd started college it had been with the intention of becoming a vet. It was the logical choice for someone who could communicate with animals. She was no Dr. Doolittle, but she'd do. It had only taken one summer job at a vet clinic to change her mind.

When she'd walked in the door, every animal in the place had gone wild, and she'd exhausted herself calming them down one by one. She'd been better prepared when she returned, sending out soothing, welcoming vibes as she walked through the front doors. It got a little easier with time, but by the end of the summer she was worn out, and it was clear that kind of an environment would never work for her. Plus, the other employees seemed to know there was some kind of connection between her and the animals in the clinic. Something not right. She'd been relieved to leave the weird looks behind and had happily turned to accounting when she returned to school.

Ignoring the uncomfortable memories, she concentrated on the wolves, smiling at the way they teased each other with light nips at each others heels and mock growls amid lunges. The longer she watched, the more fascinated she became. She didn't even notice how cold she'd become, how the shivering had overtaken her body and her teeth chattered, until they both looked up at her.

She tried to send out calming vibes, tried to assure them she meant them no harm, but couldn't tell if they understood. They approached. Slow. Cautious. It was almost as though they were afraid of scaring her off. At the bottom of the steps, they paused. She should be afraid but wasn't and tried harder to reach them. She only got a vague sense of curiosity and satisfaction that left her confused and frustrated.

Freeing one of her hands from the folds of the quilt, she stretched it out, urging them to move closer. She shook her head. Not her brightest idea. Would serve her right if one did approach and bit off her hand. Both crept up the steps, not stopping until they rested at her sides. She dug her free hand into the pelt on one side of her body and let go of her grip on the blanket to run her fingers through the other. They were soft and silky, the palest grey. Almost silver. A memory of the twin's hair flashed through her mind. Odd how similar the colors were.

Her hand shook as she stroked them and after mere seconds they stood, one moving in front of her, and the other at her side. The one at her side lowered his muzzle to her wrist, gently took it in his jaw, and tried to tug her up to her feet. The barrier between their minds came down suddenly, and she felt a burst of disapproval and anger. A vision of herself huddled outside against the cold filled her mind. Sighing, she tried to gather the blanket around her shoulders again, tried to push to her feet, but she was too cold. Alarmed, she gritted her teeth. She'd stayed out too long, was likely to freeze to death if she didn't get her ass moving, but her next attempt to stand was as unsuccessful as the first.

The wolves exchanged a look, woofed at each as if in a language all their own. Hell, maybe it was. Or maybe she was finally going crazy. Then the damndest thing happened. One minute she was watching her two wolves, and the next they were changing, their bodies shifting forms until Abel stood before her and Cain at her side. Both were naked as the day is long. She blinked. *Must be hallucinating.*

Cain stooped down, his arms sliding under her, and he picked her up while Abel moved around them and opened the door. For the second time that night, she was deposited on the couch. Abel left the room, and Cain pulled the cold blanket from her fingers, replacing it with one from a corner chest. He turned to start a fire and had it blazing when Cain returned and handed her a steaming mug. She took a tentative sip, smiling when the hot chocolate coated her tongue. She drank it down, sighing as it warmed her insides. When it was gone she considered asking for more, but one look at the brothers' faces and she didn't dare. They were good and pissed.

She narrowed her eyes, remembering what she'd seen out there on the porch. She didn't ask them about it, refused to acknowledge it. Werewolves didn't exist. And yet... what had she seen if not two wolves change into men?

"That was a damn fool thing to do, woman."

It was Abel who spoke, whose angry voice made her wince. And here she'd been thinking of him as the nice, mellow one for some reason. Cain didn't speak but his disapproval radiated from him. For some reason that got her back up.

"Which part?"

The question was sarcastic, and Cain's eyes narrowed even more, while Abel just arched an eyebrow. She got the impression she was going to get an earful and then some. A sudden vision of being pulled over his lap and spanked filled her gaze. His eyes lit up, and she gasped, realizing she'd picked that vision up from him, not the dark desires buried in her own mind. It was shocking not only for the arousal that flooded her system at the thought, but because she'd never been able to pick things up like that from humans. But then, they weren't exactly human, were they?

"What are you?" she asked, but she wasn't sure she wanted an answer.

"Later," Cain said. "First, let's discuss the ground rules."

She leaned back against the couch, letting the blanket fall to her waist, and crossed her arms over her chest. She wasn't about to let some stranger order her around.

Cain started ticking his rules off on his fingers. She would have laughed if she weren't so furious at his gall.

"One. Don't you ever leave this house again after dark without one of us with you. Two. Don't ever approach a strange wolf like that again. No place is perfectly safe, and we both have enemies. They'd love to strike at us through our woman." Her eyes widened at that one, and she wondered if she'd walked into a movie mid-reel. "And third. Don't you have a coat? Jesus Christ, you could have gotten hypothermia out there. Think about what could have happened if we hadn't been here. I know you're a beach bunny, but I expected an accountant to have a brain and the sense to use it!"

Oh, that last bit did it. She jumped to her feet, ignoring the way her body still shivered with cold, and put her hands on her hips. "I don't know who you think you are, bubba, but I've been on my own a long time. I can take care of myself, and I sure as hell don't need some stranger bossing me around. I'll call Chloe and get out of your hair."

No way in hell was she staying here. She circled the couch, determined to go upstairs and prayed her cell phone was charged enough to work, prayed she got reception up here, but her path was blocked. He was several feet in front of her, but he didn't stay there. He stalked her, his approach stealthy and inexorable. His hot, angry, lustful gaze held her still. When he reached her, he slid a hand around the nape of her neck and tugged her closer. He bent his head to her shoulder and took a long, shuddering breathing.

"I'll tell you who I am, Delilah. I'm Cain Williamson, and you're mine. My mate. And you're not going anywhere."

"Ours," Abel said softly.

"Ours," Cain agreed.

Her body thrilled at the idea of being possessed by them, *both* of them. Thank God caution, and confusion, ruled the day. She jerked away from Cain, saw by the look in his eyes it was only a temporary reprieve, and put some distance between them all. She crossed her arms over her chest in a useless effort to hide the visible proof of her arousal. "I don't understand."

"We'll explain everything, but I think we should check you over first, make sure you don't have any signs of frost bite." Abel held out his hand. "C'mon, Delilah. Sit down."

She rolled her eyes. She wasn't out there long enough to get frost bite or hypothermia, but they were sure pushing the issue. Rather than escalate the argument, she returned to the couch, determined to get some answers. Abel sat next to her and turned her so she leaned back against the arm of the sofa, then he pulled her feet into his lap. He made a show of checking out her toes before starting to rub the balls of her feet.

The massage inched upward, and she closed her eyes, bit her lip to keep in a moan of pleasure, and didn't even protest when his hands inched up her calves under the loose, flannel pants. It wasn't a sexual touch, but it turned her on nonetheless. His skin was hot against hers. His fingers kneaded muscles she hadn't even realized were tense. He passed her knees, moving on to her thighs. He paused just a moment when his thumbs brushed the crease between her legs and hips, as if asking for permission, waiting for a

sign from her. She lifted up, moving her hips toward him, encouraging the touch she burned for.

She hadn't put on underwear after her shower, and when his fingers danced over her pussy lips, she hissed and jerked against him. Blood engorged the area. Desire spiked through her. She reached for the waistband on the pajama bottoms, determined to get them off and get closer to Abel.

When Delilah started to shimmy off her pants, Abel thought his head would blow off. The little one. He was quick to help her—didn't want her changing her mind—and yanked them off. She was left exposed from the waist down, and he sucked in a deep breath, forcing himself to exhale and keep on breathing.

Her belly button was pierced. He'd known that already, since he'd seen a flash of the metal loop in it when she'd been walking around earlier. His gaze traveled up her body and zeroed in on her nipples. He'd bet they were pierced, too. They pebbled hard and large in the cool air of the living room. He couldn't wait to see them but was determined not to rush this, not to give into the wolf side of his nature that was urging *now, now, now*.

Returning his gaze to her middle, he lifted a hand and traced the tattoo that wrapped around her waist. A rose vine complete with thorns. He smiled. It seemed an appropriate theme for her. She was lovely, the most beautiful woman he'd ever laid eyes on, but prickly. Stubborn, too, but pure joy.

He'd been afraid his heart didn't have room for another bond as strong as the one he shared with his twin. He'd been so wrong. He wished Cain was here to share the bliss of her, but he'd already left the room. He was on his own tonight. They'd agreed that Abel would have her first, that they'd take as much time as they could introducing to their world and the idea of being mated to two men.

In the were world that only happened with identical twins, and even in their world it was considered a little odd. For the first time, worry edged its way into his mind. The concern that she couldn't accept what he was, couldn't accept that it wasn't just one mate she was getting. He tried to ignore it. When that didn't work, he went for distraction.

He pulled her off the couch and laid her down on the thick rug before the fireplace, settling on his belly between her thighs and leaving the thin shirt and the secrets it hid in place. Squeezing his eyes shut, he took a deep breath. Her scent was going to drive him crazy. Decadent and luxuriant; fiery and sweet. He moved forward, swiped his tongue in one long sweep from her ass to her clit. She tasted like a rich, spiced rum. Perfect. No other woman had ever tasted like this, and he and Cain had shared several. He could die happy right here, right now.

She whimpered when his tongue passed her clitoris, and he went back to it, loving the way her hips thrust up, the way her pelvis undulated against his mouth. Sucking the small nub between his teeth, he gently bit down. Her back arched, and she groaned, long and low. He could feel her body begging for more, tight and trembling under his, and he smiled as he sucked harder, bit harder. So their newfound mate enjoyed a little pain? Good. They'd be happy to oblige her. Thrilled even, and relieved not to hold back. Of course, this didn't give him a clue what her limits were. What he really wanted to know was how she would take to a whip. Would it get her wet and hot? Get her off? Turn her off? Maybe a little test was in order.

He recalled the image of her going outside scantily dressed, ill prepared for the cold and inviting the attentions of two wolves she didn't know. Then there was the hair. He'd almost wept when he saw she'd cut most of it off. He'd so looked forward to seeing that hair every day, getting his hands in it. Watching her as it swung around her naked ass. Yeah. He might be more pissed about the haircut than the other.



He slowed, softened his ministrations, knowing instinctively it would drive her crazy. The soft, easy strokes over her clit would build her arousal, but it wouldn't bring her to orgasm. She needed more. But he loved the sight and scent of her, and though he planned on punishing her before letting her come, he wouldn't turn away from the chance to torment her a little more.

He replaced his finger with his tongue. Light, gentle strokes. Then thrust it into her channel. Oh, God. That might have been a mistake. She was hot and wet and tight, and he just wanted to bury himself in her forever. He had his first moment of unease. How was he going to share her with his brother? Why did he have to be born an identical twin?

He got lost in her, and thankfully Cain felt it. He entered quietly, but Abel heard him. He didn't shift his position but lifted his gaze, arching an eyebrow. He didn't welcome the intrusion.

"Why are you stopping?" Delilah choked on a sob after she asked.

He sighed, reluctant even as he recognized the necessity.

"Because punishment comes before pleasure, baby," he answered.

She gasped, glared, but his fingers were still buried inside her, and he felt her response. Her cunt spasmed around him. Her core grew even wetter. He was relieved. She needed it as much as he and Cain did. He moved then, standing and extending a hand to help her up. When she was standing, he ripped the shirt over her head. Might as well have full view of her as he did this. Since Cain was here, and she'd already seen them shift, they might as well up their schedule. He met Cain's gaze, communicated in their private way that he should strip. His brother cocked an eyebrow, but he didn't hesitate in removing his clothes.

Abel lifted her easily and carried her to the sofa. He sat and pulled her over his lap, her ass right there in easy smacking distance. She struggled, and he returned his fingers, thrusting deep into her cunt.

"Abel, what the hell? Let me up!"

"I don't think so, baby. You have a punishment coming. You can get it from me or Cain, but one way or the other you're getting it. And I promise you, it'll be easier from me."

Her struggles didn't cease, but her pussy got wetter, soaking his fingers. He twisted his hand so he could stroke her G-spot, and she thrust back against him, her moans filling the air.

"This is not right," she managed to huff out.

He stopped his movements. The moment of choice had come.

"I can stop." He paused, meeting Cain's angry gaze. His brother didn't want him to give her any outs. "But I don't think you want me to. I think you want to see what I, *whatwe*, can do to you."

She moaned, and he felt moisture on his leg. He was afraid she might be crying and leaned close to her ear.

"We'll take care of you, Delilah. *We want* to take care of you. But you have to decide. If this doesn't turn you on, if it doesn't make you hot, there isn't any point in it, is there?"



He paused, waiting. One hand rested on her ass, the other was still between her legs. When she made no response, he asked again.

“Yes or no, baby?”

She arched up, moving against his hand, and he knew her answer before he heard her whispered, “Yes.”

Thank God. He didn't think he could hold back now, and he didn't try. He tried to start slow. He hit her ass but kept the stroke tempered. It still left a nice pink spot. She didn't respond, but he left his fingers inside her pussy, and she remained wet. He needed a response from her and looked up to meet his brother's gaze. It was so clear that Cain was also turned on by seeing her like this, that he wanted her screaming and squirming, too. They had different reasons for punishing her, though, and he wanted her to know what they were. He thought the best way was to tell her while he increased his strokes.

“Do you know why you're being punished, Delilah?”

His hand fell harder as he asked, and Cain glared at him. He knew he was supposed to work up to the harder strokes. He pulled back. She didn't answer, just shook her head. He leaned closer to her, whispered in her ear. That was for her benefit because Cain's superior hearing would easily pick it up.

“You cut your hair. I was so looking forward to getting my hands in that hair.” He paused, let it sink in. “Cain has other issues. He's much more pissed off about you going outside than I am. Don't be surprised if he breaks out his whip.”

Her wetness gushed over his hand at that pronouncement, and he grinned at his brother. She wanted it. She needed what they did.

“But not tonight,” he said, one final, hard slap hitting her ass.

He nodded at Cain, and he pulled the glass coffee table out of the way. This was something they'd done before with women they'd shared, women they'd brought into this sexual sharing world. It would end in frustration for one of the brothers, and Abel was damned glad this time it wasn't him.

