

Paranormal Mates Society: Werewolves of London

Isabella Jordan

All rights reserved.

Copyright ©2006 by Isabella Jordan

No part of this e-book may be reproduced or shared by any electronic or mechanical means, including but not limited to printing, file sharing, and email, without prior written permission from Changeling Press LLC.

ISBN (10) 1-59596-306-5

ISBN (13) 978-1-59596-306-2

Formats Available:

HTML, Adobe PDF,

MobiPocket, Microsoft Reader

Publisher:

Changeling Press LLC

PO Box 1561

Shepherdstown, WV 25443-1561

www.ChangelingPress.com

Editor: Connie Alberts

Cover Artist: Fabiano Fabris



This e-book file contains sexually explicit scenes and adult language which some may find offensive and which is not appropriate for a young audience. Changeling Press E-Books are for sale to adults, only, as defined by the laws of the country in which you made your purchase. Please store your files wisely, where they cannot be accessed by under-aged readers.

Chapter 1

Grace Shaw shivered as she took a seat in front of her computer and booted up. It was four o'clock in the morning and she'd been out in the cold, English rain for hours. Even in her thick, velour robe and matching slippers, Grace couldn't shake the cold. She couldn't go to sleep either.

How could she, when she had a possible clue as to who killed Francesca Woods? The seventy-two-year-old woman's mutilated body had turned up late last night. Grace had been tasked with identifying the party responsible. It was the reason she'd been brought to England.

And Grace *would* find the murderer.

Grabbing the comforter from the floor where she'd left it last night, she threw it over her lap. Grace had been cold since the moment she'd arrived in London and it was really starting to piss her off.

Being pulled out of the States and sent to the Motherhouse in London sucked too. Grace had been working a fascinating case for the Thoth Agency back in America. The newly discovered cult whose members were rumored to have achieved immortality through black magic was completely fascinating to watch. The cult members weren't vampires. No, they'd been something else entirely. Grace had been on the brink of discovering *what* exactly they were when she'd received the call, telling her that she was being reassigned to London.

What the hell could she do? Grace had been a part of the Thoth Agency from infancy.

Taking its name from the Egyptian God of wisdom, the scribe of the underworld, the Thoth Agency was an ancient assembly able to trace its origins back for over two thousand years. What had started as a small, clandestine group of individuals recording

the events of the world all around them, was now a vast organization filled with experts in every field. The Thoth Agency knew everything, saw everything. They were still unknown to the world, a secret society of observers and scribes. It was nothing short of a miracle in modern times with the media everywhere.

Her parents had moved to America from China not long before she was born. They were both killed in an auto accident when she was just a baby. Two of the Agency's members, man and wife, took Grace in and raised her. Though, she'd never been told how that arrangement came about. After trying to bring up the subject of her birth parents a few times, Grace felt in her gut that Bernard and Vivian Shaw had never met them and knew nothing about them. Curiously, there was no record of adoption and no one had ever come looking for Grace. If they tried, they'd probably never find her anyway. There were no records to be found at all.

The Agency had taken her in and Grace had her suspicions as to why.

Grace grew up in the shadow of the Thoth Agency. The secretive ways of the Agency and its members, including her adoptive parents, became second nature to her. It seemed natural to join their ranks when she finished high school and now that she was in her late twenties, she was pretty sure that was what they intended from the start. They had educated her at Stanford, taken care of all of her needs. All she had to do was agree to follow Agency policy -- not a word should ever be spoken to anyone about the Agency outside of its confines, no intimate relationships outside of the Agency and to conduct herself at all times as a member.

Observant. Respectful. Invisible. Wise.

Grace was that all right. She was a top agent and one of the best profilers for the Agency in America.

She was also a twenty-eight-year-old virgin with a passion for ice cream and Internet porn. Go figure.

As Grace waited for the operating system to load, she stared at the sticky note with the numbers she'd scribbled down on the way back from the murder scene. For hours she'd waited in the rain, watching for an opportunity to conduct her own search.

Investigation was what the Thoth Agency was all about. For centuries the Agency silently watched all creatures of the earth including the ones the outside world refused to acknowledge or wrote off as folklore. Especially them. Vampires, shape shifters, werewolves...

Werewolves. Okay, so the case was a little interesting.

Francesca Woods had been a senior agent within the Thoth Agency in London, highly respected with a perfect and impressive record of research, investigating and profiling. When she'd gone missing two weeks ago, the news spread like wildfire through all the Motherhouses around the world. Many of the English agents had dropped their assignments immediately to join the search.

The search for Francesca Woods ended last night when her body was found, broken and mutilated in Kent. Killed by wolves the authorities claimed, though they really couldn't explain that. There were no known wolf packs in the UK aside from a small number sheltered by conservation groups. Newspapers in London carried what they knew about the story and it had set off a firestorm of panic and controversy.

Grace knew better. The Agency had forensics experts planted all over the world and the good fortune to have one here in London who'd have access to the scientific reports from the autopsy that would prove what Grace already knew.

A werewolf had killed Francesca Woods.

In fact, the last three people to see her alive were known werewolves, all from the same pack. There was a fourth party who may have been a witness, a drag queen and a long time friend of one of the werewolves.

One of those three werewolves, Carter Annis, was the biggest suspect in the murder of Francesca Woods in Grace's mind, because he'd seen her last. She'd set out to find something, anything to prove that tonight, but she'd only ended up soaking wet and really pissed off. There'd been nothing to prove her point in that shady little spot in Kent. Grace had nearly wrecked her rented car in frustration driving back to the Motherhouse in London.

Then she'd gotten a phone call that changed everything.

A computer geek from the Agency had gained access to the computer authorities had retrieved from Francesca's flat. The man identified a single IP address from the history log on her web browser that didn't fit her normal pattern of online behavior.

Grace snorted as she opened up a web browser on her own computer. If Grace met her end early, the computer geeks would have a field day with *her* "normal pattern of online behavior." Gangbangsrus.com. Nudegroups4u.com. 69isfine.net.

In her defense, Grace also read the news online and did all of her financial transactions there. She wasn't a total pervert.

Yeah, right.

Okay, now to see what the IP address revealed. Grace selected File from the browser menu, then Open. Slowly, she typed in the IP address. 66.84.19.65.

The site loaded quickly. Grace's mouth dropped open as she stared at the screen.
www.ParanormalMatesSociety.com

Now this is really fucking funny. A dating site for paranormals? Did the Agency *know* about this? *Jesus!* This case was getting too good, she thought as she began to read.

Welcome to Paranormal Mates Society, where finding the love of your life is supernatural, super easy.

Tired of squeamish humans passing you over because blood is your beverage of choice? Do you long to indulge in intimate moonlit jaunts with a potential Pet Smart Companion? Are your fins fed up with the goldfish bowl of dating? Did the devil make you give up on ever finding your soul mate? Long to soar to the heavens with the match of your dreams?

Fill out our in-depth entry form. Browse thousands of profiles from paranormals just like you! Make new friends -- find the immortal man or woman of your dreams with just one easy click.

Let us help you find the paranormal match of a lifetime at www.paranormalmatessociety.com -- where meeting the perfect match can be out of this world!

Grace tamped down her amusement as questions formed in her mind. Why did

Francesca Woods, a seventy-two-year-old *human* visit this site? Francesca was, by all accounts, very happily married to another human and fellow Agency member. That meant that Francesca had another reason for visiting the site.

Perhaps, the site held a lead in the case she had been studying when she died.

Now we're getting somewhere.

Was that how she'd hooked up with the werewolves? Grace had read through all of Francesca's case files. Her last study had been an old and notorious pack of werewolves based right here in London. Three of their members had been the last to see her alive.

But why? Why the hell would a highly respected agent, with her record, break from Agency policy and actually approach the subjects she studied? Hang out with them for at least a week? According to the Agency, it was the biggest mistake you could make. Apparently, they were right because she was dead.

It didn't make any sense.

Francesca, why were you hanging out with them?

Scrambling out of her chair, Grace grabbed her purse from the floor at her feet. Fishing out her cell phone, she redialed the number of the geek who'd called her with the IP address. When he answered, Grace was direct.

"Who did Francesca Woods receive e-mail from? Were there any from the domain paranormalmatessociety.com?"

The British male voice on the other end of the line was scratchy from sleep.

"Who the hell is this?"

"Grace Shaw," Grace spoke impatiently. "You called me earlier with the IP address on the Francesca Woods case."

"It's four o'clock in the bloody fucking morning," the man mumbled.

"Yes, and I still have a fellow agent's murderer to find. A *British* agent."

More mumbled obscenities. But the sounds on his end of the line told Grace that he rose from wherever he was sleeping. He yawned twice loudly into her ear, almost cloaking the sound of shuffling papers. She moved back to the desk while he searched,

ready with pen and paper for anything he might tell her.

"Do you have anything?" Grace wanted him to hurry up.

An impatient sigh. "What was the domain again?"

"Paranormalmatessociety.com."

More shuffling.

"I have something from the deleted files." The man's tone lost a bit of its annoyance. "Rawmeatlover1969@paranormalmatessociety.com. There were three e-mails from that address."

Raw meat lover? Cute.

"Any chance of getting copies of those e-mails?" Grace wanted to know.

"Perhaps. Tomorrow."

"Can you track that person's IP address?"

"I'll try."

"Thank you. I'm sorry to have awakened you." Grace meant it.

The man mumbled something, but Grace hung up without really listening, excited about the new information. Her eyes scanned the e-mail address she'd hastily scribbled on the small legal pad. rawmeatlover1969@paranormalmatessociety.com.

Intuition had always served Grace well. She just knew her raw meat lover was Carter Annis.

Grace meant to find out for sure. She'd become a member of this site, express an interest in this person and go from there. If it *was* Carter Annis, it then became a matter of getting the goods on him. Grace was a good profiler, so that part shouldn't be difficult. Then she'd submit a full report to the Agency. Done deal.

The Agency hadn't said what action it would take when the killer was revealed and Grace was really curious about what they would do. Other Agency members had been killed before in the line of duty, but they were usually young members, or foolish ones. Francesca Woods wasn't the type to make mistakes or to break with Agency policy. Aside from that, she was a high profile member, well respected, and as close to the inner circle of elders as an agent could get.

The sheer brutality of her murder, in Grace's opinion, should warrant some action. Poor Francesca had been torn mercilessly apart.

Time to get to work. Grace plopped back down in the chair at the computer and began to read the site's content, membership information. She selected the Heavenly Membership, which gave her full access and privileges for three months. Grace planned to nail this asshole well within that time frame.

Hastily, Grace filled out the member profile, using the assumed surname Cho. The species question did make her pause. It was known by only a few in the Agency that Grace herself was a paranormal, one of just ten paranormal agents ever, in fact. Grace had always guessed it was why the Agency took her in as an infant. They'd probably identified her parents as paranormals and knew the family's species.

Who better to give a perspective on paranormals than one of their own?

Still, to actually commit to that anywhere in writing...

Grace took a deep breath. Okay, snow leopard for species. Female. Age, height, weight. Blah, blah, blah.

Grace selected long term relationship even though Carter was not known for the longevity of his love affairs. She'd profiled a hundred guys like him. They were all the same. All of them seeking something they couldn't find but wanting that one special person to spend their lives with. Oh, yeah. He'd be looking for the long term.

Had no litter, but wanted litter. Blah, blah, blah.

When she got to the paranormal categories, Grace snickered at the choices. Well, she'd definitely fit into *Wild Thang*, *I think I love you* for Werewolves, hairy critters and more. And a username? Crap.

Then an idea came to her. Purrfectwoman. *As in the purrrfect woman to nail your werewolf ass*. When the form indicated the username was taken, Grace tacked on 616 for her birthday. Purrfectwoman616.

Grace finished by typing in her profile, painting herself as a fun-loving kitty that was looking for a good time and possibly more.

That should do it. Now to look for her raw meat lover.

She found him in no time, floored when she saw the photo of an incredibly handsome man with dark hair, dark eyes and a face she'd seen before.

Carter Annis. This is too easy.

Grace read his profile slowly.

Alpha Male seeks shifter's delight.

Six-foot-four, dark and sometimes hairy, seeks mate for serious relationship only. Must love hitting a field or two for a moonlight run -- Steak Tar-Tar and a good back scratch. I love children and hope to someday have a whole litter.

I'm open to an inter-shifter partnership -- love a lady with junk in the trunk, but it isn't necessary. I foresee finding the woman of my dreams here and I won't leave disappointed. No players, control freaks, one-night stands or social climbers need apply. If the only game you like to play is Charades, I'm the guy for you -- e-mail me and I promise you, you'll have a howling good time.

Interesting. Particularly the part about foreseeing that he'd find the woman of his dreams at this site. Grace didn't know how that would turn out. She was definitely not the woman of his dreams.

No, she was the woman who would prove he'd killed Francesca Woods.

Grace clicked on the e-mail me icon on his profile and began typing her message.

Chapter 2

Carter Annis stretched his nude body under the mussed sheets of his bed, groaning at the stiffness in his muscles. He'd climbed into bed just two hours ago, hoping he'd simply pass out from exhaustion.

Instead, he'd tossed and turned and reviewed the events of the last several days in his mind. Not that it did him any good. What was done was done and he was fucked.

Carter was a "person of interest" in the murder of Francesca Woods. Detectives from Scotland Yard had questioned him for hours last night before finally releasing him with the warning "they'd be in touch." He didn't need that sort of attention right now and neither did the pack.

He knew Francesca Woods, had known her a week anyway before she'd died. But Carter certainly hadn't killed her and he didn't know who did. The detectives believed, at the moment, that she was killed by a wild animal, a wolf. It was *close* to the truth.

Carter's instincts told him that one of his own kind, a werewolf, had murdered her. They'd shown him a photo of the body. The claw marks on her body certainly looked as if they'd been made by a werewolf.

The implications were making him crazy. What if the humans had enough evidence from the crime scene and the motivation to dig a little deeper? How much would it take for them to identify a type of DNA that they'd never seen before?

And if his suspicions were correct, who was the culprit? Had a werewolf from a rival pack killed the woman? Or was it someone from his pack?

