



Packing for Three

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Changeling Press

Send 'em Packing: Packing for Three

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When Matt Brewer, Maya Eddings' werewolf lover, calls her from his hometown in the Ozarks, Maya is fit to be tied. He's in trouble. His were-chick girlfriend Jenny has disappeared, and the clan suspects foul play. And Jenny's den is blaming Matt.

Maya would love to tell Matt to kiss-off, but the stakes are too high. His life could be forfeit if the situation isn't resolved. So, she packs her bags and her 9mm for a road trip with her other lover, Stephen Daniels, riding shotgun. Probably not the best idea, since Stephen's incubic genes seem to have a really strange reaction to lycans.

Between Matt's family, Jenny's disappearance, and Stephen's unusual talent for inciting a sexual riot, Maya has gotten into more trouble than she can shoot her way out of.

Chapter 1

"Jesus..." Maya Eddings' hands fumbled across the nightstand. The phone rang again as the bedside lamp hit the floor. "Christ!"

A warm brush of leg crossed her body, and she felt an arm loop over her chest. "Here." The warm timbre of Stephen Daniels' voice sent shivers through Maya's body as he handed her the phone.

"Who the hell calls this early?"

Stephen chuckled. "It's after ten a.m." To make his point he drew back the curtain, flooding the small bedroom with ungodly light.

As much as Stephen's body looked *freaking awesome* all kissed by the sun, Maya threw the blankets over her head and grouched into the phone, "This better be good."

"I can hear him. I guess you're busy."

Even with the static, Maya knew it was Matt. Matthew Brewer, on again off again lover, full time lycanthrope, and general pain in the ass. "You know I keep vamp hours. The only busy I'm up to is sleeping."

A long pause followed and it pissed her off that she felt the need to explain herself, but she probably loved him. Even with his "pain in the ass" status. Peeking from the cover, she looked at Stephen, part incubus, full time lover, and generally one of the easiest guys she'd ever hooked up with. Scoping out his glorious ass resting perfectly on long well shaped legs, a v'd back leading to wide shoulders and the mop of dark-blond hair on his head, she knew she probably loved him as well.

"I need your help," Matt finally said.

Rich. Great. He needed her help? She was nearly disinclined to respond, considering he'd taken off to his hometown of Camdenton with his were-chick girlfriend. "What could you possibly need my help with, Matthew?"

"Do you have to be so..."

"Bitchy? Yes. Yes, I do. You need help? Call Penny. Oh, wait. You don't need to call her. She's there with you if I recall."

"Jenny." His voice became gruff. "She's the reason I'm calling. She's missing."

"My Lord, you've got brass ones. Great big, gi-normous, gilded brass ones. Your *other* girlfriend disappears and you call me?" *Idiot*. Like Maya had any interest in tracking down her competition. Not.

"She's pregnant, Maya." He paused then added, "And they're blaming me. I'm going to be put before a lycan tribunal starting tomorrow."

Pregnant. Oh, my God. Jenny's pregnant. A sudden wave of nausea hit her, and Maya fought to keep from ralphing the chocolate pudding she'd eaten before going to bed. "That would be bad." She gulped in air.

"That's an understatement."

She remembered when he'd told her about his brother being whipped sixty-six times with a special rod that would leave scars on a lycan after judgment from a tribunal. The incident had happened three years ago, several months before Maya had met Matt. After, his brother had been shunned from the clan. Matt wouldn't even say his brother's name out loud -- they were that freaking serious. Matt didn't say what his brother had done to warrant a tribunal, but she had the feeling it had been for a lot less than suspected foul play in the disappearance of a clan member.

"When's the tribunal thingy?"

"It starts tomorrow. If Jenny doesn't show up, her family will ask for my death. I wouldn't take her as a life mate, and I made my intention clear yesterday to her family. She went missing three days ago. They think I killed her."

"Why won't you take her as a mate?"

Stunned silence ensued.

"Matt? Are you there? I can hear you breathing, goddammit."

"You wind me so tight sometimes. I just can't believe the crap that comes out of your mouth." He huffed his breath. "Why didn't I take her as a mate? You. Fuck, Maya. You."

Well, wasn't that... special. "Give me directions."

Stephen turned sideways, the morning sun casting a burnt orange over his pale, beautiful skin. He noticed Maya staring and wiggled his eyebrows. A sexy little grin graced his lips as he dragged a hand down his stomach to palm his thick cock.

Maya swallowed, hard. She finished jotting the directions down, trying unsuccessfully to ignore the growing warmth between her legs. "Got it. I'll be down this afternoon." She gasped as Stephen knelt beside the bed, his lips grazing the inside arch of her foot. "*Late* afternoon."

Matt groused something unintelligible into the phone as Maya dropped the receiver into its cradle.

"So..." Stephen's gorgeous green eyes peeked over her toes. "Road trip?"

Maya jerked her foot away. "No. No. No effing way I'm taking you with me."

Stephen crawled up between her legs, kissing his way to the sensitive skin of her inner thigh. "Pretty please."

"You actually expect me to take you down into the middle of a lycan clan?" She'd seen the way Stephen's incubic pheromones reacted with werewolves. Hell, she'd even enjoyed the scary, but oh-so-erotic fruit of the interaction. Scary because Matthew had nearly shape-shifted during the encounter trying to change Maya into the terminally furred.

The threesome had definitely made an impact on her though, and Maya had fantasized multiple times about it happening again, but... "Uh-uh. I'm not fighting my way out of an orgy of horny wolves because you can't keep your ju-ju juice to yourself." Teeth grazed her clit and she moaned. "No fair."

His tongue swiped between the folds of her wet, swollen pussy as he glanced up at her through a thick fringe of dark eyelashes that framed his gorgeous green eyes.

Pupils dilating, he murmured softly against her skin, "But I thought you liked my ju-ju."

"Oh. Yeah." Maya squirmed under the exquisite pressure of Stephen's tongue. "Ju-ju good. Ju-ju real good."

A wave of lust rolled over Maya and she bucked her hips forward. Her empathic abilities worked with every emotion in humans, nearly none in lycans, and apparently, only one with incubus demons. Desire. At first it had troubled her that Stephen was a sex demon, but over the last couple of months she'd come to... "Ahh..." Her thoughts were interrupted as his tongue slid into her pussy, unbelievably thick and long. "Fuck, you're fantastic." And a fantastic fuck.

Was it the fact he was an incubus that drew her to him? Having Stephen around kept her in a constant state of arousal. No, it wasn't that, at least not just that. He was uncomplicated. Maya liked uncomplicated. Needed it. Like now. The feel of his large, strong hands smoothing down her chest, caressing her breasts, kept the bad away. By bad, she meant Matt's news that Jenny was pregnant.

"I want you, Stephen. You. I want you inside me." Desperation tugged at Maya. She wanted to not think about Matt. "Stephen, Stephen," she whispered as she arched to meet his smooth glide up her body. She loved his height. Maya was six feet tall, and it was rare to find a man who could match her length in bed. Stephen was nearly six inches taller, and as he inched his thick cock deep inside her, his head bowed down to gaze at her with unblinking eyes.

He thrust his hips forward, hard, burying his cock deep within her. "Oh," she groaned. "Yes."

Withdrawing slowly, he thrust forward again, slow then hard was how he worked her body. His thumb reached down to massage her aching clit. She arched to meet his hand. His skin smelled sweet of honey and vanilla. He'd been using her body wash again and the scent heightened her awareness of his every touch, every caress.

“God, you feel so good. Your pussy is massaging my cock. I’m lost in you, Maya. Lost.” He quickened his thrusts. Moving his hips back and forth, the head of his cock rubbing the sensitive area just inside her canal.

“I need you, Stephen. Make me come.”

His mouth met hers, wet, warm, his tongue sliding past her teeth in a tangled fury. He rolled them until he was on his back with Maya straddling him. She rocked back and forth over his cock, squeezing her thighs against his sides as one hand tweaked her nipples while the other thumbed her clit. He knew exactly what she wanted and how she wanted it. Another reason to adore him.

The pressure mounted from within her and she glided down his cock, taking him as deeply as she wanted. “Come for me, Maya. I want to feel you come.”

The words put her over the edge as the orgasm spread through her. She arched and cried out as her body stuttered forward. Stephen’s hips jerked once, then twice, then again. She fell forward onto his chest. “You’re really something,” she told him.

“Ditto, babe.” He grinned.

Chapter 2

Maya turned to Stephen. "This is such a bad idea. I can't believe you talked me into letting you come along." When her eyes went back to the road an armadillo had suddenly appeared and she swerved, her right front wheel hitting the drifty bumps along the side of Highway 65. "Where the hell did that thing come from?" She took a deep breath after getting the car and her pounding heart under control. "It just came out of nowhere."

"Armadillos don't just come out of nowhere, babe. They aren't the fastest animals on the block."

"Smart ass." Shaking her head, she gripped the steering wheel tighter. "Like I said before, this is a bad idea." She turned back to him to gauge his reaction, since her empathic abilities worked very little on the incubus.

Apparently, he must have thought his coming along was a good idea, because he didn't answer her. He pointed forward without meeting her gaze. "Eyes on the road."

She focused back on the highway, not so much because Stephen told her to, more because she didn't want to end up in a ditch in the middle of the Ozarks. "You're going to get me killed. You know that. Right?"

"I'm going to make sure that you don't get killed." His voice had taken on an edge, not feral like Matt's (when he was angry or horny), but closer than she'd ever heard it. "You have no understanding of lycan politics, Maya. By Matt asking you for help, he's basically named you lamb to the wolves."

It was hard to keep the heat from her voice. Maya didn't even try. "Obviously, Matt thinks I can handle myself." Her knuckles were going white. "But you don't."

"I think Matt is desperate, and he thinks you're the only person he can trust. I don't *think* he's got your best interests in mind. Only his own."

"I'm tired of this fight already."

"Good. I don't want to fight anyways." His fingertips grazed her upper arm, trailing slowly to her elbow.

A shiver of warm pleasure caught her off guard, her right hand loosening on the wheel as her left hand dragged it down. The car swerved into the middle of the road. Maya reaffirmed her grip and brought the vehicle back into the lane. "Are you crazy? You could have killed us!"

"I made sure no one..." He chuckled, his low reverb stimulating her body to action. "...or *thing* was on the road first."

"Stop that." They were twenty miles south of Warsaw, Missouri, the distance Matt had given in his directions. She motioned to the paper on the dash. "What's that road I need to turn on again?"

"Pull off on any of these small roads and I'll show you a turn on."

Without even looking, she knew his eyebrows were wiggling. "Stop that."

"I'm just saying." He grabbed the paper. "It looks like UU, but it could be VV, or even W. Your writing is terrible. And you used to teach English?"

"Don't make me shoot you." She snatched the paper from his fingers. "It's UU." Maya huffed. "Idiot."

Teaching English to a bunch of teenagers had been Maya's first career out of college, but as an empath, the drama of the "it's all about me" generation had taken its toll on her. She'd gone home nightly with migraines and seriously drained by the roiling emotions of the acne crowd.

Meeting Jack Simon, her business partner and friend, had been her salvation. She'd only started taking karate classes to blow off steam, but her natural aptitude for the sport and her quick ascension to black belt drew the attention of the former Army sergeant. Jack had been a Ranger with black ops over in the Middle East, and after he'd gotten out, he'd taken up private security.

After he'd talked Maya into coming on a job with him, she'd become addicted to the adrenaline and the money. So much better than a teacher's salary. Also, after a few

weeks of weapons training, she got to carry a gun. That had been four years ago. Since then, the 9mm had been her best accessory.

Clearing his throat, Stephen pointed to a small sign up the road. "There it is."

The small gravel road was about one hundred feet ahead on the left. Maya put on the blinker and rapidly decelerated to make the turn. Although the road seemed well-maintained, the white gravel threw dust everywhere behind them, making the highway disappear completely from the rearview mirror. A farm house loomed on the right then there was nothing for about four miles except wooded land and hills. "Where is the damn turn?"

"We should be coming up on it anytime. It'll be another left." Stephen gripped her arm. "Like right there." He pointed out the driver side window.

Maya glanced over to see two worn tire track marks between a couple of large trees. She slammed on the brakes, sliding the car forward about three feet. Putting the car in reverse, she rolled back to where Stephen had indicated.

"You've got to be kidding me. That's not a road. It's a path." The trees were so thick that the road was darkened under the looming branches of oaks and maples, poison ivy encroaching on the edges, giving the sense of an old fifties horror film. "It's a goddamn spooky path in the middle of freaking nowhere."

Her hand drifted inside her jean jacket, lightly touching the butt of the 9mm poking from her hip. It made her feel better. Like a security blanket. A cold steel woobie that could fire eleven rounds within a matter of seconds to take down the boogie man quick and make him cry for his mamma.

"That's the twentieth time you've checked your gun, Maya. I don't think it's going to magically disappear."

A few months before Maya would not have believed anything could magically disappear, but after coming face to face with a real honest to goodness sorceress and finding out magic was real, well, anything was possible. If it hadn't been for Stephen, she'd be living in ignorant bliss of that little tidbit. Of course, he'd either be dead or in jail right now, so knowing was the better option. Right?

"Again, don't make me shoot you." Smacking Stephen in the arm for good measure, Maya backed up a bit more and turned down the scary-as-hell road. "This is a bad idea."

"I wish you'd quit saying that."

"This time it has nothing to do with you. Something doesn't feel right. Like we're walking into a trap."

"Alert is good, Maya. Especially when you're going into lycanthrope territory."

