

Carnal Surrender

Kate Hill

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Chapter One

Altah's heart beat more wildly than the drums that accompanied the brutal fights underway in the courtyard of her palace. All afternoon the finest Werewolf warriors from families throughout the world had been tearing each other bloody with the hope of earning their place as her guardian.

The competition was an old custom. Altah considered it cruel and archaic, yet Werewolves more than any race clung to the past. They accepted technology only to keep their place in an ever-advancing world, yet they still hunted with tooth and claw. They procreated like wild beasts, without the careful scientific intervention that made Vampires superior to every other species on the planet.

In spite of their many faults, Wolves remained her people's closest allies and continued to serve them well. Now it was part of Altah's duty to see that the relations between Vampires and Wolves remained intact.

When her mother died two weeks ago, Altah had taken her place as Ruler of the Vampire Nation. Though not the most physically powerful species, Vampires' intelligence, wealth, and technological advancements made theirs the most powerful nation in the world. Like Werewolves, they lived for several centuries, yet unlike their canine cousins, Vampires required blood to fuel their regenerative powers.

Tradition stated that each Ruler accept a Werewolf guardian to remain by her side until death claimed one of them. Their bond, sealed through mating, was among the strongest in the world.

Vampire Rulers rarely married and created heirs through artificial insemination with selected donors to ensure an untainted bloodline. Though marriage between a Vampire Ruler and a Werewolf was not allowed, their relationship with their guardian often turned to love. Over the centuries, many feverish affairs had heated the palaces

walls. Altah believed her mother's love for her Werewolf had hastened her death. When her guardian passed on, the old Ruler had followed less than a month later.

Altah had never understood the attraction. To her, Werewolves were arrogant, disrespectful and filthy. Sure they had a certain physical appeal and she wasn't exactly opposed to mating with her new guardian, whoever he might be, but to fall in love? The chances of Vampires giving up blood drinking were better.

Below, two pairs of Werewolves grunted, growled, and tore at each other with fangs and claws. Blood sprayed the white stone ground. A vast crowd filled the courtyard. Wealthy spectators, both Vampire and Werewolf, had the best seats on the colonnade. Poorer folk packed in as best they could along the walls while armed guards stood watch. Everyone booed and cheered throughout the fight.

Almost simultaneously, two of the Werewolves defeated their opponents, knocking them bleeding and unconscious to the ground. Altah stared with great interest at the winners, for these two would fight for a place at her side.

Both tall and well-formed, they were of similar height and weight. One was black-haired, the other blond and both had eyes of such vivid blue that Altah could see them clearly from her balcony. Both wore their beast shape for the fight. Though crude, the beast form was nevertheless intriguing. They stood on two legs, like men, but their naked bodies were covered with an animal-like pelt, one blond, the other black. Elongated ears, thick fangs and curved claws on their hands and feet completed their bestial features.

Once the defeated Wolves' bodies were dragged away, the referee -- a burly middle-aged Werewolf with a grayish-brown pelt -- signaled for the last fight to begin.

The two wolves didn't hesitate. They sprang at each other and their bodies locked with a slam that echoed through the courtyard. Their claws sank into each other's backs and dragged downward, leaving deep, bloody gashes from shoulders to buttocks. Savage fangs, far thicker than any Vampire's, ripped and gouged flesh.

Frenzied, the Werewolves fought as if rabid, lasting longer than any match yet.

As the battle raged on, Altah's belly clenched, her fists squeezed so tightly her fingers ached. Surely if they continued this brutal fight they'd kill each other. The onlookers had fallen silent, so only the growls and ragged breathing of the Werewolves sounded in the courtyard. They broke apart, circling one another, their eyes tinged red from fury and exertion, yet neither looked ready to surrender. Again their bodies locked and crashed to the ground. The blond landed atop the black-haired Wolf. With a mighty heave, the black-haired one reversed their positions. They rolled along the pavement, their powerful limbs squeezing one another while they bit and clawed.

Altah wasn't sure how much time passed before their movements slowed. Though completely exhausted, neither was willing to give up. At a motion from the referee, several Wolf guards armed with rifles approached the two warriors. It took several moments for the guards to pry them apart. They stood, panting and growling, their faces masks of pure rage.

Torn between disgust and arousal, Altah stared at the Werewolves.

"My Lady."

She turned to a young female messenger standing beside her holding a sealed note atop a gold tray. Immediately she knew it was from one of the Wolf leaders, for they were among the few left in the world who still used handwritten messages. Annoyed at the interruption, Altah snatched the note, broke the seal, and read.

If she were the fainting kind, she would have hit the floor from sheer excitement laced with fear. The message, signed by the leaders of the two families who had sent the blond and black-haired Wolves, suggested that she accept both as her guardians.

Altah drew a deep breath and released it slowly, once again staring at the Wolves who were still restrained by the soldiers. As far as physical appeal, both were magnificent representations of their race. Yet their excessive strength and stubbornness made them even more dangerous than normal Werewolves. If she agreed to accept them, she must mate with both to seal the traditional pact between their kind and hers.

Altah picked up the gold pen resting on the tray and willed her hand to remain steady as she wrote her consent on the message and resealed it.

Her heart throbbing so hard she thought it might leap through her chest, she waited. Though only moments passed before the messenger approached the referee, to Altah it seemed like hours.

The burly Wolf broke the seal, read the message quickly, then announced in a deep, rumbling voice, "By royal decree, it has been decided that Altah, Ruler of the Vampire Nation, shall claim an unprecedented two guardians. The Werewolves Rex and Kyros will be bonded to her this night. The battle for dominance is officially over."

Murmurs swept throughout the crowd and the Wolves, Rex and Kyros, ceased struggling. Their expressions changed from anger to shock then back to anger again. They no longer glared at each other, but turned their fierce gazes to Altah.

In spite of the fear winding through her, Altah wore her most regal expression and held each of their gazes in turn. No one, particularly such savage beasts, would intimidate the Ruler of the Vampire Nation. They were born to serve her and she would see that they never forgot it.

* * *

Kyros and Rex remained silent and fuming as they allowed the soldiers to escort them through the castle and up to a spacious chamber, far too richly decorated and comfortable for Wolf warriors. Before leaving the courtyard, the leaders of their families had met with them but refused to listen to their complaints that assigning two guardians was an insult to both men.

"You will be grateful for not only our generosity, but Lady Altah's. Had the fight continued, you would both be dead," said Luki, leader of Rex's family.

"No. Only one of us would be dead," Kyros snarled through gritted teeth.

"Yes, you!" Rex growled. His fangs, still bloody from the fight, shone against his lips.

"Silence!" roared Tallis, leader of Kyros' family. "You will not bring shame upon our families by acting like mindless beasts. You will accept the honor you have been given and perform your duties flawlessly."

"Death is preferable to sharing duties." Kyros lifted his chin to look down his nose at Rex, difficult considering the man was as tall as he was.

Tallis' fangs flashed. "If you do not conduct yourself in a manner befitting our family, you will suffer a worse fate than death. You will be disowned."

Rage flooded Kyros. His nostrils flared with each harsh breath. He could not be disowned and dishonored in such a way, forfeiting all he had worked so hard to achieve.

"Before you protest, I warn that you will suffer the same fate unless you agree to the joining of three," Luki said to Rex.

The black-haired Wolf looked furious, but kept his silence. He and Kyros glanced at one another coldly, yet hatred bubbled beneath the surface of their eyes. Kyros gladly noted that Rex looked as wrung out from battle as he felt. Though he would never admit it aloud, Luki had been right. If the fight had continued, both he and Rex would most likely have killed each other.

With curt nods, the two agreed to share guardianship of the Vampire Ruler.

The soldiers left Rex and Kyros alone in the chamber. Still panting and dirty from the fight that had ended just moments ago, they glanced around. A large black marble bath stood on a raised platform. The faucets had already been turned on and the tub filled with steaming water for the Wolves to bathe in. It was fine for them to shed their sweat and blood fighting for the right to protect Altah, but she wanted them scrubbed and dressed in finery before sealing the pact, lest her smooth ebony skin be soiled with their bestial filth.

"We could finish the fight now," Rex suggested, raising his clawed hands.

He and Kyros growled deep in their chests and circled one another. His heart pounding with battle lust, Kyros noted the quickening of Rex's breathing and smelled his anger.

"If we do that, she will most likely deny the winner," Kyros said. "Still, it might be worth it to determine which of us is the better Wolf."

"I know who's the better Wolf!"

“Prove it.”

In spite of how their bodies ached from the previous fight, the men lunged at each other, biting and grappling with vigor borne of wounded male pride. Kyros was vaguely aware of a servant woman entering with scented oils. She screamed and ran for the guards.

Moments later, Werewolf and Vampire soldiers alike pried them apart. Luki, Tallis and Altah entered the chamber seconds after.

Beyond the rage that nearly blinded him, Kyros was entranced by the sight and scent of the Vampire Ruler. The woman was mouth wateringly beautiful. Tall with erection-inspiring curves, elbow-length black braids, and eyes that shone like polished amber, she stared at her new guardians with contempt. Kyros gritted his teeth. How dare the bitch look at them like that? Her guardians, her mates who were willing to fight and die for her?

A glance at Rex and he saw the other Wolf also watching her with anger and arousal.

“Unless these beasts prove themselves worthy of me, I want nothing to do with them,” Altah stated. Without another word, she turned on her heel and strode out of the chamber.

“Did you hear that, fools?” Tallis growled. “Your pride is about to destroy a relationship between Werewolves and Vampires that has existed for thousands of years.”

“This is your last chance,” Luki stated. “You will accept your positions and perform your duties or face disownment. If you wish to destroy each other, say so now and have enough respect for your families and Lady Altah to leave this palace before you finish each other off.”

“We will control ourselves,” Rex muttered.

“And accept our positions,” Kyros said.

With growls of disgust, the Werewolf leaders left, followed by the soldiers.

