

Wolf Caller 1: Control

Silvia Violet

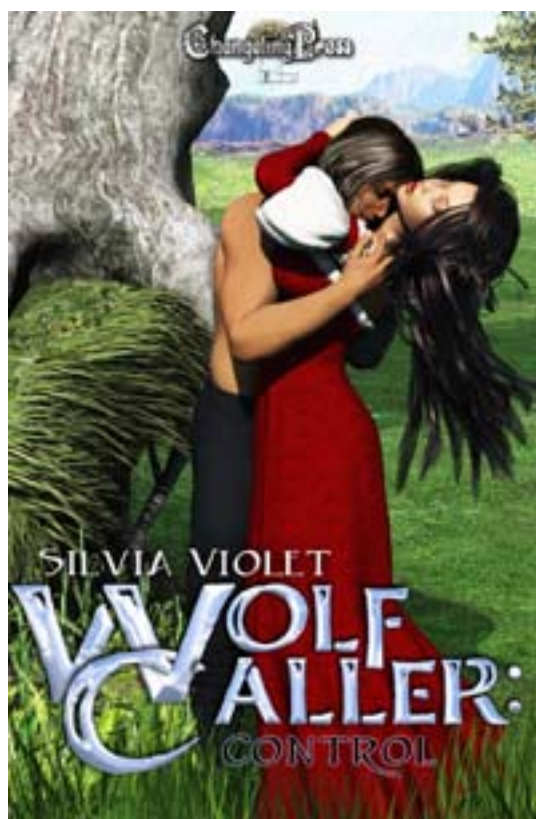
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Wolf Caller 1: Control

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Ultimate power...

As their world draws closer to war, the future of Albion is in the hands of a werewolf pack who must protect the country's most carefully guarded secret, a new magically-generated fuel source. Rumors about the mysterious Lord Derek Valmont abound, but no one in Albion's Upper Circles knows the whole truth. Valmont is a werewolf. He's also an operative for the Office of Clandestine Affairs.

Captivated -- literally -- by the hauntingly beautiful wolf caller-witch Serena, he's furious that he can't break the hold she has over him in wolf form. When she flees their encounter he drinks in her lingering scent, determined to find her again -- on his own terms. But before he convinces her to use her powers to aid his pack and his government, he'll take her to his bed and prove he's the one in control.

Serena may not be able to control the man as she does the wolf, but she's got an agenda of her own -- and her sites set on both the Alpha and his second in command.

Chapter One

Serena couldn't sleep. She'd spent the last several hours tossing and turning, drifting in and out of vivid dreams about her grandmother. The jumbled images were filled with snippets of what Serena knew were real memories, yet they seemed too strange to be real. Finally she rose and pulled a hooded cloak from the wardrobe. She ran her hands over the lush red velvet before swinging it over her shoulders. Never had she touched a softer fabric.

Her grandmother had made the cloak herself, just before she died. Nonna had instructed Serena's aunt to give it to Serena when she turned twenty-one. The first time she wore it, Serena had found a note from Nonna in one of the deep pockets. The note told her to wear the cloak on every possible occasion because it would show her a path to an alternate future.

She didn't know what sort of alternate future one might find while walking in the dark, but she couldn't sleep and the crisp early spring air called to her despite the hour. She slipped on her half boots and buttoned the cloak over her nightgown. As quietly as she could, she tip-toed down the stairs and opened the doors leading onto the side porch of her cousin's country house.

Her cousin and his wife would worry if they realized she'd left the house at night, but hopefully no one would wake and detect her absence. The wind whipped her cloak, making it float around her as she hurried down the stone steps and across the well-manicured lawn. When she reached the edge of the woods, an owl called sharply as if warning her not to venture forward. But her odd dreams had put her in a reckless mood. When else would she get a chance to stroll in the woods with a full moon showing through the trees to light her way?

She walked along the trail that would ultimately take her to the neighboring estate, a house her cousin had warned her not to visit. Serena had never met the owner, Lord Derek Valmont, but she'd heard plenty of rumors about his exploits.

He had disappeared from Albion City the year before. No one, not even his father, the well-respected Marquis of Longtemps, knew where he'd gone. When he returned months later, Valmont gave no explanation for his absence. Now his only contact with the Upper Circles lay in luring young women back to his estate and seducing them. By all accounts he was wickedly handsome and so skilled in bed that a woman would willingly trade her reputation for a night with him. Serena had to admit the thought of being so seduced sounded tantalizing rather than threatening, which might explain why she'd unconsciously headed in the direction of his estate.

A loud whir interrupted the sounds of the forest. Serena looked up and saw a dirigible moving rapidly past. Probably another military training expedition. War with Toulousia was looking like more of a certainty. Albion's army had been training like mad, trying to get a handle on every new technology they could. Rumors had circulated in Serena's circles that yet another new fuel source had been discovered, but all information was being kept top secret.

When Serena looked back down, an enormous black wolf stood in front of her. Her breath caught, more in surprise than fear. She knew instinctively that she could talk to wolves the same way she could talk to dogs. She held out her hand as she would for a dog to catch her scent. *Come.*

The wolf's eyes widened. It leaned away from her as if trying to resist her call. No dog had ever done that before.

Come. I won't hurt you.

Who are you?

Serena jumped. Had she imagined the response? Her mind told her she had not. *My name is Serena.*

Leave. The wolf backed a step away. She could read anger and fear in his stance.

What was going on? She'd kept her abilities hidden all her life. Nonna was the only other witch who'd come out to her. Her mother knew what she was, but they never spoke of it. The only power Serena knew she had was an ability to call dogs to her, to calm them if they were angry or afraid, and to heal them if they were injured.

Her friends simply thought she had a special affinity for animals. No one suspected that magic was involved, but Serena knew differently. She felt something come alive inside her when she used her power. Nonna had hinted that she had more abilities, but she'd died before Serena had learned how to use them.

Come. She called the wolf again, determined to see what level of power she truly had.

The animal snarled, but he took a step closer to her.

Come to me. She held out her hand and drew from the place inside herself where the magic rose, sending out every ounce of compulsion she could raise.

The wolf took two more steps toward her. His eyes glowed with anger. *You will regret this.*

Serena shivered. But what could he do? She was the one in control. Having never felt any resistance from the dogs she'd worked with, she'd never known how alluring such power could be.

Come now. She shouted the words in her mind and the wolf crawled forward, resisting every step.

Don't move. She reached out and stroked his head. Instead of snarling as she anticipated, he leaned into her touch, rubbing his head against her. His fur was even softer than her cloak.

After stroking him for a few minutes, she stood, suddenly ashamed of having forced her will on this beautiful animal. *You may go.*

I will find you and have my turn.

Serena's heart pounded. What was that supposed to mean?

He turned and raced away. She took a few deep breaths, thoroughly unsettled by the encounter. She picked up her lantern and headed back to her cousin's house, nearly at a run.

When she reached her room, she opened her trunk. Removing the false bottom, she took out the small book her grandmother had given her the last time they'd seen each other. The volume was a collection of lore about her kind that her grandmother had compiled. Serena always carried it with her, but she'd never allowed herself to read the entire book.

She'd been so afraid of what would happen if her friends and family discovered she was a witch that she'd denied what she was. Witches were no longer killed on sight, but they often met with unexplained "accidents," and they were never accepted by society.

Now she frantically scanned each page, looking for information about canines that could speak. Finally, near the end, she found what she needed. Her heart pounded as she translated the words from her grandmother's native Tuscan.

While commonly believed to have gone extinct several hundred years ago, werewolves do exist though they are few in number. A witch who can call wolves will hold power over them, but they will attempt to resist, unlike their animal brothers. Some may hold the power to speak back to the witch who controls them. A strong witch can force a werewolf to remain in wolf form. If they shift to human form, all control is lost. Werewolves have been known to exact revenge, even to kill those of our kind who wield power over them.

Serena drew in a shaky breath, closed the book, and put it away. Out of sight. Out of mind. That was best for now, lest she begin to jump at every little sound, certain a pack of werewolves was coming to rip out her throat.

Outside, the clouds were turning pink and orange with dawn's light. Serena knew she wouldn't get any more sleep after what she'd learned. She needed contact with something and someone normal to help put the incident from her mind.

She changed into a simple morning dress. She took the servants' steps and entered the kitchen. Her cousin's cook had gotten used to her early morning visits and often had a little something ready for her when she arrived. She saw a plate of scones

and a cup of tea waiting on the long prep table and smiled. She could think of nothing better than a cup of tea and sweets to make her feel truly human.

* * *

Derek Valmont flipped rapidly through one of the ancient books that lined the walls in his study. But the books he'd been given when he ascended to pack leader contained only a few references to wolf callers. He'd never believed they existed before, nor had the one who changed him, but the legend had been passed down to him anyway. And tonight, he'd met one. He was sure of it.

The woman in the woods had initially captured his attention because of her beauty. Her long, black hair hung unbound, escaping from the edges of her hood. He loved the way it shone in the moonlight and contrasted with her blood red cloak, a cloak no dutiful daughter of the Upper Circles would wear. Her olive-toned skin and striking dark eyes revealed Tuscan ancestry. He had never met women whose passions burned hotter than those he'd shared a bed with during his visit to Tusca the year before. He wanted this woman, and he'd intended to discover where she was staying and seduce her.

Then she'd spoken directly into his mind. At first, he'd assumed she was no more than a witch with an uncanny way with animals. But when he found himself unable to resist her commands, he knew she must be a wolf caller. No one had ever exerted such control over him, and he'd hated the sensation. He longed to sink his fangs into her, but he could feel her mental strength. His efforts would have been futile.

She would pay for humiliating him, but he doubted she'd correctly imagined the revenge he would exact. He would not kill her as his kind were rumored to have done when wolves and wolf callers existed in larger numbers. He would find her, bring her back to his estate, and teach her what it meant to lose control. An image flashed in his mind. The woman tied to his bed, her eyes wide with fear and lust. His cock hardened instantly, and a growl escaped him.

He would enjoy making her his lover, but that was not the only reason he wanted her alive. War with Toulousia looked more certain every day, and the existence

of a wolf caller could be the break his people had been hoping for. Having a human mate who could communicate with his animal and strengthen his powers would bring him a whole new range of tactics to use against Albion's enemies.

Derek sat down at his desk with a stack of books and pressed a button on the intercom. "Luke, I need you to find out if there are any guests in residence at the Winston estate."

"Yes, my lord."

He hoped they would find the woman there. She'd been on the path that connected the two estates. It dated from a time when Derek's grandfather had been friends with the grandfather of the current owner. Now relations were cool between the two families. Outside of his pack and the government office he worked for, the only people in Albion who wanted anything to do with Derek were women looking for a temporary thrill. Even most of the wolves and the human members of the Office of Clandestine Affairs were afraid of him. Of course, he had no one to blame but himself. He'd created his own reputation. Most days he could convince himself that his lack of friends didn't bother him.

He flipped through the first book on his stack and found nothing of interest. But halfway through the second book his breath caught. He scanned the page rapidly then went back and read it again and again. His heart pounded as he asked himself how much he would give for Albion. If he could bring himself to give up more of his freedom then he might have found a way to strengthen the pack and ensure the safety of his country.

Chapter Two

Serena slipped through the open doors into the courtyard and took a deep breath of the chilly night air. She'd been at the party for several hours and was beginning to grow weary of the endless, inane chatter. The evening promised no excitement. She'd broken things off with her last lover before going to the country with her cousin, and she'd not yet settled on another though she'd had several propositions.

She sat on a bench and looked up at the night sky. A couple's laughter echoed from the far side of the courtyard, but otherwise she seemed to be alone. Her thoughts drifted to the wolf she'd met in the woods, and her heart rate sped up.

"I was told I'd find you here."

She jumped and looked up at the man who stood beside her bench. She'd not heard him approach. Fuel-powered lanterns lined the courtyard, giving off enough light for her to see him as well as she would in the darkened ballroom. He belonged in an erotic dream. He wore his thick, dark brown hair unfashionably long, and he'd pulled it back into a queue. His eyes were light brown, almost golden. They were lit with something she could only guess was lust.