"Or when I'm going into lycanthrope territory with a guy who puts the nip in catnip."

"They're wolves."

"I know. Don't you think I know that? It's a metaphor."

"We should be okay. We're going straight to Matt's cabin. He's the only one there right now, and I'll keep my distance from the other clan members."

Staying at the cabin and away from the other lycans had been the promise Stephen made to her. If he hadn't, Maya wouldn't have let him come along. But she understood. He needed her. Stephen's incubus genes required him to have sex on a regular basis and as long as he was with Maya he could resist the impulse to fuck anything with two legs. He didn't want that, not anymore, and neither did Maya.

She'd never had any moral qualms about sex, and up until Stephen and Matt, she was totally cool with the occasional strange wang. If she looked deep inside, she'd have to admit that she hated that Matt still slept with his werebitch, but fair was fair. No looking deep, she scolded herself. She had no intention of giving up Stephen. Strangely, the sandy-haired, green-eyed part-incubus didn't seem to care that she slept with both Matt and him, but she knew if Stephen started diddling everything that moved, she'd lose it. She was more possessive of him than Matt.

It could've been the fact that Stephen was content to have Maya any way she'd allow, no pressure, no talk of marriage, or permanency. Easy. He was so easy. In so many more ways than one.

The tree branches dragged over the hood of her car reminding her of Freddie Kruger cutting into the side of a metal wall with his bladed fingers. "God, will this road never end?"

"I think I see the light at the end of the tunnel."

And there it was, the sun, peeking through the trees, throwing its blessed light down on the road now opening into a pastoral setting. She'd expected a small rustic cabin, something out of Grizzly Adams, but instead it was more like Donald Trump's guest house. "Holy bejeezus. This place is freakin' huge."

"I'd say Matt's been holding out on you."

"Ya think?" The cabin, if you could call it that, was a two-story log house accented with cedar panels, and had to be at least 8,000 square feet. She pulled up into a paved circular drive in front. "Who would have thought something like this..." She gestured toward the house then jerked her thumb. "...would have been at the end of that," she finished, pointing at the path of darkness.

As they exited the car, the front door opened and two large hounds came barreling out in front of Matt. The bigger, a black and tan, ran right up to Stephen, with the blue-tick right behind him, and proceeded to try and hump his legs. Stephen shook both dogs loose and let out a sharp bark of irritation, cowing both the dogs. "Fuck," he muttered in frustration when they came back again.

"Pete! Snoop! Down!" Matt snapped the command and both dogs came to heel next to him. He didn't even try to keep the grin off his face.

"Relatives of yours?" Stephen asked as they approached the front porch.

The grin quickly left Matt's face. "I could let them at you again."

Maya stepped between the two men, duffle bag in hand. "Cool it. Both of you." She sidled between Matt and the door, moving into the foyer. Yes, the place had a freaking foyer. "Where do I put my shit?"

"My room is at the end of the hall on the left." Matt gave a wide berth to Stephen. While the incubus hormones wouldn't turn him into a stark raving sex-starved

werewolf again, Matt still felt intensely horny around the part demon, and the feeling made him uncomfortable to say the least. "Did you have to bring him with you?"

Maya glanced sideways at Matt, then to Stephen, then back to Matt. "Yes. Yes, I did." She rolled her eyes. "Did you have to get your werechick pregnant?"

"I... uh..."

"That's what I thought," she snapped. "So shut the fuck up." Maya headed up the stairs.

"My room is down here," Matt said.

"I know. I'm sure I can find my own up here somewhere."

"Oh, ho, she told you," Stephen kidded, drawing a dark, stormy look from Matt before the blond started up the stairs after her.

Matt broke his rule about not touching the sex-driven demon and grabbed Stephen's arm. "Where do you think you're going?"

"I go where she goes."

"The fuck you do. Not in my house."

"Don't push me, dog boy." The air stilled as the space between them grew tense and quiet.

Maya leaned against the railing, fighting a heavy sigh. What was a girl to do with two really difficult to kill men? "Let him go, Matthew." The storm brewing behind her eyes matched that of the lycan's. "If you boys can't play nice, I'll lock you both in a room together and let you fight it out on your own."

Matt let go of Stephen's arm, a puzzled expression of lust and anger clouding his face. Stephen smiled, dazzling bright, shining between his sensuous bow lips. "I'm all about playing nice."

Growling, Matt gnashed his teeth.

"Don't start nothin', won't be nothin'," Maya snapped. "Besides, and need I remind you, your *pregnant* girlfriend is the reason you called me here. You're not allowed to be jealous." It wasn't fair to Matt, but she didn't give a fuck. She wasn't the

queen of monogamy, but sharing her men didn't set well either. "Come along, Stephen."

Before Maya could get to the top of the stairs, Matt had jumped from the lower floor in what could only be described as a singly fantastic bounding leap. He landed in front of her. Maya was ready to fight, but all the protest left her body as he embraced her in his arms, his lips finding their way to hers, feeding on her mouth like a dying man with his last meal. The heat of his kiss made her weak, fragile as she gave in, her tongue matching his in a fervent dance. Her body responded to his feral nature. It always did.

"Matthew," she breathed against him.

His eyes were startling blue, no yellow rings to indicate an emerging wolf on the horizon. Moisture rimmed the inner edges, and therein lay grief and loss, but was it for Maya? Or for Jenny? He buried his face against her neck, the heat from his breath blowing softly across her skin, and it didn't matter. Matt was hurting, and Maya hurt because of it. "I'm sorry, Maya. So sorry. I shouldn't have involved you in my... mess. I just didn't know..."

"Who else to call," she supplied, stroking his thick dark hair. "It's okay, Matt. I'm glad you did."

Stephen placed his hand on the small of her back. She was sure he meant to be comforting, at least 90.1 percent sure. Comfort was not what she felt. The sensation of Stephen's palm on one side of her, while Matt was pressed against the front of her body, sent an erotic shiver through her, bearing straight down into her pussy.

Matt must have sensed her arousal, or he was having a moment himself, because his hard cock pressed through his jeans against her thigh. When the lycan's hand slid along the side of her breast, Stephen took his cue and pressed his body against her backside, his hand moving to her free breast, cupping then squeezing her nipple between his forefinger and thumb. Her back arched of its own volition as a moan escaped her lips.

"Wait," she said breathlessly. "Just wait."

Blue eyes met hers -- *still blue, still blue* -- as both men froze in place, neither moving. Maya wondered for a split second if they were even daring to breathe.

She traced the curve of Matt's jaw. "Are you cool with this?"

Matt began to breathe again, but Stephen remained still, like even a breath would ruin the moment until the lycan pressed his lips against Maya's. "I feel lost." Desperation edged his words. "I'm lost without you." Not much of an answer, but she'd take it... for now.

Both her men were lost. Either with or without her. What did that say about her state of sanity? Stephen stripped her down to panties while Matt handled the shirt, the holster, and the bra. A breeze rose up the stairway, making her acutely aware of her nakedness. She dropped to her knees in front of Matt and undid his jeans. She could hear Stephen undressing behind her.

She freed Matt's solid cock from his pants and slipped it between her lips. He needed this, she could tell, just a little submission, and Maya was willing. She sucked and stroked his cock with her mouth and hands. Fondling his testicles, she rolled one around her tongue then the other. From behind, Stephen pulled her panties down around her knees. He spread her thighs with his hands. She felt his tongue slide against the lips of her pussy as she took Matt's cock back into her mouth with vigor.

She wanted Stephen inside her so badly while she fucked Matt's shaft with her mouth. To take both men at the same time into her. "Fuck me, Stephen. Matt."

Matt began to pump his hips forward, sliding his cock in and out of her mouth, while Stephen held her thighs with one hand to steady himself, then pushed his length into her wet pussy. There was something so titillating about two men at once and the sheer taboo of it excited and aroused Maya, more so than the first time, since Matt wasn't turning furry.

Both men grunted and moaned as they pushed and pulled on her, thrusting and withdrawing. Matt came first, the salt of his semen washing over her tongue as she drank him in, sucking his cock until it was soft inside her mouth, and his moans became a whimper. Stephen quickened his thrusts, his balls slapping against her clit until she

could take no more and she cried out around Matt's tender flesh. Then Stephen came, grinding and pounding her flesh with his hips until the last of his orgasm was spent.

Maya fell to her side and put her back against the wall, laughing, feeling powerful and good. "So, does this mean we're all okay with this arrangement now?"

Stephen chuckled while Matt grimaced and buttoned his jeans. "I'll never be okay with sharing you, Maya. But for now, I'll take you the way you'll have me."

"Good enough." Although his shift in attitude baffled her. Why all of a sudden had Matt decided to be cool with a threesome? She'd worry about it later. For this second, they were all getting along, two supes and a human. Even to Maya, it sounded like a bad sitcom. "So tell me."

"I don't even know where to begin."

"The beginning is usually good."

Stephen had enough sense to keep his mouth shut, but Maya could see the hint of a smile play on his lips.

Matt chose to ignore Stephen's amusement. "I haven't been completely honest with you about my relationship with Jenny. What I'm about to tell you has to stay just between us." He gave the incubus a meaningful glance.

Stephen did the whole pretend locking the mouth and throwing away the key. Matt rolled his eyes. "Remember when I told you about my brother?"

Maya nodded, pulling up her panties and grabbing her shirt from the floor.

"Well, what I didn't tell you was that Jenny was to be his mate."

"Holy fuck stick. You're dating your brother's girl?"

"It's not what you think..."

Maya cut him off and stood up. "That's crazy, Matt. Even for you. I know your brother doesn't *technically* exist in your world. But still... he's your brother." She looked around. "Where are my fucking pants?"

Stephen pointed over the banister. They were lying on the first floor.

"Great, just fucking great."

"Are you going to let me tell this story or not?"

"Fine, fine. But I can't believe I drove all the way down here for this."

"Jesus, Maya. Are you going to let me talk or what? I feel like I'm already at the tribunal."

Stephen placed his hand on her shoulder, sending peaceful vibes. "Sorry. Go ahead."

"You sure?" Matt waited and when Maya didn't say any more, he continued. "Jenny would have chosen shunning over giving up Mi... my brother. The last thing he said to me before I was forced to turn my back on him was that he wanted me to keep Jenny safe."

"So your bed is safe?"

Matt's blue eyes turned dark, reminding Maya of tinted glass. "I haven't had sex with Jenny."

Both Maya's and Stephen's heads snapped up.

"Surprise." Matt shrugged.

"So..."

"The baby isn't mine. Which is another reason I wouldn't commit as her mate."

"Did she expect you to?"

"I'm not sure what she expected. Her clan found out about it before I did, and when they put me on the spot, I respectfully declined." Rubbing his hands through his short, black hair, Matt sighed. "It caused quite a stir."

"I imagine so." The baby wasn't Matt's. He wasn't having sex with Jenny. Yippee skippy. Of course, that brought up more questions. "If you aren't the baby's daddy, who is?"

A heavy sigh whooshed from Matt. "It's Michael's."

"Michael?"

"My brother."

He'd said the name, holy shit. Matthew had always been so careful, respecting the clan's decision when they'd shunned his brother. Maya waited to see if they would be struck by lightning before asking, "So you've been in touch?"

"Yeah. I'm sorry for not telling you. It's shitty of me, but they take shunning seriously in lycanthrope communities. I couldn't risk anyone finding out."

"Who am I going to tell, really?" Maya suspected that the reason Matt hadn't told her was because he wanted her jealous over Jenny, but she didn't put voice to the thought. "Beside the point." She waved her hand in dismissal. "Go on with the story."

"I've been arranging for Michael and Jenny to be able to see each other in Kansas City without the clan's knowledge, but we've made a point of coming home as a couple to keep up the legitimacy of a relationship. I didn't have a clue she was pregnant, but her mother knew instantly. A woman thing apparently. She put us both on the spot in front of her den and demanded a binding ceremony.

"Jenny just stood there, speechless, leaving it to me. I couldn't do it. I couldn't commit to a binding and... hell, Maya, the only thing I could think was that if I bound myself to Jenny, I'd never have you in my arms again." He shuddered.

Maya slipped her arms around his waist. The gesture brought a low rumble from Matthew's chest.

"When I told them I wouldn't take her as a mate and couldn't come up with a good reason why, Jenny's father challenged me. It was about that time that Jenny took lycanthrope form and ran off into the woods. I went after her and when I caught up to her, she attacked me. I got her pinned down, both of us a little bloody. She calmed and said if I let her up she'd come back with me."

"Let me guess," Stephen interjected. "She didn't."

"Nope. She took off again." Matt cracked his knuckles. "When I got back to her family, I tried to tell them she was okay, just needed some space, but they could smell her blood on me and all they could think was that I'd hurt her in some way... or killed her. Even worse. I thought she'd come back that evening, and when she didn't the accusations started flying."

"You think she went to Michael?"

"I wish. I've been in contact with my brother. Jenny hasn't even called him. It's been almost four days now. That's the deadline they gave me, by the way. If she didn't show, they would assume the worst and a tribunal would be called."

"That's not good."

"Understatement."

"I'm the queen of them."

That brought a smile to Matt. "I'm really worried, Maya. This is not going to go well for me. If Jenny does show up they're going to find out about Michael, and we'll both be shunned for being in contact with my brother. If she doesn't show up they're going to think I killed her, and I'll be put to death."

Oh, God, he'd said it. The D-word. "What do you want me to do? I'll do it."

