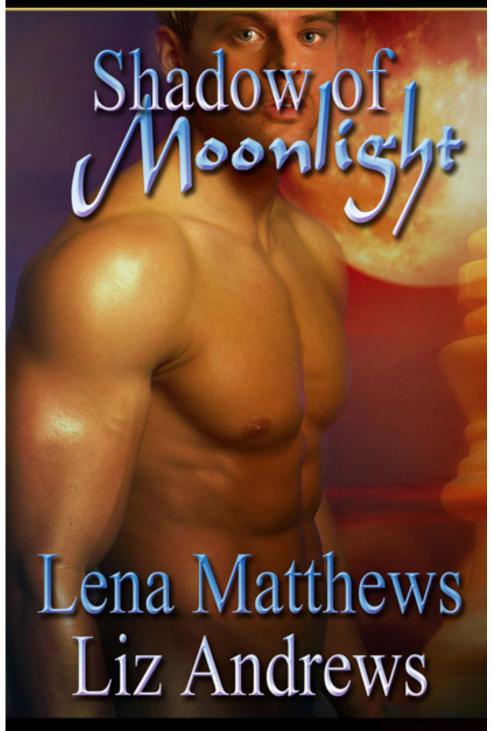
Ellora's Cave Presents



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Shadow of Moonlight

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SHADOW OF MOONLIGHT

Lena Matthews & Liz Andrews

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Chapter One

On nights such as these, so dark and crisp, Jace McClellan cursed the fates for the path they'd laid before him. He was neither man nor beast, but an amalgamation of the two. He was cursed with their strength but not with their ability to shift. And to him, a curse it was. To be the anomaly within his own Pack, a brother in arms, but not where it truly counted. He was *Rakshasa*, a seer for his clan, and tonight his gift called to him.

As Jace walked through the dark forest, the sound of a babbling brook grew louder with every step. It was the only sound in the still of the night, the one constant that beckoned to him, leading him to where the future lay. Normally his visions weren't as intense, but as Jace neared the clearing, he noticed a naked woman bathing in the water. The water lapped at her firm brown thighs, showcasing her body in all its glory. Although she was turned slightly from him, Jace would have recognized her anywhere. Elizabeth Remington was unforgettable.

Even though he'd never seen her naked, he knew every curve and sinew of her body. Elizabeth, or Remy to anyone who didn't want to die a slow and painful death, was tall and muscular, but altogether a woman with high, rounded breasts and a curvy ass that evoked images in his mind of her kneeling before him as he pounded into her from behind. Droplets beaded on her as she knelt and sluiced the water over her body, being careful to keep her shoulder-length dark hair dry.

Jace sat on the grass, his back against a tree as he watched her. She looked like the Venus de Milo, rising from the water, as if she were some ancient fertility goddess. Remy stepped from the bank and knelt on the soft carpet of grass, staring at him but not really seeing. Her dark war-weary eyes saw right through Jace as she stretched out before him. Her body was riddled with scars and bruises, some fresh and some aged, yet every one was a wound to his soul. Remy was a warrior, a *Venator*, second-incommand to their Pack leader, and she'd earned her title the same way she earned her scars—by fighting.

Her strength and determination were just one of the many things he admired about her, along with her dark, spankable ass, an ass, thanks to her new position in which she faced away from him, was now within licking distance. Jace knew it was only a dream, but his cock didn't care—it hardened at the thought of Remy kneeling before him.

Stroking himself through the rough fabric of his denim, Jace pictured Remy reaching out to release him and cupping his cock in her hands before enveloping it in her warm mouth. Jace closed his eyes and imagined wrapping her hair in his hands as she licked and sucked him until he was wild with wanting her.

The purpose for his dream long forgotten, Jace began to unfasten his jeans, wanting to touch his flesh as he imagined it was Remy. The hand on his shoulder brought him to a halt and he turned to see who dared to interrupt him.

"It's not that kind of dream, nipote."

"You have the worst fucking timing, Vlad."

Vladimiro McClellan, Jace's ancestor guide, frowned in annoyance. "You know I dislike it when you shorten my name."

"Yeah, yeah, as if I care." Quickly refastening his jeans, Jace stood and ran a hand through his hair. He glanced over at the image of Remy still kneeling and now brushing her hair. Frustration burned in his gut knowing he would be unable to recapture this dream without first finding out what premonition was in store for him. "What do you want?"

"I wish you would be more appreciative of your gifts." Sighing, the blond man crossed his arms over his bare chest. With the same almond-shaped blue eyes, wavy dirty-blond hair and muscular physique, the two of them could have been mistaken for brothers instead of the great-grandfather and great-grandson they were.

Vladimiro, like Jace, had been cursed with the gift of sight, and it was he who appeared whenever Jace had a vision. A watcher for the watcher.

"I am appreciative. It's just damned inconvenient, you know."

"Stop thinking with that head and start looking around you. There is more going on here than you realize."

As if he could possibly see anyone or anything else when Remy was present.

"Go on, *nipote*, *see*." As if by Vladimiro's words alone, the vision grew more vivid. Almost as if someone or something had lifted a shrouded curtain and more of his premonition came into light. Jace glanced around the clearing and saw a number of wolves gathered around. Cutting his gaze back to Remy, she was now in her wolf form as well, her sleek silvery gray coat shining in the moonlight. Remy stood between two groups of wolves, an older Pack and a younger one led by Nico Cassamonti, the Pack *Benandanti*, and his *Elitario*, his top security officers, as well as other important Pack members. Into the clearing walked a human, a woman with long blonde hair and penetrating blue eyes, who appeared frightened and very, very pregnant.

"Who is she?" Jace didn't recognize the woman, but he realized there must be some significance to her presence.

"Keep watching." Jace should have known better than to ask Vladimiro any questions. His ancestor was only a guide and never answered an obvious question. Instead, Jace received all his premonitions in riddle form, which was very annoying. All the symbolism was sometimes hard to decipher, making Jace wonder why the fates had to be so fucking cryptic all the time.

The woman first walked toward the older group of wolves, who circled around her as if she were prey. They howled and jumped at her, their claws reaching for the child

she carried within her. Crying, she covered her stomach and tried to keep the wolves at bay—as clichéd as it sounded—but she was merely human. No match against any of them. Turning toward Nico's Pack, Jace realized there was a strange wolf in their circle and the blonde woman kept trying to gain his attention, all to no avail. She looked downhearted at the rejection.

Jace noticed the older wolves were taunting the blonde woman now, pushing her off balance and pulling at her clothing. She looked scared and began to back away from them, only to have them circle her again and again, cutting off her escape. During this entire exchange, Remy continued to stand between the two groups of wolves, never moving, just observing the action.

Finally Nico howled, calling Remy over to him and Jace could almost imagine them speaking as they sniffed and nuzzled one another. Remy turned and headed for the blonde woman, and for a moment, Jace believed she was going to attack the human as well. But at the last moment Remy dragged her away from the group of older wolves, pulling her into the circle formed by Nico and his *Elitario*.

There was a loud scream as the woman dropped to her knees and Nico's Pack gathered around her. Everyone except Remy, who stood at Nico's back, ready to do battle. The scream abruptly broke off but was replaced by a loud wail, seemingly from an infant.

Annoyed, Jace turned to Vladimiro, who was watching him intently. "I get it. She's pregnant. Pregnant women give birth. See, I'm getting this dream reading down pat."

"If you weren't of my blood, I wouldn't waste my time with you."

"If I weren't of your blood, I wouldn't be seeing you," Jace reminded him as he turned back to the wolves. "You're dead, remember?"

"I live on, young Wolf."

"I'm not a Wolf." The words were as bitter as Jace himself was. "I ask you again, who is she?"

"It is something, *nipote*, you'll have to figure out for yourself."

Of course. "And the child?"

In an instant the clearing and the wolves were gone. The only thing left was the woman and child, who were standing on a lawn-sized chessboard. The mother stood with the child in her arms as Nico, now in human form and his wife Kimberly, walked behind her and took their position as king and queen. Next came Remy, who at first filled the spot as the knight to the king's right then she slowly took a step forward so she was even with the woman and child.

Confused, Jace stepped toward them as the older Pack of wolves once more came on to the scene. They stayed clear of the board, but snapped at the heels of Nico and Kimberly.

Undaunted by the angry wolves, Jace stepped onto the board and walked slowly around the human pieces. They were all in specific spots, and with the exception of

Remy, no one had moved forward or backward, as if they were there for a reason. Nico, the leader, was the king, his wife the queen and the woman and child...

It couldn't really be so simple could it?

"The woman and child are pawns."

"So astute." Vladimiro moved next to Jace and gestured with his head toward Remy who was looking straight ahead. "But they are not the only ones on the battle line."

"Remy was in the knight's position."

"Yes."

"But she didn't move in an L shape. She stepped forward." Jace frowned, his brows furrowed as he concentrated on the scene before him. It didn't make any sense. A knight was unlike the king or queen. It could only move in one particular pattern. Circling her, he studied her position carefully. "It isn't right."

"How so?"

"She shouldn't be able to take this square."

"And why not?"

"Because she's a knight."

"Is she?"

Jace looked up sharply into Vladimiro's knowing gaze. "Isn't she?"

"You tell me."

Jace didn't want to believe what his vision was showing him. His Remy was a fighter, not someone to be used and discarded.

"You're thinking with the wrong head again."

"I'm not."

"Then tell me what she is."

"A pawn," Jace bit out. He wanted to pull back the vile words even as they slipped past his lips. "She's merely a pawn."

"Aren't we all?" Vladimiro clasped Jace on the shoulder and turned him until they were facing one another. The scene shimmered and vanished around them as the two locked gazes. "Sixty-four squares, *nipote*, which one will you stand on?"

Jace sat straight up in bed, sweat dripping down his back from the intensity of his vision.

"Fuck." The visions often exhausted Jace, but this one was one of the most powerful yet. If this were any indication, his gift was growing. Unfortunately it didn't mean the premonitions became any clearer. In fact, they were just as obscure as ever. Although this dream only had one conclusion. Jace needed to contact Nico.

Glancing over at the clock on the bedside table, he noted it was four-thirty. Nico certainly wouldn't thank him for the early morning interruption. On the other hand, Jace knew this message was one that couldn't wait until working hours. Jace had no idea who the blonde woman was, but she needed to be found. Her presence as a pawn on the chessboard meant if she wasn't protected by Nico, she could be a threat to the Pack.

Jace tried hard not to be reminded Remy had also been a pawn. He hated to think of her in such a way, someone to be used at a whim. At least as a knight she had power, but as a pawn, she was nothing.

Not true.

Although he rarely heard the voice of his ancestor outside the dream realm, the thought came through loud and clear. And then Jace recalled his childhood chess games. If a pawn were able to make it across the chessboard unscathed, it turned into a queen. Jace could only hope Remy would be so lucky.

Picking up the phone, he dialed Nico's home. The phone rang three times and Jace was wondering if the fourth ring would come and he would have to leave a message on the answering machine when the phone was finally answered.

"This had better be life or death." Nico's voice was scratchy with sleep and Jace winced at the fact he had to bother the *Benandanti* at this early hour, but he reminded himself it was for a good cause.

"Nico, it's Jace. I'm sorry to bother you but I had a disturbing dream."

Thankfully Nico didn't deride him. The *Benandanti* was instantly aware of the significance of the call and immediately got down to business.

"I'll meet you at the Desert Sanctuary within the hour."

Jace hung up the phone and slowly stood. His body felt as if he'd participated in a marathon race, his muscles screaming in agony as he moved toward the bathroom. He was going to need a hot shower and plenty of coffee before he faced the *Benandanti* this morning.

* * * * *

Over the course of Remy's lifetime, she had maimed, tortured and killed, yet there had never been a time she wanted to hurt anyone as much as she wanted to harm Jace. It was five-thirty in the fucking morning. *Five-fucking-thirty*. The bastard was going down.

With the flat of her hand, she shoved against the observation room's door. The latch gave way under her powerful strength and the door slung back forcefully, banging into the wall.

"I've said it before and I'll say it again—" Remy's voice roused the gathered men who all looked over at her and smiled. To say Remy wasn't a morning person would be like saying Beethoven's *Für Elise* was a snazzy tune to listen to. "Nothing short of the world's chocolate supply being held hostage is worth getting out of bed before nine."

"Good morning," Harrison Wood called out to her as he rose from his seat. He headed straight for the coffeepot where he quickly prepared a cup of coffee for her. "How many have you had?"

For such a muscular man, Harrison moved with grace. The dark-skinned man was as agile as he was handsome. Even though he preferred his role as *Cahalith*, teacher for the young Weres, Harrison had seen his share of battles and had the marks of valor to prove it, including a nasty scar that ran just shy of his left eye to the corner of his newly grown goatee. Instead of taking away from his good looks, the scar added to it, at least in Remy's eyes.

"Three," she grumbled as she made her way around the conference room table to her self-designated seat, directly to the right of Nico's, which flanked the head of the table.

Unfortunately for Derek Chow, he didn't move fast enough out of her chair, and he nearly fell on his ass as she pulled the chair from underneath him. Undaunted by her normal behavior, Derek laughed and moved to the chair next to her. "Morning, sunshine."

"Eat me."

"Maybe later." He winked, knowing it would drive her further mad. Remy knew he sat in her chair on purpose. For some reason the Asian man adored getting her goat. It was the only thing he lived for, next to pussy. And for Derek, that came in spades. Women were drawn to the handsome Were like bees to honey. With jet-black hair that hung past his shoulders and eyes the color of onyx, Derek was the epitome of exotic sensuality. Throw in his muscles and his charisma and he was a force to be reckoned with.

"In your dreams." Harrison handed the cup to her as he rounded the table and took his seat across from her. The other two men in the room also took their seats, following Remy's lead in the room just as they did in all things related to the Pack.

She'd known them all since adolescence. They'd grown up together in the Pack and met as young pups, just learning the ways of the Were. They were all outcasts in their own way and had banded together as a group. Luckily Nico was part of the group and when he became *Benandanti*, his friends continued to follow him.

Remy had fought by their side in battles past. Bled for them, tried for them. And she would die for them. They were her Pack. Her brothers, though the only one in the room who slightly resembled her was Harrison, and he only because they both shared the same skin hue.

Harrison and she were the only Weres in Nico's *Elitaro's* that shared African forefathers. Derek was of Asian descent and Jackson Young and Kellen Quinn, the other two Weres in the room, were of European descent. Yet to them, it didn't matter. Their

human ethnicity was as unimportant as the color of their fur. It was the one thing the Weres had managed to overcome their human brothers had not.

"Does anyone want to enlighten me regarding what the hell we're doing here?"

"Jace," the men chimed in all at once, much to her annoyance. She wasn't irritated they spoke at the same time, but that they'd all spoken the dreaded name of her mortal enemy.

"I know that," she bit out before pausing to take a drink of her coffee. It was strong, bitter and black, just like herself, and despite the soothing effect of caffeine, Remy still was pissed off. "But do we know what Watcher Boy dreamt about?"

"You of course, princess."

Naturally he walked in while she was talking about him. With a heavy sigh, Remy closed her eyes and slowly counted to ten. When she finished counting and it hadn't done anything to relieve the tension coursing through her veins, she counted to thirty.

Jace, the never-ending yeast infection who haunted her nightmares. He was a pain in the ass, and not the sexy, sharp sting of someone's hand. He drove her crazy and damn him, he knew it. The unfortunate part was she was strangely attracted to the man. She could barely be in the same room with him for a few minutes before they started sniping at each other, but it didn't stop her body from responding to his presence.

"Who left the door open?" Remy opened her eyes but kept looking ahead. She refused to glance his way. He'd use it as an opening to annoy her further.

"Aww, your bitterness wounds me." His voice caressed her ear as he leaned over and spoke softly in her ear. Try as she might, Remy couldn't stop the way her nipples hardened under her bra. As irritating as she found him, Jace was the one man who could make her wet with a single glance. And he knew it. The bastard.

She didn't have to glance at him to know how good-looking he was. His image was burned into her brain and late-night fantasies. Jace typified the California surfer dude, with his sun-kissed blond hair and smiling blue eyes. He was tan and muscular, giving the appearance of someone who could handle himself out on the waves or in a backalley fight. Why he couldn't look like a troll, she had no idea.

"Good, maybe you'll bleed out."

"How about you kiss it and make it better?"

Enough was enough. Remy slowly turned her head until her face was mere inches from his and growled low and deep. Her growl was a sound that frightened men to death, yet Jace merely smiled, as if the threatening sound amused him.

He wasn't too bright.

"If I were you, Jace, I'd back up." This came from Kellen, her champion and former lover. Former by her decision not his, and everyone knew it, even Jace, who didn't budge. At six foot two inches, Kellen's fiery temper matched his flaming hair. His eyes were a light blue that could sometimes make him look cold and unrelenting, much like now.

For someone who didn't get all fuzzy, Jace surely had balls of steel. Kellen could change in a second and rip out his throat before he drew another breath, but by the way Jace leaned closer in to her, moving back toward her ear, he wasn't threatened. In fact, he seemed to egg the younger man on.

"But he isn't me, is he, Remy? And that was the problem, wasn't it?"

His words weren't whispered but even if they were, with their keen hearing, everyone would have heard him anyway. Jace's taunt didn't fall on deaf ears. Kellen pushed his chair back and stood, much to Jace's amusement.

Not everyone was amused though. Harrison jumped up as well and placed a cautionary hand on Kellen's arm. He shot Remy a "do something" look, but short of banging their heads together, she was clueless. She wasn't the type of girl men fought over, and it flattered and frustrated her all at the same time.

Fucking men.

"Could you fellas piss on her another time?" Nico stood in the doorway, eyebrow raised in annoyance. The *Benandanti* held a commanding presence, towering over everyone in the room. His thick dark hair matched his nearly black eyes, which swept across the room, catching everything in his intense gaze. "We have more important things to discuss."

Everyone except for Remy looked toward Jace, knowing he was the bringer of the doom and gloom. Remy long suspected their venerable watcher didn't know shit and often made stuff up just to piss her off. On the other hand, he'd come through when Kimberly, Nico's mate, had been kidnapped. So rather than make a firm commitment, she was staying neutral on the subject of his abilities until she had further proof. On his ability to heat her up, with anger or desire, she had no problem ruling him a complete pain in the ass.

"Okay, Jace, let's hear it." Nico was ready to get down to business.

"I'm going to Cliff's Notes it for you."

"Why?" Remy questioned, mainly just to get a rise out of him. It worked.

Jace shot her an annoyed look before letting out a heavy sigh. "Simply because I could go into details and since you're not in the know, most of it won't make any sense to you."

"Not in 'the know'?" Remy raised a brow at his a haughty answer. "I didn't realize it required a lot of skill and know-how to sleep."

"Remy," Nico warned.

"Sorry." She wasn't, but it sounded good.

"Basically, here's the deal. There's a human blonde pregnant woman out there and we need to find and protect her. For some reason she and her child are important and the *Maggiore* want her, bad."

At the mention of a human woman, the room turned en masse toward Derek, known not only for his womanizing but for his affinity for humans.

Holding up his hands, Derek laughed for a moment until he realized everyone was still staring him down. "Hey, don't look at me. I'm more careful than that—really. Besides, aren't we all supposed to be dying off because we can't reproduce?"

Remy remembered the conversation they'd had only a few months before in the Howler, when Nico first suggested they join with the *Morbauch* Pack, a group of Coyote Weres. It was the first time any leader had acknowledged their females were unable to get pregnant or have as many young as they'd had in the past.

Nico sighed and nodded. "It's true our females are having a harder time getting pregnant. But perhaps this woman has some answers for our problems."

"But Watcher Boy here said she was a human. How does that help us?" Remy held in the smile when Jace frowned at her nickname for him. She could give as good as she got.

"Good question. But a better question may be, who is this woman?" Harrison had the innate ability to boil a problem down to its lowest level.

"Sorry, Jace, but I think we're going to need a little bit more. Can you describe the dream?" Nico's request was a lot more tactful than Remy's would have been, which is one of the reasons he was the *Benandanti* and she was the *Venator*.

Jace ran his hand through his hair, a look of frustration on his face. Remy had to steel herself from wanting to comfort him. First, it would make her look weak in front of her *Rahu*, something she'd never allow herself to do. Secondly, he'd probably turn it against her, teasing her mercilessly.

"I don't know who she is. I didn't recognize her. In my dream, she stood between two Packs of wolves, the *Maggiore* on one side and you and the *Elitario* on the other. You sent Remy to bring her to you and she gave birth to the baby. Then the scene changed and both you and Kimberly willingly stood guard over her. I don't know why, but I can only can go by the feeling she knows you both."

Remy felt as if Jace were holding something back in his explanation, but she couldn't figure out why. There was no reason for him to hide anything from Nico. Jace was the one who asked for this meeting in the first place.

"Describe her to me." Nico's words cut off Remy's further musings.

"She's a beautiful woman, very petite, blonde hair and blue eyes."

"She sounds like half the women in California," Jackson noted, amusement spilling from his tawny gaze. The historian wasn't until recently part of the *Elitario*, but after Nico's power play with the *Maggiore*, he'd become as synonymous with the group as jokes and laughter. He wasn't much of a conversationalist, but there was very little the staid Were missed, which made him a great sounding board.

"She sounds like a fucking Barbie doll." Remy didn't enjoy the feelings she was having when Jace described the woman. She just about felt jealous, although she pushed the idea aside almost immediately. Hell, Jace didn't even know the woman.

But he was dreaming about her.

Kellen rubbed his chin thoughtfully. "Hey, didn't you call those *Morbauchs* Ken dolls? Maybe she's from their Pack?"

"Hello, human, duh. The *Morbauch* Pack may only be Coyotes, but they're still Were." Remy grimaced as she watched Kellen flush at Derek's words. Derek sometimes didn't think before he spoke, shooting everyone's ideas down whether they were good or not. Kellen was a good fighter and he didn't deserve Derek's derogatory comments.

"Enough. This is getting us nowhere. We need to discover who this woman is. The sooner the better." Nico's gaze swept the room as he spoke.

"Can't you nail down her identity any more than you have?" Remy's irritation came through her question, and Jace's response was just as frustrated.

"I can't fucking turn it on and off, you know. The visions come and they don't exactly make a hell of a lot of sense. For God's sake, I'm doing the best I can."

"We know, Jace. Everyone realizes the seriousness of this situation and we appreciate your contribution." Nico was trying to soothe over Remy's rudeness and she felt as if she were a child whose parent had to apologize for their unruly offspring.

"I don't think everyone does, *Benandanti*." His words and his gaze were pointed, and Remy fought back the urge to make him eat them. How dare he challenge her in such a manner? "This is serious."

Even though Remy knew the logistics of Jace's so-called talent, the why and how it worked still eluded her. It didn't help that he was the youngest watcher in two decades — the last, his great-grandfather had been murdered in the Great War. Leaving just Jace to lead the future watchers, a class of six young Weres, all with the same power he possessed. All just as clueless. It was the blind leading the blind. And it was annoying as fuck.

"Yeah, yeah," Remy waved her hand in a dismissive way toward Jace, already bored with the meeting. Did she really have to get out of bed for this crap? "Fine. We search for a pregnant blonde chick. We bring her with us, to the dark side. Shove her away in a stable so she can safely give birth. We win. Bad guys lose. Party and pizza at my house."

Her simplification of the situation brought forth laughter from everyone surrounding the table. Everyone but Jace, that is. "You think it's so easy?"

"For us, yes."

"You're just going to walk in and kill first, ask questions later."

Remy shrugged her shoulders as if his comment didn't faze her. "Dead men don't talk."

"What about dead women?" Jace leaned forward, his gaze intently focused on her. "Are they immortal? Are you?"

The room grew deadly silent at his words. The way he said it didn't come off as a simple question. "Are you threatening me, human?"

Jace flinched. Disclaiming his Were DNA was a direct shot. Remy was just as good at wounding with her words as she was with her hands.

"Remy!" Nico barked at her disrespectful tone and words. Even the other men turned shocked gazes her way.

Remy wasn't going to feel bad though. He had pushed her. But she couldn't exactly meet his eyes. "Look—"

"No, you look, Remington." Jace slammed his hand on the table. The force of the blow cracked the wood, and all eyes shifted to him in surprise. Everyone knew Jace was gifted with some of the strengths, but she had no idea he was so physically powerful. Impressed by his show of force, Remy didn't retaliate against his insolent action. She actually sort of admired him a bit now...but just a bit. "I've had it up to here with you."

"You have, have you?"

"Damn straight."

Now things were getting good. If there was one thing Remy admired, it was someone who didn't take her shit. It amused her. "And what exactly do you think you're going to do about it?"

Jace moved with lightning speed out of his chair and around Derek until he was at Remy's chair. Shocked, Remy stared at him as he pulled back her seat and picked her up, chair and all, until they were eye to eye. "Keep testing me, she-wolf, and you'll see exactly what I'll do about it."

Without another word, Jace dropped Remy's chair and strode from the dead-silent room. When her chair hit the floor the legs shattered and Remy was left sitting in a pile of wood.

"What the..." Remy bound to her feet, dusting off her rear in the process. Looking up, she noticed every eye was on her, and they all wore the same stunned expression on their faces.

Nico frowned, yet for some reason, Remy was sure it wasn't to her advantage. "Remington, you owe him—"

"An ass-kicking," Kellen offered, his face as red as his hair. "I ought to do it myself."

"No, I'll handle it." Glancing at the door, Remy knew just what she had to do. Damn it all to hell, she hated the taste of crow.

Nico stood, capturing the attention of the entire room with his gaze. "Good, now let's go find out who this woman is and bring her home."

Chapter Two

The paper gown crackled as Cassandra Adams shifted on the exam table for what seemed like the hundredth time since she'd entered the room. Try as she might, she couldn't control the foreboding sense of dread hovering over her like a dark cloud.

Where the hell is the doctor?

Biting her bottom lip, she tried to still the thoughts bouncing around her brain. Unfortunately she hadn't been very successful up to this point, hence the restlessness.