Once again alone, Rex and Kyros stared at each other warily. Both were panting hard from their fight, but now their anger wasn't completely focused on each other.

"It is not fear of you that made me accept the ultimatum," Kyros stated.

"Nor I. It was the look on that Ruler bitch's face."

"Vampires are known to look down on every race but their own. If we work together we can show her that Wolves are superior beings."

"When I get through with her, she will know who is superior." Rex grunted with laughter. "I can hardly wait."

"Why wait?" Kyros said, curling his lip. "She wants us perfumed and groomed like a couple of fops before we touch her fine skin, but we are Wolves --"

"Not Vampires," Rex continued. "I say we go to the woman now and show her what Wolves really are. What *we* want."

"And what *she* wants. She might have appeared disgusted by us, but did you catch her scent? Lust, pure and untainted. The Wolf in us is what she wants."

Rex smiled, a wicked twisting of his lips. "Then let's make sure it's what she gets."

The men threw back their heads and howled long and loud, a sound of males ready to claim their mate.

Kyros tore open the door just as a servant woman was about to enter. Gasping with surprise, she backed away as the men strode by. It took mere seconds for the Wolves to follow Altah's scent to her chamber.

* * *

Altah stood by a floor-length mirror in her chamber while a female servant unfastened the zipper on the back of her gown. The strong yet pleasant scent of herbal oils wafted from the adjoining bath where she planned to enjoy a swim before joining with her new guardians. Not that it mattered to beasts like them. Just moments ago she'd witnessed how animal-like they truly were. Still bleeding from their battle in the courtyard, they had tried to finish each other off in the guest chamber. She'd only glanced at them for a brief moment, torn between lust and repulsion. The most

desirable quality for a Werewolf guardian was power, yet to serve in the palace they must conduct themselves appropriately. Rex and Kyros seemed unable to restrain their animal side. Unless they could carry themselves in a manner befitting her, she would not allow them to serve her, even if it threatened the treaty between their peoples.

The servant slid the dress down Altah's torso and over her curvy hips. She stepped away from the garment. While the servant picked up the dress and placed it over a cushioned chair, Altah removed her slip, bra, and underpants. Naked, she studied her reflection in the mirror. Tall and well-padded, she considered herself attractive. Slanted amber eyes and full lips gave her face an exotic look inherited from her father's bloodline.

"Which nightgown would you like to wear tonight, My Lady?"

"The silver one, please, Kyla," she replied.

Kyla nodded and headed for the trunk at the foot of the enormous bed covered in moss-green satin sheets and pillows. Altah's pulse leapt when she thought that tonight she would share that bed with two alpha Werewolves. She only hoped they hadn't injured each other so badly that their performance would suffer. Though she couldn't help feeling a hint of sorrow for the pain they had endured during the fights, she thrust such thoughts aside. They had chosen to accept the challenge insisted upon by their kind. It was Wolves who thought the binding ritual so important. When Rex and Kyros had been honored by being appointed her guardians, they'd rudely carried their personal vendettas into the palace walls. Such disrespect made them unworthy of her compassion.

Before Kyla could open the trunk and retrieve the nightgown, the chamber door burst open. The servant screamed at the sight of Kyros and Rex, their blue eyes gleaming and fangs bared.

They strode toward Altah and paused so close she felt heat emanating from their bodies and saw the sides of their strong necks pulsing to the staccato rhythm of their hearts. Still panting from the physical and emotional strain of their fight, they defined Werewolves at their most savage. Their musky scent filled her with every breath. The

wolfish pelts covering them from head to toe gleamed with blood and sweat, the muscles beneath well defined.

Altah drew a sharp breath and resisted the urge to bury her hands in their furred chests, if only to satisfy her curiosity about how they felt in their wolf form. Her gaze met Kyros' and a slight smile touched his lips, as if he sensed her attraction and curiosity.

The two soldiers who had been stationed outside Altah's door staggered inside. "We tried to stop them, My Lady," said one of the soldiers. He and his companion aimed their rifles at the Wolves, ready to fire at her signal.

"Wait," Altah commanded, then fixed her attention on the Werewolves. "Why have you come here, unwashed and unclothed?"

Their gazes swept her nude body. Kyla quickly opened the trunk, took the silver nightgown and turned to Altah, but Rex tore the garment from the servant's hand.

"My Lady." Kyla looked frightened.

"You may go, Kyla."

"But --"

A fierce look sent the young woman scurrying out of the chamber.

"We have come to claim our reward," Kyros stated.

"My Lady?" one of the soldiers asked. Both watched the Werewolves with a hint of fear.

"Leave us," she ordered. They looked hesitant, so Altah repeated, "I said leave us. My guardians have arrived. Your services are no longer required."

With a final glance toward the Werewolves, the soldiers left the chamber.

As soon as the door closed, Altah glared at Kyros and Rex. "Except for a life or death situation, do not ever burst into my chamber like this again, especially covered in filth and --"

"We're covered in filth because of you," Rex said, his deep voice laced with anger. He ripped the nightgown still clutched in his claws and flung it aside.

"You will be punished for this insult," Altah snapped.

Werewolves' strength and reflexes far surpassed that of Vampires. Altah had no time to react before Kyros grasped her wrist and tugged her against him. His arms wrapped snugly around her torso and he held her close to his chest. The hot, damp pelt felt strangely sexy against her flesh. He spoke close to her ear, his voice deep as Rex's but his phrasing shockingly cultured. "Have we not endured enough for your sake, My Lady? We deserve repayment for shed blood and ravaged flesh. I swear to you, rewarding us will not be unpleasant."

"And I swear that unless you get your claws off of me, I will wear your balls on a bracelet," she snarled.

When Kyros' hold tightened the slightest bit, she turned her head and sank her fangs into his hand. Grunting, he shook her slightly.

"I'm surprised the lady soiled her fangs on your dirty flesh." Rex chuckled. He grasped her ankles and she kicked hard, yet he didn't release her.

The Wolves carried her, twisting and snarling, toward the bed.

"No! Don't ruin the sheets!" Altah shouted. "Take me in the bath. Through that door."

The men paused and held each other's gaze. From her position, she couldn't see Kyros' face, but Rex tilted his head to one side, his expression thoughtful.

"We'll fuck her in the bath," Rex said.

Altah's heart pounded wildly. In spite of her fury, she couldn't control the thrills coursing through her at the thought of being claimed by these primal Wolves.

"Fuck me, you Wolf-swine?" Altah raged. "You don't fuck the Ruler of the Vampire Nation. You make love, if you're lucky!"

She felt Kyros' chest rumble with laughter, and Rex grinned savagely.

"One look in your eyes, My Lady, and it's obvious you don't want a man to make love with you," Rex said. His azure eyes shone like jewels against sleek black fur and long black hair. She wondered what he looked like in his human form, with smooth skin and claws withdrawn. And Kyros, how would he appear when the beast in him subsided? She could hardly wait to see.

"Any Wolf worth his teeth fucks. He fucks long and hard. He fucks until his woman screams from the pleasure," Kyros said, the crude language a contrast to his beautiful speaking voice.

His words tightened her belly, made her clit ache and her nipples tighten.

They carried her through the door. A large square pool of heated water filled the center of the room. Moonlight shone through enormous oval windows and light from many candles placed at the corners of the bath glimmered on the water. Near the pool were baskets filled with towels and containers of perfumed soap and oils.

Rex released her feet and Kyros swung her fully into his arms so that she was forced to hold his neck. For a moment their gazes locked and she noted his eyes were a bit larger and a lighter blue than Rex's. Fringed with thick platinum lashes, they blinked slowly, seductively. She'd been with these men only a few moments, but already she was starting to know them.

Rex was all fire and raw emotion. He would willingly sacrifice his life for something he believed in. She guessed by his speech he had come from poor kin, but had worked his way up as a warrior. Kyros, though no less passionate, had learned to temper his emotions. He was crafty, his intelligence nurtured by a classical education. Most likely his kin were wealthy and of an upper class.

"You're a lovely bitch," Kyros said and before she could reprimand him, he covered her mouth with a kiss.

Her first impulse was to struggle, but curiosity and pure lust got the better of her. His firm, soft lips moved slowly against hers. Once she relaxed, he thrust his tongue into her mouth. With a soft sigh, she tightened her grip around his neck and met his tongue stroke for stroke. His fur tickled her face, but to her surprise, she felt it retract and become a man's smooth flesh. She opened her eyes to see him in his man form and he tossed her into the water.

Gasping with shock, she stood, water coursing down her torso, and wiped droplets from her eyes.

"Bastard son of a dog!" she hissed at Kyros.

Now in their man form, the Werewolves stood side by side, chuckling. She studied them with interest. Rex had a light olive complexion while Kyros was pale with a rosy undertone. Sparse dark hair dusted Rex's chest while a heavier mat of golden curls covered Kyros'. Though their wounds had already begun to heal, several still looked painful and oozed blood. Both males possessed old scars from what must have been severe injuries, since their wounds usually regenerated completely.

Their cocks, though different, were each magnificent in their own way. Rex's long, well-veined shaft rose from a wiry thatch of black pubic hair. Altah could scarcely wait to wrap her hand around it and stroke the velvet skin. Kyros' cock, slightly shorter and thicker, had a ruddy head that Altah longed to suck. She couldn't decide which she wanted to feel inside her first. Each would undoubtedly be more than satisfying.

The men exchanged glances.

"Maybe this won't be so bad," Rex said.

"Might even be worth sharing, if her appetite for mating is as strong as she is beautiful." Kyros walked to the steps leading into the pool and waded in with the dignity of a king at his coronation.

Rex growled and jumped into the water, spraying Altah. He reached for her and nuzzled her neck. His tongue lapped her tender flesh, the sensation so pleasant that she closed her eyes to better enjoy it. Wrapped in his arms, she pressed even closer and ran her hands up his back. Powerful muscles flexed beneath his smooth skin. Her breasts flattened against his broad chest and his cock, trapped between their bodies, swelled to even larger proportions.