Matt squeezed her hand. "I know you can't read lycan emotions, but you were able to read my mother's since she began as a human. Jenny's clan has a lot of *debanases*, lycans who started as humans. Someone knows something. The tribunal will last three days. We only have that long to find out who and why."

Chapter 3

They'd left Stephen at the cabin the next morning and headed out in Matt's truck. Maya wasn't certain what to wear to a tribunal, so she went with country chic -- low-rise jeans, T-shirt, black bomber jacket, and a black pair of Doc Martens. She must have changed T-shirts four times before settling on the dark green V-neck. It looked good against her pale skin, and the whole outfit made her look tough, yet still feminine. Considering she was six feet tall and had short brown hair, looking feminine could be a challenge at times.

The small trail leading from the cabin didn't look any better exiting than it had entering. "You need some serious pruning through here," she said, involuntarily ducking as a branch swiped the windshield.

"Nah," Matt answered. "It keeps out the riff-raff and gawkers."

"It didn't keep me out."

Maya was rewarded with a smile. "This isn't going to be like your day job. I know you can take care of yourself, but bullets aren't going to stop a mob of lycanthropes from tearing your throat out if things get out of hand."

"I can take care of myself."

"Just try not to be... impolitic."

"Is that your nice way of telling me not to be a smart ass?"

"Yes."

She tried to think of a witty comeback, but unfortunately, nothing came to mind. "Fair enough."

"Wow, not even an argument. Amazing."

"Look. I'm not stupid. I shot you eleven times a couple of months ago. I know that your kind is stronger, faster, and much more resilient than I am."

"Just call me Steve Austin."

Speaking of the Million Dollar Man... "What's up with the cabin? You live in a dinky apartment across from me in the city, yet you live like royalty down in the Ozarks. I know your job doesn't pay near that well."

Matt blushed. "Oh, that."

"Yeah, that."

"Well, my father is chief of the ruling clan down here."

"Oh. My. God. You're royalty. A friggin' prince."

"I'll inherit his position when he dies, yes."

"I feel like I should prostrate myself at your feet."

Grinning, Matt glanced over at her. "Only if you feel you must."

She slugged him in the arm. "Not unless it's to bite your toes off."

"Don't worry. I won't make you call me sir or master or anything like that."

Maya ignored the comment. "So, being a chief pays well, eh?"

"Kind of." Matt shook his head. "My father is the baddest of the bad asses. He fought challenge after challenge to make our den the strongest. It's a lot of work, but in the end, the lesser dens pay an homage of sorts. Ten percent of the yearly clan income goes to the ruling den. That's my father's. When he dies and I become chief, new challenges will be issued, and I'll either be in charge, or be paying my own taxes."

"So, no fights to the death then?"

"Used to be, but the policy changed years ago. Now it's a fight to submission. Death is sometimes the result if the opposing challenger refuses to submit, but rarely."

"Well, your father has to be a bad ass to put up with your mom. So, it doesn't surprise me."

"Uh..." Matt winced as he pulled out onto UU. "I forgot to tell you that my mother's going to be there."

"It keeps getting better and better." Matt's mother, Isadora Brewer, was not the president of Maya's fan club. She wasn't even an honorary member. "Nails on a blackboard," she mumbled.

“Huh?”

“I was just thinking about how pleasant it’ll be to see your mother again.”

“It’ll be fine.” The twitch in his eyelid told a different story.

The first time she’d met Izzy, as the woman liked to be called by everyone but Maya (she preferred Maya to call her Mrs. Brewer) was the first time Matt and Maya had broken up. Matt had sprung the surprise meeting on both women. Neither had been too appreciative or too happy about the whole thing. Izzy thought Maya unworthy of her baby boy, and Maya thought Izzy a raving bitch in heels.

“That’s like saying an F-5 tornado is blowing through town but the trailer court will be fine.”

“Just don’t shoot her.”

Maya choked back a laugh. “She’d survive.”

Now smiling, Matt eased back in the seat. “Yeah, but I’d never hear the end of it.”

It was the most relaxed Maya had seen him since she arrived and she knew it wouldn’t last. He’d shaved that morning, but he already had a five o’clock shadow on his strong angular jaw. His short curly black hair and dark eyebrows framed his clear blue eyes, perfectly melding his Irish and Greek lineage into a gorgeous package begging to be unwrapped over and over again.

“If you don’t quit looking at me, I’m going to pull over.”

Maya’s eyes widened innocently. “Looking at you like what?”

“You know, like I’m a push-up pop that you can’t wait to suck on.”

“Ohh, I haven’t had an orange Creamsicle in years. That sounds really good.” She licked her lips.

Matt growled low, sexy. The sound made her lower parts go tight and wet. The lycan inhaled deeply through his nose. “I can smell your arousal, Maya.” His tone had dropped two octaves lower than normal.

“Is the big bad wolf going to eat me?” She knew she was playing with fire, but just knowing that he hadn’t been having sex with Jenny made her want him that much more.

“Only if you ask nicely.” He flashed his teeth then yanked the steering wheel left, sending them speeding onto a turn off into the woods.

Maya hung onto the dash and braced herself as the truck lurched to a stop about twenty feet off the main road. “Uh, do we have time...” Before she could finish the question, Matt had unbuckled himself and was working on Maya’s seatbelt.

He scooted to the middle and pulled her across his lap. His arms wrapped around her tightly as he kissed her hard on the lips. “You’re so goddamn beautiful. Beautiful,” he whispered.

“Ditto,” she answered back. Lame. Yes. But it was all she could manage as her body reacted to his every touch.

He’d popped the top button on her jeans, his hand slipping between the rough fabric and her skin, under her panties to her drenched, swollen pussy. “Always. I want to feel you, smell you, taste you...” Pulling his hand from her pants, he brought his glistening fingers wet with her fluids to his mouth and sucked them, his eyes never leaving hers.

Maya drew a staggering breath at the sight as she watched him. His eyes nearly rolled into the back of his head as he fed himself from her.

“God, you taste so fucking good.” He dipped his hand once again, fingers playing along her sex, dipping the tip of his middle finger into her channel as she moved against the pressure, hips moving forward. Then again, he pulled his hand out to taste. She was surprised when he placed one finger to her lips and slipped it into her mouth. Sucking at his finger, Maya watched his eyes glitter with hunger and savage lust. Raw and unfettered.

With another growl, he pushed her back until her head was against the passenger window, pulling her jeans down her hips until they rested at her ankles. His

head dipped between her legs. "Ah!" she cried out as his uber-heated tongue slid between the folds of her pussy, curling and flicking her clit.

His hand molded to her breast as he came up and pressed his lips to hers, his tongue fighting for occupation in her mouth, then back down between her legs to lick and suck the tender flesh. He hooked his other hand under her thigh, lifting her leg for a better angle to delve his tongue deeply into the heat of her pulsing channel.

She grasped his hair, squeezing her hands against the coolness of the soft curls while his face worked gloriously between her legs, then she pulled him up for another kiss, licking her own juices from his shiny wet lips. His eyes had been closed, and when he opened them, a yellow ring rimmed his black pupils. Fear shot through her like a large caliber round.

Matt snarled as he took two fingers and plunged them into her pussy, his teeth nipping her lower lip. "Fuck, oh fuck," she moaned into his mouth.

Her pelvis thrust against his hand as he thrust his fingers in and out. His free hand moved to his own jeans, freeing his large, solid cock. He rubbed the head against her clit, making her squirm beneath him, pleasure enhanced by building panic. The blue in his eyes had nearly disappeared in place of the wolfish amber-gold.

Maya forced herself to stop moving against him. She'd only found out a couple of months back that sex with a shifted lycanthrope could turn her into one of them, something about their sperm having some kind of special protein or some shit like that when they were turned. But as she had told Matt in the past, a tail didn't go with anything in her wardrobe. She had no intention of joining the ranks of the fully furred.

"Trust me." It was hard to know what to say, considering his voice had taken on the low, rumbling timbre of his wolf, and when she didn't respond, Matt's eyes narrowed. Well, that and the fact that he'd tried to turn her twice against her will. He reached around her side and came up with her 9mm in his hand. "If I shift you can shoot me."

She took the gun and dropped it in the floorboard. A small concession that she trusted him, but still close enough to grab if she needed it. *"Fuck me."* *Said the fly to the spider.*

That seemed to be the only encouragement he needed as he thrust her legs up, her Doc Martens pushing against his shoulders as his thick cock slid into the waiting grip of her pussy. Her head bounced against the window as he thrust his hips forward, burying himself deep within her.

Growling, Matt slipped out of her and turned Maya onto her knees as he straddled her calves. He yanked her jacket off, then slid the T-shirt over her head. The snap on her black lace bra came next, freeing her breasts. His hand slipped around, cupping the soft mound of flesh, pinching the nipple between his fingertips as he simultaneously bit down gently on her shoulder and pushed his thick cock into her pussy once again.

Pleasure soared through her body as she rocked backwards to meet the onslaught of thrusts, their moans meeting in chorus. His teeth bore down into her flesh, not enough to break the skin, but enough to hurt. The pain heightened the sensations as blood was pulled to her lower regions, making her feel impossibly swollen around his rock-hard shaft. He was dominating her, and she didn't care.

His teeth released the skin on her shoulder as a sound, much like a howl only lower, pushed through his mouth. One hand gripped the back of her neck, while the other splayed against her buttocks. "So good watching my cock slide in and out of your pussy. Feels so good." He lightly slapped her ass, then dug his fingers into the giving flesh. "Mine."

He surged forward again, another light slap. "Mine," he growled this time. "Say it."

"Oh, God..." Her words bit off at the end of a groan of ecstasy as his thumb slid over the circular opening of her ass, the pressure building inside her like a dam trying to hold back the ocean.

"Mine!" he grunted louder as he pumped his cock into her.

"Yours!" she screamed as the floodgates opened, her body bucking and shaking through the orgasm as ripple after ripple of ecstasy surged through her. Matt's pace quickened, his body rigidly moving against her, his grip tightening on the back of her neck and ass until... "Ahh!" he cried out with one final thrust, holding himself tight against her until the last of his seed pumped into her.

He pulled out slowly as Maya collapsed down, her forehead lying on the passenger door armrest. "Holy shit stick. Fu-uck me."

Matt flopped back into the driver's seat, not bothering to pull his pants up. "I think I just did." He reached over and popped the glove compartment and handed her some napkins.

Maya started laughing. "Yes. Yes, you did. And quite well, if I might add." She grabbed the napkins and raised an eyebrow. "You always keep things like that in your glove box?"

Matt smirked. "I'm always prepared, darlin'."

"A regular freaking boy scout." After cleaning up, Maya stuffed the napkins into a plastic bag behind the seat. She pulled up her jeans and sat back. Flipping the visor, she smoothed her hair down in the mirror and wiped at the smeared mascara under her eyes. "I'm a mess."

"You are stunning." He smiled. "And you are mine."

Maya had said it in the heat of sex, but she didn't mean it in the way she thought he thought she meant it. "About that..."

He put a finger to his lips. "Don't talk. You'll spoil the moment. For now, for this day, I need you to be mine. Okay?"

There were a million things going through her mind, like the fact that she was no one's possession, but instead of arguing, she nodded. "Okay."

They'd been on the road for about fifteen minutes when Matt turned the truck down a private-property-trespassers-will-be-shot road which led to a large houseboat on the lake. Dozens of men and women milled around by the dock in sectioned groups.

Maya inclined her head as they stopped. "Your people."

"Some of them."

"I just meant the terminally furred."

"We're lycanthropes, Maya. Not some creature glamorized by Hollywood. I don't mind your jibes so much, but many of my people will not take kindly to it."

"Got it." She raised an eyebrow. "So, anything special I should do when I greet them? Scratch behind the ear, sniff a butt or two?"

"Not funny." Matt opened the door and came around to Maya's side.

"I thought it was."

All eyes turned at once on them. Didn't none of them look like happy eyes. Matt must have felt the tension in Maya's body. He leaned to her ear and said, "Relax."

"Easy for you to say."

"Not really."

His hand slipped into hers, and the gesture brought her some comfort. A man approached them. He looked early thirties, solidly built, a few inches shorter than Maya, his brown hair blowing forward over his eyes. "Hey, Matthew."

"Dom." Matt's face was like stone, his voice tense. "You sitting on the council?"

"Sorry, bro. Trandill asked. I couldn't very well say no to him." His gaze shifted to Maya and she could see the color clearly now, a dark, dark brown nearly black. It was hard to tell where the pupils ended and the irises began. He walked around her sniffing the air between them. His lips formed a small "O." "You think this is a good plan? Bringing your bitch out here to flaunt in front of the Trandills."

Without thinking, Maya went for her gun, but Matt put his hand on her arm and stilled her. He bared his teeth to the shorter man. "Call her a bitch again and I'll put my fist down your throat and pull out that tiny heart of yours."

Dom's eyes narrowed like he wanted to take the challenge, but instead he threw up his hands. "No harm, bro."

"I don't have a brother anymore if you recall, Dom."

The brown-haired lycan shrugged and walked away. Maya saw a hint of a smile cross his lips as he headed down the hill to the others. "What an asswipe."

“Good description.” Matt hadn’t taken his eyes off Dom since he’d walked away.

“Who is he, anyway?”

“Dominic Goth. He *was* my brother’s best friend.”

“Ah.” As if that explained anything. “What was all that sniffing he was doing around me?”

Matt managed to flinch and blush at the same time. “He could smell my scent on your body.”

“Oh, no, you did not!” Turning on her heel, Maya headed back to the truck. Matt ran to catch up with her.