One thing was certain in Carter's mind. The murderer had killed the woman to strike at *him*. It was the only explanation because not many people in the human world even knew of Francesca's existence, much less his. Hell, he'd known more about her in

just a few days' acquaintance than the detectives could compile from their vast resources. From her cryptic little explanations, Carter realized that Francesca Woods came from a world more shrouded in secrecy than his. Hard to believe, but true.

Unfortunately, Francesca had also been the only one who knew the identity of his mate. The woman he'd been searching for and who the elders claimed would put in motion the restoration of his pack's dominance and power in Great Britain. She'd bring fresh and powerful blood from the east, they said.

Well, the prophecy hadn't guaranteed that she would definitely be *Carter's* mate. The mating ritual the elders prescribed would reveal who she belonged to. There were three males contending for the role of pack leader when old Bendrix died or could no longer lead, Carter and his two cousins. Once the female was identified and presented to the elders, the mating ritual would take place. The three contenders would make love to her while one of the elders watched for "the sign." That sign, whatever it was, would determine who the next pack leader was and who would be the female's mate.

Carter was going to be the one, the female's mate and the next pack leader. He'd always known that in his gut. Carter didn't feel that way just because he was power hungry or was the type that had to be in charge. Sure, he was a natural alpha and like the other two contenders, he wanted the role of pack leader.

But he wanted the woman just as much, if not more. Carter didn't know who she was or what she looked like. But he craved her, needed her.

Carter had dreamt of this woman since he was a boy, since he'd first heard the prophecy of the pack elders. He'd always envisioned a beautiful girl with long black hair and exotic eyes. When he'd gotten a little older, his dreams had taken a most erotic turn and in his fantasies she'd belonged only to him. He'd taken her in every sexual way imaginable, told her all of his dreams and secrets.

Carter was the only one who knew it, but she'd belonged to him for a very long time.

Well, his chance of finding her any time soon was likely lost now with Francesca's death. She had known who Carter was looking for and he'd been unable to

convince her to reveal the woman's identity in time.

He'd have tried a little harder if he'd known his time was limited.

It had been a bloody long night.

Fuck.

There was no pointing in staying in bed because there was no chance he was going to sleep. Carter rose, pulled on his robe and sauntered to his study. Dropping into the leather chair behind his desk, he pushed at the mouse attached to his computer to deactivate the screen saver on the flat monitor. Carter always left his computer on, always left his e-mail program open and running.

Francesca had told him that he was wasting his time. The woman meant for him and his pack would never go near a dating web site or any dating agency, she'd said. That was the last time he'd seen the woman alive.

But Margaret, one of the pack elders and Carter's beloved grandmother, had told him that he'd first talk to the woman the pack sought on his computer. Margaret had also told him the woman would be a shifter but not necessarily a werewolf. Well, her species didn't pose a problem for him at all. She could be a wererabbit and Carter wouldn't care. He only wanted to find her already, realize his dreams with her and get on with his life as pack leader.

It was going to happen.

Since his first contact with her was to be by computer, it seemed only natural to look for a place where one shifter would go to find another. www.paranormalmatessociety.com. It was a site where paranormals could meet one another and the only site of its kind as far as he knew. So Carter had registered, and he read through one e-mail after another day after day, waiting.

Tension made the space between his eyes ache as he scanned the *War and Peace* list of e-mails in his box, all but a handful from the dating site. There were several from Kim, a former lover who hounded him relentlessly for any bit of attention. Carter deleted those without reading them.

Then Carter did what he always did with the dating site e-mails and first, deleted

the ones he'd already crossed off his mental list. That took care of several. Then he read the messages from the e-mails he'd never seen before. Always looking for her, always hoping.

There was a cherry2faerie who liked to pretend she was a virgin and obviously had emotional issues. Then there was a dragon lady, likes2puff48, who hated smokers. That was a pretty good one. Guess she meant a different sort of puffing.

Purrrfectwoman616 was probably a feline shifter judging by the username. When he clicked on the message he found nothing new there. She was looking for a good time and maybe more. Like him, she enjoyed an evening run and a nice rare steak. Perhaps she was the woman he was looking for. They all said that.

But it was the last thing she said that grabbed his attention. Like him she was looking for that special someone and she wouldn't leave the site disappointed either.

Oh really?

Probably another dead end, but one that had him logging into the site anyway, searching for her by username. It took only a few seconds for her profile to load while he waited, the tiniest spark of hope stirring faintly in his chest. While Carter was disappointed to find that she hadn't posted a photo of herself, what he read in her profile piqued his interest greatly.

Her name was Grace and she was a snow leopard. A female from the east?

Possibly. He wanted to know a little more about this lady.

Clicking on the instant messaging icon, Carter was grateful that she had the same membership level so he could potentially communicate with her. There was probably little chance she was there at five o'clock in the bloody morning. Still, he had nothing to lose by trying.

Rawmeatlover1969: Are you there, purrrfect woman?

The response was almost immediate. Carter grinned.

Purrrfectwoman616: Where have you been? I e-mailed nearly an hour ago.

Carter had to chuckle at that.

Rawmeatlover1969: Impatient, are we?

Purrrfectwoman616: You have no idea.

Rawmeatlover1969: If you are so impatient to meet someone, where is your photo? That helps, you know.

Purrrfectwoman616: I'm not impatient to meet someone. Just you.

Carter liked her aggression. Damn he hoped she didn't turn out to be another waste of his time.

Rawmeatlover1969: You didn't answer my question.

There was no response for a long moment. Carter waited, wanting to see her live up to her bold approach.

Purrrfectwoman616: I don't have a recent photo.

Rawmeatlover1969: What about a digital camera? Most people have one of those.

Another pause. Now Carter was wondering what her deal was. Was she telling the truth? Or was there some reason she didn't want him to see her photograph?

Purrrfectwoman616: Give me a moment. It's been a long night.

Carter snorted.

Rawmeatlover1969: I completely understand.

Carter went back to his e-mail program and sorted through the other e-mails. A couple of them were interesting but not enough to keep him from checking the instant

messaging panel every few seconds for the feline lady.

How long did it take to take a picture and send it, for Christ's sake? He knew it had only been ten minutes but it seemed like ten hours while his eyes darted back and forth watching for her next message.

Purrrfectwoman616: Don't laugh. I'm sure I look like hell.

With an excitement he hadn't felt for some time, Carter hit the reload button on his browser and watched the screen intently as the image began to load alongside her profile. A beautiful woman emerged in that image and Carter's heart began to thump as his eyes greedily moved over it.

It was her. It had to be. The beautiful Asian woman before him looked just like the woman he'd been dreaming of all this time.

Her long, black hair flowed over one shoulder like a silken river. Her eyes were just as dark, shining like fine obsidian. What a beautiful face with its delicate angles and full, bow shaped mouth.

She wore a red robe that gaped open at her chest just enough to give a luscious glimpse of her generous cleavage. The little minx curled up into a seductive pose on the chair with the lower vee of her robe revealing a gorgeous, smooth length of thigh.

Carter's cock went on red alert, hard and throbbing as he gathered his wits enough to type.

Rawmeatlover1969: I want to meet you. Today.

Another pause while he kept staring at that photograph. His hands were burning to run over that creamy skin.

Purrrfectwoman616: Whatever happened to getting to know one another on the Internet first? Isn't that how it goes?

Oh, no, she wasn't going to play coy now. He wouldn't let her.

Rawmeatlover1969: You said you were impatient to meet me. I want to meet you in person today.

Several long seconds passed and she said nothing. Anxiety had his blood pressure rising. This was her. He felt it. He couldn't let her get away until he knew for certain. Carter had to meet her today, as soon as possible. Once he breathed in her scent, he would know.

Rawmeatlover1969: What do you say, Grace? It's today or never.

When she typed nothing back, Carter cursed himself for being an idiot. Would he be able to find her if she didn't answer? Why did he give her an ultimatum?

Purrrfectwoman616: Where?

Carter wanted to howl in triumph. He had just the place in mind for their first meeting. One of his favorite restaurants and one she was bound to like.

Chapter 3

Grace sat shivering near the door of Lee Ho Fook's, typing notes on her laptop while she waited. The steaming pot of tea the waitress had brought sat next to it, ignored. It was too bad she hated tea. Otherwise, she could drink it to warm herself up. The foggy afternoon in Soho had rapidly changed into a cold rainy night and she still couldn't believe that she was there. She was actually going to do this.

Grace had agreed to meet Carter Annis for dinner.

Had she lost her mind? It was against Agency policy to interact with anyone that you were studying. Technically, she'd done that already by approaching Annis on the dating site. But meeting him in person was a different story.

Francesca Woods had broken that particular rule and now she was dead. Carter Annis just might have been the man who killed Francesca and Grace was meeting him for dinner.

It was completely insane.

But he'd left her no other choice. It had only taken an hour for him to reply to her e-mail. Grace had felt pretty safe and confident, talking to him through the computer using an assumed name.

When he asked about her photo, Grace had panicked. When she'd registered at the dating site, she hadn't thought that the absence of a photo would be a big deal. It showed what little she knew. Carter Annis pressed the point and she'd been afraid that he'd move on if she didn't post one. He could have thought she was hiding something, like an extra limb or some other kind of deformity.

Grace certainly wasn't ugly. He'd wanted a photograph and she'd given him one, by God. Grace chuckled as her eyes scanned her notes on the screen of her laptop but her mind wasn't on them. She was thinking about posing in front of her digital

camera early this morning.

Grace had thrown her dignity and the Agency rules out the window by taking that suggestive photo of herself. Shit, it had been fun. Grace had deliberately gone for sexy and alluring even though she'd been up all night and it showed in the shadows beneath her eyes.

Still, the picture hadn't turned out half bad and she wasn't the only one that thought so. Grace flipped over to her e-mail program to read another e-mail she'd received from the dating site right before she'd left for the restaurant. It had cracked her up.

wolffish@paranormalmatessociety.com Merman seeking sophisticated mermaid to share my life. Six-foot-four, light blue scales, athletic, romantic, and world traveled. If you like moonlit swims in warm Caribbean waters, dancing until dawn, sushi, and mountain climbing you may be the woman of my dreams. I am looking for a long term relationship with marriage and children in mind.

Are you tired of swimming in circles? Send me an e-mail and let's get acquainted. Family lineage, sexual competence report, and sperm count will be provided to serious aspirant only.

A merman and a snow leopard? Sexual competence report? Grace snorted. Interesting.

Carter Annis had liked the picture too. He'd liked it so much that he had immediately insisted on meeting her in person today.

It disturbed Grace on a lot of levels. There was no way he could have any idea who she was or why she wanted to talk to him. That meant Carter liked what he saw in that picture and he wanted to see her in person because of it. It made Grace nervous. It turned her on. Carter Annis was a gorgeous man and having dinner with him certainly wasn't a hardship. Especially if he thought she was hot.

But it left her feeling so vulnerable. Grace lived in the shadows of the world, unseen and unnoticed. It didn't matter what she looked like any other day of her life. It didn't matter what her personal views were. Her life was her work with the Agency

and her work was impersonal. It didn't matter what Grace personally thought or felt about the subjects she studied. No one ever saw her. What mattered were her profiling skills, her ability to discreetly gather data. Then all that was required was the ability to objectively compile the data, process it, and summarize it for the Agency.

But in agreeing to meet Carter, all of that changed. He *would* see her and it would be personal. Grace couldn't rely on her analytical mind or her training from the Agency. She was meeting him as an ordinary woman and it wasn't a role she was well prepared for. Grace had only been out on two dates, both five years ago with the same geeky scientist who'd considered online gaming a "hot night."

Carter Annis was a big hunk of a man who had more sensuality in his thumbnail than Gary the Gamer had in his entire being. Carter was well known for his sexual conquests and was well liked by many of his former lovers according to Francesca's files. That told her something.

He'd know how to pleasure a woman.

Crap. How would she get through this? She couldn't be Grace the profiler if she was going to take advantage of this opportunity to talk to the man she suspected killed Francesca Woods. She'd have to be Grace the woman.

It sucked. She really *was* a virgin.

"Reading over other possibilities while you're waiting for me?"

The deep male voice brushed over her like dark velvet and her thighs squeezed together. Damn. Grace glanced up from the merman e-mail into the handsome, smiling face of Carter Annis. With his thick dark hair and shoulders wide as the bedroom door, Carter was sexier than any man had a right to be. The confidence in his eyes told her that he knew it too.

"I've only had one other e-mail since I joined PMS," Grace teased him. "It's pretty entertaining."

Carter snorted. "PMS."

Grace knew he referred to the acronym the dating site shared with premenstrual syndrome. Yeah, it was a bad joke.

Carter looked so damned good in the black pullover sweater with denim jeans that fit him like a second skin. Grace watched him sit in the chair to her right. He seemed relaxed and completely at ease.

She was glad he was relaxed because her insides were rioting from his close proximity. He wore cologne that was subtle and elegant, but the wild scent beneath it, of wolf and man, permeated the fragrance and her senses. Her blood began racing and boiling, heating her body like copper coils.

"May I?" he asked.

His hard thigh brushed hers, the denim abrading her skin through the sheer black stocking she wore. Her mouth went dry as she angled the laptop so he could read the merman's message on the screen.

Carter's chuckle was a deep rumble in his chest.

"I don't know how I'll compete with that."

Grace laughed along with him as his gaze slowly moved over her. He was scenting her too. Very subtly, but she noticed.

"You look beautiful, Grace."

Grace smiled at his praise. She just couldn't help it. Damn it, she had gone to a lot of trouble for tonight once she'd decided to do it. She'd gone shopping for the little black dress with its thin straps, the thigh high stockings, and sexy strap on heels.

"So you are Chinese-American?"

She hated all the PC terms.

"I'm an American," Grace corrected him.

If Carter minded her reproach at all, he didn't show it.

"And your family?"

"They were Chinese."

Grace began closing out the programs on her laptop but she was wondering why he was starting out by asking questions about her heritage.

"So what brings you to London?"

Carter's gaze was intent on her. Yeah, he liked the way she looked all right. But

there was something else going on. What was with all the questions?

Best to stick to the truth. "Work," Grace answered, shutting down her computer.

