



Book 2:  
**BLUE MOON**  
*Magic*

Loose Id

*Twice in a*  
**BLUE MOON**  
*Honey Jans*

BLUE MOON MAGIC,  
BOOK 2:  
TWICE IN A BLUE MOON

Honey Jans

LooseId®

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This book contains explicit sexual content, graphic language, and situations that some readers may find objectionable.

# Blue Moon Magic, Book 2: Twice in a Blue Moon

Honey Jans

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## **Blue Moon Magic, Book 1: By the Blue Moon**

### **Debi Wilder**

Chastity Lynne Langford couldn't understand her sudden fascination with sex or her uncontrollable attraction to upstart Justin Matthews. The last thing Chastity wanted was to have to work hand-in-hand with Justin, but that's exactly what her father has ordered her to do. As her need for sex with Justin increases, so does her metamorphosis from human to wolf increase.

Justin Matthews holds a secret close to his chest: since birth he has been promised the eldest daughter of the Elite clan...a clan of superior werewolves who are more human than werewolf. Justin's the last living descendant of the original Sinclair clan, which came to America hundreds of years before. Justin has no choice but to join Charles Langford and the Elites on a rescue mission and reclaim the pelt and remains of Remington Sinclair before he can claim his mate. The rite of passage would soon take place where Justin will take Chastity as his lifemate, or die trying to protect her... By the Blue Moon.

With the season of the Blue Moon comes the likelihood of danger and death. The Beta clan and lowest form of werewolves is commanded by Rowan, a tough, bitter werewolf who hates the Elites and their superiority. The Betas, more werewolf than human, believe only the foretold red or blonde-haired girl babies born to the Elite clan in a span of three years will bring them into a world they can only look at from the depths of the Brey Forest. The night of the Blue Moon will afford them the perfect opportunity to take the eldest of the sisters, Chastity Langford, and to kill Justin Sinclair.

The story continues...

## Chapter One

Charity rushed back to her office in the IT department, cheeks flaming. At least one of the Langford sisters was getting laid on a regular basis. But really, catching Chas and Justin making love in the executive washroom was just plain embarrassing. Even worse, it brought home to her the sex she wasn't having. Now she was the one taking pains to keep her fantasy life private.

Passing her staff, she avoided eye contact only to come upon the immovable object of her guard dog, Lucas Kendal. The PI sat at a desk across from her office where he could keep an eye on her. The work she'd assigned him as a cover sat ignored. Instead, he read an issue of *Sports Illustrated*; no doubt the swimsuit issue. It was a wonder he hadn't followed her into the ladies room.

The man practically oozed sex appeal. Her lips tingled as she stared at him. What might he taste like? She'd love to find out; maybe nibble his square jaw, and dip her tongue into that cute cleft in his chin. "Down, girl," she muttered in self-recrimination. *He's hired to look after you, not teach you the joys of sex at your old maid age of thirty-two.* Just then, he looked up, snagging her gaze, his quirked brow telling her he'd guessed her thoughts.

Cheeks flaming anew, she quickly shut the door and locked it. Thank goodness, she had her mystery Laird to dim the flames. This sexual itch, combined with the series of hacking attacks she'd thwarted, threatened to drive her crazy. Ending the barrage of attacks with her fireball program had made enemies. The pissed off hackers sent death threats, prompting her father to hire Kendal, who made her want to knock him to the floor and do him. It was a vicious cycle, one she couldn't break.

Throwing off those troubling thoughts, she peeled off the jacket of her business suit, loving the way her silk blouse felt against her bare skin, and rushed over to her computer, late for a date with her cyber Master. She had two hours until she had to leave for her staff's annual weekend getaway to the IT conference. A weekend far away from her annoying babysitter would be wonderful. Maybe she could hook up with a charming stranger in Las Vegas, sow a few wild oats, and get this desire for sex out of her system.

She slipped into her desk chair and reached for the keyboard. Her excitement building, she logged on to the online sex site she'd discovered last week and looked for his screen name. Yes! He was there. *Wolf*. A thrill went through her. She logged on as *Honey* and put on her headset, saying softly, "*I'm here, my Laird.*"

*"Follow me to our private room."*

She shivered, hearing his sexy rumble; a thick brogue that rushed over her like warm honey, making her cream as she imagined what was coming. Sex with a guy wearing a kilt -- now, that had kinky possibilities. With guilty pleasure, she murmured, "*Yes, my Laird.*" She could surrender to her online master, get off, and still maintain an illusion of icy reserve.

*"How many times did you touch yourself today, Honey?"*

His demand to know how many times she'd played with herself made her hesitate. Hell, the man wouldn't know one way or another if she told the truth or a lie. After a tense moment, she let out a sigh of surrender. *Here comes the Langford upbringing again...finish what you start and never lie to anyone about anything.* Blushing, she confessed, "*Six, my*

*Laird.*” His chuckle made her squirm in her chair; she was going to get punished. Good. She thought about the vibrator in her desk drawer; maybe he’d make her come three times in a row like last time.

*“What a naughty girl not to wait for Master’s permission.”*

His scolding echoed her thoughts. Why couldn’t she control herself? “I’m sorry, Sir.” She shivered with delight, getting into the secret fantasy.

*“Did you obey my instructions, Honey?”*

She brushed her bare breasts through her silk blouse, loving the free, sensual feeling of forgoing her usual bra and panties. *“Yes, Laird, I’m not wearing underwear.”*

He took in a deep breath. *“Good girl. Unbutton your blouse for me and play with your pretty tits.”*

*“Yes, my Laird.”* Her hands quickly flew to do his bidding, slipping the ivory buttons out of their buttonholes until her blouse hung open. The air conditioning wafted a cool breeze over her budding nipples. With a sigh of pleasure, she cupped her full breasts and fanned her fingertips over the puckered nipples, murmuring at the pleasure. *“I’m playing with them, Laird.”*

*“Excellent. Imagine it’s my big hands touching them, getting your nipples hard.”*

Closing her eyes, she pictured her mystery Laird, imagining her soft hands becoming his larger, harder ones, his rough fingertips rolling her stiff nipples. *“My nipples are so very hard for you, Laird.”*

*“Now pinch them for me, Honey, a small punishment for being late.”*

She pinched them firmly, whimpering at the erotic feeling.

*“Good girl, now spread your legs and touch your pussy. Let me know if it’s wet for me.”*

She leaned back in her big desk chair and spread her legs, her hand reaching under her skirt to touch her hot pussy. Her clit was stiff, her pussy quivering, and wet. She rubbed it, moaning. *“I’m wet, Sir.”*



*“Good. Play with that bad pussy; make it nice and creamy for me, but don’t come.”*

She stroked her wet slit, her thumb rubbing her stiff clit. She couldn’t hold back a moan as she got nearer to orgasm.

*“Imagine it’s my hand touching you, my fingers slipping inside you, getting you ready to be loved.”*

*“Yes, my Laird. I’m imagining it’s you. When can we meet for real?”* she asked, desperate for a taste of the real thing.

*“When I think you’re ready, Honey, and not before.”*

She groaned at his rejection, but it didn’t stop her hot response to his commands, or her growing need for him.

*“Do you like the way it feels when my fingers slip inside you?”*

She panted, her pussy clenching on her fingers as he spoke. *“Oh yes, Laird, very much.”*

*“Now stop.”*

Trembling on the brink of a huge orgasm, her fingers went still at his command. *“Please, Sir.”*

*“No. You’re being punished for playing with yourself earlier. I’ll talk to you tomorrow.”*

Charity moaned as he disconnected and tried to stop, but couldn’t. Her fingers plunged into her wet pussy, pretending they were her mystery Laird’s. Ripples gathered, and she exploded into orgasm. She was dimly aware of her office door opening as she came.

Lucas Kendal stood inside Charity Langford’s office doorway blocking anyone passing by from ogling his beautiful she-wolf mate in the throes of passion. Still shaken by the culture shock of being rescued by the Elite, only to have his half-brother Lash killed in the raid, he was still trying to get his bearings. The cyber sex he’d initiated to get her ready for mating had backfired, making him frustrated and horny as hell. Keeping his promise to take

Lash's place as Charity's mate -- and not succumb to her charms -- was going to be harder than he'd thought. That wasn't the only thing hard, he thought ruefully, his cock throbbing.

He'd protect her; teach her passion, and who she was before she dumped him. He was no more than a stud. Hell, he ought to be used to it after the Betas' breeding farm. After the danger of the Blue Moon was past, her father would choose a more suitable husband for her, and he would move on, ever moving in the shadowy world of the Alphas. Still, he couldn't help watching her in the throws of an orgasm he'd initiated.

Charity's beautiful face was flushed with passion, her headset still in place, her eyes shut, as the extended orgasm swept her away. His hunter's gaze focused hungrily on her beautiful bare breasts, the pink nipples like ripe strawberries. How he ached to taste them. The sweet sound of ecstasy pouring from her full red lips was like music to his ears, and like an aphrodisiac to any rogue wolf within a sixty-yard radius. This was no longer about a turf war between wolfen societies. From the moment he'd met her two weeks ago this had turned very personal.

What a naughty girl to disobey him and keep playing with herself. She was so exquisitely responsive; it was hard for him to restrain his animal instincts. He itched to take her over his knee in retribution and then make love to her until she couldn't think straight. "Want me to take care of that for you, love?" he asked, working hard to keep the sibilant hiss of his Scot's ancestry out of his voice. It wouldn't do for her to guess that he and her Laird were one and the same. He watched her big violet eyes pop open.

Lucas smiled as her mouth formed a perfect "O" of shock, but true to her royal status, her dismay soon was replaced by an imperious glare.

"Who gave you a key to my office?" she demanded, quickly pulling her hand out from under her skirt and reaching for her blouse.

He kicked shut the door and held up his bare hands. "Look, love, no key. The door was unlocked." He didn't bother mentioning his fully developed skills gave him powers she'd

never dreamed of. Opening a locked door was easy. He'd walk through fire to get to her and keep her safe. He closed the distance between them, noting her trembling hands as she buttoned her blouse. The lady wasn't as unperturbed as she pretended to be. Good, it suited him to keep her off balance. "We need to talk about this weekend."

"Save your breath, Kendal, I'm going."

"Have it your way," he murmured, focusing on her stiff nipples showing clearly through her silk blouse. "I'll have to go with you."

Noting the direction of his stare, she scowled and swiveled her desk chair so that her back was to him. She stood and put on her blazer. "I'll see you at the airport, then."

"It doesn't work that way and you know it. I've arranged transport for us. I'll be here to collect you in half an hour," he said, walking out of the room. For all his sexual experience, he couldn't help feeling like the vulnerable one.

## Chapter Two

Lucas stalked toward Charles Langford's office, hard and frustrated. Jacking off didn't help; the past week had taught him that. Charity was the only cure for what ailed him, and he couldn't, by rights, take her until the night of the Blue Moon. At least he'd get the pleasure of bedding her before she rejected him. It might be enough to keep him warm during the cold nights to come.

How was he supposed to romance her? He didn't have a clue, something he wasn't about to admit. With the Betas, who'd held him captive during his formative years, romance didn't play a part in mating. Sex was for procreation, and pleasure didn't even come into the equation for the females. This trip to Las Vegas was going to complicate matters. Trying to wine and dine her in front of her gaggle of women friends would be excruciating. He'd be trailing after them like a puppy dog. He stepped into Langford's anteroom and Langford's private secretary, Cordelia Sinclair, looked up.

"He's a bit busy now."

"He'll see me." He watched the woman's brow wrinkle with disapproval. One of Charles Langford's trusted circle of wolfen employees, she wasn't used to rubbing shoulders with Alphas. Wolf society ranged from the Elite, like the Langford clan who were more

human, down to the Betas who were more animalistic and deadly. He was an Alpha from the mixed group, a half-breed straddling both worlds, living in the shadows.

“Very well, I’ll buzz you through.”

Lucas nodded and shouldered his way into the inner sanctum. Stopping a moment to take in the sight of Charles Langford seated behind his large mahogany desk, Lucas’s sire’s words rang in his ears.

*“Once you’re at their heart, boy, you’ll have them where we want them. That’s the time to strike. Never forget, their superior attitude makes them vulnerable.”*

Rowan Angus, the Beta leader, had done everything to turn his bastard son into a carbon copy of himself. Pitting him against his half-brother, Kill, to make him stronger and meaner. Having the females of the Beta ply him with sex as he came of age. The most powerful tool in Rowan’s arsenal was teaching him to use his dark Beta powers. They were seductive, empowering for a youth. Still, after years of what he’d seen as abandonment by the Elite, a rational part of him saw the brainwashing for what it was -- a power play.

When he grew too powerful for Rowan’s comfort, he’d been banished to the mating barns, held prisoner, his powers bound, to beget the next generation of bastards. He’d been about to escape with two other captive Alpha males when the Elite came to save him. As he held Lash, mortally wounded, in his arms he’d promised to come back and take his place as Charity’s temporary mate.

He gazed at Charles Langford, still surprised the Elite leader had seemingly welcomed him as Charity’s mate. Of course, he didn’t count on it lasting. The old man had needed a wartime Lobo, a stud, to protect his daughter and initiate her, and he fit the bill. The Elite leader used him just as surely as Rowan had used him. But this time he didn’t mind; he had promises to keep.

The walls behind the Elite’s leader were darkly paneled, the bar in the corner glistened with crystal decanters of good booze. It was everything an Elite wolf’s den should be and

nothing like Rowan's primitive keep deep inside the Brey forest's gloom. There were no manacles chained to the walls to hold hapless victims.