Cassandra never thought she'd find herself in a "delicate" situation as the nuns at Catholic school used to say. But here she was, waiting for the obstetrician to return and give her the verdict. The same verdict five pregnancy tests, four months of missed periods or the word of her father hadn't been able to convince her of.

Of course her father—Franklin Russell—wasn't the most reliable of sources. The man was truly treading on the dark side. If it weren't for the DNA test telling her otherwise, Cassandra wouldn't have believed someone so evil or so...unnatural could be related to her. And it didn't get much more unnatural than dear ol' dad. He was a Werewolf.

If Cassandra hadn't seen him change right before her eyes, she wouldn't believe it herself. Lord knows, when she started her quest five years ago to find her biological father, she never expected to find proof of the supernatural as well. Now all Cassandra wished was she could go back to the safe, sane world of not knowing. Then she wouldn't have to deal with her father and his crazy plan to take over his Pack or any of the other Werewolf bullshit she had witnessed over the last year.

Then again, if she went back in time and changed everything, she wouldn't be here today. Unfortunately Cassandra wasn't too sure how she felt about it. Sure she hated everything her father stood for, but her distaste of her new four-legged friends would have to come to an end. Especially since the father of her child was a Werewolf as well.

David... No, she wasn't going to think about him. It was more than obvious he hadn't spent a moment thinking of her in the last four months. Hell, he probably hadn't given her a second thought once he climbed from her bed and walked out of her townhouse. Of course, it was no less than she deserved, sleeping with him as quickly as she had.

Although she'd never planned a future with the guy, she didn't think he'd turn out to be a "wham, bam, thank you, ma'am" type. But when she'd slyly inquired about him to Kimberly, her assistant and David's sister, Cassandra was surprised to hear he'd gone home.

Thankfully her thoughts were interrupted by a quick knock on the door and Dr. Felicia Osterman peeking her head around the door, smiling as she entered the room. She was a classic beauty with sable hair and big, beautiful green eyes. Cassandra always imaged her in a Rubens painting, frolicking in a garden.

"Your suspicions were correct, you are definitely pregnant. About four months along, I'd say." Cassandra wrapped her hands around her middle as the doctor spoke. "You're already starting to show, you really didn't think it was anything else, did you?"

Cassandra shrugged her shoulders. Yeah, she knew. She'd just been hoping for a miracle.

"Okay then. Am I to assume the father won't be involved and this wasn't necessarily a planned pregnancy? Maybe something you've been avoiding for a while?"

Cassandra snorted with derision. Since David wasn't living in the same city, she doubted he would be involved.

Felicia laid down her chart and took Cassandra's hands in her own. "Cassandra, this is me. We've known each other for the last three years, ever since you moved to Bayside. I didn't even think you were dating anyone. So what's going on?"

Cassandra just shook her head, knowing there was no way in hell she could ever explain this to anyone. "Nothing's going on and no, the father won't be involved."

Felicia pressed her lips together as if she wanted to say more but was holding back. "As your doctor, I feel I need to inform you you do have choices here. This is obviously an unplanned pregnancy. I can leave information for you or we can discuss your options."

"Wait a minute, are you talking about abortion?" Cassandra was surprised at her own shock. She never planned to become pregnant, and certainly not like this, with no father for the baby in sight, but hearing someone actually talk about terminating her pregnancy brought out her protective instincts.

"No, that's not going to happen. I'm keeping this baby. She's going to be all mine." Now that she'd actually said the words aloud, Cassandra realized she really believed them. She'd never let her crazed father get a hold of this child and she'd protect it with her dying breath.

"She?"

"Yes, I've decided to have a girl. You can make sure that happens, right?" Cassandra smiled at her own joke.

"Sorry, too late. It's already been decided. But by the twentieth week we should be able to find out for sure."

"I guess when it's all said and done, it doesn't really matter what the sex is. It's not as if I can send it back if it's a boy."

"So true." Felicia grinned. "I'm going to call for a nurse now and we're going to do an ultrasound."

"An ultrasound!" Cassandra's hand instinctively went to her stomach.

"Don't worry, Momma. It won't hurt your baby."

Cassandra wasn't so much worried about the ultrasound hurting the baby as she was of the doctor seeing something unusual on the screen. Wolf pregnancies weren't exactly covered in health class. "Is it necessary?"

"Necessary, no, but we usually do a baseline diagnostic at the beginning of the pregnancy."

"I'm not sure if I want to do one." In fact, Cassandra wasn't even sure if she was going to make any more doctor visits after today.

"Cassandra, I..." Felicia paused for a second, as if searching for the right thing to say. "You do understand whatever is said between us stays between us."

"Yes."

"And even if we didn't have doctor-patient confidentiality, I'd hope you know as your friend you can trust me."

"I do."

"Do you?" Felicia picked up the file she brought into the room with her. "So do you want to tell me why the pregnancy hormone wasn't the only thing we found in your bloodstream?"

Cassandra paled. "What else did you find?"

"You tell me." Felicia opened the file. "Why in the world would a woman who I personally fitted for a diaphragm less than six months ago, have a Clomid derivative in her system? I was under the impression you weren't trying to get pregnant."

"I wasn't. I don't even know what Clomid is. I met a guy and one thing led to another and here I am." Cassandra desperately tried to downplay the mention of fertility drugs, turning Felecia's attention to the matter at hand.

"Fine, don't tell me. I'll give you some names of obstetricians you can contact."

"What do you mean?"

"If you can't be honest with me, I can't treat you to the best of my abilities. It would be better if you found another doctor."

"I am being honest, Felecia. I don't know what is in my blood and I wasn't trying to get pregnant. But it happened and I'm here and I need a friend. I really do." Cassandra burst into tears.

"Shhh, it's okay. It's just the hormones screwing with you." Felecia wrapped her arms around Cassandra, offering the comfort she needed.

"Please don't dump me on another doctor. I don't think I could stand the rejection right now." Cassandra wiped at her face, knowing she probably looked atrocious. Her hormones must be messing with her since just a few minutes ago she was contemplating dumping the doctor.

"Okay, but you need to be honest with me during this whole pregnancy. I'm going to write you a prescription for some vitamins and I'll want to see you again in two weeks. And we will do an ultrasound then."

Cassandra nodded her head in agreement. Felecia left as Cassandra began to get dressed. Two weeks. She would have to decide what she was going to do by then. As she walked out of the building with prescription in hand, her cell phone rang.

Struggling to grab her phone, she frowned at the unknown number as she answered.

"Hello?"

"Hello, daughter dear. I hope the doctor confirmed my diagnosis." Franklin's words caused Cassandra to stop in her tracks and glance around at her surroundings. Although she didn't see anyone, he obviously had someone watching her.

"Why are you calling me?"

"To offer you congratulations of course. You surprised me, and I'm not often surprised."

"Oh yeah, how'd I do that?" Cassandra began walking quickly toward her car, wanting to get out of the open. She didn't like the feeling he could find her so easily.

"I figured you for a little rabbit who'd run away. But you didn't. Have you decided to embrace your destiny?"

Reaching her car, Cassandra struggled for a moment to open the door before she was finally able to gain entrance. Once inside, she locked the doors immediately.

"Listen to me and listen good. I'm not 'embracing my destiny' as you so aptly put it. In fact, I want nothing to do with you ever again. Leave me alone." Not waiting for his reply, Cassandra ended the call and turned off the phone.

Looking into the rearview mirror, Cassandra saw an overwrought woman staring back at her. She took a shaky breath, trying to regain her calm. She hadn't heard from her father since the night of the fire at Heath's estate when Franklin told her she was pregnant. Cassandra shuddered when she remembered the moment he revealed he'd been slipping her fertility pills.

That was the moment she knew for certain her father was insane. She had wanted to have a family so badly she initially did everything he'd asked of her. His stories of persecution by the Pack leader seemed legitimate until she discovered it was all based on lies. Unfortunately she didn't realize how far gone he was until that fateful night.

Placing her hand on the noticeable bulge of her stomach, Cassandra tried to imagine what was in store for this child. Even though she might have been ambivalent about getting pregnant, she knew now she would hold on to this child for all she was worth. And she'd do it without David or her father.

* * * * *

Jace jogged on the treadmill, his heart rate pumping as he tried to relieve the tension haunting him the entire day. A confrontation with Remy usually had a way of making his blood pump, but this morning's incident was still grating on his nerves even as the sun was going down. Her dismissal of his abilities and him in general stung like no other hurt.

Reaching down to increase the speed of the machine, Jace picked up his pace, running now, sweat dripping off his forehead. He'd long since removed his shirt, clothed only in socks, running shoes and low-slung jogging shorts. A shower was definitely going to be in order after this workout.

The ringing of the doorbell threw off his concentration and Jace stumbled for a moment before regaining his balance and slowly bringing the treadmill to a halt. Walking to the door, he swung open the heavy oak to reveal the source of his frustration staring him in the face.

"What do you want?" Jace wiped a towel over his face and down his body as he stared at Remy, unwilling to give even an inch.

"I came over to see if little Watcher Boy was okay after his temper tantrum today."

"You can be a real bitch, you know."

Remy pushed past him and walked into his living room. Shaking his head, Jace closed the door and followed her, wondering what her motivation was. She rarely did anything without a reason and he questioned whether Nico had ordered her over here to apologize. He certainly wasn't interested in accepting some half-assed forced contrition.

"Yeah well, she-wolves like me are usually wired that way."

"Don't try to make me feel guilty. You were out of line." He crossed his arms, mainly in an attempt to control his desire to take her over his lap and give her the spanking she was desperately in need of. "Did Nico send you?"

"I'm no one's lapdog."

"No, just a bitch." Instead of looking insulted, she grinned, as if she were pleased by his remark. "You know you're wired completely wrong."

"Why do you say that?" Remy dropped on his couch and propped her feet on his coffee table as bold as she pleased.

"First of all," Jace dropped his arms and walked over to her, shoving her feet off the table on to the floor, "you have no manners."

"Manners are just a façade people put on to hide who they really are." $\,$

"And you don't hide, do you?"

Remy held her arms out wide. "What you see is what you get."

"Yeah, right." Jace shook his head. He wondered if she really believed that bull.

"You say it like you don't believe me."

"I don't."

"Jace, you're going to hurt my feelings."

"Do you even have any?" His words were a low blow, and by the look that quickly flashed across Remy's face, she felt the hit.

Of course she quickly masked her emotions. "Surely you jest. Me, with feelings other than rage? It could never happen."

"That's what I thought."

"So are you going to offer me something to drink?" Remy asked a little too brightly.

"No."

"Why not?"

"Because it would imply you're a welcomed guest."

"Ouch." She laughed, her full lips spreading wide in a big grin. Remy's eyes sparkled with merriment and instead of standing and leaving as a decent person would have, she settled back as if making herself right at home.

Jace would never get her. If he was nice to her, she ignored him. If he ignored her, she seemed not to care. But when he gave her shit, she seemed to love it. She was twisted.

"So you've done your duty, made your appearance to make sure I'm all hunky-dory, so why aren't you leaving?"

"Damn, talk about manners. No drink, practically throwing me out the door ... you're the Emily Post reject." Remy bounced to her feet and headed toward the bar. Turning to glance over her shoulder she asked, "You want anything?"

Jace shook his head silently. He watched as she poured herself two fingers of his finest Scotch and drank it in one swallow. When she poured herself a second round, he decided enough was enough. Stepping behind her, he pulled the glass out of her hands and set it down.

"Enough with the delay tactics, spill it. What's the real reason you're here?"

"I told you, just stopping by to see if things were cool after this morning."

Fuck it. Picking up the glass, Jace downed the amber liquid as quickly as she had. "No, things aren't cool. I don't appreciate your attitude. In fact, it's detrimental to the Pack. Nico needs to take you in hand."

Remy laughed. "Nah, he has Kimberly for that. He likes me right where I am, guarding his back."

Jace grabbed her arm, pulling her in close. "Well, someone needs to take you in hand and maybe I should be the one to do it."

Instead of pulling away as he expected, Remy stared up at him silently, almost as if daring him to make a move so she could have the excuse to break his arm. "You think you can handle a she-wolf like me? Somehow I doubt it."

Jace took the dare without thought, pushing her back against the edge of the bar and leaning over her menacingly. "Don't push me."

"Awww, is little Watcher Boy gonna get mad?"

"You need your ass spanked."

Remy snorted derisively. "And you think you're the *man* to do it?" Her emphasis on "man" riled his nerves. She knew he didn't appreciate quips about his abilities as a Were kin and the words were too close to this morning's name-calling.

"That's it." Jace bent his head, capturing her mouth in a heated kiss as he tried to shut out her insults. His tongue dueled with hers as they both fought for dominance in the embrace. He wasn't willing to back down from this encounter. Although he'd lusted after Remy for years, always teasing and taunting her with sexual innuendo, they'd rarely touched, let alone ever kissed.

Pressing her body back against the bar, he let Remy feel the evidence of his desire. His cock was always semierect in her presence, but at times such as these, when she fired his blood, he became rock-hard at the thought of possessing her. Remy moaned into his mouth as he pressed against her, parting her legs slightly as if in acceptance of his body.

Breaking the kiss, Jace gasped for breath as Remy did the same. Her breasts heaved with the effort and Jace longed to see them bared, wanting to know the color and size of her nipples. Without thought, he reached out and began unfastening her shirt, slipping the buttons through the holes and slowly revealing her bare flesh to his gaze.

"What are you doing?" Remy's voice was low and husky, no longer taunting, it held a hint of wonder in her question.

"Exactly what I want to do." Jace pushed the blouse off her shoulders. He was shocked to realize instead of the utilitarian bra he expected to find, Remy was covered in pink lace. *Pink*. It was unbelievably girly and so unlike the *Venator* it made him smile. "Pink, Remy?"

Sweet hell, Remy had forgotten what she'd put on this morning. Of all the days to delve into her secret passion for lingerie, it had to be the day when she let Jace get to second base. And of course, like the gentleman he wasn't, he would have to comment.

Remy grabbed at the lapels of her khaki shirt and tried to close it but was stopped by Jace, who took her wrist in hand. "It's not pink. It was white and I washed it with something red."

"Right." Jace all but choked on his laughter. The bastard. "And let me guess. This isn't lace, it's really cotton and that one night, in a fit of boredom, you decided to make snowflakes out of your bra and took your scissors to it."

Eyes narrowed, Remy smacked his hand away. "Which is exactly what happened." "I think you're lying."

No, really. Remy gathered her shirt together so she could button it as she thought of all the different ways she was going to hurt him. "Well, it's just my word against yours."

"Is that the problem, she-wolf?" Jace once again took hold of her hands, but this time moved them down her shirt and behind her back. He gripped her hands together in one of his and pushed the shirt open again, exposing her breasts to his hungry gaze. "Are you afraid the boys will know Little Miss Big Bad is into girly things?"

At any time, Remy could have broken Jace's hold on her. Despite his strength, she had years of combat and martial arts training on him. With a single blow she could render him unconscious, even with her hands tied behind her back, and this was all without turning into her wolf form. Yet she stayed there, passive in his grip.

For the life of her, she couldn't figure out why. Despite that, she couldn't help egging him on. "I'm not afraid of anything, especially not you."

"I'm willing to bet underneath these jeans, you're wearing a *pretty* little pink scrap of lace that matches this bra."

"I am not." She so was.

"No?" Jace's brushed his fingers teasingly against her annoyingly erect nipples before sauntering down her stomach where they came to a rest on the waist of her jeans. "Do you want to bet on it?"

"As if you'd have something I want."

Jace cocked a brow, his lip spreading in a wide grin. "Oh, I think I do."

Now there was a point when cocky went from being cute to downright annoying and he was toeing the line. "Do you think you'll be the first man who'll say they've been to heaven?"

His smile disappeared and his grip tightened, causing her back to arch and push her breasts out. "No, but I think I'll be the first man who can say they've taken you to heaven."

Good Lord, the man could talk dirty. For the first time in her life, Remy felt lightheaded and it had nothing to do with the loss of blood. "You think you're God's gift or something?"

"No, I think I'm yours." Jace ran his fingers softly back and forth against the waistband of her jeans. The gentle teasing touch was a promise of more to come. Her stomach was taut and she felt almost afraid to breath. Afraid if she moved too quickly, she would lose out on discovering if Jace was as good as she hoped he was.

Remy licked her lips nervously as she stared back at him. She was more aroused by his mere words than she had ever been in her entire life. "Don't let the pink bra fool you, Jace. I'm a warrior first, a woman second."

"I don't think you know how to be a woman." Jace stopped his teasing caress and moved his fingers to the button of her jeans.

"And I guess you think you're the man for the job."

The button popped open.

"No." Her zipper slid down. "I think I'm the Were for the job."

And Jace's hand slid into the front of her lacy, feminine, pink panties and cupped her sopping-wet pussy. "Don't let the lack of fur fool you, she-wolf. I'm all the Wolf you'll need."

"If you think this proves you've taken me in hand, think again."

"I don't think it proves anything. Yet."

Remy gasped as Jace's fingers slid along her folds, finding her opening without hesitation. He teased her for a moment before slipping his fingers inside, his blunt digits making her rise on her toes for a moment at the thrust. His thumb brushed lightly over her clit and Remy bit her lip at the movement.

She didn't want to react, didn't want to let him know just how much his words and touch were affecting her. But it was as if she had lost all her bravado when he first kissed her and she was just a woman, longing to be taken by her man. Even when she and Kellen had been lovers, Remy had fantasized about Jace. She sensed he had a dark side, one she was eager to explore. But she'd always held him off until now. Her body was betraying her at every turn, pushing back against his questing hand, begging for more of his touch.

"I think you like me fingering your wet little pussy. In fact, I bet you'd spread your legs wide for me if I asked."

Remy whimpered as at his words, knowing he was right. She wanted Jace and maybe if they fucked tonight, she could finally get him out of her mind.

"Answer me. Would you let me fuck you?" Jace rubbed his thumb hard against her clit as he spoke, causing her to clutch at his shoulders or lose her balance.

"Yes."

Suddenly Jace pulled his hands from her jeans, stepping away from her. "Go home, *Venator*. You've done your good deed for the day."

Remy blinked at him in shock. He was rejecting her? "Are you fucking mad?"

"No, I'm not fucking anything at all."

Barely able to control herself, she quickly buttoned her shirt and fastened her jeans. Remy was so upset she could barely see straight. "That was..." There weren't words enough to describe how pissed off she was. "I can't believe I even allowed you to kiss me."

"Yeah, sullying yourself with a mere human, Remy." Jace's words were as cold as hers had been earlier in the day. "What ever would the boys think?"

Remy flushed. "That's not what I meant."

"Right." Jace wiped his wet hand on his shorts, as if her essence disgusted him. "You let yourself in. You can let yourself out."

With that, Jace turned and left the living room, leaving Remy staring at his retreating back.

Chapter Three

Today was one of those days Jace wished he didn't have such a close-knit family. In fact, when the phone rang, interrupting the precious few hours of sleep he'd finally been able to achieve, he was wishing he was an orphan.

"Someone better be dead." Jace was barely able to hold the phone up as he spoke, his exhaustion wearing him out. The fact he knew it was his family before he even answered the phone spoke volumes. His house phone was only reserved for family, everyone else called his cell.

"Hey, big brother, just wanted to remind you I'll be by in an hour to pick you up." The bubbly voice of his sister Isabelle caused Jace to roll over in bed, his hand shading his eyes from the early morning light.

"Huh?"

"You didn't forget about the company picnic did you?"

In fact, he *had* forgotten about the annual Pack barbeque at the Sanctuary, advertised as the "company picnic" in order to appear more human to their neighbors. Of course Jace couldn't really be blamed for his forgetfulness. He was barely getting three hours of sleep a night and he had to wonder if the fates were laughing at him. Ever since the visit from Remy, his dreams about the mysterious blonde had increased exponentially, to the point where Jace wondered if it was cosmic payback for him walking away from the bratty she-wolf.

"Jace, you still there?"

"Yeah, sorry. I'll be ready."

"Okay, see you in an hour."

For the life of him, Jace couldn't recall why he'd agree to ride with Isabelle. She was a pest. A menace behind the wheel and she had shitty taste in music. Yet because she asked, he agreed. No one in the family could say no to her. It was a curse, and to her a blessing.

Jace rolled over, wishing he could ignore his family and attempt sleep. Realistically he knew it was impossible. Not only would his family never let him avoid Pack obligations, but the chance of him actually getting to sleep without the dreams was little to none.

"My life sucks," he thundered, giving in to the fit he so desperately wanted to throw.

He was used to having clairvoyant dreams but never had they occurred so often and been so vivid. It was getting to the point Jace was ready to start looking for the mysterious woman himself, just so he could stop dreaming about her.

Jace dragged the pillow over his head in the process, but it was no barrier against his phone, which began to ring again. After the sixth ring, Jace rolled over again and grabbed the phone. "Isabelle," he growled.

"Get up."
"I am up."

"Liar," she teased before hanging up, much to his annoyance. She knew him too well. And just as Isabelle knew he was still in bed, Jace knew she would keep calling until he got out of it. With a ragged curse, Jace fought his way from beneath the blue tangled sheets and stomped all the way into the bathroom.

He might have to be up, but it didn't mean he had to be happy about it.

An hour and a half later, after much grumbling and teasing on his sister's part, they arrived at the Sanctuary. Today's picnic was a ground-breaking event. It would be the first time the Wolves and Coyotes had joined together for anything other than to kill one another. Although from the legendary way the two Packs had of dealing with one another, a murder or two might still occur.

The weather this afternoon was sunny, an absolutely gorgeous summer day. It was too bad Jace wasn't in a better mood to enjoy his surroundings. He had a pounding headache and the annual barbeque wasn't one of his favorite events. Besides the fact he was exhausted, he couldn't participate in the evening runs like the other Weres. It was just one more example of how he was different.

"Come on, Jace, you've been in a sucky mood since I called this morning. Why won't you tell me what's up?"

At twenty, Isabelle had been shielded from a lot of the ugliness of Pack politics. She'd never experienced the horrors of the war, being one of the first few young born after the truce was called. Jace wasn't willing to allow her to give up her innocence just yet. With her mop of curly blonde hair and twinkling blue eyes, he wanted Belle to be the same fun-loving *lupa* she'd always been, if only for a little while longer.

"It's nothing, Belle, really. Why don't you find Mom and Dad while I get something to drink?" Isabelle nodded in resignation before heading across the wide expansion of grass while Jace headed for the bar. He knew alcohol would only increase his fatigue so he helped himself to a cold soda, hoping the caffeine would wake him up.

With his sunglasses planted firmly over his eyes, Jace wove his way through the crowded grounds, looking for some place to rest. It was almost too easy to pick out the different Packs from one another. Wolves and Coyotes had a different scent or so Jace had been told. The gift of differentiating aroma wasn't one he could boast. But he did have keen vision, although anyone with any sight whatsoever would be able to pick out the almost Swedish-like blond men and women of the Coyotes' *Morbauch* Pack intermingled with the cultural clash of the Wolves *Brachyurus* Pack.

Everyone was still basically sitting with their own clan, but it wasn't a segregated meet. It was a slow step in the right direction. Taking on an enemy together tended to unite people.

After bypassing several people who shouted out invites for him to join their table, Jace made his way to a quiet area at the fringe of the forest and sat in the warm grass. The land called to him, as it always had. And just like his brethren, Jace longed to be one with nature. He loved the feel of the air on his skin and the earth under his feet. The only difference was he couldn't embrace it as they did, he could only appreciate it.

Eyes closed, Jace leaned against the tree trunk hoping to get a few more minutes of sleep or at the very least some peace and quiet. But serenity, like the rest, was not forthcoming.

"I've been *instructed* to invite you over to our table." Remy's voice was filled with as much anger as it had been three nights ago.

Good.

The temptation to egg her on further was just too damn good to resist. "Well, you can trot back over to your owner and tell him thanks but no thanks."

"Fine." Jace opened his eyes in time to see Remy stomp away from him but stop only a few feet away. In anger, she looked damn good, especially from the back. Her long, lean brown legs were on display today, thanks to the denim shorts she was wearing like a second skin. Jace was willing to bet beneath those tight-fitting shorts she was wearing another pair of lacy goodness. His cock stirred at the thought, but before he could let his mind wonder further, Remy cursed aloud.

Fists clenched, she abruptly turned back around and faced him like the proud, beautiful woman she was. "You have to come with me."

"Have to?" Jace crossed his arms over his chest and raised a brow mockingly. "Remy, sweet Remy, I don't have to do anything."

"Nico commanded you..."

"Nico doesn't command me to do dick, she-wolf. You're his lackey. Not I."

"Oh, you think so, do you?" Remy's head snapped back and her eyes narrowed menacingly.

"I know so."

"Think again, Watcher Boy." Now there was the sassy woman he adored. Jace was still sore about her nasty attitude from the other day and he was just asshole enough to keep her in whatever trouble she'd gotten into with Nico.

"No need."

The green T-shirt she wore raised a tad as she placed her hands on her hips, displaying a quick flash of chocolate skin to his hungry gaze. But just as quickly as it popped into view, it was gone again.

Damn.

"Why do you have to be so obstinate?" The frustration was obvious in her tone and the look on her face. He wondered how long he could push her before she either exploded or gave up. He bet she'd explode before giving up since no one could accuse Remy of quitting a fight.

"No reason." Jace smiled and bent his head back, closing his eyes again. It was a strategic move since he was leaving himself essentially blind to an angry, seething woman. He had left her on the brink, after all. Nothing like a woman scorned and all that bullshit.

"You're purposely trying to make me look bad and I don't appreciate it."

Jace opened one eye briefly to see Remy standing right over him, hands on hips, jaw clenched. He wished he could snake his hands into those tight jean shorts to see if her pussy was as wet as it had been the other night. She seemed to get off on confrontation.

"No, I'm not. You do well enough on your own. Not that I owe you an explanation or anything, but I'm here with my family. So run along, lapdoggy."

Jace could practically see her nose flaring at his insults.

"If you think you can get away with—"

"Hey, Jace." Isabelle came running behind Remy, cutting off her tirade in midstream. "I found Mom and Dad, are you ready to eat?"