“Maya, please don’t make a scene. I need you to be united with me here.”

“You marked me.” She forced herself to keep her voice quiet. “You fucking marked me like I was territory. A fucking dog peeing on his favorite tree.”

“I won’t lie to you, Maya. I’m glad you wear my scent. I’m not going to apologize for loving you.” He stepped closer. “But I didn’t start out this morning with the intention of broadcasting my sex life to the lycan community. I mean, first of all it’s just plain stupid, considering why I’m here. Secondly...”

Maya didn’t let him finish. She sealed his mouth with her own in a kiss that started tender, but ended with her feeling weak in the knees. “Secondly, I need to get over myself.”

The crowd had gone quiet, and Maya knew without looking that they were all staring at her and Matt. She could feel anger and indignation from several of the lycans, the *debanases*, as Matt had called them. And it seemed that one of them was projecting a very strong sense of hatred in their direction. The emotion was choking. As she scanned the crowd, she found exactly where it was coming from, Isadora Brewer. *Oh, dear Lord, shoot me now.*

Next to Izzy was a tall man, taller than Matt and broader by several inches. His hair was shoulder length and black against his pale skin, salt and pepper beard, with the same startling blue eyes as Matt. Maya could only assume it was Matt’s father, Duncan Brewer. With him being of Irish descent, she’d always imagined him a redhead

with freckles and that Matt had gotten his good looks from his mother. But seeing Duncan for the first time, Maya could almost understand why Isadora had chosen to become his mate. He was fabulously masculine and gorgeous. Much like his son.

Matt released Maya. "That was probably not the smartest move."

"Count it among the many not-so-smart moves we've made today. But it did help to determine one thing. I can definitely read the emotions from the half-wolfies."

Matt beamed a smile at her. "You're brilliant. Have I told you that lately?"

She took his hand, ready to face the tribunal. "Not nearly enough."

He kissed her knuckles. "Remember, you're only here to observe. They're not going to like that I brought you, and things could get really ugly if you interfere."

Chapter 4

Out of the frying pan and into the fire, and Maya sizzled under the piercing stares of the lycanthropes. Five men (including Dom) sat up on a small staging area inside the houseboat. Matt sat in a chair facing them. His mother and father sat in chairs next to him, while Maya and all the other witnesses had been relocated to the back of the room. The body heat from that many lycans in one small room was stifling. She wished Stephen were there, next to her, lending his comforting vibes. Of course, that comfort would only last as long as it took for the werewolves to start ripping their clothes off and trying to fuck everything in sight, including herself and Stephen.

Much better that he was back at the cabin was her next thought. She handled the glaring accusations they were making with their eyes, but she couldn't get past the sniffing. She wanted to smack them all on the noses and yell, "Bad dogs!" Instead she composed herself, shoulders and back straight as she dreamed about a hot shower and vanilla soap.

The council leaned and whispered to each other, then the large guy sitting in the middle stood. "This tribunal is now called to order." He motioned to Matt and Maya's heart skipped a beat. "Will the accused please stand."

Matt rose from his chair without hesitation.

"Matthew Donovan Brewer. You have been brought before the council on suspicion of misconduct in the disappearance of Jennifer ReAnne Trandill. What say you?"

Matt's words were clear, confident, succinct. "I make my declaration of innocence."

A stir and buzz went through the crowd. Isadora gave them all a scathing look. Maya could feel how much she loved and believed in her son, and in his innocence.

And for one brief moment, she got on the Izzy bandwagon. Which lasted until Isadora Brewer turned the scathing look on her.

“Bite me,” Maya mouthed.

Isadora narrowed her eyes and snapped her teeth. Maya flinched. Maybe pissing off the mommy wolf ranked up there with the not-so-good moves. While they were both on Matt’s side of this argument, Izzy and Maya were definitely not on the same team.

“Who stands with the accused in this manner?” the large lycan in the middle asked, his voice booming loudly.

Isadora leaned forward as if to stand, but Duncan’s tight grip on her arm held her in her seat. Murmuring ensued but not one member of the tribunal court stood. Izzy spoke. “Many of you know my son, yet none will stand. You have hunted with him. He is not a murderer and you know it.” Venom dripped from her words. “If no one will stand with him...”

“Don’t, Mom. We talked about this. You agreed...” Matt said.

Izzy threw up her hand. “You are my son,” she said fiercely and full of pride. “I will not lose another child to the whims of the clans.”

“Isadora,” Maya heard Duncan’s soft southern voice say. “Would you leave me nothing?”

“I believe my son guiltless of this accusation. I believe he is true. If you are blinded to his innocence you are not the man I thought you were.”

Anger crossed Duncan’s face, Matt looked at his mother helplessly, and Maya couldn’t stand the pain and frustration rolling off Isadora, banging in her skull like a hammer. On impulse, she stood. “I do.”

Every head swung to look at Maya. Surprise, chagrin, and the feeling that she’d just stepped into sheer lunacy swept over her. “I will. I mean... I’ll stand with Matt.” She raised her head, sticking out her chin in sheer defiance, and Matt looked... stricken. *Crap, what did I just do?*

At the head of the room, Dom leaned forward, eager. "I accept Ms. Eddings' stand." The other members, less eager, concurred. The older man who had started the proceedings quieted the room. "Are you sure you are prepared to stand with Matt, young lady?"

"Uh... yes?" She'd already said she would, too late to back out now. Right?

"No!" Matt roared.

"Sit down, Brewer. The council has spoken," Dom said.

Maya looked at Isadora who sat dumbstruck and silent. Which only seemed to confirm that Maya had done something really, really stupid.

The guy in the middle, whom Maya now assumed was in charge, looked at her sympathetically. "We'll proceed now."

Oh, shit.

"I can't believe you didn't tell me!" Maya slammed the truck door and stalked toward Matt's cabin.

"I told you not to get involved. How much clearer can I get?" Matt slammed his door as well. "I shouldn't have even called you."

"No. You shouldn't have." She threw up her arms. "So, what now? At best, I'll be beaten with a really big stick and shunned from your clan. At worst... I don't even want to think about the worst."

"You'll be put to death. Right alongside of me," Matt said, his voice sullen. "Unless... You should go home, Maya. I'll tell them you withdraw your stand."

Tempting. "No." She couldn't believe how incredibly stupid she was being by not running away.

Shattering glass startled them both from the argument. They looked up to the second-story bathroom window. Stephen waved his arms at them. "Get back in the truck! Lock the door! Maya, run!" he shouted.

Maya took a step toward the house, her 9mm already in her hand. A chilling howl froze her in place. "What the..."

"The truck, get back to the truck!" Stephen yelled. Maya noticed his shirt was ripped and he had blood streaming from his chest.

Running toward the front door, Maya heard a rumbling growl from the left. She glanced over at the seven-foot black-furred werewolf wearing the torn remnants of Matt's clothing. A blur of dark brown shag burst from the front door, rushing toward Maya. Before she could pull the trigger, the massive werewolf was on her, tackling her to the ground. She screamed as her head slammed against the hard ground.

"Maya!" Matthew roared.

Lightheaded and heart pounding, she felt more than saw Matthew jump on the back of her assailant. The brown wolf clawed at her clothing, her jeans ripped to shreds, his teeth grazing her cheek.

Oh, dear God, he meant to fuck her! What was the deal with horny fucking werewolves! The fog in her brain lifted as she struggled to free herself from his grasp. The lycan's knee dug into her thigh. Maya screamed as he forced her legs apart. It was a girly thing to do, but at the moment, girly was all she had.

"Michael! Stop!" It was Matt's voice, fear and panic edged around the feral rasping.

"Here! Here!" Stephen shouted.

The lycan's head snapped up, his yellow eyes alert as he sniffed the air. Suddenly, the werewolf rolled onto his back, his long, hard cock pressed against her bloody thighs. And he threw Maya off of him, elbowed Matt in the jaw and started toward Stephen. She'd never been so glad to be second choice.

As the incubus began to run, a whole new panic started. Bruised, bleeding, and battered, Maya rolled to her stomach and placed a well-aimed bullet into the brown wolf's back. He jerked, stumbled forward, but kept after the incubus.

Maya shot again, the bullet hitting his shoulder, as Matt jumped at him from the side and dragged him down. The black lycan pounded Michael's head until he stopped struggling and lost consciousness.

Stephen ran to Maya and helped her up. "You okay, babe?"

"Yes, yes," she replied shakily.

Matt had already shifted back to human, and the brown lycan was nearly there as well. Lying on the ground, unconscious, he almost looked sweet. Like a sleeping child. Almost. Maya kicked him hard in the head.

"Hey," Matt complained. "He's already out."

Maya sniffed. "Just want to make sure he stays out."

They dragged Michael into the house and tied him to a metal chair in the living room.

"Are you sure that's going to hold him?" Maya watched the eyelids flutter on Matthew's brother. "I mean, really? Super-strong wolf-man and all."

"He should be fine." Stephen moved behind Maya and stroked her arms. "The pheromones should have worn off by now, and he'll not have the same reaction again. And while he can shift and break free from the ropes, at least it gives us a head start."

"Fantastic." Maya shook her head and leaned back against Stephen. Her legs burned where Michael had clawed them. "What the hell happened?"

"Well, I had just gotten out of the shower, dressed, went down the stairs and there he was." Stephen shrugged. "He took one whiff of me, and the rest, as they say, is history."

"I can't believe he came here." Matt's distress shook Maya. "He shouldn't have come. If the clan finds out, they'll kill him."

"I saw the look on your mother's face today, Matt. I don't think she'd allowed that to happen."

"You don't understand." He slammed his fist against the wooden coffee table, shattering it into pieces. "Anyone who tries to stand in the way of clan law will be put to death along with Michael. This includes my mother. Duncan will have no choice. If he doesn't allow them both to die, he'll be seen as weak. It could potentially destroy our den."

"Okay, so they take shit seriously around here." She gestured to Michael. "So, what do we do about him?"

"We have to get him out of here, and his scent. If the clan smells him anywhere, a hunt will be called."

Michael's head lolled sideways. "I'm not leaving..."

Matt tilted his brother's head back. "Mike? You okay?"

"Fine... fine... Back hurts. Head hurts." His eyes opened completely and he stared at Maya and Stephen. Horror filled his face. "Sorry." He coughed. "I attacked you. I'm not sure why, but..."

"It's not your fault," Maya said, but she didn't even sound convincing to herself. She pointed behind her to Stephen. "Incubus. Good ju-ju. Makes the furry go horny-nuts."

Stephen grimaced. "You should be okay now."

"Yes," Michael replied. "The pull is still there, but it's... manageable."

Matt grunted. "I think it's safe to untie him."

Maya put up her hands. "Uhm, I think I'm going to go clean up. My legs are killing me." She lightly rubbed over her tattered jeans. "Am I gonna need a rabies shot?"

Matt frowned, but Michael chuckled. "I've had my vaccine."

Maya smiled. "Decent."

"I really am truly sorry. I've injured you, and you have every right to expect recompense." Michael's blue eyes were filled with sadness and grief.

"Recompense?" Maya tried for light. "What are you, a lawyer?"

"Yes, actually."

"That figures. I'll bill you." She tried for a cool exit, but her legs felt wobbly. Stephen held her up.

"I'll help you."

"I'm not a baby." Her knees buckled.

"Shut up and let me help you."

"Bossy, bossy. You're starting to act like him." She pointed to Matt.

"No, I'm starting to act like you," Stephen said. "Disturbing, really."

Maya nodded, all the fight leaving her. "Fine. Help me. Whatever."

The incubus scooped her six-foot frame into his arms. "You two talk," he said to the lycans. "Figure out what you need to do."

"Thank you." Matt put his hand on Michael's shoulder. "Take care of her."

"I will."

Maya glared at both men. "I'm in the fucking room, you know?"

"Wow, he's really stocked for battle here." The medicine cabinet in the small guest bath was stocked with gauze, peroxide, Mercurochrome, antibiotic ointment, adhesive bandages, alcohol -- not the drinking kind, though Maya could've used a drink -- scissors, and tape.

"Weird, considering their voodoo-like healing powers." Maya stripped to her underwear and sat on the edge of the bathtub, thighs turned out while Stephen prepared gauze.

He knelt between Maya's legs. "Yeah, it's a little weird. Everything looks newly purchased as well."

"Ouch. That hurts," she complained as Stephen dabbed at the scratches.

"You are a baby." He smiled, but it didn't reach his eyes.

"You're worried?" She caressed his face. "Why? I've had worse injuries."

"I'm not worried about these." He gestured to the shallow wounds. "I'm worried that you're in way over your head here."

She couldn't argue. "Me too."

His bright green eyes met hers. "Then let's go. Let's get the hell out of the deep woods and back to the city."

"I can't." Maya leaned forward and kissed Stephen's cheek. "I already agreed to stand for him."

Stephen didn't get angry like Maya thought he would; instead, he smoothed her hair, leaned his head against hers and whispered, "Idiot."

Chapter 5

Four-hundred-dollar suede boots squishing in the soft grass after a torrential downpour did not make Maya one bit happy. "Jeezus, Matt. Haven't you people heard of concrete sidewalks?"

"Us people?" The black-haired lycan smirked. "You should shop at Wal-Mart. You'd care less about your shoes."

Maya grabbed Matt's arm to steady herself as she shook a clump of mud from her heel. "I'll keep that in mind."