While Rex's tongue continued to flick over her neck, she felt Kyros move behind her and slide his arms around her waist. He lapped her shoulder while his slender fingers sifted through her pubic hair and rubbed her clit.

Wedge between the two gorgeous Wolves, she tried to control her lust and not give them the satisfaction of knowing how much they aroused her. It was impossible.

Rex sank lower in the water and took one of her nipples between his teeth. His tongue teased it and he nipped gently. Kyros grasped her other breast and pinched the

taut bud, then rolled it between his thumb and forefinger. All the while Kyros continued licking her shoulder and the side of her neck.

Kyros' cock brushed against her ass cheeks. It felt like silk over steel. Unable to resist, she reached behind her and wrapped her hand around the hard shaft while her other hand threaded through Rex's thick, wavy hair.

Rex moved to her other breast, sucking hard on the sensitive nipple. Between her legs, Kyros' fingers rubbed faster, then he explored her pussy lips. A long finger slid part way inside her and a wolfish fang gently scraped her stimulated nipple. Altah gasped, her heart pounding. She clutched Kyros' cock harder and rubbed faster. At the same time her fingers tightened in Rex's hair.

The mingled scents of their arousal filled the air.

"Now, My Lady, tell us what you want," Kyros said and brushed his cheek against hers. It felt so good, his smooth face pressed to hers so intimately.

"What do you think?" Altah panted.

Rex bit her nipple a little harder, causing her to jump with combined pleasure and pain. "Tell us," he growled and tilted his face toward hers, his blue eyes alive with desire.

Tendrils of black hair clung to his forehead and she impulsively brushed them back. "I want you to do what you came for. To seal the pact."

"To seal the pact we must perform intercourse," Kyros stated. "Therefore you could recline like a corpse and we could insert our cocks. The pact would be sealed. Is that what you want?"

"It's all that's neces... necessary! Ah, gods!" she gasped when Rex sucked so hard on her nipple she thought it might pop off. At the same time, Kyros rubbed her clit, parted her ass cheeks, and used his finger to tease her taut sphincter.

"But is it what you want?" Kyros repeated.

"No," she breathed. Her dignity as a Ruler kept her from begging these Wolves for what she most desired. The woman in her screamed for their hands and lips upon

her, for them to rut her, like untamed beasts, with their cocks until she passed out from excess.

"Tell us what you want," Rex demanded. He continued sucking one nipple while rolling and pinching the other.

"I want... oh gods!... yes," she gasped. Kyros cupped her soft mound with his large hand and slid two fingers into her pussy, exploring and at the same time massaging her clit, while his other hand worked her ass. His fingertip tapped rhythmically against her sphincter. The tight little ring contracted and her heart beat out of control.

"You want?" Kyros whispered in her ear.

"I want you to fuck me. Fuck me! I want your cocks in me and I want to suck them."

"Let's go." Rex straightened and slung Altah over his shoulder. It was an undignified position for a woman of her rank, but at the moment she didn't care. All she wanted was to be fucked, licked, kissed, and sucked by these two untamable Wolves.

Rex strode out of the pool using the stairs, but Kyros hoisted himself over the side so that he could more quickly grasp an oversized towel from one of the baskets. He spread it on the polished stone floor and Rex placed Altah upon it with shocking tenderness. Kyros knelt behind her and pinned her hands above her head. She glanced up into his eyes. Beneath their controlled surface leapt flames of lust. He ran the tip of his tongue over his slender lips. For the first time she noticed the delicate bow of his upper lip and longed to kiss it again. Rex used his knee to spread her legs. His lips were fuller than Kyros', the bottom one especially so. It jutted out slightly in a cute little pout. She wanted to nibble and suck it.

Rex was about to mount her when Kyros suddenly released Altah and thrust the black-haired Wolf off her.

"Wait," the blond Wolf growled. "Why should you take her first?"

His lip curled, Rex glared at Kyros. "What's the difference?"

"If there's not, then let me have her first." Kyros turned back to Altah and lowered his mouth to hers for a kiss. She closed her eyes and reached for him in anticipation, but the kiss never came.

Rex knocked the other man away from Altah. "You're not having her before me."

Ignoring Altah, the two began circling one another. Their growls echoed throughout the room, their eyes blazed and their scents changed from lustful to furious.

Altah pushed herself onto her elbow and wrinkled her nose. "I don't believe this. These bastards are crazy." Trembling with unfulfilled passion, she was almost mad enough to join in the fight, but she wanted her frustration eased in another way.

The Wolves looked ready to spring at one another and she shouted, "Hey! Wolf-swine! I don't give a damn if you're the sort of man who makes love or fucks, you don't keep a lady waiting."

They paused and glanced at her, then back to each other. Neither moved from their defensive stance, nor did they attack, which Altah thought was a good thing. At least she had some semblance of control over them.

"She's right," Rex said.

Kyros raised a sleek blond eyebrow and held Altah's gaze. "Then perhaps the lady should choose who stakes the first claim."

Chapter Two

Altah glanced from Kyros to Rex. Other than their similar height, lean muscled builds, and wide set blue eyes, they were almost complete opposites in appearance. Each was sinfully handsome. Kyros' face was fuller, his nose well formed but broader than Rex's long slender one. The blond Wolf had a square jaw and wide cheekbones while the black-haired Wolf had a narrower, more chiseled face.

Truly she couldn't decide who she wanted more.

"Let's do this the simple way," she said. "Which of you is older?"

Rex snorted. "Isn't it obvious? He is."

Kyros flung him a gloating look. "If that's meant to be an insult, all I can say is aren't you ashamed that a youth such as yourself couldn't defeat an older Wolf?"

"If the fight had taken its natural course, I have no doubt my stamina would have far surpassed yours."

"Perhaps you're right," Kyros said.

"Huh?" both Altah and Rex said in unison.

"A young man with your stamina will surely outlast me, therefore I should go first and struggle to keep up as long as I can."

Altah would have laughed aloud, both at Kyros' slyness and Rex's stunned expression, but she hadn't time. Kyros covered her body with his. One of his heavily muscled legs slid between hers, opening her to receive his thick, hard cock. She wrapped her arms around him, her smooth ebony skin pressed against his pale flesh that was roughened in places by curling blond hair.

Rather than taking her with a fierce thrust, he rested his bulbous cock head against her wet pussy lips. He covered her mouth with another plundering kiss. While his tongue caressed hers with delicious strokes, he slowly filled her with his cock.

Altah moaned with pleasure and wrapped her legs around Kyros, relishing his hard muscles and warm flesh. A low, sexy growl from Rex forced her to open her eyes. She gazed at the black-haired Werewolf who stood nearby, his large fist curled around his erect cock. His gaze met hers and while Kyros thrust into her, Rex stroked in time with the blond Wolf's pumping hips.

The full eroticism of what was happening struck Altah with a warm wave of desire. Here she was, completely possessed by a gorgeous, pale-skinned, silken-haired Wolf while another magnificent, dark-haired beast watched with flaming eyes.

"Ah, by the gods," she panted, her eyelids fluttering as passion grew. Though she longed to close her eyes to better enjoy the sensations Kyros created in her body, she couldn't bear to tear her gaze from Rex. His eyes were half closed, his chest heaving and hand flying on his straining cock as his excitement increased.

Low, passionate growls from Kyros rumbled in her ear. Heat from his body seeped into her, mingling with her own inner fire. Closer and closer he pushed her to the peak of desire. Her clit throbbed and pussy clamped around his cock. In spite of his excitement, Kyros' motions remained steady and controlled.

Moaning, Altah clung tightly to his neck. She closed her eyes, licking and kissing the flesh, savoring the sensation of straining tendons and throbbing arteries beneath. The desire to drink his blood overcame her and with a cry of ecstasy she sank her teeth into his neck and drank deeply of his bittersweet blood.

"Ah! Gods, woman!" Kyros groaned, thrusting faster while she sucked his neck.

Altah exploded in wave after wave of orgasm. Her pussy throbbed around Kyros' cock. His ragged breath echoed in her ear and his powerful muscles tensed beneath her stroking hands. She grasped his buttocks and squeezed the taut spheres, then gripped his shoulders. Her tongue flicked over his neck, savoring droplets of his blood before the wounds created by her fangs closed, rapidly healed by his regenerative powers.

Finally she relaxed and lay still beneath him, her legs entwined with his and arms limp at her sides. Kyros' damp forehead pressed against hers. Her supersensitive

hearing picked up the wild beating of his heart. To her surprise, he was still rock hard inside her. After such intense blood sharing in the midst of making love, a Vampire male would have already come hard enough to hurl him into oblivion. Obviously this Wolf possessed more control and far more stamina.

She opened her eyes and found Rex still staring at them. A slight flush stained the ridges of his chiseled cheekbones and his breath came in ragged pants. His fist clamped hard around the base of his swollen staff, the balls beneath tight.

Teeth gritted, Kyros withdrew from Altah's drenched pussy and sat beside her on his knees. His thick erection glistened with her juices. The rounded head looked ready to burst. Altah couldn't resist a lick.

Her hands rested on his hairy thighs and she stroked the long, steely muscles while running her tongue over his cock head. Kyros drew a sharp breath and grasped the base of his shaft in a hold that turned his knuckles white. A slight smile on her lips, Altah swirled her tongue around his cock from base to head. She took the tip into her mouth and sucked fast and deep.

A groan of pleasure-pain escaped Kyros' throat, then low incessant growling rumbled in his chest. She moved her hands from his thighs to stroke his muscle-ridged belly. It tightened and jerked beneath her touch.

With a grunt, he pushed her away. Altah fell back on her hands and stared at Kyros who sat, his fist tight around his cock and the muscles of his broad chest twitching in spasms as he sought to control his passion. His nostrils flared and his teeth clenched visibly.