Cain walked forward and stopped just before his knees. He pulled Delilah up but instead of turning her to him, put her on the floor facing his brother. She was on her knees, Cain's cock jutting out inches from her lips. It turned Abel on, knowing he'd demand she take Cain in her mouth, and he was pretty sure she would. He wanted to see it, knowing he'd be buried in her pussy later. Cain grabbed her hands and clasped them behind her back.

“Lace your fingers together,” he grunted. “Don't let go.”

She did so without much reluctance, and Abel thrust two fingers into her cunt, grabbing her hair at the nape of her neck, and guided her to his brother's cock. Her tongue flicked out, and it was almost his undoing. Oh, Christ. He wanted to feel that tongue on him. Then she took the head in her mouth, and Cain groaned, long and loud, and shared the sensation with him. Hot, wet suction. Exquisite torture. Abel rubbed his fingers against her G-spot until she mewled around his brother's cock and jerked against his fingers.

He leaned close to her ear. “You don't get to come yet, baby. We control your orgasms, and neither one of us has given you permission.”

He felt her struggle to fight it and removed his hand, sliding it up the slender column of her neck, caressing it, letting Cain stroke smooth and fast into her mouth, letting him come. Cain jetted into her mouth, and the expression on her face was almost Abel's undoing. Rapture. It was pure ecstasy. As soon as Cain pulled out of her mouth, Abel tossed her down and pounded into her. He'd told her not to come, and she'd done her best. Now he wanted her convulsing around him, screaming her pleasure.

"Come now, Delilah," he commanded in a whisper. "Come for me, baby."

He found her clit with his fingers, pinched it, and she responded exactly the way he wanted her to. Her cunt contracted around him and her whole body shook with the second orgasm. She screamed his name and his brother's, as if she didn't know who was riding her thighs. He didn't care. It didn't matter. She was destined for both of them, destined to pleasure and be pleased by both of them. He could share her with Cain. Had always expected he would share his mate with Cain. But not tonight. Tonight she was his.

### Chapter Three

Cain sat up when he heard soft steps on the stairs, glad he didn't have to pretend to sleep anymore. Every time he'd closed his eyes, he saw her. Delilah. Her mouth wrapped around his cock and his brother fucking her. Shit, he was hard again. He got out of bed and pulled on some boxers, shaking his head at the way it tented in front. It would be funny if it was anyone else, but since he was the one frustrated and discomfited, it wasn't. And he was not jacking off in the shower alone again. Delilah had gone downstairs, and Abel had had his turn. Now it was his.

His mood improved instantly, and he bounded down the steps, following the sound of music to the kitchen. He stopped in the doorway and grinned. Dressed in one of Abel's old T-shirts that barely covered her ass, she was an enthralling sight. She'd found an AM oldies station and was bopping around the kitchen, pulling things from the fridge and bowls from cabinets as she went. She piled it all on the counter in front of a window and opened the carton of eggs. After cracking several, she reached for a whisk and stirred them then went digging through the cabinets again. She didn't find what she was looking for and turned to the pantry.

That's when she saw him. She gulped, blushing a pretty pink that tinged her cheeks and down the collar of the shirt. He was hard as a pike, afraid if he moved he'd drag her to the floor and fuck her senseless. Sounded good in theory, but he didn't really trust himself not to hurt her, didn't have a clue what her boundaries and limits were.

"Cain," she whispered. "Good morning." She gestured behind her. "I thought I'd take care of breakfast."

"How 'bout you take care of me first?"

No, dumb ass. Demanding sex before she'd even had breakfast or relaxed around him was not the way to go. But damned if her eyes didn't light up in interest. Unfortunately, instead of jumping him, she frowned and cocked her head to one side.

"Do you and your brother share often?"

He sighed. It was bound to come up sooner or later. Later would have been better. He wanted her pliant and submissive, acquiescing to his demands. But he needed her willing. Willing to submit. To give up control and to know he'd take care her. He knew the price for that was honesty, but he wasn't sure he was the one to convince her. Even though she wasn't the first they'd shared, she was the last. The only one who mattered.

"Do you know what we are?" he asked instead.

Her teeth worried her bottom lip, and he wanted to step up and stop her, taste her mouth. It was obvious she had questions, and equally obvious she wouldn't voice them. He wasn't sure how to handle that. He was the doer. Abel was the talker. To buy time to think about it, he walked by her and filled the teakettle, set it on the range, and turned it on. The situation called for caffeine and in large amounts. Whiskey would be even better, and if it were afternoon, he'd pour a shot.

He turned around, unable to keep from watching her while she was in the room. She was only a couple of feet away. Her face was calm, but she wrung her hands. Something twisted in his chest, and he didn't like it. He'd been prepared to want her sexually, even grow to care for her. This all-consuming desire to know every last detail about her, to keep her safe and cherished and happy, was unexpected.

"C'mere, sweetheart."

He held his hand out to her, needing to kiss her, to inhale her. Hoped like hell she wouldn't deny him. She didn't. She hesitated but finally stepped forward, close enough that he could pull her into his arms, pull her close enough so her body molded against his. He might hate his brother just a little bit for having her first.

He kept his hands on her upper back and buried his nose in the crook between her shoulder and neck and breathed deep. Warm. Willing. Woman. That was all he registered. All his wolf needed to know was that she was theirs.

He turned his head so he could kiss her neck, right on that tempting little spot just under her ear, right where he would claim and mark her later. Her pulse fluttered at the contact, then pounded. He could hear her heart racing, and the feeling that swelled his chest was nothing less than triumph. Lowering his arms to wrap around her waist, he lifted her, carrying her to an empty countertop, and set her on the

edge.

Her eyes widened, and a surprised little *oh* whispered from her lips. No more delaying. He had to taste her and lowered his face to hers, caught her lips with his. His brother thought she tasted like the spiced rum he liked so much. Cain disagreed. She was the best quality brandy. Cognac. Rich, with a hint of sweet fruit. He nibbled her lips until she opened her mouth, and his tongue plunging in. Sweet. So, so sweet. His hips moved against his will, his cock seeking entrance into her body. He almost came when he realized she was naked under that shirt. Shoving it up, he verified what he already knew and groaned. The shirt came off, sailing into the air behind him, and he stopped and stared down at her. It was impossible not to notice her perfection, her frailty. He had a moment's misgiving, afraid he might actually lose himself in her and hurt her. He would just have to remember to stay in control.

He took a steadying breath, concentrating on the treasure he'd uncovered. Her breasts were small but full and firm with metal glinted through her nipples. He lifted a finger and flicked it against the ball through one hoop, watching it sway when he did. Fascinating. He wondered what they tasted like, what they would feel like against his tongue and lowered his head to the opposite breast. Closing his mouth over her nipple, he sucked, rolling his tongue over the peak until it hardened. Then he switched to teeth, biting her nipple, keeping the scrape light. He dragged the sharp points over her, catching the small ball between them and tugging.

Moaning, she bowed her back to arch against him, and he did it again, pulling her pelvis up tight against his while he did so. She was wet, and the front of his boxers where he ground his erection into her dampened. He wanted to feel that on his cock and ripped them down, let them fall to the floor at his feet where he could easily step out of them.

Then she was tipping her hips forward so he brushed her entrance. It was a clear invitation to him, and he thrust inside her. He moved. Experimentally, getting to know her body and testing his control. She was tight and hot, a perfect fit that gripped his cock on each slide in and out. Her soft moans filled the air between them, turning him on even more. He could get lost here for hours, days, and he struggled for control.

Thankfully a throat cleared behind him, and he was able to rein himself in. He looked over his shoulder and frowned at Abel, who was dressed and pulling on a coat as if he was going somewhere. Cain wasn't sure if he should be alone with Delilah yet, and his brother was obviously leaving. Before he could question him though, he noticed Delilah's fingernails digging into his shoulders, and she'd pressed her head up against his chest. Abel came over, his booted footsteps loud on the tile floor. He stopped beside them and reached over for her chin, getting her to meet his gaze. She was beet red. Embarrassed, Cain realized.

"I can't believe you started without me," Abel joked, trying to tease Delilah out of her awkwardness. "That's not fair, baby."

"I didn't mean for this to happen. I'm not quite sure how it got this far," she whispered, obviously uncomfortable to be found in the wrong twin's arms. Cain wasn't about to let her think there was anything wrong with being with him. With being with both of them. He met Abel's gaze for the silent communication.

He pulled out of her until only the head of his cock was still gripped by her cunt. Abel smiled at her gasp of pleasure, and Cain thrust back in while his brother reached over, putting a hand between them to tug the piercing through one breast. He leaned closer as he worried the nipple, placing his lips against the smooth column of her throat, and nibbled. Cain watched her eyes change, watched them go smoky with

renewed desire, and he felt it on his cock as she got slicker. Tiny convulsions squeezed him until he had to thrust harder, rougher.

Cain wrapped his hands under her thighs and lifted her again, turning so her back was pressed to Abel's chest. Abel's hands came up to caress her breasts, fingers pinching both nipples, tugging the tiny balls imbedded through them. Cain couldn't believe what the sight did to him. His balls hardened until they hurt, and he knew he wasn't going to last long at all. He met Abel's gaze.

"I'm not going to last."

Abel's eyes glowed. "She has that effect on you."

The words barely registered, the orgasm already taking him over even as he tried to fight it off. He might have lasted a few strokes more if she hadn't starting shaking, if her pussy hadn't tightened impossibly hard around him. If she hadn't screamed his name. It was the most amazing thing he'd ever heard, and he threw his head back and came with a roar.

She slumped against him, and he circled her waist with his arms, holding her up, enjoying the sated little sighs she exhaled. He lifted his gaze to meet his brother's and scowled. It wasn't even six yet, Saturday morning to boot, and he was dressed to leave.

"Where are you going?"

"Up to the house. Jackson called."

Now why the hell did Jackson need his Enforcer at the ass crack of dawn on the weekend? He'd heard that Summer and Chloe had both demanded work be done at a bare minimum on weekends, and then emergencies only. He was going to ask what was going on but was stalled by Abel's significant look at Delilah. Whatever it was, he wasn't ready to share it with their mate, who pulled out of his embrace and faced Abel.

"I should go with you. I haven't talked to Chloe yet, and I have no idea when Jackson wants me to start work."

A growl welled in his throat before he could repress it, and she shot him an alarmed look. He was still pissed about her working in the big house, as the pack referred to the Alpha's home. Logically, he knew there was no threat to her. She was the pack Enforcer's and his twin brother's mate. No one would dare harm her or hurt her in any way. But there were too many people, males specifically, in and out of there for his peace of mind. He didn't like it one damn bit. He wanted her here in their house where she could be properly guarded, properly cared for. And fucked at his whim.

"Why don't you go get cleaned up, baby? After breakfast, Cain can bring you up."

He'd been watching her through hooded eyes, wondering how long he'd have to wait to order her to quit working for Jackson when Abel spoke. It was the same measured tone as usual, but something menacing lurked in it. Cain jerked his gaze from Delilah and looked at his brother. She stepped between them and put her hands on her hips, glaring back and forth from him to Abel.

"If you're trying to get rid of me so you can talk about what happened, forget it. Believe me, it won't happen again. This morning or last night."

This time he didn't even think of tempering his growl as he stepped toward her. "The hell it won't."

She blinked, took a deep breath that raised her tantalizing breasts, and tried to look nonchalant. It didn't work; he could smell her fear. Before he could decide what to do about that, Abel interfered, his voice light and cajoling.

"Doesn't have anything to do with you, babe. I just need to talk to Cain a minute before I go to work."

She was standing close enough for him to lift a hand, brush it down her cheek, and she turned her face into it, sighing and closing her eyes. She welcomed Abel's touch and responded to it instantly. Cain felt a pang of jealousy as he wondered how to get her to react to him like that.

"Go on," Abel whispered.

With one last, lingering gaze at him, she turned and left the room.

"You have to teach me how to do that," Cain muttered. He watched her sashay out of the room, admiring the swing of her perfect ass. He was hard again, half tempted to follow her and take her in the shower. The woman was going to kill him. "Damn."

Abel chuckled. "Yeah. Something like that."

Cain grinned. Abel knew exactly what he was thinking, because he was thinking it, too. He bent to retrieve his boxers and pulled them on before going to the teakettle. He poured two mugs of the hot water and got bags out of the cabinet, then handed one to his brother. He pulled out a chair and sat at the table, cocking an eyebrow when his brother didn't follow suit.

"Talk."

Abel's expression shut down, and his eyes glowing with a feral intensity that Cain recognized. He was in Hunting mode, as if a switch had been flipped. Most people believed Cain was the more dangerous of the twins. They were dead wrong.

"Greg Thompson was attacked last night."

Cain stood, the slowness of the movement at odds with the need to act rushing through his body. Greg was one half of the only other identical twin set of their age in the pack, and they'd recently mated.

"Is he okay? Where was Jeff? And their mate?"

He should remember the woman's name but didn't feel too bad about it. She was so new no one had met her, yet. The Thompson brothers had just brought her home.

"He'll live, and she's fine. Her name is Michelle, by the way."

"And Jeff?"

Abel pressed his lips together. "No sign of him. He went into Knoxville for supplies and never made it back. Greg thinks he holed up somewhere to wait the storm out. Greg and Michelle are up at the big house. They'll stay there until he heals."

The storm had been bad enough to keep people off the mountain roads for a few hours, which meant whoever had attacked Greg had already been in place.

“Who was it?”

Abel shook his head. “Greg didn’t recognize him.”

He heard a hair dryer start upstairs and smiled. Delilah had rushed through a shower. He’d heard the water turn on and off while he and Abel talked. She must be worried about what was going on downstairs.

“You better get going. We’ll be up in a little while.”

Abel hesitated, looking like he might argue with the plan. Cain knew he wanted to, but finally he nodded. “Until we know what’s going on, I’ll feel better if we’re both with her. And there’s enough people at the house she’ll be safe, even if we can’t both be there for some reason.”

Cain didn’t respond to that, but they both knew she wouldn’t be alone. He’d retired from the Hunters and had come home intending to finally write that book he’d always promised himself he would. With a laptop he could do that just as easily at the big house as in his own office. He and Abel shared an almost psychic bond. There were no words on that mental path, but they knew the others feelings, the others thoughts. Abel understood that he could perform his duty to the pack, and Cain would watch over their mate. It was the nature of such bonds. They exchanged a look that spoke their mutual understanding. Words weren’t necessary. When they heard Delilah’s hair dryer switch off, Abel spun around and left the house through the kitchen door.