Jace stretched and stood, extremely pleased with himself. Remy looked dumbstruck as she realized he'd been telling the truth and his refusal had nothing to do with her. Walking around Remy, Jace slung an arm over Isabelle's shoulders. "Tell your boss I'll stop by for an audience later."

As he walked away, Jace could practically feel Remy's eyes burning into his back. He knew he'd have to smooth things over with Nico later, but it felt damn good to give Remy a hard time. Maybe he got off on the confrontation as much as she did.

"Jace, why do I feel like an excuse?"

Damn, his sister was more perceptive than he realized. "No reason, brat. The *Venator* wanted me to play at the royal table, but I'd rather hang out with you and the folks."

"Yeah, right. I may be young but I'm not as dumb as you assume." Isabelle shrugged off his arm and stomped away toward their parents. *Oh goodie, now I get to explain why I pissed off baby sister*. Today was turning into a real treat.

"Jace McClellan, come give your mother a hug." Rayne McClellan pulled him into her arms, hugging him tightly before releasing him and stepping back for a moment. "My God, you look terrible."

"Thanks, Mom, love you too." Jace smiled sardonically.

"I'm serious, young man. Webster," Rayne turned toward her husband, "take a look at this boy and tell me I'm wrong."

"Of course you're not wrong." Webster McClellan came over and kissed his wife briefly. Reaching out, he hugged his son before stepping back to observe him. "She's right, you know. You look like hell." "I knew something was wrong when I picked him up, but he refuses to say anything. Daddy, make him tell you what's wrong." Isabelle had always been Daddy's little girl and Jace knew he was about to be interrogated by the elder McClellan.

Pulling Jace away from the women, Webster dragged him over to the barbeque. "I've seen the same look before on my grandfather's face. Is it the visions?"

Jace nodded shortly. "Yeah, I've had a recurring one I just can't figure out." Jace looked across the open field as he spoke and saw Remy standing at attention near Nico and the *Elitario* but staring across at him. Webster noticed Jace's look and smiled.

"Maybe it's not just the visions keeping you up at night."

"I have no idea what you're talking about."

Webster raised his brows. "Yeah, right."

Across the field, Remy could see Jace speaking with his father. If there hadn't been so many people here today, she might have even been able to hear what they were discussing. She noticed he looked up once and stared across at her, but since then, he'd been completely involved with his family. There was no reason she should even care or notice what he did, but of course it didn't stop her.

Ever since Jace had unceremoniously told her to leave his house, she'd been supersensitive to any thought of him. Although anger was the one usually topping her list, lust was a close second. He had gotten her to the point of letting down her guard and she'd never forgive him for rejecting her. On the other hand, if she could somehow tie him down and have her way with him, she'd be willing to try to fuck him out of her system.

"You know, you could sit if you wanted. The daggers would be just as sharp."

Bewildered, Remy looked down at Nico. He was her *Benandanti*, Alpha, best friend, all rolled into one. But it still didn't mean she understood him. They had known each other since they were seven when she had been brought to the Pack by Franklin Russell after her parents perished in a car accident. After their death, the Pack had become her whole world. And Nico her constant companion. She would give her life for him, even though there were times when she was tempted to take his own herself.

"What are you talking about?"

Nico gestured casually toward Jace and his family. "I think you know what I mean."

"If I did," she growled, "I wouldn't have asked, now would I?"

"I don't know. You would if you were trying to play dumb."

"So while mine is an act, yours is the real deal." Remy was one of the few people who could get away with talking to Nico so boldly.

Instead of becoming upset, Nico grinned. He, like the *Elitario*, was used to her bad attitude. In fact, it seemed as if they all encouraged it. They were one big happy

dysfunctional family with Remy in the role as younger bratty sister and the rest of them as her overprotective knucklehead brothers.

Derek, who was sitting next to Kimberly, leaned forward so he was in Remy's line of sight. "Did you just call our *Benandanti* dumb?"

Remy refused to answer. She stewed instead, which of course was the wrong thing to do because it just left her open as an easy target.

"Of course she didn't," Harrison jumped on the bandwagon. "Her reply was a highly intelligent version of 'I'm rubber you're glue'. But because you yourself, kind sir, are dumb, you missed it altogether."

"Me, dumb?" Derek placed his hand to his chest as if he were offended. "I'm hardly that, ol' chap, yet even if it were the case, I'm still pretty. And pretty beats dumb hands down."

"You'd have to be dumb to think so," Harrison fired back with a grin.

"Well, to quote you, kind sir, I'm rubber you're glue."

"And I'm annoyed," Remy interrupted. They were like big kids. Big, furry, chase-after-their-own-tails kids. "Somebody tell me this."

"This." Harrison and Derek chimed in at the same time, much to her annoyance and everyone else's amusement. She was going to kill them all. Then make matching rugs for in front of her fireplace.

"Why does Watcher Boy get to ignore a direct order?"

"It wasn't an order," Nico stated, and not for the first time. "I simply asked you to invite him over to our table."

Was he kidding? "You didn't ask."

"I did."

"Please, you don't know how to ask. You order."

Nico opened his mouth to disagree but was stopped by Kimberly, who placed her hand on his arm to garner his attention. "I do feel the need to chime in here. Remy is right. You don't ask for anything. You take. You demand. You instruct, but you don't ask."

Frowning, Nico glanced at his wife of three months. "You make me sound like a tyrant."

"Then my work here is done." Kimberly sat back in her seat and grinned.

The more Remy learned about Kimberly, the more she liked her. When she first met Nico's mate, the brunette Were was everything Remy herself was not. Remy initially assumed Kimberly hadn't experienced much hardship in life as evidenced by her shy demeanor. Of course looks could be deceiving and Kimberly soon proved herself an admirable mate for the *Benandanti*. The soft-spoken Were wasn't as delicate as she first appeared, and she, like Remy, didn't take Nico's shit. It was a quality Remy greatly admired.

"Be that as it may, it was just an offer. Who wouldn't want to sit with their family?"

That was a question Remy didn't have an answer for. She hadn't been privileged enough to be reared with one. The little she did remember of her own parents wasn't enough to fill a thimble. And Franklin, well, no one could ever accuse the older Were of being overly paternal. He had provided a roof over her head. He clothed her, fed her and taught her about loyalty to the Pack, but it ended there.

Remy respected him greatly, but to be honest, she didn't know jack about him. As usual, when talk about family came up, Remy's eyes sought out Derek, who sent her a little wink. He and Kellen both grew up in dysfunctional and sometimes in parentless homes as well, and only they knew the emptiness she felt.

"You have met my family, haven't you?" Jackson asked dryly, moving behind Remy. He had a plate stacked high with food and a telltale stain on his shirt. "I'd rather eat with the Coyotes."

"Then isn't it a blessing I came when I did," replied Rachel Santana, the *Benandanti* of the *Morbauch* Pack, as she strolled to the table. The petite blonde wore a look of amusement on her pixie-like face, which was a vast contrast to the look of "oh shit" creeping up on Jackson's.

"I didn't mean any disrespect," he muttered, shamefaced.

"Of course not." Rachel rounded the table with two beefy *Rahu* at her heels and took her place of honor to next to Nico. It was the seat Remy would have normally occupied if it weren't for the fledgling merger taking place.

But with the way the two Packs still sat not intermingling with one another, she didn't see the blending of their happy little families taking place any time soon.

Rachel daintily picked up her napkin and laid it in her lap. She was a tiny little thing, and it never ceased to amaze Remy how a woman apparently so delicate ruled a clan as fierce and bloody as the *Morbauchs*. There was a story there, she was sure, but Remy hadn't had the opportunity to delve into it.

Rachel nodded to her two *Rahu*. "Roman, Doc, please don't feel the need to hover. Go help yourself to some food." The two men studied one another briefly and then nodded, some sort of silent communication passing between them. One stood stationed at Rachel's side while the other wandered over to the food tables.

Rachel glanced around the gathering as she took a ladylike sip of her water. "Everything appears to be flowing smoothly."

"If by smoothly you mean at least no one's died yet, I couldn't agree more." Nico's dry tone brought a quick smile to the Coyote's face.

"That's exactly what I meant."

"It will take time for everyone to warm up to one another," Kimberly noted.

"For the record, I'm going to do my best to warm up as many of your females as possible," Derek offered solemnly to the sedate group.

"Your prowess precedes you, *Rahu*," one of Rachel's *Rahu* said. The massive man's voice was as deep as his muscles were large. Remy didn't know they made Ken dolls so bulky. "Your legend has spread even to our clan."

"Did you warn the women?" Derek asked, his over-inflated ego on high alert.

"No," Rachel said warily. "We warned the men."

Rachel's comments broke the stiff mood. Laughing, Remy finally joined the rest of them for dinner, content to let sleeping Weres lie, if only for the moment. Sitting next to Kellen, she realized how quiet he'd been through the entire exchange. Nudging him, she jerked her head, silently asking what was up.

"I don't like how Jace subverts authority any more than you do. He shows little respect for our *Benandanti* and none to you. It shouldn't be allowed."

She basically agreed disrespect shouldn't be overlooked, but she knew only too well where some of Jace's resentment came from. Their confrontations had him as heated as her and she still believed his refusal, although cloaked under the guise of family togetherness, had something to do with their attraction to one another. Unfortunately Remy worried Kellen was taking her side for one reason and one reason only, because he was interested in renewing their relationship. And it was something long dead as far as she was concerned.

"It's not our call." Remy's defense of Jace had Kellen frowning slightly.

"Remington."

Remy looked up as Nico called her by her full name. "Yes, my lord and master?"

"Kimberly has convinced me I need to be a tad more flexible. Instead of waiting for Jace to come to us, why don't we visit him and his family?"

"I don't think she meant the Pack Benandanti should be groveling to the Rakshasa."

Nico chuckled, not allowing himself to be drawn into her verbal tennis match. "Come on, *Venator*. Let's go."

Remy sighed but stood, ready to guard Nico, no matter what foolish ideas he had.

"If you'll excuse us, Rachel."

"But of course," she replied with a nod fit for a queen.

Kimberly decided to join them and the three Weres walked across the field, stopping to talk to various groups along the way. Remy noted Nico took extra pains to make sure he talked to as many *Morbauch* as *Brachyurus* groups. He was the ultimate diplomat.

Eventually they made their way to the table where the McClellan family was sitting. Rayne and Webster immediately jumped to their feet to welcome Nico into their midst. At least Jace's parents realized the importance of the *Benandanti*. As Nico and Kimberly spoke to the elder McClellans, Remy walked over to where Jace was sitting.

She couldn't help it. She had to annoy him. "What are you doing?"

Looking up, Jace frowned as her presence cast a shadow over him. "Trigonometry, now move, you're in my light."

Remy frowned back and then looked over his shoulder to see what he was doing. With a pencil in hand, Jace was furiously sketching something on a napkin, but to her eyes, it looked no better than a faceless blob.

"That's not very good."

"Thanks."

Isabelle, who was sitting next to Jace, stood and placed her hand on his shoulder. "I think it looks just fine."

The venom in her tone surprised and amused Remy. She was standing up for her brother. How cute. "The pup has teeth."

Jace paused and looked over at Remy, pride for his sister beaming from his face. "She might be tiny but she's wiry."

"I'll keep it in mind."

"Isabelle, come here for a moment please." At her mother's call, Isabelle left Jace's side, but not before letting loose a low growl.

Grinning, Remy watched her leave then turned to Jace, who was concentrating once more on his drawing. "I like her."

"I don't think she likes you."

"Yeah, that's why I like her."

Jace snorted. "Of course it is."

Unable to resist, Remy peered over his shoulder once more and stared at the drawing. Something about it just wasn't right. Jace was moving too fast. He was messing it up. Remy wasn't sure how she knew, she just knew it to be true and it was bugging the shit out of her.

When Jace went to add another line, Remy knew she had to stop him. "No, like this."

Without thought she reached down and slowed his hand. Instead of immediately berating her for the interruption as she expected, Jace allowed her hand to guide his to slower and more deliberate motions. An electric-like surge seemed to pull them together until she was leaning against his back with her hand intertwined with his.

Everything around them ceased to exist for Remy. She didn't know how long they stood there together, one focused force of energy, but ever-so gradually a face began to emerge under their dual efforts. Before long the drawing was completed and the force dissipated. She could breathe again. Although no major work of art, Remy could definitely tell it was a woman.

"She's beautiful." Even though it pained her to admit it, the words slipped out before she could censor them. Remy was certain this was the mystery blonde in Jace's dreams. If she hadn't been jealous before—and she hadn't, she tried to convince herself—she certainly would have been after seeing this picture.

Why would Jace be interested in a soldier when he could have a woman?

"No more than any other." Jace ran a shaky hand through his hair and Remy realized she still covered his other hand with her own. Hastily she went to draw back, but she wasn't fast enough and Jace caught her hand, pulling her down beside him. "Thank you. I'm not sure what you did, but...now we have a picture to find her."

Remy wasn't sure what she had done either. She only knew she had felt an urge too strong to deny. The feeling scared her as no other. It was more than just the sexual connection she'd felt with Jace in the past.

"What's going on over here?" Nico walked to the table as Remy pulled back from Jace. She felt out of her element. Instead of analyzing her feelings, she stepped back into her familiar role. Standing, she moved to Nico's right flank. Jace cocked an eyebrow at her retreat and she knew if Nico hadn't been there, he would definitely have had something to say.

"I think I've been able to capture the face of the woman in my vision. If we can reproduce these for the Pack, we'll have a better chance of finding her."

Kimberly joined her husband, wrapping an arm around his waist. "Hi, Jace." Reaching down she picked up the napkin. "Hey, do you know Cassandra?"

"What did you say?" Nico pulled the napkin from her hands, closely examining the picture. Remy wasn't sure who Cassandra was, but it was obvious Nico did. And although pleased, he also looked confused.

"Okay, I'll ask. Who's Cassandra?" Remy queried.

"My boss," Kimberly replied.

Chapter Four

The howling of the Weres who had changed to wolves echoed across the fields. Jace leaned against the glass, watching the various members of the Pack change into their wolf forms and head out in small groups. This was the one part of the annual gettogether he always avoided like the plague. Nevertheless, he really didn't want to be where he was either.

Inside Nico's office was a grim group, unable to take pleasure in the freedom of the run the rest of the Pack enjoyed. After Kimberly revealed the identity of Jace's mystery dream blonde, Nico had immediately called his *Elitario* together for a meeting. Some of the members of the *Maggiore* noticed the flurry of activity but none were invited to join the meeting.

Jace figured Nico wanted to keep the news with those he trusted at this point rather than risk a leak to the *Maggiore*, who still battled the *Benandanti* on every decision he made for the Pack. No one knew exactly what this development would mean. How a human, Kimberly's boss no less, could be such an integral part of Pack politics was beyond Jace, but he was sure he was going to learn more before the night was out.

"Zingaro, did you know Cassandra was pregnant?"

"Honestly, Nico, I had no idea. Although now that I think about it, she looks like she's put on a few pounds. But I didn't even know she was seeing anyone, so I never would have suspected."

"I still don't see how this relates to the Pack. Was there nothing else in your dream that could help us?"

"I've told you everything." Well, everything not including Remy. He didn't want to include her part in this mystery until it made more sense to him. Jace ran a weary hand over his face. He wondered if his dreams would change tonight now that he knew the identity of the woman or if he would continue to receive the same obscure messages.

"Kellen, Derek, I want you two on Cassandra day and night. Start at Lewis and Sinclair and find out where she lives. Then go there and find out every other damn thing about her," Nico ordered. "Watch her, but don't let her know you're there."

The two Rahu nodded and left the room.

"We're not going to just go talk to her?" Harrison questioned.

"No, not yet. I'd like to know more about what her connection is before we approach her. This is damn coincidental the woman in Jace's dream is Kimberly's boss. I don't believe in coincidence. There's more going on here than meets the eye. And I'd like to know what it is before we confront her. I hate being in the dark."

"I'd love to help you, Nico, but as I've explained to your *Venator* on numerous occasions, I can't turn on the premonition pop-up feature to explain what the hell is going on." Jace knew the frustration he was feeling came across loud and clear, but it was getting damn tiring trying to explain this over and over again.

"I'm still trying to catch up here, but how did we figure out who this woman is?" Jackson joined the meeting late and hadn't seen the drawing.

Everyone looked over at Jace, who handed him the napkin and explained how Kimberly recognized Cassandra from the drawing.

As he returned the sketch to Jace, Jackson asked, "So why didn't you just draw her right away?"

"I tried, but I wasn't having much luck. Not until..." Jace suddenly stopped and turned to look at Remy, who surprisingly was doing her best to fade into the background.

"Until what?"

"Until Remy came over to help and suddenly it was as if I were inspired."

Nico turned a thoughtful gaze to Remy, who by now looked fighting mad. Hands on her hips, she stalked over to Jace. "You just *had* to open your big mouth, didn't you?"

Hands raised, Jace shook his head. "I'm only telling the truth. You saw my previous attempts, they all sucked."

Jackson cleared his throat loudly, drawing everyone's attention toward him. "I think I might have an answer to what plagues you all."

Remy turned eyes of fury toward the speaking Were. "Share then, why don't you."

In a move averse for the quiet man, Jackson pushed his glasses back up the bridge of his nose with his middle finger, in essence giving Remy the bird. "As I was saying, there are stories in the histories of *aiutante*, those who are conduits for the *Rakshasa*."

"I've never heard anything about an *aiutante*." Jace thought if anyone would know, it would be him. His family history was rife with *Rakshasa*.

"You're clueless, imagine that." For once, Remy's snide comments about his calling didn't annoy him. In fact, it was the polar opposite. If he were to understand correctly, she would be playing a small role with his gift from now on. Vengeance had never been so sweet.

"This is ancient Were history we're talking. Nothing in the last two or three hundred years." As the Pack historian, Jackson had knowledge most of them didn't.

"I'm not any conduit. It was a fluke, okay?" Remy actually looked flustered, a state Jace had never seen her in. The perverse side of him loved it.

"I just said I don't believe in coincidence. This may mean something and we need to explore it." Nico sat for a moment in thought as the rest of the room stared back and forth between Jace and Remy. Jace had no idea if Remy was really an *aiutante*, but he was certainly enjoying her discomfort.

"Jace, Remy, I want you two to spend some time together to explore this idea of Jackson's. Let's see if Remy's presence helps your vision."

"No fucking way." Remy's outburst was followed by complete silence. Nico's eyes flared menacingly for a moment and Kimberly's soothing touch was the only thing that finally seemed to calm him.

"What. Did. You. Say?" The air in the room crinkled with tension and electricity. Even Jace, who was unable to turn, could feel the presence of the Wolf in the room. The animal they all kept just below the surface was a highly dangerous beast, one which needed little provocation to burst free. And with all the other wolves baying in the distance, it was only a matter of time before everyone else gave in to their Wolf.

"I'm sorry, *Benandanti*. Forgive me. I...I spoke without thinking." No one had ever seen Remy back down, but then no one had ever seen her respond to Nico in such a defiant way either.

"You'll go with Jace and you'll like it. Now, leave before I do something I regret." Nico turned from the group, staring out his observation window.

Remy's eyebrows rose and Jace could all but swear he could smell the blood from the wound in her tongue she made to stop from speaking out. Everyone knew there was no one Remy respected or followed more loyally than Nico, but it didn't mean she didn't have a mind of her own.

Hell, even to him, the way Nico had spoken to her was a challenge, and he waited to see what she would do. To his surprise and maybe a bit to his disappointment, Remy didn't argue.

"Yes, Benandanti." Remy's words may have been amicable but the way she uttered them hadn't been. She made it very clear she would do what he wanted, but she didn't like it.

Without another word, Remy turned on her heels and stormed out of the room, her gait angry and bitter. When her steps could no longer be heard, Nico turned back around and faced the rest of the group. His face was a mask of indifference, but his eyes were a different tale.

Jace could see it bothered him to have to address Remy in such a manner, but in this he wouldn't allow friendship to intercede with what he considered his duty. Jace respected his decision and despised it all at the same time.

"Do you really expect me to get anything accomplished now?"

"I expect you to do your job and for Remy to do hers." Nico's menacing stare didn't have the same effect on Jace it apparently had on Remy.

Jace wasn't his subordinate. He was a *Rakshasa* and he didn't answer to anyone, not even the *Benandanti*. Nico needed Jace a hell of a lot more than Jace needed him. "I'll do my job, but don't you make it any more difficult than it needs to be."

"And pray tell, how am I making it more difficult?"

"If Remy is my *aiutante*, then I'm going to need her to be cooperative, not there by duty."

"At least she'd be there."

Jace shook his head in wonderment. Was Nico really so dense? "When it comes to my job, let me do it my way. I'll handle Remy."

Nico laughed. "Do you really think you can?"

"I think I'm the only one who can." His comment halted Nico's amusement.

Good. Let him howl on that.

On the way over to his house, Jace continuously checked his rearview mirror. He wasn't sure if he was checking to make sure Remy was still there or to make sure she didn't speed up and ram him off the road. When he reached the parking lot at the Sanctuary she'd already been in her car, waiting patiently for him like a good soldier.

Compliant Remy was just as annoying as bitch Remy. But he preferred the latter. At least then Jace knew she was acting off emotions, being herself, as irritating as it was at times. When she turned into Robo Remy, he had to resist the urge to grab her by the shoulders and shake her until the light appeared in her eyes once more.

She was a warrior, sure, but she was also a woman.

His woman.

Once they reached his house, she meekly followed him up the steps to his porch and inside, all without uttering a word. Before he had the chance to turn on the lights, she made her way into his living room where she sat stonily on his couch and stared at him. Ever the predator, her dark eyes peered at him in the dark, following his every step as he made his way in after her.

Grimly, Jace flipped the switch, filling the room with light. He was tired of her good-solider routine. "You can leave if you want."

"The hell I can."

"Go ahead, say it."

"Say what?"

"Thanks to me, right? You blame me for this."

"I blame no one. I'm here to do my duty."

"I'm not your goddamn duty," Jace thundered. "In fact, get out."

"No." Remy stood and slowly walked toward him. "Nico told me-"

"Fuck Nico."

"Don't speak of him in such a disrespectful way."

The hell he wouldn't. Jace was sick and tired of Remy fighting a never-ending war. There would always be leaders. There would always be crazy Weres fighting for control. But it didn't make any sense to him why she had to be entangled in their war. "And don't you speak of him that way to me."

"What way?"

"As if he's some fucking god. He's just the *Benandanti*. Not some infallible being. The way you follow him around sickens me."

He shoots, he scores. Remy's eyes roared to life as she stopped in front of him. His comments had obviously pissed her off.

Good.

"Why is that?"

"Because you're better than that. Better than all of them."

Remy's eyes widened a bit, as if she were shocked by his words. "I'm just a solider, Jace."

"You're more than just a soldier."

"Nico is my Alpha, my Benandanti."

"Nico isn't here."

"What do you want from me?" Her eyes betrayed her uncertainty. For once his shewolf was thrown off balance.

Jace pulled Remy into him, pressing her flush against his body. "I just want you."

Remy's emotions were in a tailspin and her mind was going ninety miles an hour. She felt as if she were being pulled in two different directions at once, and instead of making a decision, she just wanted to run away and hide. Which really pissed her off since she was no coward.

Nico was her *Benandanti*, and although they'd been friends for years and she could question him at times, she always ultimately deferred to his wishes. At the same time, Jace was asking her to forget about being a soldier. And as much as she wanted to, it wasn't in her. She just couldn't shut off that part of her. On the other hand, she could take what was being offered now and worry about the consequences some other time.

Wrapping her arms around Jace's neck, Remy pressed herself into his embrace. "I want you too, but—"

"I'm not going to throw you out tonight."

She'd like to see him try. "Ah, no, that wasn't what I was thinking, but thanks for the reassurance."

"So why the 'but'?" Jace smoothed his hands down her back, distracting her thoughts. His hands were no different than they'd always been, but she could almost swear she felt an energy coming from him.

Where to start? Remy had never been one to mince words before, especially not with Jace, so there seemed no point in starting now.

"You want to fuck, don't you?"

Jace's lips twitched as he fought back a smile. "It would be agreeable to me, yes." *Damn*. "We can't."

Jace placed his hand on her ass and pushed her pelvis into his. The evidence of his ability to prove her wrong was hard to ignore. "Trust me, she-wolf, it won't be a problem at all."

"Why don't I just suck your cock and you go down on me?" Remy couldn't believe herself sometimes. She usually had a better filter, but there were times when the words in her brain made it out of her mouth with no thought process in between.

"Do you mean as well or instead?"

"Instead."

"Are you kidding?"

Remy shook her head in lieu of answering. Saying it once was bad enough.

Jace stepped back, although he didn't completely release her. "I couldn't have just heard what I thought I did."

Since she didn't have a time machine handy and she couldn't erase his memory, Remy decided to try to brazen it out. "I just thought it would be better, to you know..." Her words trailed off miserably.

"No, I don't know. Why don't you explain it to me?"

Remy pulled away from him and began pacing across the living room. She should have gone for a run before she came over. Something to calm her down. Her Wolf was antsy. She could feel it beneath her skin, waiting to come out.

She wasn't in heat, but she damn near felt as if she were. Her skin felt too tight, her senses on overload. It was fucking crazy.

Remy had been perfectly fine this afternoon until she'd made the mistake of touching Jace as he was drawing. The connection they'd forged while completing the picture hadn't dissipated. She felt drawn to him now. More so than ever before. Mindful of his every move, she'd watched him as if he were her prey, and it worried her.

Her Wolf was marking him, but her human half knew better. This attraction between the two of them could never go anywhere, physically anyway. Not the indepth penetrating way he wanted.

How could she explain her fears without totally pissing him off? One of the reasons she'd never allowed herself to think of being with Jace was because he was *Rakshasa*. It wasn't the visions that bothered her, it was the lack of his ability to change. Which sounded totally prejudiced.

When she and Kellen were together, they often felt their beasts struggling to emerge in the heat of passion. Were sex was rough, especially since the participants had extraordinary strength. Even though she'd never admit it to anyone out loud, she didn't want to hurt Jace if her beast decided it wanted to get free.