"I'm done waiting," Rex said. "It's my turn. Altah, come here."

"I'm Ruler of the Vampire Nation," she stated. "You come to me."

With an angry yet aroused sound somewhere between a grunt and a growl, Rex strode toward her, grasped a snug handful of her braided hair and jerked her head back so that her face tilted up toward his. His grip didn't hurt and she sensed this sort of love play was meant to arouse, yet her pride stopped her from surrendering easily.

"When I say come, you come," Rex said.

"I give orders, not take them." Altah twisted away from his grasp. Her gaze riveted to his cock and balls. From her position on the ground, she could easily strike him, but for some reason she didn't want to hurt either of these men. Also, she didn't care to think about the furious reaction if she struck Rex in the balls. She doubted he'd do her physical harm, but something told her he wouldn't be so apt to engage in carnal play and she *did* want to keep playing.

"You are the Ruler of this kingdom and we have sworn to give you the respect you deserve," Rex stated. "But when we are alone, remember that no Wolf bows to his mate."

"We're not mates," she said. "Our laws do not allow a Vampire Ruler to marry Wolves."

"The bond between Ruler and her guardian is stronger than any marriage," Kyros said. "Have no doubt that we are mates, Altah. You know it in your heart."

"All three of us?" she countered.

"Yes," Kyros and Rex said in unison. The Wolves' gazes met. They looked surprised by their synchronized response.

"Now," Rex finally said, his voice low yet commanding, "come to me, Altah."

He extended his hand to her, palm up, and she slipped hers into it. Rex tugged her to her feet and guided her across the room where he positioned her against the wall. He grasped her wrists and pinned them on either side of her head, then bent his knees and eased his long, hard cock slowly into her wet cunt.

"Mmm," Altah moaned. She breathed deeply while he flexed his knees, thrusting in a faster rhythm than Kyros had first used. Though slightly rougher than the blond Wolf, Rex touched her with the same tenderness mixed with passion. A demanding lover, he drove her to one orgasm then another in quick succession.

His breathing harsh against her ear, he quickened his pace.

"Oh, yes," Altah panted. "Rex, gods, yes!"

Beyond the heart-pounding pleasure, she wondered what Kyros was doing and opened her eyes partway. The blond Wolf stood a short distance away, his passion-filled eyes fixed on the couple, his cock harder than ever.

As Altah neared her third orgasm with Rex, Kyros approached. His hand slid between their straining bodies and found her nipple. Altah cried out in uncontrollable passion as he pinched and rolled it between his thumb and forefinger. She came again, even longer and harder than before. His fondling her seemed to feed Rex's passion even more.

"Ah, fuck," the black-haired Wolf said in a ragged voice.

When Kyros' hand slipped between them and caressed their joined bodies, Rex exploded. His savage howl of pure ecstasy ripped through the room, and he lunged into her with several fast, hard thrusts. He tensed like a bowstring just before the arrow flew. Leaning heavily against her, his hot, damp body pinned hers to the wall as they caught their breath.

Altah opened her eyes in time to see Kyros tap Rex on the arm. The black-haired Wolf lifted his head from Altah's shoulder and glanced at Kyros with sleepy eyes.

"Step aside, boy." Kyros smirked. "The old man isn't quite finished yet."

Rex felt a twinge of jealousy and irritation at the blond Wolf's smug expression. Still, his sense of fairness told him Kyros deserved fulfillment too. It wasn't the other man's fault that Rex had surrendered to his lust earlier than planned. Besides, watching Kyros fuck Altah would undoubtedly arouse Rex enough to go another round with the beautiful Vampire.

He stepped away from the wall, his hands locked around Altah's shoulders, and thrust her into Kyros' chest. The blond Wolf caught her and turned her so their gazes met, then he kissed her. Their eyes closed and they clung to one another with fervor. The lust between them was almost tangible.

As Rex studied them, his jealousy faded to arousal. A tall woman, Altah just reached Kyros' chin in height. Her luscious curves and flawless ebony skin were a

striking contrast to Kyros' steel-muscled build and alabaster flesh marked with battle scars. Strange, he never thought he could consider another man attractive and would never speak such thoughts aloud, yet he had to admit to himself Kyros had a certain appeal.

Only a select few Wolves had the tools and the talent to become elite warriors, masters of both ancient and modern warfare. Kyros, like Rex, was considered among the best. Rex had led his troops to victory in several battles before he decided to compete for Altah's guardianship.

It hadn't been simply the honor of serving the Ruler of the Vampire Nation that drew him to the challenge, but the woman herself. From the moment he'd seen her, he'd thought of no one else. Her amber eyes and smooth voice had filled his dreams. More often than not, he awoke with a rock hard erection and a deep yearning for more than just her body.

That was why he'd fought so desperately to serve her. If he couldn't have her, death was preferable to life without her. It was like a madness, his need for her, but here he was sharing her with Kyros. At least he had her. He briefly considered making another attempt to kill the blond Wolf, then chastised himself. Kyros was an arrogant bastard, too stubborn for his own good, yet his record proved he was a Wolf of honor. Any attempt to destroy him outside of a forthright battle would be cowardly and pathetic, and Rex was neither.

Kyros finally broke the kiss and tugged Altah to the floor. Her kiss-bruised lips parted and her eyes gleamed with passion. She allowed the blond Wolf to position her on her hands and knees.

Behind her, Kyros kneaded her buttocks, then bit the spheres, leaving slight indentations in the smooth flesh. Except for her long braids and the trimmed thatch of pubic hair, her body was completely hairless. Kyros' big hands ran up and down her back and over her hips, then he parted her ass cheeks and ran his tongue between them.

"Oh gods," Altah gasped in a husky voice. Her fingers clawed at the marble beneath her and her elongated brown nipples hardened even more as Kyros' tongue teased her sphincter.

Rex's cock stirred, already swelling from where it lolled in a nest of wiry pubic hair. He reached down and grasped it, stroking slowly.

Kyros lifted his head and positioned himself on his knees behind Altah. His cock slid into her while he held her hips steady.

"Ah!" she moaned, and thrust her bottom in time with his pumping hips.

A flush spread across Kyros' broad, pale chest as passion grew. He arched his neck, shaking tendrils of unkempt platinum hair down his back. His eyes blinked several times slowly, then closed. Faster and faster he thrust, until his breath and Altah's came in ragged pants.

"Oh gods. Oh, Kyros. Yes, yes. Fuck me. Handsome beast, fuck me!"

Rex's heart pounded and the hand on his cock stroked faster.

Her breasts shook and entire body jerked as she climaxed. Howling deep and long, Kyros came, every muscle in his body tight and straining. Just before they collapsed on the ground, he pulled out of her.

Their bodies entwined, they lay together, two sated animals. Rex stopped stroking his erect cock and approached. He squatted and ran a hand down Altah's arm, relishing the feel of her soft skin. Thoroughly aroused, he couldn't resist brushing a thumb over one of her tight nipples. Kyros' head rested against her belly, his eyes closed and his expression thoroughly relaxed. Without thinking about what he was doing, Rex ran a hand over Kyros' blond head. His hair felt surprisingly silky against his fingers. Whether or not Kyros realized what he was doing or was lost in light sleep, Rex didn't know, but the other Wolf didn't open his eyes or shrink from his touch.

Rex turned his attention back to Altah and felt his chest tighten with desire. He could scarcely believe he was here, touching her. The woman belonged to him now, and to Kyros. At first he thought sharing her would be impossible, but they seemed to have

little trouble satisfying their needs and her pleasure was doubled. A woman who possessed the love of two powerful Wolf warriors was luckier than anyone ought to be.

After a moment, Kyros' eyes opened. He moved aside and stretched his long body.

Rex shook Altah's shoulder and she opened her eyes halfway, a smile on her lips. "I need a little rest. You're a couple of animals."

"You can rest while we wash," Rex said. He lifted her in his arms and carried her into the warm pool.

Kyros soon joined them with two cakes of lemon-scented soap. While Rex used one to lather her back and breasts, Kyros ducked underwater and washed every inch of her from the waist down. Altah's eyes closed and she moved her body this way and that to accommodate their washing. When they finished, she kissed Rex then Kyros.

"Now us," Rex commanded. He picked up her hand and placed a cake of soap in it.

Altah's eyebrows lifted. "You can't be serious. I am Ruler of the --"

"Vampire Nation. We know," Kyros said. He took her hand and placed it over his chest, his blue gaze fixed on her. "But behind closed doors --"

"We rule," Rex finished. He placed his hands on her waist then slid them over her belly. One hand dipped between her legs and massaged her soft mound while the other fondled her breast. He spoke close to her ear, tantalized by the delectable scent of her hair and freshly washed skin. "Wash him."

A muscle twitched in her jaw, but Rex caught the aroma of her rising lust. She rubbed the soap over Kyros' broad, hair-roughened chest, creating a thick lather.

"This isn't fair, you know," she said. "There's two of you and only one of me, so I'm doing twice the work."

"And gaining twice the pleasure," Kyros said. He raised his arms above his head, his chiseled stomach muscles elongating and chest flexing.

Altah soaped his underarms. She moved to his back and carefully washed his partially healed wounds. Her gentleness pleased Rex. Though she played the part of a spoiled Ruler, she was still compassionate.

After placing the soap on the edge of the pool, she used both hands to cup water and rinse Kyros. Her fingers strayed to his nipples, then she bent and used a fang to scrape one. She licked a droplet of Kyros' blood. Passion shone in his eyes, yet his expression remained frustratingly calm. Outside of battle, he seemed to have perfect control of his emotions. To Rex, such control had always been a struggle.

"Why haven't you done that to me?" Rex demanded.

Altah glanced at him, her lips glossy. She licked them and Rex bent and took her full lower lip between his teeth. He ran his tongue over it and tasted a hint of Kyros' blood.

After breaking the kiss, he said, "Why haven't you bitten me?"