Delilah had no idea what to expect when she returned to the kitchen, but it was not Cain leaning casually back in a chair smiling at her with a cat-ate-the-canary grin on his lips. There was no sign of Abel, and she half expected Cain to leap up and grab her.

She wasn’t sure if she was ready for that again and looked around. A platter of scrambled eggs sat warming on the stove, and bacon sizzled in a pan. She walked over to check it, but that was only a few seconds of diversion and, swamped by awkwardness and confusion, she had to turn around and face him. By this point, that seemed par for the course. She desperately needed space from both brothers and blushed as she remembered in vivid detail how little space she’d had minutes ago.

She’d never done anything like that, had never slept with two men in less than twenty-four hours’ time. She was uneasy not because of that, but because she wasn’t upset by it. It was so out of character, and now that they’d both had her, she wasn’t sure if she’d be able to resist further advances. But for her own peace of mind, she’d have to. She felt the walls around her heart weakening whenever either one looked at her, and she was afraid it would be a disaster to fall in love with one or both of them.

They seemed to like sharing women, but that didn’t mean they’d share one they cared for. They’d given her the perfect opportunity to explore a side of her sexuality she’d only dreamed of, but she was not a casual sex kind of girl. It was incredible, but she wanted something else, something more.

“All that thinking.”

She blinked, realizing she’d been lost in her thoughts for several minutes.

Cain beckoned with a crook of his finger and a gleam in his eyes that made her panties melt. “Come sit



down, Delilah. Do some of that thinking out loud.”

She opened the refrigerator first and pulled out one of the Diet Cokes she'd seen earlier then went to the table and sat across from him. He took the can and opened it, handing it back after he took a sip and made a face. She frowned. It seemed an odd thing to find in the fridge of two single men.

“Chloe said you drink that stuff,” he answered before she could ask. “I don't see how.”

Come to think of it, it was pretty odd for two such macho men to be tea drinkers, wasn't it? Not a drop of coffee in sight, and she'd looked everywhere she could think of, even the freezer. It was definitely time to get some answers.

“So, you and Abel... You're...”

She couldn't bring herself to say it. It seemed so ridiculous. Maybe she'd imagined the whole thing after all. Cain cocked an eyebrow and waited her out. She rubbed her temples with the tips of her fingers. Was it any weirder than her being able to communicate with animals?

“It's okay, sweetheart. You can say it. I won't bite. Much,” he added with a sexy grin.

She crossed her arms over her chest. They were going to have a real conversation. Even if it killed her. And judging by the way his pupils dilated with heat, and the bulge rising in his boxers, it just might.

“I was obviously hallucinating last night.”

Why she insisted when she knew damn well she hadn't done any such thing was beyond her. He smiled and slowly got to his feet, as if he was calling her bluff. He slid the boxers over his jutting erection and down his thighs, until they pooled at his feet. His expression sobered, then closed. She couldn't read him at all.

“Watch.”

He stepped into the middle of the room and...changed. She held her breath while she watched, unable to describe it, to believe it. One minute he stood there a man, and the next his body twisted, contorted, shifted, until he was a wolf. He padded closer to her, stopped at her knee, and sat down on his hind legs. Amazing.

“Werewolf,” she whispered, reaching her hand out cautiously, unsure if she was allowed to touch him like this.

He put his head on her thigh, turning his muzzle so she could scratch behind his ears. She laughed softly and tried to share the wonder she was feeling with him. For a moment he was as closed to her as they'd been last night. Then she felt relief. Overwhelming relief.

He stood, stepped away, and changed back. He pulled the boxers back on and returned to his seat, tilting his head to one side and studying her. When he spoke it was a subject she didn't expect. “How long have you kept that secret? Your ability to talk to animals?”

She was suddenly cold and mentally kicked herself. Of course he would realize. At least he wasn't spazzing out like one of her old boyfriends who had calling her a freak. Cain waited for her to answer, and she shrugged.

“Always. A few people have realized I seem to have a bond with animals, but I certainly don’t bring it up.” She forced a smile. “They think it’s weird.”

He reached for her hand, lacing their fingers together. His expression never changed, but she felt comforted.

“We consider that a valuable talent here, but you can see why you can’t approach any wolves you don’t know. Never know who they might be.”

She took in a long breath, understanding why they’d ordered her not to approach any wolves last night. “There are more of you.”

She’d thought it odd that Jackson, who owned many companies, lived isolated on this mountaintop, that the people around him treated him with such deference.

Cain smiled. “There are many of us here. Everyone. Well, the males at least.”

She frowned. She’d seen many women at Jackson’s and the small village Chloe had shown her around. What did they do with the female werewolves? For that matter, how did one become a werewolf? He must have seen the questions in her eyes.

“There are no female werewolves. Our daughters are all born human. And no, you can’t be changed into a werewolf. You’re born one or not. We’re a different species entirely.”

“So who exactly is Jackson? What does Abel do for him? And what do you do?”

He grinned and held his hand up. “Patience, sweetheart.”

He stood, went to the stove, and flipped the bacon before returning. He took a deep breath, and a long silence stretched while he seemed to consider his words.

“We’re a lot like real wolves. We’re organized in packs—this is the Appalachian pack. We have some visitors for Christmas from the Alabama pack. You’ll meet them later, since they’re staying with Jackson and Summer. There are other packs all over the country.

“Like wolf packs, we have an Alpha and Beta. Jackson and Billy. We also have an Enforcer. Abel.”

Jesus Christ, she’d managed to hook herself up with a pack of real werewolves. Alpha and Beta were easy enough to define, but what the hell was an Enforcer? It sounded creepy, ominous. And she’d slept with him, spent the night in his arms. Had felt safe. She squeezed her eyes shut, wondering if she was gullible or completely stupid to sleep with a stranger, especially after hearing all this.

Cain squeezed her hand. “You still with me, Delilah?”

She opened her eyes and met his gaze. Was she with him? That was the question, wasn’t it? She wanted to ask about mates, the word they’d thrown around so casually last night.

“What’s an Enforcer?”

“Someone in the pack who enforces the Alpha’s rules and fights for him if necessary.”

She gulped, trying to concentrate on the danger he could cause more than the danger he could get into. “And what are you?”

His smile was small, introspective. He lifted a hand and stroked the side of her face with his fingertips. It took all her restraint not to lean into it.

“I was a Hunter until Abel met you. I retired. Finished my last assignment a few days ago.”

She ignored the butterflies that took flight in her stomach, ignored the promise that wasn't spoken but was in the air anyway. It was the perfect opening to ask what he intended with her, what *they* intended, what the significance of a mate was. She didn't take it.

“A Hunter?”

His eyes gleamed. Somehow he knew she was avoiding the questions she really wanted to ask.

“We hunt rogues. Werewolves who've broken pack law.”

She nodded, not sure she wanted to pursue that, to know what those laws were or how they were punished. He let go of her hand, lifted her, and set her straddling his lap.

He stared down at her. “Aren't you going to ask why Abel's meeting you would get me home?”

She pressed her lips together. Shook her head. She sensed that conversation would represent a point of no return. He didn't push her, didn't start talking as she'd feared he would. Instead, he lifted his hands and palmed her breasts. Her nipples firmed into two hard peaks he could feel through her bra and sweater. She gasped when he squeezed them, her pussy flooding with moisture at the roughness.

“Do you always respond like this?” he asked softly, but she heard menace, warning, in his tone. She shook her head no, not sure if she could find her voice. He pulled the sweater up and lowered his lips to suck her nipple into his mouth for a quick nip. “Answer me, Delilah.”

“No.” She forced herself to breathe when his lips closed over her nipple again, wishing he'd get rid of the bra, get rid of her jeans. Fuck her senseless. “Never.”

He released her just as suddenly as he'd started, pulled her sweater down, and lifted her to her feet.

“Good.”

He nudged her back to her chair, and she watched in disbelief as he went to the stove. He'd turned her on, turned her inside out, and then just walked away? What the hell? She could see how hard he was, yet he stood calmly at the stove filling two plates with eggs and bacon. Before she could form any protest, he returned to the table and set a plate and a fork in front of her.

“Eat.”

How could she eat when she was this sexually frustrated? Stabbing him with the fork was much more appealing than eggs. She picked it up and twirled it with her fingers. He chuckled and looked over. She wondered what was so damned funny.

“You,” he answered before she could ask. That was getting damned freaky. “I’ll have to make sure Abel knows not to turn you on before feeding you.”

He couldn’t make it more obvious they intended to share her. The question was for how long, and could she keep her heart out of it? She would bet her savings account that women threw themselves at the twins all the time. How long could she hold their interest compared to that?

“Eat, Delilah.” He winked. “I’ll take care of the frustration when you’re done.”

She narrowed her eyes. He was entirely too cocky. She took her anger out on the eggs, spearing a bite and lifting it to her mouth. She tried not to watch him eat, tried to ignore the sensation that still tingled in her body, the feel of his hot gaze on her. He was too arrogant by far, but she knew she wouldn’t be able to resist him. She managed to eat half the food on her plate before pushing it away. He’d obviously been waiting for that. He stood, lifted her from her chair, and tossed her over his shoulder.

“Hey! Put me down.”

She slapped his back, but it didn’t seem to faze him. He carried her out of the room, up the stairs, and into one of the bedrooms she hadn’t been in, yet. He kicked the door shut behind them and dropped her on the bed. She bounced, and he grinned down at her.

“I figure Abel got you in a bed all night. It’s my turn.”

She sputtered, outraged and beginning to wonder if it was some kind of game with them, passing her from one to the other.

“I’m not some new toy you two get to fight over.” She glared, moving to the edge of the bed, determined to get out and nurse that sudden pang of hurt that came with the realization she might be exactly that to them.

A novelty. Someone new to play with. He stopped her before she could get down, crowding her in as he reached for the edges of her sweater and pulled it over her head. Her bra joined it before the words to protest even formed on her lips. They lodged in her throat when his mouth closed over her nipple, and all that came out was a groan. *Way to stand up for yourself, Delilah.*

She felt his hands on the waist of her jeans. Heard the snap and rasp of the zipper. Registered the long slide down her legs. But she didn’t care. She was lost in sensation, in arousal. He wrapped an arm around her back and lifted her farther onto the bed without ever releasing her nipple. When he had her settled in the center, he let it pop free of his mouth, and she almost screamed in frustration when he stood up. Thankfully, it was only for a moment, just long enough to strip off the underwear. Then he was over her, surrounding her. She was hot enough to combust, and when he drove into her she came, crying out from the perfection of it as shuddering waves washed over her.

It was several minutes before her pulse calmed, before her breathing evened and she noticed he wasn’t moving. He held still, watching her, waiting. He was hard and throbbing inside her, and she realized he wasn’t nearly done with her.

He smiled, lowering his head to kiss her, his hair brushing her face as he did. The contact was light, tender, and undemanding. He traced her mouth with his tongue then nibbled on her lower lip. Sensation shot through her, and she gasped. When her lips opened, his tongue plunged in. Not hard enough to hurt, but forceful and commanding. Her defenses crumbled. There was no way he could kiss her like that and

mean her any harm, was there?

Then his hips were moving, his cock stroking in and out of her. Fast and faster. Hard and harder. Until the tremors started again, until her body was catapulted into another orgasm. She didn't come back down. His fingers found her clit, and he kept her coming again and again until she begged him to stop, begged him to let her come down from the ledge he kept her perched on. It was so much sensation, she was afraid she'd never be able to put herself back together again.

He withdrew, and she almost cried with relief until he flipped her over, positioning her on her hands and knees. She considered struggling. She really didn't think she could take any more, but he entered her slowly, inch by inch. His hands stroked her back. Soft. Soothing. And she responded, her body keying up again. He leaned over, blanketing her, to nuzzle her neck. His fingers settled over her clit, and she tensed.

"One more time, sweetheart."

His strokes were long and slow, his fingers on her clitoris soft and gentle. It was nice, but her frustration grew. It wasn't enough for her, and she doubted it was enough for him. She rocked her hips back against his, the demand unspoken, but she knew he recognized it. His pace increased, the pressure on her clit became biting. He rolled it between two fingers, pinching as her cunt convulsed around his cock.

"Yes," she hissed as she came again.

He moved his hands to her hips and held her still as he pounded into her. Once. Twice. Gone. He came with a loud groan, collapsing against her, and they both fell flat, face first on the mattress. He rolled to his side and pulled her tight against him, his chest pressed up against her back, then buried his face in her neck again. He kissed her, sucking the skin hard enough between his teeth that she knew he would leave a mark. Then he seemed to catch himself and backed off.

"Shit," he muttered. "Not yet."

After everything else they'd done, she couldn't believe hickeys fell into the *not yet* category. She laughed and rolled over.

"Fucking's okay but biting isn't? That's a little strange, don't you think?"

He growled, but she wasn't scared. She saw the playfulness in his eyes as he rolled over on top of her. He grabbed her hands and pinned them to the pillow next to her hair. He leaned down and nipped her lips, leaving a trail of kisses across her face until he reached her ear. He sucked it between his teeth for a second before moving to the soft skin under it. She sucked in a breath, anticipating the bite, but was surprised and disappointed when it was only a kiss.

"There's biting, and then there's biting."

Apparently it was more cryptic statements time. She scowled. "And what's the difference?"

He stared at her neck so long she didn't think he was going to answer.

"There are some bites you can't go back from, Delilah. Mate bites. And when we bite you, Abel and I, we want to be damned sure you understand what that means."

She froze as he spoke, sensing herself entering dangerous territory but compelled to ask anyway. "And what is that?"

He let go of one of her hands and stroked the side of her face. Her heart warmed at the touch, and she tilted her face, into it.

"Amazing." He smiled. "We mate for life, sweetheart. One true mate, one woman for every werewolf for life. Unless you happen to be an identical twin."

She stopped breathing. It couldn't be true what he was saying. It was too fantastic, too hard to credit. How could two men share a woman forever? And *wow*. Forever?

"No one ever gets divorced?"