Pulling his attention back to the present, he refocused on the Elite leader. Langford looked up at that moment, spearing him with a direct glance guaranteed to make young pups piss their pants. Lucas inclined his head in greeting.

"Well?"

The old wolf said it all in one impatient word, and though they were at cross-purposes, he sympathized with the elder's exasperation. "We leave in half an hour."

Putting down his pen, Langford cracked a smile, sweeping him with a considering glance. "You couldn't talk her out of it, after all?"

"Not bloody likely."

"Yes, my middle child does tend to be a bit headstrong."

"No doubt. Frying the Betas' computers with her fireball, especially without corporate approval, was a gutsy move."

Charles's smile faded. "Gutsy, yes; wise, no."

Lucas merely inclined his head in agreement. "She's set off alarm bells among the Betas, no doubt."

"After Chastity and Justin's wedding, old conflicts had actually started to be resolved between the clans."

"With one exception," Lucas filled in.

"I'm afraid so; your sire is as..."

"Crazy as ever," Lucas filled in grimly.

"Crazy as a fox. Now my dear daughter's stirred up a hornet's nest and brought herself under their scrutiny." Charles sighed. "Her rash behavior is the main reason I agreed to let

you take Lash's place as her mate. She'll need a strong hand to protect her and see her through the mating."

Lucas agreed with the headstrong part, but the mention of Lash sent a flicker of rage through him. His desire for revenge still ran hot but it would have to wait. It didn't escape him that Charles made no mention of the binding. They both knew this was only temporary. "Don't worry, I'll keep my word and look after Charity."

"I didn't doubt it for a minute. Maybe it's for the best that you two leave for a while," Charles said with a nod. "It'll throw her would-be suitors off the track."

*Suitors! It was too mild a word.* The Beta and Alpha wolves tracking her would be a bunch of sex-starved beasts hoping to bed and wed a princess. Bedding could be a fierce and sometimes deadly experience for an untried female, especially one who'd been sexually repressed and kept in the dark as to her identity.

\* \* \* \* \*

Charity picked up her laptop, just the thing to keep up her sessions with her Laird in Vegas, and keep her from putting the moves on Kendal. She had five minutes before the brooding hunk came to drag her off to the airport. A tap on her door made her frown. Think of the devil, and there he was, impatient as always. "Keep your pants on, guard dog, I'm almost ready."

Her door opened, and her sister Clarity popped her head in. "It's not Kendal, sis. We need to talk."

"I can't stop to chat, Clari. He'll be waiting for me."

Clarity opened the door wider, and walked into the office. "This won't take long." She handed Charity a small paper bag. "I wanted to give you this."

Charity took it warily. Clari was always concocting herbal blends. Between the noxious brews and her dire predictions -- which, thank goodness, never came true -- it made her a

pain in the butt at times. “What is it this time, another love charm? I told you they don’t work on me.”

“It’s not a love charm,” Clari said with a gentle roll of her eyes, adding, “You don’t need one anymore. It’s just some herbal tea to help you sleep.”

*Don’t need one anymore?* Her little sister didn’t know how wrong she was; she was aching to find a real man to love her. Charity opened the bag and took an appreciative sniff. “Hmm, Chamomile and mint. This actually doesn’t smell half bad. Thanks, sis.” She tucked it into her bag, and then looked up. Clari still stood there, looking tense. “Was there something else you wanted?”

“Yes, please be careful, Chari. Dark forces are at work.”

“I know.” She looked past her sister to see Kendal’s large form looming in the doorway. “He’s right behind you.”

“Not Kendal, although...”

Charity walked past her, not wanting to hear the reasons for not getting involved with the man. She already knew them by heart. Lucas Kendal was a compelling, dark force, and she was close to succumbing to his lethal charms.

\* \* \* \* \*

Charity took her seat inside the first-class section of the jet. The chill of the leather seat made her gasp, vividly reminding her that she still wasn’t wearing undies under her skirt. A furtive glance at the sultry smile on Lucas Kendal’s face told her he’d noticed. Her Laird had a lot to answer for. Her staff were seated back in coach where she usually flew. But no, that wouldn’t do for a control freak like Kendal. He’d bumped her up to his section where he could personally keep an eye on her. She frowned as he stretched out in the leather seat beside her. Being shadowed by the hunk was getting to her, and for what?

“Comfy?” he asked.



She swept a speculative glance over him. His slight accent, European maybe, intrigued her. It always seemed to get thicker the closer they got. Not wanting to appear interested, she'd never asked him about it. He was definitely prime oat sowing material. The man was a babe magnet. He could initiate her into the mile-high club. For his part, Lucas didn't seem to notice her "come hither" look, being too busy furtively looking over their fellow passengers. Boy, she didn't even have the power to flirt with a captive audience.

Just then the fasten seat belt light dinged, the jet engines started, and she forgot all about flirting. A frightened flyer at best, take offs and landings terrified her. She squeezed her eyes shut and gripped both armrests, not caring that she was being an armrest hog.

Lucas's warm hand closed over hers as they took off. She felt his strength seep into her and remembered to breathe. Thrown back into her seat as they gained altitude, she managed to open her eyes and look at him. He was watching her. Lust and concern mingled in the warm whiskey depths of his eyes, making her cream. She'd actually succeeded in flirting. Now if he'd just make the next move. Lost in fantasy, she couldn't help picturing him kissing her.

"It's okay, sweetheart," he said softly.

She watched his hunky mouth kick up in a sexy grin, and he leaned forward to kiss her as if on cue. "Yes," she said with a sigh. His warm lips brushed hers for a second and then he withdrew. Charity moaned in protest and opened her eyes. Why had he stopped? The flight attendant's cart next to them got her attention.

"Want anything, love?" Lucas asked her.

Yeah, she wanted a lot of things, mostly him. She simply shook her head.

Lucas turned to the flight attendant. "We're good."

When the woman wheeled away, Lucas stood up and grabbed a blanket from the overhead bin. He unfolded it and sat back down, saying, "You look cold, love."

Was he talking about her stiff nipples? They were tingling, jutting out at him under her silk blouse. The top button on her blazer had come open during their kiss. As if in answer to her question, his fingertips brushed lightly over the budded peaks as he spread the blanket over her. She swallowed a moan as he deliberately did it again. “What are you doing to me, Lucas Kendal?” she whispered as his fingers brushed over them again.

“Only what you want me to, love. In this relationship you hold the strings.”

She liked that. “In that case, one more kiss, please, Lucas.”

With a growl, he leaned over to kiss her. His mouth slanted over hers. He nipped at her lower lip, and she opened her mouth to give his tongue access. Charity thrilled at that small possession, his tongue mating with hers. His hands slipped under the blanket to toy with her nipples through her blouse.

“Why aren’t you wearing a bra, love?” he whispered against her ear.

“My Laird said...” she said, drifting off.

“Your what?”

“Never mind,” she said, stifling a whimper when he pinched her nipple, rolling it between his big fingers. She squirmed in her seat, pulling him down for another kiss. He complied, mastering her mouth, as his hand drifted down to caress the delta of her thighs under her skirt.

He broke the kiss to whisper in her ear, “No panties either? What a naughty girl.”

She moaned, his words ringing out to her just like her Laird’s. If she were naughty, he’d just have to spank her like her Laird always threatened to, and then fuck her thoroughly. His blunt fingertip unerringly found her clit. She bit back a moan as he caressed the turgid nub. His mouth came over hers, sealing in her cries as he pressed her clit firmly, sending her flying. Orgasmic ripples swept through her, over and over, as she clung to him.

When it was over, Lucas left her with a kiss, and she sagged back against her headrest, spent. She’d never had an orgasm that strong or lengthy, not even with her vibrator and her

Laird's urging. Lucas Kendal had magic hands...and the rest of him wasn't bad, either. What did he look like under his business suit? She swept a dreamy look over him, noting the beads of sweat on his brow. A glance at the huge, stirring bulge of his cock made her blush. His eyes burned back at her with desire, and there was no mistaking the rueful smile on his lips. She might have been satisfied but he had to be hurting. "Um. Do you want to go in the bathroom and take care of that?" His wry glance made her blush.

"Why? Do you want to take care of it for me?"

The question, and the snarky way he said it, broke through the pink orgasmic cloud she was floating on. Had he picked up her thoughts about the mile-high club? Maybe he was psychic like Clarity claimed to be. "No." The stud wouldn't even be with her if not for his job. She didn't need his sexual favors. It might be smarter to have someone else initiate her in the bedroom.

### Chapter Three

Lucas trailed Charity and her co-workers from The Flamingo hotel's check-in desk to their rooms. She was chatting with them a little too brightly, trying to pretend he didn't exist. He could tell, having been shunned most of his life.

After he'd made her come, she'd done nothing but backpedal away from him as fast as she could go. He'd been braced for it, but the rejection still stung. She was sexually curious but not rash enough to take him on. A cautious wolf knew the value of retreat to attack again when the odds were better. Too bad he wasn't a cautious wolf when he was around her.

The conference's late afternoon session would give him time to woo her again, and prove to her he was a gent. Pull out her chair, get her a drink, be solicitous -- and above all non-threatening; that was the way to get this courtship back on track.

His sharp gaze swept the casino, alert for any signs of trouble. The scents of other wolves in the vicinity hit him in waves; Alphas farther off, Betas nearby. Damn, he'd been afraid of this. He didn't see them but that didn't mean a thing. If he could smell them, they could scent Charity. Charles Langford should have listened to him and cancelled the trip. He wouldn't be this soft when he was in charge of Charity. A wry smile curved his lips. Tough talk when the untried female already had the power to unman him.

He closed his eyes for a moment, summoning all his powers to mask her scent. The effort had him shaking like a leaf. Those damned mating barns of his sires had taken more of his strength than he'd care to admit. What Rowan didn't know was that he had the power to withhold his seed from his semen and still give receptive females pleasure. Charity's alluring scent covered for the moment, he started after her again.

She stood with her friends waiting for the elevator, and watching him with concern. Since when had anyone, other than Lash, cared about him?

She stepped away from her friends. "Are you okay, Mr. Kendal?"

The concern touched him more than he'd care to admit, but the woman was back to calling him Mr. Kendal. "I'm fine," he bit out and winced when she withdrew. He hadn't meant to come across so gruffly.

He looked past Charity to Valerie Combs, one of the Langford Elites, to see her scowling back at him with disapproval. The girl didn't like him, but then most of the Elite clan, with the exception of his cousin Justin, wouldn't give him the time of day. He sidled up closer to Valerie, whispering, "Betas." She sniffed the air, giving him an alarmed glance.

Lucas turned back to Charity to find her glancing at him and Valerie with an uneasy look in her eyes. Was she actually jealous? It seemed too much to hope for. To him, Valerie couldn't hold a candle to Charity's womanly charms. He reached out to cup Charity's soft cheek. "Something's come up, love, a little matter I have to investigate. I'm sure Valerie will stay with you until I return. I'll see you later."

She stepped away, breaking the contact. "I don't need a babysitter."

\* \* \* \* \*

Charity sat stiffly at the table where she and her staff were having dinner, picking at her food. Lucas hadn't made an appearance -- so much for his promise to see her later. It was

about as believable as his feigned disinterest in Valerie after she'd caught him whispering sweet nothings in the gorgeous blonde's ear.

She glanced at the younger woman, trying not to feel jealous. Who could blame him? Every man Val met seemed to fall at her feet. Charity had never had that experience, except for her Laird, and the make-out session on the plane with Lucas. It was what made Lucas's defection hurt.

No doubt, he was regretting starting something he had no intention of finishing. Lucas Kendal was distancing himself from her or worse. He might have even quit. As she thought it, she rejected the notion. He was too dedicated to his job. More likely he was watching her remotely, afraid she'd come on to him again. The rejection stung. She just wasn't the kind of woman men fell for. "I'm turning in," she said, rising. "I'll see you all in the morning."

"Are you sure you don't want to go clubbing with us?" Valerie jumped to her feet, pinning her with an alarmed look.

Acting as a den mother for her younger staff members sounded about as appealing as watching paint dry. Peace, quiet, and some time to think about her aberrant behavior on the plane was what she craved at the moment. "No, thanks, I'm tired. I think I'll make an early night of it."

Val yawned. "Me, too. I think I'll join you."

Charity tried not to roll her eyes at the bad acting. Why was Valerie determined to stick to her side? Had Val noticed her jealousy? The younger woman's pity was embarrassing. "Nonsense. Go have fun with your friends. I prefer it that way." Valerie frowned, as if bracing herself for an argument, and then abruptly looked into the casino, and nodded.

"Okay, have a good night then," Val said, sitting back down.

Charity looked over her shoulder, seeing nothing but potted palms and clanging slot machines. Was everyone going nuts around here? "I will," she said, knowing it was a lie. What she wanted was to get properly laid by Lucas Kendal. As if her hormonal high was

evident, more than one interested male gaze seemed to follow her. For a woman who'd lived a sexless life, it was both exhilarating and alarming.

She flicked a nervous glance at a man with coal-dark hair and spooky, light blue eyes, who stared boldly at her. Dressed all in black from his shirt to what looked like leather pants, he stood out menacingly from the tourists. His interest was palpable, making the hair stir on her nape. He and two other men fell into step behind her as she passed and she picked up her speed, feeling cornered despite the crowd.

The threesome carried a predatory air that alarmed her, moving in tandem as a group. She turned left and so did they. She knew without question she was being tracked. Weaving around a cocktail waitress, she made a fast turn around some penny slot machines, ducked toward the back of the snack bar, and hid behind a potted palm.