"You want me to?" Her face took on an even more seductive expression and she looped her arms around his neck. Ripples of desire tore through Rex at the thought of her vampiric fangs sinking into his flesh. He knew that her kind often gave tremendous pleasure with a bite.

Warm, moist lips covered his, then she kissed his jaw line and the side of his neck. Her hand reached down and clasped his cock. She stroked his staff and it grew thicker and harder. Rex's pulse raced out of control at the first prick of her fangs on his neck. She sucked and licked. A shiver darted through him and he gasped, nearly climaxing into the water. The combined pleasure of her hand on his cock and her teeth on his neck almost overwhelmed him. He drew long, deep breaths and finally managed to get a hold of himself. The last thing he wanted was to climax again before he was ready.

He opened his eyes and found Kyros staring at them with a combination of lust and amusement. The fucker was just waiting for Rex to come.

Altah slowly withdrew her fangs and stepped back, licking her lips. "You are delicious, Rex."

"Enough," Kyros said. "Wash him quickly then both of you join me in the bedroom."

"You don't give me orders," Rex stated.

"Then don't join us," Kyros growled. "But I expect the woman to be in the bed beside me in five minutes. I have an idea that will provide great pleasure. If you want to be a stubborn young fool and miss out, that's your problem."

Rex was about to retort, but Altah placed a hand to his cheek. He turned and met her gaze.

"What could it hurt to see what his idea is?" Altah asked.

Desire and curiosity gleamed in her eyes. Rex had to admit they were feelings he shared. "Fine. We'll be in," Rex said, then turned to Kyros with a challenging look. "But I'm not about to rush my bath. We'll come in when I'm good and clean."

Kyros growled again and stalked toward the bedroom, muttering, "We're going to have to find a way to establish a hierarchy in this union."

"Don't think I'm going to belly-up to you because you're older than the mountains," Rex said.

"We'll talk about it later," Kyros muttered and disappeared through the door.

Altah reached for the soap on the side of the bath and rubbed it across Rex's broad chest. His attention immediately focused on her. While she continued washing his chest, fascinated by the whirling patterns created by the sparse black hair, he caressed her face with the tips of his long, slender fingers. The pad of his thumb brushed across her lower lip. She licked it, then moved behind him so she could run the soap over his shoulders and back. Altah treated his wounds with the same tenderness as she had washed Kyros' injuries. In spite of their ruggedness, these Wolves inspired affection in her. Her feelings for them confused her, but she didn't want to ruin the night by questioning her emotions.

She continued washing Rex, relishing the feel of his muscles and skin. By the gods, he was so lean and strong, his young body so full of vigor that it practically oozed

from his pores. Though Kyros' powerful body with its corded muscles and interesting scars fascinated her, Rex's aroused her just as much.

"For a woman with little experience, you bathe a man well," Rex said.

"Do I?" She playfully nipped his shoulder, then sank beneath the water's surface and washed him from the waist down, paying careful attention to his long, well-veined cock. The soap slipped from her hand but she was too engrossed in caressing him to care. One hand kneaded his balls while the other stroked his shaft. She ran her thumb over his cock head and used her nail to gently trace the vein along the underside. Rex's entire body tensed, his hard buttocks taut and hips thrusting into her hand.

When her lungs started to burn, she surfaced. Before she fully caught her breath, Rex grasped her by the shoulders and kissed her deeply. She gasped into his mouth, needing to breathe yet unable to break away from his fierce hold. Finally he released her and they stared at one another, scorched by lust.

"I'm tempted to fuck you once more before we go to the bedroom," he said and kissed her again. His tongue thrust into her mouth and hers met it. For several moments their wet, probing tongues engaged in sensual battle.

Altah moaned and clung tightly to Rex. She loved the feel of his warm, hard body so close to hers. His stiff cock pressed against her belly. Long hands, strong enough to destroy her, caressed her shoulders, back, and buttocks with soul-stealing tenderness.

They parted, their breathing rough.

"Let's go to the bedroom," Rex said against her lips.

She nodded, certain that Kyros wouldn't wait much longer. Something told her if he came to get them, the Werewolves would end up in yet another brawl.

Rex pushed himself out of the bath while she took the stairs. No sooner had she stepped out than he wrapped an oversized towel around her and rubbed her shoulders and back. Altah dried herself while he took another towel and quickly ran it over his body. She was still blotting her dripping braids when he picked her up and carried her

to the bedroom. Being toted around by men wasn't something she was accustomed to, but she had to admit she enjoyed it.

Kyros was sprawled on the bed, his arms folded behind his head, one long leg stretched out, the other knee bent. He stared at them through half-closed eyes, his sultry expression sending little waves of pleasure through her. Gods, these Wolves did things to her body and soul she'd never dreamed possible.

"It's about time," Kyros drawled. "I was starting to think you both drowned."

"And a Wolf of your age hasn't much time left to waste," Rex retorted.

Kyros uttered something between a grunt and a chuckle. At least the Wolves had a sense of humor, strange as it might be.

Rex tossed Altah onto the bed and she rolled over so her body half draped Kyros'. Her bent knee brushed his semi-erect cock and the delightful appendage swelled to nearly full mast from that brief touch. She raised herself on her elbow and met the blond Wolf's gaze. Using her fingertip, she traced the shape of one of his arched platinum eyebrows. He watched her calmly for a moment, then sat up and dragged her to the center of the bed.

"What was the great plan you had for us?" Rex demanded. He folded his arms across his chest and stood with his feet braced apart.

"Does the idea of lapping this beautiful bitch's pussy until she passes out appeal to you?" Kyros asked as he spread Altah's thighs and covered her soft mound with his palm. At his touch, warmth spread throughout her entire body. Her nipples tingled and her clit ached with need.

Rex's eyes sparkled with desire and he moved onto the bed. "Does garbage appeal to a goat?"

Altah curled her lip and lifted her head to glare at Rex. "You said what?"

Kyros glanced at the younger Wolf with a look of disgust. "Lovely analogy, Rex."

"You know what the hell I meant," Rex growled, though the ridges of his cheekbones reddened a bit. "Excuse me if I didn't have the time for lessons in charm while working my way through the warrior ranks. Not all of us come from wealth."

The Wolves' gazes locked and for the first time Altah realized their rivalry went beyond their desire to be her guardian.

"One only needs common sense, not a classical education, to know that comment was fitting of swine rather than a Wolf," Kyros stated coolly.

Rex's teeth gritted and his chest rose and fell with each furious breath. His fingers flexed as claws emerged. His beast pelt sprouted over his smooth flesh, his ears elongated, and thick fangs gleamed against his lips.

"No, please." Altah sat up and placed her palms flat against Rex's hairy chest. Anger and, to her surprise, embarrassment shone in his eyes. She realized Kyros' words had struck deep. Obviously Rex was more sensitive about his lack of finesse than she'd realized. "Don't fight again. Not now."

She glanced over her shoulder and met Kyros' gaze. Shockingly, the other Wolf didn't look angry, but thoughtful.

"I don't want to fight you, Rex," Kyros stated.

"Then take back what you said about my kin!"

"I didn't say anything about your kin," the blond Wolf continued calmly. "I was only referring to your choice of words. I meant no insult to your bloodline."

"See, it was a misunderstanding," Altah said, her fingers tightening a bit on the sleek black fur covering Rex's chest. She felt his heart that had been throbbing wildly beneath her hands slow to a more normal pace. The fur receded, as did his fangs and claws. Altah stretched out on the bed, spread her legs and glanced at first one man, then the other, with her most coquettish look. "Now someone said something about lapping this beautiful bitch until she passes out?"

Kyros glanced at Rex and gestured for him to pleasure her first. The younger Wolf positioned himself between her legs. He lifted them over his shoulders and ran his tongue along her clit.

“Mmm,” Altah purred, drawing a deep breath.

Rex licked and sucked her sensitive flesh, sending little thrills of pleasure coursing through her. He moved from her clit only to thrust his tongue into her pussy and swirl it around, then slowed his motions and explored more thoroughly.

While Rex lapped and sucked, Kyros moved on his hands and knees until his erect cock hovered over her mouth. Her heart raced with excitement. She opened her mouth and took the tip of Kyros’ cock between her lips. Using the flat of her tongue, she laved the head, then sucked it. Kyros groaned and gently thrust his hips, careful not to hurt her as she worked on his cock. She reached up and squeezed his balls while she sucked. The tip of her tongue ran over the tiny eye, then tickled the underside, carefully tracing the prominent vein bulging beneath velvet skin.

Altah moaned and gasped, her legs trembling as her climax approached. Rex’s hands grasped her hips, holding her steady even as she tried to thrust in time with his lapping tongue. By the sound of Kyros’ ragged breathing, she knew he was also close to bursting. Her fangs pricked his cock and pushed him past endurance. He sprang off her before coming in her mouth. His hand clamped around his cock and he rubbed fast and hard as his creamy essence shot toward the ceiling. That was all Altah saw before her eyes squeezed shut against the force of the orgasm pulsing through her. Rex’s tongue didn’t leave her until the final tremor rocked through her. He sat back and wiped his forearm across his glistening lips, his eyes aglow with passion.

As if their minds now worked as one, the Wolves silently repositioned themselves so that Kyros lay with his head between Altah’s legs and Rex knelt over her face. The pleasure was almost too great. Altah’s vampiric body was strong, but she knew she couldn’t endure much longer. These Werewolves were insatiable.

She licked up and down Rex’s swollen cock, then sucked the head, swirling her tongue over it. He thrust a little deeper than Kyros had. The crown of his erection brushed the back of her throat, but he moved up a bit so as not to choke her.

Altah was completely lost in sensation. Kyros ran his tongue up and down the ultra-sensitive side of her clit. He lapped the center with upward strokes that, in spite of her previous orgasms, soon had her writhing on the verge of yet another climax.