He was tall, several inches over six feet. His shoulders were so broad she feared for the seams of his black coat. The rich burgundy color of his waistcoat brought out deep red highlights in his hair. She fought to keep her eyes from drifting downward, though she desperately wanted to see if his pants fit as tightly as his coat.

"Have we been introduced?"

He lifted a brow. "Don't you know who I am?"

She studied his face again. There was something familiar about him, but she couldn't imagine having met this man and not remembering his name.

The beginning strains of a waltz floated onto the patio. "Shall we dance?"

Serena knew she should refuse. To please her mother, she walked a fine line between flouting convention and upholding the reputation of her family. She was always discreet with her lovers, rarely dancing publicly with them. But whoever this man was, she wanted him badly. She wasn't going to risk him walking away.

She took his proffered hand and allowed him to help her up. She expected him to usher her inside. Instead, he pulled her into his arms and began twirling her in circles right there in the courtyard. He was a skilled dancer, and his arms felt as solid as she'd imagined them to be. He pulled her tight against his chest, and she fought the urge to lay her head on his shoulder and run her tongue along the strong line of his neck.

Serena prayed that no one would wander out from the ballroom. Not only was she dancing with a stranger, but the lack of distance between them was scandalous as was her desire to rip off his clothes and fuck him at the home of one of the Upper Circles' biggest gossips.

The stranger slid his hand down her back and cupped her ass, pulling her even tighter to him. His rigid cock pressed into her belly, and she groaned. He maneuvered them to the edge of the courtyard and out into the gardens. As the music faded, he pulled her onto a bench and took her mouth in a ferocious kiss.

His tongue plundered her, stealing her breath and any will to protest. She put her arms around the stranger's neck and held him against her, returning the kiss with equal ferocity.

Just as she was growing desperate for air, he pulled back and looked at her, his eyes practically on fire. "I want you."

She smiled drunkenly. "Who are you?"

He smiled. "Lord Valmont, at your service."

She exhaled slowly. She'd been snared by a champion seducer. She should be annoyed, but her heart pounded with anticipation. She'd been especially restless lately, and the werewolf encounter had unsettled her further. Perhaps a liaison with a dangerous man was just what she needed. "I should have known. You have quite a reputation for seducing women without so much as a proper introduction."

He looked suddenly serious. "I assure you we have met."

Serena licked her lips with deliberate slowness. "I would remember you."

"Don't you?"

She shook her head.

"I remember *you* very well." When he smiled, Serena saw fangs.

Oh Goddess, no. The wolf. Derek Valmont wasn't just a dangerous man. He was a werewolf. She brushed her hands along her skirt and stood. "I should go."

His hand closed around her wrist, like an iron cuff. "I don't think so."

He jerked her onto his lap and fisted a hand in her hair, holding her still. She struggled at first but soon discovered it was fruitless. He was stronger than any man she'd ever met. His lips took hers again. The need to fight drained out of her as hot, throbbing pleasure assaulted her. Her pulse pounded in her ears, and her pussy clenched with need. She'd had skilled lovers before but none of them had made her this hot this fast.

Valmont pushed her skirt up and caressed her leg. When his hand found her slick folds, he growled against her mouth as he teased her. His fingers flicked across her clit and down through her wetness, dipping just inside her but refusing to give her more satisfying contact.

She arched against him shamelessly. He pulled back from her lips and moved his hand from the back of her head to her breast, pinching her nipple as he finally pushed a finger deep inside her. She groaned and ground herself down on him.

"How does it feel to be the one who's lost control?"

"Bastard!"

"But you're not going anywhere, are you?"

"Fuck you."

"You'd like that." He added another finger and thrust them both deep and hard, dragging them over that delightful spot inside her. "You'd like to feel my cock thrusting deep as I ride you."

Goddess be damned, he couldn't be more right. She didn't care who he was or what he was trying to do to her. She just wanted to get off. As it was, she was right on the edge. He flicked his thumb over her nipple just as he strummed his thumb across her clit. She bit her lip, but she only succeeded in muffling her cry.

She was so damn close. If he'd just give her a little more, she'd go over. She squirmed against him, no longer cognizant of anything around her. The whole party could have been watching, and she wouldn't have cared.

Suddenly Valmont released her and pushed her off his lap. Her breath was ragged, and her body burned with need.

"How dare you?"

"If you want to finish this, come to my estate. I will make it worth your while." Smiling, he stood and walked away.

Serena fought for breath. Part of her wanted to run after him, shove him to the ground, and take what she wanted. Another part of her wanted to run after him and stab him in the back. Instead, she sat on the bench and watched him go, telling herself she wouldn't, under any circumstances, go to his estate.

* * *

Derek's temper rose. He growled low in his chest. "I made myself perfectly clear. No one was to breathe a word of her existence."

"Yes, my lord, but --"

Derek stared at Luke, his second-in-command. "There are no buts. When I speak, you obey. That is how life works in this pack. Otherwise, people end up dead."

"I told Rhianna because she is our mission co-coordinator. I thought she needed to know that some of our resources would be used to track this woman."

"If our enemies learn of her powers, they will target her and we will lose a significant advantage." He didn't mention how the thought of Serena being harmed made his chest ache. That was something he didn't want to admit to himself.

"I did not mean to endanger her."

Valmont slammed his fist down on his desk. "When I say 'tell no one' I mean exactly that."

"I'm sorry, my lord."

Luke looked down. Color rose in his cheeks. Derek's cock hardened, swelling until his pants grew painfully tight. Luke was the closest thing he had to a friend and one of the few men or woman Derek could go to for advice. He hadn't meant any harm by his disobedience, but he needed to be reminded who called the shots in this pack. Derek knew just how to give him some enjoyable punishment.

* * *

Serena steered her motocarriage into the driveway that would take her to Valmont's estate. Her heart pounded, and she fought the desire to turn around and drive home as quickly as she could. Her curiosity had grown stronger than her fear. Her grandmother had told her to seize any opportunity that presented itself, and she knew her spirited Nonna would have leapt at the chance to become a werewolf's lover.

After Valmont had left Lady Wickamsley's party, Serena had feigned a headache and rushed home. As soon as she was out of her clothes and tucked in bed, she'd brought herself to a mind-blowing orgasm. But she'd grown lustful again before she'd fallen asleep. Her body had never cooled since that night.

She'd arranged to meet Iris, her closest friend, the morning after the party. She'd told Iris what had happened, leaving out the detail that Valmont was not only a spectacular lover but a werewolf as well. Iris had counseled her to pretend to have accepted another invitation to visit in the country then give herself a week to play out every dirty fantasy she and Valmont could devise.

It sounded luxuriously sinful. If only it were that simple. While she could apparently control Valmont while he was in wolf form, in human form he had the upper hand. She'd melted under his touch like a lemon ice on a summer day.

She wondered if she could force the change on him. Could she reach inside his mind, find the wolfish side of him, and bring it out? That question alone was enough to send her searching for him.

She'd never played with her powers before, always wanting to downplay them lest someone call her out for a witch. If she gave herself a week as Iris suggested, she could experiment as she never had before. Of course she might end up dead. Then again, she might change the course of her future. That possibility had ultimately swayed her. The future she saw now, an endless string of lovers and parties and perhaps the eventual acceptance of a loveless marriage, was not one she craved.

She'd told her family she intended to visit a sick friend. Never had she been more thankful that her mostly absent but indulgent father had given her a motocarriage for her last birthday.

She steered the vehicle around a sharp curve, and Valmont's house came into view. Her heart rate increased and the simple act of drawing in air took gargantuan effort. She drove around to the front entrance and stopped, expecting a butler and footmen to appear. But this was no ordinary household, and nothing marked her arrival other than the rustling of the leaves that were just sprouting on the trees.

She forced herself to breathe deeply and slowly as she ascended the massive stone steps and approached the tall double doors. She started to lift the knocker and realized it was shaped like a wolf's head. A chill ran over her. Then the door swung open. Her breath caught as she anticipated her reception. But she saw no one. "Hello?"

No answer.

The hall was eerily quiet. She hesitated on the threshold for a few seconds, but eventually, she stepped inside.

"Can I help you?"

Serena jumped and whirled around. A servant stood behind her as if he'd simply materialized. Had he been there all along?

She handed him her card.

He nodded. "Follow me."

They walked through a long gallery and came to a round foyer. Light emanated from under one of the three doors in front of her. Serena heard raised, angry voices inside.

The footman led her into one of the adjacent rooms. He pulled a cord and fuel-powered lanterns illuminated the space. Serena glanced around. Tall shelves of books lined the walls, and a comfortable looking leather sofa and chairs surrounded a fireplace.

“Shall I take your cloak?”

Serena shook her head. “No, thank you.” She knew it was foolish, but the cloak was a warm layer of protection. She needed all the help she could get now that she was in the wolf’s den.

“Very well. I’ll inform his lordship that you are here.”

The man slipped out the door, closing it behind him. Serena wandered the perimeter of the room, glancing at the titles on the wall. Ancient history. Classics in Greek and Latin. Recent novels. She wondered if Valmont actually read these or if he’d simply inherited them. She’d just found a section of books on witchcraft when the voices from the room next door rose even louder. After a few seconds, the shouting stopped. Silence echoed around her.

Curiosity got the best of her. She placed the book she’d been perusing on the shelf and stepped out of the library. The door to the occupied room stood ajar. She couldn’t resist peeking through the crack.

What she saw froze her in place.

Chapter Three

Valmont had another man bent over his desk, and he was fucking him with fast, brutal strokes. She had never imagined that such a sight would turn her on, but heat rushed through her so fast she had to grab the doorframe for support.

Valmont's back was to her. His shirt hung loose around him, and his pants were tangled around the tops of his riding boots. Every time he pulled out of the other man, she caught a glimpse of his perfectly formed ass.

Blood pounded in her ears. Her nipples tightened to painful points, and her clit ached for attention. She fisted her hands to keep from reaching between her legs and satisfying herself.

The man underneath Valmont groaned each time Valmont surged into him. His hands gripped the far edge of the desk as if he were trying to steady himself for Valmont's next powerful stroke. Perspiration dampened the man's blond hair so that it clung to his face, obscuring her view, but she was certain he was as beautiful as Valmont.

Valmont's hands dug into the man's hips, dragging him back onto Valmont's cock as he ground against his ass. "Do you swear obedience?"

"Yes, pack leader."

Valmont looked over his shoulder, right at Serena, and smiled. "Our little wolf caller is here." Valmont never stopped fucking the man, but he slowed enough to allow the man to release one hand and push his hair back from his face.

The man stared at her with a face like an angel's. "She's... gorgeous." The words seemed to explode from his mouth with Valmont's thrusts.

"Yes. But for now, she's mine."

Serena stared, eyes wide, breath ragged. Her lungs tightened until she could barely drag in air. Her mind screamed for her to run, but her feet wouldn't obey. They remained stuck to the floor as if Valmont's gaze had glued them there.

Valmont flashed a fang-filled smile. Claws extend from his hands and bit into the other man's side. The man cried out. Valmont laughed at his anguish and gave him a hard, deep stroke. "Do you like watching me fuck him, Serena?"

She couldn't have said a word if her life depended on it.

"I plan to take your ass just like this."

She made a small, strangled sound. The thought both terrified and enflamed her. She'd never had two lovers at once, but she couldn't stop imagining what it would be like to have the man under Valmont fuck her while Valmont used him as thoroughly as he was right now. Heat raced along her spine, making her knees buckle.

Valmont thrust hard and deep. Once. Twice. "Come for me."

The man under him gasped and shuddered. Valmont surged into him one last time and gave a triumphant shout. His hips bucked with small thrusts as he came.

Serena found her legs. She turned and ran back through the gallery.

Valmont caught her just as she reached the front door. "Where do you think you're going?"

"Home."

"No."

"I have no intention of staying here as your plaything."

"If you didn't want to play, you wouldn't have come."

"I came to talk to you. I want to know what really happened in the woods that night."

"You came to get fucked."

Heat rushed into Serena's cheeks. "It looks like you've already had your share for the afternoon."