Peeking out, she saw the three men standing together talking in low tones, their sharp eyes scanning the crowd. The other two were shorter, with brown hair and deep tans, both equally dark and predatory. Her nose wrinkled when a funky scent wafted her way from their direction -- sweat, grime, and something else. Could they be the rogue hackers out for revenge? She thought not. They were after her; she felt it.

Holding her breath, she watched the taller one in front make a gesture that made the other two veer off in different directions. She gasped; one would pass right by her. Suddenly, a hand clasped over her mouth, muffling her scream as she was jerked against a muscular body. Warmth, sandalwood cologne, minty breath, and she could see the sleeve of her captor's leather coat. Lucas! Her terror melted like ice cream on the Fourth of July. She couldn't resist giving his palm a little taste, nipping his palm, making him hiss and letting her go.

"Damn, it's Kill," he whispered.

*Kill?* She followed his glance to the tall man with spooky eyes. Lucas knew the name of her pursuer. Maybe they were the hackers. She opened her mouth to ask and he made a

shushing sound. She froze in Lucas's embrace, demoralized that her guess he was watching her was right. It was the only explanation for him coming to her rescue.

"Easy, love," he whispered.

Telling herself the pet name meant nothing; she nodded. The man was just doing his job. A growl from the direction of her pursuers caught her attention. From the safety of Lucas's protection, she watched the shorter men walk back to Kill, who stopped to sniff the air. Lucas stiffened against her, growling low in his throat. She felt the vibration deep inside her, feeling trapped between two predators, but she knew which one had her back even if he wasn't attracted to her.

The men moved off in another direction. She heaved a sigh of relief, and indulged herself by snuggling against Lucas, recalling their clinch on the plane. As if he could read her mind, Lucas gently set her apart from him. She couldn't help feeling rejected again.

"I thought you'd left," she said, turning to look at him.

"Why?"

The confusion on his face was surprising. For a supposedly observant PI, he hadn't picked up on any of her troubled feelings. "You've made yourself scarce since we landed. Seeing that you've been my shadow since you took this job, I jumped to the logical conclusion that I'd scared you off."

"Really."

She didn't like his amused tone. This was serious and she had to say it. "I realize that I acted out of control on the airplane. I apologize for putting you in an awkward position. It was the tension of the flight and I misinterpreted your efforts to soothe me. I set you free from your obligation."

"Wow," he said, shaking his head. "That was quite a mouthful. You must have been stewing about that for a while."

"This isn't a joke."



“You bet it’s not. You haven’t seen an awkward position but you will when we get to some of the more adventurous ones in bed.”

Charity’s jaw dropped as she digested his words.

“Shut your mouth, love. Let’s make tracks away from those wolves.”

## Chapter Four

Charity ran to keep pace with Lucas's ground-eating stride as he towed her in the opposite direction from her pursuers. *Adventurous bedroom positions*. Her mind boggled at the possibilities, but it was of paramount importance that they put space between themselves and the three-pack chasing her. Lucas was right to call them wolves; they certainly had sexual conquest on their mind but she had no desire for group sex. A one-on-one with Lucas would do for her first time.

Her hand clung tightly to his as she sprinted at his side. She had no doubt Lucas could take care of them if push came to shove. Even knowing that, she didn't want him to get hurt. "Thanks for coming to my rescue," she said, panting when they finally skidded to a halt in front of the elevators, and Lucas pushed the up button.

"You're welcome, love. Be more careful next time."

That got her defenses up against him and she tried to pull her hand from his, but he wouldn't let go. "If you think I go around encouraging things like that, you're mistaken."

"It's not entirely your fault," he said, tugging her inside the elevator car. "You radiate sexuality. But there are big bad wolves about and you need a protector."

The elevator doors whooshed closed and Lucas turned to eye her with a ravenous gleam in his eye. There was a new ferocity about him radiating throughout the close confines of the elevator car. The funny thing was that she felt caught up in the same adrenaline rush, but she knew it had nothing to do with the bozos chasing them. Lucas Kendal's very presence was making her tingle in all the right places; all she could think about was doing him, now. Her lips burned, her nipples budded tight, and her pussy grew wet as she tracked him across the small confinement the car. "Did you mean what you said?"

"I know the value of the truth, love."

"Good," she said with a smile. "I want you to make love to me."

He brushed a quick kiss across her lips and stepped back. "You're not ready yet. Besides, I've got my job to do."

*Not ready?* She was practically panting for him. "And you're doing it very well," she said, humoring him as she reached out to place a hand on his chest and feel his heart thudding. He was just as turned on. A glance down at the growing bulge in his pants confirmed it. Still in warrior mode, he evidently was determined to rise above it. What was it about guys and combat? It wasn't like the stinky three-pack who'd followed her were much of a threat anymore. Lucas's muscles rippled with tension as her hand stroked down his body to boldly cup his hard-on. He went still for a moment then groaned, pressing into her hand.

"God, lady, you play hard ball."

"That's not all that's hard," she said with a giggle as she went on tiptoes to brush his hard mouth with hers. After a moment, his lips softened and he deepened the kiss, his arms coming around her to crush her to him. Charity burned, kissing him back, feeling his hard-on growing against her palm. He nipped her lower lip to give him access to plunder her sweetness.

Charity moaned when his big hands stroked down her back, stopping to cup her ass and squeeze, and then pulled her against him. She couldn't stop a little giggle from escaping,

making him growl again. His mouth moved to her neck, hotly sucking and stinging until she thought she'd swoon. Her whole body was on fire. When the elevator doors opened, he backed her out, stopping to press the buttons for all the other floors.

"What are you doing?" she asked, intrigued.

"Throwing them off the track."

The extra precaution made her realize he was still worried. "Do you think they're the hackers my dad was concerned about?"

"What do you think?"

She didn't appreciate the way he sidestepped her question with one of his own. "No. They didn't look like computer nerds at all."

"Smart girl," he said.

Charity heated up as his hand touched her back and he ushered her down the hall to her room. "Then they were after..."

"You."

Strange men had never come out of the woodwork to pursue her before. The sensual heat she was going through was attracting them; it was the only thing that made sense. "Something weird is going on here and back at Langford, too," she confided, gazing at his suddenly grim expression as he used her key card to open her door.

"Don't fret about it. I'm here for you. I'm going to go patrol the halls to make sure they're gone. Don't open the door for anyone but me."

So, he was determined to go play soldier. She sidled closer, not wanting to let him go, not when she was so close to paradise.

"What are you doing, love?" he asked, bemused.

"Seducing you, of course," she said, raising up on tiptoes to pull him down for another kiss.

“Have patience. You’re not ready for this yet.”

“You know nothing about me, Kendal. I’m plenty ready for this.” At his doubtful look she blurted out, “You happen to be seduced by a woman of experience.” She decided he’d bought her fib when something wildly primitive seemed to blaze to life in his dark eyes, making her tremble.

“Oh, really,” he said sarcastically, backing her into the room as he kicked the door shut.

Charity heard the lock click, and shuddered with desire. Her Laird briefly flickered through her mind. Was she being disloyal to him? No, just grateful. He was the one who’d prepared her for this, giving her the tools to seduce Lucas Kendal. As if he could sense her mind on another, Lucas bent to kiss her, driving her Laird from her thoughts.

Kissing him back, she lost herself in the present. Suddenly her legs bumped against the bed. She hadn’t even realized they were moving. Time seemed to stand still when she was in Lucas’s arms. He did something to the zipper at the back of her dress and the garment fell off her to pool at her feet, baring her breasts.

Lucas stepped back to gaze at her, his eyes full of heat and passion as he swept her with a possessive gaze. When his hands came up to lovingly touch her bare breasts she shuddered, pressing the aching peaks fully into his touch.

She thought she’d melt from the pure heat as she leaned into him, moaning. The man had fast, magical hands.

She still wasn’t wearing undies, and she felt provocative.

Naked, as his hot eyes ate her up, she started to shiver but the admiration in his warm gaze gave her courage. Feeling emboldened, she brazenly reached for his shirt buttons. “You’re wearing way too many clothes, Kendal.”

“Call me Lucas,” he said, tugging his shirt off, making the buttons pop off.

“Lucas, what a hairy beast you are,” she teased, running her hand over his hair-roughened chest.

“You’re offended.”

What a strange way to put it. She smiled to ease his mind and moved closer, rubbing her beaded nipples against his pelt. It tickled, sending a jolt of sensation through her. “No. I love it.” He seemed to relax at her words. Her trembling hands reached for his zipper, a desire to get him naked fast overwhelming her.

“Let me, love,” he said, helping her pull down the zipper.

Charity gazed at him and gulped as his trousers dropped. The first thing she noticed was that he wasn’t wearing underwear, either. The second thing was that he was huge. His manhood seemed to fall right into her hand. Charity’s palm encircled his shaft, barely containing it. She couldn’t help but wonder if she could handle him.

“You hold all the strings,” he assured her, cupping her cheek and kissing her lightly.

Charity moaned as she found herself sprawled on the bed, unaware of moving again. That “whole time standing still” thing was a bit disconcerting but she didn’t have time to ponder it; she had a man to seduce. If he said she wasn’t ready one more time she’d clobber him.

Instead, he seemed to heat up at her touch; his skin warming, his big hand fondling her breast, the fingertips finessing the nipple until she was squirming with need. She arched against him. He laid one of his big legs over hers, binding her to the bed, stilling her thrashing as he bent to take her nipple into his mouth.

His fingertips unerringly drifted down to the curls between her legs and touched her clit. It sprang forward. His fingers plunged into her creamy pussy, making it pulse. She’d never been so turned on, so hot as he slipped between her legs.

“Look at me, Charity.”

She focused on the fiercely hot look in his eyes. “You hold the strings. Do you want me?”

His tension told her he'd pull away if she commanded it. "I want you, please, Lucas." It seemed to settle something inside him, and she could swear she saw gratitude in his eyes. He started to enter her. The tip of his cock plunging inside her and she cried out in pain. He went still.

"You're a virgin."

"Not anymore, thanks to you."

He groaned. "What have I done?"

"Made me a woman," she filled in helpfully.

'You kept saying you were ready, coming on to me. I assumed...'

Her eyes widened when she heard his mutterings. She wasn't experienced enough for him? Well, that was too bad, he'd better... Her body adjusted to his invasion; her pussy rippled against him, her arousal returning. Still, she had her pride. "Well, get off me then if I'm not woman enough for you."

He growled fiercely, glaring down at her. "Not female enough? Do you have any idea of your allure?" He bent to kiss her.

Charity melted as his lips claimed hers. Then his cock slowly pressed the rest of the way into her until it filled her completely. He lay still inside her, letting her get used to his size as he kissed her thoroughly. His tongue rubbed teasingly along hers, his hand cupped the side of her breast, his fingertip brushing pleasantly against her nipple, and then slipped down to tease her clit.

She moaned, her body blazing as he gently began to piston in and out of her. Charity met his thrusts, her pussy clutching at him as her orgasm built. She was quivering, gasping for breath as his thrusts went deeper, touching her as never before. She closed her eyes, clutching at him as she exploded, crying his name when she came. The orgasm seemed to go on and on, wringing every bit of passion out of her. Lucas jerked, coming with a howl of triumph, holding her tightly as he seemed to come and come.

When it was over, he rolled to the side and held her close. Charity fell into an exhausted sleep to the feeling Lucas holding her tight.



## Chapter Five

Lucas lay there stunned, clutching a sleeping Charity to his side. He tenderly smoothed a hand down her curves, trying to come to terms with what just happened. He'd just had the impudence to take a princess early. Charles Langford would probably slit his throat for jumping the gun and taking her now, but he wouldn't change a thing. The heady sense of satisfaction that ran through him was intoxicating -- almost as intoxicating as his mate.

The scent of their joining still hung in the air. Regretfully, he pulled away from Charity and slipped from bed, tucking the covers around her. She'd sleep for hours after her first joining, giving him time to work. He was going to need help to deal with Kill, but not from the Langford clan. He still wasn't sure if he could trust anyone there.

He strode nude into his adjoining room. With a thought he materialized pants on him as he moved in a hurry. He pulled his laptop out from behind the sofa where he'd hidden it and logged on. *Bran, I need a hand*, he typed, rubbing a stinging spot on his chest. He looked down at the spot and froze in disbelief as a raised design of red entwined hearts appeared above his left nipple. A mating mark! It shouldn't be there. It had to be a fluke, a trick of the fates. There was no way Charity would carry the same mark, and even if she did it wasn't binding for her. Elite and Alpha females always had the option of refusing their beloveds.

*What's up, Lobo?*

Lucas put his mind off a sexless future to read Bran's reply. *A lot. I need back up in Vegas.*

*Why? Do you need help at the tables? The odds are against you, pal.*

Boy, didn't he know it. The odds of coming out of this with his manhood and heart intact were nil but he could damn well come out of this with his mate intact. *I need help guarding a princess.* He waited, and after what he assumed was stunned silence on the other end, Bran typed in, *So, the rumors are true.*

*Are you coming or not?* Lucas asked, rather than answer.

*I wouldn't miss it. I'll be there with back up in a flash, literally.*

Lucas sat back, satisfied when Bran and Garth materialized in the room, Bran as usual in a three-piece suit, Garth bare ass naked and bitching a blue streak. Garth never had mastered time jumping.

Garth grabbed a pillow off the bed and put it in front of his crotch. "Damn it, Bran, next time you dematerialize me without notice, I'm going for your throat."

"Hey, jerk, there wasn't any time to waste."