Moaning around Rex's thick cock, she closed her eyes and let herself float on clouds of passion. She scraped her fangs along Rex's cock at the same moment Kyros' skilled tongue hurled her into orgasm. With a feral growl, he pulled out of her mouth just before he climaxed. When it was over he collapsed onto his back, his eyes closed, chest heaving, and an utterly content smile on his lips.

"Damn, that was..." Altah's voice drifted off since she couldn't think of words strong enough to describe the perfection of what they'd just experienced. Somewhere in the back of her tired mind she thought they should clean up a bit before falling asleep. She felt an arm slip around her and haul her to a lean, hard chest. She inhaled deeply and smiled, detecting Rex's sexy aroma. A moment later another warm, powerful body pressed against her other side. Kyros' delectable scent mingled with his partner's.

"The pact is officially sealed," Kyros' deep voice murmured close to her ear.

Rex grunted his assent. Altah smiled and drifted to sleep snuggled between her Werewolves. Her guardians. Her lovers.

Chapter Three

The following night, Altah had a meeting with the leaders of all the tribes in the Vampire Nation. Her guests began arriving in the morning and continued until dusk. Their jets roared overhead as they descended to land at the palace's private runway. Altah sent Kyros to oversee security and report back to her when the leaders were assembled in the great hall.

Rex stayed in Altah's chamber as her handmaidens prepared her for her first meeting as Ruler.

She sat in a chair by her mirror. While a servant braided her freshly-washed hair, another painted her fingernails burgundy. Altah glanced at Rex.

He stood by one of the tall windows overlooking the courtyard. Tight black breeches hugged his muscular legs. A buccaneer-style shirt, the laces open at the throat, draped his lean torso. He stared intently outside, arms folded across his broad chest. A glance at his handsome profile made her long to kiss him again, but that would have to wait until later tonight. After the meeting, a lovemaking session with her two gorgeous Wolves would be the perfect way to relax.

"Many guests are in the courtyard," he observed. "This is an important day for you, My Lady."

"Yes, but it will go well." Altah spoke with confidence befitting a Ruler, but inside she had her doubts.

Though most of the tribal leaders had pledged their loyalty to her, a few would have preferred her brother, Theron, inherit the throne. Theron himself, leader of one of the nation's most powerful tribes, expressed his displeasure that their mother had chosen to name Altah as her successor. Until Altah appointed one of her children as her

heir, Theron would be next in line for leadership, should anything happen to her. By law, a Vampire Ruler could only name an adult blood child to take her place.

"I'm sure Kyros is making quite an impression on them," Rex said.

Altah didn't miss the hint of jealousy in his tone and expression. The rivalry between her two guardians would surely drive her mad unless they came to some sort of understanding.

"I don't doubt that he is," Altah said.

With a snort, Rex turned his back on her completely.

"Leave us please, for a moment," Altah said to her handmaidens.

"But, My Lady, your hair --"

"Just for a moment," Altah stated.

The women nodded and left. Once she was alone with Rex, Altah joined him at the window and placed her hands on his shoulders, relishing the feel of his rock hard muscles.

"Tell me what's wrong," she said. "Rivalry between Werewolves is normal, but I sense what you feel about Kyros goes deeper than a struggle for power."

"You're wrong," Rex said, but stiffened beneath her touch.

"I'm sorry you're forced to share guardianship with a Wolf you don't like --"

He turned to her, his blue eyes widening. "It has nothing to do with whether or not I like him. Kyros is a strong warrior. He will serve you well, but so will I. Just because my kin are not as wealthy and powerful as his doesn't mean his skills are superior to mine."

"You have proven yourselves equals on the field of battle, and I do not judge a Wolf by his kin."

"Then why did you send him to greet the tribal leaders and oversee security? It's because of his pretty speech and fine manners. Hell, he conducts himself like a Vampire rather than a Wolf."

"You're right. He does. But that doesn't mean I trust him more or --"

"Or what?" Rex took a step closer. His large, warm hands closed gently over her upper arms.

Gods, his delicious scent and the intense look in his eyes made her heart beat out of control. She was every bit as attracted to him as she was to Kyros. Though different, each Wolf was quickly making a place for himself in her heart.

"Or want him more. I don't know if this was planned by the gods or not, but I feel linked to both of you. I only wish you could learn to feel the same."

"I would die for you, Altah."

She held his gaze. Drawing a deep breath, she reached up and stroked his smooth, angular face. "I believe you would. I trust you both to guard me, but if you cannot trust each other, cannot... cannot bind with each other, then you risk my safety. Do you understand that?"

Rex shook his head, his eyes fierce. "Nothing is more important than protecting you. I would fight alongside the devil himself if it meant keeping you from harm, but Kyros is no devil. Like me, he is a Wolf of honor."

"I am glad to hear you say that." Altah smiled slightly, then took his face in her hands and kissed him. Rex pulled her closer, his tongue thrusting into her mouth almost ruthlessly. Her tongue met it with equal force.

Altah's eyes closed and she moaned softly. A thrill coursed through her when Rex's wildly exploring tongue scraped against her fangs. The kiss broke and both stared, panting, at one another.

"I need to finish preparing for the meeting," she breathed.

He nodded, though his gaze never left her even as she summoned her handmaidens.

* * *

That evening, the leaders of the Vampire tribes waited around a vast table in the great hall. Each had a personal guardian standing behind them. Most of the guardians were Werewolves who were paid handsomely for their service. Only the Vampire Ruler possessed guardians who served out of loyalty rather than greed.

Altah's soldiers, armed with rifles, were posted throughout the room. Once the meeting began, the guardians, including Altah's, would be dismissed. Though Kyros looked forward to some private time to train, part of him longed to be with his mistress. Already the bond between the Ruler and her guardians had strengthened.

Not that Kyros hadn't been almost magically summoned to Altah from the first. For over two centuries he had traveled back and forth between his family's lands and the palace, leading troops when the Vampire Ruler was in need of reinforcements. Kyros' pure bloodline and diplomatic skills combined with his leadership qualities made him an excellent representative of his species.

Altah had been young when he'd first seen her. Even then she'd been more charismatic than most Vampires. With a suddenness that took him by surprise, she'd become a strong, beautiful woman and he was lost. Though he managed to bury his feelings for her, he couldn't drive them away completely. The desperate craving for her grew and when the opportunity to serve as her guardian came, he knew he would either win her or die.

Rex had been a problem he hadn't foreseen. Strangely, since the bonding last night, his anger toward the younger Wolf had lessened considerably. He'd familiarized himself with the warriors before the competition and knew Rex's military record was exemplary. After fighting him, Kyros had even more respect for him. A Wolf of strength and honor was more rare than most of their kind wished to believe. If he must share Altah with someone, Rex was a worthy partner.

When Altah stepped into the great hall escorted by Rex, Kyros' benign thoughts faded a bit. A hint of jealousy snaked through him when he thought of the time Rex had spent alone with Altah while he had been busy with their guests. The young Wolf radiated power. He and Altah made a stunning couple. Kyros repressed the urge to growl and bowed from the neck when Altah approached.

"Everything is secure and in order, My Lady," Kyros stated.

Altah nodded, her expression regal. Her well-shaped nostrils flared slightly as she drew a deep breath and released it slowly. Though she appeared calm and

collected, she must have felt at least a little anxious. This was, after all, her first meeting as Ruler.

Flanked by Rex and Kyros, she took her place at the head of the long table. Her brother, Theron, sat at the opposite end -- the place of honor for the next in line to the throne. Like Altah, he was tall with smooth ebony skin and handsome features. However, he had a harsh expression in his large amber eyes. Two powerfully-muscled chestnut-haired Wolves stood behind him, their green eyes full of arrogance and cruelty, like their master. One, called Toft, Kyros had met in a battle game between their families. Kyros had bested him and by the seething look Toft cast him, the Wolf hadn't gotten over the defeat.

At a signal from Altah, the leaders' guards left the great hall. Kyros and Rex followed.

Before the door closed behind him, Kyros heard Altah greeting her guests.

While many of the guardians retired to their rooms until the meeting ended, others went to the stables and training grounds. Except for special occasions, such as yesterday's guardianship competition, the courtyard below Altah's chamber was for the Ruler's private enjoyment. Kyros and Rex, as her guardians, were allowed to use it freely. They decided to go there now and engage in a friendly sparring match to keep their skills sharp and pass the time while Altah was otherwise engaged.

Soon they were deeply involved in the fight. They bit and clawed, grappled and kicked until they finally broke for rest. Panting, their pelts slick with blood and sweat, they headed to the bath.

"Good match," Rex said on their way up the stairs to Altah's chamber.

Kyros nodded. "At least with both of us as guardians, we'll keep each other's skills sharp."

Rex grunted in reply -- a rather friendly grunt.

The sentry at Altah's door allowed them to pass without question and bowed from the neck, giving the guardians the respect they deserved.

Inside, the Werewolves reverted to their man form, walked straight to the bath chamber, and jumped into the pool of warm water. They washed and swam while discussing the palace security system and training methods. Though outwardly different, the men were more alike than Kyros first realized. They had similar ideas when it came to battle and he found himself enjoying the younger Wolf's company, even though they nearly came to blows over several disagreements.

During a lag in conversation, Kyros couldn't help wishing that Altah was with them. The image of her lush body writhing between him and Rex made his cock swell. He reached beneath the water and gave himself a quick rub.

He hoisted himself out of the pool and said, "We better hurry. The meeting should be ending."

The Wolves dried off and dressed, then returned to the great hall where other guardians soon joined them.

Theron's guardians stood close by. Their sharp gazes fixed on Kyros and Rex. This annoyed Kyros greatly, in particular the almost taunting look Toft flung at him. The battle instinct rose strong within Kyros. A glance at Rex and he knew the other Wolf felt the same. Still, they remained calm. Should the situation arise, he and Rex would send these Wolves squealing to hell, but until then they would conduct themselves with dignity worthy of Altah's guardians.