The waitress arrived and ended the string of questions. Grace ordered but she had to wonder if the waitress was even aware she said anything. All of the woman's attention was focused on Carter as he ordered beef chow mein with a wide toothy grin. It was a good thing he'd ordered several other dishes as well. If the waitress didn't realize Grace was there, maybe Carter would share it with her. She did like Chinese food and she was starving.

"So did you pick a Chinese restaurant on my account?" Grace fired the first shot when it looked as if he were about to speak.

Carter grinned. "Actually, no. It's one of my favorite restaurants." Reaching into the back pocket of his jeans, he pulled out a folded piece of paper. A menu that was spotted from the rain. "See? I brought it with me so I could decide what I wanted before I got here."

"You like it that much, huh?"

Carter's smile faded as his eyes locked with hers. "No, I just didn't want to waste a single minute I had with you."

Grace snorted. That was too much. Even with the heat and longing she read in his brown eyes. "You're good at this, aren't you?"

His expression remained serious. "At what?"

"Wrapping women around your finger." As nervous as she'd been when she'd arrived, Grace felt some of her anxiety falling away like a bad dream now. Carter was handsome, he was charming. But she'd seen his type of Casanova personality hundreds of times before in her studies. They were among her favorite subjects. Maybe she could handle this.

As long as she didn't forget that he was potentially dangerous. At least she had her pistol in her purse.

Carter nodded slowly. "I enjoy women. I won't lie about that. But until now they've been companionship, friendship, casual sex. And I never promised them more."

Grace closed up her laptop and placed it on the floor by her feet, before meeting his gaze directly. "But I'm different, right?" Grace deliberately taunted him. "I'm that special woman who has been missing all your life, aren't I?"

"You're making me sound like a skirt chasing cad, Grace." Carter leaned back in his chair, his gaze speculative on her. "And someone could make that case, I suppose. I won't lie about how I've led my life just to make a good impression on you. There is nothing I can do to change it after all. But things aren't always as they seem."

Indeed not. Charming as Carter was, he could still be Francesca's murderer. Grace had to remember that. She also needed to steer the conversation in a direction that might lead him to reveal something about the dead agent.

"How do you mean?" Grace hated going with wide-eyed innocence, but from what she'd seen in her life, the more people talked the more they revealed.

"What if I told you that our meeting on the paranormals dating site wasn't just a happy coincidence?"

The intensity in his eyes sent a warning chill down Grace's spine. "So you're suggesting it was fate?"

"Absolutely."

Grace's heart leapt at that.

Of course, the waitress chose that moment to bring food to their table. Wonder of wonders, she had heard Grace and even brought her order. How about that?

Grace no longer cared about what food had arrived or her growling stomach.

"Why would you think something like that?" Grace placed her napkin in her lap and tried to act as if he hadn't said something that had her heart hammering in her chest.

On the one hand, it was exciting as hell to have someone like him say that to her. That he was meant to meet her, Grace the invisible virgin profiler.

On the other hand, it was terrifying. Because if he really had killed Francesca...

Carter lifted a shoulder in a half shrug, lowering his own napkin to his lap. "It's the truth. It's fate."

Lifting her fork -- she'd never even wanted to learn how to use chopsticks -- she began picking at her rice. She just hoped Carter didn't notice her hand was trembling.

"Or it is one hell of a line," Grace threw back at him.

"Since we don't know each other, I'm just going to assume you're a little bit of a cynic, Grace." Carter had requested chopsticks and lifted them expertly in his hand. He took a bite of his beef chow mein and chewed like he was in no particular hurry. The heat in his gaze suggested anything but nonchalance. "And that's perfectly fine. We all need to be a little cynical to survive."

That was the truth.

"Grace, I knew from the moment I saw your face that I had to meet you." Carter's voice lowered. "It was meant for us to meet. I can feel it. Can't you?"

Sure, Grace was attracted to him. The way those deep, dark eyes moved over her had her pussy clenching in need. But where was he coming from with all of this talk of fate? Considering her life in the Agency, most of the time Grace just existed on the fringes of the real world. How could it possibly be meant for them to meet?

It was bullshit.

But why? Was she the next victim on his list?

Or maybe just the next notch on his bedpost?

The latter didn't sound so bad.

"I don't believe in fate," Grace said carefully. "I believe our lives are a series of events, cause and effect. Our lives intertwine. Our actions have an impact on the lives of others. Others' actions have an impact on our lives. That being said, to predict a single event in time, like who will be there and what will happen? Impossible."

Carter's grin was wide. "You're very cerebral, aren't you, Grace?"

Grace jumped when she felt his hand on her thigh beneath the table, his rough fingers sliding beneath her skirt and up to the top of her stocking to torment the sensitive flesh beyond it with soft teasing strokes. She should have slapped the shit out of him, but her entire body instantly went up in flames at his intimate touch. The fork dropped from her hand to clang loudly on the plate in front of her.

“Get out of your head.” His voice was low and seductive. “Feel.”

Grace gasped, oblivious to anyone in the restaurant who might be watching them. His fingers were moving over the top of her thigh toward her pussy. Oh, God.

“Do you feel it now, Grace?” Carter’s voice pierced the fog of pure lust that enshrouded her. “Have you ever experienced anything like this in your entire life?”

She certainly hadn’t.

Her hands dropped to grip the seat of her chair until her knuckles were white. Grace might have technically been a virgin, but she’d gotten herself off plenty of times using a vibrator, looking at porn on her computer. She knew what an orgasm felt like and how good sexual pleasure could be.

This was something beyond her experience. This was a consuming blaze of lust and heat that ripped through her body with the force of an atomic bomb. If he touched her pussy, she’d come, right there in the restaurant where they sat and there wasn’t a damn thing she could do about it. Whatever had taken hold of her was beyond her control.

All thoughts of the Agency, Francesca Woods, and danger were out the door. It was all Grace could do to hold onto her sanity as moisture flooded her panties.

“What are you doing to me?” Grace whispered.

His grin was smug. “Not me. Fate.”

Grace could feel the heat of his body as his hard thigh pressed against hers. Slowly he pulled his hand back down her thigh and her body convulsed in need, wanting his touch back. Wanting more...

“Want to go somewhere more private and talk about it?”

If Grace left with him, she could end up dead just like Francesca. Granted Grace was a paranormal too, and armed, but she didn’t know that she’d be able to overcome a large, male werewolf, even when she wasn’t caught in the grip of the most consuming lust she’d ever experienced.

And oh, she was...

The marvelous smelling food before them was completely forgotten. It was all

she could do now to sit still in her chair. She wanted to rub herself. Better yet, she wanted his hand back between her thighs, his fingers in her panties, in her folds.

“Let’s go,” Grace whispered.

Chapter 4

The trip to Carter's home in Mayfair was a blur. Grace remembered him being very gentlemanly, helping her into his Jaguar, carrying her laptop under his arm. After that, he'd been serious and quiet. The light from the passing cars showed the taut length of his jaw as he drove. The electricity in the car as they sped away from Gerard Street was a living thing, moving through Grace's body like bolts of lightning.

The cold night rain slashed across her face as she took his hand and together, they ran up the stairs to the door. Grace wouldn't have been surprised if the tiny drops of water had hissed and evaporated into steam on contact with her skin. She was sweating under her coat, more drops running down her sides beneath it. Her silk panties were wet too, rubbing against her as she moved. With her pussy quivering in need, running wasn't an easy feat.

Once they were inside, Carter slammed the door behind them and backed Grace against the wall in the darkened foyer. He grabbed the lapels of her coat roughly as his mouth slanted down on hers in a heated kiss. His lips demanded that hers part for him and when she relented, his tongue slid into her mouth, tasting her with a desperation that took her breath away.

It was so beyond Grace's experience that she hardly noticed that he was yanking her coat from her body. Carter's fingers dug into her hips as her coat fell to the floor at her feet. He dropped to his knees before her, burying his face against her pussy, his hot breath scorching her through the thin dress and panties she wore. Fiercely he yanked up the skirt, tore off the black silk and then dove for her with his mouth.

Grace's hands sank into his wet hair as his tongue pushed into her folds, zeroing in on her clit. Carter began to worry the hard little nub with quick flicks of his tongue until she thought she would lose her mind. Grace's blood rushed like fire through her

veins and the incredible lust held her captive as he sucked at her and licked her cunt relentlessly.

Her nails dug into his scalp when his fingers parted her even more. Carter's long tongue slid down to her aching entrance and her moan echoed in the foyer. Damn, he was using his tongue like a cock, the marvelously stiff thrusts destroying her senses. Grace hung onto him, pushed herself at his mouth as he tongue fucked her. Her thighs trembled around his face and she wondered how long she could hold herself up with his tongue darting in and out of her passage.

Grace had seen women getting head on her computer, had pleased herself while watching it, but she'd had no clue just how heavenly it would really feel. Trembling and moaning in that dark little foyer with Carter's face in her pussy, now alternating between licking her clit and teasing her opening with his tongue, Grace fought the orgasm coming on with everything she had. She wanted this to last just a little longer, wanted just a little more.

Rhythmically she pushed her pussy at him and he growled, sucking at her labia before his mouth closed over her clit again. Carter's tongue was wild on her, flicking against her clit, licking it. The rough fabric of his fine coat against her thighs was a sharp contrast to the soft, slick heat of his tongue in her cunt. Grace cried out, throwing her head back against the wall. She was coming and the handsome devil between her thighs wasn't going to relent until she did.

Grace screamed when she came, the exquisite pleasure shaking her like the fiercest storm. Her hands grabbed Carter's hair hard as he lapped her, tasting the hot juices that flowed from her pussy. Her blood felt just as hot, like molten lava as it rushed through her, taking her sanity and some of her consciousness with it.

When Grace started coming down from the maelstrom of pleasure, she was barely aware that Carter scooped her up before she watched his home rush by her in a dark blur. Carter held her high in his arms and he was running with her. His heart pounded out a powerful cadence within the muscled wall of his chest. The cool air was a cold caress against her sensitive pussy and her ruined panties dangled from her right

ankle.

In the deepest recesses of her mind, Grace knew that Carter could be carrying her to a dank dungeon room to kill her, but she didn't care. It was the single most carnal moment of her entire life and she was drugged by it. A slave to it. Grace wanted more. More than anything Grace wanted Carter inside her.

She should have felt relieved when Carter carried her inside a large bedroom, but all she felt was incredible eagerness and desire.

"Carter." Grace pulled his head down and pressed her mouth to his. He groaned, dumping her on the edge of his bed the next instant. The comforter felt cool beneath the wet heat of her lower body and she squirmed against it when her tongue twined with Carter's.

He shrugged off his coat, but that was all he took the time to do. Grace cried into his mouth when she felt his finger sliding into the wet folds at the apex of her thighs.

"I knew it was you." His voice was deep and rough with passion. "I knew it, Grace."

Grace didn't know exactly what he meant by that nor did she care when he dropped to his knees by the bed and again pressed his face into her pussy. His tongue dove into her vagina just once, slowly sliding up to her clit and circling it. Grace nearly came again.

When Carter pulled back, Grace went at him like a wild woman. Stitches in his sweater popped when she jerked up the hem in an attempt to pull it off of him. Carter grinned at her in the darkness, helping her remove it. Immediately she grabbed the front of his jeans, wanting them gone too, but Carter collared her wrists in his strong hands, stopping her.

"I had no idea kitties could be this passionate." Carter's breath came fast. "But I have a thing about control in the bedroom, Grace. I like to have it."

Shifting her hands so he held them both with just one of his, he dragged her from the bed to the dresser just a couple of feet away. With his free hand he yanked open the second drawer and pulled something from it before yanking her back onto the bed.

Grace tried to pull her hands free and found that she couldn't. It wasn't that she wanted to be free so much as it turned her on to have him restrain her. Her excitement grew by leaps and bounds when he closed the fur covered handcuffs around one of her wrists.

Shit, it was one of her favorite fantasies.

"You like this, don't you?" Carter's eyes gleamed at her as he snapped on the lamp on the bedside table. He hauled her up to the top of the bed and pulled her arms up. Easily he threaded the handcuffs through the ornately carved wooden headboard and then closed the other cuff around her other wrist.

"Do you like this, Grace? Being chained to my bed?"

Her mouth was dry but she managed to answer. "Yes."

"I wish I didn't need you so badly right now. But I'll have time and the opportunity to explore every inch of you later."

Carter tore open his jeans and pushed them down his thighs. He wore no underwear. Damn, that was sexy.

Pulling her thighs apart he positioned himself between her legs, the mushroom shaped head of his enormous cock aiming at her weeping entrance. In the soft light of the lamp she was impressed by its width and the length of the heavily veined shaft. Oh, she couldn't wait to know what that felt like in her body.

"Give it to me," she whispered.

Carter pushed just the head of his cock into her aching pussy. "Do I need to gag you as well?"

Grace tried to push her body down to take more of that magnificent cock, but the tormenting devil wouldn't allow it. "Maybe," Grace threw out just to see what he'd say.

"I have one that is shaped like a cock, Grace." Carter pushed into her just a little more. Her pussy walls tried to grab him, to pull him in farther. "With that gag I could make you perform fellatio the entire time I fucked you. But I think I would rather have your mouth on me. Later."

Grace let her mouth fall open as he said that and he rewarded her by sliding in a

little farther. "Oh, you like that idea do you? Performing fellatio while I fuck you?"

Grace couldn't speak. He slid further and further into her cunt. He moved slowly and maddeningly, but the sensation of him in there, burning and stretching her with his hot flesh was incredible.

"Do you dream about having two men at once, Grace?"

Oh, holy hell, yes!

"Or more?"

Oh, I have...

"You'll experience that, Grace."

Grace cried out when he was buried to the hilt inside her. The tight sac of his balls teased her sensitive flesh as he ground against her.

"I'll give you that treat whenever you like. As long as I am there and as long as you and everyone else know that you belong to *me*."

Grace screamed, her pussy convulsing around him as he began to fuck her. Carter pumped into her furiously. Grace wrapped her legs around his waist and hung on. The position allowed her to rub her clit against him, quickly building the powerful sensations again, while completely surrendering to his animalistic needs.