"Remind me to burn that," Lucas commented, as Garth zapped clothes on his body and tossed the pillow back on the bed. Garth turned a startled scowl his way.

"What's this all about, Lucas?" Garth mumbled.

"Guarding his woman," Bran cut in, looking at Garth's loud Hawaiian shirt and cut-offs with a raised brow.

"So the rumors are true," Garth said, looking through the open doorway to see Charity sleeping.

Lucas growled even though he knew the wolf wouldn't poach.

"Down, boy," Bran said with a grin. "We just never saw a princess in the flesh before."

“And you’re not going to this time,” Lucas said, quietly shutting the door so as not to wake her. He couldn’t let their ribbing get to him. “We’ll need to set up a perimeter guard. Kill’s in the hotel.” He didn’t miss the fury in their eyes at the mention of their nemesis. They all had reason to hate Kill. Lucas grimaced when they both stared at his mating mark.

Garth whistled and Bran muttered, “Well I’ll be damned.”

Garth grinned. “You already are, buddy.” He turned to Lucas. “What about her? Does she have one?”

Lucas frowned. “Don’t know yet, but I doubt it.”

“Does she know what it means?” Bran asked.

“No, and you’d damned well better not tell her.”

“And turn you into a gelding? No way,” Bran said, scowling.

Lucas shrugged. “Not your problem.”

\* \* \* \* \*

Charity rolled over in bed; her hand came down on a cold pillow. Lucas was gone; she knew it before she looked around. Why? It seemed like history repeating itself, reminding her of his defection yesterday and then the loss of her only boyfriend in college. They’d only dated three times before a fellowship opened up for him halfway around the world and he’d bid her goodbye.

She winced at the bitter memory. It was what made her turn back to her studies with a vengeance, dropping thoughts of romance. It seemed she was right if she couldn’t even get her lover to stick around for the morning after. She winced at the light shining through the windows and sat up in bed, brushing her hair from her eyes. A small twinge from her nether regions reminded her she’d been thoroughly debauched last night. The sheets rubbed against her sensitized nipples, making them tingle and burn. One taste of Lucas’s fierce lovemaking only made her hungrier for more. She closed her eyes with a sigh.

A sound let her know she wasn't alone. She looked up to see Lucas standing by the closed door with two coffees. How had he appeared instantly? She hadn't heard the door open. Gazing into the whiskey-dark depths of his eyes as he pinned her with an admiring look, she acknowledged there was definitely something deliciously spooky about him. "Where did you come from?" she asked, knowing he'd fob her off with a lie.

"I just popped in with coffee for my baby."

She took a deep whiff of the heady aroma as he approached the bed with his peace offering. "Cinnamon mocha, my favorite. How did you know?"

"I'm observant. It's my job," he answered with a shrug.

"My hero." She watched him blush. The man wasn't used to praise, evidently.

"Sweets for the sweet," he said, thrusting the cup at her. Two droplets plopped onto the sheets.

"Ouch."

"I'm sorry. Are you okay?" His brow wrinkled as he set the coffee down and tugged back the sheet to look at her.

"I'm fine, Lucas. It just made me jump." He did care; she knew it. She watched his expression turn from concern, to shock, to resolve and looked down to see what worried him. The love bite? It was red and strangely heart-shaped. How in the hell had he managed that in the dark? "You seem to have put your mark on me, big boy."

"So I notice. This is all my fault."

"It certainly is, you beast," she teased, trying to lighten the mood. "I must have been the last thirty-two-year-old virgin in Vegas. But no more, thanks to you."

"Are you sure you're okay?"

"Never better," she said, climbing out of bed nude. She didn't miss the fire in his eyes when he looked at her. "Want to wash my back?"

He growled, scooped her up in his arms, and carried her into the bathroom, striding over to the shower. "Turn it on."

There were two ways to take that. She smiled impishly and reached down to touch his rousing cock. "I think I already did." At his growl, she stopped fondling him long enough to turn on the shower. He stepped them into the double marble stall, still holding her tight in his arms. It was the most romantic thing that had ever happened to her. Lucas kissed her and then released her to slowly let her slide down his aroused body. She groaned as her nipples raked teasingly against his soft chest hair, and they budded tighter, jutting out at him. Standing on wobbling legs, her sensitized pussy pressed snugly against his hot cock.

Lucas kissed her again, his hands caressing her, bringing her to the peak of ecstasy. She clung to him, arching against him. He kissed her, then lowered her to all fours on the shower's tile floor, sinking to his knees behind her. "What are you...?"

"Taking you my way. It's called doggy style."

She giggled and then it turned to a moan as he thrust into her from behind. She arched her back meeting his strokes, body on fire. It gave him greater access and he penetrated her deeper, seeming to reach to her cervix. It almost felt like he was growing bigger. She lost track of her thoughts as he cupped her breasts, pinching the nipples. She moaned when he slid a hand between her legs to stroke her clit in time with his thrusts.

Trembling on the brink, she was dimly aware of her skin heating up under the waterfall, her limbs changing. Dizzy, she still felt a strong sense of power sweeping through her, felt his cock grow inside her. Wet, furry limbs rubbed together as he slammed into her harder, nipping gently at her nape when she inched away. He pressed her clit firmly, and she came with a growl, spasms pulling him deep inside her, again and again. Time hung suspended as she flickered back and forth, coming longer and harder than ever before. He let out a howl, coming high and hard behind her, holding her tight. She passed out, totally spent.

She didn't know how much later she came awake cradled in Lucas's arms. Warmly swaddled in a thick terry cloth robe, she noticed he was wearing one too, and he was sitting in a chair holding her in his lap. He was watching her, staring at her...in a panic. actually. She gave him a wobbly smile, hoping to reassure him. "That was some great idea of yours, Kendal. You seem to have sent me reeling."

He closed his eyes and crushed her to him. "You scared the hell out of me, sweetheart."

The man didn't know his own strength. Then she recalled her own burst of strength before she swooned. What was going on with her? She pushed him back a little. "I'm okay but I think there's something weird going on with me." His troubled frown seemed to give credence to her thoughts but then he smiled tenderly.

"I think there's something wonderful going on with you."

"You do, huh?" she murmured, reaching out to twirl his chest hair around her finger.

"Yes. It'll be an adjustment period for you but you'll come out of it on top."

"Speaking of on top," she cooed, rubbing against him, then caught sight of the clock. "Oh good grief, it's after ten. Why didn't you wake me earlier?"

"I thought you needed your sleep."

"I've got a seminar to teach this afternoon."

"Cancel it."

"I can't." She stared down his forbidding look. Just because he'd taught her the joys of sex didn't mean he could boss her around.

"Then I'm coming with you every step of the way."

She snuggled against him. That sounded heavenly to her. "I wouldn't have it any other way."

## Chapter Six

Charity walked back to her conference table after presenting her session in the seminar. The sun was beginning to go down and they only had an hour to go before the end of the conference. A darkly tanned man wearing a loud Hawaiian shirt leaned against the back wall, staring at her. She suspected he and a preppy type in a suit had taken turns tailing her all afternoon. It wasn't the scary sexual stare of the trio last night, but it was just as intense, maybe even a bit angry like he disapproved of her. It was probably just paranoia on her part, she figured.

He didn't really fit in with the computer nerds like her. Maybe he was a spouse of an attendee. No, he had the same focused look in his eye that Lucas wore when he was working. Her gaze shifted to Lucas, sprawled at a corner conference table watching her. Maybe the guy was another hired gun? That settled in her mind, she smiled at Lucas, who stood when she approached, pulled out her chair, and seated her. He'd been so attentive, just like a real boyfriend and not a paid employee. "Thanks."

"You're welcome, love, you were great."

Looking deep into his eyes, Charity lost herself in his gaze. Soon this idyll would be over. It pained her to think it. "Only one more night and we go back to reality."

“Good.”

Startled by his words, she couldn't stop the disappointment from being reflected in her voice. “I'm sorry. I didn't think you were that eager to go home.”

He shrugged, scanning the crowd. “It's easier to guard you there.”

It was all business then. Charity couldn't help feeling crestfallen. As if he read her mind he focused on her, frowning.

“We've still got tonight, love.”

It might be all she could get from him. Charity felt troubled, but grasped at the chance. She might not have him forever but they had tonight, and she'd make the most of those magical hours. She noticed the Hawaiian shirt inch closer; felt his full attention focused on them.

“Don't look now but I think we're being spied on.”

Lucas tensed beside her and looked in the other direction toward the French doors facing the back gardens. “No, eight o'clock to your left. The guy in the loud shirt.” He seemed to relax at her words and looked over her shoulder.

“Don't worry, I can take him.”

No way was she letting him get in a fistfight on her account. “Not funny,” she said, watching his eyes narrow.

“I've got something I need to take care of. You stay here and I'll be back to fetch you at the end of the session. I've made reservations at eight for dinner tonight.”

Something was wrong, she could sense it. “I mean it. You're not going to go pick a fight with that guy,” she said with a forbidding frown.

“I wouldn't dream of it. Humor me, okay?”

“Okay,” she agreed, bemused and in love.



Half an hour later, the conference room cleared and there was no sign of Lucas. *He must have gotten tied up with his secret business.* Left with no other choice, she walked out of the room and made her way to the restaurant. They had reservations at eight. He'd have to show up for that.

She couldn't help being worried about him as she strode down the corridor toward the restaurant. Walking by the glass doors facing the back garden, she heard a growl that stopped her in her tracks. A wolf in Las Vegas? Impossible, but she felt compelled to look. She'd always been drawn to animals, especially wolves. She pushed open the glass door and stepped out into the cool Nevada evening, shivering a little. She rubbed her hands up and down her bare arms, listening. Growls and snarls were louder out here. A few steps down the path took her into a clearing, and she froze. Wolves *were* in Las Vegas, and they were vicious. There were five of them fighting. A large, black and a scraggly, speckled one doggedly went after a smaller gray wolf while off to the left, a slightly larger gray wolf tangled with another scraggly speckled one.

Two viciously attacked one smaller one, which tore at her heart. Then a large timber wolf bounded out of the bushes, pulling the biggest beast off the one being attacked. Her heart in her throat, she watched them go at each other, knowing there was nothing she could do to stop it. The timber's side was slashed at viciously. Just then, a side door opened. The noise and light seemed to shock the wolves into immobility for a moment. She used the opportunity to pick up a heavy glass ashtray from a patio table and hurl it at the black one. It bonked him on the head. He let out a snarl, then skulked away into the night, two dark ones following at his side.

The timber turned his head to stare at her, his sides heaving, the two gray wolves he'd defended hanging back in the shadows. A charge that had little to do with fear went through her as his soulful eyes locked with hers. She didn't pick up any vicious vibes off the timber, just annoyance. Why should he be annoyed? She'd saved his hide, kind of. A glance at the

bleeding wound at his side made her wince in sympathy. He could bleed to death or get an infection. Could she possibly get him to a vet?

“Here, boy,” she said softly to gauge his reaction. He took a cautious step toward her, his tail wagging. It was a good sign. Maybe he’d been someone’s pet, or gotten loose from a petting zoo. She felt his pack’s wary gazes on her but didn’t sense danger, mostly stunned curiosity.

As he stepped closer, she got a good look at him. He was a handsome specimen, and his intelligent dark eyes drew her in. She wasn’t afraid. “Are you okay, boy?” She held out her hand, palm up, for him to sniff, which he obediently did, even giving her fingers a little lick. *Just so he doesn’t think I’m finger-licking good.* As if he could read her mind he rubbed against her most affectionately. She patted him on the back, assessing his injuries, and he shoved his muzzle against her palm. “I love you, too,” she said with a giggle as he licked her again. “Now, I’ve got to figure out a way to get you to the vet.”

At the word vet, he stopped licking her hand and loped away before she could stop him. It confirmed her suspicion that he was a pet. He knew the word vet. The timber wolf stopped at the trees, looked back at her, and then he was gone. She sighed, wishing she could have done more. Maybe it was for the best; a wild beast could take care of himself. It was time to meet Lucas for dinner.

Charity let herself back into the warmth and noise of the hotel. She wouldn’t miss all the clanging slot machines when they went home tomorrow. She hurried to the restaurant but Lucas wasn’t there yet.

She sat at their table waiting for him, her mind still on the wolf, wondering how it was doing. The guy in the Hawaiian shirt ambled into the restaurant and made his way to the bar. She couldn’t help being conscious of his quizzical gaze as he passed. He looked even more disheveled than usual and he was breathing hard like he’d been jogging. He was also sporting a black eye. Oh no, he and Lucas hadn’t gotten into a fistfight, had they? She’d put her foot down against that kind of thing, even if Lucas were doing it for the right reasons.

As if thinking of him drew him to her, Lucas walked into the room. His gaze locked with hers and she read more than heat in them, she read gratitude and what looked like admiration. Maybe they did have a chance. As he walked toward her, she noticed him moving a bit stiffly. "Are you okay, honey?"

"Honey," he said slowly as if he was savoring the love name. "I like that."

"Good, now answer my question," she said as he sat.

"I'm fine," he said, letting out a growl when the trio who'd chased her last night strode into the room and glared at them.

Charity passed a dismissive glance over the pesky intruders and turned back to Lucas. "You got in a fight after I ordered you not to, didn't you?"

He shrugged. "I won."

"That's a matter of opinion, Lobo," Kill said in an accented growl.

"Lobo?" She asked.

"A nickname," Lucas bit out.

"Then you do know him."

"Allow me to introduce myself. Kill Angus, at your service, lass."

"You're not welcome here, Kill."