He growled, and she forced herself not to flinch. How could she know if she didn't ask?

"There is no breaking a bond once it's made. No going back."

Last night he'd called her his mate. She wanted to ask about that, ask how he could be sure with a woman he'd just met, but his expression was so severe, so forbidding, she didn't dare. She had a sudden urge to flee, needed space to think and deal with this new world she'd landed in.

His eyes narrowed. "Bond or no bond, we aren't letting you go, Delilah. Get the idea out of your head now."

Her eyes might just bug out. "How do you do that? You keep guessing what I'm thinking."

He shook his head. "Not guessing. I know the same way I know what Abel's thinking. We're connected. I'm picking up your feelings. Like you and your animals, I bet."

Okay, that was just creepy. She wasn't thrilled with the idea he'd always be able to read her like this. She was entitled to keep her own thoughts to herself, right? He just grinned at her while her mind raced. Her heart started to pound. She'd never be free of them, would she? They'd know if she tried to leave. She wasn't sure how she felt about that. They intrigued her, but Cain was implying a permanent arrangement that she didn't seem to have any say in.

"Why me? How do you know I'm this woman?"

He dipped his head to her neck, inhaled deeply, then stroked it with a long swipe of his tongue.

"It's the way you taste, your scent. The way you make me feel. The way you make my dick hard just being in the same room. It's the way you make me whole. I know, Delilah. Trust me, I know."

Her mouth went dry. There was no way, no logical, safe way to respond to him. She felt a crazy connection to him, both of them. Had since she arrived last night. And it scared the crap out of her. She was saved from having to come up with words when he stood and pulled her up with him.

"We should get going." His grin was pure mischief. "I'm sure Abel's wondering what's taking so long."

## Chapter Four

Some kid Cain didn't recognize opened the door and told him everyone was in the meeting room down the hall. When they walked in, his grip tightened on Delilah's hand, and he threaded his way through the crowd. Surprise at the gathering arched his eyebrows when he reached his brother. Able stood with twins Cain recognized from the Panhandle pack. Hunters both. What the hell was going on here?

"Did I miss a memo or something?"

His gaze swept the crowd while Abel pulled Delilah between them and bent to nuzzle her nape. It was an action not missed by the crowd, and Cain found himself on the receiving end of several knowing glances as he catalogued the room. It looked like a who's who of Appalachian Hunters, current and retired. The ones who were mated stood with their mates, but there were far too many single weres in the room for his comfort.

His gaze shifted back to Abel. "What's going on?"

Abel straightened, and the hard look was back in his eyes. He jerked his head toward the twins, the Hunters, standing next to them. Cain didn't remember their names, but Abel provided them.

"Rule and Lawe. From the Panhandle. They're chasing a rogue who happens to target twins."

Twins. Cain stilled, focusing his attention on the brothers. Hunting this close to Christmas, which was only days away, was rarely done. Family, pack, was too important in the were world to ignore major holidays. These two should be home with their own pack. It would take a major threat, and sure knowledge, to make them skip it.

"How long?" he asked them.

"A few weeks."

"Obviously, Greg and Jeff were not the first," Abel said.



“The others?”

Abel’s mouth firmed into an angry line. “Dead.”

Cain knew exactly how he felt. They should have been warned. “And Jeff?”

Abel shook his head. “Still missing.”

Cain felt Abel’s conclusions mirror his own. They both knew it was likely Jeff was already dead. The door opened, and Trey and Eric came in, their mates following them, whispering, their heads bent close together. Eric and his mate walked in the opposite direction while Trey paused and looked around. His gaze stopped on their small group, and he moved in their direction. The crowd parted for him, and Cain hid a grin at the way his mate rolled her eyes. He may be the most feared Hunter in a generation, but his mate obviously didn’t share that fear. The two newcomers stopped in front of them, Trey holding his mate’s elbow and keeping her slightly behind him.

“Cain.” He nodded. “Abel.”

Then his gaze zeroed in on Delilah, as if taking her measure. Next to him, Cain felt her shrink under the penetrating look and sent her strength, reassurance. He felt the same from Abel. It bolstered her, and her spine straightened, her chin lifted. Trey finally nodded and smiled a little.

Trey Williams smiling did not give one the warm and fuzzies. Delilah’s hand shook in his before she controlled herself. Hell, it gave even him and Abel pause. Irritated, Trey’s mate jabbed her elbow in his side, and he woofed out a breath, rubbing his ribs as he looked down at her.

She stepped forward and turned to him, clearly exasperated. “I swear, sometimes I think you were raised by real wolves.”

She smiled at Delilah and held her hand out. “I’m Tara. And the rude one here is my mate, Trey.”

She spared a second to turn and glare at him over her shoulder. Cain used the moment to rub the smile off his face. When she turned back, Delilah let go of his hand long enough to shake Tara’s.

“I’m Delilah.”

Tara waited for further introductions, and he squeezed Delilah’s hand. She blinked, realized he expected her to introduce him and his brother. She nodded at them in turn. “Cain and Abel.”

It took a second to register, and then Tara laughed. Delilah grinned. “I know. The universe’s idea of a bad joke, I think.”

He almost took exception to her leaving the mate part off, but he was charmed by her smile, by the openness she showed Tara. They’d let her relax before they pushed the nature of their new relationship. He caught Abel’s gaze and knew he was thinking the same thing. The other twins were introduced as the door opened again.

Billy Cagle and his mate walked in, and Cain studied her. He’d heard the story of Wyatt, of course, had heard that Billy had to follow her to Florida to claim her. They’d obviously worked things out since she was pregnant, her belly big and round, her face radiant with happiness. His breath caught in his throat, and he wondered what Delilah would look like in a similar state, knowing the first birth would be twin

boys.

She gasped, and he looked down to see her watching him, a blush spreading down her neck. He'd meant to share the image with Abel, but she must have caught it, too.

How did she feel about that? He couldn't pursue that question in this crowd and was distracted from the thought when Clint approached. An older, retired Hunter, Clint had taken the Enforcer position after Jackson's appointment as Alpha, until Abel had been able to retire and come home. At forty-two, he was the oldest werewolf Cain knew of who'd never been mated. He shook his hand.

"Good to see you home, Cain." Clint cocked an eyebrow, taking in the threesome. "I take it it's for good?"

Cain smiled while giving the obvious answer. "Yes."

Clint's arrival was apparently what Trey had been waiting for, and he finally spoke, his gaze steady on Abel. "I'm not Enforcer here."

When he didn't go on, Abel prodded him, his smile crooked, his tone wry. "But if you were?"

Trey shrugged. "I'd take advantage of all these single Hunters. Set up patrols."

Abel didn't bristle at the command in Trey's voice. Instead, he smiled. Cain understood he'd already made those arrangements as his gaze swept the room again. There were several people he'd expect to see at this kind of gathering that were absent.

"Already done."

Trey nodded, and Cain realized he'd known before he gave the suggestion. What was he up to then?

"The Hunters are sending an analyst. A profiler I guess you'd call her."

Trey cut his gaze to Clint while everyone waited for him to go on. He felt his brother's impatience join his own and wanted to ask what the big deal was. Finally, he said, "Ellen should be here soon. Jackson sent a driver to the airport. And she'll need a guard."

The three members of his pack straightened, curious and alert, and he asked the question they all shared. "Brant's daughter?"

Trey nodded.

"I'll do it," Clint said.

Trey's smile was slight, but there was no doubting the humor in it. "I thought you would."

"Can it, Williamson," Clay said. "I may have ten years on you, but you'd do well to remember who taught you how to fight. I can still kick your ass."

Cain felt like he'd missed a whole conversation and struggled to remember Ellen. Her mother hadn't been mated to Brant, and she'd left, taking her daughter with her when the girl was a teenager. She'd be close to thirty now. How had she ended up with the Hunters?

His questions would have to wait. Jackson and Summer came in, followed by Darius and his mate. Fascinated, Cain watched as the two pairs split and worked the room. In their wake, people began to leave. Finally, the two pairs stopped at his group. Considering how at odds they'd been a year and half ago, it was amazing to see them work so easily in concert now. And very cool to see, too. He remembered in the years before Brant died that Jackson and Darius often worked rooms like this together. It was good to see them allied again.

Jackson grinned at him. "So, do I get two Enforcers for the price of one now?"

He met Abel's gaze, and together they glanced at Delilah. They would never leave her unprotected, and Jackson should know better than to ask.

Cain snorted. "No."

"Well, damn," he joked, turning his gaze to Delilah. The attention raised Cain's hackles, and he had to remind himself Jackson wasn't interested in his woman. The Alpha had a mate. "You made it in just before the storm shut the airport down yesterday. Sorry we couldn't give you a room here. I got invaded last week."

Darius and Summer both elbowed him in the ribs at that crack, and he glared at them.

"It would be nice if some people remembered who was in charge around here."

Darius just grinned, and Summer rolled her eyes. She was the second mate he'd seen do that in less than hour. He didn't like his mate witnessing it. They'd have to make it clear to Delilah that kind of disrespect wouldn't be tolerated. He had the impression it would be a hard lesson to learn for all three of them and might not go in his favor.

"I take it your accommodations are okay? Do you need anything?" Jackson asked.

He held his breath, wondering if she'd ask about the cabin she'd been promised, wondering if she'd ask for somewhere else to stay. She hesitated longer than he liked, and Jackson gave him a hard look.

"Everything's fine," Delilah answered.

"Good." He nodded then sighed. "It's a dangerous time to be here though, staying with twins. I'm inclined to move you out of there."

"No," he and Able answered together forcefully. There was no way they were handing her protection over to anyone else. Not even their Alpha. Hell, they weren't letting anyone near her even if there weren't a rogue on the loose. He felt Delilah's confusion. She didn't understand everything that was going on, the different nuances at play.

Jackson met their gazes briefly then turned back to Delilah and let his gaze linger on her neck. Every were left in the room got the message. She was unclaimed.

"She came here to work for me, and she's under my protection until... someone else steps up to fill that role."

Cain was certain he'd been about to say until she was officially claimed by her mates, but he couldn't be

sure how much she knew yet. Next to him, Delilah huffed.

“I’ve been taking care of myself for a long time.” She tried to free herself from their grasps and glared at them when they wouldn’t release her. “I don’t need a keeper or a protector.”

At that pronouncement, Jackson became the Alpha. The friendly, open man morphed into a dangerous predator. His eyes shifted, going cold and glowing. Cain was damned glad he was on their side, but he didn’t appreciate that censorious gaze being directed at his mate. He bristled, while Abel mentally told him to chill the fuck out.

“Here we go again,” Summer muttered.

She laid her hand on Jackson’s arm, and the touch seemed to calm him, force him to collect himself.

“I’m sure there are many things that Delilah doesn’t know about us yet, but it’s best not to rush through all those explanations at once. Everyone...” Her gaze lingered on him and his brother before continuing. “...understands the need for caution *and* haste.”

Summer slid her hand down Jackson’s arm, and when she reached his hand, he laced their fingers together, bringing their joined hands to his lips. He smiled at her, and Cain didn’t like witnessing the private moment at all. He hadn’t been afraid that having a mate would soften him, unman him. Now he wasn’t so sure. Mentally, he pulled back. Closed himself off from Abel’s and Delilah’s minds. Slowly, Jackson released his mate and turned his attention back to the group.

“For now, she stays with y’all. Don’t make me regret that decision.”

Summer smiled, and he heard Delilah grinding her teeth, biting back the words she obviously longed to say before they could slip out. He squeezed her hand, trying to communicate his pride in her.

“Delilah, Summer’s going to show you around. I need to have a word in private with the twins.”

If it was possible, Cain stood straighter. Narrowing his gaze, he felt his wolf leap up and take control. His ability to protect her had just been questioned, and now he was expected to let her go off on her own? Not in this lifetime. Before he could form a coherent response, Billy was next to Jackson, big arms crossed over his chest. Waiting. Aggressive behavior against the Alpha wouldn’t be tolerated. Even his own brother growled at him, low in his throat with disapproval, the warning obvious. Jackson just smiled, stood loose limbed and confident, and watched.

Cain forced his wolf down, forced his anger down. He leaned over to Delilah, kissed her neck, and scraped his teeth over the delicate skin. Damn, he should have done it earlier. The hell with waiting for Abel. He let her hand go and took a step back, felt the room sigh in relief. He trailed his fingers down the side of her face.

“If you need us, call. You know how.”

Then Summer was taking her hand, leading her out of the room, and chattering the whole time. When they were gone, Jackson spoke again as he walked toward the door.

“Upstairs.”

He and Abel followed, his brother whispering to him on the stairs. “Don’t be a pain in the ass, Cain.”

He grunted. How could he not?

He noticed when they entered the study that everyone else followed inside. Jackson sat behind his desk, Billy perched on the edge, and Abel stood behind them both with his arms crossed over his chest and glared at *him*. If he didn't find the situation so ridiculous, he would have felt like a schoolboy brought to task.

Jackson glanced over his shoulder at Abel then returned his gaze to Cain. "How much does she know?"

"She knows what we are, a little of how we're organized. Not much."

Jackson nodded. "It's a start, but the situation can't be allowed to continue. Claim her. Bind her. Get it over with tonight."

He bristled again but forced a calmness into his limbs he didn't feel. He didn't need to be told how to take care of his mate.

"I'm tempted to kick someone out so y'all will have a room here until this is handled."

Trey shrugged. "We'll go. I still have a house nearby and there's entirely too much togetherness here anyway."

Abel shook his head. "No. We aren't far, and all three of us can be here during the day anyway. She won't be alone."

Cain was damned tempted to throw in an *except for now*. She was close. He could feel her, but he couldn't see her, and it made him nervous. And that pissed him off.

Jackson picked up a pen and rolled it over his fingers, looking at the other twins in the room. Rule and Lawe.

"We'll let it go for now. What do the Hunters know about this rogue?"

"Greg was the fourth. He always attacks at night, never the mates, and when only one twin is present. No idea how he picks which one. Probably just opportunity."

"And you don't know who he is. So what led you here? You got here before the storm, before the attack."

The other twin took over. Both looked nervous as hell, as if they didn't want to give that explanation.

"Except for Greg, their mates are all from this pack. We didn't realize that until last week after the Charleston attack when we reviewed all the cases."