Valmont pressed against her back and rubbed his thick erection over her ass. "Wolves don't need much recovery time. Chasing you was all it took to get me hard again."

"What were you doing to that man?"

"I think you figured that out."

"But... why?"

"As pack leader, I must ensure the obedience of my pack."

"By fucking them?"

"Imagine how it would feel to have my cock up your ass."

Serena bit her lip as he rubbed his impressive shaft against her. Her head swam with lust and fear.

"I could control everything. Pain, pleasure, need. I could make you beg for the right to serve me just so I would make you come."

Serena shivered. His hot words made her pussy clench. She wanted to bend over the porch railing, pull up her dress, and beg Valmont to take her as roughly as he had the man in his study.

"You got off on forcing my wolf to do your bidding, but you hate how I can control you now."

"I didn't enjoy forcing you."

"Yes, you did."

"I just needed to see if it was possible." As soon as the words were out of her mouth, Serena wished them back. Now he knew she didn't understand her powers. The last thing she needed to do was show weakness.

He wrapped his hand in her hair and pulled her head back onto his shoulder. His tongue traced the line of her neck, and she felt a hint of teeth. "As you learned, our powers can do much more if we combine them. We'll talk more about that later, but first I'm going to get a taste of your pussy."

Serena shook her head, trying to summon a desire to protest.

He opened his mouth against her neck, not yet biting down but letting her know he could. His hot breath made her shudder as he spoke against her skin. "You made me wait three days to have you. I won't wait any longer."

Serena struggled against his hold. "Do you really expect me to fall into your arms as easily as I did the other night?"

"Yes."

"I want some answers first."

"You'll get answers, but not until I've gotten my dick inside you." He drew in a long, slow breath. "I can smell how much you want me. I bet your pussy is slick with cream, just waiting for me to take it."

Serena bit her lip to keep from moaning. Damn it! Why did his crudeness turn her on?

He growled and turned her to face him. Using a long, clawed finger, he traced the line of her throat and tilted her head up. She looked into his eyes. Their blue fire mesmerized her.

"If you run from me now, you give up a chance to learn more about who you really are. As a proper daughter of the Upper Circles, you face year after year of mindless banter at social engagements followed by a dull marriage. If that truly satisfies you, run now. If you want more, surrender to me."

Serena's heart pounded. How did he read her so well? Her grandmother's red cloak hung around her shoulders, a reminder of Nonna's daring and her desire for Serena to have more than her mother had chosen for her.

Serena rose on her tiptoes and kissed Valmont. The kiss started out slow, but within seconds he wrapped his arms around her and locked her to him so tightly she could hardly breathe. His tongue licked at the roof of her mouth, and his teeth worried her lower lip. She lifted one leg and wrapped it around him so she could rub her throbbing clit against his erection.

He groaned and dug his fingers into her ass, lifting her until she had to put her other leg around him or risk falling. She shuddered when she felt the prick of claws

through the thick fabric of her cloak. Goddess, they must be sharp. His lips slid down her throat, and he nibbled his way to the tops of her breasts which peeked from her low bodice.

He backed her into the railing then unhooked her cloak. It dropped to the floor, forming a vibrant red pool. He knelt in front of her and ripped the laces from her bodice, giving a wicked smile when he confirmed that she'd worn nothing underneath the silky fabric. His mouth seized one of her nipples while his fingers tormented the other one. Burning lines of pleasure raced from her breasts to her clit. She circled her hips and whimpered.

She speared her fingers through his hair and pressed his head to her, but Valmont grabbed her wrists and pinned them at her sides. She struggled against his hold but couldn't break it.

He snarled. "This time I'm in control."

"Bastard."

He laughed and bit down on her nipple, making her writhe in pleasure/pain. Then he flicked his tongue across the sore bud, both soothing the pain and heating her even more.

"Grip the railing with your hands."

He let go of her wrists. She could barely breathe. She needed to be fucked. But they were on the porch, and it was freezing. Valmont began to lift her skirt. She grabbed hold of the railing behind her, suddenly not giving a damn where they were.

He shoved her dress up to her waist, exposing her to the cold wind. But when he leaned forward and exhaled his warm breath against her pussy, she felt nothing but heat. When his tongue swiped across her clit, she cried out.

He flicked his tongue across her again and again, sending wild, spiraling pleasure deep into her belly but never giving her the contact she craved. She writhed and arched her hips toward his mouth, but she didn't let go of the rail. She felt as if he'd immobilized her hands with his command. Intellectually, she knew she could move

them. He couldn't force her like she could his wolf, but she couldn't find the will to disobey him. The thought angered her, and she snarled at him. "Stop teasing me."

* * *

Derek grabbed her hips and slammed them back against the railing, holding them there despite her squirming. He held his mouth mere inches from her pussy. Every word he spoke sent warm air across her clit. "When I'm fucking you, I decide what to give you and when to give it. I intend to make you beg for every drop of pleasure until you acknowledge that I'm the only one who can truly satisfy you."

A shock ran through him. Where had those words come from? She was a hot woman and a convenient weapon for him and his pack. He'd planned to use sex to convince her to help them protect Albion's scientific secrets. He was considering forming a permanent bond with her to increase his own powers and those of his pack. But why did it matter where she found satisfaction?

It matters because you want her for a mate.

Anger boiled in his chest. *No!*

Yes.

Isn't it a good thing you love the woman you'll be bound to?

I don't fucking love her.

Derek's human side often spoke in his mind as if that part of him were a separate person. The last thing he needed now was a bunch of romantic nonsense. He needed to shove his dick inside Serena and fill her up with come, marking her as his own.

He let go of her hips and slid two fingers inside her. She was dripping cream, and her entrance gave no resistance. "Ride them."

Serena bucked her hips, drawing his fingers deeper with each movement. Her pussy clenched. He leaned forward and drew her clit into his mouth, sucking hard. She screamed. He curled his fingers upward, rubbing across the spot inside her that would send her over the edge.

Her breath came in pants. She would come any second. He gave one last deep pull on her clit and stopped. She whimpered and circled her hips madly.

"Beg me."

She looked down at him with fire in her eyes and shook her head.

"Beg me to let you come."

"No."

He began to withdraw his fingers from her body.

"No. Please."

"Please what?"

"Please make me come."

He bent forward and used his tongue, teeth and fingers to stimulate her. He heard some of his wolves approaching, but he didn't stop. It would be good for them to see him claiming Serena. Their true mating needed to take place in private, and his bed would be ready as soon as he coached her to this first peak.

He worked her ferociously until he felt her reach the top. Her scream echoed across the lawn as she came.

Chapter Four

Serena struggled for breath. Valmont still knelt in front of her, but he'd withdrawn his fingers from her body. She looked up and froze. The man Valmont had "punished" in his study, another man with hair as black as a moonless night, and a woman with short red curls were watching her. Their chests rose and fell rapidly, and the black-haired man openly stroked his cock through his pants. The woman's nipples stood out through the man's shirt she wore.

Serena hastily pushed her skirt down, realizing the strangers were all staring at her slick pussy. But the idea of them watching as Valmont brought her off didn't embarrass her nearly as much as it should. The wild, needy look in their eyes made her feel more powerful rather than afraid.

Valmont rose and stood beside her. "Serena, these are three of my wolves. Luke," he indicated the blond man from his study, "Charles, and Isabel.

"My wolves, I would like you to meet Serena. I am doing my best to ensure that she becomes an addition to our household."

Addition to the household? There was clearly more going on than she yet understood.

Valmont took her arm. "I am sure you will all excuse us. We have unfinished business to attend to."

Isabel's gaze dropped to the bulge in his pants. She smiled. "I see that you do."

He raised his brows. "That's enough. Be gone."

The three of them walked down the steps and out into the gardens.

Before Serena could say anything else, Valmont scooped her up and carried her inside.

"Where are we going?"

He made no response. Instead, he climbed the stairs, walked down a corridor, opened an intricately carved door, and deposited her on an enormous bed.

Questions buzzed in her mind as she lay on her back and watched him unbutton his shirt and shrug it off. His chest was every bit as muscular and beautiful as she'd imagined it. She wanted to sit up and use her tongue to bathe him. "Who are you?"

He smiled as he unzipped his pants. She forgot to breathe as she got her first look at his cock. It was thicker than any she'd seen and impressively long. "I'm a werewolf of course."

"You're more than that."

"I'm the head of this pack."

She shook her head, still not satisfied.

"I work for an unacknowledged division within the Office of Clandestine Affairs, as do all of my wolves. We protect the secrets of the King's Institute and discover what we can about the technology of other nations."

Serena didn't know what to think. She'd never imagined Valmont working for the government. She hadn't thought of him doing much of anything outside of the standard rakish pursuits: drinking, gambling and fucking.

"I thought werewolves were extinct."

"We nearly were at one time, and for several hundred years those who existed stayed hidden."

He was utterly naked now, and he climbed onto the bed, crawling across the mattress until he straddled her. Her breath caught, and she almost forgot her next question. But no matter how much he tempted her, she needed to know what kind of future a relationship with him offered. "What do you want from me?"

"You're a wolf caller. You can be our enemy or our helper. I expect you to make yourself useful to my pack and to Albion."

"Useful in what way?"

"We will discuss that later. For now, we will attend to our pleasure. Then I will show you who you were really meant to be."

He leaned down and licked her cleavage where her bodice hung open. She shuddered and arched her back. She had many more questions, but she couldn't form a single one. Her mind refused to work with a gorgeous, naked man hanging over her.

Sexual energy rolled off him in waves. He was easily the most potent man she'd ever met. No wonder women fell at his feet and allowed him to use them as he would.

He stretched her arms above her head and held her wrists in place while licking and nipping the tender flesh of her neck, her chest, and her breasts.

She struggled under him. "I need to know more."

"Not now."

She started to protest, but he drew her nipple into his mouth, sucking and biting simultaneously. She whimpered, no longer able to form words.

"That's better." He let go of her wrists. "Don't move."

She lay still as if he'd frozen her with his words. She'd been with dominant men before. She usually preferred them, but never had she given into a man's demands so easily.

"I hope you packed more clothing." Valmont put his hands into her unlaced bodice and ripped the thick fabric as if it were paper. He kept tearing until her dress split to the hem. He looked up and down her body and drew in a long, slow breath. "Beautiful."

Serena was sure he was a consummate flatterer, but his breathless tone told her he truly meant it. His eyes filled with wonder when he looked at her body as if he saw something she didn't see. Her breasts were full and round and her waist trim enough. Plenty of men had complimented her on her looks since she'd become an adult, but she'd never believed herself a true beauty. Valmont could make her change her mind.

He sat back on his heels and lifted each of her legs in turn, caressing her inner thighs and then her calves. He unlaced her half boots and removed them and her stockings. Now she was as naked as he except for the sleeves of her dress that still covered her arms. That small covering managed to emphasize how very exposed she was.

A growl rumbled in Valmont's chest, and the wonder in his eyes turned to lust. "Are you ready to be fucked?"

She looked down and realized he was stroking his cock. His hand moved slowly up and down. She had to bite her lip to prevent an embarrassing squeak from erupting.

"You're mine now, and I'm going to make sure you know it."

His. What did he mean by that? She doubted he was simply adding her name to his long list of conquests. Something more lay between them.

He released his cock and rose over her again. He tested her entrance with a few of his fingers. She arched up, drawing them inside, showing him how wet and ready she was. Her whole body thrummed with anticipation as the tip of his cock teased her. She longed to feel his massive shaft pumping into her, taking her brutally like he had Luke.

Valmont's lips curled up in a wicked smile as though he'd read her mind. "You like it rough, don't you?" He pushed her legs apart and surged into her.

Shock waves rocked her body. He was too big. She had to get away. She pushed at his shoulders.

Snarling, he grabbed her wrists and pinned them again. "I told you not to move."

She squirmed under him, trying to free herself. Then he pulled back, managing to drag his cock over that perfect spot inside her. She gasped in pleasure. When he thrust deep again, her body accommodated him more easily. She still felt stuffed to the limit, but she could breathe now.