Kill shook his head. "See what I mean? Such bad manners. I was just about to ask Miss Langford out for dinner and dancing."

"No, thank you." Charity drew back. Something predatory flared in Kill's spooky, light blue eyes at the rejection. "And I'll thank you not to beat up my boyfriend."

Kill chuckled. "Your boyfriend...how precious is that? Let me tell you all about..."

Lucas growled low in his throat, making a slight motion toward him. The man with the Hawaiian shirt and the man in the dark suit stepped forward menacingly to flank Lucas, and Kill's mouth snapped shut.

Kill bowed. "Madame, I'll bow to your tender sensibilities, for now."

Charity took in the two men standing menacingly behind Lucas as Kill slunk out of the room, his companions at his heels. "His nickname is Kill," she said dryly.

"Yup, hung on him by his father, Rowan."

"Charming," she said, rolling her eyes. "I assume these two gentlemen are your back up helpers. Introduce me, won't you."

She watched the two men fidget while the blond actually blushed.

"Bran and Garth. Two friends I can count on in a tight corner."

"It's a pleasure to meet you," she said, adding, "Thanks for taking care of my boyfriend."

Garth frowned. "Us take care of him? It's the other way --"

Bran elbowed him in the ribs. "Stop babbling and say thank you, stupid."

Garth glared at him then turned back to smile at her. "Thank you."

"Would you like to join us for dinner?" she offered, noticing Lucas frown. "Honey, don't scowl at your friends."

"No, thanks," Bran said with a grin. "We're on duty." He turned and walked away.

Garth loped after him, complaining loudly, "But I'm hungry."

Lucas watched them walk toward the bar, his sensitive hearing picking up their short argument and continued amusement at his expense. He didn't really mind, owing them more than he could repay in one lifetime. Bran was a healer and had already worked on his wound, cauterizing it. By morning, it would be mostly healed.

He sat back and looked at Charity as she went back to scanning the menu. She was very serene for a woman who'd witnessed a pack attack, come to his wolf rescue, and then been hit on by Kill. She'd called him boy and petted him; he still couldn't wrap his mind

around it. On the plus side, she liked wolves so maybe finding out she was one wouldn't be such a blow.

"So tell me about them," she said, putting down her menu and glancing at Bran and Garth as they bellied up to the bar.

Lucas gave them a glance. Their fierce glares sent the other patrons to the other end of the bar. "Not very subtle, are they?"

"No, but effective. We should give them a bonus."

He frowned, suddenly reminded that he was only hired help. "They aren't doing this for money. We're friends and have each other's backs in time of trouble."

"So they're PIs too."

He chuckled. "Hardly. Garth is a surf bum."

"Don't tell me...Hawaii."

"How'd you guess," he said, smiling at Garth's attire. "Bran's an investment banker."

"Figures; the suit's a dead giveaway." She turned to look at Lucas. "Tell me about this Kill guy."

"He's bad news."

"He seemed to know you pretty well."

"He should, we're half brothers. We share the same biological father, and he'd like nothing better than to see me dead."

"I can hardly believe that. Surely, you're joking."

"Do I look like I'm kidding?" His grim expression spoke volumes.

"I guess not. What a terrible way to think." She reached out to touch his hand. "Do you want to talk about it?"

"No, and I don't want you to fret about it, either. Let's enjoy the last night here. You're mine." *At least for tonight, anyway.*

## Chapter Seven

Back in the suite Lucas took his time undressing Charity. He wanted to memorize the experience and every sweet inch of her body. She smiled up at him like she was drinking in the sun. He felt a pang deep inside. "Thank you," he murmured.

"For what?"

"For wanting me as much as I want you."

"How could I not?" she asked, and nibbled on his lip while starting to unbutton his shirt.

Lucas froze; if she took off his shirt, she'd see his mating mark, the wound. "You don't know a thing about the real me."

She stopped unbuttoning and pulled back to frown at him. "What are you trying to do, talk me out of seducing you again?"

He pulled her close, not wanting to let Kill's attack spoil this moment. "Forget I said anything. I'm yours, for as long as you want me."

"Good. I'll hold you to that, Lobo," she murmured, then nibbled on his ear while unzipping his pants. She sank to her knees, saying, "I've always wanted to do this."

Lucas groaned when she took him into her sweet mouth. He froze, tortured with pleasure and longing. "Stop, you don't have to." He groaned as her tongue flicked the underside of his cock and swirled around the head, and then she took him back into her mouth. Moaning, he felt his cock grow larger, wolfen arousal kicking in, and gently disengaged from her so as not to hurt her. Wolf cocks grew, locking inside the female they were mating with. It was the nature of the beast he was.

"You're getting bigger," she said with surprise, staring at his throbbing cock. "I thought I felt that before in the shower."

He drew her up off the floor and carried her to the bed, flicking off the bedside lamp and feeling the beast rage within him. She shouldn't have had the presence of mind to remember that. It just went to show how powerful a wolfen female she was. Sprawling on the bed with her, he plunged into her warmth, and her pussy tightened around him as she wet the head of his dick with her juices. Sensing the imminent change in her, he reversed positions. She knelt on the edge, and he drove into her as she changed into a beautiful female timber wolf. He pounded into her as she came and he along with her as his cock lodged inside her and he slowly poured out his tribute to her. Blocking her memory he savored this moment of extended wolfen orgasm.

\* \* \* \* \*

Charity showered and dressed the next day after a lazy morning of breakfast in bed with Lucas. The shower shut off in Lucas's room. She'd finally allowed him to escape to shower, dress, and pack. They'd be cutting it close to make their flight. As usual, Lucas had their departure planned like a military maneuver. The man was definitely paranoid but she could make allowances for his overprotective streak. Smoothing the wrinkles out of her challis print sundress, she stepped in front of the mirror to fasten her ruby necklace, wanting to look especially nice for Lucas. She looked at her smiling reflection, trying to reconcile the

sexually experienced woman she'd become with the old maid she'd been before. Maybe they'd make good on her fantasy about the mile-high club.

Pulling her suitcase from the closet, she laid it on the rumpled bed, recalling their morning delight. Time to get packed. She flipped open the case and went to the dresser. Light glinted off her closed laptop computer. Her Laird. Since she'd been with Lucas, she hadn't given him a thought. She had to break it off with her Laird. It was the right thing to do; besides, it wasn't in her to juggle two lovers, even if one was only the cyber sort.

She opened the laptop and went directly to the site, logged in, and slipped on her headset. He wasn't there. A moment later, he logged in. *"Please follow me to our private room, my Laird."*

*"What is it, Honey? We don't have a date today."*

*"There aren't going to be any more dates."* She sighed. *"There's no easy way to say this..."*

*"You've found someone else."*

*"As usual, you're very perceptive."*

*"Not perceptive enough to keep you."*

She heard the wry humor in her Laird's voice. *"Sorry."*

*"Tell me about my rival."*

*"He's, um...he's..."*

*"Nice."*

*"I wouldn't call him nice. He's my mate."*

*"That's a bit of an old-fashioned term."*

*"I guess it is but it fits the way that I feel."* A thud from Lucas's room caught her attention. Was he already packed? She walked to his door.

*"Well I guess it's time for me to --"*



She tried the knob; it wasn't locked. Lucas, back turned to her, was at the desk using a laptop computer. She stared at him, her jaw dropping at the site of the man who was supposed to be computer illiterate using one. Her sense of betrayal was complete when he spoke.

*"-- bow out to the better man."*

"Why?" She watched him stiffen. What did he hope to accomplish by this deception? To get into her pants? All he'd had to do was ask. Lucas spun in her direction. The irritation and resolve on his face made her even angrier.

"Now, love, I can explain..."

"Save it, I'm not interested." She started to shut the door and said, "Give me some privacy while I finish packing."

"I'll be right outside your door."

The promise tugged at her heartstrings but she turned and locked the connecting door anyway. How could she have been so blind? Sex, hormones, love...her heart sank at the last one. Blinking her tears away, she started throwing clothes in her suitcase. Damn the man for toying with her affections! When she got home, she'd see him fired. He'd even lied about his lack of computer skills -- he'd been talking to her without the aid of a headphone or mic. How was that possible? Even she, computer expert that she was, didn't have that ability.

The overpowering scent of spilled perfume over something foul suddenly filled the air, making her nose wrinkle. A muffled sound behind her told her she wasn't alone. He hadn't even honored her request for privacy. That really tore it. She spun around to see Kill standing inside her room, inches from her, with a gloating smile on his face. She opened up her mouth to scream as something pricked her shoulder and unseen hands grabbed her from behind. Everything went black, cutting off her scream.

Charity came to, moments later, her stomach cramping, totally disoriented. Birds singing, a brisk breeze billowing her dress around her legs told her she was outside. Her nose

wrinkled against the vile smell of the two hulking men dragging her along a path. She winced when her toes caught on a rut and her shoulders almost pulled out of their sockets.

Dragged past a workroom, she spied a modern computer inside. The smoking mainframe was torn apart. A technician with long unkempt hair, dressed in a ragged kilt, gave her a scowl as she passed. Did the fireball she'd launched against the hackers do that? Is that why she'd been kidnapped? It all seemed ludicrous but she was here. She licked her dry lips, moaning, as they half dragged, half carried her into the midst of a woodland clearing, ringed by dilapidated buildings made of logs and stones. It looked like a scene out of one of the Highland Historical Romances she loved to read except that she'd seen the computer. Throngs of men, some in kilts and others in breeches, were making their way to a barn-like structure set at the edge of the compound.

"Let me go..." she started to say but it only came out as a mumble. Whatever they'd given her, she was still high on it and felt strangely disconnected from her body.

"Good, she's coming out of it," Kill said, stepping in front of the men supporting her dead weight to leer at her. "We'll take her to my cabin."

She averted her gaze, not wanting to give him the satisfaction of scaring her. She'd kick his ass the minute she was free. He trapped her face in a painful grip.

"Open your eyes, Princess, and see who you belong to."

She glared at him. "I belong to myself, and no one else." She heard the men holding their chuckle, watched Kill's face redden with rage, and bit her tongue. She had to be smart and survive until Lucas could rescue her. She had no doubt he'd come for her. Taunting the madman wasn't smart.

Kill's smile was cruel. "Just as I thought, the bastard's cock wasn't enough to train her. No wonder he tried to refuse the breeding barns."

*Breeding barns?* Her gaze fell on a barn-like structure the men had gone into. Through the open double doors she saw dozens of naked men and women housed inside. Two women

on all fours were being fucked. Charity couldn't look away, just as aware of the curious stares coming her way from those inside the breeding barn. The men gave her a hungry once-over. The women looked curious and angry.

"Look well, lass, at your proper place in this society," Kill said, his grip tightening. "You'll be my breed bitch and if you please me, my first wife." He tore the front of her dress, the buttons giving way, and there was a cry of approval from the men.

"No," she cried, trying to kick him, but he backed away.

"Get her inside before Rowan gets back," he hissed.

The men dragged her into a small stone building containing a bed made of rushes with a tartan atop it, and a roughhewn table and chairs. They forced her up against one of the thick stone walls, pinioning her to it. Damp cold seeped through what was left of her sundress. She glared at Kill when he followed them inside. He was crazy. He was also aroused, judging by the bulge in his pants.

"Let her go, curs, and learn well how to bring an Elite bitch to heel." He lifted a thick leather strap from a hook on the wall. "The princess is going to grace us with a performance."

*Princess?* They let her go and she rolled her shoulders, the blood rushing back into her arms. The man was obviously not playing with a full deck. Was he going to tie her up? He flicked the strap at her, catching her thighs, and she cried out in shock and pain.

"Show us how an Elite bitch pleasures herself," Kill said with a grin.

Charity stood there frozen, appalled. "No." The strap caught her on her abdomen. She wrapped her arms protectively around herself.

"Or would you rather take it in the mating barn?"

She glared back at the mocking, glaring beast, and then slowly caressed her abdomen, her skin bared by her ripped clothing. Kill and his minion's leers made her shudder and close her eyes, thinking of Lucas. He always seemed to read her thoughts, know when she needed

him. Where was he now? Kill's hands were on her then, pushing hers aside, his rough fingers pinching her breasts, slipping between her legs.

"Wait until I'm buried deep inside you, bitch; you'll forget all about him."

"Never," she spat. "You don't have what it takes to satisfy me." Kill's face turned red with rage before he slapped her, sending her crashing to the floor. He fell on her, pawing at her as she kicked and bit at him.

"That's the way, Kill, show that Elite bitch how we Betas mate."

"They like to be played with first," the other one said.

"What the hell's going on here?" a deep voice bellowed.

Charity felt Kill go still on top of her, heard him bite out a curse. He rolled off her, getting to his feet, and she sat up, looking gratefully at the older man who'd walked in saving her. Big, powerful, barbaric; he carried that aura. He was wearing leather breeches and wore a plaid over his shoulder. His spooky blue eyes reminded her of Kill's but his handsome features reminded her of Lucas. This had to be the biological father they shared.

"I'm just teaching the Elite bitch her place, sire," Kill said.

The old man's scowl made Kill fall silent.

"Stupid brat. I didn't give orders for her to be taken yet. I won't let you fuck this one up like you did her sister. Go outside while I interrogate the princess."

"Why do you idiots keep calling me that?" She scowled up at them as they turned to look at her. Instead of answering, she watched them both stare at her exposed breasts, their leers turning to shocked glares.

"She bears his mark," Kill said.

The old man scowled. "They've mated, but they haven't bound. Look, even now his mark fades."