Jackson arched both eyebrows. "I should have been notified, don't you think? Word should have gone out."

"We agree. But these attacks have been spread out over the last three years, until the last two. The Hunters didn't believe they were connected until Charleston."

“And what do you know about him?”

For the first time they showed irritation, both fidgeting, clenching their teeth. Cain wondered if he and Abel mirrored each other so closely.

“Nothing. Greg is the first witness we’ve had. Other than the rogue was a standard grey wolf and he didn’t recognize it, he hasn’t been able to provide any information.”

Jackson tossed the pen, the first sign of his irritation. “Well, that’s just great. Maybe Ellen will be able to help.”

No one responded to that, but the air grew heavy with tension. The thought of bringing a woman into the hunt for a rogue didn’t set well with any of them.

“She’ll be here soon.” He sighed. “I need to find a guard.”

“Already on it,” Trey said. “Clint’s handling it.”

Jackson cocked an eyebrow and grinned. “That right? And here I thought you were a member of Darius’s pack.”

“I serve where needed,” Trey intoned in a mocking voice, and the older weres in the room, his friends and Clint, laughed. Even Billy cracked a smile.

But the four of them, the twins, the Hunters, were struck dumb. They’d all spent time with Trey. Training. Working. Cain had never seen the man smile, never seen a break in the severe mask he always wore. Sure as hell never saw him crack a joke. Maybe this is what finding a mate did for you. Not softened, but dulled the edges, tempered the beast that lived in every Hunter, that had to live there so they could do the job. Maybe finding a mate for someone like him made it easier to reenter the fold, return to the pack. It seemed to have worked that way for Trey at least. He could live with that. Maybe.

Before the conversation could continue, someone knocked on the door.

“Come,” Jackson said, and Billy stood to open the door.

Cain was watching Clint when Ellen came in. His reaction was controlled, covered so fast Cain wouldn’t have caught it if he hadn’t been watching. The other man’s eyes widened, his nostrils flared, and his hands fisted for half a second. If he didn’t know better, Cain would think the woman was Clint’s mate. But that wasn’t possible, was it? They’d known each other years ago. If that were the case, Clint would have made his claim long ago, wouldn’t he?

He turned to look at Ellen. To him, Delilah was perfect. Beautiful and his. But this woman looked as if she’d just walked off the cover of a high fashion magazine. To be her mate would be to constantly deal with unwanted male attention. She was gorgeous. Slim and tall, with long, straight, red hair to the middle of her back. Rule and Lawe were definitely interested in her. He saw their eyes flare with heat.

“Ellen, come here,” Clint said.

He had been in the back corner of the room, but he stepped into the center as he spoke. She hadn’t seen him when she walked in and at his words, her head swung around, flaring her hair around her upper body. It blazed like a fiery fan. Cain suddenly understood why Abel was so pissed off Delilah cut her

hair. Ellen glared at Clint, but she didn't speak or move.

"Now, Ellen."

There was a growl in his voice, warning and territorial possession in his tone. Cain wondered if he spoke to Delilah that way. And understood this was definitely Clint's mate. Why he hadn't claimed her was the curiosity. She sighed, and Cain was sure she would refuse him, but she didn't. She walked over and let Clint yank her into his arms. He wrapped his arms around her waist and glared at Rule and Lawe. It was as obvious a claiming as the bite on her neck that would no doubt come later.

Trey grinned at the couple. "Well, it's about time."

Jackson answered dryly, "Do you know everyone's secrets, Trey? Darius, I'm stealing him back."

Darius snorted. "I don't think so. Even if you could convince him, you'd never get Tara to agree to give up her shop and move here."

Trey nodded. "Tara is a force to be reckoned with, and I, for one, am not taking her on. Sorry, Jackson."

"Don't worry, Jackson. You'll break Abel in soon, and he'll end up being just as sneaky as Trey." Eric grinned as he shot a droll look at Trey.

Cain met Abel's gaze then looked at Rule and Lawe, noticing they were just as off balance at witnessing the four old friends so open and easy. Billy seemed to take it in stride, which struck Cain as odd, since he was the same age as he and his brother. He figured that was from exposure.

Jackson, Darius, Eric, and Trey had reached legendary status in his mind years ago, and he wasn't the only one. It was like those four were particularly blessed. He cocked his head to the side as he watched them continue to joke and wondered about it. He'd joined the Hunters because he'd always known he'd never be Alpha. It was damned obvious to everyone that that would fall to either Jackson or Darius from the time they'd been young boys.

He and Abel were about five years younger than them, so they'd grown up watching, idolizing. Wondering if they'd ever compare. Cain understood now that they weren't so different. There was just an incredible amount of talent focused into one group friendship. He and his brother, along with Billy and a couple of others, had run in a similar group once. He hadn't the chance to catch up with Billy yet, much less talk to the others. Would they end up a force in the pack? A group that younger weres looked up to? Emulated? He'd never thought of himself, of them, like that. It was damned strange and something he wanted to talk to his fathers about later.

He sighed and thank god that Abel was the only one who caught it. He sensed this was a shared concern. Their younger brother and sister would arrive tomorrow, to spend part of their college winter breaks at home. But their parents, all three of them, would be home tonight. Delilah was in for one hell of a shock.

"Ellen. It's good to see you again, but the last time you were much shorter," Jackson joked.

She laughed. "I was fourteen, and I'm sure I was at least five-seven. So, not much shorter."

That might explain why Clint hadn't claimed her. At fourteen, she wouldn't have met maturity yet,



wouldn't awaken the bond between her and her mate. Cain was sure there was more to it, though. He was sure Clint knew before she walked in that she was his mate.

Clint had to let go enough so she could face Jackson and speak, but they were still held her close, tucked up under his considerably taller shoulder.

"Can you help with this? Know who we're looking for?"

She tried to shrug out from under Clint's grasp, but he didn't release her until she dug her elbow into his lower belly. Walking forward, she sank into one of the two empty chairs in front of the desk.

"No. But I have theories."

"Go on."

"This guy always goes after one twin of a mated pair. I think that tells us something. Maybe he's a twin and his brother died. Maybe he's a twin and his mate died. Or maybe he's not *atwin* and the woman he wanted went to twins."

No one responded, but he could see they were all thinking it over, cataloguing the twins they knew in their minds. The problem was that you couldn't know the ins and outs of every pack. Unless you had access to Hunter resources.

"I'm working on a database of every known living twin set. Well, where at least one is living. Actually, I'm to the verifying point now."

She grew animated, warming to her subject, and he could see the single weres in the room were charmed. Hell, he knew there was no other woman, never would be, for him but Delilah, but even he was charmed.

The door swung open and Summer poked her head in, glaring at Jackson smiling so openly at another woman. Cain was damned glad Delilah wasn't with her.

"Lunch," she said, sauntering into the room. "And you might as well come down 'cause y'all are all gonna spill all your secrets tonight anyway."

He and Abel exchanged a look. There were a lot of secrets that needed to be shared with Delilah tonight, and some of them were going to be damned hard to explain. Summer walked around the desk and sat in Jackson's lap, turning her head to watch Ellen. Cain wondered what the hell she saw because, after a few seconds, she nodded and smiled, and it wasn't fake. It was a welcome. It didn't look like he was going to find out either. In seconds, Jackson had the room cleared, and Cain was in the kitchen before he realized the Alpha and his mate hadn't joined the pack for lunch.

## Chapter Five

Delilah watched them come into the kitchen. Her men. Cain and Abel. Was she really thinking of them like that? She still didn't quite believe it, *couldn't* believe it. She felt as if she'd landed in the twilight zone. She hadn't ended up with one, but *two* incredible men. And they were werewolves. She had to be dreaming. But two hot looks, one from each, and she knew at least some of it was true.

She hadn't got much from the women she'd ended up with—Summer, Chloe, Meg, Tara, and Mary. They'd been chatty and welcoming as Summer showed her around the house, but it was obvious there were things being intentionally left unsaid.

Like why Jackson thought she wasn't safe staying with the twins? Who was the man that had been attacked? What exactly were rogues anyway? Cain had mentioned them earlier, but she hadn't asked, had been afraid to. Now, she hated that ignorance, realizing this was not only a very different world but a dangerous one, too.

She didn't know what to make of the women who'd all introduced themselves as being someone's mate. She took it to be their version of marriage, but the way it was presented disturbed Delilah. Had they done that to help her identify the couples in the house or was there more to it? A cultural aspect she wasn't getting? It was like they belonged to their men, and she wondered if that was a two-way street. She couldn't handle it if it wasn't.

She'd been carefully but deftly questioned about Cain and Abel and tried to be noncommittal, neutral in her answers. She didn't want anyone to think she was complaining about them, but she wasn't ready to think about that relationship, much less discuss it, with a bunch of people she didn't know. Not even Chloe, who was the closest friend she'd ever had and who'd given her a wounded look when she'd stonewalled their questions.

So, when Abel approached and pulled her into his arms, she accepted the embrace, hid her face in his chest, and took the strength he offered. She was so far out of her depth here, she didn't know how to find her footing, and she welcomed his comfort.

"You okay, baby?" he whispered close to her ear. She just shook her head. How could she answer that? She'd come here for a job. What she got was something else entirely. She needed time and space to regroup, and she got a sinking feeling in her gut she wasn't going to get either.

Abel lifted her chin and stared into her eyes for a full minute. She could get lost there and wanted to kick herself. They were a big part of her confusion. She couldn't afford to get lost in one of them.

“After lunch, we’ll head home.”

What did he see in her gaze that brought on that decision? She felt bad. She was usually so together, and she didn’t want the fact she was off balance affecting him negatively. He obviously had a job to do here, but she didn’t say no, didn’t prod for any answers. Didn’t think it was a good idea in a crowd of people she didn’t know and couldn’t have framed the questions anyway, since she went from Abel’s arms right into Cain’s. Cain wasn’t as circumspect as his brother, and he kissed her, full and hard, right in front of everyone.

No one noticed, but she was still thankful he had some control because she was more than willing to lose herself in the mysteries of his mouth, in the way his lips commanded hers. He kept it short, but when he lifted his head, he didn’t let her go, keeping her at his side while Abel filled three plates and led them to chairs at the long table in the dining room next door.

She sat and picked at her food. The last thing she was interested in was eating. She wanted answers, wanted to understand this strange new world she found herself in. Wanted to know what the hell that gathering was about earlier and the tension that hung heavy in the house. The tension that clung to Cain and Abel.

There was a lot going on here that was unsaid, and it pissed her off to be kept in the dark. She’d been tempted to blurt out *stop it, I know they’re werewolves*, on the tour, but had bit her tongue. If it had been just her and Chloe, she would have said something, would have peppered her with questions, but she didn’t know any of these other women. They seemed nice enough, but she’d learned appearances could be deceiving. And weren’t Cain and Abel a prime example of that?

“You need to eat, baby.”

She smiled, knowing it was Abel, based on the endearment, before she looked up. Lifting the fork, she took a bite of the chicken salad and glanced around the table. The kitchen had been set up buffet style, and the other couples were drifting in and out.

The other twins she’d met earlier came in and sat a few chairs down. They were the only men in the two rooms that didn’t have a woman with them. *Mate*, she reminded herself. They made her nervous. Tall, thickly muscled, with cold eyes and closed faces.

Another couple came in and sat across from them. She looked up and found herself pinned under Trey’s gaze. Cain squeezed her hand, feeding her strength and support. Good thing, too, because while the twins scared her a little, this one made the hair on the back of her neck stand on end. He was terrifying. How did Tara deal with that? She broke the gaze and looked at his mate. To be fair, she didn’t look the least bit cowed by him.

Abel nudged her with his elbow, and she took another bite of the salad, chewing to hide her smile. They were such mother hens. She sent them the mental image and struggled to hide her laugh when Cain choked.

He turned hot eyes on her, a slight twist of his lips. “You’ll pay for that one later, sweetheart.”

The image that filled her mind was out of her deepest fantasies. She was tied up, and a whip cracked the air. She sucked in a ragged breath, glaring when she saw them grinning at each other, and reversed the vision.

“That could go both ways,” she said sweetly.

“You know, I think I’m missing most of this conversation,” Trey said.

“You are,” Tara answered. “They’re telepaths. All three of them. I’d expect that from the twins. Bit of a shock in a human woman, though.”

“Cool. I could use a talent like that.”

Tara shuddered. “I doubt you’d want it. Ask Meg.”

He frowned. “True.”

“Ask Meg what?” The woman in question sat down next to Tara, who nodded at Delilah, Cain, and Abel. Darius took the chair next to Meg. *Her mate*, Delilah reminded herself.

“Telepaths. Trey thought it might be a fun talent to have.”

Meg snorted. “Not really.” She cocked her head and looked at Delilah. “I’ve never met another reader.”

Delilah couldn’t believe the turn the conversation had taken and was shocked to her toes. She’d always considered herself, her abilities, freakish, but the others were speaking of them like they were an every day occurrence. Well, maybe not everyday, but not so unusual. She didn’t feel any surprise from the twins, and she realized Meg was waiting for some response.

She shook her head. “I’ve never been able to read people before. It was always animals I could connect with.”

Trey grinned, and Darius laughed, tipping his tea glass at her. “We’re not exactly human.”

“Um, yeah. There is that.”

She wasn’t sure if she was ready to face that, yet, and was surprised someone had brought it up. Setting her fork down, she stopped pretending to eat and waited for Cain and Abel to finish. She needed to go back to their house and knew there was no way they’d let her go alone. She wondered if there was a way to go back to pretending to be normal.

“The rest of us aren’t either, exactly, you know,” Meg said, her gaze sharp, assessing. “Well, my cousins and I. And you.”

She started. Had she been so distracted she’d missed part of the conversation? “Aren’t what?”

“Normal.”

Tara grinned, lifting her glass to the other woman. “Normal is overrated.”

“Amen to that.” She turned back to Delilah. “Did anyone tell you we’re cousins? Me, Tara, and Summer?”

“No.”

“Ahh. Well, our grandmother was a witch. We inherited some of her talents. I’m the reader. Tara is wonderful with spells, and Summer dreams.”

Delilah cocked an eyebrow. She didn’t have to voice the question. Meg shrugged one shoulder. “The future. Sometimes the past. You can’t exactly direct that kind of thing.”