The tribunal had gone pretty much as it had the first day. Four hours of accusations, denials, and waiting. "This is such bullshit." Maya swatted at a horsefly that had been buzzing her since she'd walked out of the boathouse. "I hate nature." Although, she had to admit the scenery was beautiful, the pale orange reflection of the setting sun on the water, the tree leaves just starting to turn with vibrant fall colors. Even so. She sneezed. "Again, I hate nature."

"I have to tell you, having ol' Stev-o back at the cabin is making me nervous as hell. What if someone else shows up there?"

The same thoughts had been running through Maya's head. Stephen was her rock, but if more lycans showed up, she'd have more than a hard space to contend with. Maya leaned in close, not wanting any big ears to hear their conversation. "We can't have a repeat of yesterday. I don't know what would have happened if you hadn't knocked your brother's ass out. You animals are pretty damned persistent when you get a whiff of the..." She finger quoted the next word. "...incubus."

"Yeah, not good."

"So, where'd he-who-shall-not-be-named go?"

Matt rolled his eyes. "He's not the dark lord, Maya."

"Just trying to be discreet is all."

"He got a motel room in town. He's not going to leave without Jenny."

"If she's still alive."

"There is that. I can't think about her being anything but well. I just wish I knew what the hell happened. Someone or something is preventing her from getting in touch with Michael. She loves him. Ardently. She might disappear from her family, but not him."

"I'm sorry." Maya stroked Matt's cheek.

"For what?"

For all the times she'd referred to Jenny as a werebitch, for all the times she'd wished Jenny would drop off the face of the earth, for the fact that Matt had sacrificed so much to be with Maya at the expense of his clan, for... "Everything."

"Well, well. Like brother like brother." A woman, dressed in a tight red skirt and a white blouse, walked toward them. An older woman with dark brown hair, cool gray eyes -- a cold beauty. "Don't think you'll be getting away with any of this, Matthew. I'll see justice is done."

Dom strode up behind her. "Mother. Have you met Matt's current bitch, Maya Eddings?"

"Don't be a pomp, Dominic. It's unbecoming," his mother scolded him.

Maya stepped forward and extended her hand. "You must be Mrs. Goth."

A rush of hate, possessiveness, and pride washed over Maya. Emotions so strong from the female lycan that they nearly floored her. The woman glanced at Maya's now shaking hand and sniffed. "Clever girl. Parents must have been rocket scientists."

Maya's jaw went slack and she felt the red creep up her neck into her face as she stared at the she-wolf. "Well, your parents must have been..." Her mind blanked. Goth was a woman who thought she was better than everyone.

"I don't think it, dear. I know it." Mrs. Goth sniffed again. "As I thought. Come along, Dominic."

Amused and smug, so fucking smug. Dom's mother had somehow read Maya's thoughts, but how? Or was she just that good at anticipating reactions to her brand of vile? After the mother and son reached their SUV, Maya yelled, "Yeah, well, your parents must have been..."

Matt shook his head and patted her shoulder. "Let it go, Maya."

"Rude. Just rude."

"Yes, Laurenia Goth is that." He put his arm around her, the natural heat of his body taking the edge off as he helped Maya into the truck.

After they'd cleared the dock road, she asked, "What is their deal? Why the animosity?"

"Dom and I had a falling out after my brother's tribunal. Dom had been my brother's best friend, but he turned his back on Michael during the whole thing."

"I have to ask. What did Michael do that was so bad he was beaten and shunned?"

Matt winced. "He was twenty-one, just out of college with his undergrad when it happened. He was home for the summer and a couple days before the Fourth of July the Dunhills' barn caught fire after it was hit by a Roman candle. Their son Donald had been trapped inside. They caught Michael pulling Don out of the blazing building. He'd saved him, but several head of cattle died in their stalls. And Don was covered in third- and fourth-degree burns. He almost didn't make it. Even for a lycan that's a lot to heal."

"Did Michael do it? Did he start the fire?"

Matt shook his head. "I don't know. He's never defended himself in the matter."

"Well, I don't know your brother that well, but I can't believe he'd have been out shooting fireworks in the middle of the night all by his lonesome."

"Yeah. I know. But he wouldn't say any different. I always suspected Dom was involved, but I can't prove it. Not that it matters now." Matt turned on the main road. "Michael's fate is sealed. I have to worry about my ass now."

"And Jenny's."

"What do you mean?"

"If you're right, that she just wouldn't disappear, then someone has her. If she's not already dead."

The look on Matt's face told her he'd had the same thoughts. "I searched her trail. It ended less than a quarter of a mile from where we'd fought. Cold, nothing."

"Do you think someone could have organized her disappearance as a way to get to you? Your family?" She rubbed his shoulder. "From what you've told me, your dad's a big deal around here. Maybe someone is trying to take him down a notch."

Matt's blue eyes lit on her. "God, I'm stupid! No." He dismissed the idea. "It can't be that. Jenny's family called the tribunal. They have no quarrel with my den."

"Yeah, but wouldn't whoever's behind this know what would happen if Jenny came up missing? It still makes sense. Otherwise, why Jenny?" Maya couldn't see anything special in the woman. At least not the one time she met her. Sure the lycan was pretty, petite, had flawless skin, a full head of long red hair, big boobs... *If you like that type.*

"The other den leaders like my father. He hasn't had a challenge in ten years. He's fair. It hasn't always been that way with the clan. But since my father took over, there hasn't been any major turmoil."

"There's going to be jealousy, Matt. You'd have to be living in a bubble to think otherwise. Even if it's not out in the open, it's there. Bubbling, bubbling."

"Like a witches' brew?"

"Speaking of witches. What the hell was up with that Laurenia Goth woman? She's vile."

"What'd you pick up from her?"

"Triumph, hate, and a deep-seated sense of self-worth. In other words, the bitch thinks a lot of herself." Maya snapped her fingers. "Oh! And I found it difficult to concentrate when she was there."

"This is because you couldn't think of a comeback to her jibe about your intelligence, isn't it?"

"As if. You know under normal circumstances I'd have torn her a new ass." She looked out the window. "Man, it's getting dark. You think it's going to rain?" Headlights appeared in the side-view mirror. Normally not a cause for alarm, but they were getting closer, quickly. "Uh, Matt."

"I see them." He punched the gas. The vehicle behind them matched speed, still gaining on them.

"What are they doing?" A jolt, then the truck lurched forward as the dark SUV smashed into the bumper. "Holy fuck! They're trying to kill us."

Matt swerved into the oncoming lane as the vehicle hit them again. "Good guess," he shouted.

"Go faster!"

"I've got my foot to the goddamn floor, Maya. This is as fast as she goes."

"Fucking hell!" She unstrapped her seatbelt just as the truck hit them again and she flew forward, face smashing against the windshield. "That's going to leave a mark." She pulled the 9mm. "Motherfuckers." Leaning out the side window, Maya shot at the pursuing truck. Even over the roar of the engines, she heard shouting and commotion from the other vehicle as they dropped back twenty feet.

"Aim for the tires!" Matt said.

"You try aiming for the fucking tires on a moving SUV going eighty miles an hour down a dark road in the black of night." She squeezed off two more rounds, taking a headlight out with one of them. "Shit! It's not that friggin' easy."

"They do it in the movies all the time."

"Well, if only I was John Friggin' Rambo." *Idiot*, she added as a mental afterthought. She squeezed off a couple more rounds as the pursuers got brave and came up close on them again. There was a flash, and a shotgun blast sounded. Maya felt multiple stings on her left arm and the side of her face. Anger and adrenaline danced through her body. She emptied the clip into the truck and it swerved off the road into the ditch.

"Shit, shit." She pulled herself back through the window and slumped in the seat.

"You got them, Rambo. We should go back and find out who was trying to knock us off the road."

Now that the adrenaline had passed, Maya felt lightheaded. "Uh-hum."

"Oh, crap. You're bleeding. Maya. Fuck." He punched the gas. "Hang on, honey. I'm taking you to the hospital."

The pellets in her skin burned, but she could see the flaw in his plan. "Too many questions. They'll want to know who shot at me and why."

"We don't know who or why, so it doesn't matter." Matt's face tensed with panic.

"Then when the cops start poking around, what's your clan going to say then? You're in enough trouble, Matt." The pain was bad, getting worse as the shock wore off. But Maya had been shot before, and it didn't feel like she was dying. "Just take me back to the cabin."

"No. We'll go to my parents' house."

"Oh, great. Izzy can sneer me into good health."

"My mother was an ER nurse before she married my dad. She can help. So... shut the fuck up. If we're not going to the hospital, we're going there."

Maya pressed her hand to her face and came away with blood. "Fine. Torture by Izzy it is."

Less than ten minutes later they were pulling into a long drive.

"Why do you not want my son for a mate?"

Having a conversation with Isadora Brewer, in a bathroom no less, was nearly as painful as the antiseptic the woman was daubing on Maya's wounds. "Ya know, if this week goes badly, it's kind of a moot question, Mrs. Brewer."

"You may call me Izzy."

Oh goody.

"It will not go badly." She pulled out a pair of tweezers that had been soaking in rubbing alcohol. "This will hurt."

"No shit."

"I don't like you, Maya. But for some reason..." She dug into one of the pellet wounds on Maya's face and pulled out the first bit of shot. "...my son, he loves you."

Maya winced and gritted her teeth. "Why do you even care? You hate me."

"I don't hate you. I don't like you, but I don't hate you." Izzy was telling the truth. For once, Maya didn't feel a jolt of animosity, which she normally felt around the mommy she-wolf. It wasn't all warm and fuzzy, but it was tolerant.

"Well. Wonderful. One less person hating me -- I can live with that. Ow." Another pellet hit the sink.

"You're going to need stitches."

"Ducky." Maya looked at her face in the mirror. Only three shots had hit the left side of her face, two in the cheek, one above the eye. Her shoulder had taken the brunt of the flying shot, but even so, only about seven pellets had penetrated the skin.

"Why were you all being shot at?"

"That's the question of the day, or night, or whatever."

"I fear for my son. Duncan has already sent some of our den to investigate where Matt said the other truck went off the road."

"Unless you're dead on lucky, I can almost bet the truck will be gone, along with its passengers."

"We have ways of finding what we want to find." She tapped her nose.

"Well, your sniffers sure haven't helped in finding Jenny." Maya held up a hand. "I'd lay odds the same people responsible for Jenny's disappearance are the same ones who tried to run us off the road. Worst of all, they're smart and they're covering their trail really well."

"You really think the two incidents are connected."

"I'd bet my right titty on it."

Izzy rolled her eyes.

"I'm just saying, I don't believe in coincidences."

"You may be smarter than you look."

"Uh, gee, duh. Thanks. What is it with you lycan women and your jibes about my intelligence? I'm getting pretty damn sick of it."

"Maybe if you didn't cuss every other word." Izzy shrugged. "Some lidocaine would be handy about now, but I'm afraid I'll have to suture you without it." She pulled a little package out, broke it open and took out a hooked needle with a see-through thread attached. "Can't be helped."

"Goddamn, at least offer me a bullet to bite down on and a swig of whiskey."

Izzy raised an eyebrow. "You think it would help?"

"Ah. Skip the bullet biting and let's go straight for the whiskey."

Izzy left the bathroom, her hairpiece bouncing with every step. She returned moments later with a bottle of blended whiskey. "Here."

Maya took the cap off and took a long pull. The amber liquid burned her throat and the warmth of the alcohol spread into her belly. "Do I really need stitches?"

"One each, maybe two for the one on your forehead, or you can live with the scars. Another option, you can mate with my son, become one of us and heal yourself."

"You're really pushing it."

"A mother only really wants for her children to be happy. You'll understand when you have children."

"Are you kidding? I can't even keep goldfish alive. Why are you pushing the relationship all of a sudden?"

"You are a smart girl. I can see why my Matthew is intrigued by you."

"You think Jenny's dead. You think she's dead and you think Matt's going to be dead by the end of the week."

"Yes. If you accepted my son as a mate, I think he could be convinced to run away. I would never see him again, but at least I'd know he was alive."

Maya could feel the love that Izzy felt for Matt, and the desperate fear of a mother for her son. "I... I don't..." Luckily she didn't have to finish the sentence because Matt and Duncan walked in.

"They found shattered glass at the scene but nothing else. The trail went cold," Duncan informed them.

Maya fought to keep the "I told you so" look off her face as she and Izzy exchanged looks. "No big surprise there." She sucked in a breath, squeezing her eyes shut as Izzy put in the next stitch.

A hand touched her back, and Maya knew it was Matt. He massaged his hands down and up and she tensed. "You doing okay?"

"Yeah." What she really wanted to say was, "Don't rub on me in front of your mommy. Go get Stephen," but she knew it would hurt Matt's feelings. Stephen would know exactly the right thing to say, to do, to make Maya feel better.

"The wounds are superficial, my son." Izzy linked her arm through Matt's and escorted him to the bathroom door. "You needn't worry. Let me finish here and you can take her home."

Maya stared at Izzy after Matt and Duncan were out of earshot. "Are you being nice to me because I stood for Matt at the tribunal?"

"Yes." She didn't elaborate.

"You know I had no idea what it meant when I did it."

"Yes, I know. But you came back today after you found out. You didn't run away, Maya. That says a lot about you."

Yeah, that she had cotton instead of brains between her ears. Well, she and Izzy would never be best friends, but it seemed in this, they were at least allies.

Chapter 6

Stephen came out of the kitchen wearing boxer shorts and an apron, holding a wooden ladle. "What the hell took you guys so long? Dinner is ruined." His next reaction... he dropped the ladle. "Oh, my God, Maya! What happened?" The question was more of an accusation and it was aimed at Matt.