The doors to the great hall opened and the Vampire leaders strode out. Their guardians joined them. Some retired to their rooms while others went to mingle over supper in the dining room. Finally even the soldiers left. Only Altah and Theron remained in the great hall. Before the last soldier closed the doors, Kyros glanced inside and saw Altah and Theron facing one another across the table. He repressed the urge to growl. It was common knowledge that Theron was envious of his sister, especially now that she had inherited the throne. Kyros didn't trust him.

Rex took a step closer and exchanged glances with Kyros. Perhaps it had something to do with the bond they shared with Altah, but he seemed to sense Rex's thoughts and they matched his own.

The door closed and the soldiers disappeared down the hall, leaving the four Werewolves completely alone.

"We meet again, Kyros," Toft said in his grating voice.

"Too bad it's not in battle," growled the Wolf standing beside him.

Toft shook his head. "No, Seger, we're not here to start trouble with Lady Altah's guardians. Kyros wouldn't sully his claws now, except to fight to the death for the Vampire Ruler."

"He's sullied enough by the company he keeps." Seger cast a scathing look at Rex.

"If you have something to say, then out with it," Rex growled and took a step toward his rivals.

Kyros grasped his arm. "They're not worth your effort."

Seger's teeth ground, but Toft smiled evilly. "What's it like having to share Lady Altah with a gutter, Kyros?"

The insult to Rex hung heavily between them. The black-haired Wolf's fury was almost tangible and Kyros prepared to stop a brawl. Gutter was an insulting term for the lowest form of Werewolf, more acceptably called knifers or knife-bearers. Neither hunters nor warriors, they skinned and cleaned dead animals killed by other members of their family. Though most meat was now processed in factories, the workers were still referred to by old labels. Rex's kin were indeed knife-bearers and there was no shame in it, at least not in Kyros' eyes. They were necessary members of Wolf families.

"Rex is twice the warrior you are, Toft. I'd know, since I've done battle with both of you. You begged for quarter, if I recall. I would rather this knife-bearer fight beside me than you with your *pure* bloodline. It didn't serve you then, and I doubt it would help you now."

Rex glanced at him with a look of surprise and a hint of gratitude.

Overcome by fury, Toft made a motion to attack. Claws shot from his hands and fur sprang from his flesh as he lunged at Kyros. Seger stopped him and shoved him against the wall.

"Control yourself!" Seger growled.

"This is a palace, not a training field," Rex said.

"And we will remove you by force, if necessary," Kyros added. "That would not only be embarrassing to your master, but to your families, as well."

Still glaring at one another, the four Wolves fell silent, waiting for Altah and Theron to emerge.

* * *

Theron leaned back in his chair and stared at Altah with scarcely repressed fury.

Though she had never liked her brother, her hatred of him had grown throughout the meeting with the tribal leaders. While others respectfully debated issues, Theron tried to debase her at every turn. His condescending tones and the way he questioned her, as if trying to find fault in her knowledge and logic, infuriated her. Not that his little plan to make her look like a fool in front of the leaders had worked. Altah spent too much time keeping up with issues within the Vampire Nation and abroad. The other leaders soon ignored or thrust aside Theron's arguments, yet inside Altah still seethed.

"So, you're the Vampire Ruler and you have two Wolf guardians," Theron said, then shrugged. "I've found two to be better than one and from what I hear, yours are a couple of mad dogs. There's been talk all over since yesterday's competition, about how they ripped through all challengers then nearly destroyed themselves as well."

"At least my mad dogs serve out of honor and wouldn't sell their souls to the highest bidder," Altah said.

Theron raised a slim eyebrow. "Sure about that, are you? After all, what better place to serve than in the Vampire Ruler's palace?"

Altah chose to ignore his comment. How could he possibly understand what she, Kyros, and Rex shared together? She had experienced it and still could scarcely believe the closeness already developing among them.

"You wanted to talk privately so talk, Altah, and I doubt it's regarding our Werewolf servants," Theron said.

"First you will address me as My Lady," she said with authority that even Theron dared not dispute.

"Of course, My Lady. What did you want to discuss?"

"Your attitude. Unless you want to find yourself undergoing a trial to remove you as heir to the throne, you will concentrate your efforts on the welfare of your tribe rather than wasting time trying to discredit me."

Hatred gleamed in his eyes, but he said calmly, "Being Ruler doesn't mean you won't be questioned. The tribal leaders have the right to voice their opinion and do what's best for the people, even if it means disagreeing with you, *My Lady*."

"As you could see during this meeting, I am open to what the leaders have to say, but I demand the same respect I give. You will start conducting yourself like a tribal leader and not an arrogant brat, Theron, or you will feel my wrath. *Do you understand?*"

Altah's gaze held his and it was Theron who looked away. "Yes, My Lady."

"That is all."

He bowed from the neck and swept out of the room. Seconds later, Kyros and Rex joined her.

With a sigh, she massaged her temples in an attempt to relieve a nagging headache.

"Are you not well, My Lady?" Kyros asked.

She forced a smile and glanced from one Wolf to the other. In spite of their gruff appearance, concern shone in their eyes and she had the sudden urge to melt into their arms. "I'm fine. Just wonderful," she said and stood.

Rex leaned closer and whispered in her ear, "Perhaps we can make that lie a truth?"

This time her smile was genuine. She reached up and stroked his cheek, then glanced at Kyros who watched her with lust and underlying concern. Sometimes he was almost too vampiric. It would be nearly impossible to hide anything from him.

Maybe she didn't want to. Rex and Kyros were her guardians, the only people in the world with whom she needn't hide her innermost self -- at least in private.

"Come," she said and left the great hall. They followed behind her, appearing to any onlooker they passed as ever obedient servants. When her chamber door closed behind them, Altah was quickly reminded that true alpha Wolves can never be tamed.

"When my handmaidens come to undress me, you will wait outside," Altah ordered, still using the regal yet commanding tone from the meeting.

She reached for the buzzer on the wall that would summon her handmaidens, but Rex grasped her wrist, hauled her to his powerful chest and held her arms to her sides.

"You won't need your handmaidens tonight," he growled softly in her ear.

"Release me," she stated, though in truth there was nowhere she'd rather be than in his arms or Kyros'.

"Have you already forgotten what we told you? You are the Vampire Ruler, but we bow to no one." Kyros approached and placed a hand to her cheek. His palm felt warm and rough. She longed to feel it on her breasts. As if sensing her need, he grasped the front of her dress, tore it down her middle and used his clawed fingertip to slice her bra open.

"Are you crazy?" she demanded. "You destroyed my dress!"

"A meager price," Kyros said and cupped her breast. His thumb brushed the nipple, then he bent and took the plump bud between his lips. His tongue rolled over it and he nipped it gently.

Altah's heart pounded out of control. Her eyes closed and she leaned back against Rex, relishing the sensation of his powerful torso and his hair-dusted chest against her back. The feel of Kyros' lips on her breast was incredible. In a matter of seconds she had forgotten about the meeting and Theron. Now her entire focus was on the drives of her body and the sexy Werewolves bent on fucking her into oblivion. Damn, what a trip it was going to be!

"I love your scent," Rex said close to her ear. He guided her arms upward and ordered, "Hold onto my neck."

Her back still pressed against his chest, she obeyed and clasped his neck. The sensation of his thick curls and smooth skin felt wonderful.

"Don't let go, no matter what we do," Rex said. "Answer me, you sexy bitch."

"Yes," Altah breathed.

Kyros sank to his knees in front of her and pulled down her panties. She stepped out of them and kicked them aside before he grasped her hips. His warm, wet mouth covered her clit. At the same moment Rex cupped her breasts and kneaded them. He pinched her nipples and rolled them between his thumbs and forefingers.

Altah closed her eyes and moaned with intense pleasure. Her nipples tingled and ached. Shivers of delight ran down her spine. Kyros' tongue lapped her clit while he slid first one finger then another into her drenched, quivering cunt. He rubbed and explored, licked and tasted. His firm, moist lips tugged on her clit, then he ran his tongue up and down the side of it. Altah's mind spun, her body engulfed by flames of passion.

She moved her hands from Rex's neck, but he growled and said, "Put them back."

"But, oh, baby, I don't think I can... hell, I don't think I can keep standing." She wasn't lying about that. Between Rex's fingers pinching and rubbing her elongated nipples and Kyros' lips, tongue, and fingers on her clit and cunt, she had turned into a quivering mass of sensation. Her legs trembled as she neared her climax.

As if sensing her breaking point, they slowed their motions. Rex simply held her heaving breasts and Kyros paused, the flat of his tongue pressed against her pussy, his fingers going still inside her.

Ever so slowly, they began the delicious torture again. The pads of Rex's thumbs rolled over her nipples. Kyros eased his fingers in and out of her to the rhythm of his tongue on her swollen nub.

"Oh gods," she murmured, her head lolling against Rex's shoulder, her fingers clutching the back of his neck hard.

Her legs weakened even more, but Kyros grasped her hips and supported her almost completely while he lapped her clit. Damn, every moment with these Wolves seemed to get better and better. They'd only been together a short time, but already she could scarcely remember what her life was like before them. One thing was certain, she couldn't imagine the rest of her life without them.

"Please," she panted. "Fuck me."

Rex chuckled. "Yes, we'll fuck. Remember, My Lady, we have all night."

"Night creatures," Altah panted. They might not be the same species, but now there was no way she could deny the fevered attraction between Vamps and Wolves.

"Oh gods!" she cried, her voice raw with passion. Simultaneously, Rex and Kyros sped their motions. Tits, clit, and cunt all stimulated so perfectly pushed her over the edge. Her eyes rolled back and her heart threatened to explode.

"Ah, ah! Oh gods, oh..." Altah's entire body thrashed and strained so hard she nearly lost her grip on Rex's neck. Somehow she managed to cling to it in spite of the waves of climax that hurled her into another realm of existence.

Her eyes still closed, she felt Rex lift her in his arms and carry her to the bed. Only when he removed her torn dress and bra did she open her eyes and meet his burning gaze.