“And you, my dear,” Tara said, “will fit right in with the rest of us completely normal witches.”

“I’m not a witch.”

“Who’s to say your grandmother wasn’t?” Abel asked, and she realized he knew her story, knew much more about her than she knew about him.

That disturbed her, and she felt like the balance in this new relationship leaned much farther to their benefit than hers. What did she know about them really? Aware there were several people at the table who could apparently read her thoughts, she tried to control them, tried to wall up her emotions. No one gave her any looks or called her on her concerns, so maybe she was successful.

“Delilah,” Cain said softly. “Don’t cut us out like that.”

It did work, but she saw the hurt flash through his eyes, and she knew she couldn’t keep it up. She sighed. “Could we get out of here?”

“Yeah.”

He gathered their plates, and Abel took her elbow, helping her up. He led her through the kitchen and out the back door. When they were away from the house, she breathed easier and stopped, squatting down to scoop up a handful of snow. She compressed it into a ball then crumbled it, watching it fall to the ground through her fingers. Someone cleared his throat, and she looked up to see them watching her with odd expressions.

“What?”

“You act like you’ve never snow before.”

She grinned, stood, and dusted her hands off on her pants. “I haven’t.”

They exchanged a grin. “That’s a real shame, wouldn’t you say Cain?”

“Definitely.”

Something in that look, in their light-hearted attitudes, warned her, and she held her hands up and backed away.

“Oh, no.”

“Oh, yes,” they said in unison as they bent over at the same time, scooped up handfuls of snow, and balled them together. She was quick to copy them and launched the first ball, hitting Abel square in the chest. He looked down and the white clumps falling off the front of his coat. When he met her gaze, it was with a mixture of disbelief and promise of retaliation. She laughed and took off running down the

path, barely dodging three balls that zoomed by her.

She didn't hear footsteps behind her and hoped they were giving her a head start. She grinned. No way. They would try to outflank her. She needed a plan, and a place from which *she* could ambush *them*.

She rounded a corner in the path and ducked behind a tree long enough to form several balls. Cradling them in the crook of her left arm, she readied her right for throwing. She could see the house in the distance and thought she saw a flash of movement in the trees to her right. One of the twins. She'd have to make a run for the house.

Crouched low, she took off running, trying to watch the forest on both sides. She sensed Cain before she saw him, threw on instinct, and got lucky. When he broke through the trees a few feet behind her, his hair was dripping snow. She laughed, thrilled at the impromptu game, and kept running, pumping her legs faster, glad it was something she'd done for years for fun.

She broke through the tree line into the clearing around the house and tried to run backwards to throw snowballs at Cain. He stopped, laughing, and held his hands up in surrender. Too late, she wondered where Abel was.

She squealed when he grabbed her from behind. She wormed her way out of the embrace, but he hooked his foot around her ankles, crushing her under him as they both fell on the soft snow. Her arms were free, and she stuffed two handfuls of snow down the back of his coat. He yelped, stood up, and jumped around to dislodge it. She should have used the opportunity to escape, but she was laughing too hard and winded from the run in colder, higher altitude air than she was unaccustomed to. She lay back in the snow and relaxed, watching her breath puff before her face.

"And here we thought you boys might have finally grown up."

The voice was deep, masculine, joking, and definitely not Cain's or Abel's. She jerked into a sitting position, saw two men leaning against the porch railing, and felt her eyes widen. More twins? Abel held out his hand, pulling her to her feet, while Cain came into the yard. He walked up the stairs and nodded at both men.

"Dad. Pop. Y'all are early."

"Your mom was anxious to get here." The one who spoke shrugged, but the pause in the conversation was short.

"Well, boys, are you going to let us have a look at her?" the other asked.

They both looked at Delilah, and she fought the urge to squirm, feeling like she was being measured. Judged.

"Don't," Abel whispered to her before walking forward, tugging her along with him. On the porch, he let her stop and stand sandwiched between him and Cain.

"Delilah, meet our fathers. We call them Dad and Pop to keep them straight."

She'd been having such a fun time, and here she was right back into the twilight zone. She looked at them both, trying to figure out how she was going to keep them straight, if she'd even be around long to need to keep them straight.

They looked like their sons. And wasn't that a weird thought? She wondered which was the biological father but quickly buried the thought before Cain or Abel could pick it out of her head. She was certain no one in this crowd would consider it polite to ask. Anyway, how to tell them apart? They looked identical. Same build, same features, same eyes. Both bald. She wondered if Cain and Abel would go bald some day?

"Bite your tongue, woman."

Cain looked incredulous as he lifted a hand to shove his hair out of his face, while Abel laughed. She grinned and shrugged. Who knew he was vain about his hair? His fathers saved him from her teasing.

"Delilah. It's wonderful to meet you. I'm Zach." He stepped forward and kissed her cheek. She was so surprised, she almost missed the other one.

"And I'm Steve. Welcome to the family."

Family. She blinked back a rush of tears and uncertainty. She'd never had a family, and Steve's words told her a lot of about the twin's intentions. She just wasn't sure if she could deal with it.

"Dad." Cain's voice was full of warning. Or maybe not. Maybe that wasn't their intention at all.

"What?" Zack asked, his gaze disapproving. "You mean to tell us our boys are dallying?"

Cain was going to take exception to that, she felt it, sensed it as he shifted his stance and turned to more fully face the older men. She held her breath. She did not want to get dragged into the middle of a family argument. Or worse, be the cause of one. Thankfully, they were all interrupted when a woman stepped out the kitchen door on the other end of the porch.

"Y'all let her come inside. Good grief, she's so cold she's shivering." She gave the older men a scolding glare, and they looked contrite.

But Delilah didn't correct her. It wasn't the cold that made her tremble. It was the uncertainty. She didn't know where she fit in here, and she just wanted to escape. She shivered yes, but with the urge to run.

"Now way," Cain said.

"Forget it, Delilah," Abel added.

She huffed, broke free of their grasps, and went into the house through the French doors in front of them rather than walk down to the kitchen door. It was bad enough she wasn't sure what was going on or how she really felt about what she suspected. Why did she have to end up with two men who couldn't seem to stay out of her head? She hurried through the living room and up the stairs to the bedroom they'd assigned her, not sure if she was relieved or disappointed when no one followed.

\* \* \* \* \*



“Shit.”

Abel rubbed a hand over his head, watching Delilah run up the stairs, while Cain ushered their fathers into the kitchen.

“Yeah,” Cain answered softly even though they both knew their words would be overheard, the situation reported to their mother and no doubt dissected at length.

Before he could think about that, though, and how to deal with it, his mother wrapped her arms around him. “Abel. Did they run her off?”

“Yeah, Mom.” He glared at his fathers. Delilah was skittish enough without getting ambushed by his family. He fought back the urge to scowl some more and smiled at his mother. She wasn’t the cause of his current problems, didn’t deserve the brunt of his anger and frustration.

He leveled a glare at Dad. “Y’all weren’t supposed to be here until late tonight. And don’t try blaming it on Mom.”

Dad shrugged, sheepish. “You told us you’d found your mate. You can’t blame us for getting here ASAP.”

“She doesn’t seem very friendly.” Pop’s scowl was his usual default expression, but for the first time it irritated Abel.

“Lay off, Pop,” Cain said. “She’s new to this, and there are things she doesn’t understand, yet. She’s overwhelmed.”

“Which is to be expected.” Leaning back against the counter, his mother glared at her mates. “And better than y’all were. Talk about being thrown to the wolves.”

Both of the older men winced at her tone, and neither would meet her gaze. Abel cocked an eyebrow. Interesting. He’d never had the impression their coming together had been anything but smooth. Obviously, he was wrong. Before he could pursue it, Dad changed the subject and asked what all the excitement up at the big house was about.

Both fathers’ gazes turned hard as he explained the situation with the rogue. It was something he wasn’t accustomed to seeing in them and reminded him that they were both Hunters when they met his mother. Pop had been Brant’s Enforcer before his mother insisted he retire.

That was a story he was familiar with. A rogue they’d been Hunting had gone after his mother, and the twins had been just in time to save her. He glanced over, wondering how she’d taken the news and saw her eyes were wary, pinched around the corners. He sighed, but his resolve hardened. He didn’t ever want to see that look on Delilah’s face. Pop pulled her into his arms and met Abel’s gaze over her head. The communication was silent but unmistakable. *Find the rogue and take him out.*

After a moment, Mom straightened and faced her sons again. “We’re staying with Rebecca and Nolan tonight, but we’ll be over early tomorrow. You need to explain things to your mate before the family descends on her, boys.”

He heard a gasp and whirled around to see Delilah in the open doorway leading from the living room.

How long had she been standing there? She seemed confused as she stepped into the kitchen, but the look she gave him was all irritation.

“I hope you’re not planning on leaving on my account. I’d feel awful if you left because of me, especially at Christmastime.” She moistened her lips before continuing, and his entire body clenched at the sight of her tongue darting out over her lips. “I’m sure Jackson or Chloe can find me a room somewhere.”

He and Cain moved at the same time. His brother’s growl was low, a warning more than menace, and they crowded her against the table.

“You’re not going anywhere, Delilah,” Abel said with a matching growl.

She surprised him, laying her palms flat against both their chests and shoving them back. She set her fists on her hips, her eyes narrowed and her lips pressed in a thin line. He wanted to trace them until she let him in, went weak and boneless in his arms. But that would only, could only, end one way, so he held himself in check. There was a lot he wanted to share with his family, but giving them a show was not one of those things.

“If you expect me to sit quietly by while your mother talks about going to stay somewhere else, you’ve got the wrong girl, Abel.”

He couldn’t hold in the grin that tugged at the corners of his mouth. He definitely had the *right* girl, and she continued to surprise him. She’d been shocked earlier to meet his fathers, but she’d bounced back quickly, feisty and determined to make the best of things. He lifted a hand to cup the side of her face, and she turned into it. Just a little. Just enough to make his heart soar.

“Can I explain it when we don’t have an audience?”

Everyone but his mother would easily catch the words, but he kept his tone soft, gentle, for Delilah’s benefit. Her eyes flashed, and he smelled her rush of arousal at the mention of being alone. And something else. Something that teased his senses. Woke up his wolf. He took a deeper breath. Her scent was richer, headier. Jerking his head up, he met Cain’s gaze.

She was in heat, though she probably wouldn’t appreciate having it described that way. He reached out, laying his hand over her belly. He knew it was a lousy thing to do, but he had every intention of impregnating her, filling her with his seed.

If she were pregnant, she wouldn’t be able to turn away from them, would she? He didn’t think so. He thought he knew her well enough to know she’d give them the time to convince her she belonged with them, to them. The deception would piss her off, but he dismissed it. And really, he just wanted to see her swollen with his children, twin boys in the tradition of his family. Or Cain’s children. It didn’t really matter. They were a unit, the three of them. He’d justify it any way he had to and damn the consequences.

“What? What is it?” Her brows drew close together in confusion.

He leaned forward, kissed her forehead, and shook his head. “Nothing.”

Someone cleared a throat behind him, and he turned his head to see his mother gathering her things. She smiled at him, at all of them, and it was a smile full of hope and optimism. The smile he was used to seeing from her. She was a glass half full kind of person. She moved forward, and he stepped out of the

way.

Smiling, she took Delilah's hand in her own, cradling it. "Don't worry, honey. I had already planned to stay at my brother's house tonight. You'll meet him and his mate later. And tomorrow, you're getting invaded. The three of us and our younger son and daughter." She winked. "Enjoy the peace and quiet while it lasts."

She hugged Abel and Cain, but stopped Delilah again before she left. "Don't start breakfast without me, and don't let the boys do it." She gave a fake shudder then winked again. "I swear I taught them better, but if they know someone else is around who can cook they'll mess it up on purpose."

And then she was gone, dragging Dad and Pop with her. Abel turned to Delilah. He wanted in *her now*. But he wanted her in a bed, and he wanted to claim her, bite her, and bind her to him. He'd like to give her more time, but there was no way his wolf would wait. Plus, he wasn't giving Jackson any excuse to try to remove her from their house. His wolf snarled its outrage at the thought. No way in hell.

By unspoken agreement, he and Cain led her out of the kitchen, up the stairs, and down the long hall to the master bedroom. He looked around with satisfaction. She'd be moving in here before the day was out.

"Someone want to explain to me exactly what the hell is going on?"

"Take your clothes off, Delilah," Cain said. He was already stripping, and Abel was quick was to jerk his off, too.

Anger flashed in her eyes. "That isn't explaining."

"We'll explain. After we fuck you." Cain tilted his head back, nostrils flaring as he took in her scent. Abel felt his brother's control slip. "You want it as much as we do. And, Delilah, that's about all the defiance I can take from you right now. Remove your clothes. *Now*."

At the order, her arousal flooded his senses, her scent intensifying, and the mental barriers she'd put up against them slipped. Her fingers reluctantly brushed to the bottom of her sweater and gripped it. Abel waited patiently for her to go on. Cain prowled, and Able used the mental connection between them to try to convince his brother to give her a minute to catch up with them. She was stubborn and independent. Her capitulation would be all the sweeter if she came to them totally unprovoked. When she realized she wanted to give over control to them. He wasn't stupid enough to believe it would extend outside the bedroom, but he had high hopes for compliance here.

## Chapter Six

Delilah clung to the bottom of her sweater as she fought an internal war, a war she suspected she was going to lose. She hated to be ordered around, hated to follow direction, but she was trembling as she fought off the need to submit to Cain's demands. She was sure that if she accepted them here, he would try to force them in the rest of her life. That he'd try to take her over. Abel was more easygoing. She looked at him, the raw tenseness of emotion etched in his face. Or maybe not. Maybe they weren't so different after all. Sighing, she pulled the sweater up and swept it over her head.

Cain was right. She did want this as much as they did. She'd just have to figure out a way to not get too attached in the process. She didn't get the impression they'd ever been the long-term commitment types. Not that she was sure that would work with three people, but she had a little more hope in that direction after meeting his parents. She pushed the feeling away. No. She wouldn't get hopeful. She'd take what they offered, see where it went, but optimism about a future with them was setting herself up for heartache. But then there was no time for thinking when Cain took her hand and led her to the huge bed.

"This is our room."

She frowned. Surely two grown brothers didn't share a room.