He let her wrists go and tilted her hips up, changing the angle of his entry. After a few more strokes, the fear faded from her body and she felt only pleasure. She squeezed his cock with her inner muscles and was rewarded with a sharp gasp from him. He increased his pace in return, and she found herself struggling to catch a breath. She worked her hips faster and faster, trying to keep up. He pushed deep and she felt his balls slap against her ass. Goddess above, she never imagined she could feel so full, so possessed.

"You're mine."

She looked up at him, breath coming in pants. She could feel the color rising in her cheeks. He looked ferocious, dangerous. He smiled and fangs showed. Then she felt the bite of claws against her hips. The slight pain only turned her on more. She arched against him, wanting the last bit of contact she needed to go over, but he pulled back.

"Say it."

"Wh-what?" She barely got the word out.

"You're mine."

She shook her head.

He growled and dug his claws in harder. "Say it, now."

He pushed a hand between them and stroked her clit.

Her body tensed, on the edge of orgasm. She knew he would pull back and leave her there if she didn't respond. "I'm yours."

He thrust and squeezed her clit simultaneously. Her muscles convulsed around his cock, trying to pull him over with her, but he held back. She nearly sobbed with a desire to make him come too.

"Turn over."

She tried to clear the fog around her mind. "What?"

"Turn over."

She tried to roll over, but the remnants of her dress got tangled. She tried to push the sleeves from her arms, but they needed to be unbuttoned before they would come off.

"Leave them."

Valmont pulled the dress out from behind her back and held it while she turned. "Hands and knees."

She obeyed him, her body already anticipating more pleasure. He took the ruined dress and wrapped it around the slats in the headboard, trapping her. He pulled her hips high in the air, and she laid her head on her folded arms.

She gasped as he thrust into her again. He went even deeper in this position. He reached forward and grabbed her nipples, pinching and pulling them as he fucked her. Within seconds she was spiraling toward another climax.

Her breath came so fast she thought she might pass out. She needed to escape the nearly painful intensity. "More. I need more."

"You'll get it. Every inch of my cock and every drop of my come. Are you ready?"

"Yes, Goddess yes."

His cock began to swell, stretching the lips of her pussy nearly to the point of pain.

She gasped. "What's happening?"

"My knot is swelling. Don't you know that wolves tie when they fuck?"

Serena couldn't process his words through her haze of need. She tried to ask what he meant, but he pinched her nipples so hard she screamed. He gave one last brutal thrust. The swelling at the base of his cock locked them together and stretched her to the limit. Her climax burst deep inside her. He shouted her name and bucked against her. She felt the hot rush of his come inside her as her body writhed beneath him.

Chapter Five

A loud pounding woke Derek from his sensual daze.

"Derek! It's urgent," Luke shouted.

Anger rumbled in his chest and his fangs lengthened. "It damn well better be." His knot had shrunk, freeing him from Serena's body, so he untangled his limbs from hers and sat up. "Stay here."

She mumbled something and curled up tighter. He smiled down at her. Damn, she'd gotten under his skin fast. It was bad enough she could control his wolf. He didn't need her having this much pull on his human form as well.

Not that you're ever particularly human.

Derek snarled as he opened the door slightly and stepped into the hall. "This better be important. I would think your ass was sore enough by now."

Luke's cheeks grew red. "I'm sorry to disturb you, but we received a wire-call from Alex. He's spotted Number Two. He's taken a residence in Albion City, and he's going about town under the name of Pierre, pretending to be a cousin of Prince Jean Luc and an Albionan sympathizer. He's either looking for intelligence on other developments or he's searching for a witch or wizard with the ability to power the box."

"Any confirmation that he has the box with him?"

Luke shook his head. "I don't think he would trust anyone else to deliver it to France, but we have no proof of that."

"Any indication that he knows he's been set up?"

"None. Should we send Alex in?"

Derek shook his head. "A break-in is too risky. Two's bound to have a magical security screen. I've got another idea."

Luke raised his brows in question, but Derek had no intention of describing his plan until it had been set in motion. "I need time to finish my business with Serena. Call a meeting of the wolves in one hour."

"Sir --"

Derek held up his hand. "Not now. Go. Do as I said."

Luke gave him a last longing look then turned away. Derek knew Luke was worried about what was happening with Serena. Derek had been more unpredictable than usual since he'd met her in the woods, and as an investigative profiler, Luke was extremely perceptive about any shifts in personality. But a pack leader didn't have to justify his actions, not even to a man he considered a friend and a lover.

Derek opened the door and stepped back into his bedroom. Serena was sitting up in bed, looking uneasy. "What's going on?"

Derek sat on the bed beside her. "Can I trust you?"

Serena tilted her head to the side and studied him for a few seconds, then answered, "Yes."

"About ten years ago, Graham Stone, a werewolf with a passion for science, came out of seclusion and joined the King's Institute. He was instrumental in developing better methods of extracting fuel from the Gythium flower, and he has continued to work on developing an even more efficient fueling system for flight and land travel.

"His best inventions used not only a knowledge of science but magic as well. When it became clear that tensions with Toulousia were heating up, he made a decision that shifted the nature of our existence. He told the Prime Minister what he was. After consultation with those in national security, Graham created others like him to form a security force that now protects our growing scientific community. As I told you before, we make up a division of the Office of Clandestine Affairs."

Derek paused to take a slow, deep breath. He'd told Serena enough to make her a major security risk, but few would believe her if she began raving about werewolves in the government. If he went further, he'd be obligated to kill her if she turned against

him. He'd killed rogue agents in the past, but the thought of watching Serena's luminous eyes lose all signs of life made his stomach roll.

She furrowed her brow. "Is there more?"

He said a silent prayer that he was doing the right thing. "Yes. Are you sure you want the responsibility of hearing it?"

"I chose to stay. You promised me an alternate future, now give it to me."

"A year ago Graham discovered a method that increases the power we can generate and the speed at which we can travel. When Toulousian intelligence officers got word that we had found something so significant, getting access to it became their primary objective.

"Many in the government believed war was inevitable and began to push for the members of the King's Institute to work faster to get Graham's technology into military vehicles. Then Graham and the Prime Minister came up with a plan that could stop the war. However, many of us believed the plan held an unreasonable level of risk."

"What did you think?"

"I thought they were insane, and I knew my wolves and I would pay the price if things went wrong." Derek pushed his hair back from his face. Suddenly, the weight of his responsibilities seemed ready to crush him.

Serena reached out and fondled a lock of his hair. "You truly can trust me."

He looked at her and saw truth on her face. "We leaked information to one of Toulousia's top agents, helping him to find one of the solar collection boxes that form the basis of our new power system."

"A real one or a fake?"

"The real thing. We knew Number Two, the agent who would intercept our message. He'd spot a fake instantly."

"So you gave him the secret? Why?"

"We gave him a box. We didn't give him the werewolf magic needed to make it work."

"I still don't understand why the Prime Minister would do this."

"If the Toulousians understand the nature of this new power source, they will realize they have no chance of beating us in an all out war. As long as the agent who has the box cannot figure out how to make it work, we can prevent the coming conflict."

Serena nodded. "The Toulousian agent has the box now?"

"Yes. And he's more than just an agent though. He's known as Number Two in part because he's the second in command in their intelligence service. He's also King Martine's second son. He has access to the best resources money and power can buy. We have to get the box back before he finds a witch or wizard with powers similar to ours."

"Could a witch make the box work?"

"I'm not sure, but Graham says it's possible if Two found just the right individual."

"Won't he make a copy of the box in case you steal it back?"

"Not this quickly, but the longer it is in his possession the greater the chance that he will figure out how."

"Why do I have the feeling you aren't just telling me this so I'll know what you're up against?"

"Because you're going to help us get the box back."

Serena's heart pounded. She'd still hadn't recovered from the explosive orgasm Valmont had given her, and now she was being hit with an opportunity to enter a life more exciting than she'd ever imagined. But she was hardly equipped to become a *de facto* member of the Office of Clandestine Affairs. "How could I do that?"

"Two has taken up residence in Albion City. He's introducing himself as Pierre and pretending to be a Toulousian aristocrat who is sympathetic to Albion. You're going to get to know him and wrangle an invitation to his townhouse. Then you'll drug him and search for the solar box."

"How the hell will I accomplish that?"

"Use your feminine wiles, your magic, whatever it takes."

"I don't have any magic to use."

Derek raised his brows and stared at her.

"Other than my ability to call dogs and wolves, I have no other powers."

"You're bursting with power. You just don't know how to access it."

Serena's heart pounded. "What do you know about my powers?"

"Far less than I'd like, but now is not the time to talk about it. Surely you know something of what you are."

"I have a book from my grandmother, but she only recorded information about her abilities with canines."

"I wish I had time to work with you before you go into the field, but we have to move on this now."

"If this man is as insightful as you've implied, how do you expect me to drug him without him becoming suspicious?"

"Insightful he may be, but he's not immune to the charms of beautiful women."

"Just because I've had several lovers, including you, does not mean I'm willing to sleep with a man in order to learn his secrets. I am not --"

Derek growled, and she watched his fangs descend. "If the man touches you, I will kill him. I don't care how big a war it will start."

His primal defense of her brought heat rushing through Serena's body. "Then what do you propose I do?"

"Suggest that you would be interested in being his lover, arrange a rendezvous at his residence, then drug him before you have to follow through on any physical contact."

Serena rolled her eyes. "Of course. How simple."

Derek gave her a hard stare.

"The seduction I can likely manage, but I've never drugged anyone before."

"You will be equipped with a sleeping potion in various forms: a powder, a syringe, and an oil. Two will be suspicious of any food or drink you bring with you, so you will have to introduce the drug once you are in his home."

"You could ask him to get comfortable, pour some wine, and add the drug then. You could get close and inject it, but that is a riskier choice because if he realizes what you are doing, he may pull away before the syringe is fully emptied. You could rub the oil on the outside of his glass, but it takes close to half an hour for enough of it to absorb through the skin. You might not be able to stall his advances that long."

"You're frighteningly good at this."

"If I wasn't, I'd be dead."

His stark statement stole Serena's breath. He wasn't lying. She knew that this was no game, no suspense novel she could read in the privacy of her own room. She was in danger on many levels. At any time, Derek or the other wolves could decide her powers posed too much of a threat, especially if she failed to help them. If she took the assignment, she would pit herself against the son of the Toulousian king who was also a master spy. He could well discover her deception and kill her, or send her to a Toulousian prison.

But despite all these risks, Serena wasn't going to turn back now. "How will I contact you if I find anything?"

"You will have a contact in the city. He's not a wolf, but he's a member of our organization. He will meet with you daily to advise you and monitor your progress. If you need to get a message to me, send it through him. Once you gain entrée to Two's residence, I will come with a few of my wolves. We will come to your rescue if the worst should happen."

Serena exhaled forcefully and tucked a few errant curls behind her ears. "If the worst happens, a rescue won't be necessary."

Derek brushed his knuckles along her cheek. "I will do everything in my power to keep you safe."

He leaned down and lightly touched his lips to Serena's. It felt so different from the harsh kisses he'd given her earlier. "I need you to leave for Albion City now. I must call a meeting of my wolves and explain our plan of action."

"How will I find your associate once I'm back home?"

"His name is Alex. He will meet you at half past midnight in your back garden."

Before she could ask any more questions, Derek gave her another kiss and stood. "A maid will bring your trunk shortly so you can dress and be on your way. Did you tell anyone you were coming here?"

"Only my friend Iris. She's an incorrigible gossip. I wanted the scoop on you and your past indiscretions. I told my mother I was visiting a sick friend."

Derek's serious look turned to a lascivious smile. "Tell your mother I'm feeling much better. A single afternoon with you did the trick."

Serena couldn't help but smile. Derek turned toward the door.

"Wait."

He looked over his shoulder.

"How do I know I can trust you?"

He smiled. "You don't. But ask your gossipy friend if I've ever failed to keep my word."

* * *

Derek's chest tightened as he walked into the drawing room where Luke had gathered all of the wolves currently in residence. As pack leader, he had every right to make the final decision about how missions were carried out, but the wolves weren't going to like that he'd revealed their secrets to Serena without even warning them.