Kyros climbed onto the foot of the bed and caressed her legs from calf to thigh. He ran his thumb over the damp curls covering her clit.

The sound of tearing material brought her attention back to Rex who used his claws to shred four lengths of fabric from her ruined dress. He tossed two strips to Kyros.

"Umm, I think I like this," Altah purred as they used the fabric to bind her wrists and ankles to the bedposts.

Seconds later she lay spread-eagle, her entire body at the mercy of her powerful, sexy Wolves. Rex joined Kyros by her feet. Beginning at the ankle, they each licked their

way up one leg. Rex paused when he reached her pelvis while Kyros moved slightly aside and continued lapping up to her breasts. The sensations again rocked her body, making her nipples swell and her heart beat like crazy.

"Oh, oh, yeah," Altah panted, rolling her head from side to side, her eyes closed to better enjoy their carnal game.

Between her legs, Rex thrust his tongue into her pussy and explored. His hands slid beneath her and squeezed her ass. Kyros sucked one nipple and fondled the other.

Rex grunted and Kyros moved away from her. She opened her eyes, about to protest, but Rex swiftly covered her body with his and kissed her. His tongue thrust into her mouth at the same time he filled her with his thick, hard cock.

"Mmm," Altah moaned, as he pumped steadily into her. She glanced at Kyros who studied them with smoldering blue eyes.

Edging closer, he caressed one of her feet, and then her calf. His hand strayed to Rex's thigh, then trailed up his buttocks. The black-haired Wolf grunted softly, a thoroughly aroused sound, and thrust a bit faster. Though Altah longed to close her eyes, she felt drawn to the sight of Kyros stroking Rex while he pumped into her. The pale-haired Wolf used both hands to stroke Rex's lower back. His long, lean fingers trailed over Rex's ribs. He used the tip of one claw to trace his spine to the back of his neck, gently enough that he didn't break the skin. Rex must have liked the sensation because he grunted with pleasure. He plunged faster in his excitement and spurred Altah closer to another orgasm.

Kyros leaned over their straining bodies and sank his teeth into the back of Rex's neck in a wolfish love-bite. A thrill of pre-orgasmic pleasure rolled through Altah at the sight of one Wolf biting the other. The desire for blood overcame her, as well. Her fangs pierced Rex's shoulder. At that moment they came simultaneously. The black-haired Wolf lunged fiercely into her while she thrashed wildly beneath him.

Gasping, he pulled out of her and flopped onto his back, his chest heaving. Before she had a chance to fully recover, Kyros mounted her, his lips drawn back over his thick ivory fangs. He thrust into her drenched, throbbing cunt.

"Ahh. Oh, yes. Yes, Kyros, yes!" she urged.

It took a moment for her to come again. Her pussy clamped tightly around his cock, squeezing and pulsing. Kyros threw back his head and howled savagely as he came long and hard.

He rolled onto his side, panting, while Rex untied her ankles and wrists. Once she was free, Kyros tugged her close to his warm, steely body. A lazy growl rumbled in his chest as he nuzzled her neck. Rex moved closer and kissed her gently. His long, heavily muscled leg draped over her and Kyros.

"Anybody hungry?" Kyros asked.

"Um," Altah murmured, her eyes slipping shut.

"I am," Rex said.

She must have fallen into a light sleep, because the next thing she remembered was opening her eyes and staring across the room. Both Wolves sat naked at the breakfast table, devouring bread and rare meat washed down with fragrant red wine.

Chapter Four

The following evening, an outdoor festival was held in Altah's honor. The tribal leaders attended to spread goodwill among their people. The invitation extended to all members of the Vampire Nation.

Altah, flanked by Kyros and Rex, led the procession of Vampire leaders to the banquet table located on a raised platform shaded by a black and red tent -- the colors of the Vampire Nation. A cheering crowd packed the field surrounding the palace. Altah smiled and waved, though inside she felt a bit unsettled. Had it not been for Rex and Kyros' uneasiness, she could have relaxed and enjoyed the day.

While there had been no direct threats against her, other than Theron's obvious hatred, the guardians said they felt something was wrong. Werewolves possessed a sixth sense, perhaps stemming from their wild roots. If her guardians were concerned, then Altah didn't doubt there was good reason.

The previous night, Altah had confided in her guardians about her private conversation with Theron. Rex and Kyros had in turn expressed their dislike of Theron's mercenary Wolves, Toft and Seger. They agreed that all three were to be carefully watched, especially while staying at the palace.

Theron and his Wolves walked directly behind her in the procession, and she noted that Kyros and Rex kept a discreet but careful watch over them. When they reached the platform, Altah stood at a podium to make a brief speech before the festivities began.

She got as far as "People of the Vampire Nation" before Kyros dove and knocked her onto the platform. The breath whooshed from her body, and it took her a moment to realize the crowd had flown into a panic. One of the tribal leaders who had been standing behind her writhed on the floor, clutching a profusely bleeding shoulder. He

had been shot, and that shot had undoubtedly been meant for Altah. A bullet through the heart would kill a Vampire as well as a Werewolf.

Soldiers sprang into action, as did Kyros and Rex. They stood by Altah, shielding her with their bodies, until an armored military truck screeched to a halt by the platform. Kyros shoved Altah inside and turned to ensure they weren't being followed. Nearby, Rex's gaze scanned the crowd, then fixed on something -- or someone. From her position in the truck, Altah couldn't tell.

"Look out!" Rex bellowed and instinctively stepped in front of Kyros. The black-haired Wolf grunted and staggered into the side of the truck. He clutched his chest. Blood dripped through his fingers.

"Gods." Kyros reached for him, but Rex's teeth snapped at his hand.

"Forget me. Get Altah to safety," Rex growled, then tore off through the crowd.

"Rex!" Altah screamed, enveloped by fear that her courageous yet impulsive guardian had decided to chase her assassin in spite of a serious injury. Though Wolves were known for their strength, they weren't invulnerable.

Kyros dove into the truck, shouting for the driver to go even as he closed the door. The next moments seemed like a blur and soon Altah found herself locked in a secure chamber, surrounded by soldiers.

"You are safe, My Lady," Kyros said, kneeling in front of her and taking her hands. "I am going to find Rex."

"Hurry," Altah urged. Her heart ached with concern. The thought of her guardians sacrificing themselves to protect her was more painful than she wanted to admit. "If he has gotten himself killed... Just find him. I do not want to lose either of you."

Kyros nodded and left quickly. Altah sat, her teeth clenched. If her Wolves died, the person or persons responsible would rue the day they ever challenged this Ruler. She would use every resource to hunt them down and all her power to see them punished.

* * *

The hours dragged by while Altah waited for any word about her guardians. Finally her advisor, a vampiress called Chalice who had served since Altah's mother's reign, entered the chamber. Nelius, the highest ranked general in the Vampire Nation, followed behind her.

Nelius said, "Your guardians captured the two assassins and their companion driving the getaway vehicle. One was killed by Rex. The others are being questioned and have already confessed to being hired by two Wolves called Toft and Seger to kill you and your guardians."

"Toft and Seger are my brother Theron's mercenaries," Altah said, rage burning inside her.

"Yes," Chalice said. "Theron allegedly ordered them to see to your death. Had Rex not chased down the assassins, most likely Theron and his Wolf mercenaries would have gotten away with their plans."

"Theron is in custody now," General Nelius informed her.

"Where are my guardians?" Altah demanded.

"Rex was seriously injured. The shot he took was from a silver bullet. Kyros has taken him to Scarletcove Medical Facility."

For a moment Altah forgot to breathe. To Wolves, an injury by silver was potentially deadly if not treated in time. "I'll go there immediately."

"My Lady, because Theron is a tribal leader, we need your approval to place him on trial. And I'm assuming you'd like him removed as heir?" Chalice said.

"Definitely. Have the appropriate files downloaded to my personal computer and bring it to me at Scarletcove Medical Facility."

"Yes, My Lady." Chalice bowed from the neck and left to carry out Altah's orders.

General Nelius summoned two soldiers waiting outside the door. "Escort Ruler Altah to Scarletcove Medical Facility and be discreet. Her safety is of the utmost importance."

"Yes, Sir," the soldiers replied in unison.

* * *

By the time Altah arrived at the medical facility, Rex was out of surgery and fully conscious. When she stepped into his room, he was lying on the bed. Kyros straddled a nearby chair. Their intense blue gazes fixed on her.

Kyros stood and approached, his brow furrowed. "What are you doing here? You should not have left the palace at this time."

"I'm fine." She placed a hand on his powerful biceps and squeezed affectionately. "Thanks to my guardians."

She stepped away from Kyros, sat on the edge of Rex's bed and kissed the injured Wolf's brow. "How are you?"

"I'll be out of here in a day or two. As soon as the regeneration is complete."

"He had lost a lot of blood when I found him," Kyros said. "Any more damage from that silver and he might not be alive."

Rex's gaze locked with Kyros'. "Thank you for coming after me. If you hadn't, the other two assassins would have gotten away."

"I was just doing my job," Kyros said. "You were the one who stepped in front of a bullet to save me."

"It is my job," Rex stated. "Until this happened, I didn't realize..." He looked uncomfortable for a moment and the ridges of his cheekbones flushed. "I didn't fully understand the seriousness of what we share."

"Yes," Kyros agreed. "We're loyal to each other. This is a three-way bond."

"Forever." Altah took Rex's hand and squeezed it. Still clinging to him, she reached out to Kyros who stepped forward and clasped her hand firmly in his.

At first she hadn't been sure about having two guardians, but at that moment she knew their relationship was as close to perfect as any woman could hope for. She and her Wolves were three hearts, but one soul.

The End

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Kate Hill is a thirty-something vegetarian New Englander who likes heroes with a touch of something wicked and wild. Her short fiction and poetry have appeared in dozens of publications both on and off the Internet.

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