"I just think we should be careful."

Jace nodded his head, but the look in his eyes was anything but complacent. "Careful, I see. And just what is it we're trying to be careful of?"

Remy sighed, realizing not only was she not getting any tonight, she was probably signing her death warrant. Because as soon as she told Jace, he was going to go back on his word and throw her ass right out the door. And then Nico was going to kill her for not following orders.

"Look, I don't want to hurt you, okay?"

Jace grinned at first, as if he thought she were kidding, but when Remy didn't add anything to it, his grin slipped away and his face became an empty mask of nothingness.

Then all of a sudden he threw back his head and laughed. But nothing about it sounded the least bit amused. Oh no, he was extremely pissed off. With lightning speed, he shot across the room, grabbing her by the arm and twisting her around until her back was pressed against his front.

Damn, she'd forgotten he could move so quickly.

"I think I've just been insulted."

Remy could feel his cock, iron-hard, pressing into her back. In fact, his whole body felt hard and the strength in his grip was radiating off him in waves. She'd seen a few examples of his strength, but she realized she had no idea what his true abilities were. Everything she believed had just been an assumption, one she was rapidly discovering was possibly an error.

"I don't know if my beast might get out of control."

"What's wrong with losing control, Remy?"

"Nothing, but—"

"If you say you're worried about hurting me again, Remy, I'll be highly upset."

"As if I care." Remy had had just enough of being pushed around for one night. She made a move to break his hold upon her, but Jace tightened his grip and lowered his mouth to her ear.

"You care, she-wolf. More than you're willing to admit."

Remy didn't say a word. What could she say? He was right, and those were words she'd never let slip past her lips.

When her silence became deafening, Jace sighed and Remy could feel some of the tension leaving his body. "I guess I should be happy to know you actually had thoughts about us being together."

Too many times to count.

"Maybe I've imagined what it might be like."

Jace's hand crept up, cupping her breast through the thin cotton T-shirt. He rubbed across her nipple, already standing at attention. Remy bit back the moan in her throat. She'd already admitted to too much. Jace didn't need to know just how much he affected her.

"Tell me."

It was as if he were a fucking mind reader. The one thing she didn't want to do. "No."

"Let me guess then." Jace's head bent and he nuzzled her neck, nipping at the soft spot just below her ear before licking at the mark he most likely made. The idea of him marking her as his had the cream between her thighs flowing within seconds. She should be irritated, but instead it was arousing that he wanted everyone to know what they had done, or were going to do as the case may be.

"Did you think of us in bed, under the covers with the lights out?"

"No."

"Good, because that's never going to happen. When we fuck, and we will fuck, I want to see every inch of your skin. I want to see the sweat on your brow. I want to see your nipples hard and aching and begging to be touched. I want to see your sweet pussy opening for my tongue."

The moan she'd been holding in escaped, unable to be repressed any longer. His words were like a siren's cry, making her want to turn and rip off his clothes.

"You like the idea, don't you, she-wolf?"

"The tongue thing," Remy closed her eyes as the image filled her mind, "we can do. But nothing else."

"We'll do everything else," he growled, a sound she met with one of her own.

Despite his inability to turn, Jace was showing some serious signs of Alpha Wereness. "I'm going to slip my cock in your mouth, in your pussy," Jace pressed his erection forward, "and into this sweet ass of yours."

His words made her quiver. "Think so, do you?"

"No, baby. I know it."

"You're so full of it."

"And you'll be stuffed full of me." Jace nipped at her ear.

The sharp pain startled her and Remy broke out of his embrace to face him, hand to her ear. "Watch it or I'll make you eat those words."

"I'm eating something and it's not words." Jace stepped toward her, as if all of a sudden he were the stalker and she the prey. "Heed my words, Remy. I'm going to fuck you and mark you."

"Mark?" Talk about delusions of grandeur. "That's never going to happen."

Jace grabbed the hem of his shirt and pulled the blue material off. He dropped it so casually on the floor, it was as if undressing in front of her were a daily occurrence. Wolves had no problem with nudity, yet Remy was having a hard time keeping the fact in mind as he kicked off his shoes and began to unbutton his jeans.

"Did you hear me, Jace?" Remy backed up, needing to put as much distance between them as possible. "Never."

Still he didn't reply. His pants and boxers soon joined his discarded shirt and shoes on the floor. As well as Remy's mouth, figuratively of course. Despite her best attempts at keeping her eyes above his chin, when his clothes dropped, so did her gaze, and it landed smack-dab on his cock, which was an impressive figure all on its own.

She unconsciously licked her lips, which brought forth a masculine chuckle from Jace. "Like what you see?"

"It'll do." Her words might have had more of an impact if she hadn't had to clear her throat twice before getting them out.

"I'm sure it will." Jace stepped toward her, to which she once again backed up. "Do I have to chase you, Remy? Is that what you want, she-wolf? Me to track you and pounce? I'm all for role-playing."

"It's not a role for me, Jace." There, it was out. "I might claw you, bite you."

"God, I hope so." He grinned and moved forward again. This time when Remy went to step back, she came in direct contact with the wall.

"I might change. In the middle. Afterward. Who knows?"

"My entire family is Were. I won't freak out if I wake in the morning and you've changed."

"But will you if I do in the middle of sex?"

Jace tilted his head to the side and gave a light shrug of his shoulders. "Bestiality isn't on my kink list of things to try before I die, but I won't go running to the hills. I know what you are. I'm not afraid of the unknown or of getting hurt. If you think you can, I say give it your best shot. You're my mate, Remy. Nothing you are can scare me."

"Mate..." Why was he making this so damn hard? "You won't be able to..."

"Knot." He finished for her. Knotting only occurred in mates, which was something, as far as she knew, he would be unable to do.

"Yes."

"My cock, though impressive," he added with a wink, "is one hundred percent knot free. But I don't need a growth to prove a damn thing to me."

"That's because you're stubborn. We're not mates, Jace, but we can be fuck buddies. Kellen and I-"

Jace reached out, grabbed her shorts with both hands and yanked them down her legs. The ripping material startled her almost as much as the fierce look in his eyes. Jace moved in closer to her until they were just inches apart and reached down, ripping her panties off as well.

"Damn it, I just bought those."

"Don't *ever*," Jace stressed the word "ever" as if it were a holy name, "mention you and Kellen in a sexual way to me again. Do you understand me?"

Remy couldn't resist. "No. Maybe you need to use smaller words."

"Or maybe actions speak louder than words." Jace dropped to his knees in front of her and pulled her leg over his shoulder, placing her pussy at mouth level.

Remy knew what he'd find there. With her bottom half bared, she could already feel the wetness on her thighs. His words and actions since they'd arrived at his home had been affecting her to the point she would probably come with one swipe of his tongue over her clit. If she could get him to be satisfied with this and her sucking him dry, then perhaps the discussion of intercourse would become a moot point.

Jace chuckled at the evidence of her desire and nibbled at her thighs, licking and sucking at the dampness. He avoided her clit however, parting her succulent folds with his fingers and running his tongue along her opening. Remy tried to brace herself against the wall, already sensing this was not going to be quick. Jace was planning to take his time and enjoy himself.

His teeth on her outer lips, pulling gently, had her eyelids popping open. "What are you doing?"

"Eating you up, baby. I want to learn every inch."

Jace was true to his words, licking and kissing every inch of her slit. But he continued to ignore her clit until she thought she'd scream.

"Jace, please."

"Please what?"

"Pretty please with sugar on top."

"No, you have to say it. Tell me what you want."

Remy sighed, her head thrown back, her clit aching for his touch. "Suck my clit, Jace, please, I need it."

"All you had to do was ask." Jace spread her lips wide, exposing her clit to the cool brush of air, causing her to suck her breath in quickly. When leaning in, he covered the sensitive bundle of flesh with his lips, sucking the hardened little nub into his mouth. At the same time he thrust two fingers deep inside her. Remy bucked against his hand, the dual sensations causing her nerves to go into overdrive.

"Oh shit, harder, harder." Remy braced her legs in anticipation of her oncoming orgasm. Her hands, previously balled into fists, grasped his head, holding him tight. Jace was relentless, never letting up. Remy's scream caught her by surprise. She'd never been one for screaming, being more of a low-growl-in-the-throat kind of girl. But the cry was ripped from her throat as the wave flowed through her.

Jace finally released her and Remy began to slide down the wall, her legs unable to support her any longer. Her pussy continued to pulse with the aftershocks of her orgasm.

"That's just the beginning, Remy."

Chapter Five

As he watched Remy slide to the floor, her mouth slack and her eyes dazed with passion, Jace felt a deep sense of contentment. She may have thought she was in control of this situation, but he'd been able to prove her dead wrong. There was no way in hell she was getting out of here tonight until he fucked her into submission.

Standing up, Jace leaned down and pulled Remy into his arms, carrying her toward the bedroom. She'd finally started to recover and was struggling, but not really putting any effort into the fight.

"I can walk, you know."

"And I can carry you, which is what I wanted to do."

Jace kicked his bedroom door shut as he strode through the doorway. Approaching the bed, he tossed Remy into the center, satisfaction filling him at seeing her lying sprawled there. She looked like an odd combination of sensuality and innocence as she lay there, her legs spread and pussy open while her T-shirt still covered her breasts.

"Why don't you take off your T-shirt so we can continue with tonight's festivities?"

"I don't need to take off my top to suck your cock." Remy sat up and got to her knees, crawling over to him.

"Darling, as much as I'd love for you to suck my cock, we're going to save it for another time. We are going to fuck, and we can spend the next hour arguing about it, or we can spend the next hour enjoying ourselves. Either way, we will eventually fuck."

"Jace, I don't think..."

"It's okay, Remy, you don't have to think about it. I already have. If you're so worried about hurting me, I've come up with the perfect solution."

"What?" The suspicion in her voice made him want to laugh.

"I'll restrain you."

Remy frowned. "You do realize I'll be able to break free?"

"I know. It's not the physical bondage as much as the mental."

"What do you mean?"

"Neither one of us is naïve." Jace walked purposefully to his oak nightstand. He picked up the cordless phone handset from the base and laid it on the table next to the extra cell phone he always kept there. "I'm strong. You're stronger. Not by much, but you are."

Remy snorted but didn't interrupt. It was a start.

"What you need to realize is," Jace grabbed the phone base and pulled, ripping the telephone cord from the wall, "I don't care. Nothing you can do, with the exception of

saying 'no', is going to stop me from stuffing your pussy full with my cock. You can growl at me. You can get all furry. But you and I are going to fuck."

Jace stood at the side of his bed, slowly winding the twelve-foot cord around his hand. Remy had jumped when he ripped it from the wall, but she hadn't made a move to leave and she hadn't said no. It was good enough for him. "If push comes to shove, Remy, you can get free, but both you and I know you really don't want to. You're going to stay bound to my bed because it's where you belong. And you're going to love every second of it."

Remy sat back on her heels for a moment, obviously pondering Jace's words. He knew she ultimately needed to accept she wouldn't hurt him and if the idea of being restrained was what it took, all the better.

"I guess we can try."

"Oh, we're going do more than try. Now take off the T-shirt."

Remy grasped the hem of her shirt and pulled it over her head, exposing a purple lacy bra. She must own of a collection of the frilly things. Without being told, she reached behind her, unhooked the bra and let the lace cups fall forward.

Her breasts were high and firm, and the sight of them made Jace want to take a taste. He steeled himself against the temptation however. Once he had her restrained to the bed, he could take his time and enjoy her to his heart's content. Until then, he needed to keep his mind clear and not get distracted.

"Now what?"

"Now the fun begins. Lie back down."

Remy lay back on the bed, her head turned toward him as he approached her. Grabbing two of the pillows, he put them under her head, making her as comfortable as possible.

"I'm ready." Remy thrust her hands out in front of her.

Jace chuckled and slowly wound the cord around her wrists, looping them together. Pulling Remy's arms over her head, he wrapped the cord around the heavy oak crossbeam of his headboard. When he finally had her secured to the bed, he stepped back to observe his handiwork.

"God, you look so hot."

Remy snorted, but his comment had broken the tension he'd seen in her muscles.

"You don't believe me."

"Of course I believe you. I've seen me naked."

"As have I, and let me assure you, up close, without the rest of the brat pack, your body is very impressive."

"As a Wolf, we're trained to overlook nudity."

"As you've pointed out before, she-wolf, I'm not one of you."

"Yes, you are." Remy's eyes lost the teasing glint it had just mere seconds before. "I'm sorry if I ever made you feel as if you weren't."

"Of course you're all repenty now that I have you at my mercy."

Remy lifted her head and focused her dark eyes on him. "I'm serious."

"I know, but you were right."

"What do you mean?"

Jace climbed onto the bed and lay beside her. "I'm not like you. I'm something much more."

Before Remy could question him further, Jace covered her mouth with his. Licking at her lips, he coaxed her mouth open, slipping his tongue inside. Instead of the fight he was expecting, she met his tongue with her own, matching his ferocity.

Breaking the kiss, Jace pulled back and gathered himself. He felt ravenous, as if he weren't capable of controlling himself. He wanted to sink balls deep inside her and pump her full of his cum until every Were for miles around would know she belonged to him.

With a calming breath, he centered himself. This was only the first of many times he would lie with her. There was no need to rush.

Jace cupped her cheek in his hand, loving the feel of her soft brown skin under his. Remy's eyes were still closed, but it was fine with him. He wanted to be able to explore her fully.

Slowly, with a gentleness even he didn't know he possessed, Jace traced his index finger across her full bottom lip. Remy growled softly then snapped at his finger, much to his amusement.

"My little she-wolf."

From her mouth, he trailed his finger down her chin to her neck, slowly moving it between her breasts. Unable to resist the sweet temptation before him, Jace cupped her full mound into his hands.

Her breasts were softly rounded, topped with nipples that looked as good as chocolate kisses, and Jace was addicted to chocolate. Leaning down, he licked at each nipple until the turgid little points were wet and glistening then pulled the hard peak into his mouth and teased it with his teeth. When he increased the pressure, Remy moaned and arched toward him.

"Harder," she moaned.

And he complied. He twisted a nipple, pinching tightly as he suckled the other one between his lips, adding a bit more force for his she-wolf. He could spend all night pleasuring her breasts but there was more of her he wanted to discover.

Jace pulled away from her chocolate-kissed peak and moved his hand away from her breast to her torso where it came to rest on the first of many scars. Without saying a word, he traced scar after scar, ten in total, one thin one longer than the palm of his hand. Her body was marred but still beautiful.

"Still think it's impressive?"

Jace lowered his mouth and let his lips follow the trail his hands had made until he'd kissed every badge of honor he saw. When he looked up, he could have sworn her eyes were glassy for a moment. His little warrior. "You're flawless."

Remy blinked for a moment then smiled. "And you're blind."

"Not so, I see only too well." Jace trailed his hand down her lithe frame and watched as she reacted to his stroke, shivering at his touch and bending to his hand.

Remy quivered at his attention and opened her legs. "Are you going to stop talking and fuck me?"

It was a tempting sight, but Jace wasn't ready to climb onboard just yet. "In due time, she-wolf, in due time."

The open valley of her legs made it all the easier for Jace to enjoy the scrumptious feast of her smooth-shaven pussy once more. The smell of her arousal filled the room as he moved his hand down between her legs and caressed her damp lips.

Even though he had gorged himself on her sweet caramel taste mere moments ago, Jace's mouth watered from the desire to do so once more. Remy's body lurched up as Jace traced his fingers against her slit. He feathered his fingers across her clit before dipping them into the sweet recess of her body.

"Jace..."

His cock twitched, dying to be buried where his fingers were held in her snug, wet body. "Yes, Elizabeth," he dared calling her by the first name.

Remy's growl of protest made him chuckle. "Don't call me that."

"When you're dressed and in the field, you're Remy." Jace withdrew his fingers and plunged them forth, silencing any protest she might have made. "But when you're naked and wet for me, I'll call you Elizabeth." For Jace, Elizabeth was just a term of endearment. In his mind, she'd always be Remy, his she-wolf warrior and his mate.

His fingers dove deep within her heat over and over. Remy was so fucking hot she almost seared his fingers off. The hair on his arms rose as he felt the metaphysical essence of her Wolf clawing to get out. "How long has it been since you've changed, Elizabeth?"

"A few days." Panting, Remy pumped her hips up, meeting his fingers thrust by thrust. "I warned you..."

"I'm not worried. I just want to watch you come."

"Then get inside me and stop this madness."

He could see she was on the verge of climaxing, but as selfish as he was, Jace wanted to feel her trembling around him when she came this time.

"Anything you say, Elizabeth." Jace pulled his fingers from her tight pussy and brought them to his mouth for a taste.

"Stop calling me that."

"Anything but that." Jace chuckled and reached over to the bedside table, pulling open the drawer and tearing the foil packet he found there before quickly sheathing his cock.

"My strength has never been a question with me. It's always been an ability I had. I can't see for miles around. I can't change. And until this moment, I thought my sense of smell was on par with humans. Boy, was I wrong."

"What do you mean?" Her voice was shaky and filled with need.

"The smell of your arousal is imprinting itself in my brain. Even poets would be at a loss for words if they tried to describe it. All I know is," Jace placed himself at the head of her sweet entrance and pressed forward, engulfing his cock with her burning heat, "it smells like home."

Seated deep within her, Jace rested his head on her forehead, trying to regain his breath. Remy was no innocent, but as her soft flesh yielded to his invasion, he swore he'd never felt someone so snug and tight before. For just an instant he wanted to stay like this forever, locked together with his woman.

Of course Remy had to rock his world at that very moment, drawing her legs up and wrapping them around him. Impossibly, he sunk even deeper into her.

"Oh God, Jace, move, please move."

Pulling back, Jace began to thrust into her, pistoning his hips and driving her deep into the bed with every forceful drive. Remy wrapped her hands around the cord binding her to the bed, her head thrown back as she growled in response.

"That's it, baby." Although Remy was afraid of her beast, Jace had no fears where that was concerned. He wanted her to feel free with him and he wanted to have all of her. But it wasn't as if he wanted her to change during sex. He didn't want her to hide part of herself from him either. Only then would she realize she could truly be herself with him.

"I need... Oh God, Jace, please." Remy was bucking against him now. Her legs had dropped from around him and she'd braced her feet against the bed, pushing back as he continued to press into her.

"I'll please you, baby." Reaching down between them, Jace grasped her clit between his thumb and finger, pressing hard on the engorged core. "Come for me, Elizabeth. Come for me now."

Remy's eyes dilated as her orgasm hit her and her body arched off the bed. The clasp of her pussy around his cock was all it took to for him to join her in ecstasy.

"Fuck. Damn. Fuck." The words were ripped from his soul as his own orgasm rode over him. A burst of energy shot through his soul and into his mind, blinding him for a moment.

The pleasure was so intense he could hardly breathe. He felt dizzy and hurt everywhere. Jace took a few deep breaths as he began to recover from his orgasm. He realized Remy was struggling with her restraints, her nails digging at the cord surrounding her wrists. Her skin was shivering, almost as if something were forcing its way out.

"Jace, let me up!"

"It's okay, baby." Rolling from the bed, Jace ripped the cord from the headboard, demonstrating the true power of his strength. Before he could unwind the cords, Remy sat up and her body began to transform. Even though the changing process was quick, it was still a merging mess of bones, flesh and fur. Yet it wasn't anything Jace hadn't seen before and soon the beautiful ebony warrior was no more and in her place was a silver gray wolf.

And yet, she was still beautiful.

Opening the French doors to the outside patio, Jace stepped back and allowed Remy to leap from the bed and out into the night.

* * * * *

The cool, brisk wind rippled through her fur as Remy raced around Jace's property. The land was large and plentiful with enough room for her to run about. Yet no matter how far she ran, his scent beckoned to her. Still, she resisted the call and darted throughout the woods.

Remy could smell the markings of other wolves throughout the terrain. The scent was of her Pack so she forged on, dodging through underbrush and leaping over logs. She became one with nature once more, as free in her fur as she was in her own skin.

The forest surrounding Jace's home was empty tonight of other wolves but not of prey. Rabbits darted away from the running wolf, and though she wasn't hungry, Remy couldn't resist the chase.

She would only scare them a little. Enough to see their furry little butts dart into the burrows beyond. It was the forest's version of cat and mouse.

When she grew tired of her game, Remy trotted back to Jace's house, amused he'd left the light on and door partially open. With her nuzzle she pushed the door farther apart so she could slip in.

A loud rumbling sound drew her attention to the bed. Jace was sound asleep. His arm hung from the mattress and Remy couldn't resist padding softly over to him and licking his hand.

Despite the shower he'd obviously had, Remy could still smell herself on him beneath the refreshing smell of the soap and the crisp scent of the water.

Yet as appealing as a shower sounded, a quick nap sounded even better. Remy jumped onto the bed and lay at the foot. Crossing her one paw over the other, she lowered her head and closed her eyes.

A quick nap and she'd leave.

* * * * *

Remy was running through the woods, but instead of the carefree jaunt from earlier in the evening, she had a sense of urgency, of a need to get somewhere and quickly. Breaking through the trees, she reached a clearing.

A small brook loomed ahead. Fun. Remy took off at a run, intent on playing in the stream, but then froze as her mind caught up with her body. How the heck did she get here? One moment she was curled up on Jace's bed. The next she was about to go splashing through some water. What the hell?

As she sat back on her haunches to rest with her tongue lolling out of her mouth, Remy looked around. Everything was too bright, too clear to be reality. She realized she was in a dream. But this was no ordinary dream. Something else was going on here. She could practically feel the energy crackling around her.

Damn Nico and his dream-walking.

Nico's annoying ability to infiltrate the dreams of those with whom he had a connection with was downright maddening. He was the only one in the Pack who possessed this gift and he wasn't shy about using it.

With the image of her human body planted firmly in her mind, Remy stretched and transformed from wolf back to her womanly form. Looking down, she realized she was naked.

"Damn it, Nico, you have a mate now. Why are you pulling me into your stupid dreams?"

When there was no immediate response, Remy shivered, although she tried to tell herself it was due to the cold, even she wasn't entirely convinced. Something odd was going on here. When they were younger, Nico would sometimes play tricks on her, invading her dreams. But that had been years ago and suddenly Remy wasn't feeling too confident this was Nico.

"Easy now, lupa, don't be frightened."

Remy twirled at the voice, dropping to a crouch in an effort to defend herself. Squinting she stared at the man in front of her with faint recognition. "Jace?"

"No, I am his ancestor Vladimiro. There is no reason to be afraid."

As if his assurances meant a hill of freaking beans to her.

"Why am I here?" Remy continued to stay crouched, not willing to assume she was necessarily safe from him.

"Jace needs your help."

Before she could interrogate him further, he faded into the woods. Remy stared after him for a moment before standing and turning back toward the clearing. The scene in front of her had changed. Gone was the brook and in its place was a large, human-sized chessboard with Nico and Kimberly in the positions of king and queen. Cassandra was standing directly in front of them, a baby in her arms. Most surprising of all was the image of herself, also standing on the board, right next to Cassandra.

Suddenly, from the other side of the chessboard, a number of wolves swarmed out from the woods, yipping and growling at the figures on the chessboard. Remy realized with shock she recognized many of these wolves as members of the *Maggiore*. With his back to her, Remy noticed a crouched figure studying the scene intently.

Stalking over, she squinted her eyes, trying to see whatever it was he was seeing. "What's going on?"

Jace swiveled his head, starting to lose his balance before catching himself. "Remy?"

"Yeah." Jeez, you have sex with a guy and he forgets who you are?

"Why are you here?" Jace stood. He appeared more surprised to see her than she was to see him.

"That's what I'd like to know. But you know what I'd like to know more? How come you *forgot* to mention I was in this little dream of yours?"

Jace frowned. "I didn't think it was pertinent."

"Oh really? Well, maybe you should let someone else decide for you because you're obviously impaired. How did I get here?" Remy squinted at him, suspicion clouding her mind. "Did you have something to do with this?"

"Look, I'm not really sure why you're here. I've never had anyone show up in my dreams except for Vlad."

"I talked to him." She decided not to mention what he said about Jace needing her help.

"You did?"

"Yeah, old guy who looks like you."

"Yes."

"Then yep." Remy walked across the chessboard and stopped in front of herself. Leaning forward, she peered into her own face. Index finger out, Remy poked herself in the forehead and giggled. "Okay, this is pretty freaking cool. I'm a sexy bitch, aren't I?"

"He actually spoke to you?"

"Did I stutter?" Remy turned back around and faced Jace, her doppelganger no longer of interest. "And stop changing the subject. I want to know what's going on here."

Jace clenched his jaw. "How the hell would I know, I'm only the Watcher Boy, remember? You're the *aiutante*. Why don't you figure it out?"

"I don't mean I want to know what's going on *here*," waving her hand at the chessboard, "I meant I want to know what's going on *here*," tapping his forehead. "Why would you neglect to mention someone who was in the dream?"

"I didn't seem to have a bearing on figuring out who Cassandra was. And I was right, you'd never met her."

"But I'm here for a reason." When he opened his mouth to respond, Remy held her hand up to shush him. "I don't mean me here, I mean that me here."

"What?"

"Her." Remy pointed to her other self. "She-me is here for a reason. You don't have to be one with the ancients to figure that out."

"Yes, I know."

"So what is it?"

"We have a theory."

"And?"

"How much do you know about chess?"

"Dick." Remy placed her hands on hips. Her bare flesh quickly reminded her of how undressed she was. "Watcher Boy, give me some clothes."

Jace lowered his gaze until it ran the entire length of her body and back up again. Gone from his eyes was the wary look, in its place was the look of passion. "Sorry, shewolf, it's not that type of dream."

"Excuse me."

"I have no power over what happens here."

"How convenient." His lustful leer was beginning to annoy her. Even though she was used to being nude in front of others, this was different. Jace wasn't looking at her as a fellow being. His look was purely sexual, especially when he lowered it down to her breasts. "At least avert your eyes."