At first, his strokes were short and grinding, his hips never really leaving her. But he made Grace cry out in frustration when he deliberately lengthened his strokes, pulling almost completely out of her before spearing back in hard. Her fists clenched and she pulled viciously at the restraints, wanting to touch him. The restraints and the realization that he could do whatever he wanted with her and to her, heightened her pleasure unbelievably.

Carter's weight dropped on her and he took her mouth with a searing kiss, his tongue thrusting inside with a rhythm that matched his plunging cock. Carter's hand slid between their bodies, his fingers finding her clit and teasing it mercilessly while his thrusts grew in strength and speed.

"No," she begged into his mouth. It was too much. Her clit was too sensitive. Oh, God, she was coming again.

Carter pulled back to look down into her face. "Yes, Grace."

And she came again, hard. Her pussy convulsed with a force that stunned her and she screamed long and hard as he drove on above her.

Grace was weak and trembling beneath his taut body as he shouted his release. She could feel the explosions within her, over and over, and she moved with him. Grace lifted her hips to meet each thrust until he slowed down and collapsed on her.

"Grace," Carter whispered in her ear, cradling her in his arms. "What a beautiful name. It suits you."

His cock was still inside her. Grace loved that, loved his weight on top of her.

"What a beautiful night," Grace spoke her thought aloud. A gorgeous man, multi-orgasms. What more could a girl want?

"And the night, as they say, is young."

Grace gasped at the swelling of his cock inside her. He couldn't be ready again just like that. Could he?

"I, uh, take it you aren't ready to let me out of these handcuffs?"

She hoped not anyway.

Carter's grin was a study in wickedness. "Beautiful *and* perceptive."

Chapter 5

Carter followed Margaret down the hall toward his bedroom. He'd called his grandmother first thing this morning to let her know that he'd finally found her. The woman the pack had been waiting for. He shouldn't have been surprised when she showed up half an hour later.

Margaret gently pushed open the door and peered inside. Standing behind her shoulder, Carter also looked in through the sliver of an opening at Grace sleeping on his bed.

God, she was beautiful. Her long hair was a black, silken web across his pillow and the sheet dipped at her chest. Just enough to offer a tantalizing view of one dusky nipple. One of her slender feet hung uncovered over the side of the bed. In sleep, she looked so innocent and perfect. A little china doll.

But Grace was far from innocent. Her fire and enthusiasm in his bed dazzled him. Carter hadn't been able to get enough of her. It was only in the small hours of the morning that he'd allowed them both sleep and that was only because he knew the next two days would be big ones for her.

The full moon was the day after tomorrow. The mating ritual would need to take place then.

Nodding, Margaret pulled the door closed and led Carter back to his study. Her tread was light and her movements strong and fluid. His grandmother was a woman in her eighties but one might guess she was much younger from her demeanor. Very properly she sat down in the plush chair before the fireplace, folding her hands in her lap regally as she always did. Margaret's authority in all things was unmistakable and she commanded respect wherever she went.

She wasn't head of the Council of Elders for nothing.

"Do you think it was a good idea that you slept with her, Carter?"

Ah, it was time for his lecture.

Carter grinned. "Why, yes I do."

Hell, he'd *had* to. There was no way once he caught Grace's scent that he could have avoided making love to her.

Margaret's stony expression didn't change. "There is nothing amusing about this. This is the woman we've been looking for these many years. Now that we've found her, you know what must take place. You also know that it is possible that you aren't her intended mate."

No, it wasn't. Carter *would be* Grace's mate. She was his. After all of these years she'd materialized from his dreams and he had no intention of ever letting her go. He didn't care what he had to do.

When he didn't say anything, Margaret shook her head. "I don't understand how all of this came about so quickly, Carter." Which in Margaret-speak meant "Tell me how immediately."

"It happened just the way you said it would," Carter explained, sitting in the chair before her. "I couldn't sleep Tuesday night. The detectives didn't release me until early morning. I'd registered some time ago with a dating site for paranormals and --"

"What?"

Carter laughed at the startled expression on his normally stoic grandmother's face. "You heard me. There is a site for paranormals to meet each other and I registered there."

The look in her dark eyes was incredulous. "What is the world coming to?"

"Are you kidding?" Carter enjoyed teasing her. "It was a wonderful stroke of luck for us, finding www.paranormalmatessociety.com."

"And they call it a society? How very proper."

Carter didn't miss the sarcasm in her tone.

"How did you think I was going to find her on the computer? Did you think she'd just randomly e-mail me one day?"

Margaret's brow lowered. A sign she was losing patience with him.

"Carter, your career is on the Internet." Margaret's voice was slightly tighter. "There are a myriad of ways you can meet and converse with millions of people. You know that, but to have found her through some matchmaking agency? It just seems so... tawdry."

"Call it what you will," Carter threw back at her. "I found her, didn't I? I was beginning to get frustrated. Especially after that woman told me I'd never find her on the Internet."

"There is something else we need to talk about, Carter. That woman."

Here we go.

"I know you were quite taken in by her and her promise of help --"

"Francesca Woods knew all about the prophecy, Grandmother. Every detail of it."

"Yes, I know. But what you and your clever cousins managed to keep from me was exactly why you were discussing any of the pack's affairs with that human. There could have been any number of ways that she learned of the prophecy. Everyone in the pack knows of it. Do you honestly think that no one in the pack ever told it to an outside soul? Because you are a fool if you do."

Carter deserved her admonishment. They really had kept her out of the loop where Francesca Woods was concerned. He owed her an explanation.

"I believed her," Carter said honestly. "Maybe I still do. She offered to tell us the woman's identity in exchange for something for herself."

"And that was?" Margaret's brows shot up.

"Help for her husband," Carter explained. "He suffers from dementia. Alzheimer's. Somehow, Francesca knew about the experiments your father conducted. All she wanted was to see his old journals. I don't know enough about it to be dangerous, but she seemed to know precisely what she was looking for. Once she'd found what she wanted, she'd promised to tell us about the woman."

"And you know for certain that her husband was demented?"

Carter was surprised at her question. "I'm not an idiot. Of course I asked to see him. He was what she said."

"And that is why she was seen with all three of you?"

"Spencer, Joseph and I live in homes that once belonged to our great-grandfather. His old journals and books are in all three homes as you know. Hell, they're scattered everywhere. She probably wouldn't have found what she was seeking anyway."

Margaret nodded. "But now she is dead."

"And a werewolf killed her," Carter said flatly.

The grim expression on Margaret's face told him she wasn't surprised by the news.

"Any ideas on who might have done it, Carter?"

"Honestly, no. It could have been someone from another pack, I suppose. I don't know. I don't know of any reason why someone in our pack would have done it."

Margaret considered his words, her dark eyes moving over his face. "Keep your eyes open then."

"I will."

"I trust you've learned a lesson from all this."

Margaret never changed. There was always some lesson she wanted him to learn.

"If you are going to lecture me about interactions with humans, you can stop right now. If I had it to do over again, I would have made the same call. I'm not as naïve as you believe me to be."

Margaret slowly rose from her chair and normally that marked the end of the conversation. She turned and walked to the door of his study, but surprised him by turning back.

"You said that maybe you still believed that woman when she told you she knew the identity of the young lady in your bed." Margaret's eyes were intent on him. "Why?"

"She told me that Grace would be an American. And she is."

Margaret rolled her eyes. "It's one of the largest countries in the world, Carter. How is that a great revelation?"

"You didn't know that," Carter pointed out. "You knew she'd be from the east, her parents were anyway, and you knew she'd be a shifter. But even you, in your great wisdom, didn't know the finer details. Francesca did."

Carter wanted to laugh at the scowl that earned him, but he didn't dare.

"By the way, what is she?" Margaret wanted to know. "Is she a werewolf?"

"She says she's a snow leopard." Carter did laugh this time at the flat look of annoyance on Margaret's face. "I haven't seen her shift yet but I'm sure she's quite charming."

Waving her hand imperiously at him, Margaret began to walk away.

"Take her to see your cousins, Carter. Today. You have two days to get her ready."

Carter knew she meant that he had only two days to get Grace ready for the mating ritual where she would have sex with him, Spencer, and Joseph while one of the elders, likely Margaret, watched.

Then all would be decided. Some sign would reveal that Carter was her true mate and Grace would be his for the rest of his life.

Chapter 6

Grace didn't realize that Carter was watching her from just outside the kitchen while she searched for the keys to his car. She'd showered, enjoying the soreness in unfamiliar places on her body, before dressing in her stockings, heels, and long, black coat. She wore nothing underneath because both her panties and her dress had been ruined by Carter last night. He'd promised to replace them, but Grace didn't care really. All she wanted to do was retrieve her laptop and the purse that contained her gun from Carter's car and head back to her flat to get her head on straight.

She wasn't a damn bit closer to finding out anything about poor Francesca, but she had now officially broken every important policy that a Thoth Agency member could break. Someone from the Agency might already know about her activities. What would she do if that were the case?

Where did she go from here? Grace had just spent the most incredible night of her life in Carter Annis' bed, the man she was investigating for Francesca Woods' murder. She should walk away and forget it ever happened. She could investigate the others who'd been seen in the other agent's company. Perhaps there were some leads there.

But how could she walk away? Now that Carter had awakened the woman in her, how could she ever give that up? How would she ever survive the rest of her life on just memories of him and how he could make her feel?

"Not trying to slip away are you, Grace?"

Grace jumped at the sound of his deep voice from the doorway. Well, yeah, that was exactly what she'd meant to do. Damn it.

"Good morning, Carter." Grace tried to keep her tone polite, professional. "I need to get my laptop from your car. I have to be going."

Carter looked wonderful in the gray dress shirt and slacks he wore. He stood leaning in the doorway, completely relaxed with his hands in his pockets. But his dark eyes were already smoldering as they moved down her body.

Grace's pussy twitched in response.

"Where do you have to be going?" Carter asked.

"Work."

"What's work?"

Damn him to hell with his questions.

"I'm not at liberty to say."

One of his dark brows shot up at that.

"Do you work in an office, Grace?"

Grace watched him warily as he took a step toward her.

"Not exactly."

"Do you work out of your home?" Carter took another step closer. God, she loved the smell of him. "Well, your home here in London."

Grace took a small step back and her butt solidly met the smooth top of his kitchen table. Her nipples beaded hard at the predatory expression that had formed on his face.

"Why do you want to know so much about me, Carter?"

"Because."

Grabbing the lapels of her coat, he used them to pull her against him. Grace tried to swat his hands away but his fingers made short work of the buttons of her coat. And well, she didn't fight him that hard.

Grace moaned as his hands slid inside her coat to find her heated naked flesh. He palmed her breasts easily, her hardened nipples straining into his hands.

"Because why?" Grace wanted to know.

Carter's eyes were gleaming like obsidian on fire as they gazed down into hers. "Because I've never wanted anything in my entire life more than I've wanted you."

Grace melted against him at that, whimpering against his mouth when he

pressed it to hers. Carter crushed her against him, his hands wild as they yanked off her coat. He growled and it was filled with the same desperate hunger she felt, standing there in his arms in the bright sunny kitchen wearing black heels and stockings and nothing else.

All thought of what she could or should do was gone when Carter turned her from him, pressing her palms flat onto the smooth wooden surface of the table. Sinking to his knees behind her, he grabbed the cheeks of her ass and pulled them apart. His hot breath as he blew on the hot flesh of her pussy made her knees wobble.

Something about the way his tongue dove through her cunt from behind to work her clit made her completely lose it. Grace cried out sharply and dipped her head to see the movement of his firm chin between her legs as he licked her. God, she loved his tongue and he gave it to her, lapping at her clit for several seconds before circling her vagina and darting in there over and over.

"Fuck me, Carter," Grace pleaded with him. "I can't take this."

"Yes, you will." Carter's voice was rough and low. "Don't move your hands from the table until I tell you to."

When his tongue went back to flicking against her clit, she moaned in frustration.

"If I move my hands, what are you going to do about it?" she challenged.

The exquisite torture of his tongue stopped and her pussy clenched hard.

"I'll chain you to my bed and bring you to the edge of orgasm over and over again. But I won't let you come. Then I might leave you there a while to think about the consequences of displeasing me."

The bastard would probably do it, too. And Grace wanted him badly. Right now.

While Grace's fingers still touched the table, she'd lifted her palms during their exchange. Slowly she lowered her palms back to the wooden surface. Anything to get his mouth back on her.

"Good girl."

Carter stood and with rough hands, pulled her back against him. His hand worked frantically at his slacks until they slid down his thighs and she felt his naked

flesh pressed tightly to hers.

He burned her back and buttocks like a blazing fire. Bending her forward, Carter pushed fully into her, his balls slapping against her as he slid home. Grace hissed in pleasure and slight pain at his powerful entry, her body still sore from his loving the night before. He stretched and filled her, feeling larger than he had last night.

The angle of his penetration put pressure on different pleasure points within her body. Pain and ecstasy blended when he began thrusting into her with long, powerful strokes. His cock was so deep inside her that she felt like she was about to split in half and she loved it.

“Don’t stop! Please don’t stop, Carter,” Grace begged him.

The sound of their bodies slapping filled the kitchen and a fine sheen of perspiration broke out on Grace’s skin. Her elbows threatened to buckle, her knees threatened to give way. When Carter began to thrust even harder, Grace’s short screams rang out.

Her pussy closed like a fist around him when she came and Carter pounded more furiously into her. Grace cried out long and hard as her body convulsed and trembled from the explosive orgasm.

Carter continued to thrust into her with powerful control, bringing Grace to release once more before his body went taut behind her. Glancing at him over her shoulder she saw the incredible display of his muscles, tight and rippling, his head thrown back. When he came his growl filled the room, feral and savage.

The primal sound washed over Grace like a balm for her soul. It made her want to do what she’d only allowed herself to do three times in her life and shift into her feline form. She’d love to run with Carter, wolf and leopard, through the old forests of this country, playing in the sun. The cool morning air would feel as welcome as the cool surface of the table against her cheek as she slowly lowered herself onto it.

What was she thinking? What about the Agency?