Cain snorted. "No. *Ours*. We'll move your things in here later."

Her heart skipped a beat. That sure sounded long term to her. But what about Abel? She turned to meet his gaze. He was smiling.

"Yes, the three of us. And yes, it's a new arrangement for us, too."

"And now, sweetheart," Cain said, nibbling her neck, "it's time to make it permanent."

Abel bent his head to the other side of her nape, and she felt the connection between the three of them intensify as they dropped the shields between their minds and hers. Her body hummed with awareness, her pussy filling with cream as they bit and sucked at her tender flesh. The bites grew harder, and she gasped when she felt their teeth puncture her skin. It should have hurt, but her body was so keyed up, ready for a little pain and roughness, that it was just a sting quickly soothed away by their lapping tongues.

They lifted their heads at the same time and crowded even closer to her, but she swore she still felt their teeth in her skin. She lifted her hands to cover the small wounds, trying to remember what Cain had said earlier about some bites being different.

Abel heaved a huge sigh, as if a great weight had been lifted from his shoulders. He nudged her backwards, watching as she fell across the bed. Cain moved behind her, arranging her so she lay in the center.

“Now you’re ours. Forever. There is no undoing the binding,” Abel whispered.

She wanted to ask what he meant by that, but he moved between her legs, lifting them over his shoulders. His mouth hovered over her pussy, and he blew a hot breath over her. She moaned, rolling her head against the pillow and thrusting her hips up. She’d ask later. Now she was dying to feel his mouth on her, his cock in her.

But he didn’t touch her and in seconds she found out why when Cain tied a scarf around her head, covering her eyes and blinding her. Then he grabbed her wrists, wrapped something around them tightly, and pulled her arms high over her head. The bindings pulled taut, and she struggled against them, trying to lower her arms. Whimpering, she realized he’d secured her to the bedpost. She didn’t like the loss of control.

He shifted, and she felt his chest against her side. His weight pressed over her, and he whispered. “Shh, sweetheart. Let us take care of you. Let us show you what it means to have two werewolf mates.”

His lips closed over her nipple, his teeth tugging at the ring through it. She groaned, trying to thrust up into his mouth, but they held her down too firmly. She couldn’t move, couldn’t urge them on with her body. They’d taken away her ability to participate, to encourage, and she started to relax when she remembered she’d always longed for this kind of freedom.

Cain’s fingers closed over her other nipple, pinching a little, tugging, and she felt her mind beginning to fragment. God, could she come from him playing with her breasts? Was that all it took?

She didn’t have time to wonder because Abel went to work then, his tongue beginning a lazy exploration of her pussy. He spread the lips with his hand and stroked the area around her hole with his tongue. Barely brushed over her clit. She choked back a sob. *Sheneeded*. Was now desperate to come. He moved one finger into her channel, and she convulsed around it, but he kept the rhythm slow, measured. When he withdrew, tears leak from the corners of her eyes.

The finger returned, this time exploring her butt. He teased the rim, and she held her breath. It had been years since she’d had anal sex, and she wondered if one of them would want to try it. He withdrew, and she heard a squirting sound, like something being expressed from a tube of liquid. She didn’t have to keep wondering. His finger returned to her ass, this time edging inside. Slowly, cautiously. As if he was afraid of her reaction. While he worked his way in, his tongue returned to explore her cunt, this time paying more attention to her clit. He suckled the hard nub and started a steady in-and-out rhythm in her ass. It only took a couple of strokes before she was coming, keening in the silent room.

It took a few minutes for the shudders to subside before her mind came back together. She realized several things at once. Her hands were free. Her ass felt fuller, stretched, and the rhythm that had brought on her orgasm had slowed but was still steady. She sighed. He’d added another finger, was working the muscles looser. One of them did intend to fuck her ass.

“Have you ever had anyone here?”

“Yes,” she whispered, and Cain growled, nipping one of her nipples hard enough to make her yelp. So he didn’t like the fact none of her was virgin? There wasn’t much she could do about the past. Suddenly they both moved, and the blindfold was gone. She squinted against the glare coming through the window.

Abel lay down next to her, withdrawing his fingers from her ass and pulling her over to straddle him. He

thrust his cock into her pussy and held her down, still. She could feel him pulse inside her, sighed, and closed her eyes. *Perfect*. She didn't see Cain move, but she felt him behind her. His hands roamed her back, pushing her down so she lay pressed against Abel. He caressed her ass, squeezing her, and then she heard the squeaky tube again. Her heart lodged in her throat, and he leaned over to speak softly in her ear.

“And what about both holes at once? Is that something we at least get to be first at?”

She groaned. Oh, God. One of her greatest fantasies.

“No,” she whispered. “Never.”

He growled. “Good.”

His fingers probed her ass, the wet slickness of the lube announcing his attention. Holding her breath, she concentrated on Abel's face. His jaw was clenched hard, and she felt his determination to hold still. She gripped his shoulders when she felt Cain's cock enter her. He was careful to go slow, his progress gentle but insistent. He rocked in and out several times before he was all the way in, and she bit her bottom lip to keep from screaming.

She wasn't sure if it was pain or pleasure that threatened to escape in the cry. She felt too full, bursting with cock and wondering if the pressure would tear her apart. Then they began to move, working in tandem, one thrusting in while the other slid out. It was heaven and hell. Exquisite torture. And in seconds she was screaming, unable to hold the pain or pleasure at bay. It was the strongest orgasm she'd ever had, and she knew they'd come with her, as soon as her overtaxed body had clamped around theirs. She shook as they both withdrew from her body, pulling her down to lie on the mattress between them.

Wrung out and replete, her body still humming, she stared at the ceiling and waited for her mind to come back together. She swore she still felt them in her, touching and caressing her. Their minds were wide open, and she felt their satisfaction, their triumph. What the hell was going on here? Something stirred in her memory, and her heart skittered. She wasn't sure if it was alarm rising or that dark, needy part of herself she'd long hidden away. She sat up, looking back and forth between the two of them.

“What did you mean forever?”

Sighing, Abel rose, propping himself up on one elbow and reaching with the other arm to tug her back down. Cain watched, his mental shields mostly back in place. She got a sense of determined watchfulness from him and sensed a crouching beast just beyond her ability to fully see.

“There are enzymes in our saliva that when mixed with your blood connects us. Bind us.”

“*Bindus?*”

Okay, that was definitely alarm she was feeling. She wanted to get to know them, explore the sexuality that raged between the three of them. But binding sounded so... against her will. Her hands went to the marks on her neck. They tingled. As if they were alive—a living piece of Cain and Abel added to her flesh. Had she really thought she wanted a man of her own? Had she really made that stupid Christmas wish? If they were right, this couldn't be undone. Whether she liked them or not, loved them or hated them. And if she did love them... Oh, God. What if they never loved her back? What if it was only chemistry that held them to her? She'd never forgive them for it. Never forgive herself for letting them close enough to destroy the happiness of three people. All for what? Lust? The sexual urges she couldn't

indulge anywhere else?

While she thought, Cain had gotten up and rushed through the shower. He came back to bed, shoved wet hair out of his eyes, and watched her as carefully as Abel did on her other side. Delilah's chest constricted as she returned his gaze. That quiet watchfulness, the air of command, made her toes curl and her heart thump. She squeezed her eyes shut, knowing she was in real trouble. It wasn't a matter of could she love him—*them*—only of matter of how long it took and how hard she fell. The animal awareness that resided deep within her that had kept her alone and lonely and safe for years clamored for escape.

"You have to undo it," she whispered in desperation. Desperate to flee. Desperate to avoid heartache.

"No." Cain growled, rolling over on top of her.

She was slick from the earlier orgasms, from Abel's cum, and Cain's aggressive action only made her wetter. He entered her in one thrust, with no preamble, not bothering to see if she was ready to accept his body but seeming to understand it would welcome him anyway. She wanted to resist, but her body betrayed her. She felt Cain's desire for her to stay still, to accept him. Even if she'd found the will to push him away, his gaze held her in place. Dark and possessive, yet showing a vulnerability she'd never guessed him capable of. Something in her reached out, refusing to deny him whatever succor it was he sought.

"Mine."

He leaned over to once again nibble at the spot on her neck he'd marked earlier, and her body was catapulted into another orgasm. She screamed at the intensity as he powered through the convulsions of her womb. It was as if her body had decided to force him over, too, and then wring every last drop from him. When he did come, it was with a low snarl, not the roar she expected.

"*Mine*," he whispered again, withdrawing from her body and flopping to the bed beside her.

"Ours," Abel added not giving her any rest.

He rolled her over, pulled her hips up so she was on knees and elbows. He plunged into her mind at the same time he plunged into her body. She felt everything the wolf felt. The need to possess. The need to dominate. The need to protect. And she realized she would never be able to make herself leave, would never be able to protect her heart.

His fingers found her clit, alternating between soft strokes and hard pulls and then, unbelievably, she was coming again. When the trembles subsided, he released her, and she fell flat on her face against the mattress. She had one thought before oblivion took her. *They're going to kill me. I'll never survive the sex.*

\* \* \* \* \*

The next morning, Abel dragged himself from the bed. He didn't want to leave Delilah's warm body, but somewhere in the house his cell phone was ringing. Damn his werewolf ears anyway. He got up as quietly as possible, just shook his head at Cain's questioning look, and pulled on his jeans. He slipped out of the



room without waking his mate. His exhausted mate. He winced. They might have tried to start out gentle but sure as hell hadn't ended up that way. After a day and night of two insatiable werewolves, it was a miracle she hadn't run screaming from the house.

Downstairs he found the phone sitting on an end table in the living room. The window said he had voice mail, and he flipped it open, pushing the button that would play messages. One was from his younger brother saying something about his plane being early, but Abel skipped over the rest of it. The other two were from Billy, demanding to know where the fuck his sorry ass was.

He arched his eyebrows, irritation rising. Unusual for their unflappable Beta to lose his cool or his manners, especially when he knew Abel was busy. Not to mention the holiday season. He reminded himself that Billy had once been a good friend, that they'd drifted over the years and it was Billy's mate who brought Delilah to them. So maybe he could cut the were a little slack.

He went back upstairs to finish dressing. He heard Cain's even breathing and knew he'd gone back to sleep wrapped around their mate, and he slipped into his old room to find clothes that hadn't yet been moved. Clad in a sweater and his spare boots in mere seconds, he was out the door, hurrying to get back to the big house and find out what the damned rush was.

An hour later, the phone woke Cain. He would have ignored it but was afraid it would wake Delilah. Grumbling, he lurched from the bed and hurried to pick it up. He didn't bother to look at the caller ID.

"What?"

"Nice to talk to you, too, brother."

Cain had to smile at Aidan's smooth, slightly sarcastic voice. He glanced over his shoulder at Delilah who still lay in a deep sleep, and his grin broadened. He couldn't wait until the day Aidan met his mate. He had a feeling whoever she was would give him hell.

"It's not really a great time for chatting, little brother."

"Well, you're stuck with me. I caught an earlier flight and no one else is answering their phone. So you won the lottery. You get to pick me up."

He was *not* getting stuck with baby-sitting duty. But he couldn't leave his brother stranded either. Fuck.

"All right. Someone will be there as soon as I can round them up."

He didn't wait for a response, just hung up the phone and dialed. He growled his frustration when there was no answer and called Abel. He answered on the second ring.

"Hey."

"Where the fuck did you run off to? Aidan is at the airport. One of us has to go get him."

"Well, go." His brother was distracted. His tone had a definite *why the fuck are you bothering me with this* edge.

Cain actually cringed when he answered. "I don't want to wake Delilah up. Can you get back to the house?"

He hated to admit even to himself why her comfort was so important to him. Because he knew he couldn't live without her. Knew he already loved her. And he knew when she awoke, she'd still be thinking about leaving them. His hand itched to stroke her belly, but he held himself back, took a deep breath. Already her scent had altered, a sweetness added to the rich spice that had damn near driven them crazy earlier.

She was pregnant. He was pleased and disturbed. Thrilled that she carried their child, that there was now one more tie between the three of them, but worried about how she'd react when she discovered their deception. They could prevent pregnancy the same way humans did. They'd just chosen not to.

Abel sighed, and Cain felt the same conflicted emotions from his brother. "Why can't the dads go?"

"No answer." He'd tried calling them before his brother.

"You're gonna have to take her with you then."

There was a long pause while he thought it over. He really didn't want to wake her up. They'd worn her to exhaustion the previous afternoon and then kept her up half the night. Then there were the babies to consider. Giving into temptation, he laid his palm over her stomach. He'd have to talk to Dad, find out if it was possible to be certain of pregnancy so early. He felt his wolf rise, a long satisfied stretch, and inhaled deeply. No. He was right. Her scent continued to alter, to grow sweeter, more alluring. If this was normal, he'd have to make sure she stayed pregnant.

"It worked," he said, sharing the news with his brother in images, feelings. He heard Abel take a ragged breath, felt his heart race.

"She needs her rest then."

"She does." But he couldn't keep himself from leaning over her, nibbling her neck. She moaned in her sleep and rolled to her side, turning into his touch. He backed off, reluctant to rouse her.

"Go get Aidan. Lock the house, and let her sleep."

Cain's wolf growled, reluctant to leave its mate unguarded.

"The roads are clear, Cain. It shouldn't take more than thirty minutes to get him. She knows not to leave house without us, and I'll feel it if she needs me. I can be there in less than two minutes if I change. Hell, she'll probably still be in bed when you get back."

Cain hated the idea but knew there was no good reason not to follow it. The house was only half a mile from the Alpha's home. Everyone knew it and knew who the woman who lived in it belonged to. There was the rogue, but whoever he was, he'd never attacked during the day, and never a mate. He always went after werewolves. Cain wasn't concerned for his safety or Abel's and knew Delilah would be safe. So why did he feel uneasy about leaving her? Was it simply the fear she'd wake up and try to leave? Or something more?

"All right. But I'd feel a lot better if you were here, or just went and picked him up yourself."

He had a vision of Abel gnashing his teeth, heard a door shut in the background and silence as Abel moved into a room by himself.

“Look, Cain. I know how you feel, but you know as well as I do that at some point we’re going to have to give her some freedom. A little bit of space. We can’t be with her 24/7.”

Like hell he couldn’t.