"I'm a seer, Remy, not a saint." Jace returned his gaze to her face and smiled a slow, sexy smile that made her think all things were right with the world.

Damn it. When did she become so damn girly? She needed to hit something. Or kill someone. Only then would her mind get back on track.

"So tell me, in chess, what would I be?"

The smile slid away and the seriousness of the situation came forth once more. "A pawn."

"A solider." Remy nodded her head. It made sense.

"Not just a solider, Remy. An expendable piece."

With a shrug of her shoulders, Remy faced the pieces once more. "That's all a solider really is, Jace. Someone who can be risked. Someone who is willing to die."

"Are you really so willing to die?" Jace grabbed her arm and spun her around. His face was filled with anger. Whether it was with her or with the situation, Remy couldn't tell.

"We all have roles, *Rakshasa*. I'm just more comfortable with mine than you are with yours."

"Or I am with yours." Jace's grip tightened on her arm.

She could tell he was at war with his vision and it touched her. "I'm not suicidal, Jace. I'm a good soldier."

"You're more than a warrior."

"I'm—" Remy's words were cut off by Vladimiro, who strolled onto the board.

"Much more than even you know."

To Remy's amusement, Jace pulled her behind him, shielding her body from his ancestor's view. Even more amusing, she was instantly covered by the same white T-shirt Jace had worn earlier in the day. It only reached the top of her thighs, but it was enough.

The funny thing was, Remy wasn't uncomfortable with nudity. Most Weres weren't. They felt as at home in their skin as they did in their fur, but it amused her Jace felt the need to clothe her, especially after he'd lied and said he couldn't earlier.

"What is she doing here?"

"You tell me, nipote, you brought her here."

"The hell I did."

"Maybe you need to show her the whole dream. She is the aiutante after all."

"Hello, this is the whole dream. And by the way, why didn't you mention the whole *aiutante* thing?"

Vladimiro sighed. "Things are revealed in the time they are meant to be. Remember, the beginning is significant to the end, *nipote*."

"Oh my God, now I know where you get the fortune-cookie crap," Remy said with a laugh.

"Ha, ha, ha."

Remy watched as the scene changed again. Cassandra was surrounded by the wolves nipping at her heels while Nico and the *Elitario* stood in another group. Remy saw herself standing between the two. But this time it wasn't the vision of herself that caught Remy's attention. Rather it was Cassandra's inability to catch the attention of a certain wolf standing with Nico's group.

"Hey, I know that wolf. It's David, Kimberly's brother."

Chapter Six

Getting ready for work, Cassandra grimaced as she slipped on her shoes. She couldn't continue to handle these twelve-hour days for much longer. This baby was draining every ounce of energy she ever thought she had and then some. In fact, she'd been so tired last night, she hadn't even checked her messages. Which was surprising, considering the fact she was desperately waiting for a call. Unfortunately, pressing the button only informed her she had no messages waiting.

This was getting past the point of ridiculous. Cassandra dialed David's cell phone for the fifth time in two days, but this time, she was going to do what she swore she wouldn't do. Cassandra was going to let him know over the phone he was going to be a father, even if she had to leave a message with the news.

The previous times she'd call, she'd only left a "This is Cassandra, please call me back" message along with her phone number. Despite not hearing from him in over four freaking months, she had always been cordial, never leaving a "Call me back, asshole!" message the way she truly wanted.

Cassandra wasn't one to push herself onto anyone. If David didn't want to be in her life, then fuck him. She damn straight didn't need his money or his help to rear her child. If her mother had done it, she could too. Yet the little bit of soul she had refused to have a child with someone and keep him in the dark. Even if the father in question was a furry one-night-stand asshole like David.

The Metallica song David had for a ringer burst through the earpiece of her phone, setting Cassandra's nerves on end. Up until she'd begun her search for David, she'd been a fan of the group, now she wished they, along with David, would fall into a pit of fire.

When the digital recording came on instructing Cassandra to leave a message for the umpteenth time, she blew her cool. "David. This is Cassandra. The woman you picked up in a bar and took home to fuck about, oh, four months ago. Well, surprise, surprise, I received a bit of startling information from my doctor's office, and it wasn't that I have the clap. I'm pregnant, asshole. Call. Me. Back."

Cassandra slammed the flip lid closed, more upset now than she'd been when she called him. "Asshole!"

"Tsk, tsk, tsk. Is that anyway for a mommy to talk?"

Hand to her heart, Cassandra spun around and faced her surprise guest. Out of the dark hallway her father walked, a sick, twisted smile upon his handsome face. With the phone still clutched tightly in her hand, Cassandra backed away, wanting to put as much space between her and her mother's sperm donor as she could. "How did you get in here?"

"And look at the way you speak to your father. For shame."

"You are not my father."

"Deny it all you want, daughter, the proof is, as they say, in the pudding." Similar to the devil himself, Franklin was a handsome man with dark black hair and eyes as blue as her own. When she'd found him, she knew instantly he was her father, his DNA ran rampant throughout her body. She was a fair-skin version of him without the wolfy gene. He was right, the proof was there, but she'd die a painful, tortured death before she'd call him father again.

"You aren't welcome in my home. How did you get in here?"

Franklin calmly sat on her ivy-patterned sofa and made himself at home. "Since when did I need an invitation?"

"Since the day you started drugging me."

"You should thank me."

"Thank you?" His words set her temper ablaze. "I should kill you."

"You're welcome to try." Franklin grinned at her comment, as if she amused him, but there was no amusement lurking in his eyes. Neither was there much humor to be found in the lengthening canines, which slid into view.

"And take the pleasure away from Nico when he finds out what you've done." Nico was her only ace in the hole, but even that threat was growing thin.

"Such as..."

"Drugging me."

"As if he'd care."

"Trying to use me to break up him and his mate."

Franklin waved his hands in front of him as if it all didn't matter. "Yet he and his mate are as happy as can be. Besides, all I did was *suggest* you get to know him. Nothing more. Nothing less."

He made it all seem so simple. "You are an evil man."

"You flatterer you."

"Stop it!" His condescending tone was driving her insane.

"Cassandra dear," Franklin bound to his feet and walked over to her side. This time Cassandra didn't retreat. She held her ground, refusing to show him any weakness. Like the wolf he was, she knew he would pounce, and Cassandra wasn't going to give him that opportunity until she had a knife in her hand ready for him to land on. "You seem all out of sorts. This can't be good for the baby."

"Leave my child out of this."

Franklin placed his hand across her womb and smiled. "My grandchild, dear one."

"Go to hell." Cassandra placed her hands across his wrist and tried to push it off her stomach but without luck. He was eons stronger than her and the battleground was her stomach. Not exactly what she'd call a level playing field. "Release me." "You, gladly." Franklin chuckled and stepped back. With an evil little smile, he bent forward and brushed a kiss across her forehead. "I'll show myself the way out."

"Finally," she couldn't help but add, much to his amusement.

When Franklin reached the door, he paused and turned back around to face her. "You know, dear heart, if this child is so much of an inconvenience, I'll gladly take him or her off your hands."

"Over my dead body."

"Funny," Franklin opened the door, "I was thinking the same thing."

Franklin shut the door behind himself, pleased when he heard something hit the wood and shatter. His daughter, despite the horrible human DNA coursing through her system, was very similar to himself. Even if she didn't want to believe it. He'd prefer not to kill her, wanting her around merely for breeding purposes, but he'd do it anyway if forced. His grandchild would rule his Pack with or without her for a mother.

He'd reared one motherless child and he could do it again. This time of course, he'd start from the very beginning, molding the child in his own image. Remy had turned out well, but a child from his own DNA, started on the correct path from the very start, would be unstoppable.

As he walked toward his car, his pocket vibrated, reminding him the phone had a message. Pulling out David's cell phone, Franklin punched in the code and listened to his daughter's angry words with a smile.

Deny it all she wanted, his blood ran through her veins.

* * * * *

Across the street, Kellen turned to Derek, who was watching Franklin get in his car. "What the hell is that all about?"

"I have no idea, but I'm willing to bet Nico is going to want to know about this little meeting." Derek reached into his pocket and dialed his *Benandanti*. The shit was about to hit the fan. "On a bright note though," he added as an afterthought, "it looks as if we might get to kill someone soon."

* * * * *

Slowly waking from the intense dream, Jace rolled over and opened his eyes. Remy was lying naked at the foot of the bed, obviously where she'd collapsed after her run the night before. Jace was still amazed about her appearance in his dreams and how she was able to affect his visions. Deciding he might as well take advantage of both their naked states, Jace crawled over to join Remy. He was sure he could discover a few delightful ways to wake her.

Remy was lying on her side, her hands tucked under her head and her legs slightly drawn up. The curve of her hip called to him and Jace reached out to touch the expanse of skin. He stroked along her hipbone, grazing his fingers over the cheek of her ass as he trailed his hand down her legs. His she-wolf made a sound deep in her throat, rolling over to her back, exposing her luscious body to his gaze.

"Remy, don't you want to wake up?" Jace's softly whispered words were followed by his fingers stroking their way back up her leg until they rested high on her thigh.

"Hmm, don't stop." The husky order caused a smile to break out across his face.

"Happy to oblige." Jace parted her legs, caressing the tender flesh of her pussy. "Are you sore?"

"Please. Last night was a good workout."

"We need to put you on a regular exercise schedule." Finding her already starting to become wet from his attention, Jace pressed a finger inside and watched as Remy's hips arched to take the digit. "I think the idea appeals to you."

"Maybe I need some convincing." Remy cupped her breasts and for a moment, Jace forgot everything else. Watching his woman touch herself in such an intimate way was a big turn-on for him.

"Maybe you need to do some more of that." Jace nodded toward her hands.

Remy grinned as she lightly pinched her nipples. "Do you like this, Watcher Boy?"

Somehow the previously derogatory name now had a sexual overtone as he watched her pleasure herself.

"I more than like. Pinch them harder."

Jace returned to fingering her gently as he watched her tweak her nipples to sharp little points. Remy's breath was coming in short, panting gasps and she parted her legs to allow him better access to her pussy.

"Jace." She spoke his name in a shaky whisper as he continued to pump now threefingers deep inside her.

"What is it, baby?" He knew what she wanted, but he wanted her to ask for it.

"Touch my clit. Please."

Jace rubbed his thumb lightly over her clit once and then returned to thrusting his fingers.

"Damn you. Harder. I want to come."

"Okay, baby, I want you to come hard too." Moving his thumb back over her clit, Jace rubbed back and forth with constant pressure. Her first orgasm hit quickly but Jace wasn't backing down and continued to tease the sensitive flesh. "Come on, baby, ride it out."

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"I can't."
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"Yes you can. Do it for me."

Remy had released her breasts by this point and was clutching at the comforter as the second orgasm rushed through her.

Jace collapsed across the bed, his cock rock-hard and begging for attention. Grasping his shaft, Jace began to stroke the turgid length. He could hear Remy's breathing slowly begin to return to normal.

"Want some help?" Remy's breath drifted across his thigh as she spoke.

The ringing cell phone caused them both to jump for a moment and Jace groaned at the interruption. Grabbing the phone from the bedside table, he hit the talk button. "What?"

Remy moved with him, but stopped at his waist where she leaned forward and engulfed his cock in her warm, wet mouth. The feel of her lips sliding up and down his cock damn near took his breath away. Jace pushed his fingers through her hair, anchoring her head to his body. She looked up at him, her dark eyes promising.

"Good morning to you too, Rakshasa."

Shit, shit. It was never good news when the *Benandanti* called at seven o'clock in the morning.

"Nico, what can I do for you?"

Remy's eyes widened as Jace spoke and she immediately released him. Damn it all to hell.

"There have been some developments with Cassandra. I need you to come in for a meeting."

Remy had risen and was standing next to the bed. She had gone all soldier on him at the mention of Nico's name and now his soft, teasing woman was nowhere to be seen.

"We have news as well."

"Remy's still there?" Nico's voice held a bit of wonder.

"Yeah, we'll be there in about an hour." Jace ended the connection, throwing the cell phone on the bed.

"I should take a shower."

"Worried the rest of the Pack might find out something?" Jace knew he shouldn't be so bitter, but it galled him to realize she was so willing to jump as soon as she knew it was Nico on the phone.

Remy clenched her jaw. "Not at all. In fact, I was going to invite you to shower with me. But now I think I'm going to rescind the offer." Stomping into the bathroom, she slammed the door.

An hour later as they were driving to the Sanctuary, Remy still was barely speaking to Jace. He knew he'd pissed her off with his comments and her subsequent one-word answers after she'd emerged from the bathroom only proved she still was mad. He was surprised he'd been able to convince her to ride along with him in the car rather than take her own. Much to his disappointment, Remy insisted on stopping by her place to

grab some clothes. Jace had been looking forward to everyone's reaction when she showed up in one of his T-shirts and a pair of his boxers.

"I guess Nico was right about you being able to help me with my visions. Do you think he'll be surprised by his brother-in-law's involvement?"

Jace could practically feel Remy's stare as she turned her head to look at him.

"I have no idea."

Reaching out, he grasped her hand, wrestling with her for a moment as he continued trying to drive. "Look, I said I was sorry. I said it more than once. Can we please get past this?"

Remy sighed and he could feel a minute relaxation of her hand in his. It was something at least. "I have a hair-trigger temper."

"I've noticed."

"It's a carry-over from my childhood. React first, ask questions later."

"I've always been jealous. When my parents had Isabelle, I asked them when she was going back."

Remy laughed. "I bet you get teased about that all the time now."

"Oh yeah, my family loves to pull out the old stories."

"You're lucky. I don't really remember my parents."

Jace was amazed Remy was opening up to him. As far as he knew, she never talked much about her childhood and he was honored she was willing to share anything with him. "That must have been tough."

"Franklin was good to me. Hell, I'm *Venator* because of him. He reared me to be strong, something a lot of Weres never did for their female children."

"You're right."

"What about you? Did you always know you were going to be the Rakshasa?"

"No, not right away. Although my great-grandfather told me before he told my parents. I was so disappointed. I wanted to be able to turn into a wolf and getting premonitions seemed like a poor substitute."

"Yeah, especially since you don't know what they mean."

Jace tugged her hand playfully. "Poking fun at my abilities again, huh?"

"Maybe." Remy could barely keep the laughter out of her voice.

"I ought to take you over my knee."

"I'd like to see you try."

"You're on."

Remy shook her head but Jace was totally serious. He could only imagine her spread out over his lap, her ass waiting for his hand. Jace shifted in his seat to try to relieve the erection he was developing at the image.

"I've wanted to ask you something."

"Shoot."

"Have you had dreams with me in them before?"

Jace chuckled. "Baby, you've been in my dreams more than you'll ever know."

Pulling her hand from his grasp, she smacked his arm. "You know what I'm talking about, perv. I meant have you ever had premonition dreams about me?"

Remy wasn't the first one to ask him this type of question. Sooner or later everyone wanted to know if he knew something about their future. He tried to explain his dreams were often too cryptic to give exact information.

"You know what the dreams are like. I can't always tell what they mean."

"I take it that's a yes then."

Pulling into the parking lot of the Sanctuary, Jace parked the car and turned toward her. "Yes, I've had dreams of you. One especially keeps coming back over and over."

"Tell me. Please."

"It's just you and a small child. And you're smiling and happy." Jace had always loved the vision because he enjoyed seeing Remy as something other than a soldier.

Remy gasped and Jace turned to her. "Is everything okay?"

Remy's voice was hard as she spoke. "You need to work on your skills, *Rakshasa*. Your powers of perception suck." Grasping the handle, she opened the door and then jumped out of the car before slamming it and striding into the building.

Remy stood silently to the side as Jace filled Nico in on what had occurred in his vision, including their belief that David was the father of Cassandra's child. Although after his bombshell in the car, Remy was beginning to wonder once more if his stupid dreams held water.

Her—with a child. A scenario on par with him turning into a wolf. They were both examples of things neither of them would ever be able to do.

"What did you think of the dream, Remy?"

Nico's words pulled her attention back to the matter at hand. From the looks on everyone's face, he'd asked her more than once. Shrugging her shoulders, Remy moved to the black leather couch in his office and sat in what was known as her spot.

It was really funny how territorial they all were. Even though it was Nico's office, all of the *Elitario* had their designated spots. The only person who was not sitting now that Remy had was Jace, who was leaning against the bar next to the door. His demeanor might have been causal, but Remy could feel the irritation steaming off him.

What he said had upset her and he knew it. The only problem was she knew he had no idea why.

"Well." Nico tapped his fingers on his desk in a sign of impatience.

"It was a dream. People walking, talking. Strange old guy checking out my nude bod."

"You were naked in the dream?" Derek, who was sitting next to her on the couch with his feet propped on the coffee table, revved his eyebrows in a leering manner at her. The flirt even went as far as to reach across the couch and run his finger along her leg. "Do tell."

"Completely." Everyone was used to his teasing manner, and Remy knew it meant nothing more to him than it did to her, but Jace was of a different mind.

"You want to remove your hand, or do I have to do it for you?"

His comment cut short any further remarks that might have been made when everyone turned surprised looks his way.

Of course Derek being Derek didn't know how to leave well enough alone. He tightened his grip on Remy's leg and smiled. "Now what are my options again?"

"Let me show you." Jace stepped forward and Harrison, who was sitting closest to him stood, blocking Jace's way. "Get out of my way."

"No can do."

Jackson eased forward in his chair as if he were trying to get a better view of the action. He was a man of few words but there wasn't much he missed.

"Fine, I'll move you." Jace went to grab Harrison but was stopped by Nico slamming his hand on his desk.

"Can we get through one goddamn meeting without one of you assholes pulling out your cocks and waving it around?" Nico thundered, standing now as well.

"Don't you mean Were-damn meeting?" Derek piped up, ever the fool.

"Remy." Nico's tone was tired but his meaning was clear.

Without taking her gaze away from Jace, Remy removed Derek's hand from her thigh and bent his fingers back until he yelped, "Uncle."

"It's 'Auntie'," she reminded him as she raised a brow at Jace in a "better now?" way. He nodded once and took a step back, much to Remy's amusement. He might not turn furry, but he was as possessive as his brethren about his "territory". Remy wasn't sure how she felt about his marking her just yet.

"Auntie! Auntie!"

"Much better." Remy released Derek's hand and watched as he shook his fingers to alleviate the pain. "Pussy."

"You're mean."

"You're welcome."

"Can we please get back to the matter at hand?" From Nico's tone he was growing agitated at their byplay, which was extremely unusual. He sat once more in his chair and leaned back wearily.

"What's the deal?" Remy asked, kicking up her feet until they mirrored Derek's on the table. "Tell her," Nico ordered Kellen, who during the entire Jace episode had sat back and watched quietly.

Remy had avoided looking his way until now. It wasn't as if she felt she had anything to be ashamed of. Kellen and she were long done, and to be honest, should have never gotten started. But hurting him would be as painful as hurting a brother, which should have told her something from the start. You don't fuck family.

There was a heavy look to his gaze but not an accusing one. "Derek and I spotted Franklin leaving Cassandra's house."

"Franklin?"

"Yes."

Franklin had been in the dream in his wolf form, along with other members of the *Maggiore*.

Damn it, what was he involved in now? Remy turned her head until she was facing Nico once more and met his gaze steadily. "Have you questioned him?"

"About?"

"About his relationship with this woman?"

"Do you think he'd tell me anything?" Nico asked.

"No." Franklin despised Nico. He'd made his position very clear in that regard over the years. He had always hoped Remy would fight for the position of *Benandanti* but her heart wasn't in it. Something he'd never understood. To Franklin, the only reason Remy had never gone for the position was because Nico had, and Franklin had never forgiven Nico. "But he'd tell me."

"No," Jace said from the sidelines. "That's a bad idea."

"Why?" Nico templed his fingers, awaiting his reply. "Do you know something you're not telling us, *Rakshasa*?"

"I know you don't send a child to question her parent."

"Remy isn't Franklin's child."

"And hello, Remy is in the room." Just in case anyone had forgotten, Remy felt the need to point out the obvious. "Also, I'm not a child."

Neither man paid her the least bit of attention. "It's wrong. She's not a freaking pawn," Jace spewed.

"Of course she's not. She's my Venator. And she knows her duty."

"Is it always about duty with you?"

"Yes."

"Who's waving their dick around now?" Derek murmured to Remy, his gaze glued to the ongoing debate.

"If the dick waving keeps up, I'm going to bring my plastic one from home to wield about. Maybe then someone will listen." Clearing her throat loudly, Remy stood. "Excuse me, boys. The pawn has something to say. I don't mind speaking to Franklin."

"Of course you don't." Jace's sarcasm was palpable.

"Enough. I don't really care about all the *personal* issues going on right now. Deal with them on your own time. This is Pack business and we need answers. Remy, you talk to Franklin and see what you can find out. Jace, you're coming with me and we're going to talk to Kimberly. I want to see if she's heard anything from her brother." Nico's edict brooked no argument.

Remy stared across the room at Jace. He looked as if he wanted to refuse, but she quickly shook her head at him. She knew Nico's moods and this wasn't the time to push him. In fact, she had a feeling he had some of his own personal issues going on right now.

Chapter Seven

The meeting couldn't have ended any sooner as far as Jace was concerned. He stood in front of the elevator watching the numbers light up as they neared his floor. Every last person in Nico's office was officially on his shit list, Remy included. There had never been a question in his mind about where her loyalties lay, but the fact she was willing to do anything, even something that could be to her detriment, was in-fucking-sane.

The more Jace thought about it, the more he realized Remy wasn't just a pawn to whoever was behind the whole Cassandra thing, she was a pawn to everyone who wanted to use her for something. Including their "oh-so-fearless" leader.

Remy's position in the Pack hadn't changed since they slept together, but his had. He wasn't just the Pack's *Rakshasa*, he was also the man in love with the *Venator*, and Jace wasn't just going to sit back and watch her get hurt.

The closer the elevator came to his floor, the better he felt. He had to get out of there before he said or did something he'd regret.

"You ever hear the saying about a watched pot?" Remy's voice from behind him dashed away the little bit of peace he'd manage to acquire since leaving the meeting.

"Not now, Remy."

"Still upset, I see."

Jace refused to answer. The doors slid open and he stepped in and turned, facing the controls. He hoped his silence would speak for itself, but as usual, Remy wasn't listening. She stepped in right beside him with an annoying little smile on her full, sexy lips.

He was so not in the mood for this shit.

"Did Nico send you to chase after me to make sure I don't leave the grounds?" Jace pressed the button to the ground floor harder than necessary, but it felt damn good.

"I'm not Nico's lapdog."

"Since when?"

Remy moved until she was behind him, and leaning into his back, she reached around Jace and pressed the button to shut the doors. The feel of her body pressed against his back was almost enough to make him rethink his pissed-off position. Almost.

"I'm surprised at you, Remy."

To Jace's surprise Remy's arms wrapped around his waist. "For?"

"I never thought you'd be the type to use your sexuality to get over on someone."

Instead of getting upset as he thought she would, Remy laughed. "I'm amazed you think I'd think I would be able to. I'm not exactly all known for my girlish charms."

"Then what are you doing?"

"Thanking you?" Remy nuzzled her head against his back.

"For..."

"Caring."

"Fat lot of good it does me."

"It means," Remy's arms tightened around him for a moment, "something to me."

"Then how could you—" Jace turned in her embrace until he was facing her and pushed her back so he could look into her face. "Why do you take that bullshit from him? From any of them?"

"This job, as pointless as it may seem to you, means a lot to me. Nico and the rest of them are the only real family I have. I could never forgive myself if anything happened to any one of them when I was sitting at home being the good little girl, especially when I know I could have done something to prevent it."

"They're not the only people who care about you, Remy."

The elevator dinged as they reached the ground floor. Remy stepped away from him just as the door opened. "I know it now."

"So did you two get everything worked out?" Jace's irritation returned twofold as he turned and to see Nico and the rest of the *Elitario* standing in the lobby. They must have taken the stairs and taken them quickly.

Damn interlopers.

"Just about." Jace pressed the button to close the doors once more, much to Remy's amusement.

"You know they can still hear us, right?"

"I'm going to pretend as if they can't." And just to make things a bit more interesting, Jace hit the emergency stop button, which set off an annoying alarm. "Now where were we?"

"I don't remember."

"Sure you don't." Liar.

Remy shrugged her shoulders and smiled. Jace didn't doubt for a second she remembered exactly where they'd left off, but like him, Remy realized everyone in the lobby would be able to hear them, despite the alarm. She might have been ready to open up to him but not in front of her crew.

"I'll make this easy for you. Tonight, after we both do Nico's bidding, we take a step back and do things a bit proper."

"Proper." Remy looked amused at his turn of phrase. "And proper means what exactly?"

"I want to take you out."

Remy raised her eyebrows as if the concept were totally foreign to her. "Out?"

"You know, a date. You put on a dress. I come to the door. We go out to dinner, maybe a little dancing. Then you take me home and let me have my wicked way with you."

"I don't do dresses."

Jace shouted with laughter and he wasn't the only one. He heard a few chuckles from behind the elevator door. "Of all the stuff I said, 'I don't do dresses' is your only response?"

"I don't own a dress."

"I suggest you go shopping then." Jace turned back to the control panel and hit the emergency button once more. "And while you're at it, why don't you buy some thigh-high stockings?"

"Why don't you stick your foot up your ass?" Now there was the Remy he adored.

"Because it wouldn't be as sexy as seeing you in a dress, stockings and heels." Jace waited until the door opened and Remy stepped forward before he slapped her on the ass. "I'll pick you up at seven so you better be ready."

Remy glanced over her shoulder at him and murmured, "You're going to pay for that."

"Promises, promises." He was feeling better already.

Jace stepped off the elevator and stopped in front of Nico, who was staring at him as if he wanted to have Jace's spleen for dinner. The sick, sadist side of Jace loved how he'd infuriated Nico. It was about time someone took him down a peg or two. "You ready?"

"Let's take my car." Nico's offer was more of an order, but despite his irritation with the man, Jace knew better than to decline it. "I need to discuss a few things with you on the way over. I'll drop you back here so you can get your car."