“I’ve got to go,” Grace whispered against the table.

“We need to talk.” Carter’s voice was low in her ear.

Chapter 7

Carter insisted on taking Grace out for dinner that evening and he wasn't taking no for an answer. The biggest thing Grace needed to do was send in her daily report to the Agency which she could do from her computer. She thought she could convince him to let her return to her apartment to do that. She had nothing to wear right?

But as she sat towel drying her hair on his bed, Carter walked into the bedroom carrying a box she just knew held clothing for her. Grace shook her head.

"Where did that come from?" she wanted to know.

Carter's face split into a wide grin. "A very good friend of mine is the manager of one of the finest shops in London."

Jealousy was a new emotion for Grace, but damned if it didn't surface easily with that comment.

"How good a friend?" Grace asked.

"*That* good. A long time ago."

Grace shouldn't have been surprised. Or jealous. She knew all about Carter's background from Francesca's files. There were several references to his long line of lovers.

She watched him place the box next to her on the bed. Curiosity had her dropping the towel in her hand to the floor to lift the lid of the white box to see what was inside.

A beautiful dress of jade green lay nestled in fine tissue paper. Very simple lines, very elegant. There were gold silk panties there with flesh colored stockings along with little gold heels just her size. There were four different bras though, all gold to match the panties but in different sizes. Since she'd worn no bra with the evening dress he'd ruined last night, he'd had nothing to go by.

So there went her excuse that she had nothing to wear. How would she get back to her flat now? He'd offered to go with her. Oh, hell no. What if the Agency had someone there waiting for her? With Carter there, it could be quite a scene. No, she didn't want that.

She couldn't just leave without her laptop. Many sensitive files pertaining to the Agency and her work there were on that computer. The worst thing she could do would be to let that fall into someone else's hands.

Yeah, right. It's right up there with approaching someone you're studying, fucking them...

It appeared that she was going out to dinner with Carter.

That left her just one thing to do. Since she'd probably jeopardized her entire career with the Agency in the last twenty-four hours, she might as well try to meet her objective.

She still had to find out who killed Francesca Woods.

Carter, who wore his robe now, walked over to the beautiful wardrobe next to the bathroom door. He whistled as he sorted through the clothes hanging there.

Grace stood and pulled off the towel that she'd wrapped around her body. She stepped into the gold panties and pulled them on before sitting on the bed again to pull on the new stockings.

"So you wanted to talk?"

The whistling halted. "Yes, I did."

Grace waited as she pulled the first silken stocking up over her thigh, admiring its glittery sheen.

"Do you remember our conversation last night?" Carter asked as he walked over to the padded chair by the window.

There'd been a conversation?

"Yes." Grace went along.

"About fate?" Carter reminded her, obviously picking up on the fact that she didn't immediately remember what he was talking about.

Well, yes, she did remember that part.

"Yes," she said confidently. "I remember telling you that I don't believe in it."

"Do you consider yourself to be open minded, Grace?"

She paused in pulling the second stocking up on her other leg. "It depends. I guess. What are you getting at, Carter? You think it was fate that brought us together?"

"It was fate that brought you to us."

The emphasis he placed on the word us stopped her cold. "Us?"

"Grace, you know I'm a werewolf. I come from a very old and prestigious pack right here in London."

Grace nodded as though she were listening carefully to what he had to say. And she was. But she would know most of everything he said early on because she'd read the case files. She pulled out the bras and found one just her size. Thirty-four B. She worked at putting it on as he continued.

"When I was a child, one of our elders, my own grandmother, had a vision of a woman who would one day be the mate of one of her grandsons."

Okay, this was new.

"So you were one of the grandsons?"

Carter nodded. "Yes, there are three of us. Myself and my cousins, Spencer and Joseph."

Oh, my God. The other two werewolves who'd last seen Francesca alive.

A chill of apprehension ran down her spine as she pulled the dress from the box, but she just pulled it across her lap for the moment.

"This woman would come from the east, according to her vision, and bring new blood to the pack. It would help restore our pack and make us the most powerful in Britain, as powerful as we were when she was young. Later on she predicted that I would find this person on my computer."

Oh, shit. The east? Was that why he was asking about her family? Because her parents were Chinese, he thought she was the person his grandmother dreamed of?

Carter met Grace on the computer. First he'd met Francesca. He couldn't have

thought that the older woman was the one his pack had been waiting for. So what had they done with her?

"Grace, it's you." Carter rose from his chair and came to kneel at her feet while her heart thumped so strongly it threatened to break through her ribs. "I knew it the moment I saw your face. When I breathed in your scent, when I touched you... You felt it too. You can't deny your body's reaction to me."

Grace swallowed hard. Her hunger for him was powerful and no, she couldn't deny that. But her lust for him, their chemistry, didn't mean that she was this person his grandmother dreamed about.

"Carter," Grace spoke slowly. "There is a lot you don't understand. If you and your pack believe your grandmother's story about her vision, fine. Who am I to doubt that? But I don't think it was fate that brought us together. It really can't be. Perhaps your competition with your cousins has made you more hopeful than you should be."

Carter's expression darkened. "Competition? No. You don't understand. I'm not in a race with my cousins to find this woman. It doesn't work that way in our pack. Every few generations this happens. One of the elders will dream of a newcomer, a mate intended for the new pack leader."

So he was up for pack leader. More and more Grace was establishing motive. He wanted to find this person so he could be pack leader.

"Then a mating ritual is held the next full moon." Carter gently took her hands in his. "The contenders for pack leader, in this case the three of us, will mate with this woman while a designated elder watches. During this rite, a sign will reveal who the woman belongs to. That wolf will be her mate for life and the new pack leader."

"Whoa!" Grace couldn't have heard that right. "Once you find this woman, the three of you will tag team her in front of one of your elders who will decide who gets to keep her?"

"It's not that crude, Grace."

Oh, shit. He was serious! Grace stared at him in amazement.

"You told me that something like that would excite you," Carter reminded her.

"I wondered if you'd been with more than one man at once before from your reaction."

Grace pulled her hands from his, stunned. Pushing him back, she rose to pace the floor by the bed. "Carter, don't laugh, but last night was the first time I'd ever been with *any* man."

Now it was his turn to look amazed. Pulling himself from the floor, he took her seat on the bed. "You weren't a virgin, Grace," he pointed out.

That stopped her. "In the technical sense, no I wasn't. I come from a world where relationships are very difficult, Carter. I had a jackrabbit and a lifetime membership to the Lay of the Day porn site, okay? But I'd never been with a man before."

Oh, God. What was she going to do? She was in so fucking deep.

She couldn't let him believe she was this woman of prophecy that his pack was looking for even though the thought of the mating ritual he described turned her on to no end. Spencer Kingston and Joseph Beckford were nearly as gorgeous as Carter himself. She'd seen their images in Francesca's files. What woman wouldn't like to have all three of them at once in bed?

Grace wasn't the person he thought she was. The only way she was going to convince him of that was to tell him the truth and that was breaking with Agency policy.

Fuck.

Well, why not? Chances were she'd be expurgated anyway for the other policies she'd violated. What was one more now?

And once she told him the truth, she could just ask him about Francesca. Grace couldn't take it any more. Her fascination with Carter wasn't just lust. He was handsome, he was intelligent. Somehow, she knew if she got to know him better, he could be someone to fall in love with.

Grace wanted to be able to fall in love with him. She couldn't do that if she discovered he'd killed her fellow agent.

Okay, here goes.

"Carter, I registered at PMS under false pretenses," Grace started slowly. "I

didn't register there to meet eligible paranormal males and to have a good time. I was looking for someone specific. I was looking for you."

Carter's expression was guarded. "I remember you saying something to that effect."

Grace took a deep breath, trying to think of a great lead in for what she had to say. When nothing came to mind, she decided to be blunt.

"Carter, my intent was to draw you into a conversation online, not in person, to see what you knew about the murder of Francesca Woods."

The intensity she read in his beautiful eyes took her breath.

"You knew Francesca?" he asked quietly.

"No," Grace answered honestly. "I never met her. The people we work for have given me the task of identifying her murderer. According to all of the data I have, you were the last person to see her alive."

"Oh, God." Shock registered in Carter's expression now. He looked as if she'd slapped him. "I didn't kill her."

Grace wrapped her arms around her body. "I want to believe you, Carter."

"Why would I kill her? I needed her."

"What?"

Carter rose and stood before her, his hands closing around her upper arms. Grace sensed no menace in him, no danger. The pleading in his eyes as they gazed down into hers had her heart pounding with more than just anxiety.

"She did the same thing you did," Carter explained. "She made up a profile on PMS and sent me an e-mail. We set up a meeting. She described someone like you perfectly in her profile. She didn't use a photo, so that's why I wanted one from you so badly. You can imagine my surprise when my date turns out to be a little old lady."

Grace smiled at that.

"Francesca had a proposal for me. She knew all about the vision my grandmother had and the woman we were looking for. She had too many details right for me to doubt her once I thought about it."

Of course, she did. For all Grace knew, Francesca could have been studying the pack for years.

"Her husband was ill and my great-grandfather was a physician --"

"Dr. Edward Annis," Grace cut in. She'd read about him. His experiments with the mentally ill had been ground-breaking and ahead of his time.

Carter nodded. "She wanted to see his journals. She was looking for the key to her husband's dementia."

Grace knew nothing about Francesca's husband except that he was a retired agent. If she, as the agent investigating the woman's murder, didn't know Francesca's husband was mentally ill, Grace was betting no one else did either.

"In exchange for access to the journals, she promised to reveal the name of the woman I've been looking for," Carter said. "You, Grace."

She didn't get it. What did *she* have to do with this?

"Carter --"

"So you see, I needed Francesca. She wouldn't give me the name until she found what she wanted. I guess she was afraid." Carter's sigh whispered through the room. "I don't know who killed her. I don't know if it was a werewolf from another pack or one from my pack. What bothers me is why they did it."

Grace wanted to believe his story. "What about your cousins? She was seen with them too. Did they know about your arrangement?"

His fingers loosened on her arms. "Of course they did. My great-grandfather's journals and books are in all of our homes. They had to know about it. And they are as anxious as I am to be done with this prophecy so we can all get on with our lives. They want to know as much as I do."

"I'd like to talk to them anyway," Grace told him. She'd gone this far out on a limb. She'd find out what happened to Francesca now damn it!

"Of course you would." Carter pulled her against his chest, his arms wrapping around her like bands of steel. "And you will tonight at dinner."

It occurred to Grace now why he'd been so insistent on dinner.

Pulling away from him, she planted her palms on his chest and met his gaze squarely. "Carter, you have to realize now that I'm not the woman you are seeking. Now you know why I am here. I can't tell you about my world or who I work for. I'm already in deep shit with them as it is. But you have to realize --"

"Grace, you *are* the woman I'm seeking. I don't know how it works with snow leopards, but when a wolf finds his mate, he knows. He knows her by scent. In a thousand other ways, he knows her."

Grace shook her head. "Even if that were true, didn't you tell me that I'd have to sleep with you and both of your cousins and then one of your elders would decide who my mate was? What if they decided it *wasn't* you?"

Carter grinned confidently. "It *will* be me."

"You don't know that," Grace shot back. And why the hell was she arguing this with him anyway?

"Maybe I do." Carter dipped his head and brushed her lips with a gentle kiss. "My grandmother has visions. Why can't I?"

Grace sighed, weighed under by a truckload of emotion. Mostly she was relieved because deep in her heart, she didn't believe Carter killed Francesca. His story rang true. But there was a lot of dread too. She dreaded facing the consequences of her actions with the Agency and it wouldn't take them long to find out what she'd been up to if they didn't know already. She dreaded having to end things with Carter because he was looking for another special lady from the east -- not her.

Plus, she had a little reason to dread going out to dinner to meet Carter's cousins. What if one of them was the murderer? Or what if she never found out and she'd thrown her life away for nothing?

Chapter 8

Carter smiled as he introduced Grace to his cousins, Spencer Kingston and Joseph Beckford, and a long time friend of the family, Blue Garrett.

Carter wasn't surprised that Joseph brought Blue, the notorious drag queen, along for dinner. He saw them together a lot these days. Blue was simply a gorgeous creature with expertly applied makeup, a blonde wig and a slinky red dress. His body language spoke volumes about his relationship with Joseph who was quiet and more reserved by nature. They seemed an odd pair, whatever they were doing together.

Not that it was any of his business.

Grace was his business and tomorrow was the full moon. He had until tomorrow night to convince her that she was meant for him and to mentally prepare her for the mating ritual. It was a tall order in a short period of time.

He'd gone over their conversation in his mind on the drive over to Trader Vic's. What he couldn't understand was Grace's belief that she *wasn't* his intended mate. How on earth did she not realize that? She seemed to base her entire theory on the fact that she'd sought *him* out while investigating the murder of Francesca Woods. While that explanation had taken him a bit off guard, he really didn't give a damn now that he'd found her. He didn't need to know about the place she'd come from.

She wasn't going back. Period.

And what the hell difference did it make how they met? They had. Grace *was* the one.

Carter could tell by the way Spencer stared at her over the rim of his piña colada glass that he recognized her as the one too. He saw Spencer's nostrils flare slightly when Grace wasn't looking at him. Not that Carter needed verification for something he already knew, but it was obvious that he recognized her scent.

Joseph seemed interested in her too, but not as much as Spencer. Joseph was hard to read. He wasn't a thing like Spencer with his perfect blond hair and his clear blue eyes. Spencer had as much of a reputation with women as Carter even though he looked like one of those Ken dolls the human children played with. Spencer's lust flashed in his eyes when he looked at Grace. If nothing else, Spencer would get to make love to Grace and Carter would enjoy watching the levels of pleasure their combined efforts would bring her to.

As long as it was understood that Grace was his.

"So where have you been all our lives?" Spencer grinned at her while she took a drink of the piña colada Carter ordered for her.

"I wasn't here." Grace's tone was formal.

Spencer cut his eyes at Carter before glancing back at her. "American?"

Grace nodded.

"You are absolutely stunning, Grace." Spencer raised his glass. "A toast to Grace. May she bring us power and prosperity."