They were back to talking about her and it pissed her off. “Mated?” she asked, looking down at what she’d assumed was a hickey. It was heart shaped with a raised pattern. “But I don’t under...”

“You bear his mating mark, but have no fear; we’ll soon knock it out of you. By the light of the Blue Moon, Kill will take you and mate with you, and take his rightful place in the pack.” He looked at Kill. “Secure her so we can go to the auction. We have to make an appearance.”

Charity struggled as Kill locked her in manacles attached to the wall. She glared up at Rowan, who watched with approval.

The old man cackled. “Chip off the old block, this one.”

“Yeah, rotten to the core,” she commented.

He cast a startled look her way then roared with laughter. “You may be right at that, Princess, but being brutal has kept our clan alive for centuries.”

## Chapter Eight

Lucas paced outside Charity's locked bedroom door. It would have been easy for him to open, but he didn't want to invade her privacy.

"We're ready, Lobo," Garth said, coming into Lucas's hotel room.

Lucas couldn't stop the fierce glare he gave him.

"Whoa, don't kill the messenger. We can take another flight."

"Sorry, I'll hurry Charity." *That is, if she's even still speaking to me.* He was stepping toward her door when the smell hit him. Betas, their faint foul odor masked by something else...Charity's perfume. "Damn it all." He reached for the door to find it locked and then willed it open. The tumblers turned in the latch and he pulled it open. Charity was gone, her open suitcase on the bed, her spilled perfume running off the dresser to the carpet below. "Betas," Garth said with a growl.

Lucas turned to see his pal sniff the air as Bran zapped into the room. "Come on, we don't have much time."

He tore open a time portal and they transported to the Beta encampment. Lucas crouched in the bushes; Garth and Bran crouched beside him in wolf form. Rowan, Kill, and two other males headed out to the mating barn for the auction. Their voices carried telling

him he'd come just in time. Kill was to mate with Charity at midnight, and then wait to take him out in an ambush. They knew he'd come despite their efforts to mask her scent but they hadn't counted on him coming this quickly. Luckily, they didn't know half his powers.

A sound from the mating barn made him spin in that direction. The auction had started. Betas from all the packs would be here to purchase breeding bitches. It meant a huge night's profit for Rowan, one he couldn't pass up for a princess. Lucas sensed that was the reason why Kill chose to snatch Charity tonight. He'd always chafed under the old wolf's command. Rowan would dangle Charity over Kill's head as a prize for being a good boy. He sneered, wanting nothing more than to gut the two of them, but vengeance would have to come later. Right now, he had to find her.

Lucas pointed toward the cabins, motioning for them to check the outer cabins first. Garth nodded, ran toward Rowan's cabin, and peered inside. His plaid was flung across his bed; a wolf's skin, Rowan's emblem of chiefdom, hung on the wall.

He passed on to the next dwelling. A lone figure was curled up on a bench in the corner. As he moved Lucas saw that it was one of Rowan's sons, the one they kept hidden. Why was he held prisoner? Lucas couldn't risk asking him, for fear of him giving them away. He ground his teeth, frustrated, hating to see any man caged, and headed for the next cabin.

He searched two more before he came across the third. Charity was manacled to the wall. Rage went through him as he saw her sagging against the wall, her dress torn, tears staining her cheeks. He transported inside with Garth and Bran still in wolf form beside him. "Baby, I'm so sorry those wolves hurt you," he said, falling to his knees beside her. He pulled the manacles out of the wall, rage overtaking him, and took Charity in his arms.

"I knew you'd come," she said, kissing his jaw.

He watched her eyes widen as she pulled back to look from the empty manacles to him and then took in his wolf companions. Without a word, he picked her up and teleported them back to their suite in the Flamingo.

\* \* \* \* \*

Charity was trembling, numb as she stood in the middle of the room. The stagnant scent of Kill and her perfume made her gag. Her shocked gaze took in the wolves that in an instant turned into Bran and Garth inside her suite. Good heavens, Garth was nude. Her eyes widened as she stared at his package. He had nothing on Lucas.

“Cover it up, will ya, before we all go blind,” Lucas muttered, seeing the direction of her stare.

She watched in astonishment as Garth turned beet red, and clothes suddenly covered his nudity. Had she seen what she’d thought she’d seen? Garth and Bran turned from wolves to people? Even though it seemed impossible, it all came together in her mind. She’d seen those wolves before. They were two of the wolves she’d seen fighting. A larger timber wolf had helped them. Lucas. She turned to stare at him, noting too late that the brown eyes matched. Lucas was the big timber she’d saved. He was half wolf? And then there was the change in herself she’d felt when they were making love. Was it even possible she had powers, too, that she was a wolf? There was also the issue of the strange mark on her breast. Going by Rowan’s angry words, it was a mating mark.

It all seemed impossible, a fairytale gone wrong, except she was living it. The fact that Lucas had picked her up and they’d all suddenly popped into her suite couldn’t be denied. She looked at his chest. Was he marked under his shirt? She had to know. “Let me see it.” He opened his shirt to show the matching mating mark. It was true. “Then this means...”

“Now, sweetheart, don’t be scared.”

She frowned as clothes somehow materialized on her, replacing her torn dress. “I’m not scared, I’m bloody furious. How dare you manipulate me like this? Who put you up to it?” At his wary look, she knew. *Princess*. “My dad.”

Lucas looked over his shoulder at Bran and Garth. “Uh, you want to give us a moment, guys?”



"You're going with them," she said, marching him toward the door.

"No. You're in danger." He turned to Garth and Brad. "Pack us up, boys, and get us on the next flight out of here. We're in danger."

"Yeah, from you." At his sad look, she felt guilty. "I need my time, and my space to think. You can guard me from afar. I'll have three big strong...whatever you are..." She looked at him for clarification.

"Werewolves," he filled in.

She braced herself, already guessing the answer. "Fine, I'll have you werewolves to look after me. And why fly? Why don't you just beam us home?"

"You're not ready for that." At her glare he let out a sigh, grasped her hand, and teleported them.

She wasn't surprised to see Garth stark naked again or to be standing in her living room. Instead, she was numb.

"I'll give you some privacy," Lucas said, turning to leave. He hesitated a moment by the door, then followed the others out.

"I'll scream if I need you."

"Don't bother, I'm telepathic. I can read your mind."

She slammed and locked the door. Great. Who needed a guy who could read her thoughts? *She did*, she thought forlornly, and snatched up the phone. "Chas, I'm home from Vegas and I need some answers fast. Just what am I?" The silence on the other end of the line told her.

"Um. What's the matter, Chari? Is Lucas there with you?"

"Any reason why he should be?" She couldn't help baiting her evasive sister. She'd known for months that Chas was hiding something.

"Well...I mean you've just come back from Vegas and I'd figured you'd, um...well, Justin and I didn't wait."

The arranged marriage part was true too. She felt like crying. “Oh no,” she whimpered into the phone.

“Are you hurt?”

“Define hurt,” she said, collapsing on the sofa.

“Sit tight, I’ll be there in a flash with reinforcements.”

Charity sat there, staring into space, waiting for Chas to materialize out of thin air.

\* \* \* \* \*

Lucas stood rigidly outside Charity’s door. As expected, she’d rejected him, so why did it hurt so damned much? It made the formality of binding with him a moot point. It was never going to happen, and he’d been a lovesick fool to think it ever could. Still, he had a job to finish. Until the Blue Moon was past, he’d stay by Charity, whether she wanted him or not. Garth and Bran were in position outside the building, within shouting distance if he should need them.

At least Charity had the presence of mind to call her sister for help, a calm move considering all she’d been through. His woman made him proud. It saved him from breaking focus to call in the Elite for backup to give her extra personal protection. Chastity and Justin flashed in right on schedule. Lucas braced himself; Chastity’s glare was enough to freeze his balls off.

Justin leaned against a wall giving him a casual nod. “Lobo.”

Lucas inclined his head. “Justin.”

“What in the hell did you do to my sister?” Chastity demanded.

Lucas took a half step back, surprised by her fire. They’d done each other, all right, but he wasn’t the kind to kiss and tell. He didn’t miss Justin’s rueful smile.

“This isn’t the time,” Lucas cut in.

“Like hell it isn’t, I --”

“He’s right, honey,” Justin cut in gently but firmly, and then turned to Lucas. “There was trouble?”

“Kill and a hunting party kidnapped Charity, took her to Rowan’s hunting cabin in the Brey Forest. I got her back when they went to the mating barn auction, end of story.”

“Not quite,” Justin said, looking pointedly at Lucas’s chest.

Lucas pulled open the collar of his shirt, showing them the mating mark above his left nipple, knowing he could be signing his death warrant with the Elite. Charles Langford would probably gut him; maybe it would be better than a life spent alone and sexless. He glanced from Justin’s grim look to Chastity’s wide eyes.

“But she said you two didn’t do it.” She clasped a hand over her mouth. “Oops.”

“Why don’t you go see your sister? Lucas and I have things to talk over.” Justin handed her a talisman. “Use this to go to the bunker. I want you both out of the line of fire.”

Lucas nodded. At least Charity would be safe. Seeing her safe was all that counted anymore. He braced himself as Charity opened the door to admit her sister. The angry look she shot him made him shrink inside. She let in Chastity and shut the door in his face, blocking him out.

His spine rigid, he turned to face Justin, prepared for annihilation.

“You have backup?” Justin asked.

Lucas nodded. The question took him by surprise. He’d thought there’d be hell to pay for touching a Blue Moon princess early. “Yeah, flanking the house, why?”

“They’ll hit again.”

“Tell me something I don’t know.” Lucas watched the barb roll off the roguish Elite male and sighed, relenting. “The Blue Moon is two nights away. They’re going to go ape shit when they find her gone and come after her with all they have.”

“Succinctly put,” Justin said with an icy smile. “Where do you want me?”

Touched, Lucas nonetheless raised a brow jokingly. “Buddy, I’m not that kind of wolf.”

“Cute.”

“You can help me most by being a liaison with her father. Make sure she’s okay and gets to choose her own mate next time around.”

\* \* \* \* \*

Charity walked back to the sofa, Chas following behind her. Lucas, the hunky werewolf outside her door, was practically calling out to her, and damn, she wanted to answer. She could feel his vibrations, sense him, damn near taste him. Fighting the feeling, she sank down onto the sofa and curled up into a ball, casting a baleful look at her sister, looking for signs of change. “You don’t look like a werewolf, Chas.”

Chas rolled her eyes. “Neither do you, Chari, and we prefer the term were-folk or wolfen.”

“It’s true, then.” She watched Chas’s mouth clamp shut and, a moment later, Chas nodded. She’d always sensed there was something different about her family, but this... It was so preposterous.

“It’s true, we’re werewolves of the Elite clan. All of us but Momma, who’s human, and Clari, who’s something else. It seems she’s a throwback to another time.”

“How do you know all this?” Chas was standing there discussing it like it was normal. How could she be so nonchalant, unless she’d always known? That had to be it. Maybe her parents didn’t think she was mature enough to handle it. That hurt. “Why didn’t they tell me? Why was I kept in the dark about all this?”

“Don’t feel so all alone. I didn’t find out until Justin and I were about to be mated. In short, our parents kept us in the dark to protect us from the big bad wolf.”

Charity thought of Rowan and shuddered. “I think I’ve met him.”

“Now isn’t the time to muddle this out. You’ve got bigger problems. Unless, maybe you don’t bear the Alpha’s mating mark.”

Chari felt her sister's curious gaze on her and hesitated, then reluctantly tugged open the neckline of her blouse to show the mark. She gazed down at the entwined hearts on the upper curve of her breast, noting the raised pattern. It was beautiful, actually, and very scary.

"You do," Chas said with a gasp. "I hadn't thought it possible."

*Hadn't thought it possible? She and Lucas were dynamite together, when he wasn't turning into a wolf, and maybe even better when he was.* "Gee thanks, I do know how to have sex, thank you very much."

"Poor Lucas."

That got Charity's dander up. "What do you mean poor Lucas? Sleeping with me isn't a fate worse than death."

"Maybe not for you. When you don't bind with him, your mark will fade and you can move on to another. True, it won't be a love match and the sex won't be satisfying. Lucas, on the other hand, will bear the mark forever and never mate with another. He'll be alone."

"A lone wolf, what a cliché."

"Wait, it gets worse. Eventually he'll be emasculated, losing even his desire and ability for sex."

Chari blinked up at her in shock. Lucas essentially gelded. It couldn't be. He was so virile. "So help me, Chas, if you're making this up I'm going to kill you."

Chas showed her own mating mark, a star-shaped emblem on her forehead. "I'm not. Our marks are distinctive and aren't visible to humans. Most couples don't even get mating marks. If they do it means they're fated to be together, and it's permanent. Unfortunately, even Mother Nature sometimes makes mistakes."

"Lucas is not a mistake." Charity prayed it wasn't a lie. The sexual and emotional attraction between them was deep. So deep that she knew she could never let him go.

"Of course he's not, sis," Chas said, walking up to her. "Now how about we get the hell out of Dodge before the shooting starts."

## Chapter Nine

“Shooting?” Chari frowned, jumping to her feet. A thud out in the hall, accompanied by a familiar stench made the fine hair on her nape stand on end. It was the smell of the Betas who’d kidnapped her.

“Okay, biting and maiming, then.” Chas grabbed her hand.

“No,” Chari cried in frustration as she felt herself dematerialize and watched her sister go transparent. Suddenly they were in her father’s office. Her parents and Clarity stood there waiting. Charity took in their worried expressions. Her mother’s eyes were red rimmed and her father’s scowl was fierce. Now his tendency to growl made sense. He was the picture of an outraged werewolf.