Those with the most aggressive tendencies would question why he hadn't killed her as soon as he confirmed that she was a wolf caller. He had good reasons for keeping her alive and for using her to re-capture the solar box, but he couldn't expect the reactionaries in his pack to understand. The men in question had their usefulness as well, but if they protested too strongly, Derek would do away with them. He could not tolerate dissension in the pack, especially not with the fate of Albion at stake.

"My wolves." He held up a hand and all conversation stopped. All six of the wolves looked up.

Derek's heart pounded, and he cursed the fear running through his body. He knew he could overpower anyone who protested too strongly. But he was afraid of

what would happen to the pack and to their mission if he couldn't foster acceptance of his plan.

"Alex sent word from Albion City that Two has taken a residence there. He is presenting himself to those in the Upper Circles as Pierre, a cousin of King Martine and an Albionian sympathizer."

"Has he got the box?" The question came from Charles, one of the most aggressive wolves.

"We cannot be sure but our best guess is that he does."

"Then let's go take it back," Charles responded.

Derek raised his brows. "Subtlety had never been your strength."

Charles bristled but said no more.

"A raid on Two's townhouse would gain us nothing. He would detect our entry, take the box and flee. I have a better plan."

He paused for a moment, watching the puzzled looks on the faces of his wolves. "I invited the wolf caller here today, and I have engaged her services for our cause."

Derek watched the reactions that ranged from shock to anger. Luke was the only one whose face remained bland. He'd likely guessed what Derek was going to do. "Serena has been ordered to seduce Two, drug him, and search for the box."

"What the fuck were you thinking?" This sentiment came from Henry, the other over-aggressive wolf.

"For some time, we've needed to add more powers to our arsenal. A connection with a wolf caller will do just that."

Henry growled. "The hell it will. She'll be able to use her powers against us to give Two exactly what he wants. We're giving him the weapon he needs."

Henry was spoiling for a fight, but Derek refused to give it to him. Of the two disagreeable wolves, Charles posed more of a real threat. Henry had proven himself to be all talk. "Her ability to control our wolf forms has no connection to her loyalty to Albion. I assure you she will not side with a Toulousian agent."

Charles snarled. "You have no idea what she will do. It is not as if you can control her like you try to control us."

Derek growled. "Are you challenging my leadership?"

Charles said nothing, but he held Derek's gaze and failed to look down or show any sign of submission.

"Isabel and Olivia, you have my permission to restrain Charles and do with him as you would like for the rest of the day. If he protests your use of him, I will take his actions as a direct challenge and meet him on the field."

Isabel and Olivia both smiled. Derek knew the two of them could devise erotic tortures even Derek's own twisted mind wouldn't think up.

"We'd be delighted to assist you, Pack Leader," Isabel said.

Derek bowed slightly. "Your cooperation is noted."

Charles held his fists tight at his side. A low growl escaped him, but Derek ignored it. "Charles, once your punishment is over, you will be expected to be on continuous alert to leave for Albion City and act as back up to Serena. Henry, Luke and I will accompany you."

"Yes, Pack Leader." The words came out with a snarl, but the wan look on Charles's face told Derek that the man was sufficiently scared. The tension in Derek's body loosened. For now, Serena was safe and his mission could be carried forth as planned.

* * *

Serena reclined on the chaise in her sitting room, absently flipping through the pages of a fashion catalog. Four days had passed since she'd left Valmont's estate. At times she could almost convince herself that her experience with Derek was a dream, but her nightly meetings with Alex proved her wrong. Alex was a no-nonsense man who gave her the information she needed and nothing more. At first she'd assumed he didn't like or trust her. After a few meetings, she'd determined that he'd learned not to trust anyone.

On her first night in town, Serena had inquired if Iris had heard of the Toulousian newcomer who was reputedly making a splash with the ladies of the Upper Circles. Iris had more information about life in the Upper Circles than anyone else she knew, and her friend had known Two by the alias of Pierre instantly. Iris's brother had become acquainted with him over cards a few nights before.

Serena could tell that Iris wanted to know more about what had happened with Derek and why Serena had returned to town so soon, but she remained close-lipped on the subject. Iris was also puzzled by Serena's interest in Pierre, but she agreed to speak to her brother about arranging a meeting for Serena.

So the next night, Serena had come face-to-face with the Toulousian. She'd deliberately worn her most alluring dress, and she had put every effort into being a charming and slightly salacious companion. Pierre had taken the bait and asked her to dance.

He'd spent the entire waltz staring into her cleavage and trying to convince her of his importance in Toulousian social circles and his desire for peace with Albion. She'd wondered if he really was such a pompous ass or if that was simply the character he'd taken on. He'd told Serena he would like to see her again, which if she understood correctly meant he'd like a taste of what such a lascivious woman had to offer.

A footman knocked at the door, disturbing her reverie. She bade him enter.

"Mail for you, Miss."

Serena wanted to leap up and snatch the stack of letters. Instead, she allowed the man to place the mail tray on the table in front of her and exit the room before she touched a single envelope.

As soon as she was alone, Serena grabbed the stack and flipped through it rapidly. She let out the breath she'd been holding when she saw a note embossed with the coat of arms Pierre was using. She quickly opened it and was rewarded with an invitation to dinner at his residence the following night. There was nothing suggestive about the note, but she'd been of age long enough to know when a man was inviting her for a liaison rather than requesting her presence at a respectable dinner party.

An Albionan would have waited until they had been together socially several more times before making such a clear proposition. Fortunately, Toulousians were more casual in their liaisons. Serena went to her desk and quickly penned an acceptance. She sent it out with a footman before putting on her cloak and leaving a note saying she was headed to the communications office. Alex had given her a code to send by wire as soon as Pierre gave his invitation.

* * *

Derek reread the wire communication from Alex for the third time. Serena had worked even faster than he'd anticipated. She would be dining at Two's residence the following evening. The thought of what Two would do to her if he discovered her true nature made Derek's fangs ache to descend. He fisted his hands and surprised himself by cutting his palm with claws he hadn't realized he'd extended. He licked the wound and stared out the window at the rolling hills of his estate.

He'd promised to protect Serena to the best of his ability, and as he'd told her, he was not a man to go back on his word. She needed better defenses before she faced a man like Two alone, and he had a way to give them to her.

His research on wolf callers had revealed a bonding ritual that could be performed by a pack leader or a wolf of equal strength and a wolf caller. Both would gain strength as well as a new range of powers. What exactly these powers were Derek had not yet learned, but apparently the entire pack could take advantage of them.

But there was a catch. The bond was permanent, and if either partner died, the other would die as well. One wolf's journal also described a deep, aching need that descended when he was separated from his wolf caller. To give Serena and his pack the advantages they needed, Derek would have to give up his freedom, something he swore he'd never do.

He had to bite her while in wolf form for the bond to take place. His entire body tensed at the thought. She would have complete control. If she chose not to accept the bond, he couldn't force it on her. And worse, she could make him do whatever she pleased. The idea made him snarl. He had suffered almost daily beatings from his

father when he was a boy, and he'd vowed never to be helpless in front of anyone again. Once he'd reached manhood, he'd succeeded except for the brief encounter with Serena. His heart pounded, but despite his fear he knew he had little choice. The ritual must be performed.

He'd brought Serena into his world, and he owed her his protection. But a bond was far more than that. He rarely liked to extend a liaison for more than a week. The bond would join them until death, and if what he'd learned was true, Serena would have to take up residence at his estate. But it wasn't as if they couldn't have other lovers. In fact, the nature of pack life guaranteed that they would, at least among the wolves. He'd already given up much of his freedom when he allowed Graham to change him. What more did he really have to lose?

Chapter Six

Serena sat up in bed. She gasped when the gauzy curtains fluttered out from her window. Then she remembered she'd left the window open because the maid had stoked the fire too high. Another cold breeze rushed into the room, making the curtains rise again. She slid out of bed intending to close the window. What she saw then made her scream.

A man stepped out from the shadows cast by the curtains. Several heart-stopping seconds passed before she realized it was Derek.

"Will that outburst have summoned anyone?" he asked as he stepped closer.

She shook her head. "My mother sleeps like a rock, and my father is away from home on diplomatic business. No one else sleeps on this floor."

He smiled. "Then I am free to do with you as I like."

She took a step back, wary of the evil grin on his face. "What are you doing here?"

"Potentially saving us both."

"What do you mean?"

"In ancient times, pack leaders and wolf callers occasionally formed magical bonds. They strengthened themselves and the wolf's entire pack. If we bond, you will gain the use of the powers you've denied, and I will increase my own power as well as my physical strength."

"Have you known about this since you met me?"

"Yes."

"Why didn't you mention it when I was at your estate?"

"I was not prepared to bond with you then."

Unease fluttered in Serena's stomach. "Why not?"

"The bond is for life. If one of us dies, the other is unlikely to survive."

Serena shook her head. "No thanks. I'll take my chances on my own."

"I'm not giving you a choice, Serena. Bonding with me will give you the best chance of defending yourself against Two."

"If you weren't going to give me a choice, you wouldn't have bothered to explain yourself."

Anger flashed in his eyes, confirming her suspicions.

"How do we form this bond?"

"I bite you."

She raised her brows and stared at him, knowing there was more. He'd bitten her when they'd had sex, hard enough to leave marks that were just now fading.

"The bond will only take effect if I'm in wolf form. If you were a normal human, my bite would infect you and make you like me, but wolf callers cannot be converted."

She smiled. So that was the problem. He couldn't force her because she could stop him from biting her if she wanted to.

"Serena, I swore to protect you and this is what I have to offer. We both need the additional strength."

Serena knew he was right. She'd wanted something more from life. Her grandmother had told her again and again during their short time together that Serena was a witch and her destiny lay with her magic. It was time to accept or deny that legacy once and for all.

"I'll do it."

Derek visibly tensed. Then the air around him shimmered and suddenly a wolf rather than a man stood before her.

Her heart hammered. Once she let him bite her, there was no turning back. She would be linked for life with the infamous Lord Valmont. She knelt at the end of the bed and pulled her hair over her shoulder to give Derek access to her neck. *Come and get me.*

He approached slowly, his padded feet making no noise as he moved across the floor. He licked her neck with his long tongue.

She shivered, her body heating. Then she felt the prick of fangs and tensed. *Wait!*

He pulled back a fraction of an inch. *We must do this.*

Fear paralyzed her. The thought of his fangs piercing her and spilling her blood dizzied her. But not knowing how this transformation would affect her scared her far more than the thought of pain. *I can't.*

He growled and lunged toward her neck.

Stop!

He froze. She glanced around and saw anger burning in his eyes. She watched as he struggled to move forward. He took one step and then slammed into an invisible wall. She felt the shimmer of magic again. He was going to shift back to human form.

No. She reached out with her mind, searching for the part of him that allowed the shift. She focused all her energy on keeping him in wolf form.

The black wolf wavered then solidified again. He growled, long and low, the eeriest sound she'd ever heard. Then a blast of magic shoved her back down against the bed.

Suddenly a human man hovered over her. "Get up on the bed."

Serena's chest constricted. She scrambled up on the bed and turned to face Derek.

He pushed her back, pinning her with his weight. She shoved at his shoulders, but he didn't move. Anger burned in his eyes. "Don't ever try that again."

She swallowed, trying to moisten her throat enough to speak. "I --"

"Turn over."

Fear made her hands shake. "Why?"

"Do it."

Serena didn't argue again. She turned onto her stomach. As terrified as she was of him biting her, part of her was growing uncomfortably hot in response to his

nearness. Her nipples were hard as rocks, and she had to fight the urge to rub her body against the mattress.

Derek shoved up her gown, bunching it around her waist. She arched her back and lifted her hips, anticipating his touch on her quickly dampening pussy.

Instead his hand slapped against her ass. She yelped in pain and shock, but he didn't stop. As he continued to spank her, she ceased protesting. In fact, she found herself arching deeper to take what he gave her. Cream ran down her thighs as he alternated between her left and right cheeks. Sometimes the blows were hard and sometimes lighter. Each one radiated heat straight to her pussy. Her ass burned and ached, but, embarrassingly, she didn't want the sensations to stop.