“And if you could, you’d drive her crazy. She’s not gonna put up with total control, and if you’re honest, you’ll admit you don’t want that anyway. She has to be here of her own free will.”

Just like that, Abel got to the root of his worry. Cain sighed, already getting dressed. His brother was right. He wanted—needed—Delilah to stay because she wanted to be with them, not because the bond forced it.

“Shit,” he muttered. In his ear, Abel laughed, but it was a distracted sound. He’d already moved on to pack business, assured Cain would take care of family matters. He closed the phone without saying goodbye, bent to drop a brief light kiss on her lips, and left the room.

Downstairs, he locked all the windows and doors with a sense of unreality riding him hard. He’d grown up in the house but couldn’t remember a time the doors had ever been locked. The unease he’d felt earlier came back when he walked outside. He stared at the house a few minutes before shaking it off and going to the truck. Aidan better appreciate this and keep his wiseass comments to himself.

## Chapter Seven

Delilah sat on the porch, cradling a cup of hot chocolate between her hands, and laughed at the birds’ antics. She didn’t know what they were. Hawks, eagles, some kind of birds of prey at least. They were big and majestic and putting on an aerial show for her, chasing each other, swooping high in the air and low enough to the ground to drag the edge of one wing through the snow. It had begun a game with them to see which could fling the most amount of the wet white stuff in his wake against his pursuer.

Definitely not typical bird behavior. She’d felt drawn outside, and they’d been waiting for her. As she

watched them and relaxed, she became aware of the others animals in the area. Skittering along tree branches, hunched down under trees and bushes. It didn't take long to realize they were drawn to her. Had that always been true and she just hadn't noticed? Or was it a new manifestation of her talent brought out by this place or her forming connection with the twins? Or maybe it was her reluctant acceptance that it was just a cool talent to have and her new willingness to embrace it and not consider herself a freak in the process.

Suddenly silence fell, and the birds disappeared into the treetops. The chattering squirrels warned her someone approached down the path from the big house. Her heart leapt, and she waited to see Cain or Abel come around the bend. She didn't know how late she'd slept and had been surprised to wake up alone. She also couldn't believe how badly she wanted to see them. Was that the bond speaking or something else?

She concealed her surprise when the figure came into view. Not her twins. Not anyone she knew. But he had that combined animal-human vibe she'd started to identify as werewolf, and he'd presumably come from the big house. He walked into the yard and over to the porch. She repressed a shiver when he smiled at her. There was something about him that made her instincts scream, but she'd had that feeling around the other werewolves yesterday morning. It was probably nothing.

"You must be Delilah."

He was on the porch in two big leaps. Her stomach knotted. Or maybe that feeling was something after all. She tried to remember what she'd heard about the rogue as she set her cup on the porch rail and stood. She wanted to go inside and bar the door behind her, but he blocked it, grinning. The birds called to her, and she realized the forest may have gone quiet, but none of the wildlife had left. They urged her to flee, to get away from the stranger. Told her they'd help her escape.

The kitchen door had been locked when she came outside, and she bet the twins had locked all the other doors, too. The house was not an option. The birds were flying again, circling high over the yard. They implored her to run, demanded she get off the porch where they couldn't help her. They wanted the stranger in the yard where he'd be at the mercy of their talons and sharp beaks. She wasn't sure how much damage they could really do to a werewolf, but maybe they would buy her enough time to get to Jackson's or for Abel or Cain to get to her.

She gritted her teeth. She should have reached for them right away, but it hadn't occurred to her. She tried now, wondering if their connection worked over so much distance. She immediately felt Abel, his warmth surrounding her, him filling her, and his alarm at the situation. She sensed him moving, running through the house stripping his clothes off as he did. Her relief was swift but short lived as she saw the man gather himself, his muscles bunched in preparation. She didn't wait to see what he'd do. With a quick warning flung to the birds, she jumped off the porch and took off into the woods. She realized her mistake right away; she should have gone for the winding path to meet Abel.

Behind her, the yard filled with screaming; the outraged calls of the birds, and the man's reaction to their attack. She wanted to know how they were doing but didn't dare slow enough to look back. The animals sent her images as she ran. The man turning, snarling back at the birds, and taking off after her. Her heart thundered in her chest, and she forced herself to run faster over the unfamiliar terrain, tried to reach Abel and show him where she was. She felt Cain through the connection, too, and knew he was also running through the woods to her.

Someone directed her to a deer path. She had no idea if it was Cain or Abel or one of the smaller animals following her, but when she saw it, she swung onto it. It was an easier run, flattened by years of

use, but narrow. There was another vision, and she knew there were boulders up ahead. Huge rocks with cracks and crevices in them, places big enough to hide a small woman. She realized then the vision was from one of the animals. Instinct told her Cain and Abel wouldn't lead her to a place like that. Anywhere she could hide, the wolf could follow. And even if she managed a way, he could sniff her out.

Too late. She saw the rocky area ahead and was forced to slow her run over the new terrain. The wolf slowed as well, and the birds renewed their attack. She breathed easier when Cain entered her mind. He was close, and he wanted her to climb the boulders to buy another few seconds.

She heard them before she saw them. Not just Cain and Abel, but many wolves moving through the forest. The one under attack either didn't notice or didn't care. He still growled at the birds, snapping his teeth and swiping at them with vicious claws. Two white wolves barreled into the small clearing, and the birds swung out of the way, finding perches in the trees and scattered around her on the rocks. She moved over so one could land next to her. He was injured and lifted his wing so she could see the long scrape on its underside. She crooned softly to him, thanking him for coming to her aid, while the two white wolves on the ground circled the big black wolf that had chased her through the woods.

The arrival of others barely registered. Her gaze was riveted on the twins as they attacked. It was short and brutal. Cain and Abel gave no quarter, and within seconds the black wolf lay on the ground between them, chest still, neck snapped. She'd heard the crunch as one of them bit down and hoped the sound didn't haunt her nights for years to come.

Someone she didn't know emerged from the woods, opening a bag and tossing jeans at wolves around the clearing. She held Cain's gaze as he shifted and pulled on the offering. When she judged it safe, she looked around. Anything was better than the anger and reprimand she saw in his eyes. Everyone in the damn house must have followed them. Jackson, Billy, Trey, Darius, Eric. Several others she either didn't know or couldn't name. Most of them left now that the danger had passed.

"You were told not to leave the house." Cain. She turned back to look at him. God, he was good and pissed. He held a hand out. "Come down, Delilah."

She bit her bottom lip. "It might be safer up here."

There were several muffled laughs, and she glared around the crowd. A big black bird cawed at her, asking if they should attack this man, too. She grinned at it, shook her head no, and started to make her way down. At the bottom, she turned, waiting while the injured bird hopped down, then scooped him up into her arms. There had to be a vet somewhere close. She turned and saw several shocked expressions.

"He helped me. I'm not leaving him out here."

Cain and Abel approached cautiously, eyeing the big bird she cradled against her chest.

"Careful, baby. His claws can do a lot of damage."

She looked at the dead wolf, at the gouges that raked its sides and head. "Yeah. Handy to have around, isn't he?"

Jackson's eyes narrowed, and he looked around the clearing. Several animals shrank under his predatory gaze, but they didn't flee. There was wonder in his voice and respect in his eyes when he met her gaze. "They all helped you. The animals."

“They did,” she answered, smiling when the last pieces fell into place. “They led me here. I thought that was a mistake when they did, but I don’t have the bird’s eye view. They knew we’d meet in the middle here.”

The black bird cawed again, a reminder.

“The doctor. Um. Vet. Whatever.”

Cain shrugged and jerked his head toward the bird in her arms. “Sure, but will he let one of us carry him?”

The bird’s reluctance was clear in her mind, and she shook her head. He’d paid for his help, and she wouldn’t upset him further by letting her mates insist.

Cain bristled, and Abel sighed. “We’d really prefer it if one of us carry the bird, Delilah.”

She frowned. What the hell? They didn’t have time for this. She just stepped around them, ready to go on her own. Cain caught her arm.

“You’re pregnant. We’d rather you not be that close to those talons. Explain it to him.”

She stared at him, unable to voice her shock. “I’m not pregnant.” But she had the strangest sensation he was right.

“You are,” Abel insisted. “Probably anyone here can confirm it.”

She should be angry. She was a little and glared the twins. “That’s just not right. No one should know I’m pregnant before me.”

But she couldn’t keep the anger up while excitement and anticipation rose. She’d wished for a family. Looked like got one. She communicated with the bird, tried to show that she was pregnant and that was why they wanted to carry him. Finally, she made herself clear, and it agreed. The transfer was made from her arms into Cain’s, and they started the long walk to the vet’s office in the village.

\* \* \* \* \*

Her heart felt lighter than she ever remembered. Not even the events of the last few hours or Cain’s lecture about going outside—hadn’t happened, yet, but she knew it was coming—darkened her spirits.

The bird, which the twins christened Hawk even though it turned out he was an eagle, was cleaned up and ensconced in the clinic. That had taken all her powers of persuasion, both human and animal. The doctor wanted him in a cage, and he absolutely refused to be penned in. She didn’t blame him. In the end, the vet agreed he could stay loose inside the clinic for a few days while he healed, and Hawk agreed not to attack any people or feed on the local inhabitants, namely the clinic’s pet cats that had free roam of the building. She’d left him perched on a filing cabinet, he and the cats having reached an uneasy kind of truce.

She sighed her relief when they walked through the door of the house. Cain nudged her toward the couch, and she gratefully sank into it while Abel checked his voicemail. She raised an eyebrow when she saw a tree propped against one corner of the room.

Abel shut his phone. "Mom called. They'll be here in about an hour, and they're bringing dinner. We need to get things set up here."

She stood. Damn it, she was just starting to relax. "What things?"

"Not you, baby. You're gonna plant your sweet ass on that sofa and not move."

She put her hands on her hips. "Is that right?"

"That's right, sweetheart." Cain cocked an eyebrow when she didn't sit back down, his eyes promising retribution if she didn't follow his order.

"Ya know," she said, imitating their Southern draws. "I think y'all need to reevaluate how you feel about this relationship."

They crossed their arms over their chests at the same time. She bit back her grin.

"At least you're acknowledging there is one," Cain said.

She shrugged. "That depends on whether you want a mate or a possession. A partner or a dependent. You know, that doesn't really work for me."

And she'd fight them both every step of the way if that's what they tried to make her. Smiling now, she looked around the room, opening her mind to them and letting them see what she wanted. A home. A family of her own. Her palm settled over her stomach. The sex was great, phenomenal, but that was the last reason she was staying. Well, maybe not the *last*.

Abel's reaction was immediate. Love. Acceptance. Her breath caught in her throat, and she looked at Cain. Waiting, wondering.

"I think we're both going to have to learn to compromise."

She nodded, hiding her disappointment. She was pretty sure he loved her, but he wasn't going to admit it. Abel sent him a disapproving glare, but she shrugged it off and straightened her back. "So, what things?"

"You're moving rooms, and one of us will have to go up into the attic and find the Christmas stuff."

"Okay. I can handle moving my stuff."

"Good. I'll go to the attic." Abel hurried from the room, and she was surprised Cain didn't follow him.

He was silent, brooding, and when he didn't speak after several seconds, she walked around him. She had no idea what was going on in his head and grumbled her exasperation. The hell with him then. She made it to the stairs, her foot on the bottom rung, before he caught her, whirling her around and tucking her face against his shoulder.



His voice was gruff, and his mind opened to her slowly. "I'm bossy, and I'm a predator." She realized then he'd been the one who'd killed the black wolf. "But don't ever think what's between us is only about sex, Delilah. I'm going to order you around, especially in bed."

Her pussy clenched at the promise.

He sighed. "And you're going to disobey, I know. We'll work it out."

She didn't care. Wrapped in strong arms, feeling warm from his love, she lifted her gaze to meet his. She put her hand on the nape of his neck and licked her lips, pulling his head down to hers.

"Always starting without me." Able passed them, carrying a big box. He set it down by the tree and came back to where they stood, smiling, his gait lazy as he approached, adding to the fire her blood.

"I already moved your things." He looked at his watch. "Less than an hour. I suggest we all relocate."

The images that filled her mind were inseparable. Hers, theirs. And more than enough to spur her into movement. The last thing she heard before they took her over were their whispered declarations of love, and it was the first thing she cried when they stroked her body to new heights, new bliss.

Later, someone slapped her ass to rouse her from sleep, and she cracked an eye open to see them both looming over her. Abel leaned close, licked her neck, and stopped at her ear.

"I love you, Delilah." He straightened and grinned. "Now get your pretty butt moving before they start without us."

She rolled onto her back, stretching her arms above her head and listened. There were people downstairs. Laughing. Talking. She smiled when Cain leaned over her, until he sucked her nipple into his mouth. Groaning, she arched up. How she could take anymore, she didn't know, but the need was sharp and immediate. He lifted his head and grinned at her.

"Later, sweetheart. I promise." He grabbed her hands and pulled her up, holding her close a moment to whisper in her ear. "I love you, too."

"I love you, too." She included Abel in her gaze. "Both of you."

She dressed in a hurry and went down the stairs to find that they'd started without her and the twins. Someone had dimmed the lights, and the tree glittered brightly in front of a window. She smiled, ready to face her new family, ready to face the future. And the best damned Christmas ever.

She blinked, looking at her mates. How could she have forgotten? "Tomorrow's Christmas Eve."

"Yep."

How could they be so calm? "It's the last shopping day of the season."

The two women in the room laughed.

"Don't worry, honey," their mother said with a wink. "It's also the day we drag all the Williamson men to the mall."

There was a chorus of groans and complaints, but not from Cain and Abel.

“We already got our Christmas present,” Cain whispered in her ear.

“And we couldn’t have wished for anything better,” Abel added.

She laughed. She couldn’t argue with that.

### Author Bio

As a native of the South, is it any wonder Loribelle has a love of storytelling? She started writing seriously as a teenager and finished her first manuscript, a mystery, when she was nineteen. After a few bumps along the way and stints as an Army MP, a waitress, a book store manager, a student, and a wedding photographer, she turned to writing full time. Now she divides her time between a husband, three kids, writing, and a part-time photography gig. She is also a member of Romance Writers of America and Passionate Ink.

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