Light beams hit a painting on the wall behind his desk, snagging her attention. Funny, she’d never noticed how beautiful it was before. Maybe the fact that it portrayed a wolf made her identify with it. Her father’s hand on her arm broke the spell. She looked up at him, noticing he was staring at her mating mark, his face turning red with anger.

Clarity stepped forward, gaining Charles’s attention. “They’re in trouble, Dad.”

“I ought to geld the impudent whelp,” he said under his breath. He turned to Joanna. “Get her into the bunker before the light on the painting tempts her away from us.”

“Wait, Daddy,” she wailed, but her father was already striding from the room. Her dad wouldn’t really hurt Lucas for sleeping with her, would he? And what did Clarity mean by trouble? He didn’t even break his stride. Her mother pushed a button on a control panel, and the back wall whisked silently open. Clari and Chas closed ranks behind her, herding her inside.

“Stop pushing,” she snapped. She hadn’t even known this bunker existed. A quick glance around told her they could hold up for an extended siege. What kind of trouble were they expecting? Picturing Rowan and Kill’s flinty eyes, she knew. She dug in her heels, standing her ground. “Mom, we’ve got to come up with a plan to rescue my mate.” Her mom’s frown didn’t give her hope. She watched her sisters exchange a worried glance.

“It’s probably Stockholm syndrome making her say that,” Clari said to Chas.

“No, it’s true; they did the dirty,” Chas hissed back.

Joanna gave them both a quelling look. “Girls, let’s try to maintain a little decorum.” She turned back to Charity with a sigh. “I’m sorry, honey, but we can’t interfere. Besides, you’d distract him, likely make things worse.”

“Yeah, and he’s got his hands full even with his friends helping him. I can sense it. I only hope that Dad and Justin get there in time,” Clari said.

Chas rolled her eyes. “Lay off the woo woo psychic stuff, will ya, sis? You’re scaring Char. We’ve got to talk some sense into her, Mom. She thinks that barbarian Alpha is her true lifemate. It’s impossible.”

“Who’s to say what’s impossible? I’m human, and your father and I are mated.” Joanna put a comforting arm around Charity and led her to the table.

“Why do they keep calling him an Alpha? Teach me about this so I can understand.”

“Our wolfen society is broken down into three divisions, Elite -- more human than wolf, Betas -- more wolf than human, and Alphas -- half-breeds like Lucas. They’re considered dangerously unstable.”

Charity shook her head. “He’s not, he’s very controlled.” *Even down to his cyber seduction of me.* “Is it true this was only a job for him?”

“Not a job, a promise fulfilled. You were promised to Lucas’s half-brother Lash when you were born. Lash was killed rescuing Lucas from his Beta captors and Lucas honored his dying request to take his place as your mate.”

\* \* \* \* \*

Lucas smelled trouble; it smelled like Beta breath. He popped into Charity’s flat in time to see two Betas come through the patio door. In an instant, he was on them.

They turned and ran. He gave chase. The stabbing pain in his back came as a surprise. He snarled and turned to see Kill behind him, dagger in hand. An ambush. How could he be so recklessly stupid? Love. It was making him careless.

Feeling his strength deplete, he vowed to take them all down with him, and turned on Kill with a snarl. As more Betas closed on him, he heard a new battle cry. A quick, startled glance told him that Justin and Charles Langford were wading into the fray alongside his Alpha friends. Getting his second wind, he dispatched the first Beta and then looked for Kill in time to see him vanish. Damn him for an opportunistic coward.

Then he saw Langford go down as a Beta jumped him from behind. Lucas growled, sending the Beta flying, and then used his powers to tear open a time portal and send the attacker hurtling back into time. The stinky bastard went with a startled cry on his lips and the others soon followed. Lucas gave Langford a hand up. “Now what’s this I hear about gelding me?” he asked Charles, then wobbled on his feet.

Bran and Garth caught Lucas and eased him down onto the sofa. Bran pulled off his shirt to reveal two stab wounds in his back, and his mating mark. Hissing at the burn as Bran started the healing process, Lucas glanced up at Charles Langford’s narrowed eyes.

\* \* \* \* \*



Annoyed by Chastity's continued dismissal of Lucas as a proper mate for an Elite, Charity glared back at her and rubbed her sore leg. Something was poking her leg. She hitched up her skirt to rub the irritated bump.

"What's wrong; did the bastard give you fleas?" Chas asked.

"Not funny," Charity said, pulling up her skirt to reveal a red bump on her thigh.

"Oh my God, they tagged her," Clari said.

"Tagged as in bugged?" Charity stared at the red spot, seeing the tiny sliver of metal sticking out of her skin.

Joanna gently pulled the sliver out of Charity's leg, and then threw it in the trash. "Don't worry, girls. The thick walls should protect..."

They all smelled it at the same time -- smoke and Beta stench. "Oh no, I led them to us."

Joanna scowled at the sealed door. Wisps of smoke curled underneath it. "How dare they presume to break the covenant this way? At least there aren't any employees around to get caught in the crossfire." She turned to the girls. "Remain calm girls. Charity, go and get towels to absorb the smoke. Chastity, go to the cabinet and get the guns. Clarity, try to make contact with your father."

"Yes, Mom," they all parroted back. Charity placed the rolled towels under the door's crack, blocking the smoke, just as something crashed against it. Yelping, she tumbled back onto her butt, then jumped up and ran back to the table. She gaped at her mom, who was hefting a shotgun.

"You can't kill a werewolf, can you? Unless that thing's packed with silver bullets. Right?"

\* \* \* \* \*

Lucas winced as Bran cauterized his stab wound. He glanced up at Justin and Charles Langford as they talked. Langford turned to look at him then.

“How’d you do that?”

“Do what?”

“Tear open a time portal? Send them packing?”

Lucas shrugged. “I’m a freak. It goes with the territory.”

“I never quite saw anything like it.” Langford stopped talking and frowned.

Lucas felt a stabbing pain in his head a second before he heard Charity’s voice in his mind.

“They’re under siege,” Lucas and Charles said at the same time.

Lucas surged to his feet. He wobbled a bit but braced himself, meeting Charles’s worried glance with one of his own. No matter the cost they had women to protect.

They transported to Langford and Langford. Lucas, Charles, Justin, Bran, and a naked Garth touched down in Charles’s office waiting room. Wisps of smoke curled in the air but Lucas didn’t detect any active fire. He zapped clothes on Garth and they rushed into Charles’s office and toward the bunker. The bunker door was open, the doorway smoldering. Charity and Chastity, both in wolf form, attacked wailing Betas. Charity growled, laying flat on the back of one Beta, nipping at his flailing hands. Chastity tackled another, taking him to ground with a growl.

“Look out, sis,” Clarity said, aiming a blast of the fire extinguisher at first one and then the other Beta. They howled, cowering in submission, while Kill stood snarling in the corner.

“Make one move and you’re dead,” Joanna said holding a gun on Kill. She swore when he vanished.

“And don’t come back or you’ll be picking silver buckshot out of your ass,” Joanna yelled after him.

The men shared an amused look.

"I see the ladies have this well in hand," Charles said, taking the shotgun from his wife and laying it on the table. He pulled her into his arms. "You were magnificent, dear."

Clarity gave the Beta one last squirt as Charity and Chastity turned back into human form.

"Doesn't leave a man much left to do," commented Justin, pulling Chastity into his embrace.

"Too true," Lucas said, sending the whimpering Beta back from where he came. "Hardly gives a guy an opportunity to be a hero." He turned to look at Charity, gauging her reaction. Her troubled frown made his heart sink.

"Daddy, don't you dare geld him; he's my mate and I'm keeping him."

Lucas caught Charity as she launched herself at him. Hope warmed his whole being. He felt his mating mark intensify. Hugging her, he glanced over her shoulder at her parents.

Charles glanced down at his wife and chuckled. "We sure raised some feisty, independent princesses."

Joanna smiled. "Despite all your growling you wouldn't have it any other way, would you, dear?"

"You're right, my dear," Charles agreed then turned to rake Lucas and Charity's embrace with a satisfied glance. "Hell, honey, you can keep him. It takes a hell of a wolf to stand up to the Betas. You two have my blessing."

Lucas looked deep into his mate's shining violet eyes. "Will you bind with me, Charity?"

"I wouldn't have it any other way, my Laird," she said, pulling him down for a kiss.

Joanna beamed at the happy couple and then turned to look at her other daughters. "It looks like we've got a last minute wedding to plan, girls."

Clarity looked at her father. "I think the invitations are already out, aren't they, Dad?"

Charles flushed at the startled look from his wife. “I had a feeling,” he said with a shrug.

Joanna nodded. “I guess I should be used to your fey ways by now, husband. You could have told me.”

“I didn’t want to jinx it. I did leave all the girly details to you.”

Clarity grinned. “It’s about time you came clean, Dad; now maybe everything will get back to normal around here. I’ve got the flowers covered; my garden has an abundance of blooms.”

“I wouldn’t count on things settling down,” Chastity said, and then smiled ruefully. “I wouldn’t have picked him for her, but she loves him, so maybe Father does know best. I’ll take care of the music.”

“Thanks, girls; all that’s left is the cake and dress, and I can see to them,” Joanna said. “I’ll give the chef and dressmaker orders to commence.”

## Chapter Ten

Charity stood at the entrance to Langford and Langford's courtyard under the magical light of the Blue Moon. Members of the extended Elite clan gathered in the garden for the binding ceremony along with Lucas's Alpha clan. It was an historic moment for the two segments of wolf society to socialize together. True peace had yet to be achieved with the Betas but now wasn't the time to worry about that. It was a time to rejoice.

Justin, Lucas's best man, wearing a black tuxedo, walked up to a flower-strewn arbor. Bran and Garth followed him dressed in formal Scottish kilts, as was the Alpha way. Charity bit back a small grin thinking of her fantasizing about men in kilts. Then Lucas walked up to the head of the aisle and took her breath away. His plaid of red, green, and gold was one she'd never seen before, and he looked drop-dead gorgeous in it. His bare chest glistening in the candlelight showed his mating mark; his strong, hair-covered thighs sticking out of his kilt made her wonder if he wore anything underneath.

As guitar and lute started playing, Chastity started down the aisle carrying a bouquet of hydrangeas that matched her tea-length, blue silk gown beaded with pearls. A sapphire studded tiara glistened in her hair. She gave Justin a secret smile as she took her place across from him.

Clarity, holding a bouquet of lilacs that matched her tea-length gown sewn through with crystals, wore a tiara studded with amethysts. She gave Bran's kilt a playful glance as she neared him.

A bagpiper joined the guitarist and lute player. Charity took a deep breath and took her father's arm, her bouquet of white roses and heather trembling a little in her hand. The wedding guests stood and turned to look at her. She heard their pleased murmurs and felt like the princess they thought she was. Her long white gown had a low, sweetheart neckline displaying her mating mark, and her ruby-studded tiara felt like a crown. She'd been shocked when her mother had put the gem-studded crown on her head.

She only had eyes for Lucas as her father escorted her down the aisle and toward her destiny. Lucas looked handsome and a bit nervous as he waited for her at the altar. When she looked into his eyes all else faded away. He was her lifemate.

Two ministers stepped up to the altar, the Elite Parson Eliot in white robes, the Alpha Chaplain Wolfe in breeches and plaid.

Parson Eliot began. "All assembled, we joyfully gather together to celebrate a wedding."

Chaplain Wolfe nodded. "We also celebrate the joining of our two wolfen packs. May this be the start of a new harmony between our kind."

Parson Eliot looked down at Charity and Lucas. "A thousand welcomes to you and your bride, Lucas Kendal. May you be healthy all your days. May you be blessed with long life and peace. May you grow old with goodness and with riches." He looked out at the wedding guests. "Is there any objection from either clan to this match?"

Charity froze, worried someone might object. She turned to give the guests a forbidding scowl, and they erupted in laughter. Not very princess-like but she got her point across.

Lucas took her hand, turning her around. "Easy, honey."

“There is no objection,” Charles Langford said. “I, her mother, and our people freely give my middle daughter, Charity to bind to his Alpha clan.”

Charity looked at her father then, all the love and admiration she had for him welling up inside her. Her dad leaned over and kissed her cheek.

“Be happy,” he said, before placing her hand in Lucas’s.

Her father tied a red ribbon around their joined hands. “This red ribbon symbolizes strength and the abiding passion between bind mates.”

Joanna smiled and tied a purple ribbon around their joined hands. “This ribbon stands for love and harmony.”

Chaplain Wolfe smiled. “And now for the Alpha part of the ceremony. The plaid please.”

Garth handed him the folded plaid. The minister blessed it and handed it to Lucas.

“Charity, my love, do you accept my plaid, my clan as your own. Will you bind with me for all the days of our lives?”

Tears of joy misted Charity’s eyes. She nodded. “Lucas, I accept your plaid, your clan as my own.” Charity stood still as Parson Elliot gently draped Lucas’s family’s red, green, and gold plaid over her shoulders. Then Lucas took a Celtic wedding ring from Justin and placed it on the finger of their joined hands.

She took the larger Celtic band that Chastity held and turned to Lucas. “Lucas, will you bind with me, will you take this ring as a symbol of our abiding love?”

“Charity, honey, I will bind with you and wear your ring as a symbol of my love for you.”

Both clergymen smiled, saying, “We now pronounce you husband and wife. What has been brought together this evening, let no creature put asunder.”