She slipped a hand under her body and touched her clit, moaning as she did so. She expected Derek to stop her, but he didn't. He just kept assaulting her ass while she drove herself closer and closer to orgasm.

"Come for me. I want to watch your red ass squirm in ecstasy."

His nasty words pushed her up and over. Every muscle in her body tightened. Then her clit seemed to explode. Her inner muscles clamped down on the fingers she'd pushed inside herself. She pushed them in and out, enjoying the power of her climax.

Derek stopped raining fire on her ass, and she let herself fall to the mattress. She ground her hips into the soft fabric, reveling in every convulsion of her body. He nuzzled her back, and she realized he'd shifted to wolf form. He stood on the floor with his front paws on the bed and a ferocious look on his face.

She knew what she had to do. Her heart thundered from exertion and fear, but she no longer doubted that her destiny was inexplicable linked with Derek's. The way he'd pulled such a reaction from her body, turning pain to blinding pleasure, told her they were already linked in a way she would never have thought possible.

She lifted her hair and rolled to her side, presenting him with the back of her neck. *Bite me.*

He sank his fangs deep into her neck. She screamed, thinking she might pass out from the searing pain. Then warmth slammed into her belly. Pain receded as tingling

lines of heat raced out from her center through her limbs. The sensation resembled that of calling on her magic magnified many times over.

Derek let her go. Magical current continued to pulse through her body. She writhed on the bed, feeling as if the magic were burning her up. The magic had to find a way out of her body or it would scorch her from inside.

Change. Now!

This time Derek gave no resistance. His wolf body simply disappeared, and his human form appeared in its place.

“Kiss me!” she screamed as a wave of magic bowed her back and stiffened her limbs.

Derek bent and kissed her open mouth. Her belly clenched. Magic rose up and poured into Derek. He tried to pull away, but she gripped his shoulders hard enough to pierce his skin with her nails. Finally the magic spent itself out, and she let Derek go. Both of them collapsed against the bed.

She stared at the ceiling, listening, feeling, trying to discern what had happened to her body. She wanted to speak or move, but she felt paralyzed by the riot of sensations racing through her.

Eventually, Derek broke the silence. *How do you feel?*

Strange. I can hear things I couldn't before like the grass rustling out in the garden and rabbits hopping on the lawn. I can see better in the dark, and... I think I understand how to use my magic.

She propped herself up on her elbows and looked at a candelabrum sitting on her dresser. With a thought, she brought flames to life. The sight made her jump. *Dear Goddess, I really did that.*

Yes, you did.

Say that again.

Yes, you did.

She sat up fully and looked down at Derek. *We're not actually talking are we?*

Not with our voices.

"Did you know this would happen?" She said the words out loud just to make sure her voice still worked.

"I knew it was a possibility. I am able to communicate mentally with the strongest of my wolves."

Serena's heart hammered as she thought about the ramifications of a mental connection. Somehow mental communication with a human scared her in a way it never had with animals. "Can you read my thoughts?"

"Possibly, if I forced my way into your mind. But you will learn to block what you don't want me to see."

She took a deep breath and listened as she would to discern the feelings of a canine. She could sense Derek breathing, hear the beat of his heart, but she heard nothing from his mind.

Still unnerved by the mental link, she spoke aloud. "How do you feel?"

Derek smiled. "Invigorated. Stronger. Ready to rip Number Two apart if need be."

He reached behind him and grasped one of the iron slats in the headboard. With an effortless tug, he made it bend. His smile widened. He crawled across the bed toward Serena.

She scrambled back until she hit the bedpost. The look on Derek's face was a mix of desire and menace. "What do you want?"

He laughed as he pulled his shirt over his head and tossed it to the floor. "Most werewolf magic is sexual in nature. We must seal our bond with a good, hard fuck." He rose up on his knees and unfastened his pants, letting his cock spring free.

Serena shivered with need that was growing fiercer by the minute. The look on Derek's face made her heart pound. He'd been an amazing lover before. What would happen between them now that they shared this bond?

Derek watched Serena's eyes fill with lust as he removed his boots and pants. The sexual hunger that always filled a new wolf after her transformation was growing in Serena. He could smell it, and his cock begged for him to respond.

He reached out and speared his fingers through her hair, using his grip to pull her head to his. His lips crashed down on hers, making her gasp. She cupped his shoulders with her hands and pulled him even closer. Her tongue dueled with his, and she nipped at his lower lip. He felt sexual energy racing through her as though she were projecting it into his mind.

She pushed him onto his back and straddled him, the position forcing her nightgown up to her waist. Derek pushed it up further, exposing her breasts. He cupped them, weighing them in his hands, but not yet touching her nipples.

She squirmed against him, arching her back to press her breasts further into his hands. Every second she grew more fevered. This was going to be one wild ride, and he was going to have to work to stay in control. He brushed his palms lightly against her nipples then pulled back.

She growled, sounding exactly like one of his wolves. "More."

He squeezed her breasts hard, still refusing to give her what she wanted.

She reached between them and grasped his cock, rising up enough to bring it to her entrance. "No more teasing. If you're going to fuck me, do it now."

He snarled. "I'm going to fuck you all right. I'm going to ride you hard enough to make you scream."

She started to draw him into her body. "Prove it."

The slick heat of her pussy made him groan, and her challenge brought the animal in him to the surface. He took hold of her hips, driving her down until his balls slapped against her ass. She gasped as he pinched her nipples.

"Goddess above, that hurts."

"You love it."

He twisted his fingers, pulling her nipples outward as he did so. She hissed, but she arched into his touch and circled her hips. He pushed her gown further up, and she

raised her arms, letting him pull it over her head. He tossed it to the ground and pulled her to him so he could suckle her sore nipples.

"Ride me," he commanded just before pulling one into his mouth.

The harder he sucked, the harder she slammed down on his cock, as if she thought filling herself fuller would relieve the ache in her nipples. Her pussy squeezed him deliciously, and he fought to hold himself back. He wanted to hold her hips still so he could pound into her until he exploded, filling her with his seed.

Any time a werewolf changed another, the wolf wanted to mark his new conquest. Nothing would fulfill this primal need better than filling Serena's body with a load of come. But he was going to save it for her ass. He'd found no better way to establish his dominance over the other wolves than a good, hard ass fucking.

He released her breasts and lay back. She arched her back, letting her head drop and working her hips faster and faster. Her hands caressed his chest, tugging at his nipples as he had hers. He growled and pushed one hand between them. He coated two fingers thoroughly in her cream and reached around to find her rear entrance.

She gasped when he pushed his finger past the tight ring of muscles. Instinctively, she squeezed, trying to force him out. The action milked his cock and his finger. Goddess, it was going to feel good to get his cock in there. He slid his finger out as she rose off his cock then shoved back in. She groaned and ground against him, already adjusting to the invasion. He added another finger.

She tried to pull away. "Fuck."

He laughed. "Yes."

She rose and fell twice more before her body tightened, squeezing his fingers to the point of pain. He kept them inside her as she rode her orgasm, bucking against him and crying out over and over. Sexual energy spilled across his skin. He bit his lip until he tasted blood to hold back his own climax.

When the contractions of her inner muscles had slowed, he rolled her over until she lay beneath him. Then he pulled himself from her body and sat back on his knees. He glanced across the room and saw something that looked like what he needed.

"What's inside the rose-colored pot on your vanity?"

She opened her eyes and stared blankly at him for a few seconds before answering. "Olive butter."

"Perfect. Can you bring it to the bed?"

She shook her head. "I can't move."

"Use your magic."

"I don't think -- why do you need it?"

"You'll see. Just try."

Serena squinted her eyes and her breathing stilled. Suddenly the pot rose from the vanity and sailed through the air. It landed with a *thunk* on the bed.

"Excellent." Derek lifted the lid and dipped his finger inside, scooping up some of the slick body butter.

Serena's eyes narrowed as she watched him. "What are you going to do?"

"Grease my cock."

She glanced down at the rampant organ. "Goddess, you didn't come, did you?"

He shook his head.

She reached her hand between her legs and caressed her pussy. Her head dropped back and her eyes closed. She made a low sound like a purr. "I'm plenty wet enough to take you again."

"Not where I'm going to fuck you."

Her eyes flew open. "No."

"I initiate every new wolf by fucking his or her ass. There is no better way to show you what it means to surrender to your pack leader."

"I'm not a wolf."

He growled. "You are one of us as surely as if you had fangs and fur."

"Your cock is not going in my ass."

"Yes, it is."

Her face flushed a deep red. "Derek, you --"

He leaned over her, bringing his face within inches of hers. "I am your pack leader, and my word is law to you. You saw what I did to Luke for his disobedience. I won't be as rough with you since you are new. But I will fuck your ass, and you will beg for more, just like he did."

Chapter Seven

Fear cut off Serena's ability to breathe. Once she'd gotten used to the strange sensation, his fingers felt delicious in her ass. But his cock was enormous, the biggest she'd ever had. And when he came, his knot would swell. Even with him in her pussy she'd struggled to accommodate him at his fullest.

And yet she'd always had a secret desire for a man to take her ass. It was her dirtiest fantasy, and Derek would fulfill it beautifully if she dared to let him.

He'd already convinced her to form a lifelong bond and effectively make her a member of his pack. She was about to risk her life to get back military secrets. What was an ass fucking compared to that? Her heart hammered against her chest. She couldn't make herself speak so she turned over and lifted herself onto her hands and knees, displaying her ass for him.

He caressed her ass cheek. "That's better."

He circled her entrance with a greased finger then pushed his way in. She groaned. The sensation was wickedly tantalizing. When he added a second finger, the fullness made her struggle for breath but it didn't hurt. Then he flexed his fingers, stretching her more. A strangled sound escaped her. Son of the Goddess, it burned. She wanted to pull away, but she forced herself not to. Now that she'd accepted her fate, she refused to back down from the challenge.

She arched her back, pushing herself further onto his fingers. Spirals of pain and pleasure raced through her belly. She bit down on her fisted hand, refusing to let out the scream that threatened to choke her.

Derek groaned and pushed even deeper. Serena flexed her hands against the sheets, knotting them and pulling so hard she feared the fine silk would rip.

Derek slid his fingers in and out, using a twisting motion. With each stroke he went harder and faster. At first all Serena could do was fight the urge to scream. Then her hips began to buck against his hand. Her pussy was desperate for attention. A scene flashed in her mind. Derek was fucking her ass while she rode Luke's cock. The mental picture brought heat racing through her. She laid her head on her bent arms and arched her back deeply.

Derek added a third finger. Burning pain overwhelmed her. She reached beneath herself and took her clit between her fingers. Derek grabbed her hand and pulled it away. "You're not going to come until my cock is in you to the balls."

"Bastard."

His fingers slipped out of her body. "It's going to be a tight fit. Are you ready?"

She snarled.

Derek laughed, and then she felt the tip of his cock press against her entrance. Her body tensed. He was truly enormous.

"Relax and push out against me."

She took a long, deep breath and he surged forward. Serena tried to relax as the air rushed from her lungs, but fear seized her muscles tight.

"It won't hurt if you relax."

"The hell it won't."

"It won't hurt for long. Did Luke look like he was suffering?"

"Yes."

"He was begging for more, and you will too. Now push out."

Derek pressed harder. This time Serena did as he said. Her ass still burned, but her body accepted his invasion. He drove in further. She screamed, unable to hold back.

He took her clit between two fingers and squeezed. Pleasure stabbed through the pain, making her whimper. "Please."

"You're going to take every inch. Keep pushing."

She pushed out as strongly as she could. Derek pressed forward a few more inches. Her breath came in pants and tears stung her eyes. Pain and pleasure mixed until she feared she would lose her mind.

Then Derek pulled back, leaving only the tip of his cock inside her. The world swam in front of her eyes as dizzying pleasure masked the burning in her ass. He pushed in again, deeper than before, but his fingers continued to tease her clit. Soon, she found herself circling her hips and pushing back against him. He went deeper with each stroke until she felt his balls brush the swollen lips of her pussy.

The fire in her ass threatened to overwhelm her, yet each thrust brought more pleasure. She couldn't process everything she was feeling, but she knew she was climbing toward a vicious orgasm.