They all raised their glasses except for Grace, who looked really uncomfortable now.

"Before you get really excited about something that is *not* going to happen, Spencer, why don't you tell me about the last time you saw Francesca Woods."

Well, damn, so much for subtlety.

If her frankness alarmed Spencer in any way, it didn't show. He didn't miss a beat.

"So you *did* know her?"

"No, I'm just trying to find out what happened to her." Grace sounded like a Scotland Yard detective. "What can you tell me?"

Spencer's expression became more serious. Well, serious for Spencer.

"The last time I saw her was on the day she disappeared. She'd come by my home to pore through the journals again. She'd complained about the rain. I was meeting a lady friend for dinner so I walked out with her. She got in her car and I never

saw her again."

Grace nodded, took a sip of her drink. Carter reached for her hand beneath the table and was surprised to find that it was trembling. Her beautiful dark eyes met his and they were so filled with anxiety. She flashed him a gentle smile. It was a lot to take in for her. He understood that.

"What about you? Joseph? Blue? When did you last see Francesca?"

"Same day," Blue chimed in immediately. "The day she vanished. She came over to Jo's place too. We had tea."

Joseph said nothing as if Blue were their spokesperson. What was going on there? His cousin wasn't usually that quiet.

"Did she meet with anyone else in the pack?" Grace looked at each of them in turn. "Anyone outside the four of you?"

Carter hadn't introduced her to anyone else. Spencer shook his head.

"No," Joseph said quietly.

"I love your dress," Blue told Grace. "That's a wonderful color for you. Your season of color is winter, right?"

Grace did little to hide her annoyance at the off topic question. "I have no idea." Her fingers squeezed Carter's under the table. "Where are the restrooms?" she asked him.

"I'll show you." Carter nodded to Spencer. "Excuse us."

There was stiffness in her body as he led her from the table. The restrooms were close to the main entrance and it was that door she headed for. Carter followed her out of the restaurant and into the cool evening air.

"Is there any way we can go to their homes?" Grace asked the minute the door to the restaurant closed behind them.

"For the ceremony?"

Grace rolled her eyes impatiently. "No, to look for clues."

She was too preoccupied with her investigation for Carter's tastes. "Are you and Francesca part of some sort of law enforcement? Is that why you carry a gun?"

"No."

"Look, I want to find out who killed the woman and why, just as much as you do."

"I doubt that," Grace snapped. "My entire career is on the line here."

"You love your career that much then?" Carter wanted to know.

"Yes." But there was a hint of doubt in her eyes. Grace hugged herself to keep warm. "I don't know. It's all I've ever known, Carter. My entire life has been these... people. Francesca went missing and they brought me here from America to find out what happened to her. That's it."

Carter wrapped an arm around her and she surprised him by snuggling against his side.

"That was it. Then I met you and..."

"And?"

"Everything I knew in the world changed. You weren't what I expected you to be. Being with you is incredible."

"It will always be that way for us," Carter said gently.

Grace looked up at him in desperation. "Don't you get it? There won't be an always for us. I can't stay."

"Why do you have to go?" he wanted to know.

"I don't belong here, Carter, I'm not --"

Carter gently touched his fingertips to her lips to halt her words.

"Don't think about telling me that you aren't my intended mate, Grace. You know better. You knew the moment I touched you in the restaurant last night. That sort of fire and passion isn't coincidental. It's not chemistry. That is the way things are between true mates, Grace."

She released her breath in a ragged exhale that he barely heard over the noise of the city.

"Spencer certainly recognized you, Grace. He knows who you are as well as I do."

Her full lower lip trembled as she gazed up at him.

"Stay with me, Grace." Carter traced that lip with his finger. "Don't go back to that other world. Stay here with me. Be my mate, my lover. Always."

"Do you know how crazy that sounds, Carter? To throw away a successful career and everything I've ever known to be with you? I mean the sex is wonderful, but..."

"It's just about sex?"

Carter kissed her mouth with all the finesse and tenderness he felt. He loved the taste of Grace and knew joy at having her in his arms. She parted her lips for him and he deepened the kiss, tasting her passion and fire.

Carter couldn't lose her now. In all of his imaginings over the years of a beautiful woman who would be his mate and lead the pack with him, the possibility that she wouldn't want to be with him never entered his mind. It was bloody arrogant on his part.

Losing Grace now would make him want to crawl into the woods and die. She'd been in his life less than forty-eight hours and already she was becoming as essential to him as the air he breathed. It was scary. It was thrilling.

"If I agree to do this," Grace whispered when the kiss ended. "When would it take place? Your ritual?"

Carter hoped she was ready for this. "Tomorrow. Tomorrow is the full moon."

"Oh, God."

"Are you afraid?"

"Of the ritual and the sex? A little, but I think I could do that."

Carter grinned. He knew she could. Grace would enjoy it, in fact.

"I'm more afraid of the future. I've never lived outside of the world I'm from, Carter. I've been part of it since I was a baby. What will I do?"

"We'll figure it out. Together."

Grace wrapped her arms around his waist and embraced him. Carter wanted to howl loud enough to bring down London.

"Ready to go back in?"

Grace nodded.

* * *

Grace agreed to spend the night with Carter and he was quiet and serious when they arrived back at his home. Grace had just shrugged out of her coat when Carter gripped her wrist in his large hand and pretty much dragged her down the hall to his bedroom.

Carter's expression was dark and predatory. "Undress, now."

Grace gave it no thought at all, removing her dress, undergarments and shoes. He stood, watching until she was before him naked. Something about the way those hard, dark eyes moved over her made her feel exposed and vulnerable.

But she didn't have long to feel that way. Carter turned her so that her back was to him and pulled her against the solid heat of his body. His hands ran over her breasts and her nipples beaded hard beneath his palms. Her legs started to tremble when his hands moved down her abdomen and his fingers sank into her sex.

"All my life," his voice was rough in her ear, "I assumed that I was prepared for the mating ritual. That I'd have no problem sharing the woman I've always dreamed about with my cousins."

Grace moaned as his fingers rubbed maddeningly over her clit, smashing her sanity.

"Damn, Grace. I don't want to share you with anyone. You're mine, do you understand?"

Those fingers quickened, flicking against her now.

"I understand," Grace whispered.

Lust rushed through her like the blood in her veins. Her pussy was soaked and her body felt as if it were on fire. Grace wanted him that badly.

"No matter what happens tomorrow, Grace, you will be mine. If the Council of Elders decides that I'm not your mate, we'll leave. Do you understand?"

Grace nodded. She had no emotional investment in his pack. Grace didn't care as long as his fingers didn't stop working their magic.

“Get on the bed,” he growled. “On your knees.”

She did as he commanded, feeling his eyes on her as she climbed on the high mattress with her ass pointing in his direction. Grace heard him fumbling with his clothing, but in an instant he was covering her, his fingers back in her wet slit, bringing her closer to the release she so desperately wanted.

Soft wet kisses dotted her skin, her shoulders and down her spine. Grace cried out when his mouth arrived between her thighs, licking at her juices before his tongue wound around her clit. Carter licked her until her fingers were digging into the comforter on the bed and her thighs were trembling. Her orgasm was powerful, shaking her body and engulfing her in incredible heat.

Carter rose on his knees behind her, probing her aching entrance with the head of his cock. With a low growl, he dug his fingers into her hips and drove hard inside her. Grace moaned at the invasion of his hard cock and pushed back to meet each thrust. Her pussy walls trembled and clamped around him in her need.

He nipped at her shoulders but the hard momentum of his cock never paused. The rumbling growls in his chest grew louder as he pressed against her, driven by lust and his need for her.

Grace loved this. She felt powerful and beautiful after a lifetime of hiding. Another orgasm knifed through her and she screamed as he drove on relentlessly, refusing to stop.

Her legs trembled with the effort it took to hold her up. Carter howled behind her, long and loud, when he came. His body shook violently as he poured his seed deep inside her and his hands ran over her body in light, trembling strokes.

They collapsed together onto the bed and Carter spooned up behind her, pulling her tightly against him. His breaths were deep and growing slower each moment, his body a hard solid heat all around her.

“I love you,” he whispered into her hair before his breathing eased into the cadence of sleep.

Grace’s heart squeezed in her chest at the barely audible words.

Chapter 9

Grace convinced Carter to let her return to her flat alone. She promised to meet him back at his home an hour before the ritual and she intended to keep that promise. No one from the Agency was posted outside her door when she arrived. So far, so good.

As the old saying went, what a difference a day made.

Two days ago she'd been Grace the twenty-eight-year-old virgin profiler. And now...

Grace closed the door to her flat behind her and looked around at the neat, tidy surroundings. She'd admired the flat when she'd first arrived in London just a few days ago. She'd thought the simple, elegant accommodations to be wonderful compared to most of the places she stayed in the States.

Today, the flat looked empty and small.

It was so quiet as she sat down in front of her computer, checking her e-mail. She had literally dozens of e-mails from the Paranormal Mates Society site now. Ah yes, two reminders that her reports to the Agency were due. Didn't anyone think that was odd? Grace had never missed a single report, much less two, and no one questioned it?

Well, it would just make things easier when she resigned. Once she got through the mating ritual of Carter's pack, she'd gather the rest of her belongings and resign from the Agency.

She didn't think the decision would be that easy to make, but now that she was back in her familiar surroundings, the life she'd led before Carter didn't seem all that appealing. Now that she'd had a taste of him, how could she ever live without him?

The future with Carter stretched out before her now, unknown and exciting. She would make it through the mating ritual tonight. She could do it. For *him*.

Truth be told, Grace was just as excited as she was nervous about the mating

ritual. The prospect of having sex with three men at once? *Oh, my.* Orgies were among her favorite fantasies and the Internet fed those fantasies with literally thousands of images and movies to download over the last decade. Now, she'd get to try it out in real time. Three men, their hands and mouths on her body. Their cocks filling her...

Grace shivered just thinking about it as she headed for her bedroom to collect some of her things.

More exciting still was the fact that Carter would be one of those three men. The things he made her feel, the incredible pleasure he gave her, were beyond anything she'd ever experienced even in her wildest fantasies. Carter would make sure it was the most carnal event of her life. He'd control the situation. She had no doubt about that.

The only thing that did make her nervous was having someone watching them, watching for a sign. What sign?

A sound drew her attention to the bedroom of her flat. What was that? Apprehension flooded her body, her senses going on red alert as she softly padded down the carpeted hallway. Was there an agent hiding in her bedroom? Had someone been searching her flat?

Or was someone else here?

Grace peeked into the bedroom and didn't see anyone. Nothing looked out of place.

Grace shook her head. Perhaps the rollercoaster ride her life had become over the last couple of days was making her jumpy. Just to be safe, she opened the closet. Searched it. Nothing.

But Grace screamed when the large male werewolf with a silvery coat burst through the door of her bathroom. It turned to glare at her menacingly with glowing, yellow eyes and the way it rocked on its haunches led Grace to know it would strike any second.

The wolf that killed Francesca? Probably. And he meant to kill her now.

Summoning the side of her that she held so tightly in check, Grace focused every fiber of her being on the leopard, calling it. The tingles quickly grew into sharp pains;

the pain increased until Grace doubled over and began convulsing. A thousand needle pricks stung her skin as she began to change.

Curiosity held her hunter where he was until her transformation was complete. The werewolf was so much larger than she was in the form of the snow leopard but she did have one very important advantage.

The snow leopard could outrun just about anything.

But she'd have to get around him first.

The wolf sprung at her and Grace leapt away, back down the hallway toward the door of the flat. Before Grace could jump at the doorknob, the wolf darted in front of her, growling and baring his razor sharp teeth. The werewolf was now between her and the door.

Hissing fiercely, Grace swiped at the wolf's face with her paw, dragging her claws through the flesh of his jaw as hard as she could. The werewolf shrieked in pain and it gave her just the break she needed. Grace grabbed for the doorknob, a task made difficult with the silky fur and small pads of her paws. Somehow, she managed to pull the door open and ran through the apartment building as fast as she could.

* * *

Carter looked up at the tapping sound outside his window. His senses were already heightened because of the full moon and the ritual that was to take place tonight.

On top of all of that, Grace was late and he was worried. What if she'd changed her mind about everything? About him?

Why the hell had he let her go back to her flat without him?

What the hell is making that noise? The sun had gone down and when he approached the window, he couldn't immediately see what was outside it. But then he spotted a pair of glowing, green eyes under his window, preternatural eyes in a feline face.

Grace?

Carter opened the window of his study and a beautiful spotted snow leopard

leapt through it. It was Grace but what he wanted to know was why she was running about London in her paranormal form.

The leopard stopped and glanced at him for just a moment before heading straight for his bedroom. Carter followed, watching her shift back as she made her way down the hall. Once inside his bedroom, the woman he loved emerged, naked, and she looked frightened.

"What happened?" Carter asked with rage beginning to well up in his chest.

Grace ran into his arms, trembling against him.

"Carter, there was a werewolf in my flat," Grace struggled to tell him. "He jumped out of the bathroom at me. I barely got away from him."

Carter pushed Grace back enough that he could look into her face. "A male?"

"I think so. Yes."

"What did he look like?" Carter demanded.

"He was enormous and he had a silver coat."

That took Carter off guard.

"No one in our pack has a silver coat," Carter explained.

"I know," Grace said.

She knew that? Oh, yes. They would talk about her mysterious background. But first they needed to get through this night.

"Are you okay? Are you hurt?"

"No." Her slender body continued to tremble. "But I took a shot at him. I clawed his face. That was how I got away from him."

She got the bastard's face? That could prove helpful.

"How?"

"I got the right side of his face, his jaw, with my claws," Grace explained.

"Good." And God help the bastard if Carter spotted him.

Grace buried her face against his chest and he held onto her tightly. Of all the damned times for this. They should already be leaving for Margaret's house for the ritual. That alone would make her nervous. But having a scare like this thrown on top

of it?

"It might have been the same wolf that killed Francesca," Grace muttered.

"Possibly." But why? Damn it. None of this made any sense.

Urging Grace to look up at him again, Carter kissed her gently.

"We need to leave soon for the ritual."

Grace swallowed, nodded.