Lucas scooped Charity up in his free arm, holding her close. Charity laughed and tossed her bouquet in the general direction of the guests and saw Clarity catch it. "You're next," she shouted over her groom's shoulder.

"Not bloody likely," Clarity shouted back and handed the bouquet off to another woman.

"Decorum," her mother shushed.

As Lucas carried her off to their mating chamber, *Wild Thing* blared forth from the amplifiers. Her pointed look at a laughing Chastity told her who the culprit was. Her mom gave up trying for decorum as the guests started dancing in the aisles.

"Look," she said when she saw her mom and Garth dancing.

"Well I'll be. I wouldn't have believed it myself."

Lucas didn't slow down until he had them in their binding chamber. He'd stolen a princess's heart and he wasn't giving her up. He bolted the door and then set her down, gazing at her in wonder. He could still hardly believe it, that this vision of loveliness wanted him.

"Come here, mate," Charity said, crooking a finger at him.

Lucas stepped toward her, suddenly feeling unprepared. Mating he knew; binding was another story. He pulled Charity into his arms and kissed her. She kissed him back, melting into his embrace; her stiff nipples rubbing against him through her gown drove him crazy. Lucas touched her gown and it fell off her so that she was suddenly naked shivering with excitement in his arms.

"You've got to teach me how to do that!" she said, stepping out of her gown.

"All in good time, honey," he said, picking her up and carrying her to bed. "You've got a lifetime to learn all my tricks."

She nibbled on his ear, making him hiss with pleasure.

"Sounds delightful but you're wearing too many clothes, Mr. Kendal."



Lucas groaned as she reached down to cup his growing erection under the kilt.

“Kilt be gone,” she murmured, then sighed. “Maybe I don’t have any powers, after all.”

He groaned, his kilt disappearing as they sprawled on the bed. His stiff cock rubbed tantalizingly against her warm thigh. “Honey, you’ve got all the powers you’ll ever need.”

Charity smiled, opening her legs. “Take me, my husband and lifemate.”

Lucas settled against her warm, welcoming body, her pussy wetting the head of his cock. “Your wish is my command, wife.” He looked down at her. “Ready?” He didn’t miss the sudden expressive longing in her big violet eyes.

“Yes.”

He took her hand. “Our hands are bound, our bodies joined as one,” he said in a low rumble, surging into her. “I take you as my one true mate, Charity.”

Charity cried out, her pussy clutching his cock as her body and soul claimed him as her own. “Our hands are bound, our bodies joined,” she gasped with pleasure, wrapping her legs around him as he took her to orgasm. “I take you as my one true mate, Lucas, my Laird.”

A cheer went up from the crowd in the courtyard as their binding symbol glowed in the night sky.

 THE END 

## Honey Jans

Honey Jans lives in a small Midwestern town with her husband and true inspiration. She is a born romantic with an extraordinarily vivid yet kinky imagination. In her spare time, Honey enjoys lounging under a shade tree and sipping a cool drink while reading a good book. Her talents and interest are not limited to romance, erotica, or printed words. She lives life to the fullest, traveling whenever she can, frequently taking tropical vacations and Caribbean cruises with her husband.

Honey hopes her erotic tales add spice and reading pleasure to your life. She loves to hear from her readers and tries to answer all queries. If you'd like to contact her, you can e-mail Honey at [author888@hotmail.com](mailto:author888@hotmail.com) or join her newsgroup at [http://groups.yahoo.com/group/honey\\_jans/](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/honey_jans/). She is a member of Romance Writers of America, WisRWA, Outreach, Passionate Inc., and EPIC.

Honey Jans's novels -- *The Gift*, *April Love*, *The Commanders Club*, *Double Fantasy*, *A Wolf's Tale*, and *Monica's Manhunt* -- are published by Whiskey Creek Press.

\* \* \* \* \*

Read on for a tantalizing glimpse of

*Blue Moon Magic, Book 3: Never in a Blue Moon*

by Shari Dare

Coming soon from Loose Id®

## **Blue Moon Magic, Book 3: Never in a Blue Moon**

Clarity Langford couldn't understand her sisters. They acted the way she had when she first went to college and was out from under her father's thumb. James Farnsworth, her first lover, had loved her and dumped her. Once awakened, she'd found sex exciting. Of course it was still exciting, but it certainly didn't consume her every waking moment the way it did her sisters. As the corporate accountant, she'd learned to balance business and pleasure.

The way Chas and Char behaved, anyone would think they were horny teenagers rather than thirty-something married women. After they'd mated, she'd thought their bad behavior would end; instead, they were so intent on a good fuck it was almost frightening. They knew who and what they were, now, so identity confusion was no excuse. Of course, finding out you were a werewolf could be upsetting. Clarity had known of the differences in the three sisters for years. She'd been a sophomore in college when their mother explained that she was one hundred percent human while her sisters were wolfen. It was a secret her mother told her was between the two of them, because her sisters were not to be told until they came into heat.

She knew they had just recently come into heat, but that didn't excuse their behavior, in her book. She also knew the differences made her life shorter, and therefore, she'd found sexual pleasure earlier. As wolfen, her sisters would live for hundreds of years in comparison to her human life span of seventy to ninety years. They had just come into their peak and would be sexually active over the course of their lives, while she, in comparison would be dead and buried while they were still in their prime.

"What's up, Clarity?" Tom Morrison asked as he entered the office.

Just the sound of his voice made her pussy lips weep. He'd been hot as a pistol last night when they played sex games in her apartment. "Not much," she replied. "It's just this P & L statement has me bugged." *And my clit is throbbing like Ricky Ricardo's conga drum. If I were like Chas and Char, I'd be masturbating right in front of him in the hopes of getting a little afternoon delight. It would be different if they weren't both happily married, but they think sex with their husbands is something to be enjoyed no matter where or when they want it. Thank God I have more control than they do.*

"Let me see," Tom said, coming up behind her. "Maybe a fresh pair of eyes can spot the problem. How much are you off?"

"Seventeen hundred dollars," she replied, well aware that his eyes were glued to her ample breasts rather than the figures on the sheet lying on her desk. It was her own fault for wearing such a low-cut, sheer blouse.

"Have you heard the latest from the office rumor mill?" Tom asked, his breath hot against her ear.

"Which one? The one that says the company is on the verge of bankruptcy or the one that says Daddy is dying of cancer and can't decide which one of us to leave the company to?"

"Neither," he said, shoving his hand down the front of her blouse. "This one says your whole family turns into werewolves at the full moon. Is that why you always have plans at that time of the month?" He fondled her breast and then tweaked her nipple.

Tom was too close to the truth to suit Clarity. "Where did you hear that line of bull? I've never turned into a wolf in my entire life. If you must know, I always avoid people at that time of the month because they use the full moon as an excuse to act like idiots. I'm sick and tired of it. I learned a long time ago it was a good night for me to curl up with a book, a bowl of popcorn, and a glass of wine."

“If I’m a good boy and bring the wine can we get together tomorrow night? I even have a hot DVD we can watch to get us in the mood.”

*Like I need something to get me in the mood. If I weren’t at work, I’d be jumping your bones just for suggesting something like that.* “If it will nip this ugly rumor in the bud, why not? I’ll even pop for a tray of shrimp and make my special dip. Does this mean we’re not still on for tonight? As I recall, you promised to take me to that new Japanese restaurant on the lake.”

“Of course we’re going out tonight. I plan to pick up where we left off last night. I’m hot for you, honey, and don’t you forget it.”

Tom kissed her long and hard before he left her office, promising an exciting evening to come. Even though he hadn’t helped her find the discrepancy, she had other things to think about. Somehow she had to stop the rumor that was circulating through the office like a wildfire in a drought. As far as she knew, no one other than her parents and sisters were aware of their wolfen characteristics and no one else in the clan ever mentioned them. Even though she was the youngest, she felt it her duty to protect Chas and Char as well as her father from these rumors. Hopefully, entertaining Tom tomorrow night would put an end to it. She certainly wouldn’t be turning into a wolf, and that in itself should help.

It was just past one when Chas entered her office. “When are you going to get married, Clari? Justin is so good in bed I don’t know how I got along without him all those years. Char and I have been talking and we think you and Tom should...”

“We should what? Get married? I don’t think I’m the marrying kind, like the two of you. Besides, why screw up good sex? You know I’m one hundred percent human. I can get my jollies with more than one guy. That’s why I wouldn’t be comfortable with just one man. It’s too restricting.”

Chas smiled. "You're my sister and I love you dearly, but you don't know what you're talking about. The next Blue Moon is coming soon and Daddy's got his heart set on another moonlight mating with you and Tom getting married then."

"You can't be serious. It's one thing for him to arrange your marriage to Justin and Char's to Lucas, but I'm not a wolfen princess. The continuity of the family line does not rest as heavily on my shoulders as it does on yours. I'm just the number pusher around here."

"Like hell you are. You know you're a Blue Moon princess, wolfen or not. You know that Daddy depends on your premonitions, like the one you had about Lucas and Char being in trouble in Las Vegas, or the one about Justin and Lash going into the Betas' lair to rescue Lucas. You also know that Rowan would do anything to harness your powers. Please let Daddy find you a husband, or at least talk to Tom about the two of you getting married. It would be better than all of us having to worry about the Betas doing harm to you because of your powers."

"Look, Chas, my powers are not common knowledge outside of the family. Unless someone close to me is spilling their guts to Rowan, I'm nothing more than the black sheep of the family, and you know how sheep and wolves get along."

Clarity no more than spoke the words than lights exploded behind her eyes. She knew the feeling all too well. A premonition was trying to materialize for her. From the severity of the pain in her head she knew this one would not have anything to do with happily ever after.

\* \* \* \* \*

Tom left Clarity's office. He liked the way she got all flustered when he mentioned the werewolf rumor. Joanna and his mother were best friends as kids. It wasn't until Charles asked Joanna to find a husband for Clarity that his mother had heard from her one-time friend. Tom was like Clarity in more ways than she knew. His father was a silver beard like Charles and an Elite to boot. His two older brothers had married well and were breeding up a

storm. For him, it had been different. He, like Clarity, had no wolven characteristics. Instead, his humanity came with psychic powers. Even though his brothers considered him inferior, his premonitions had saved their sorry asses more than once.

He headed toward Charles Langford's office when the bright light of premonition assaulted his senses. Clari was in trouble. He knew it. He needed to talk to Charles about this.

He waited in the outer office until Cordelia told him he could go in to see Charles. The man looked as intimidating today as he had the first time they'd met three months ago when Tom first arrived at Langford & Langford. He couldn't help but wonder if it was just the man's personality, or that he was put off by the fact that Tom was purely human even though he was of the Elite clan. Would he have preferred that his youngest daughter marry someone like Justin or Lucas, even though such a match wouldn't be right for her?

"Something on your mind, Morrison?" Charles asked once the door closed behind him.

"It's Clarity, sir."

"What is it? Don't you like her?"

Tom laughed at the question. "Like is a pretty lightweight word. There's not a man in the world that wouldn't like her. I'd say it's more like love. I couldn't be happier about this match my mother and your wife have arranged."

"Then you're ready for the Blue Moon ceremony that's coming in a few weeks?"

"I am but I don't think she is. There's a problem."

"Problem? What kind of a problem? Isn't she attracted to you sexually?"

Tom thought about the love games they had played just hours earlier, to say nothing of what he had planned for not only tonight but also for tomorrow night.

"We're good in that department."

"Then what the hell is it, Morrison? Don't beat around the bush; spit it out. What's going on with my daughter?" Charles's face had turned red and the cords in his neck stuck out.

It was evident he was losing control. If he wasn't careful he could morph into a wolf without even knowing it. Tom wondered how he could explain what he didn't completely understand himself. "Nothing yet, but you have to know of her psychic powers. Well, I have those same powers and with them I sense there is going to be trouble for her."

"What kind of trouble?"

"I'm not sure yet. I just left her office and got the beginnings of a premonition. It could take hours or even days for it to completely materialize. All I can tell you is that something is going to happen and I'm worried about it."

Charles nodded his head. "I understand. I know that's how things happen with Clarity. Sometimes she never knows exactly what the visions mean. It certainly is unsettling, but I've learned to live with it. I guess I don't have to tell you that it's imperative you keep her safe. Will you be with her tonight?"

"Yes, and tomorrow night as well."

Charles raised an eyebrow in question. "She's agreed to go out on the night of the full moon? She usually lays low during that time. I think she's afraid of morphing like the rest of us, but of course we know that won't happen. She's like her mother in that respect. If I'm not mistaken you're the same way. It's the curse of being the third child."

*Curse? I certainly wouldn't call it that. I think it's more like a blessing. I know what my brothers went through when they first morphed. I'm pleased that I don't have that to look forward to. If the truth were known, I like the fact that I have the instincts of being Elite but none of the drawbacks. My only affliction is these damnable visions.*

"Call it what you want, sir, but I'm very happy with my position in the clan, as I think is Clarity. We aren't going out tomorrow night. She's allowing me to come over and watch a DVD with her while we enjoy a glass of good wine. I'm bringing the wine and the DVD and she's supplying not only the apartment but also the shrimp. If I have my way, the shrimp will only be the appetizer."



“Are you telling me you plan to take her sexually?”

“I’m discreet enough not to kiss and tell. She’s not like her sisters, sir. Unless I miss my guess she’s been sexually active for a long time. It’s best that way. I never did get excited about being the first one with a virgin.”

Charles’s face turned red with embarrassment at Tom’s blunt description of his youngest daughter. The man wasn’t used to dealing with the human aspect of the Elite clan. It was common knowledge that human Elites were no different than any other human when it came to sexuality.