Derek ground his hips against her ass. "Who do you belong to?"

She snarled. "No one."

He pulled out and shoved back in hard. "Whose wolf are you?"

"You don't own me."

"I say who touches you. I say where you go and what you do. I am your master now. Admit it."

"No. I am a wolf caller. I'm not yours to command." Serena knew with conviction that Derek couldn't control her as he could his wolves.

He growled and drove his cock deeper, filling her until she thought she would explode. "In pack business, you will submit to my commands."

"You do not own me."

Another hard, fast stroke left her panting. She fought to keep her head from spinning.

"Whose wolf are you?"

He pulled out slowly, making her moan. She rubbed her clit against his hand but he pulled it back.

"When I act as wolf, I am yours."

He leaned forward and ran his tongue along her back. She gasped. His tongue felt like velvet, and she could feel the tips of his fangs. She looked down at his hands where they supported him on the mattress and saw claws. Fear tightened her chest.

“Your body is mine. No other wolf will touch you without my permission.”

Serena didn't fully understand the way the pack operated. But from what she had learned, the wolves slept with one another indiscriminately. Derek was taking possession of her, but he was also protecting her from unwanted advances. “My body is yours.”

He growled and nipped at her back. Everywhere his fangs touched her, lines of heat ran along her skin, making her shudder. She bucked her hips, working herself on his cock, desperate for the orgasm that was just out of reach. She felt his cock begin to swell and cried out as he stretched her ass even further.

“I'm going to fill your ass with my come, and you will never forget that I own you.”

Serena started to protest his words, but he grabbed her hips and drove into her so hard the world went black for a second. She tried to get a breath, but one stroke came on top of another. The knot in his cock brought back the burning that had receded as her pleasure rose.

She screamed as his balls slapped her pussy, stimulating her but still not giving her what she needed. She thrust her hips, desperate to match his punishing rhythm and bring them both off. When she thought she would lose her mind from the mix of pleasure and pain, Derek reached for her clit. Two circles of his finger were enough to bring her up and over. She screamed, and he stiffened against her. His hot seed filled her ass as her body convulsed and the world went dark.

* * *

When Serena woke, Derek was gone. She called out to him mentally, trying to mimic what had happened when she'd spoken directly into his mind, but she got no response. The link must only work over a short distance. Then she noticed a note propped up on a breakfast tray which a maid must have left.

Blast. She was never so indiscreet. The servants would have plenty to gossip about today if they'd seen a man in her bed. She doubted any of them were as oblivious to her exploits as her mother, but she didn't need to give them concrete proof.

As she slid out of bed, her entire body protested. Her ass and pussy ached from Derek's thorough use. She would have to order a hot bath. It wouldn't do to be stiff tonight when she went to meet Pierre.

She picked up the note on her tray, and Derek's scent wafted up. She couldn't stop herself from bringing the envelope to her nose. She took a deeper breath, and heat sped across her body. A small sound of longing escaped her. She wanted to bed Derek again, despite her sore body.

Her chest tightened. Blast it all. She was falling in love with a werewolf who liked to use anal sex to prove his dominance. Was this what Nonna meant by seizing life's opportunities? She had to laugh at the thought to keep from crying.

She opened Derek's note and read the contents.

*You will not see me tonight, but I will be there waiting.
Reach out with your mind to find me.*

Some of the tension in Serena's body drained away. Knowing she could contact Derek at any time would boost her confidence when she faced Two. But a shiver ran over her when she realized that no matter how close he was, the price of failure would likely be death.

* * *

Serena stepped out of the hired motocarriage that had driven her to Pierre's apartment. The stone steps leading to the townhouse looked especially dark and foreboding. Serena wanted to laugh at herself for over-dramatizing the scene, but her body was too tense to produce anything akin to laughter.

She turned and watched the motocarriage drive away. Then she focused inward, trying to make a connection with Derek.

I'm here.

I can barely hear you.

We must be close for our communication to work. That will change as we grow stronger.

I'm scared.

I will remain close, but do not try to keep our connection open. That will drain too much of your energy and split your focus.

She felt his presence fade from her mind and gave up trying to seek him. He was right. She had to concentrate on finding an opening to drug Pierre.

She lifted the large brass knocker and let her presence be known. A footman opened the door and showed her to the drawing room. Pierre was waiting, lounging on a sofa, jacket removed and tie loosened, leaving no doubt to his assumption that they would become intimate that evening.

He rose when she entered. "Serena, I've been looking forward to our evening all day."

Serena forced herself to give him a seductive smile. "So have I."

He reached for her hand and bent as if to kiss it. At the last second, he turned it over and placed his lips against the inside of her wrist. He swiped her wrist ever so lightly with his tongue as he rose, and she had to prevent herself from shuddering. Only the deepest sense of responsibility kept her from fleeing. Everything about Pierre repulsed her.

His eyes lingered on her breasts for several seconds before he spoke. "Please feel free to make yourself more comfortable. Can I get you a drink? Wine? Sherry?"

Serena made a show of sliding her cloak from her shoulders and slipping out of her shoes. "A brandy, please." She needed something a hell of a lot stronger than sherry to get through the evening.

Pierre took her cloak, laid it over the back of a chair, and crossed the room to the brandy decanter. He poured a glass for himself as well. Now if she could just get him to leave the room, she could add the vial of sleeping potion to his drink. That afternoon, she'd hastily added an inner pocket to her dress. It now held two vials and a syringe.

She sat down on the sofa next to where Pierre had been seated when she entered the room. He joined her and handed her a snifter. When she glanced up after her first sip, she saw the unmistakable sheen of lust in his eyes. She had to use it to her advantage if she was going to catch him off his guard. If she dared, she could lean forward, kiss him, then plunge the syringe into his arm. But she remembered Derek's warning. Pierre was clearly much stronger than she. He might well pull free before she'd depressed the plunger.

Pierre startled her from her thoughts. "I hope you are as eager to get better acquainted as I am."

She smiled, deliberately breathing deep and thrusting out her breasts that were about to spill over her dress's scandalously low neckline. "Indeed, but you did promise me dinner."

He slipped his foot under her hem and caressed her leg. "I'd rather imagined us eating a late dinner to revive ourselves."

She smiled. "Let's eat first. I wouldn't want to chance running out of steam." She licked her lips. "Besides, anticipation can be so sweet."

He laughed. "That it can, but I've been anticipating you all day."

Serena slowly unhooked the top button on her bodice. Pierre's mouth opened slightly as he watched her run her finger along the inside of her neckline. "If you give me the chance to get enough brandy and wine in me, there's no telling what I might do."

He smiled. "I think you've convinced me. Let's eat here, by the fire."

"That sounds delightful."

He stood and pressed a button on an intercom unit mounted on the wall. "Sebastian, please bring a dinner of finger foods to the drawing room."

"Yes, sir," came the reply in heavily accented Toulousian.

Pierre turned to face Serena again. "I'm going to slip upstairs and change into something more comfortable for lounging before the fire. I'll see if I can find a robe for you. Then I can help you into it when I return."

His lascivious smile made her stomach knot. "I'll miss you."

As soon as he left, Serena pulled up her skirt and reached into the inner pocket. She couldn't stall him from touching her much longer so she had to take this chance. She popped the cap from the vial and began to pour it into his brandy, praying he would finish it when he returned.

"I knew you couldn't be as guileless as you seem the moment I learned you were Valmont's latest plaything."

Serena froze. She hadn't heard a thing. The man was as silent as a damn cat. What was she going to do now?

Derek! Help! He knows!

Pierre was behind her before she could get her hand on the syringe. She jabbed back with her elbow, catching him off guard. He stumbled.

She grabbed the syringe and whirled, poised to stab him in the chest. He caught her wrist in the air. She heard something pop and astonishing pain exploded in her arm.

The syringe fell from her hand, but she brought her knee up, ramming it into his stomach.

He punched her face. She cried out in shock and fell to her knees. He picked up the syringe. She tried to scramble away, but her wrist gave beneath her and she fell. He pinned her to the floor. She felt the prick of a needle at the back of her neck. She fought, trying to crawl forward, desperate to escape before he could get enough of the drug in her to put her out. He grabbed her hair, wrapping it around his wrist and holding her still.

Derek, help. Where are you?

The drug burned as it entered her body. Pierre tossed the syringe aside and sat back, watching.

She struggled to get to her feet, but she couldn't push herself up with her single useful hand. She turned over and tried to scoot away, but her limbs were already growing heavy.

She saw a heavy, ornate vase across the room. *I'm a witch*, she thought and almost laughed out loud as the drug began to cloud her brain. In her panic she'd forgotten to try using her new powers to save herself. She drew on the energy she had left.

The vase lifted. It nearly crashed, but she got it in the air again. Putting everything she had into her magic, she brought the vase crashing down on Pierre's head. He collapsed to the floor.

She tried to stand again. She made it to her knees, then wobbled and joined Pierre in unconsciousness.

Chapter Eight

Derek's heart skipped a beat when he heard Serena's plea. "He knows," Derek repeated out loud.

"Shit!" That came from Luke but Derek ignored everyone around him. He opened his mind, focusing, trying to read her thoughts and "see" what was going on. Flashes came to him then, searing, sickening pain. He had to shut down the link.

"We're going in."

Luke grabbed his arm. He was the only pack member who would dare contradict an order in the field, and the only one who could get away with it.

"If we go in now, it's a fight to the death. If Two wins, he's got the box and he's bought time to find a way to make it work. If we win, we face the consequences of killing King Martine's son."

Derek snarled. "I won't let him kill her."

"He won't kill her. He'll keep her and use her against us. When he contacts us, we'll go in and get Serena back."

Derek knew Luke was right. He'd been an agent too long to think jumping into a fight half-cocked was the right solution no matter whose life was in danger.

Derek. Help. Where are you?

Her words stabbed him in the chest. He'd promised her protection, and now he was leaving her to Two's devices.

Stay strong, Serena. As he spoke the words, he realized the pain Serena had been radiating had dulled to nothing. He couldn't feel her mind at all. She was either unconscious or dead. *Goddess, don't let her be dead.*

"I lost her."

Luke squeezed his shoulder. "She's alive. And we *will* save her."

* * *

Serena's first waking thought was that someone was pounding her wrist with a hammer while someone else piled weights on her cheekbones. The pressure on her cheek made her eye feel like it was going to pop. After a few deep breaths that did little to calm her pain-induced nausea, she opened her eyes and peeked at her wrist. It was mottled purple with bruises and swelling extended into her hand.

She tried to lift her hand, but the pain made bile rise in her throat. She lifted her other hand and realized it was tied to the bedpost. Her ankles were bound together, so between pain and rope she was effectively immobilized.

Anger at Derek's abandoning her made her tighten her fists reflexively. Agony blinded her for a few seconds. Then fear rushed in to take the place of anger. What if something had happened to him? Had Pierre caught him too?

Derek?

Thank Goddess, you're awake.

Where are you? I --

I'm close. I wanted to come to you, but our chances of getting you out alive were better if we waited.

Tears rolled down Serena's cheeks. She needed him desperately, and she hated herself for the weakness.

Are you hurt?

I think my wrist is broken.

We will see to it as soon as we get you free. I need you to tell me everything you know about the inside of the townhouse. The layout of the rooms, where you are, how many servants are present. Anything you can tell us that might help us get you out quickly.

Serena tried to think, but the throbbing in her cheek made focusing on anything more than the mental link challenging. *The drawing room is to the right as you enter. I know of two servants, one who showed me in and one who was asked to bring food. Both are Toulousian. When I entered I felt magic run over my body so Pierre must have some sort of*

magical warning system. I don't think a normal human would have felt it, but I know it was there.

Do you know where you are?

No, I passed out in the drawing room after I knocked Pierre out.

You knocked him out?

I levitated a vase.

She could feel Derek's smile across their connection.

Can you use your magic to free yourself?

No energy. Lifting the vase took all my strength.

Can you describe anything around you?

I'm in a bedroom. My good wrist is tied to the bed. Between that and the pain in my other wrist, I can't move.