"She got caught by a shotgun blast. She's okay," Matt explained.

"*She* can talk for herself," Maya added. "I'm fine, really. Some asswipe tried to run us off the road on the way home."

Stephen was already next to her, examining the stitches under the little bandages on her face. "Did you go to the hospital?"

"No, Matt's mom did it."

"I don't like this, Maya. Not one bit. We've been here two days, and you've been injured twice already. First getting mauled by a lycan, now shot. What's on the schedule for tomorrow, an amputation?"

Matt dropped his keys on the foyer table. "I really hate to agree with demon boy on this, Maya, but maybe you should think about going back to Kansas City."

"Sounds like a good plan to me." Stephen nodded.

Both her men surrounded her with worry, their fears tugging at her, and Maya flushed. How could two men love her the way they did? "The only plan I have is... going to bed." She took off her jacket and put it on the stair banister. Next, her shirt was off and over her head. Matt and Stephen stared at her, dumbstruck. "Well, come on, guys. In the immortal words of Marvin Gaye, I want sexual healing. Se-sexual," she sang as she kicked off her shoes and shimmied from her jeans.

Stephen was the first to react, scooping her up and carrying her to the large guest bedroom. Matt hesitated, briefly, but followed. Stephen laid her gently on the bed,

careful of her wounds. The guys stood on either side of the bed and stared at her. Complete polar opposites -- Matt, dark haired, blue eyes, stocky, but ripped with muscle -- Stephen, light haired, green eyes, lean and long, tightly muscled like a swimmer -- both gorgeous.

Even with the injuries she couldn't help but think she was the luckiest girl in the world. "This is not a one-woman show. Off with the clothes," she ordered them. Surprisingly, Matt was the first one to strip. He slid in next to her on the right, then Stephen, torturously slow, took off his apron and his boxers and slid in on the left.

"My, my," she said to both of them as her hands caressed their already hard cocks. "What big dicks you have."

Matt chuckled. "Are we really going to do the X-rated version of Little Red Riding Hood?"

"I'm just telling it like I see it." She smiled. Her lips met Matt's in a gentle kiss as she turned toward him. Stephen pressed his body against her back, his cock nudging her buttocks.

Matt's blue eyes brimmed with wolfish amber. "Your blood smells good." He closed his eyes, afraid to look at her. "Does that freak you out?"

"Only if you plan to eat me."

He opened his eyes. "Oh, I plan to eat you."

Stephen undid her bra then slipped his hand under her wounded arm and slid around her front to cup her breast. "Me too." He pulled Maya on top of him, as Matt kissed his way down her belly, his fingers toying with the hair of her mound before he tugged her panties down and his tongue slipped between the wet folds of her pussy.

"Oh, shit." Stephen's cock pressed against the crack of her ass while he rolled her nipples with his fingertips and sucked the flesh on the back of her neck. Matt slipped a finger into her as his lips, tongue, and teeth worked her clit. Her whole body ached with arousal and desire. "Feels so good," she whispered, snuggling her body back into Stephen's while pushing her pelvis to meet Matt's mouth.

Reaching down, she grabbed a handful of thick black hair, pulling Matt's face tighter to her pussy, his mouth sucking her clit like she'd sucked his cock so many times. Stroking her sex with his mouth until she cried out. "Oh fuck, I'm going to come."

"Come for us, Maya," Stephen whispered in her ear.

"Not yet," she panted. "Not yet. I want you in me."

Matt looked up at her, his mouth glistening with her slick juice. She lifted her buttocks. "Put his cock in me, Matthew. Please, put his cock in me."

She felt Matt's hand under her ass, tugging Stephen's cock free and placing the head of it in her pussy. Matt's thick fingers guided the long shaft into her, inch by hard inch. "Oh, fuck, yeah." She arched her back to take as much of the cock in her as she could manage.

Stephen moaned as he thrust his hips forward. Matt lapped his tongue around her clit once again then started his climb up her long body. "What... what are you doing?"

"Do you want us both? Both of us in you?" His words buzzed in her head. Alien, foreign.

Stephen thrust forward again. "Yes, both of us."

A tingling sensation ran through her body, like shock, only it felt much, much better. "Yes."

Matt smiled, his eyes more amber now, but still human. His fingers stretched and rimmed her pussy as Stephen pulled out slightly to allow room for Matt. The large head of his cock pushed through and she cried out again. "Do you want me to stop?" Matt asked.

It hurt to be stretched so tight, but the pain added to the pleasure. "No, fuck no," she managed, her throat hoarse with panting.

Stephen grabbed the nearest pillows and propped them up at an angle. His hand went to her thighs, pulling her legs back. "Maya, Maya, love you."

Her body relaxed at his words and Matt slid the rest of his cock into her. She should have felt like she was being ripped apart. Instead, she felt completely turned on. Her head rolled to one side, her neck being nibbled and kissed by Stephen, Matt stretching and tugging her nipple with his teeth, while both men, slowly, and as one, stroked their rock hard cocks in her.

“Oh. Oh. Ah!” A tingling rush pulled against her stomach and down into her pussy, her clit vibrating against the hair of Matt’s groin as her first orgasm took life. Her body shook against theirs as she brought her legs up, looping her heels around Matt’s thighs. Tears were in her eyes, a physical response as ecstasy played over and through her. When it subsided, she collapsed back onto Stephen. “Nothing should feel that fucking good.”

“Fucking should,” Matt said.

Maya couldn’t believe she’d just let two men fuck her at the same time. She’d been with both of them at the same time, but not like this. It was strangely more intimate, especially since they were both still in her. Also, she realized, her wounds no longer hurt or stung, not her thigh, not her arm, not her face.

Stephen moved first, his arms wrapping both Maya and Matt as he rolled them over so that Matt was on the bottom, Maya was straddling the lycan, and Stephen had her mounted from behind. She rocked over Matt’s cock as Stephen began to thrust with earnest, both men grunting, moaning their pleasure of her shared pussy. “Oh, God, yes.” They were not in unison, one cock moving slowly, the other quicker, and it felt even better than before.

Stephen’s arm wrapped her waist and Matt’s hands cupped her breasts. Maya slipped her hand down to her pussy, her fingers sliding to feel the two cocks as they moved inside her. Stephen bucked forward, nearly mashing her down. Maya cried out again as a surprise orgasm ripped through her. She arched against Stephen, grinding her hips down and out. Matt roared as a shuddering climax took hold of him. Stephen followed, pumping himself into her until they all collapsed into a ball on the bed.

No one spoke for several seconds, until Maya caught the faint odor of something... smoke. She leaned her head sideways and saw the glow of flame under the door. "The house," she rasped, patting Stephen's shoulder. "The house is on fire."

Stephen smiled lazily while Matt joined him in a chorus of... "We don't need no water, let the mother-fu..."

She smacked him hard then kicked away from both men. "No, you idiots. The house is on fire." She pointed at the door.

"Oh, fuck!" Matt shouted. He and Stephen were up and throwing their clothes on. Maya's were on the staircase, along with her gun.

"Shit!" She ran to the door.

"What are you doing?" Stephen tried to pull her back, but too late, she'd already flung the door open.

Flames licked the stairwell, but the fire hadn't made it completely to the second floor. Maya yanked her arm from Stephen. "My gun!"

Matt pushed them both back and ran past. He was back in a few seconds with her charred holster and 9mm. His hands were covered in red, blistering burns. "Here." He shoved the weapon at her. She took it.

Stephen wrapped the blanket around Maya's naked body while Matt opened the bedroom window. He jumped the two stories to the ground as Maya and Stephen watched him land with the grace of a cat. "Jump, Maya. I'll catch you."

It was a long fucking way down, and Maya was seriously considering braving the fire. She turned to the door. Heat poured into the room.

"No time to argue," Stephen said as he picked her up and tossed her from the window.

She screamed as she plummeted to the ground and stopped when she landed with an *ummpfh* in Matt's arms. Stephen jumped next with Maya's overnight bag in his hand. His landing wasn't so graceful as he rolled onto the ground, his head taking a terrible twist.

"Oh, God. Stephen!" Maya ripped herself from Matt's arms and ran to her incubus lover. His head was at an impossible angle, along with his leg which had turned back behind his body, the bone pushing through his bloody jeans. "His neck. Matt. Oh, God. His neck is broken."

Stephen's eyelids fluttered open. He reached for his head and twisted it back, then pulled his leg around and set it straight. Closing his eyes again, he breathed deeply as his body healed before Maya's eyes. "I'm okay, Maya."

"I'll never get used to that." She shuddered.

"Whoever started the fire, they didn't come by vehicle. I think I can track them." Matt sniffed at the air.

"Why wasn't your super-sniffer working when they were in the house starting the damn fire?" Maya asked, pulling clothes from her bag.

"To be frank, the only thing I could smell was you and how turned on you were."

"Oh," she said, slightly embarrassed as she tugged on a pair of jeans, slipped on some tennis shoes, and pulled a shirt over her head. "Well, that s'plains that." Her holster was blackened, but no worse for wear. She strapped it on, checked her 9mm. She'd put in a full clip before they'd left Matt's parents' house. She dug inside the bag Stephen had grabbed and took out two more fully loaded magazines. "Okay. I'm ready."

Stephen put his hand on her shoulder. "I think you should stay here."

"Agreed." Matt nodded.

"Kiss my ass, both of you." Since when did they start agreeing on everything? "I'm going."

Matt glared at her. "Fine. I'll take the lead." His body jerked as his eyes went bright yellow. Maya watched as he changed first into the familiar werewolf form she'd seen several times now, then became smaller, more compact as muscle and bone stretched, bunched, and popped. When he was finished, the form he'd taken was a

large black wolf. Only the eyes told her that Matt was in the animal somewhere. He sniffed at the air, howled, then turned and loped into the woods.

Maya's face went slack. Stephen nudged her. "I think that's the only invitation we're getting."

She nodded and they both took off running after Matt. The wolf moved quickly in a zig-zagging pattern, stopping every so often to paw at the ground or sniff a tree. He hiked his leg and pissed on several of them, shocking Maya even more.

"Do we really have time for potty breaks?"

"I think it's a territorial thing, babe," Stephen said as they ran. "He smells other males in his woods. It's natural to piss on their scent to reclaim his area."

Maya made a face. "If you say so."

Out of seemingly nowhere, a brown wolf went running full speed toward the black, then stopped in a sudden halt and yipped. The black wolf turned and continued the trail, the brown wolf at his side.

"Michael," Maya assumed, since they weren't getting into a big dog fight. "Where'd he come from?"

"I don't think he's been far since he got here."

After nearly three miles of running, the two wolves stopped and started whining, pacing between a couple of trees. Maya and Stephen came up behind them. They both seemed reluctant to move any further. "What is it, boy?" Maya knelt next to the black wolf. "Is farmer Johnson trapped under his tractor in the barn? Is Kitty down the well?"

The wolf put his ears back and growled.

Maya smiled. "Sorry, had a Lassie flashback."

Matt shifted back to human form. "You're not funny."

Michael followed suit. "I think she is." He chuckled.

Stephen muttered a curse and they all turned to look at him. "Black fucking magic." His fingers traced a pentagram carved in the tree. "It's an alarm system. Whoever put this here knows we're coming."

"I felt it when I crossed the tree line," Matt confirmed.

Maya shivered. "I'm really getting sick of all the 'Sorcerer and the Stone' bullshit. One maniacal magic user a year is my limit."

"You should go back," Matt was quick to add.

She glared at Stephen, daring him to agree. "You're not getting rid of me that easy." Maya chambered a round in the 9mm and took the safety off. "I'm in it to win it."

Michael whistled, soft and low. "Wow, she really likes that gun of hers."

"Yep," Matt and Stephen said in unison. Which was really starting to creep Maya out.

"We can do one of two things here, boys. We can continue on or I can shoot you all for being a bunch of smart asses."

Matt and Michael changed forms again and were back on the trail.

"Good answer," Maya mumbled.

The farther they got the worse Maya felt. Her legs were leaden and it felt like rain clouds were gathering in her head. "Do you feel it?"

"Yes," Stephen answered. "I'm finding it harder to go on. Every step is a chore."

"Exactly." Even the wolves were slowing down. "Didn't Matt say that in wolf form, sorcery couldn't stop him?"

"Yes, normally, yes. But this feels different than any magic I've seen. Not as blatant, but more potent."

"Great, that makes me feel better. Not." Fear coursed through her body with every heavy step. Suddenly, they were in a circular clearing in the woods. Every tree was marked with a pentagram. "Oh, this is so not good."

She crawled to the center where the wolves had lain down. They were starting to shift again, slowly, but already in lycan form. "Matt, what's going on?"

His voice came in a rumbling growl. "The magic is strong. Can't fight it."

"Mother was right. You are all dumb as a box of rocks." Dominic stepped from the woods.

"I should have known," Maya groaned. Her arms and legs refused to react.

"Dom..." Michael rasped. "Why?"

"How?" Matt added.

"Why? How? You Brewer boys were always such simpletons. I never understood what Jenny saw in you. Either of you." He easily paced around them. "Did you know my mother was a sorceress? Of course, probably not. Not many know, with the exception of your father and the council. When she chose to mate with my father, she gave up her powers with the transformation. The lycans thought they'd be safe after that." He laughed. "It was unprecedented, a sorcerer sleeping with the enemy. But no one could have predicted the end result. A lycan child with the ability of sorcery."