"Are you going to be all right?" Carter wanted to know.

"Yes." Grace wrapped her slender arms around him and squeezed him gently.

"I'll get dressed."

But as he watched her walk on shaking legs to the wardrobe for something to wear, he worried about the night ahead and her ability to cope.

One thing was certain. He'd never let her out of his sight again.

Chapter 10

Margaret's house on the outskirts of London was actually a mansion and Grace regretted that it was dark and she couldn't get a better look at it and the surrounding grounds. When Carter led her inside the house, she admired the simple elegance of the furnishings and décor. What she could see of it anyway. Every room they passed was lit only by candles, giving an otherworldly appearance to the place.

Nervously, Grace looked around for the other people, Carter's cousins, his grandmother who was the elder meant to watch everything.

"Grace."

Jumping at the sound of his voice, Grace looked up at Carter. He looked so beautiful in the soft candlelight all around them.

"It's all right, Grace." He took her cold hand in his large warm one. "Everything's going to be fine."

"Where is everyone?"

Carter's smile was gentle, but sensual all at the same time. It messed with her insides as he led her up one of those winding staircases Grace had seen before only in movies.

"Margaret and I thought perhaps you'd be more comfortable talking to everyone... afterwards."

That was the truth. Everyone knew she was here to fuck three werewolves, but she was relieved at not being expected to make small talk beforehand. Grace appreciated the courtesy.

They finally arrived at a large bedroom all done up in red and gold with an enormous four poster bed. The room was well lit with several lamps in strategic

locations around the room. Now it was real. Grace felt as though the breath had been knocked from her body and her heart began to beat frantically.

Carter left the door open, smiled at her gently. Slowly, he began to unbutton his dress shirt.

"Let's just start with you and I. Okay?"

Grace nodded, reaching for the hem of the green dress she'd had to wear again, pulling it over her head with shaking hands. Her mouth was dry as the desert and she took deep breaths, trying to calm down. She took off her bra and panties while Carter pulled off his shirt and unfastened his slacks.

"So where --"

"They will join us in just a few moments," Carter answered the question he hadn't allowed her to finish.

"What about --"

"Margaret?" Carter's slacks slid down to his feet. Again, he wore no underwear. His cock was ready, jutting out proudly as he stepped out of his shoes and slacks. He grinned at her as he pulled off his socks. "She would consider it rude to sit in here with us, but rest assured she is watching everything going on in this room."

"Camera?"

Carter nodded and Grace began to panic.

"This isn't being taped, is it?"

Carter chuckled. "No."

"If I end up in some gang bang collection on DVD, Carter, I will kick your ass."

That had him laughing. "That will never happen. I promise."

Grace pulled off the little gold heels but Carter stopped her before she could remove the stockings. His fingers traced the lacy tops of her stockings, making her thighs quiver.

"Leave them."

Her nipples had tightened into hard little points and the scent of her desire floated around them on the heat from their bodies. Carter had barely touched her and

already lust ravaged her body like a fever, making her pussy swell in wicked anticipation.

Very soon she'd take him and the other two men inside her. All of them would fuck her, bury their cocks in her body. Her pussy convulsed just thinking about it.

"Relax," Carter murmured, taking her in his arms. His cock was a hot whisper on her belly as it slid against her. He moved them toward the bed, urging her onto it. "This is one of your fantasies, Grace. How often do we get to live out those? Relax and enjoy us. That's all you have to do."

Yeah, like it's that easy.

Carter helped when his mouth claimed hers in a kiss that was gentle at first, but quickly grew hot and demanding. His hands smoothed down her back, caressing her gently and easing the tension from her muscles. Grace focused on relaxing into that touch and enjoying Carter.

Making love to him had far surpassed any of her fantasies. If what was about to happen was living out a fantasy, it was only because he was in it, part of it.

Dipping his head, he ran his tongue over the hard peak of her nipple. Grace gasped and clutched his shoulders as he laved each of her nipples in turn, arching into him. His large hands cupped the cheeks of her ass, his fingers sliding from the back into her cleft.

Grace's body felt as if it were on fire. Each time he touched her was heaven and hell.

"Put your mouth on me, Grace," Carter whispered against her breast.

Grace sank onto her heels on the bed, thinking it a marvelous idea. She needed to do something besides be anxious over what was about to be done to her. Pulling closer to him, Grace got on eye level with his cock. The heavily veined shaft twitched as she took it in her hands.

First she worked him with her fingers while massaging his balls. Above her, Carter groaned appreciatively, his hands sinking into her hair as she began to tease the head with her lips and tongue. Very light touches meant to drive him crazy. It must

have worked because he began thrusting his hips at her face, urging her to take more of him into her mouth. Grace loved the heady feeling of controlling his pleasure. She loved the musky smell of him, his taste.

Grace sucked the head of his cock into her mouth then flicked her tongue against the tip of it. Unable to resist that invitation, Carter pushed into her mouth until he filled it. Careful to keep her teeth away from the heated silk of his skin, Grace worked him in long strokes, back and forth. He moaned loudly when she let him slide to the back of her throat.

“Grace,” he whispered.

Licking off the salty drop she tasted at his tip, Grace teased him with swirls of her tongue, explored him. The rhythm of his cock in her mouth was the center of her focus.

Until hands slid over her thighs and hips, fingers gently easing her sensitive pussy lips apart. Grace jerked when she felt hot breath against her sex. When a sleek tongue sank into her pussy, she cried out in surprised delight.

Another hand cupped her left breast, rolling the nipple between his fingers. Pleasure shot through her body, racing toward her aching center while someone teased and licked her. The man at her side lifted her hand and pressed it around the thick shaft of his cock. Grace stroked him with her hand, easy strokes, eliciting a low growl from him.

“That’s good.”

She recognized Spencer’s deep, sexy voice. That would mean it was Joseph’s mouth in her cleft, driving her wild while she continued to suck Carter’s cock.

Grace explored more of Spencer’s cock, tracing her fingers along his length. Grace smoothed her fingers over its wide, smooth head. She found a drop of come at the tip and spread it over his hot skin, pulling another low growl from him.

“You taste wonderful, Grace.” Joseph’s voice was muffled slightly as he spoke from between her thighs. Then his mouth returned to her, his tongue flicking against her clit, and Grace felt her pussy walls quiver in need.

As much as this scenario had excited Grace in images and in her imagination, nothing could have prepared her for how truly wonderful it was to have the sexy bodies of three, gorgeous men at her disposal. Panic and anxiety slowly slipped away. So what if Carter's grandmother was watching? Wasn't this what she was here for? Why not enjoy it?

Flexing her thighs, Grace pressed her pussy back against Joseph's mouth. A drop of moisture ran down the inside of her leg, feeling like liquid fire.

Grace's tongue caressed Carter's cock as he continued his rhythm in and out of her mouth. Her fingers moved up and down Spencer's cock, her confidence growing as his shaft turned hard as stone in her hand.

"A beautiful and passionate bitch." Spencer's voice was rough.

Carter laughed as he pulled his cock away from her. "I don't think that's the appropriate term for a snow leopard. Is it, darling?"

Grace's lips were tingling and her mouth was full of his taste. She allowed Carter to haul her up onto her knees away from the other two.

"I prefer the term leopardess," Grace managed, looking around her now at all three of them. All three of them were naked, beautiful. The lust that controlled her shined in their eyes.

"She's magnificent." Spencer's smile was meant to charm her.

Grace wasn't in the mood.

"She's really horny too. Can we get on with this?" Grace demanded.

Carter grinned. "As you wish. Ride Spencer, Grace."

Stretching out beside Grace on the enormous bed, Spencer reached for her. When she climbed over him, he rewarded her by stretching up to lave the rock hard peak of her right nipple.

"That's right, Grace." Carter's voice was seductive and low. "Take him. I can smell your need."

Spencer positioned his cock at the entrance of her drenched cunt. Grace relaxed her muscles to take him in, enjoying the pressure building as he slid higher and higher

inside her.

"Carter?" Grace needed to know he was there.

"I'm here." Carter moved behind her, brushing her shoulder with a kiss. He grabbed her hips, pushing her down until Spencer's cock was buried to the hilt. Grace cried out at the exquisite pleasure. The deep penetration, combined with her excitement of what Carter was about to do, sent her over the edge. Her pussy walls pulsed around Spencer's cock as the room began to spin.

Joseph's weight dipped the bed next to her. Grace swallowed hard as the powerful orgasm faded.

"Take Joseph into your mouth, Grace." Carter's whisper was close to her ear, making her shiver in pure carnal delight.

Grace glanced up at Joseph, fair as Spencer was with green eyes. Two long silvery scars ran across his muscular chest. That only held her attention for a moment before her gaze swept down to the long shaft of his cock. It bucked as she stared at it longingly, eager for her mouth.

Dropping onto her elbows over Spencer, Grace took Joseph's swollen head between her lips. He pushed further, filling her mouth and she began to suck on him, savoring his taste. Behind her Carter controlled her movements on Spencer's cock, driving her quickly toward another climax.

Carter's fingers teased the sensitive opening of her ass, lubricating the tight hole with her own juices. Grace couldn't help pushing against that finger as her desire began to spiral out of control. With Spencer's cock pushing into her pussy in a driving rhythm and Carter's finger teasing her ass with easy strokes, Grace felt another orgasm coming on fast.

Carter pushed another finger into her ass. It burned but it heightened her desire incredibly.

"Do you like that, Grace?" Carter growled into her hair.

Grace more than liked it. She felt wild with the need to have all of them inside her at the same time. The most incredible sensations flooded her body, made every

nerve in her body super sensitive. Each touch of their hands on her body, their scents overwhelming her senses, sent pleasure coursing through her body in strengthening waves. She sucked Joseph's cock while she fucked Spencer and Carter teased her ass relentlessly.

She'd been on the edge of another orgasm when they began moving around her again, moving her. Joseph moved beneath her, his cock not as long as Spencer's had been, but wider, stretching her pussy walls with a fullness she hadn't experienced before. Heat spread through her body at lightning speed and Grace wanted more, needed it.

Another cock pressed to her lips and she took it, not realizing until strong hands sank into her hair and her greedy lips pulled a low growl from him, that it was Spencer. Her own intimate taste combined with his met her tongue, exciting her even more.

When Carter's cock pressed to her ass, Grace nearly came. Excitement raced through her just at the thought of what he was about to do. Joseph's hands at her hips urged her up and down on his wide cock while her tongue swirled around Spencer's shaft.

Pain pierced the veil of her desire as the head of Carter's cock slid into her ass, but not for long. With her own cream easing his way, Carter slowly pushed into her until she was filled by both cocks, one in her pussy and one in her ass. Quickly they found a rhythm to shatter her sanity, one withdrawing as the other pushed in. Stroke after stroke they stretched and rubbed her, creating a wave of sensation that quickly began to consume Grace.

Grace fought the orgasm coming with everything she had, wondering if she'd even survive it as she sucked on Spencer's cock vigorously. His hands in her hair controlled her pace, but she didn't care. His body was tensing and he was losing control, just as she was with the other two men fucking her. Grace wanted to make Spencer lose control. She wanted him to be as out of his mind with pleasure as she was.

Spencer howled loudly when he came, his hot seed spilling into her mouth. Grace welcomed the salty taste of her victory, lapping at it until he pulled away from

her.

That left her Joseph and Carter to deal with as they continued to pound her ass and pussy. Grace gasped for breath and trembled on all fours, a slave to the pleasure consuming her body at the hands of the two men controlling it.

Grace cried out in protest as Joseph pulled his cock from her cunt and his seed spurted out between their bodies as he bucked wildly beneath her.

"There's only me now, Grace." Carter's voice was low as he gripped her hips roughly. "I was the first, I'll be the last."

Grace shuddered at those whispered words. His body went taut behind her and his hands were almost painful on her flesh as he drove into her ass. The hot explosion of his coming, combined with his deep growl, pushed Grace over the edge. Her empty cunt pulsed strongly with an orgasm that broke over her with the force of a powerful storm.

Grace was barely aware of sinking onto the bed, the sound of footsteps fading away.

A kiss pressed into her hair as she lay there, panting. Colors swirled behind her eyelids as she came down from a carnal experience that defied imagination.

"I have to leave you for now, Grace." Carter's voice seemed to come from a distance though his breath was warm on her face. He brushed her cheek with a kiss. "Margaret will give you time to recover and shower before she comes to speak with you."

Grace wondered how patient the elderly woman would be. Her entire body was trembling. How would she ever find the strength to shower?

Grace had forgotten the woman had been watching. Had she seen the sign she was looking for? What would happen?

"Everything will be fine," Carter whispered as if he could read her thoughts. "I'll be waiting for you."

Cool air wafted over her body as she listened to Carter leave the room. She realized then that she didn't want him to leave. She would have preferred that he stay

with her to talk to Margaret.

Grace felt her heart squeeze in her chest as she realized that she didn't want Carter to ever leave her.

Chapter 11

Grace not only had time to pull herself together, shower and dress, but she also had time to sit nervously in one of the plush chairs in the bedroom and dread the conversation with Carter's grandmother. What would the woman decide? Would she be given to Carter as a mate, subsequently making him the next pack leader? Would Margaret decide on another of her grandsons? Then what would Carter do?

Wasn't it insane for her to be caught up in this at all? She was no one's property anyway. She could leave whenever she wanted and be done with all of them.

But she hadn't left so far, had she? Grace had stayed. Hell, she'd just gone through with the mating ritual of Carter's pack.

She stayed for a reason. For Carter.

"Ah, you're ready then."

Grace nervously watched the tiny woman with eyes as dark as Carter's as she made her way into the room and gracefully sat in the chair next to her. Grace was impressed with the older woman's bearing and poise.

"Did you enjoy yourself?" the woman asked calmly as if she were inquiring about a dinner party.

What the hell did one say to that?

"It's quite all right," Margaret continued. "It might help you to know that I went through the same ritual when I was a young woman."

Okay, so that did help. "Your mate is pack leader then?"

Margaret nodded. "Bendrix and I have been together since that ceremony."

"So what was the sign that revealed he was your mate?" Grace wanted to know.