They all headed outside to the parking lot before Remy stopped Jace.

"By the way, Watcher Boy, how the hell am I getting home when my car is parked at your house?"

Pulling his keys out, he tossed them to her. "Easy. You take my car, go back to my house and switch them and Nico can drop me at home instead of here."

"I can, can I?" Nico asked snidely, but Jace refused to rise to the bait. Instead he pulled Remy into his arms and kissed her in front of God and country, not caring who saw or why. To his delight, instead of pulling away, she leaned in to him for a moment, giving back as good as she took.

When the catcalls from the *Elitario* grew ear-piercing, Remy pulled away with a slight stain to her cheeks. His she-wolf blushing? He could die a happy man now. "Until later, Elizabeth."

Remy's eyes narrowed but she didn't reply. Not until she walked away and Derek added, "Did he just call you what I think he did?"

"Shut up," she replied with a fist to his arm.

Problem solved, Jace watched as Remy drove away in his car before climbing into Nico's.

"Why is it you're under the impression I won't kill you?"

Jace shook his head. "I don't believe you can't or won't kill me. What you don't seem to understand is, I think Remy's life is worth whatever you may do to me."

"She's my Venator."

"She's my mate." Nico's eyes widened at Jace's words but he kept silent. "And I don't see you allowing your mate to put herself in danger. Let alone allowing anyone else to do it."

"I don't purposely put Remy in danger, you know." Nico slammed his hand on the steering wheel. "Goddamn it, Jace, she's my best friend in the entire world. I love her like a sister. We grew up together and there is no way in hell I'd let her do something she wasn't capable of doing. This is what she does, what she's been trained to do. I don't need someone thwarting my authority right now, Jace. The *Maggiore* are just itching to find a way to take me down. I need everyone together on this."

"I respect you and what you've done for the Pack. But I can't change how I feel."

"Keep it to yourself then. I want a united front. Even in front of the *Elitario*. Do you understand me?" Nico's words, although spoken softly, held a world of meaning. Jace could feel the tension in the car and he knew Nico was barely holding a leash on his beast.

Jace knew he needed to do what Nico asked and keep some of his concerns just between him, Remy and Nico. He nodded his head, and thankfully, Nico accepted his acknowledgement.

"You have it bad, Jace. Just be careful not to hurt her or I'll have to do something about it."

"No worries. I plan to keep her very happy." Even if he had to hogtie her to do it.

"How does Remy feel about this whole you being her mate thing?"

"She loves it."

Nico's burst of laughter was deafening. "I'm sure she does. You know she's not going to be easy to tame."

"I don't want to tame her. Just housebreak her."

"Good luck with that."

"I don't need luck."

Nico looked as if he wanted to say more, but instead he started the car and they headed over to the law firm where both Cassandra and Kimberly worked.

"So you still don't want to confront Cassandra?"

"Not yet. It's not exactly as if I can tell her that while I had surveillance on her, I happened to see a known Werewolf visiting. I'm not sure Cassandra knows anything

about the Were community. On the other hand, if David really is the father of her child, she's going to have to be brought in on the secret at some point."

"We still don't know why her child is important."

"I think I know." Jace wasn't sure why Nico didn't sound happy about the awareness.

When he didn't elaborate, Jace couldn't hold it in any longer. "Are you going to share with the rest of the class?"

"You know about the Were infertility issues. I think Cassandra getting pregnant by a Were is where our Pack is destined. Humans may be our only hope to continue the species. I'm just worried about all the current Were couples who aren't having children."

"Yourself included?"

"Very perceptive, *Rakshasa*. Once desperate to avoid pregnancy, Kimberly now worries she won't be able to have children. And I have no hope to give her."

Unfortunately Jace had no words of comfort either. Sometimes being the man with useless brain-numbing visions really sucked. The rest of the car ride continued in silence and Jace was actually happy when they arrived at their destination.

As they approached Kimberly's office, she spotted their arrival and stood to meet them. "What's wrong, Nico?" Kimberly could read her mate like a book and obviously sensed his unease.

"Nothing's wrong, Zingaro." Nico brushed the hair away from her face. "I just wanted to ask if you'd talked to David recently."

She shook her head. "No, in fact I haven't been able to get a hold of him for a couple of weeks now. I've left a zillion messages on his cell phone." Kimberly's gaze cut to Jace. "Have you seen something bad?"

"No, nothing of the sort, Kimberly. He was in one of my dreams but he was fine. We were just hoping to talk to him to see if he could shed any light on the vision."

"Why would he be in any of your visions?"

"That's what we want to know, *Zingaro*." Nico looked at Jace, his eyes filled with the same trepidation that traveled through Jace's soul. "That's what we want to know."

Unseen by the small group, Cassandra stood in the doorway separating her office from Kimberly's. She'd heard someone arriving and had come to see who it was right when they mentioned David. Leaning her head against the doorjamb, she curled her hand protectively over her stomach. *Dear God, what had Franklin done to David?*

* * * * *

As she stared at herself in the mirror, Remy cursed yet again. Now she knew why women were notoriously late. This girly thing was hard work. Checking her hose one

last time, she thanked the Lord the package she'd bought had come three pairs to a pack because she'd already run two of them. Of course at the time she hadn't been happy about it, wondering why she was paying for three pairs when she'd probably never wear them again.

In fact, her entire shopping trip had been a major chore. She had no idea what type of dress to buy and had finally let the saleswoman pick out a few for her to try on. It was the last dress she tried that she eventually bought. Picking up the dress, she was actually hoping Jace liked it. Compared to the others it was relatively plain, a simple black wrap dress with a subtle pattern.

But she liked the material and it was actually comfortable when she tried it on. Even the saleswoman complimented her, telling her how good it looked. She'd fallen for the trap and purchased the dress, happy to finally be done with the entire shopping extravaganza.

The doorbell ringing had Remy glancing over at the clock. It was only six-thirty. *Damn, Damn, Damn.* Jace was early. The man was going to die. Pulling the dress over her head, Remy stalked to the door, ready to do battle.

Remy started speaking before the door was fully open. "You are in so much trouble, Mister—"

She blinked in surprise as she saw Franklin standing in her doorway. Although she had left several messages throughout the day, she had been unable to reach him. Remy never expected him to show up at her door. In fact, she couldn't remember a time when he'd ever visited her apartment.

"I think you've mistaken me for someone else." Franklin looked her up and down, taking in the dress, hose and high heels. "And maybe I have too. I came to see Remington, the fierce fighter of the Pack. Instead I see a young woman." Leaning in, he kissed her cheek, something he hadn't done since she was a girl.

"Ah, sorry about the greeting. You're right, I was expecting someone else." Remy stepped back, allowing him entrance into her apartment before closing the door. She watched as his gaze studied the surroundings, feeling like a child again and hoping for his approval. Unbelievable when one considered they hadn't exactly been close in the last few years.

She tried to see the room as he would. It was decorated very simply with nary a knickknack in sight. The walls were painted a dark chocolate color and the furniture was soft beige suede. There were even a few nature prints on the wall, something she'd only added in the last month. The entire theme of the room was comfort.

Taking a seat on her couch, Franklin made himself at home. "So, Remington, to what do I owe the massive number of messages I received from you today?"

Never one to play politics, Remy wasn't going to beat around the bush. "I know you've been visiting Cassandra Adams. Do you want to tell me what's going on so I know if I should kill you, defend you or try to do a combination of both?"

"Remington, would you really kill me?"

"Of course I would."

Franklin smiled with pride at her words. He'd reared her to be a warrior and was obviously proud of what she'd become. "Ah, my dear, you do this old man's heart good."

"Old man, my ass. You're just as strong as you ever were. Maybe even stronger. And stop avoiding the question."

"No avoiding, I'll be happy to tell you about Cassandra. She's my daughter and your sister."

"What?"

"You heard me. She's the product of a youthful dalliance. I never knew she existed until she found me three years ago. Belinda was still alive then so I didn't want to acknowledge her publicly. But now she's pregnant and I want to know my grandchild."

Knowing Franklin had a biological child was shocking enough. Knowing he'd known about her for three years was devastating. Although they never had an overly loving father-daughter relationship, Remy felt distraught to realize she'd always thought she was special to Franklin.

Now that he had another child, his real child, who was going to give him grandchildren. Remy reached for the chair and sat, unable to take in the grief that was overcoming her. She thought she'd come to terms with the fact she couldn't have children after the battle five years ago that almost took her life. But first Jace revealed his vision this morning and now with Franklin's disclosure, Remy realized she never cared so much before.

"Remington, are you okay?"

Remy nodded, unable to speak for a moment. Clearing her throat, she tried for a semblance of order. "I'm sorry. It was the shock of it all. I was never expecting this. She's human, isn't she?"

Franklin grimaced in distaste. "Yes, unfortunately. The Were gene is recessive." He waved his hand dismissively. "No matter. The child will be Were."

"How do you know for sure?"

"The father is the young pup David Brenin, our own Benandanti's brother-in-law."

"But the child could still have the recessive gene, like Cassandra."

"I have faith this child will be Were. He will be the leader of this Pack someday."

As Remy listened to his words, she realized what he was saying. Not only was he trying to ensure his line went on, but he wanted his grandchild to hold the ultimate power within the Pack. The position of *Benandanti* wasn't hereditary, it was held by the strongest Were and Franklin wanted to be in that position. He couldn't best Nico himself so he was doing the next best thing.

"Sounds as if you have it all worked out."

"If only, dear child, life were so simple."

"Oh really."

"Yes, Cassandra... Well, I'm thinking she's not going to be as moldable as I was hoping."

"You mean manageable, don't you?"

"That too." Franklin chuckled. "Also, she seems a bit...off."

"How so?"

"Skittish. To be honest, I don't think she'll be up to the task of rearing a young pup."

"No." Remy watched Franklin with a mixture of bemusement and wonder. "And you think you'd do a better job?"

"I did all right with you."

"Yes, you did." *All right* wouldn't have been the way she would have worded it, but she was alive and semi-normal, so Franklin must have done something right.

"See?" He smiled. "But I have to say, that in this, I don't think I'll be up to the task. I'm getting on in age and not familiar with the new ways of things."

"As a fan of the old ones, that seems a bit right."

"This pup is going to need something neither I nor Cassandra can offer it."

Insanity-free DNA. "Which is?"

"A strong mother." The smile Franklin had been wearing as if it were a suit of armor from the moment he entered Remy's face dropped. "A warrior of unlimited proportions."

"You have anyone in mind?" Remy asked, even though she knew the answer.

"You of course."

That's where she thought he was going with this. Remy rose from her chair without a destination in mind. There was so much she wanted to say, yet she had no idea where to begin.

"Before you say no, think about this. This could be your chance at a child." Franklin rose as well and crossed the room until he was standing in front of her. In a disturbing violation of personal space, he placed his hand on Remy's flat stomach. "You will never know how I mourned the loss of your womb. I had such plans for you."

"You did, did you?" Her words were cold, as was the feeling creeping over her skin. He spoke as if her womb belonged to him and not her. "Then let me express my sorrow for you."

"No need, my child." Franklin waved away her words. "I know who is to blame."

Not this again. "It was a battle, Franklin. Nico wasn't at fault."

"He had you in the battle."

"I had me in the battle. It was a lucky passing blow. Nothing to be done."

"See, this is why I admire you so much. You'd give anything for this Pack. Hell, you did. You gave your womb. It was a sad sacrifice but a noble one."

"If I had to do again, I think I might have given a toe instead."

Her sarcasm was lost on him. "As you said, it's all water under the bridge in retrospect. I thought we'd lost everything, but I see now, it was only a small stumble in our path."

"Our?"

"Yes, our." Franklin patted her tummy then stepped back. "If you met her, you'd understand, Remington. She's weak, disgustingly so. I can't tell you of the war I've waged inside myself about allowing her to carry my grandchild."

"Was there another option?"

"Isn't there always?"

"Yes."

"It should have been you."

"I agree." To an extent, she did. It should be her pregnant.

"I can give you the chance again."

"Can you grow a womb for me?"

"No, but I can give you this child to rear." $\,$

"Give? Don't you think she should have some say?"

"Not really, but I can tell from your expression you think she does."

"Maybe just a little." This was getting out of hand. "You think we should just take her child. I think I'm going to need you to explain this to me a bit more."

"Another time perhaps, child." Franklin glanced at his watch. "Looks as if your beau is here. A bit early still, isn't he?"

Remy had been so enraptured with Franklin she'd missed the sound of Jace coming up her stairs. "A bit, yes."

"Not that it matters because you look lovely. I don't think I've ever seen you in a dress before. If we have a girl, you'll have to wear more of them. Nothing wrong with being a warrior and a lady, is there?"

"No," her voice was wooden.

"I agree." Franklin walked over to her door and opened it as Jace, hand raised, was about to knock. "Jace, well, well... Is this the way the wind the blows?"

"Evening, sir." Jace's voice was even and cool, as if he expected Franklin to answer. "It's a pleasure seeing you again."

Franklin held out his hand and took Jace's in a firm grip. He was a stickler for formality, even when he was plotting to take a child from its mother's arms. "You as well. Don't keep Remington out too late."

"Of course not." Jace grinned at the joke, much to Franklin's amusement.

"I like this one." Franklin winked at Remy as he patted Jace on the shoulder. "I'll be in touch, Remington. Think on what I proposed."

"I will." As if she could think of anything else. "Take care."

"Always."

Jace waited until Franklin headed down the stairs before he shut the door and let the smile slip from his lips. "What was that all about?"

"Franklin at work." Remy sat in her chair again, her legs having lost all feeling.

"What are you talking about?" Jace walked over to her and crouched in front of her until they were eye to eye. "Did he say anything or do anything to hurt you?"

Hurt? She needed to be able to feel in order to recognize pain. "No, he just offered me the chance at immortality."

"How so?"

"He offered me a child."

Chapter Eight

Unbelievably for the first time in his life, Jace watched as Remy had an emotional breakdown. She didn't wail or gnash her teeth, but instead bent her head and wrapped her arms around herself. He had no idea why the idea of having a child caused her such pain, but he did know he couldn't stand to see her like this. Standing, he pulled her out of the chair and into his arms.

She felt stiff, like a cardboard replica of Remy instead of the vibrant, sassy woman he'd fallen in love with. Jace knew he needed to break through whatever barriers she'd raised and get her to open up to him. Sitting back in the chair she'd just vacated, he settled her on his lap.

"Come on, baby. You have to talk to me."

Remy raised her head and looked at him. Although there wasn't a tear in her eye, the anguish he saw there tore him up. Jace wanted to race after Franklin and beat him to a pulp for hurting his woman this way.

"I...he..." She shook her head. "I don't know where to begin."

"Let's start easy. Explain how he offered you a child."

Remy sighed, as if preparing for a chore. "He's Cassandra's father. And not only does he know she's pregnant, he thinks the child has the Were DNA. He wants to take the child from her and let me rear it."

Jace absorbed the information. Knowing the significance of a human having a Were child, he knew Nico wouldn't be pleased it was of the *Polda* line.

"Why would he take the child from his own daughter?"

Remy eyes flashed for a moment and Jace could have kicked himself.

"I'm his daughter too."

"I know, baby." Jace tried to stroke her arm but she shrugged him off. "I was just wondering why he would think she wasn't capable of rearing the child herself."

"Because she's human. And according to him she's unstable, although that's debatable, knowing the source."

"He can be a really cold bastard, can't he?"

"You have no idea. He wants this child to rule the Pack someday." $\,$

"And the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world. Well, he has high hopes, that's for sure."

"We have to let Nico know what his plans are." Remy looked as if she wanted to jump up right then and find Nico, but Jace wasn't letting her go so easily. Wrapping his

arms around her, he drew her back against his chest, holding her close until he could finally feel the tiniest bit of relaxation in her body.

"The woman hasn't even given birth yet, baby. I think we can wait a couple of hours to inform Nico."

"You're right."

Jace stroked Remy's thick hair, little by little trying to get her to let go. There was more to this story but he was unsure if he should push her at this point. He had never seen her as fragile and he worried if he continued to question her, he might actually find her breaking point. On the other hand, he had the feeling this was the time and place to finally discover the true depths of this woman who was his mate.

Surprisingly, he never had to make that step.

"I can't have children."

Remy's announcement was stated matter-of-fact, as if she were telling him the sky was blue. But it explained so much. Her resistance this morning in the car and her devastation at Franklin's offer. Jace knew she had every right to feel the hurt and pain of never carrying her own child, but he also knew it didn't matter. Not to him.

Jace hated to ask, but he needed to know. "What makes you believe you can't?"

"The lack of a womb for starters."

The long thin scar that ran underneath her bellybutton came to mind. Jace moved his hand down her stomach until it came to rest upon where he thought the scar was. "Was it an accident?"

"No, I think the Cougar's aim was dead-on. Although I'm sure he was hoping to take out more than my flesh and womb."

"When did this happen?"

"Five years ago."

Jace's grip tightened as he pulled her closer into him. He remembered stories about the battle for the Silver Mines. It was a deadly mini-war that had taken place soon after Nico took over as *Bendanti* for their clan. The fight had been unprovoked and swift, but the *Brachyurus* had fought hard and after dismantling most of their opponents, had won the right to the land.

A battle over barren land had cost Remy her ability to bear pups. How fucking ironic.

"Remy, look at me."

Remy slowly lifted her head, staring at him. She looked almost apprehensive, as if waiting for his reaction, steeling herself against the perceived blow.

"I hate the fact that you can't have children. Not because it matters one iota to me but because it causes you pain. And I hate to see you in pain. It kills me. I want to hurt someone or something. I want to fix your problem and make the pain go away. But I can't do that. I can only be there for you."

Remy nibbled at her lower lip as he spoke, her nervousness a palpable presence in the room. When he finally finished, he could actually see tears shining in her dark eyes, although her formidable will would not allow them to fall.

"Damn you. Why'd you have to go and say something so sweet? I don't want to cry, dammit."

Jace wanted to tell her she could cry in front of him, but he knew it would do no good. His little she-wolf was a warrior not a crier. "Then don't. You don't have to do anything you don't want to do."

"Why?"

"Why what?"

"Why me? You can have any Were you want." Remy glanced over her shoulder at him and peered at him from her big brown eyes. "I don't want this to go to your head or anything, but you're a very attractive Were."

She called him a Were and not a man. Would wonders never cease? "You think?"

"In a Ken doll sort of way, yes."

Always the fighter. "Thanks...I think."

"I know you've been with other Weres, just as I know you could have the pick of the litter from the Coyotes. So why me? I'm not exactly overloaded with the womanly charms. I'm more at home in a brawl than at the mall. What gives?"

Did she really not know? "It's because I want the best."

"I'm the best at fighting."

"And loving."

"I don't know how to love."

Unable to help himself, Jace burst out laughing. Was she for real? At the annoyed look on Remy's face, he quickly gathered his senses and took control over his mirth. "Remy, that's the biggest load of crap I've ever heard. You love beyond reason, fiercely, loyally and deeply. And if you don't believe me just ask, Nico, Derek or Kellen."

"That's different."

"Not really. There is no wrong way to love. I'm just hoping I can cash in on the love bandwagon because, Lord knows, I love you."

"You do?"

"Without a doubt."

Remy opened her mouth then promptly closed it with a frown. Jace could tell she so badly wanted to say the words, but couldn't. The fact she would try meant more to him than he could ever explain. When she went to speak again, Jace placed his fingers over her lips, silencing her. "I didn't say it so you could return the favor. I said 'I love you' because I wanted you to know. I'm not looking for you to say it back now because I know you will one day and I'm okay with that."

Remy closed her hand around his and pulled it away from her mouth. "You are insane."

"I'm willing to concede the point."

"Make love to me."

Jace lifted his hand again and stroked a finger along her jawline, watching as she shivered in reaction to the slight touch. Tracing a path down her neck, he stroked along the tops of her breasts. They rose and fell with her every breath, which was definitely becoming shallower with his attention.

"With pleasure."

"Mine or yours?"

"Both. I'm here to please."

"Does this mean I get to have my wicked way with you?" Remy was twisting the button on his shirt as she spoke, the teasing lilt in her voice a balm to his heart.

"Whatever my lady wants."

"Oh goodie." Grabbing his shirt in her hands, she pulled at the material, tearing it open. Buttons flew as they were ripped off his shirt. "I hope this wasn't your favorite shirt."

Jace laughed. "No, I couldn't care less."

"Good, then let's get rid of it." Remy pulled the white shirt from his body, leaving his chest bare to her hungry gaze.

"Like what you see?" He was certainly enjoying the view he was getting. The fierce warrior he fell in love with was in full attack mode and he couldn't be happier.

"Oh yeah." Running her hands over his chest, Remy's touch was causing his cock to strain at the confines of his pants. When she leaned down and licked at his nipple, Jace had to grip the arms of the chair to stop himself from grabbing her and pushing her to the floor He had promised to let her control the evening and, by God, he was going to do it, even if it killed him.

Remy shimmied to the floor in front of him and peered up from between his legs. If Jace hadn't already been hard, his cock would have stirred to life at the sight before him. His beautiful she-wolf on her knees before him. "Damn."

"What?" Remy removed his shoes and socks and ran her hands from his knees to his thighs then up to his belt buckle, all the while wearing a little seductive smile.

And she thought she wasn't woman enough for him. "You take my breath away."

"Not yet, but I will." His pants came apart as quickly as his shirt did in her firm grasp.

Jace lifted his hips so she could pull his pants off. "You keep this up and I'll have nothing to wear when I leave."

"You speak as if I'm going to let you leave."

"You speak as if I'd fight you to leave."

Remy took a bit more care with his boxers. When she moved them past his hips, his cock sprang out, hard and aching for her touch. "Looks as if someone is happy to see me."

"I agree. Why don't you come over and say hello?"

"I think I just might." Remy rose to her knees and grasped his cock tightly in her hand. The pre-cum, which glistened on the head of his shaft, was used as lube as she stroked his cock.

"Tighter, baby."

"I thought I was in control."

"I lied. And when I said I wanted you to say 'hello', I didn't mean with sign language."

Remy grinned as she leaned forward and blew softly on his cock. When he hissed, she looked up at him and batted her eyes. "Whatever did you mean then?"

"I meant suck my dick."

"Gladly." Remy opened her mouth and slid his cock between her full lips and into her warm mouth. *Home at last*. Eyes closed, Jace buried his hands in the thick strands of her ebony hair and guided her in a ritualistic dance of oral sex. He directed her, teaching her with the pressure of his hands in her hair how he liked to be pleasured, groaning deep within his throat as she soon found the rhythm he craved and moved from student to teacher.

She moved her hand in time with her mouth, stroking his shaft as she slid his cock in and out of her lips. "That's right, baby. Suck me."

Remy moved with such fierce devotion and skill she soon had Jace gripping her hair tighter and fucking her mouth as he wanted to fuck her pussy. When the familiar tingle in his balls began, Jace pulled a reluctant Remy away from his cock. "Stop, shewolf. I don't want to come in your mouth."

"Then where do you want to come?" Her lips glistened with the evidence of his desires, making her look all the more tempting to Jace. He wanted to fuck her while he feasted on her mouth.

"So many choices."

"You can pick one." Remy rose to her feet, pulling the black dress off in the process. Her glorious body was encased only in a matching black lace bra and thong set, thigh-high stockings and the sexiest heels he'd ever seen.

Good Lord, she was trying to kill him.

Licking his lips, Jace rose as well and pulled her flush against him. His erection was pressed up against the rough texture of the lace and it felt great. "Anywhere."

"Yes."

Jace slapped his hand on her behind, and Remy's eyes widened in understanding. "Then how about your sweet ass?"

For all her supposed experience, Remy hadn't slept with many Weres. In fact, she could count on one hand the number of men she'd been with. And although Were sex was formidable, she'd never experienced anal sex. It had always seemed too personal and intimate. She'd never been willing to give up the control and let a man take her that way.

Her thoughts must have been revealed on her face because Jace put a finger beneath her chin and tilted her head so he could look her directly in the eyes. "Have you ever..."

"No, never."

Jace's satisfied smile made her want to slap the smirk right off his face. At the same time she reveled in his possessiveness. The dress must have warped her brain because she was definitely acting more girly than she ever had in her entire life.

"You are such a perv."

Jace didn't contradict her. In fact he didn't say anything at all. Instead, he stepped forward, causing Remy to retreat. Something she never thought she'd do. But she was enjoying his pseudo stalking, playing the game of cat and mouse. With her being the mouse.

"You have me at a disadvantage. I'm wearing heels."

"And looking damn fine in them too I might add. I knew when I told you to wear heels and thigh-highs I made the right call. They make your legs appear as if they go on forever."

Remy could actually feel her body flush at his words. When she'd asked him why he wanted her, she'd been dead serious. She was scarred, flawed, damaged goods. But he didn't care. He saw her as beautiful and he made her see herself as such.

"Are you thinking about it?"

"About what?" Remy eyed her surroundings. He probably thought he had her boxed in but she had some moves. She was just waiting for the right moment to unleash them.

"Delay all you want, she-wolf. I'm going to have your ass. But we can play your game first."

Jace strode forward another step. Remy held her position this time, but barely. She felt the need to run, to play the game he accused her of. Letting her Were chase her and take what she so obviously wanted to give.

It was time to make her move.

Leaping over the couch, Remy sprinted down the hallway toward her bedroom. She could hear Jace, hot on her heels, her surprise move not slowing him a single bit. Just clearing the doorway, she was tackled from behind, Jace's body cradling her own as they both landed on the bed.

"Are these your favorite?" Jace fingered her thong.

"No, why?"

"Time for payback." Bunching the material in his hand, he pulled, ripping the lace confection from her body. Her arousal was evident on her thighs and she was aching. Remy groaned in relief as his hand settled on her pussy, cupping her weeping flesh so lovingly. "Don't worry, baby. This kitty won't be lonely."

"Stop teasing me."

Jace rolled her over, pushing her onto her back and began kissing his way down her body. He pulled off her bra, paying special attention to her breasts, nibbling and sucking at her nipples until they were glistening with his saliva. Continuing his way down, he licked along the scar across her belly, staring up at her as he placed each loving kiss before finally moving lower.