"You were my friend," Michael said. "We were friends."

Dom spat. "We were never friends. Your family is weak, and even still, my father refused to challenge. You were given everything. On top of that, Jenny wanted you as well. I couldn't stand seeing you together, touching each other. It made me sick." He stomped Michael's elongated jaw onto the ground.

"I just sat back smiling, laughing at your jokes, pretending until... Remember the fire."

Michael's eyes widened.

"Yeah, that's right. It was my doing. I knew your do-gooder attitude would get the best of you. There we were, you, me, and Jenny, shooting off fireworks. It was easy. I just hastened the spark to a blaze. And all you could think about was Jenny." Dom clapped his hands. "It was perfect. We heard Donald scream from the barn. *Dom, get her out of here,*" he mocked. "*I'll handle this.* As always. The hero."

Maya found it difficult to move even the smallest bit, but she worked to slide her gun up on her thigh. Dom meant to kill them all, she could feel it, but even so, he planned to torture Matt and Michael first. She closed her eyes, focusing all of her energy onto her hand, her fingers. *Work, goddammit, work,* she bid them.

"After your shunning, I figured it would be the end. Jenny would come to me without you around. But no, instead, she went to Matt." Dom kicked Matt in the stomach. "But he never appreciated her!"

Michael struggled for his words. "What have you done with Jenny?"

"Do you think I could ever hurt her? The way you hurt her. The way you both hurt her. If you had really loved her, Mike, really, the way I do, you would have fought for her, taken her into exile with you. But you took your punishment and slunk off with your tail between your legs like a whipped dog."

"Fuck you," Michael managed.

"Interesting, but no." He smashed his fist into Michael's face, then turned on Matt. "Then you! You get her pregnant and won't even do the right thing. I couldn't believe my luck when Jenny showed up on my doorstep, bloody and crying."

"You better not have hurt her," Matt growled. "I'll kill you."

Dom laughed again. "You're in no position to be making threats."

The sorcerer-lycan continued his circling of the four of them. Maya had finally managed to get the gun on her thigh, but if he didn't stop right in front of her, it wouldn't matter. "Hey, dog-butt," she taunted. "If you were half the man Matt is..."

Dom leaned down in front of her. "I certainly wouldn't be sharing my bitch with a fucking demon. Yes, I know all about the incubus. I smelled him on you the first time we met. Tasty, yes, but I'm immune to their charms."

"Come closer," Maya whispered.

Dom leaned in. "Yes."

"Are you immune to this?" She'd angled the gun toward him and pulled the trigger. The bullet ripped through his right knee, knocking him to the ground with a howl of pain.

"Fucking bitch!"

The pain interfered with his hold on the spell and Maya could move her arm more easily. She turned sideways and unloaded the entire clip into the lycan. Before she could get reloaded, Dom pounced on her, already shifting, his wolf form brown, much like Michael's.

"Fucking bitch," he shouted again. "I'll kill you." He placed his hand on her chest. It turned cherry red with heat as it burned into her skin.

She screamed. Two blurs of fur knocked him off Maya at once. Three lycans grappled in a death match. Maya clutched at her chest. The pain made it hard to breathe. Stephen was at her side, holding her, whispering gently to her.

The black-furred lycan, Matthew, yelped as a fireball nailed him in the side. Michael lunged for Dom's throat as Matt tore into Dom's leg. The sorcerer-lycan howled with frustration and pain, unable to hold the two of them off at once. His howls turned to gurgles as blood gushed from his neck wound. Matt and Michael didn't stop there.

Maya turned her face into Stephen's shoulder as the two brothers tore Dom to shreds. Dom stopped moving, his form shifting again to human. Michael plunged his hand into the lycan's chest and pulled out his heart. "Heal that, motherfucker," he growled.

Michael and Matt shifted. Stephen helped Maya to her feet. "She's badly burned. I don't know how deep it goes, but I have a feeling he managed to singe part of her lungs."

Michael looked at his brother. "Go, take Maya and get her help. I think I know where Dom took Jenny. I can find her on my own. Just go."

The two brothers clasped hands. Michael shifted to full wolf form then took off into the woods. Matt lifted Maya off her feet. "Maya, thank you," he whispered. "Thank you."

She nodded, still clutching her chest. "It's getting harder to breathe," she wheezed. "Matthew, Stephen..." She vomited from the pain, then lost consciousness.

Chapter 7

"Are you sure the burn was deep?" Maya heard Isadora Brewer say. "She's healing remarkably fast for a human. Even the wounds on her face and arms have all but disappeared."

"Stephen... Matthew..." Maya mumbled.

"I'm here," Matt answered. "We thought it better if Stephen didn't come in. He's waiting in the truck."

Maya nodded. Probably smart. "I feel better. I can breathe much better now and the pain is nearly gone." The only thing left of the searing burning was a dull ache.

"Remarkable," Izzy said. "I think I may have underestimated your woman."

"I am not his woman."

"Yep," Matt chuckled. "She's feeling better."

Maya sat up from the strange bed. "Is it over? Now that we know the truth?"

"It's far from over, darlin'," Duncan Brewer said from the side of the bed. Maya hadn't even noticed he was in the room. "If what my son says is true, he may be out of the pickle for Jenny's disappearance. But Laurenia and Jonathan Goth are going to rain a massive amount of shit down on our heads."

"But Dom was fucking crazy. He kidnapped Jenny and tried to kill us with his hoodoo. Doesn't that count for something?" Maya couldn't understand the problem.

"If we can't find Jenny, it's all for naught. It'll be Matt's word, which isn't counting for much these days with the clan. And you, little girl. While you're a feisty pistol, the clan will not believe you any more than Matthew. One, you're an outsider, two, they'll think you'll say anything to save your lover."

"But Mi --" Matt grabbed her arm and squeezed. Apparently, he'd left out the part about Michael being there. "But my word is good."

"We know that, dear," Izzy said, a look of warning in her eyes as well. "But the clan and the council won't see it that way."

A knock sounded on the bedroom door. Duncan went to answer. Maya could hear gruff whispers of hushed conversation. He closed the door. "Dom's body has been disposed of properly. There's nothing left to say what happened to him. And that's the way it's going to be. Do you both understand?"

"Where will we go tonight? Now that the cabin's a big ole cinder." They couldn't leave Stephen to sleep in the truck all night. It wouldn't be right.

"We have several homes in the area. You all can go to one of those. They aren't as big as the cabin, but they'll do."

Maya looked down at her bloody clothes. "I'm a mess. What am I going to do for clothes?"

"There's a twenty-four-hour super center in town," Izzy suggested.

"Fine, Wal-Mart it is." Desperate times called for desperate measures.

Actually, the trip to Wal-Mart had been less painful than anticipated. First of all, the clothes were much more stylish than she remembered from college, and secondly, no one gave her disheveled appearance a second glance. Weird, but nice.

She and Matt had also picked up some groceries, shampoo, deodorant, and a few other necessities. It really was a one-stop shopping experience. Maya sat out on the back deck of the Brewers' home away from home. The tremendous view of the lake made Maya rethink her hatred of all things outdoorsy. She sipped on a bottle of beer (one of the other necessities they'd gotten from the store), and let the whippoorwill calls lull her into a deep meditative state.

The sliding glass door opened and Stephen joined her. "You really had me scared, you know."

"I know."

"And being stuck in the truck, not knowing whether you were going to make it or not drove me crazy with worry."

She caressed his face. "I know. I'm sorry. Really though, it was better than having an orgy fest with Duncan and Isadora Brewer. I think that really would've killed me."

"I'm really proud of you, Maya."

She smiled then frowned. "Proud about what?"

"The way you're handling your new ability to heal yourself. It hasn't even fazed you."

"My new ability to..." She gasped. "Oh. My. God! I can, can't I? Is that weird? That's weird right?"

"Well, I'm not surprised. I've always suspected you were more than what you seemed to be." He shrugged and took a draw from her beer. "Did you feel some kind of change in you when we were in the woods? Maybe something Dom did?"

Maya shook her head and grabbed her beer back with a "mine" look. "I don't think it's that. I think it happened when we all... well... you know."

"Oh, ho." He grinned. "During the two is better than one fest."

She smacked him. "Shut up. But, yeah, during that. I sort of felt tingly --"

"Me too."

She smacked him again. "Shut up." Gulping half the beer, she set the bottle down away from Stephen. "Anyways, tingling, then all my aches and pain went away. I just felt better."

"Hmm." He brushed his blond hair from his eyes. "Interesting. We might have to experiment further."

"You think so?" *God, I hope so.*

Matt joined them with three beers in hand. He handed one each to Maya and Stephen.

"I could so get used to this," Maya said to neither in particular.

"Which part?" Matt asked.

"Don't you start with me as well."

"Maya and her harem of men." Stephen laughed.

"Whatever." She waved them off, but the possibilities wouldn't leave her alone. Her pussy tightened at the thought of both her lovers, in her at the same time. *Bad, Maya. Very, very bad.*

Matt crouched behind her and kissed her neck. Stephen dropped down in front of her, his hands moving up her thighs. "Good things happen to bad people," she murmured. For three months she'd been fantasizing about having both men in bed, and now it was going to happen again, for the third time in three days. She nuzzled her head against Matt's chest. "Greedy."

"For you? Always." Matt's low voice sent flutters through her stomach.

"I was talking about myself." She leaned back and gazed into his light blue eyes. "I don't want to ruin the moment here."

His brows narrowed. "Then don't."

She was going to risk it. "Why are you suddenly okay with sharing me?"

"I'm not suddenly anything." He leaned down and tugged her earlobe with his teeth. "I've been a fool. Stubborn and foolish where you're concerned. For months now, Stephen has been with you almost every night."

"Every night," Stephen corrected as his fingers worked the button and zipper on her jeans.

Maya flicked his forehead. "You're not helping."

The incubus didn't look ashamed as he smiled all innocent like.

Matt continued. "I could die in the next few days, Maya, at the hands of my own kind." Before she could protest, he put a finger to her lips then kissed them. "I could die. I thought I would have all the time in the world with you when you finally came to your senses. I was fooling myself with the dream of a house in the suburbs and a white picket fence. So, I came to realize that if I wanted to have you, as much as you're willing to give, then Stephen is part of that bargain."

"We've talked," Stephen said, eyes peeking up from between her thighs.

"Oh goody, so you all kissed and made nice." Even though the comment was benign, the idea of the two of them kissing made her nipples hard and her pussy slick.

"God, Maya. I can smell the flood of lust pouring from your skin." Matt rubbed his nose against her skin. "We may both fuck you, but we're not doing each other, so get that notion out of your head."

Stephen's hand dipped under her panties. "I don't want to fuck you, either, wolf-man. If that's what you're thinking."

"Calm down. I'm quite content with both of you, only *doing* me. It's just..." God, even to herself she sounded like she was in junior high, getting ready to play truth or dare. "I was thinking about how hot it would be seeing the two of you kiss is all. That's a pretty far cry from fucking."

"I'm not kissing him," Matt grumbled.

She reached into her open jeans until her hand arrived at the folds of her swollen sex. She slid her middle finger along her slicked clit then put it to her mouth. Both men reacted visibly. "Just one little kiss."

Matt moved to her side and licked her juice from her lips. "You're playing with fire, Maya."

"Afraid you might like it too much?" Damn, it was becoming a game of truth or dare. She reached down again, then back to her mouth. Stephen reached up and caught her hand before it made it to her lips. He sucked her finger between his teeth, curling his lips around so that when he pulled it out of his mouth it made a popping noise. She shivered with excitement.

This time she put one hand then the other down her pants. Both middle fingers shiny with her juices, she gave one to each of her lovers. They both licked the juices clean then looked at each other. Stephen spoke first. "I'm secure enough in my manhood."

"What manhood?" Matt rebutted.

"Baww, baww," Stephen countered.

Matt's face flushed with anger and heat.

Maya tensed. They weren't going to kiss -- they were going to fight. Oh, shit. "Boys..."

"You think I'm scared to kiss a man? You're nuts. I'm totally alpha." Matt growled to emphasize his alphaness.

"Fine. If you say so, butch."

They were actually puffing their chests out at each other. "Now, guys..."

Matt lunged forward, his lips locking onto Stephen's and not just in a little peck, but a proper kiss, tongues and all, until Maya thought she'd have an orgasm right then and there on the lawn chair. "Holy fuck nuts." It was everything she'd fantasized and more.

When the kiss ended, Matt pushed back from Stephen. "Fuck you. Who's the goddamn chicken now?"

Maya shimmied down between them, tearing her clothes off on the way down. "You guys are the best!"

"That's what I'm talking about." Stephen wiggled his eyebrows as he shed his own clothes, Matt close behind.

Crawling over Stephen, she took his cock in her mouth while baring her ass to Matthew. He accepted the invitation, his tongue curling around her clit then moving up into her pussy, then to the skin between her pussy and her ass, then back inside her. She squirmed against him, pulse and body racing with need and desire. Then he did something he'd never done, he slid his tongue into her ass. Her eyes widened, her body jerked, and she nearly choked on Stephen's cock.

It felt good, better than good. She dropped the shaft from her mouth. "Jeezus." She stayed up on all fours, barely, as Matt's tongue rimmed her in the place that she usually proclaimed untouchable. Stephen turned and crawled beneath her. Up on his elbows, he went to work on her clit, sucking and licking, both of them working on her in unison.