"Don't you mean what sign was witnessed to reveal your mate?" Margaret's grin was sly. "You had it easy. My own father watched my ceremony. Afterwards when he

came to talk to me, well, it was a little awkward. But then he showed me something that made me the happiest female in the world."

Margaret leaned forward and gently grasped Grace's arm in her tiny, wrinkled hand. Turning so that her inner forearm was revealed, Grace noticed a symbol on her skin that she hadn't noticed before. It almost looked like a tattoo but it was more translucent. It looked like it had actually formed beneath her skin.

"There." Margaret smiled as the fingers of her other hand smoothed over the symbol on her arm. "Just as I suspected."

The symbol was beautiful in its design, even though it was nearly black. Grace had never seen anything like it before. She had no idea what it meant.

"What?" Grace was dying to know.

"Carter *is* your mate."

Grace couldn't contain the happiness welling up inside of her. Margaret smiled at her, a sincere smile that reached her warm brown eyes.

"I'm glad that you are pleased with the outcome. You will be a good mate for him. It's high time he settled down."

Grace was already out of the chair, eager to see him. "Thank you."

"Wait, child." Margaret's voice stopped her before she could reach the door.

Grace turned back and it took a moment for the apprehension in Margaret's expression to register.

"What is it?"

"There is one last issue to contend with," Margaret explained. "There is still a murderer on the loose. That person is here tonight, along with all of the others, to celebrate the recognition of the future pack leader and the fulfillment of the prophecy."

Reality ran up her spine with icy fingers. The werewolf who killed Francesca was here? Now?

"Do you know who it is?" Grace asked.

Margaret shook her head. "But the mystery must be solved before your future can begin."

Indeed. Grace smoothed her hands down the front of her dress, an old habit from her Agency days, and darted out the door to look for Carter. The soft footsteps behind her let her know that Margaret followed.

* * *

Carter squeezed Grace so hard when Margaret announced that he was her mate that her ribs compressed. Grace would have loved to share in his merriment except that Margaret's words haunted her. Francesca's murderer was in this room and when Carter left her to join his grandmother on the dais in the grand ballroom downstairs to say a few words, Grace felt cold and vulnerable. She had no idea what he was saying and didn't try to listen.

Her eyes searched the sea of faces all around her. There would be marks on his face, the wolf who'd been in her flat. Most eyes were on her as she looked around and she tried to smile and look like the blushing future mate of the pack leader who'd just had a smashing time fucking three werewolves.

But Grace felt real danger in the room. Especially when her eyes locked with the dark eyes of a pretty female who stood only a few feet away from her. She had chestnut brown hair and a clear perfect complexion, a lovely woman, really. But her dislike, no it was more than that, shone in her eyes as she glared at Grace.

The woman in Grace gave way to the Agency profiler under that stare. Why would she dislike Grace so much when they hadn't met? Jealousy was the first thing that came to mind. She was likely a former lover of Carter's. The woman was a werewolf in his pack else she wouldn't be at the gathering. Had she entertained hopes of being Carter's mate then? Had she tried to stop the prophecy the pack believed in by having Grace killed?

Grace didn't linger too long on the woman, but continued to stare nervously around the room as if she had no lead whatsoever. Ah, but she did. And a single question boomed in her mind as she continued her wide-eyed ruse.

It made perfect sense why someone would seek to kill Grace. She *was* the woman foretold by the elders. She would be Carter's mate, mate of the future pack leader. There

could be any number of females who resented her for a number of reasons because of it. To the point of attempting to murder her? Sure. People had been murdered throughout time for far less.

But why kill Francesca?

Think! What was Francesca's role in the entire affair? Grace knew from Carter that she claimed to know the identity of the woman the pack was seeking and wanted to exchange that knowledge for help for her husband. Whether or not Francesca actually did know it was Grace was unknown. That they were both part of the Agency and much of Grace's history was also unknown was unsettling for her.

If Francesca had known Grace was the one the pack was looking for, what else did she know about her? Did the woman know anything of her history?

No, she had to put that aside for the moment. The murderer was here and he had tried to kill Grace once. He could try again. Judging from the hostile stare she felt coming from the other woman, he most surely would.

Grace found Spencer who smiled at her, the warmth in his eyes sincere. She'd never had any suspicions about Carter's cousin at any time. Next to him stood Joseph, who didn't meet her gaze, but who listened attentively as Carter continued to speak to the gathering. Next to him stood Blue Garrett, beaming and happy in a blue sparkling evening dress that looked very flattering on him. When he met her gaze, he smiled at her nervously and quickly looked away.

That stopped Grace dead. She could understand why the drag queen looked so happy. There was obviously a relationship between him and Joseph and now there was no fear that Grace would interfere with that since she'd been identified as Carter's mate.

But why nervous?

Blue had known about Francesca Woods. He'd known why she was there, what she was after. And since he'd had tea with her and Joseph very shortly before her death, he just might have been the perfect person to tip off the murderer about the older woman's whereabouts.

It could have been so easy for the person behind the murder to convince Blue to

help them. If Joseph were selected as the mate of the woman in the prophecy, what would that do to his relationship with Blue?

Grace had not been in the picture prior to Francesca's murder. Killing Francesca could buy the perpetrator time to find a way to stop the prophecy from being realized. It would also protect Blue's relationship with Joseph.

It would also protect someone's interest in either Carter or Spencer. Since Carter was the heir apparent and the woman still glared at Grace, somehow, she suspected that Spencer wasn't the focus of the killer.

"What did you think?"

Grace gasped as Carter grabbed her from behind and squeezed her again.

"You did a wonderful job." Grace smiled when he turned her and hauled her against him.

"I thought you'd hate it since I waxed poetic about you." Carter pressed a kiss into her hair as he shook the hands of a couple next to him who wished them well.

"What you said was very kind." Grace was busy watching Blue who pecked Joseph on the cheek and gracefully made his way toward the beautiful glass doors that appeared to lead out into a garden.

"What is it?" Carter's whisper was low in her ear. "What's wrong?"

Grace watched the graceful, tall blue clad form as he disappeared out those doors.

"I'm feeling a little claustrophobic." Grace smiled up at Carter. "I want some fresh air."

"Let's go."

Grace started to protest but thought better of it. Why not take Carter? If she stumbled across what she hoped she would, wouldn't he want to be there?

Taking her time as she headed out to the garden, Grace grasped Carter's hand tightly in her own. The worry in his gaze didn't stop her. She held a finger to her lips as she opened the glass door. Carter nodded.

The night air was a cold shock and the gooseflesh that sprang up all over her

body only heightened the suspense of the moment. Very quietly, she led Carter through the large, sprawling garden, listening. It wasn't long until she picked up the sound of whispering voices.

Carter pointed to a tall hedge in front of them. The voices came from the other side. One voice she recognized as that of Blue Garrett.

"I gave you what you wanted. I want out. Now. Joseph has been asking a lot of questions."

"But I didn't get what I wanted." A female voice this time. "She was still found. Now that the ceremony has taken place, getting rid of her won't be so easy. Not without a good deal of suspicion. You can help me with that."

"Oh, are you out of your mind?" Blue's voice rose. "Why should I?"

"Do you want Joseph to find out about our intrigues so far?"

There was a pause. Grace knew Blue was battling with his decision.

But when she glanced up at Carter she saw the rage in his expression. His hand in hers trembled with it.

"Joseph might understand." The confidence in Blue's voice was diminished.

"But I won't," Carter announced his presence, rounding the hedge.

Grace stayed on his heels and just as she suspected, the woman standing there in startled surprise with Blue Garrett was the woman who'd glared at her so fiercely in the ballroom.

"You're behind this?" Carter's voice was deceptively calm as he approached the woman whose eyes rounded in fear.

But just when it seemed the woman would crumble in cowardice, anger transformed her features. "Are you surprised, Carter? You courted me, fucked me, and then dismissed me like you did so many other women. But unlike those other women, I wasn't going to just let it go."

"I never promised you anything, Kim." Carter's voice was tight.

"We were so good together." The woman took a step closer to him. "Don't you see that? You didn't need her and that damned prophecy. You had *me*."

Carter grabbed Grace's arm and pulled her to him. "This is the woman I love, my true mate. *She* is my destiny and you tried to take her from me."

The emphasis Carter placed on each word should have alarmed the other woman. It made the hair on the back of Grace's neck stand up.

"I'm the woman you belong with, Carter!"

Spencer and Joseph ran up behind Grace and Blue as the woman stared wildly at Carter, madness evident in her gaze.

"I'm going to rip your lungs out, Kim!" Carter exploded into the form of the wolf, springing at the woman before the shreds of his clothing could hit the ground. She transformed in the next instant and ran away with a high piercing cry that rose in the night sky toward the full moon hanging overhead.

Joseph's expression was stony as he grabbed Blue's arm. "We need to talk."

Blue hung his lovely head and allowed his lover to lead him away, leaving Grace and Spencer alone in the garden.

Spencer bent to pick up a scrap of Carter's dress shirt.

"I've got to find out who his tailor is," Spencer said as if they were having a casual conversation instead of watching Carter dash after the bitch who'd had Francesca killed.

"Oh, don't worry." Spencer offered Grace his arm. "Carter will deal with this. Let's go back inside and find Margaret."

"But there is another wolf out there. A male wolf that was waiting for me in my flat today."

"Grace." There was still no concern in Spencer's face or tone. "There could be ten wolves out there waiting for Carter. They wouldn't stand a chance. Not if they pose any threat to you, my dear."

Grace's heart squeezed in fear and something else.

Reluctantly, Grace took Spencer's arm and followed him back to the house.

Chapter 12

Grace allowed Carter to slide her panties down, giggling at the feather light strokes of his fingers on her body. Stretched out on her stomach in his bed, she'd just submitted her resignation to the Agency from her laptop. It had been a lot easier than she'd thought.

"Well, that's another loose end tied up." Grace sighed as he pressed a kiss against the sensitive flesh of her ass.

"Another?" Carter paused in his sensual ministrations, his fingers stopping their glide up the back of her thigh. "What loose ends are left now? You've resigned from your mysterious job. Most importantly, we unraveled the mystery behind Francesca's murder and ensured your safety."

"There is a lot more to it than that, Carter." Grace curled onto her side so she could look at him. "You didn't tell me what happened to that woman."

There was no emotion in Carter's expression at that. "I didn't kill her if that's what you want to know. But trust me, she won't be back."

Carter abruptly jumped off the bed, startling Grace for a moment as he walked briskly out of the bedroom. When he returned, he handed her a plastic folder that looked eerily familiar. It was just the type of folder she'd used at the Agency.

"I almost forgot to give you this. We found it in Kim's home," Carter explained.

Carter's generous robe slid down over her shoulder as she opened the folder and began skimming the pages it held. Her heart began to pound furiously in her chest when she recognized her own name, Grace Shaw, over and over again.

"I thought your name was Grace Cho?" The bed dipped with Carter's weight as he sat beside her.

Grace grinned up at him. "An alias. Shaw is my legal surname. The name of my

adoptive parents.”

Slowing down, she found the most recent summary page in the file and began to read it. It only took Grace a few seconds to realize that she held the mystery of her own identity in her hands.

“My parents were Xiaou and Mei Wong. They were from Hong Kong,” Grace said aloud.

Carter’s brow lowered. “You didn’t know this?”

Grace shook her head, continuing to read. “Until now, I knew very little about my parents. Now... God, Carter. Francesca had been studying this pack for years. They were studying my parents. Francesca knew before I was even born that I was part of your pack’s prophecy. And yet, they took me in.”

“Who?” Carter’s tone was demanding. “The people you worked for?”

“Yes.”

The Agency had taken her in, knowing this pack would be looking for her. They also had to know that while she followed Agency policy, it would never be. If not for Francesca’s indiscretion, she’d never have met Carter. She’d never have fulfilled the prophecy of his pack. Now her pack.

“You worked for the same people as Francesca, didn’t you? You know exactly what you are looking for in that file.”

Grace stopped rifling through the papers to look up into his beautiful face. “Yes, I did. And yes, I do.”

“Who are they? What did you do for them?” he pressed.

“All I will tell you,” Grace spoke carefully, “is that they’re observers. That’s what Francesca and I were. Observers only. We were never meant nor allowed to interact with those we studied.”

Carter snorted at that. “Both of you missed that particular memo.”

Grace put the folder aside, grinning at him. She loved Carter. She loved everything about him. His proper British accent, his deep dark eyes. And his body...

“I’m glad I did now,” Grace admitted.

Carter leaned in to kiss her but the last thing they needed to do popped back into her memory. "That's it! We need to close out our memberships at the PMS site."

Carter's impatient sigh echoed through the room. "You can't be serious."

"I'm quite serious," Grace informed him as she pulled the computer onto her lap and logged onto the paranormal dating site. After searching for a moment, she found the link for ending a membership.

"It looks simple enough," Grace told him. "There is just a pull down menu here for exiting. Let's look at the options. *Too expensive?*"

"No." Carter feigned boredom but his hand was sliding up her thigh.

"I'm taking a break from dating right now?"

"We could use that." Carter's fingers reached her pussy under the robe, his fingers gently teasing her labia. "It's not their business what happened, is it?"

Grace groaned. "It's hard to think with you doing that."

"That's the idea."

His finger slid into her folds, finding her clit. The delicate strokes he used on the excited nub quickly pushed any logical thought from her mind.

"The last one is *found my lifemate*." Grace gasped as he continued to destroy her sanity. "They want us to tell our story on the form."

Carter grabbed the computer from her and placed it on the floor by the bed. When he turned back to her, the expression he wore was purely carnal.

"Let's give them a good one," he said before pulling the robe open and diving for her cunt with his mouth.

Grace moaned at the slide of his tongue into her pussy. His fingers parted her sensitive lips, giving him greater access to the center of all of her pleasure.

"Yes, let's give it some thought."

Grace was doing anything but thinking at that moment.

Isabella Jordan

Isabella Jordan is a lucky lady who spends her days with her family, doing volunteer work and writing. She loves creating new stories of all kinds and chatting with readers and friends.

Isabella would love to hear from readers! Visit her on the web at <http://isbellajordan.com>.