"Did you change today?"

"Yes, before I came home." Remy didn't want to risk changing this time around.

"Good, she-wolf."

"I got your wolf."

"No, baby. I have yours."

Pulling her thighs wide, Jace licked at her clit, sucking it into his mouth. Remy gasped at his immediate assault on her sense, spilling forth her juices in response. Finally releasing her clit, Jace licked along the seam of her pussy before pushing his tongue deep inside. Remy grasped his head in her hands as she arched her hips toward him.

Jace paused in his sensual assault for a moment, gathering the moisture at her opening and dragging it across to her rosette. Rimming the hole with his finger, he ignited the nerve endings there, causing her to gasp at the sensation. Returning to her pussy, he gathered more of her essence to tease at her forbidden hole, finally pushing a finger deep inside.

The sensation was different from any she had ever experienced. Simultaneously she felt full yet wanted more. Jace returned his mouth to teasing her pussy, licking and nibbling at the swollen flesh, lightly grazing over her clit. At the same time he began to move the finger in her ass, loosening the tightness there. The overwhelming feelings were too much for Remy and as Jace sucked her clit into his mouth, she came with a scream, her body ricocheting back and forth between the dual sensations of Jace's mouth and teasing finger.

Vaguely returning to an awareness of her surroundings, Remy felt as if she were floating for a moment. Her orgasm had blinded her to everything for a brief moment and Jace had taken advantage of her euphoria. Her ass felt full and she realized he had added a second finger.

"Jace, it's too much. I can't take it."

Jace chuckled. "Are you telling me the big, bad Venator is felled by two fingers?"

"No, but you're too big. It's never going to fit."

"Oh, it'll fit, baby. We're just getting warmed up."

So saying, Jace began to thrust the fingers in her ass, moving them back and forth, slowly at first but with ever-increasing speed. Eventually Remy realized she was pushing back as he thrust forward, whimpering with need. Ever so easily he slowed his hand, letting his fingers slide from her ass. She felt empty at the loss.

"I don't want to hurt you. Do you have any—"
"The drawer."

Pulling it open, Jace found the lube and a box of condoms she had there. "Well, well, well. We'll have to play with some of these toys one of these days."

He grabbed a condom and the water-based lube before shutting the drawer. Jace tore into the wrapper with his teeth and then sheathed himself. After quickly coating his latex-covered cock, Jace returned his fingers to her ass to briefly lubricate the entrance before pushing her legs high and wide and kneeling between them. Staring into her eyes, he told her without words how much he loved her. Remy only wished she could return the words to him, but he said he could wait and she could only pray he would.

"I'll go slowly."
"I trust you."

Holding his cock in one hand, Jace pressed forward slowly until the head of his cock popped through her anal ring. He stopped for a moment, allowing them both to catch their breath. Remy reached down and began fingering her clit, purposely taunting Jace to hurry. Her ministrations garnered the response she was looking for when Jace growled and pushed forward, firmly seating himself deep inside.

The fullness was unbearable at first and Remy wondered why she had been begging him to rush. But eventually her muscles relaxed and she felt the need to move. Never stopping the slow, soft strokes between her thighs, she anchored her heels on the bed and lifted her ass, pushing his cock unimaginably deeper.

"Jesus, woman, are you trying to kill me?"

Remy laughed and then gasped as Jace pulled back, almost pulling free of her ass before sinking deep once again. He began a slow, steady thrusting, and she pushed back with every plunge, giving as good as she got.

"Rub your pussy harder for me, baby. I want to see you coming on your hand."

Happy to obey, Remy continued to stroke her clit, strumming at the swollen bundle of nerves. Her body was on fire and she knew she couldn't hold off her orgasm for much longer.

"Not yet, Elizabeth."

"Why?" she moaned, holding back as he commanded.

"Because I don't want you to come yet."

"What makes you think you get to make the rules?"

"This." Jace punctuated his words with a deep thrust, which damn near brought her off the bed. "And this. And this."

He matched every word with a plunge, fucking her ass with as much vigor as he had her pussy. "Say the words, Elizabeth."

Dazed, Remy tried to focus on what he was saying and not what she was feeling. It was a difficult task. Her pleasure sensors were on overload and she was having a hard enough time remembering to breathe, let alone think. "Say...what?"

"You know what I want to hear," he growled, leaning forward until his chest was against her breast. "Tell me what you are. Who you are."

From the dominating way Jace was powering into her and lording over her, Remy didn't doubt for a moment his Wolf lived and breathed inside him. He may not change, but he was truly her Alpha in every way that counted. "I'm..."

"Say it," he ordered seconds before he sunk his teeth into her nape.

"Your. Mate!" Remy's answer roared from her lips as her orgasm swept through her body, blinding her to everything around her except for the intense pleasure washing over her body.

She came over and over, her body jerking, her pussy weeping, her ass taking every stroke from Jace's hard shaft. The pleasure was maddening and Remy didn't want it to ever end.

Jace's own release wasn't far behind hers. "Mine!"

Remy couldn't have agreed more. She was his and whether she said the words aloud or not, she knew in her heart she loved him.

They were mated. Bound for life, and Remy wouldn't have it any other way.

With a heavy groan, Jace pulled from her trembling body and plopped down next to her on the bed. Their labored breathing was synced and for a moment neither one of them said a word.

The silence was a first for them.

Of course it couldn't last forever. "Damn, you're good."

Remy chuckled at the satisfaction lacing Jace's words. "Funny, I was thinking the exact same thing."

Jace stood and headed into the bathroom, disposing of the condom and returning with a warm cloth. After cleaning Remy, he returned the cloth to the bathroom before rejoining her in bed.

"So..." Jace propped himself up on his arm and leered at her. "What's for dinner?"

"If you think I'm getting back in that dress—"

"Fuck the dress."

"Now you want to fuck the dress. My ass wasn't enough?"

"No, she-wolf, your ass was just the beginning." Jace took her hand in his and brought it to his mouth. He slowly took the fingers she had masturbated with and licked them free of her essence.

Once done, Jace placed her hand down and ran his fingers up her arm to the nape of her neck, caressing the mark his teeth had imprinted into her skin. "Does it hurt?"

"Does it matter?" she teased.

"Of course. I wouldn't hurt you for anything in the world." There was a seriousness to Jace's tone that spoke volumes about his feelings for her. Remy had felt kinship before, even love from one friend to another, but she had never felt this before.

The love of a man. The love of *her* man.

Remy had to clear her throat twice before she could speak again. Gone was the teasing tone in her voice. "I know."

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"Do you?"
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"Yes."

"The answer is..."

"Yes." When Jace's face clouded over, Remy reached up and caressed his check. "But I'd hurt for you, gladly. I think you're worth it."

"I feel the same way."

"I believe you." And for the first time in her life, she did.

Chapter Nine

There was no doubt in Jace's mind when he opened his eyes where he was or why he was there. In fact, if he had slept through the night without a vision, he would have thought something was wrong. The only complaint he had was he had to walk through all the freaking underbrush to get to where the true vision lay.

As he continued to walk, the trees seemed to get larger but also closer together. The branches were bent, providing a blanket over the forest below and blocking out any semblance of light. Jace peered into the shadows, pretty sure he'd passed this way earlier, but it was hard to believe he could be walking in circles.

So far not so good. The sound of the babbling brook rang out through the silent night, but no matter how far he walked, the reverberation didn't get closer. He stumbled, he pressed forward, he fought his way through greenery that appeared to grow from every angle in every direction and over logs larger than most trees, and still he remained nowhere.

The dark night sky filled the empty spaces of the low-hanging trees and it was becoming increasingly obvious the reason he couldn't get anywhere was because the fates didn't want him to.

"Vlad!" Jace called out between curses as he battled bushes and low-swinging limbs. "Get your old ass out here."

There wasn't a reply. Not as if he thought there would be. There was something about calling his great-grandfather old that made him not want to appear.

Imagine that.

Frustrated, Jace refused to take another step forward. "A hint would be appreciated about now."

This was beyond stupid. If the fates wanted to show him something, then they better get on with the get on because he was so done with this *George of the Jungle* routine.

When his request was once again met with silence, Jace threw up his hands and flipped whoever was in charge of the dream-weaving bullshit the bird and leaned back against one of his tree oppressors.

Why couldn't he be normal and dream about Angelina Jolie? Even Rosie O'Donnell would be a welcomed break from this mumbo jumbo. A tree branch tore at his shirt and sliced his skin. Grimacing in pain, Jace looked down through the ripped yellow fabric and saw blood rise up.

What the fuck?

Jace had never bled before in a dream. Hell, he'd never felt pain before in a vision. How in the world was it even possible?

"Vlad!" he bellowed once again. "Either get your ass out here—"

"Or what, *nipote*, will you moon us next?" Although Jace could hear his great-grandfather, he couldn't see him. Which by the way he was feeling right now, was a good thing for the old man. "Your father would be so proud."

"He just might," Jace muttered, prodding at his injury. "Just tell me what I'm doing wrong."

"You're not seeing?"

"Because it's dark as hell in here."

"Darkness is not the reason why."

If Vlad were alive, Jace would have killed him. "Then why?" He added "smart-ass" silently to himself as he crossed his arms over his chest.

"Do you know the old saying, *nipote*, about not being able to see the forest—"

"For the trees?"

"Yes, that is the one. Take it to heart. What are you missing? What's stopping you from getting through to the vision?"

"You mean besides a flashlight and a machete?"

"Yes." The dry reply was telling.

As was Jace's aggravated sigh. What was he missing? Trees. Forest. Logs. Pain. What the hell was Vlad referring to?

Dropping his arms, Jace glanced around the crowded woods, trying to let his irritation flee. He couldn't think when he was riled. "You'd think this shit would get easier," he muttered to himself.

"Wasn't it?" Vladimiro's words whispered through his mind, clearing away the cobwebs that had gathered in the darkness.

The last time he dreamt things had been so much clearer and the difference between then and now was Remy. As soon as Jace thought her name, the forest disappeared and the chessboard once again appeared before him. This time it was minus all the pieces.

"I worry about you sometimes." Vladimiro walked up from behind Jace, frowning. "That took much longer than it should have."

"I get it. Remy is my aiutante. When she's here, I see things better."

"Right."

"So..." Jace looked around, waiting for Remy to appear, just as she had the last time they had fallen asleep together. When nothing happened, he glanced over at Vladimiro, who was watching him as if he were waiting for a light bulb to go off. "Well, where is she?"

"You tell me?"

"We went to sleep together."

"Yet you woke up here alone. What does this tell?"

"She's not here anymore?" Where the hell did she go?

"If you want an answer, nipote, look closer."

Suddenly Cassandra and the child appeared on the board again. But this time she was completely alone. The night air was still and calm but Jace recognized it as the calm before the storm. He looked around, waiting for the danger to appear. The silence was split by the howl of an animal on the hunt, but it wasn't a Wolf. It was a Coyote.

A small group of Coyotes broke through the trees, slinking along the ground, their bellies almost dragging as they made their way toward the chessboard. Their eyes gleamed yellow and Jace could see their lips unfurled, exposing sharp teeth. Leaping onto the chessboard, the Coyotes nipped at Cassandra, pushing her to her knees. The terror in her eyes was palpable.

"Where's Nico and the Elitario? Or Remy and the Rahu at least?"

"I thought you didn't want Remy to fight?" Vlad's words stung because in the end, he knew as much as he wanted to protect Remy, she was a fighter, a warrior who protected others who couldn't defend themselves.

"Shut up, old man."

Jace heard the howl of the wolves, but instead of the cavalry arriving, the *Maggiore* wolves appeared, circling the chessboard. They seemed willing to observe the byplay between the Coyotes and Cassandra, waiting to see who the winner would be.

Cassandra was trying to hold the Coyotes at bay but swiftly losing the battle. She curled herself over the child, attempting to shield it from danger. Jace wondered again at Franklin's assertion of her inability to rear the child. Cassandra may not be a Were, but she was protecting her child as any other mother would. Unfortunately, her human body gave out and she eventually collapsed.

As the Coyotes moved in for the kill, Nico and the *Elitario* suddenly appeared, battling against the smaller group. The fight was over in minutes, the *Elitario* obviously more experienced, although a few of the Coyotes were able to escape.

The *Maggiore* continued in their role as observers, watching as the *Elitario* attended to Cassandra. Intent on Cassandra and the child, Jace almost missed as one of the wolves broke away from Nico's Pack and headed toward the *Maggiore*.

Turning to Vlad, Nico asked the one question that had been paramount in his brain since the vision had begun. "Where's Remy?"

"You tell me, *nipote*, this is your vision."

Jace could feel his fury rising at the cryptic response. "Tell me, damn you. She's here somewhere, otherwise I'd still be stuck in the forest. So she has to be okay." He wasn't sure if he was trying to reassure Vlad or himself.

"I have no answers for you, *nipote*. Only you can find those. But you must remember to open yourself to the visions. Look beyond everything in the light and into the shadows. Because it is in the shadows you will discover the truth."

Jace wanted to ask more but a hammering was beginning in his head and it wouldn't stop. Sitting up suddenly, Jace pounded his fist on his thigh as he realized someone was knocking at the door. As he stood, he spotted his boxers laying over a chair in the corner. Remy must have brought them in from the other room. Quickly pulling them on, he made his way out to the living room to see who had the death wish.

Without checking the peephole, Jace swung the door wide. "What?"

The grim visage of Franklin greeted him. Great, Jace had slept with his daughter, who was conspicuously missing, and now he was being confronted by Daddy Dearest.

"When I said get her home at a decent hour I didn't mean I expected you to stay here."

Jace's eyes narrowed at Franklin's insinuation. "Are you having me watched or Remy?"

"Neither, my dear boy. Guilty conscience?" Jace wasn't sure if Franklin was referring to Nico having Cassandra watched or the fact Jace and Remy had obviously slept together, so he just remained silent, waiting to see what Franklin wanted. "Nothing to say?"

"Just wondering why you're here."

"Can't a father visit his daughter?"

"Twice in so many days? It's just not like you. Besides, she's not home."

"I'm worried about Remington. She is a sensitive soul. Not many see that side of her."

Jace stood back in amazement. As evil as he knew Franklin to be, the show of paternal concern and caring made Jace respect the man, if only infinitesimally.

"It's nice to see you care about one of your daughters at least."

Franklin cocked his eyebrow. "So, Remington shared our news."

"I just find it interesting you would wrestle a child from one daughter's arms to hand it over to another. Didn't you hear it's not a good idea to show favoritism?"

"You must realize I have both their welfare at heart. Cassandra is weak, a human, with no concept of the needs of a Were pup. How could she attempt to teach him all the history of our Pack with no knowledge of it herself?"

"That's bullshit. We have teachers and historians. She could learn if you gave her the chance."

"What about protection of the child? Remington is ideally suited. She was born to protect leaders."

Jace was surprised Franklin was so willing to reveal his avarice for power. But truly, what did he have to hide? The man never backed Nico, it wasn't a secret. And if he could rear a child to a position of power, what of it? It wasn't as if it were against Lycan Law. In fact, just the opposite. The strongest ruled. Nico became *Benandanti* by force, not by birth.

"Remy is more than the *Venator*. She is a woman, my woman and my mate. I won't allow her to be a pawn in your game." Jace wasn't above stating his own ambitions.

Franklin smiled. "I like you, my boy. Protecting my girl so fiercely. But remember, you will never allow Remington anything. She is her own woman and makes her own decisions."

Franklin turned to leave and Jace watched as he headed down the stairs. As he closed the door, he muttered, "You keep it in mind as well, old man."

* * * * *

Derek pulled in front of Cassandra's townhouse and shut off the engine. He adjusted his seat back until they could both peer out the tinted driver's side window. "So do you want to tell me why we're here?"

He probably wasn't the right person to call for a stakeout mission, seeing as how his Hummer didn't exactly shout "Don't look at me", yet Derek was the first person Remy thought of to bring.

In truth she could have asked any of the *Elitario* to come with her, but of the four men, Derek and Kellen were the ones she was closest to. And since, despite her shower, she still wore the scent of Jace on her skin, Remy thought it best to bring the friend who wouldn't be pouting because she wasn't giving him any.

"Recon."

"On whose orders?"

"Mine."

Derek laughed. "Just like I thought."

"Then why did you ask?" Remy focused on the floor of the building Kellen had said Cassandra lived and stared at the main door, praying the woman would come out. Even though she saw the blonde in Jace's vision as well as the drawing they'd completed together, it wasn't the same thing. She needed to see Franklin's daughter in the flesh.

"Because I wanted to hear you admit you were insanely jealous out loud."

"I admit nothing."

"You don't have to." Derek's voice lost some of the teasing quality. "She's not your competition, Remy."

"As if she could be." Even though her words were haughty, Remy's bravado was forced. She unbuckled her seat belt and turning, muttered to herself, "She's just a human."

"Who happens to be Franklin's biological daughter and carrying his grandchild." Remy had filled Derek in on the demented father-daughter chat Franklin and she had the night before in her apartment. Yet hearing him call Cassandra Franklin's child bothered her.

"It doesn't matter to me."

Remy never considered herself to be a possessive person, not when it came to Franklin anyway, yet she couldn't help the hurt coursing through her veins. This interloper was everything she wasn't and everything she could never be.

"Right." Derek dragged the word out as if he didn't believe the shit she was shoveling any more than she did as the words fell from her lips. "Which is why we're here at eight in the morning watching her place."

"I just want to see what all the fuss is about."

"You mean besides the *pregnancy* and the *Franklin DNA*?"

"Yes."

"Liar."

"Eat me."

When Derek didn't reply with his usual smart-ass remark, Remy tore her gaze away from Cassandra's door and looked into the knowing eyes of her friend. "What?"

"I would follow you blindly into a collapsing burning building or into battle with nary a weapon between us, but one thing I will not do is follow you down this path of bullshit."

"I don't know what you mean."

"Then let me clarify it for you. Your parents died. Mine were too consumed with the death of my brother to pay much attention to me. They let their grief rob them of their ability to parent, to love, to live. I buried them when I was sixteen, but they'd died long before then, and there wasn't a moment of my childhood where I didn't wish I could have traded places with Kai if I could have. If there is ever anyone you needn't explain wishing for more to, it's me."

"I know, it's just..." Remy did know, she just didn't know how to explain her whacked feelings to anyone. They didn't make sense to her, how could she possibly expect someone else to get it? "It's not as if I want to be pregnant right now. I just want the option. And it's not as if I wish Franklin were my birth father, I just want. I just want..."

"A family."

Sadly, Remy nodded her head. "Yes."

"You already have one." Derek reached out and took her hand in his. "Sure, I have all the looks, you have all the strength, Harrison has the brains and Kellen has all the charm. No wait, I have the looks, the strength, the brains and the charms, which just leaves you with the really good tan."

"Asshole."

"That's brother asshole to you," Derek teased. "You also have Jace. And from those teeth marks you tried very unsuccessfully to hide, I'm willing to bet he's not going anywhere for a while."

"So he thinks." Remy could feel her cheeks heating. She wasn't trying to hide Jace's mark, which surprisingly hadn't healed. Apparently the only Wolf mating ability he lacked was the knotting because the love wound was branding her skin just as surely as if he had fur.

"I don't think he's the only one."

"Shut it."

Derek chuckled. "Consider it shut. Now can we get out of here or what?"

Remy glanced longingly at Cassandra's door once more before nodding her head in agreement. "Sure."

"Good, I'm so hungry I could eat a sixth grader."

"You are so nasty. I hear those human kids don't bathe." Remy sat back in her seat and began to buckle up again when she spotted two men in a black van parked across the street. "Wait a minute."

"What?"

"I bet you five dollars we aren't the only stalkers out today."

The two blond men exited the van in sync and headed toward Cassandra's building. Their stealthlike moves combined with their musky scent screamed of their Were heritage.

"Coyotes."

When it rains it pours. "Either she's the world's biggest Were slut or they're up to no good."

Derek revved his brows in a leering manner. "Oh, I'm hoping for the former."

"Not in the mood to kill today?"

"I'd take a slut over a dead body any day."

"Good to know." Remy shook her head. Boys.

"You think Franklin has something going on the side with the Coyotes?"

"No. I seriously doubt it."

"You think she does?"

"Probably not."

"So we're thinking kidnapping."

It looked as if she were going to get to kill someone after all.

"Kidnapping." She sighed, shaking her head in dismay. You truly just can't fix stupid. "Do you think the idiots noticed it was daytime? It's almost as bad as staking someone out in a Hummer."

"Leave Lucille out of this." Derek opened his door and bound to the ground with Remy close on his trail. They crossed the street quietly, doing their best to stay downwind and to appear inconspicuous. They paused next to a brick wall along the walkway and watched as one of the Coyotes knocked on the door. When Cassandra opened it, her face was set in a polite smile, which soon disappeared as the two men pushed their way into her home.

"Did you hear a 'please come in'?"

"No, I didn't." Remy started across the lawn with Derek by her side. "See, this is why I was against joining with them. No manners."

"And we all know Emily Post is your middle name."

"Exactly."

"So do we have a plan?"

"Kill the bad guys."

"I love your plans."

When they came to a stop at Cassandra's front door, Remy raised her hand and knocked. "Domino's Pizza."

"It's too early for pizza," Derek chided.

"It's never too early for pizza."

There was a muffled noise from behind the door quickly followed by silence. Just as they had caught the Coyotes' scent, Remy knew they must have caught their wolf scent as well. Without waiting for a reply, Remy shoved her shoulder into the door, breaking the lock in the process. The red door gave under her strength and the jamb splintered as she burst into the room.

Releasing the door handle, Remy dusted off her shoulder and smiled. "I really don't know my own strength."

"You have to lay off the Wheaties," Derek said as he stepped into the room.

"I know, but I'm a growing girl." As they bantered back and forth, Remy's honed senses surveyed the room. Cassandra, the frightened mess she was, huddled behind a leather armchair, as if the dead cow could protect her from anything. The two Weres were standing just a few feet apart in front of the chair, looking like two dumb-as-a-stump statues.

The whole scene was ridiculous yet telling at the same time. There was no question Derek and she could handle these two Ken dolls.

"I'm going to give you to the count of three to turn around and get out of here before I rip you a new asshole," ordered the brawny Coyote.

"Can you count so high?" Derek calmly began to unbutton his black silk shirt and take it off. He hated to wrinkle his clothes when he changed. "And I can't speak for you, but I happen to like the asshole I have."

"One." The Coyote growled as he began to crouch lower to the floor "Two."

"Three," Derek finished for him, and pounced across the room, taking the counting Were to the floor in one fell swoop.

Remy could feel the swell of bloodlust rush over her as she charged the remaining Coyote. With the image of her beast in her mind, Remy changed into her wolf form mid-leap, knocking the transforming man to the floor. The weight of her clothing didn't slow her down as it puddled around her merging form. She was used to it. Remy had learned to adapt. Besides, she wasn't wearing clothes around her mouth. She plowed into him before he had a chance to fully change and her teeth clamped on his throat. With a powerful shake of her head, her teeth slashed through his skin, deep into his arteries.

The metallic taste of blood filled her mouth as she chomped down on him. The overwhelming urge to feast clouded her mind for a moment before reality came pouring back in. Cassandra may know about her Wolf heritage, but it didn't mean she was up to watching them eating someone in her home.

Reluctantly Remy opened her mouth and watched in glee as the Coyote's body twitched on the floor. It sometimes took a while for the body to catch up with the brain. Nevertheless, he was dead, even if his legs wanted to do a farewell dance.

Glancing over her shoulder, she saw Derek still toying with his prey. The man was almost dead. He was bleeding out from a wound in his stomach. Cassandra was going to need new carpet.

Remy trotted over to Derek and snapped at his hind legs. Finish him already.

Don't get pissy with me because you killed yours too quickly.

Remy glanced over at Cassandra who looked as if she were about to throw up. Apparently sister girl wasn't into gore and carnage. So much for Thanksgiving at her place.

Don't kill him just yet. I want to ask him some questions.

Fine. Derek's lips curled back as he stood guard over the injured Coyote.

Satisfied Derek would do as he was told, Remy trotted over to Cassandra and sniffed at her leg. Squealing, Cassandra pulled back as if she didn't want to get wolf hair or Coyote blood on her black slacks. Wimp.

With the image of her human self in mind, Remy transformed, stretching her body to get the kinks out. Cassandra's eyes widened as she took in Remy's bloody appearance. Her outerwear had puddled around her when she changed, but her undergarments had remained intact. Unfortunately, they were now covered in gooey death gore, but they weren't the only things. The artery had been a gusher and spilled out, not only onto the floor but onto her pile of clothes.

"Do you think I could borrow some clothes?"

Cassandra nodded and Remy shook her head in disgust. The human was useless.

"I'm going to go find something in your closet. I'll be right back." Remy wasn't sure if she should leave her alone, but she couldn't stand there nearly naked all day. Scouring through her closet, Remy realized finding something to wear was going to be

no easy task. The woman was a midget. She finally grabbed a T-shirt that was going to show off every curve and then some and a pair of shorts with an elastic waist.

It was better than nothing, she thought, as she headed back into the living room. Derek had turned back as well and was dressing.

As she made her way over to the dying man, she spotted Cassandra looking as if she were about to pass out at any minute. "Hey, are you okay?"

"I don't know. My baby...I'm pregnant. I'm not sure, but I think something—" Suddenly Cassandra cried out and doubled over in pain.

"Shit. We have to get you to a doctor."

"My ob-gyn, the number's on the fridge." Cassandra could barely speak as Remy rushed to the kitchen and grabbed the number. Snagging the phone, she dialed the doctor.

"Hi, Cassandra, what's up?" This was obviously no doctor's office.

"This isn't Cassandra. I'm at her house, but I think I have the wrong number. I need her doctor."

"This is Dr. Osterman. What's happened?"

"I don't know. Something's wrong with the baby."

Chapter Ten

Slowly coming awake, Cassandra took stock of herself. Definitely in a hospital, she thought, looking down at the ugly green gown she was wearing. Glancing up, she sucked in her breath as she recognized the African American woman standing in the corner staring at her.