Maya collapsed down on Stephen's abdomen, unable to hold herself up any longer as pleasure took over her senses. Matt's fingers plunged into her pussy, while his tongue continued its assault on her ass, thrusting in and out. Stephen continued his

relentless sucking, nibbling, his finger joining Matt's inside her, both of them fucking her with mouths and hands.

A massive wave of pure ecstasy rolled through her as her hips bucked against them. They held her in place, unrelenting, making her take every ounce of the orgasm until her skin was on fire with raw nerve endings. She gasped, moaned, and sang her orgasm. They finished, lapping every bit of cream from her, not asking for more, not needing more. Her satisfaction in that moment was their only desire. And she was satisfied.

When Maya regained control of her voice, she said, "So, big day tomorrow."

Matt licked his lips, then wiped them. "Yep, big day."

Stephen did the same, then nodded his agreement. "Yep. Do you feel better now?"

"It'll do, boys. It'll do." She grinned.

"Fuck that," Matt said. He picked Maya up from the ground, sat in the chair and impaled her on his cock all in one swift motion.

Stephen moved up behind her, rubbing pre-come against her anus.

Maya gasped. "Uh, I don't think..."

"Better not to, darlin'." Matt pulled her into a kiss, his tongue tangling with hers as Stephen slicked her with some sort of cool substance.

"It's just lubricant, Maya. Relax."

Relax? Relax! They were talking about going into virgin territory and they wanted her to relax.

Matt pushed his hips forward, his hands crushing her breasts as he took another kiss.

Stephen entered her from behind, slowly, just the tip of his cock pushing past the first ring of muscle. "Tell me to stop."

"Don't..." Maya whispered, ashamed at how good it felt having Matt inside her pussy, and Stephen pushing his cock in her ass at the same time. "...stop."

"So wet, so hot," Matt growled.

“So tight,” Stephen said, sliding forward, inching his way inside. “Love you, Maya. So much.”

“Love you, love you,” Matt murmured against her lips.

Stephen said it often while they were making love, Matt occasionally, but in this moment she knew they both meant it. They loved her and were loving her with every bit of themselves, willing to share just to have her, willing to do and be everything she needed them to be. She rode them both, and allowed herself to be ridden by them as the wake of pleasure broke once more and she could feel herself spasm around them, drinking their cocks into her body, taking them as the orgasm took her.

Matthew howled beneath her as Stephen shuddered against her back. All spent, all satisfied. She waited until they could move, separately, both men's cocks going soft inside her, withdrawing slowly, reluctantly. She slid off Matt's lap into Stephen's arms. Then held out a hand for the lycan to join them on the ground. Unshed tears glistened in her eyes as she looked at both men in wonder. “I love you both, so much. So much. How did I live before you?”

Matt and Stephen surrounded her with their arms, holding her tight, like they were both afraid to let go. But she wanted to tell them it would be okay. They would be together forever. They were family now. She felt that more than she'd felt anything, ever.

Chapter 8

It was Saturday, so the tribunal convened early in the morning, rather than the evening. It was the last day to prove Matt was innocent, and it wasn't looking good. Stares of disapproval and unabashed hatred focused on Maya, just like the prior two days. She faced them without fear. Whatever happened, she would not let them go down without a fight. Clan honor be damned. They couldn't tell anyone about Dom, because that would open a whole 'nother kettle of worms, and they couldn't call Michael as a witness, because that would just make things worse.

If only Michael had contacted them the night before, but Matt hadn't heard from his brother yet, and Maya feared the worst. Dom really had killed Jenny. "What are we going to do?"

Matt shrugged.

"That's not much of a plan." The dark-haired lycan had already put the kibosh on her plan to set Stephen loose on the clan and in the midst of the doggy-style orgy make their escape. Okay, so it hadn't been the best plan, but at least it was a plan! Waiting four hours for a sentence of death that she knew would come was not her idea of a good time.

"If it's any consolation, I think they'll settle for shunning you," Matt said, trying to be helpful.

"I'm not leaving this place without you, fur-brain. So, no, not much of a consolation prize."

The gathering crowd was getting anxious, as it was the last day. One of the Trandills called for justice, then the whole boathouse became a madhouse of shouts and calls for Matt's head.

"These guys really are a pack of carnivores."

"Not helping," Matt muttered.

The head guy stood up, the seat next to him, where Dom had sat, suspiciously empty. "I see no point in prolonging the morning."

Duncan Brewer jumped up. "I protest early judgment. Only four sit on the council of five. Where is Dominic Goth? You cannot continue without a fifth."

Maya's eyes widened in surprise. So, big daddy wolf had a plan. The man knew damn well Dom wasn't going to show up. He had *cojones*, she'd give him that.

The head guy looked at Laurenia and Jonathan Goth, who both looked confused about their son's whereabouts. "He'll be here," Laurenia said. Still as smug as ever. If she only knew.

Laurenia nudged her husband. He rolled his eyes, but stood. "I'll stand on the council in my son's stead if the Trandills approve." Jenny's parents nodded their approval.

"So be it," the head council guy said as Jonathan Goth made his way to the platform. "The council will take a break to discuss the matter of Matthew Brewer."

"Tell them the truth, Matt. When they get back, tell them the truth. You got nothing to lose at this point." It was time. Jenny wasn't coming back and they were about to pronounce sentence on Matt. What could it hurt to tell them about Michael and Jenny? It certainly gave Matt less motive to have killed her.

"It won't make a difference and it will only serve as another black mark on my family."

"It's better than death!"

"They might think my parents knew. If that were to happen, they would tear our den to pieces. I have aunts, uncles, cousins, there are more lives at stake than my own."

"What about my life? I need you, Matt."

"You'll have Stephen. You'll go on."

Now he was just pissing her off. "What I said last night. I meant it. You are part of me, family. I love you, Matthew Donovan Brewer, and I don't want to *go on*!" In the midst of her anger, Maya hadn't noticed that the boathouse had gone silent. She looked

around daring even one of them to say something. "And I don't care who knows it either." She stuck out her tongue at all of them. Childish, yes, but it felt really good.

All the lycans looked stunned, except for Isadora, who Maya feared might start a "slow-clap." Instead, Matt's mother merely dabbed at her eyes with a tissue and nodded.

Laurenia spoke up. "Touching, dear. But it's not going to win your lover's freedom. Or yours for that matter."

Maya was ready to come unglued on her psycho-son-making ass, but the honor was taken from her as Isadora Brewer jumped from her chair, shifted into a large black werewolf and pounced on the smug, smug woman. "Shut up, Laurenia," she growled. "You, stupid, stupid bitch."

No one interfered and they all seemed more than a little nervous, which gave Maya a whole new respect for Izzy. Within seconds, she was back in her chair, smoothing her blond hair, which Maya had always suspected was dyed, and her clothes like nothing had happened. Laurenia Goth didn't fare as well. She scrambled from the floor and fled the boathouse.

Izzy looked up at Maya. "I still don't like you."

"I know." Maya sighed. "But you don't hate me either. I can live with that." She leaned into Matt. "Your mother is one scary woman."

"Tell me about it."

The council came back within a few minutes. "Wow, that was quick."

"Not hard to come to a decision when your mind is already made up." Matt shook his head.

The head guy stood up again. "Do you have anything to say before sentence is passed?"

"No," Matt said.

"Then it is the judgment of the council of five that Matthew Donavan Brewer has been found --"

"Wait!" Maya jumped to her feet. "You can't do this. Matt is innocent. You all know him. Do you really think he's capable of killing someone?" Okay, stupid question. She'd already seen him kill a couple of people. "I mean, someone he cares about?" Still not making anything better.

Matt tried to tug her back down in the chair, but Maya shook free. "I know he didn't kill Jenny. I know it, and I'll prove it."

The councilman raised his eyebrow. "And where is your proof?"

Matt's eyes were pleading as he shook his head, silently begging Maya to keep her mouth shut.

"I... well... I... just know he didn't." Fuck!

The head council guy rolled his eyes. Honest to God rolled them. Prick. "I'm afraid your say so is not enough, young lady. Sit down." His voice boomed through the boathouse.

"Is my say so enough?" a female voice said from the front door. It was Jenny. Her arm was in a sling and she had abrasions on her face and legs. A murmur of shock and surprise rippled through the attending clan members. "Sorry I'm late, but I was a bit tied up." She gestured to the rope burns on her free wrist.

The Trandills rushed to her and Matt sighed his relief. Maya hugged him, hard. "Yes!"

The council dude knocked his gavel on the table bringing everyone to order. "Jennifer Trandill. Approach the council."

She made her way to the front of the room. "Yes, Uncle."

"Where have you been?"

"I've been held hostage for the last six days by Dominic Goth while he tried to convince me to take him as a mate. You have been unfair to Matt. He is innocent in this whole business. I escaped only this morning and went directly to the hospital to make certain my unborn child is well. He is. I say 'my' unborn child because Matthew is not the father. There is no reason to hold him accountable to me."

A scandalized gasp rocketed through the crowd.

"The father is not of this clan and I am leaving to join him today. You will not see me again after. I just wanted to clear Matthew's name, and thank him for being such a good friend to me these past few years." She inclined her head to Matt. "Thank you."

"You're welcome," he mouthed to her. Jenny turned and left the building. No one tried to stop her, not even her parents. Her decision had been made. Maya was beginning to think she'd underestimated all the women in Matt's life.

The gavel hit the table again. "Matthew Donovan Brewer is cleared from judgment. Tribunal adjourned."

"That it?" Maya asked. "We're free to go?"

Matt picked her up in a bear hug and swung her around. "Oh, yeah, baby. Free at last, thank God Almighty, free at last."

"Put me down." She laughed, then slapped his shoulder. "Idiot."

"Oh, you say the sweetest things." He grinned.

"Can we go home now, like, home home? Kansas City home? I've had about all I can take of the fresh country air."

"Yes, we can go home. Home home, even."

Before they left, Izzy took Maya aside. Her face was red and puffy, she'd obviously been crying. "When you see Michael, tell him I love him. And kiss my grandbaby when it's born for me."

Maya hid her surprise. "I will."

"Oh, one more thing, dear." Izzy smoothed her hairpiece. "Take care of my son, or I'll take care of you." Her eyes flitted amber and she snapped her teeth.

As Maya walked out of the boathouse and back to the truck, she shuddered. "Your mother is a very scary woman."

Word from the Ozarks was that Dominic Goth still hadn't shown up. Of course, Maya knew he wouldn't. The rest of the clan assumed that after Jenny escaped Dom went on the run. In actuality, Dom had held her captive in a small abandoned shack in the deep backwoods of his family's property. He and Michael had used it as a

playhouse when they were younger, then later they'd branded it their private sanctuary. When Dom had revealed he'd been behind Jenny's disappearance, Michael figured out where she was being held.

After he'd rescued her, his first concern had been her safety and the safety of the baby. He'd wanted to go to the tribunal with Jenny, but they both knew that it wouldn't go well for Matthew if they did. Even with Dom's admission that he started the fire that caused Michael to be shunned from the clan, Michael and Matt would never be able to tell the clan without revealing they'd killed Goth. Then it would only be their word.

The chances that they'd be believed by the other dens in the clan would be slim and none. Several of the other den leaders would have looked at the situation as an opportunity to take Duncan down without a challenge. No one in the community had any idea how truly dangerous the lycan had been. A werewolf with the powers of a sorcerer -- that could have been really, really bad. No doubt, Dom had had plans to take over leadership of the clan.

Personally, Maya was just thrilled to be home safely with Matt and Stephen. Michael and Jenny had stopped in once, just to let Matt know they were all right. Maya gave Michael his mother's message. And now that Jenny was no longer a rival, Maya didn't dislike her near as much.

Matt, Stephen and Maya had been bed-hopping for several weeks, taking turns at each other's apartments. It seemed to be working. Their hours weren't always the same, so everyone got their alone time when they needed it, but they were still cohesive. So no one was more surprised than Maya, well, maybe Matt, when Stephen announced at dinner one night that he was giving up his gi-normous loft to move in with Maya.

Matt scooted from the table. "Over my dead body, demon boy."

"It's none of your business, dog breath."

Maya put her hands over her ears. "Guys! Can we just settle for a minute?"

"Look," Stephen said. "I'm rarely home and it makes no sense to pay several grand in rent a month on a loft that I'm not living in."

"You're not moving in with Maya, and that's that," Matt argued.

"Hey! I'm in the room." She drew a circle with her finger. "In the room. Here. I can speak for myself and make up my own goddamn mind, thank you very much."

"Well, what do you think?" Stephen asked.

"Well, boys..." She grabbed them both by the arm and escorted them to the door. "...I think..." She opened the door and pushed them out into the hallway. "...that I have a one-bedroom apartment. Matt has a two-bedroom apartment. You should both live over there. Oh, don't worry. I'll let you come by and visit. But not until you stop arguing." She slammed the door shut in both their shocked faces.

Dusting her hands off, she sat back down to the table to enjoy her plate of spaghetti and meatballs Matt had so lovingly prepared. She could hear them arguing as she happily ate the garlic bread and salad that Stephen had made. It went down yummy as well. She figured she'd give them ten minutes from the time the yelling stopped and let them back in. Until then, she was going to enjoy her meal and her life.

Hannah Beckham

Hannah Beckham is ready to be fitted for her own straitjacket and a magical stay in the rubber room. After a stint in the Army, Hannah found writing a great way to escape the insanity that is her life. She likes tough heroines with a sense of humor, and heroes who are hunkishly supernatural and a little damaged. She's always up for email; readers can write her at hannah@hannahbeckham.com or visit her website at <http://www.hannahbeckham.com>