We received a demand to bring in one of the wolves who can produce enough magic to run the solar box. We're supposed to exchange him for you. We're gong to pretend to make our delivery in a few hours. Can you hang on until then?

If Pierre doesn't come in.

I don't think he will hurt you anymore. You have to be alive for him to make his deal.

Alive but not well.

Serena's chest tightened and tears dripped down her cheeks. She jerked when she felt a hand caress her back. She looked, but nothing was there.

You felt that, didn't you?

Y-yes. What was it?

Me.

How?

Keep the link open and picture me in your mind. Touch me like you would in a fantasy.

Serena imagined herself running her hands over Derek's strong shoulders and down his arms.

It's working.

Serena couldn't believe this was happening, but she could feel herself relaxing from the physical contact.

Forget your pain and fear, and let your fantasy play out in our minds.

Serena took a deep breath. The throbbing in her hand had lessened since she'd made contact with Derek. Now it seemed far away, as if her injured hand were not really a part of her. She envisioned Derek in her mind, naked, just the way she wanted him. She intended to explore his body thoroughly.

She traced the planes of his chest slowly and gently. He shuddered under her touch. He felt so real. She could hardly believe he wasn't truly in the room with her. She leaned forward and licked one of his flat nipples while her hands caressed the tight muscles of his abdomen. His cock jutted up ready for action, and he ceased to breathe as her touches fluttered close.

Serena continued to tease him, enjoying the chance to be the one in charge. She nipped lightly at his nipples while sliding her hands down to his thighs. His muscles were tight with the tension. She smiled against his chest, reveling in her power to enflame him.

He growled. She looked up and smiled before sinking to her knees and drawing his cock into her mouth. He gasped and made a strangled noise.

She swirled her tongue around his cockhead while gently tugging at his balls and massaging his shaft with her hands. He bucked his hips, surprising her and pushing deeper into her mouth.

She pulled back and pushed at his hips. She imagined a wall in her mental picture and pushed his hips flat against it. *Don't move.*

He snarled.

She looked up to see his eyes filled with hot lust and frustration. *My fantasy. My way.*

Derek fisted his hands in Serena's hair, fighting his urge to hold her still and fuck her mouth. She needed something to take her mind off her pain and fear. He had to let

her take control if she was going to find the strength to overcome her real world helplessness. But his instincts to dominate her were damn hard to overcome.

The wolves had congregated at a hotel across the street from Two's townhouse. Derek stepped into a different room so he could have privacy from the others. He'd only experienced mind-to-mind sex one other time, but he knew from that experience that the orgasm would be quite real. He unzipped his pants and released his cock as Serena drew him deeper into her mouth.

Her tongue played along the underside as she massaged his perineum. Her touch shot hot waves of pleasure through his body. He was damn close, but he wanted to be inside her. He marveled at how real she felt and had to open his eyes to make sure she wasn't kneeling before him in truth.

She sucked him even deeper. He felt his balls tense, ready for release. Then she stopped, sitting back on her heels.

He snarled, but she lay back and opened her legs. *Fuck me and don't be gentle.*

He rose over her and plunged, sinking nearly to the hilt with one stroke. Serena made a strangled sound and arched against him. He withdrew and plunged in again. She gave a muffled scream. He began driving hard and fast, knowing they were both hanging on the edge.

Her pussy tightened around him. He shoved in all the way and held himself there, grinding his hips against her. She convulsed around him, her pussy milking his cock. He withdrew and gave a few more shallow thrusts before he let his climax erupt.

Someone pounded on the door to the room where Derek had retreated. "We're ready."

He shook his head in an attempt to clear his mind. *I've got to go. We're coming for you now.*

Derek broke the connection, and Serena tensed as pain flooded her body. Within seconds, she heard gunshots downstairs.

She studied her bonds, desperately trying to think of a way to free herself. The link with Derek had only temporarily taken away her pain, but it had improved her strength. If she could get free, she could use her magical abilities to help Derek and the other wolves.

She'd twisted around so she could see the knot in the rope that held her good hand. She focused on it, willing the rope to move and undo the knot. The end of the rope moved about half an inch and then stopped. After a few more seconds, she gave up. She just didn't have the magical strength to force the knot to come apart.

She remembered igniting the candle in her room. Is she lit the ropes on fire, the sheets would quickly catch fire as well, but what choice did she have? She pulled the rope as taut as she could and tossed her hair over her shoulder. Her broken wrist throbbed and the pain dizzied her, but she fought her nausea and forced herself to keep going. Once she'd burned through the rope, she was going to have to run.

She stared at the rope, reaching for the part of her mind that could kick-start the magic. Smoke rose, then a small flame. She tugged hard with her good hand and the rope broke. Flames rose higher as the rope landed on the bed.

She cradled her sore hand and rushed across the room to the lavatory. Holding her hand against her chest and fighting the roiling of her stomach, she filled a pitcher with water.

Flames rose off the bed, several feet high. She tossed the water on the bed, willing the fire to die down with her mind. She quenched part of it, but the pillow still blazed.

She turned to get more water. Then the door burst open. The servant who'd showed her in reached for her. She leapt out of the way, but her sore hand collided with the bedpost. She fell to her knees.

A gun pressed against her back. "Don't move."

She needed something to distract him long enough for her to figure out how to get free. "The fire must be stopped."

He glanced toward the bed. "You're a witch. Put it out."

She had no intention of letting him know that fire quenching was beyond the scope of her powers. "No."

He grabbed her hair and jerked her head back. "Bitch. How about I tie you up again and leave you to burn?"

"You won't. You need me."

He used his hold on her hair to jerk her to her feet. The world swayed before her and threatened to go black. She tried to fight, but he was several times stronger than she was. He used a hand around her waist to lift her and carry her to the door.

A shot cracked, and he fell to the floor. She fell with him, just managing to catch herself on her good hand and keep her sore wrist from being further crushed. She fought to breathe through the pain radiating up her arm.

She felt the man's weight being lifted off her. She looked up and saw Luke.

He smiled. "Can you walk?"

She nodded, but when she tried to stand her legs collapsed.

Luke scooped her up, cradling her in his arms. "Derek is downstairs. He and the others are holding their own, but he needs help. Any magical strength left?"

Serena concentrated on her magic for a minute. The simple effort dizzied her further. "I can help."

"Good."

Luke ran downstairs, still carrying her. When they reached the drawing room, she counted half a dozen men fighting hand to hand. She focused on Derek. His hand was locked around the wrist of a man who held a long curved knife.

Taking a deep breath, she forced the knife to fly from the man's hand. His shock allowed Derek to gain the upper hand. Two punches from Derek brought him crashing to the floor.

Then she noticed the blood soaking Derek's shirt. "Oh Goddess."

Luke snarled. "He needs to shift, but he can't fight armed men as well in wolf form so he's refusing. Can you force him?"

Before she could answer, Pierre broke free from the man he was fighting. Serena recognized him as Charles, the other wolf she'd met at Derek's estate. Charles was bleeding badly. He dropped to his knees then passed out.

Luke set her down. "Will you be all right?"

She gripped the doorway for support. "Yes. Go."

Luke ran after Pierre, and Serena focused on the fight again. Only one of Pierre's henchmen was left standing. A wolf she didn't recognize lay unconscious next to him. Serena shrank back around the door, praying the man wouldn't see her as he reached for a revolver that had slid under a sofa.

Derek stepped toward the man and swayed. She knew she had to act.

Shift. She projected the thought to Derek.

No.

Do it now.

Derek started to protest, but she pushed her will on him. His image wavered. She felt a push against her mind, but she overpowered it. Suddenly, he was a wolf.

The unknown man took aim.

Roll to the left.

Derek did as she commanded, unable to resist. The bullet barely missed him.

She was losing strength fast, but she focused on the man, trying to rip the gun from his fingers. Her distraction gave Derek time to pounce.

The world wavered as she watched Derek's fangs sink into the man's throat. She dropped to her knees. Derek snarled as he ripped out the man's throat. She closed her eyes to block out the gruesome sight and dropped into unconsciousness.

* * *

When she woke, she was on the sofa. Someone laid a cold cloth on her head and she realized her injured wrist had been bandaged.

"You awake?" It was Derek, back in human form.

She nodded, not sure she could speak yet.

He gently stroked the fingers of her injured hand. "It's not broken, just badly sprained. It will begin to heal rapidly once we have sex again." His lips curled up. "So as soon as you're ready --"

She scowled.

A hand rested on her shoulder. "Werewolf magic is all tied to sex. Didn't Derek explain that?" Luke laughed as he said the words.

Serena found Luke's touch disturbingly comforting, and she missed his warmth when his hand dropped away.

She turned to look at the blond wolf. "Did you catch Pierre?"

Luke shook his head. "He got away. I'm sorry."

Derek growled, and she turned back to him. He took her good hand in both of his. "I swear to you I will find him."

The ferocity in his stare made Serena shiver.

"Shall we leave for home now that Serena's awake?" Luke asked.

"Give us a few moments alone."

"I'll wait with the others. Our motocarriages are garaged across the street."

Derek nodded.

Serena took a deep breath. "Are you going to berate me for forcing you to change?"

Derek scowled but shook his head. "I needed to heal myself, and I was too stubborn. I resent your ability to control me and I will exact revenge in my own way, but you made the right choice."

Serena smiled. She understood the effort it took Derek to make such a confession. And the idea of him taking retribution sent wicked heat through her body.

She attempted to lift her injured hand. The pain was excruciating but not as bad as it had been earlier. "How do I explain this to my family?"

"You don't. You're coming home with me."

"Derek, I can't. I --"

"You have no choice in the matter. Two is still a free man. You are injured. Your powers are as yet unreliable. And our bond requires us to be near each other."

"My mother is difficult at best, but I do not wish to bring such a scandal down on my family."

Derek sighed. "Then I suppose we will have to marry."

"As proposals go, that's about the worst I've ever heard."

"Serena, we don't have a choice. Neither of us intended to marry, but circumstances have forced us to it."

"No. If the idea of marrying me is so odious, I would rather find a story to placate my family and simply stay with you as long as I can."

"You *will* marry me."

"Not if it means being trapped with a man who doesn't care for me. That is why I've refused every proposal that has come my way."

"Damn it, Serena. I love you, and I will not allow you to live anywhere but with me."

For a moment Serena thought she must have heard him wrong. Then she saw a flicker of fear in his eyes and knew he'd spoken the words in truth. "I love you, too."

"Then you will marry me?"

"Yes, but there will still be a scandal if I go with you now."

"I'll get a special license. We'll be married within days."

"I suppose my family will recover from a scandal of that magnitude. Plenty of others in the Upper Circles have."

Derek smiled. "Likely it will only increase their standing. They will certainly get invited to all the best parties."

Serena laughed. "You're right."

"We need to go."

Serena nodded.

Derek picked up her red cloak from the back of the chair where Pierre had flung it. Serena was thrilled to see that it had survived the fight.

He studied it before handing it to her. "You can tell everyone the big bad wolf kidnapped you. But instead of eating you up, he did the honorable thing and married you."

She smiled. "Eating me up sounds pretty good right now."

"That can be arranged." Derek stalked her until her back was against the wall.

"I thought we had to leave."

"My wolves can wait a few more minutes."

Serena shook her head. "Not here. I don't want anyone watching."

Derek nuzzled her neck. "You'll have to get used to that as a member of the pack. We have very few inhibitions."

"I know. I thought *I* was uninhibited until I met you."

Derek smiled. "The other wolves are going to want a taste of you."

Serena shivered at the thought, but with lust, not fear. "Not tonight."

"No, tonight you're mine."

Silvia Violet

Silvia Violet can often be found haunting coffee shops looking for the darkest, strongest cup of coffee she can find. Once equipped with the needed fuel, she can happily sit for hours pounding away at her laptop. Silvia typically leaves home disguised as a suburban stay-at-home-mom, and other coffee shop patrons tend to ask her hilarious questions like “Do you write children’s books?” She loves watching the looks on their faces when they learn what she’s actually up to. When not writing, Silvia enjoys baking sinful chocolate treats, exploring new styles of cooking, and reading children’s books to her wickedly smart offspring.

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