Cassandra had known who Remington was from the moment she stepped in her townhouse. Franklin had told Cassandra all about his adopted daughter, how she was an important member of the Pack and Nico's special bodyguard. Just looking at her made Cassandra feel inadequate.

Everything Cassandra wasn't, Remington was, something Franklin had pointed out to her time and again. Now looking at her, Cassandra knew why. She would never be able to compete with the dark beauty in her father's eyes. No matter how many children she birthed.

Lifting her hand to her head, Cassandra moaned as she realized there was a needle stuck in her arm. She pulled at the needle, trying to dislodge it from her arm.

"Stop it." Remy was at her side in the blink of an eye.

"I don't want any drugs. The baby..."

"According to your doctor the baby's fine and it's only a saline drip, nothing but IV hydration."

Cassandra settled back against the bed, praying Remy wasn't lying to her. "Where is Felic...Dr. Osterman?"

Remy shrugged her shoulders as she returned to her post in the corner of the room. She stood like a solider, overlooking Cassandra yet seeing her and everything in the room at the same time.

The silence was maddening and it made Cassandra feel uncomfortable in her own skin. "Thank you for bringing me here but you can leave now."

"I can, can I?"

"Yes." Clearing her throat, Cassandra ventured forth with a question that had been plaguing her since Remington and the other Were showed up at her place. "What did those other...things want?"

That got her attention. "Things," she sneered, adding more emphasis to the word than Cassandra had intended.

"I didn't mean it like it sounded."

"Sure you didn't."

She was definitely Franklin's daughter. "Let me rephrase, what did those Wolves want?"

"They weren't Wolves. They were Coyotes. Couldn't you tell the difference?"

"Apparently not." So there was more to the other world than Werewolves. Cassandra really wanted to find out more but she doubted Remington was in the mood to share with her. "Well?"

"We don't know. We were going to question one of them, but you got all sick and we had to kill him so we could rush you over here."

"You make it sound as if it were an inconvenience to bring me here."

"It was."

Bitch. "Why do you hate me?"

Remy cocked an eyebrow, a slight smirk on her face. "I don't."

"Please. It's written all over your face." Cassandra couldn't believe she was confronting this woman. Franklin adored her. Had lorded Remington over Cassandra in fact.

"I don't think you know me well enough to know what I'm thinking." Remington's eyes were hard as flint as she spoke, although the smirky little smile still hovered over her lips.

"I know more than you think. You're Nico's *Venator*, the greatest warrior of this generation. You believe in Lycan Law and the only thing you hold more dearly is personal loyalty. The epitome of a true Were, I think, was how Franklin put it."

Although quickly masked, there had been a look of surprise from Remington when Cassandra repeated Franklin's accolades. He must have never told Remington what he thought and now she had revealed everything.

"If you're so smart, tell me what I'm thinking."

"You see me as weak. A puny human who is so far beneath your attention you would ignore me, just as you would ignore an ant on the ground. Which is why I can't figure out why you helped me today."

"I step on ants."

Cassandra sighed with regret. She was completely and utterly alone. Franklin certainly couldn't be a refuge, he only wanted her as a baby-making machine. She was afraid to go to Nico, her complicity in Franklin's plans too big a stumbling block. And David was nowhere to be found.

"Oh for God's sake, stop feeling sorry for yourself."

"I-I'm not."

"I-I think you are." Remington's mocking imitation of her stuttering answer was the last straw and she could feel the tears gathering in her eyes.

"Don't. You. Dare," Remy ordered harshly.

Shocked, Cassandra stared back at her in horror. What would Remington do to her?

"Stop staring at me as if you're Goldilocks and I'm the Big Bad Wolf come to eat you."

"A lot you know, smart-ass. Goldilocks was eaten by the three bears. The Big Bad Wolf wanted to eat Little Red Riding Hood."

Remy burst out laughing. "Damn girl, you may actually have a backbone yet. Not crying anymore, are you?"

"No, I'm getting mad."

"Good. Get mad, get angry, just don't cry. I can't stand it."

Cassandra clenched her jaw, determined to prove herself in Remy's eyes. She didn't know why, but she had a sneaking admiration for her. It was easy to see why Franklin was so taken with her.

"So, are you ever going to explain why you helped me today?"

"You don't fuck with family. Even if it's family you barely knew you had."

Remington called her family, Cassandra hadn't been expecting such a admission. "I never had a sister. It was always just me and Mom until she died five years ago."

"My parents died when I was seven. I can barely remember them. Franklin took me in and reared me as his own. I was never really close to his mate Belinda. Really, sometimes it just seemed like me and Franklin in the house."

Cassandra wanted to ask her more but the door opened and the attractive Asian man who had come to her townhouse with Remington walked in carrying two cups of coffee.

"Hey, you're awake. Cool, I'll let Felicia know."

"It's Felicia now, is it?" Remington's tone was filled with humor.

"Oh yeah." Derek handed Remy one of the cups before bounding out of the room like a puppy.

"He's awfully cheerful."

Remington snorted. "He's in lust with your doctor friend."

"What?" Hell, she had barely thought of Felicia and what she would think of these two. Cassandra realized she may have to reveal her secret. Unfortunately she had no idea what Franklin or even Nico might think of such a plan. The idea of explaining the reality of Werewolves to someone, even someone she considered a friend, was not high on her list of things to do. In fact, she had hoped to avoid the issue all together.

"Yeah, it was a real surprise for me too. Sure, Derek loves the humans. But she's not exactly his style, you know."

"Felicia is a beautiful woman." Cassandra felt the need to defend her friend. She was beautiful, even if she wasn't the type of woman who graced magazine covers.

Remington held up her hand. "I'm not saying she isn't. All I'm saying is he usually goes for six-foot model types with legs up to here and no boobs in sight. Dr. Osterman is practically the exact opposite of that."

Cassandra couldn't dispute facts. Felicia was short, well-rounded. About as far away from runway model as a person could get.

"So what's this I hear about my patient being up?" Felicia popped her head around the corner of the door, a wide smile across her face.

"Hi. Guess you didn't expect to see me again so soon."

Felicia walked into the room, quickly followed by Derek, who looked for all the world like a besotted loon.

"That's for sure. When your friend called to tell me you'd been attacked and there was something wrong with the baby, I practically freaked."

"Remington is my sister." The words just fell out.

Both Derek and Remy recoiled in shock at Cassandra's declaration, but Felicia took it all in stride.

"Well, thanks to Sis here, both you and the little one are doing well. You have an incompetent cervix."

"What the hell is an incompetent cervix?" Remington asked, recovered from her earlier shock.

"Unfortunately Cassandra's cervix is weak and has been gradually opening during the course of her pregnancy." Turning back to Cassandra, Felicia continued. "If you hadn't been attacked, you might never have known about the problem until you went into premature labor."

"Oh my God. So what now?"

"Bed rest."

"For how long?"

"The rest of your pregnancy, sweetie. Unless you are coming here for appointments, I want you flat on your back and your feet up in the air."

Derek snorted at Felicia's description and she turned to frown at him. "This is no laughing matter. She could put the baby's health in serious jeopardy."

Derek sobered quickly at her admonishment. "Sorry."

Felicia turned from Derek to Cassandra, who was still having a hard time processing the news.

"I'm serious, Cassandra. If this baby means as much to you as I think it does, you're going to follow my instructions to the letter."

"But..." Cassandra held her hands up in confusion. "I live alone. How can I possibly be on complete bed rest?"

"Can't you find someone to stay with you?"

Her mother was dead, her father was crazy and her baby daddy was nowhere to be seen. It wasn't as if she had a lot of options. "No one I can think of."

Felicia gestured over to Remington. "Well, what about your sister?"

"What about her sister, what?" Remington questioned, stepping forward with a frown.

"Can't she stay with you?"

Cassandra and Remington both answered at the same time. "No!"

"Why not?"

"Yes, why not, big sister?" Derek teased, leaning against the wall with a big smile.

"Because she... Because I..."

Cassandra glanced over at Remington, looking for help.

"The child's life is at stake." Felicia picked up the chart at the end of Cassandra's bed. "So whatever little family tiff you two have going on needs to be squashed now."

Without another word, Felicia walked out of the room.

"Hey, Felicia, wait a minute." Derek headed out after her, leaving Remington alone in the room with Cassandra.

Cassandra picked nervously at the nonexistent lint on her sheet. Part of her wanted to get to know Remington, but this wasn't exactly the way she wanted to go about it.

"I can hire a home-care nurse."

"Or you can just go to your house and pack your shit."

"Why do I have to move?" Cassandra asked confrontationally.

"Because I'm bigger, stronger and there's no blood on my floor." Remington turned on her heel and left the room.

Maybe having a big sister wasn't so great after all.

* * * * *

After Franklin left, Jace snuck out of her place wearing only his boxers and headed back to his house to shower and change. He just emerged from the shower, wrapping a towel around his waist when he heard his front door open.

"Hey, honey, I'm home." Remy's lilting voice rang out loud and clear.

Jace smiled in anticipation. Even though she'd abandoned their bed this morning, she'd shown up at his home, which he considered a good sign. Walking down the hallway, he stopped to admire the vision standing in the middle of his living room. Jace didn't know what he had done in life to deserve this, but whatever it was, he was damn grateful. Remy, his too-sexy-for-words mate, was wearing a tight T-shirt pressed against her body like a second skin, outlining her pert lip-licking-good nipples and a pair of running shorts, which made her long, brown hot-as-hell legs seem as if they were never-ending.

It was enough to make a man howl in appreciation. There was a God.

"Nice outfit, but did you wear it out in public?"

"Ha, ha," Remy snarled at him, and Jace just chuckled at her mock anger.

"No matter, I can rip it off in three seconds flat." Jace headed toward Remy, intent on following through with his words. The sound of a throat clearing stopped him in his tracks.

"Uh, hi." Cassandra stepped through the open door, rolling a suitcase behind her. Looking around, Jace realized there were a lot of suitcases in the room.

"Want to tell me something?"

"Jace, this is Cassandra. I think you've seen her around. Cassandra, this is Jace...my mate."

Damn Remy all to hell. Hearing her call him mate made him want to pull her to the floor and pound into her, mark her as his over and over again. She had to announce their status when he couldn't do a damn thing about it.

"Okay, what's she doing here?" Ever since he'd begun dreaming about Cassandra, Jace had wanted to meet her. But not like this and not with so much luggage. This was not going to end well.

Cassandra glanced from him to Remy with a worried expression on her face. "I don't think—"

"Shut it. You're not allowed to think. In fact, you shouldn't even be lugging a big suitcase around. Sit." Remy was ordering Cassandra around like one of her soldiers. The poor woman looked as if she'd been through the wringer. But she dutifully shut the door behind her, left the suitcase where it was and headed to the couch.

"Feet up. You heard the doctor."

Doctor? What the hell did I sleep through?

Cassandra rolled her eyes but twisted around on the couch until she was lying flat with her feet up on one arm. "I feel ridiculous."

"Too bad."

"Hello. Anyone want to tell me what's going on?" As much as Jace was amused by their banter, he was interested in the home invasion more.

"We're moving in for a bit. Hope you don't mind."

We? Since when was Remy a package deal?

"Cassandra, please excuse us." Jace shackled Remy's wrist in his hand and dragged her to the kitchen. Before he could begin to cross-examine her, she started to speak.

Rapidly.

"I'm sorry, but I didn't know what to do with her. Since we're mates now, you're stuck with my sister, just like I get stuck with yours."

There was the mate word again.

All of a sudden, the whys and the hows didn't matter one little bit. She acknowledged *them*. Who cared about suitcases? Pressing her against the counter, Jace let Remy feel the evidence of what her words did to him. "I love it when you call me

mate." He licked at the mark on her neck, happy to see it still remained, a clear sign of his possession of her.

"You have a bigger place than I do and she needs help. I'm not good with people, you know that." Remy was babbling away about the hospital and doctors as Jace licked the curve of her ear and bit down on her lobe. Pushing his hands up under the T-shirt, he cupped her breasts, pinching her nipples lightly. "Shit, Jace, that feels so good."

"You can move in anyone—sister, brother—I don't care. Just not your father."

Remy started to laugh but it quickly turned to a moan as Jace snaked his hands past the elastic band of the running shorts.

"Hmm, no panties. I like."

Remy widened her stance as Jace's fingers found her moist opening. But before he could delve deeper, she grabbed his hand. "Jace, we can't. Cassandra's right in the other room."

"If you're both going to be living here, she better get used to seeing and hearing some stuff. Understand? There is no way in hell I'm not making love to you."

"Well, that's good, because I'm not giving you up any time soon." Remy grabbed Jace's ass. "I just think we should get Cassandra moved into her room before we start fucking in the kitchen."

Jace pulled back, realizing the truth of her words. "Fine. But as soon as possible, I want you out of this outfit and spread-eagle on my bed."

"Out of it?" Remy cocked her head to the side. "I thought you liked it."

"Like isn't even the word." His feelings on the outfit were more of deep-hungered gurgling noise from the pit of his throat. The sound a hungry man made when he spotted food. It was nowhere in the vicinity of like.

"I might have to keep it then."

"It's not yours."

"Do you really think I'd own something so...tight?"

"A man can hope." But now that she mentioned it... "Who does it belong to?"

"Malibu Barbie in there."

"And you're wearing it, why?"

"Because I changed and my clothes were bloody."

Jace closed his eyes and took a deep breath. His she-wolf was going to be the death of him. "Do I even want to know?"

"Do you follow the belief couples should be open and honest with one another?"

He shouldn't have asked. "Yes."

"Then Derek and I killed two Coyotes."

"Two."

"But it was self-defense. Sort of."

"Sort of?" Jace knew he sounded like an idiot repeating everything she said, but he couldn't help himself. This whole thing was beyond comprehension by anyone completely sane.

"Well, it's not as if they really stood a chance against us. So it was more of a slaughter—but for a worthy cause. We saved Cassandra and her little messiah."

"I never said her child was the Wolf messiah."

"Yeah I know, it just sounds a lot cooler than I saved my adoptive dad's daughter knocked-up and her out-of-wedlock kid."

"You are so right." Jace laughed as he leaned his head against her neck. "So how long do you think the two of you will be here?"

"She's here until she drops the kid and I'm here, well, I guess it's up to you."

Jace pulled away and looked deep into her eyes. God he loved this woman. Crazy family and all. "How so?"

"I'm here for as long as you'll have me."

How his she-wolf warrior could be so fierce yet so vulnerable all at the same time amazed him. Remy was so guarded, it was remarkable she even brought up the issue of moving in. The fact she felt comfortable enough to show up with her suitcases was a step in the right direction. "How does forever sound to you?"

* * * * *

Remy eased out of bed and padded softly down the hall toward the guestroom. Or not-so guestroom, seeing as how Cassandra was now occupying it for at least another five months. Despite everything she had gone through in the last few days, she was still having a hard time comprehending how she ended up babysitting the woman who not only haunted her mate's dreams, but who was also her adoptive father's birth daughter. In addition to being the woman carrying the hope for the next generation of Weres all wrapped up in one person and now in Remy's very own care.

Talk about an overload of facts.

Remy opened the bedroom door quietly and peered inside. Still asleep, Cassandra snored softly, which earned the sleeping woman a frown from Remy. Could she be more cute? Even her snoring was ladylike.

This shit was going to get annoying real fast.

Closing the door, Remy made her way back into her new bedroom and closed the door. This time the faint noises coming from sleeping blonde didn't bother her in the least. It made her smile. Jace's snoring was cute, and not in an I-have-to-gouge-my-eyes-out way. Almost as cute as every other aspect of him.

The exact moment Remy realized she was standing in the dark naked staring at the former bane of her existence with a stupid smile on her face, was the exact moment she realized she was a goner.

Damn it. She was in love.

This was all Jace's fault.

Walking back to the bed, Remy joined Jace under the covers. He turned toward her immediately, wrapping his arms around her lovingly, even in his sleep. As much as she loved the snuggling, she was ready for something more. Which was surprising when she considered how thoroughly Jace had loved her just hours before.

Leaning forward, she nibbled at his neck and laved the love mark she'd given him in return. Sometimes she felt as if they were a couple of kids making out and wanting to show off to their friends what they had done. But it was true. Remy wanted to let the Pack know Jace was hers.

Remy's hands stroked over the muscles in his chest before snaking down between their bodies to find Jace's warm cock.

"That's right, baby. Keep going."

"You're awake."

Jace rolled over until Remy was flat on her back, her core cradling the cock she had just been stroking. "Uh-huh, and a very nice way to wake up it was."

"You're insatiable."

"Who was the one teasing whom here?"

"Okay, we're *both* insatiable." So saying, Remy wrapped her legs around Jace's and using her Were strength rolled him over until she was lying over him. "This is better."

"Any way I can have you is good for me." Jace pulled her head down for a kiss, wrapping his fingers in her hair.

The ringing cell phone broke them apart. Jace groaned as Remy grabbed the receiver and checked the caller ID. "Nico," she said, as she handed it to him.

Jace hit the talk button. "I think you do this shit on purpose, man. Do you have some kind of bias about somebody besides yourself getting some?"

"This is no time for jokes. I finally reached Rachel Santana and we've set up a meeting."

Jace sat up, all sense of enjoyment draining from him. "Did she know about this?"

"She's not talking, but this issue with the Coyotes needs to be resolved immediately. The *Maggiore* are biting at my heels about this treaty with the *Morbauch*. This could either make or break us. I need you both here as soon as possible."

"I understand, Benandanti. We'll be there."

"I guess I better leave a note for Cassandra."

"Don't think you don't owe me a good time, mate."

Remy smiled. "I won't forget."

Chapter Eleven

Jace and Remy walked into the boardroom at the Desert Sanctuary to find the room already full. Every head turned toward them expectantly. Nico was sitting at one end of the table, the rest of the *Elitario* flanked behind him. At the other end sat Rachel.

She had brought two of her *Rahu* with her, yet they stood to one side, leaving her looking slightly alone, in Jace's opinion. He wondered how telling it was in regards to the situation at hand. Glancing at her face, he noted she looked more haggard and drawn than she had a few days ago.

As Jace and Remy walked to the other end of the table to join Nico, they received a number of speculative looks from their Pack. It may have had something to do with the fact they were holding hands, but since Remy didn't seem to mind, Jace was going with it. Remy released his hand and stepped behind Nico, taking her usual spot directly to his right, while Jace went and stood behind her. Up until this point, he hadn't had a specific spot, but from now on this would be it. He would have her back no matter what she did and to hell with the rest of the world.

"Can we get started?" Rachel's voice, although low, resonated throughout the room. From the annoyed look in her green eyes, apparently she didn't relish getting out of bed in the middle of the night to answer Nico's summons any more then he did.

"Derek, Remy. Please tell us what happened earlier today."

Derek and Remy began to describe the incident at Cassandra's townhouse. Although they kept strictly to the facts, Jace was amazed by their daring. His she-wolf was one audacious Were. The room was silent, listening to the story until they began relating the fight scene. Then the Coyote Weres exploded, disputing the events.

"You must have come on them unaware, to take down two of our Coyotes so handily."

"I assure you they were aware. Right until they drew their last breath. In fact it was quite pathetic. I'd been under the impression your Pack knew how to fight." Remy had her hands on her hips but her body was coiled and ready to spring into action at any hint of a threat. For the first time, Jace didn't begrudge Remy her position. She was a warrior and a damn fine one.

The Coyote looked as if he were going to speak, but with a wave of her hand, Rachel shut him down. "Enough. It doesn't matter..."

"It damn well does matter. I don't need any advantage to kick your ass. I won't allow us to be accused of being cheats or liars just because your Pack doesn't know how to fight."

"Are you sure they were ours and not rogues?" Rachel questioned.

"Why don't you tell us?" Nico turned to Kellen, who stepped forward with a black garbage bag in his hand. Reaching inside, Kellen withdrew a severed head, one after the other and placed them on the table in front of Nico. The bloodless bobble heads stared lifelessly toward Rachel and her *Rahu*.

The Coyote woman gave the display a passing glance before looking back at Nico with a grim look on her face.

Nico grabbed the closest head to him and held him up by his blond hair. "Do they look familiar?"

"Yes." Rachel nodded her head in annoyance. "Unfortunately."

"Why were they there?" Nico asked coolly. Jace could practically see the wheels turning in his head as he watched the reactions of the *Morbauch*.

"I guess we'll never know, since they were killed in battle." A blond *Rahu* crossed his arms over his chest and sneered at them defiantly.

Jace noted Rachel's jaw clenching tightly for a moment before she spoke. "I can assure you I did not send them. In fact, I have no idea who this human woman even is or what they would want with her."

"Your assurances are most kind but difficult to accept when we examine the evidence in front of us."

"I have no proof to give you of our innocence. There is only our mutual history since the treaty began. We have been friends to you in your time of need."

Rachel reminded Nico of her Pack's assistance four months ago when Kimberly had been kidnapped by a member of the *Maggiore*. Without the added strength of the Coyote, they may not have been able to save her.

Nico nodded. "I know you have appeared as friends, but there is the old saying, 'Keep your friends close and your enemies closer'. Perhaps you are just drawing us in to determine if we have any weaknesses."

Rachel threw up her hands as if she were annoyed. "I cannot make you trust us. Only time will tell if we are truly your friends and eager members of this alliance. If you are unwilling to give us the time to prove ourselves, I don't know what else we can accomplish here. You aren't the only person who's had to deal with rogue Weres. There are members of my Pack," Rachel glanced coolly to the Coyote who had spoken, "and of my own inner circle who disagree with my decision to merge with your Pack."

"Then why did you?" Nico inquired.

"Because like you, *Benandanti*, I too see the hungry look in the eyes of our women for children who have not come. I too realize fighting only ends in death, not in peace. And I too am tired of the ways of old. Change is a necessity, not a luxury."

"Then why the attack?"

"It is a question I cannot answer. Who was this woman?"

"My sister," Remy said, speaking up. If any of the *Elitario* were shocked by her claim, they didn't show it. Cassandra was living in his house and Jace was still having a hard time coming to grips with it.

Rachel shook her head. "Sorry, but it means nothing to me."

"Maybe you should ask someone else who apparently knows more about your Pack than you do." Kellen spun one of the heads on the table like a top. "Because you seem a bit left out of the loop."

"Fuck you, dog boy." The *Rahu* to her left stepped forward menacingly but halted when Rachel held her hand up.

"Let him be, Doc." Her words said one thing; her angry eyes said another. "He has balls. I wonder how they'd look adorning my rearview mirror."

"Come find out." Kellen smiled, rolling the head he'd been toying with toward them.

"May I make a suggestion?" Harrison stepped forward.

"Why not? Everyone else has," Rachel responded as she grabbed the head and tossed it to Doc as if it were merely a ball. "Bane's mother might want his head."

"I think we don't trust one another because we are such strangers. Historically our Packs used to intermingle and it was only right before The Great War when we became so secretive toward one another."

"They came to the barbeque," Derek noted.

"Okay, fine. But we need to learn more about each other to truly learn to trust. I suggest we have an exchange of sorts, with one of the members of our Pack working together with the *Morbauch* and one of the members of their Pack coming to work with the *Brachyurus*."

"I think it's an excellent idea," Rachel said.

"Of course you would," sneered Kellen. "Especially if you were trying to spy on us. You've just gotten one step closer."

"We would have the Coyote in our midst. It's not like we couldn't watch him," Harrison noted.

"I agree. It's a sound plan." Nico stood. "And Harrison, since you thought of it, I think you should go learn about the Coyotes."

"What?" Harrison's shocked rejoinder echoed through the room.

"Scared?" one of the Coyote Rahu asked.

"Not at all." Harrison crossed his arms in imitation of the man.

"Good, now that we have the situation settled, who do we get?" Remy asked, eyeing the two *Rahu* like fresh meat.

"I think Roman would be a good candidate," Rachel said, indicating the now-shocked and reluctant-looking *Rahu* to her right.

Stepping forward, he laid his hand on her arm. "Benandanti, I don't think—"

"Then it's a good thing I didn't ask you." Rachel's voice never changed tone but she glanced down pointedly to her arm. Roman removed his hand and stepped back, standing as if carved from stone and looking at neither Pack.

"So it's decided then." Rachel smiled across to Harrison. "I guess I'll see you tomorrow."

Harrison nodded, still looking slightly dazed about his new assignment. Rachel gathered her coat and stood. "Roman, gather Zed, if you would."

Reluctantly Roman walked to the end of the table and scooped up his departed comrade's remains.

"And Blondie," Remy called out, "you can report here tomorrow."

Roman nodded, turned back around and followed the Coyotes out the boardroom. Kellen followed them out, making sure they left the building before returning.

"So what's the plan?" he asked.

"What do you mean?" Nico looked as confused as Jace felt.

"Come on, *Benandanti*, you have to have something else in mind, right? I mean you're not really just sending Harrison to them without a plan."

"I truly believe in this treaty, Kellen, and think this exchange is a good idea. I have no ulterior motive."

Kellen shook his head in disbelief. "I think you're making a mistake."

Jackson, who had remained silent through the entire exchange, spoke up. "I agree, *Benandanti*. History has shown us we cannot trust the Coyotes. We shouldn't be so eager, especially now they've started to show their true colors."

"What true colors?" Jace asked, taking a seat finally. All the bickering and finger-pointing reminded him a bit too much of schoolyard shenanigans. Nothing had been resolved concerning the whys of Cassandra's would-be kidnappers, if that was even what they were there for. "Rachel said she knew nothing of the plan, and I for one believe her."

"Well, now I feel reassured," Kellen sneered.

Jace refused to rise to the bait. The Were was bitter, and after lying in Remy's arms, he could understand why. But she was his mate and Kellen was just going to have to get used to it.

"Are your feelings dream related?" Nico asked.

"No," Jace admitted. "Just a gut feeling. I can sense she wants this to work."

"As can I," Remy spoke, adding her support. "I mean, I don't trust them, but I trust her."

Everyone around the room nodded their head as if in agreement.

"We will see this plan through to the end." Nico's tone brooked no disagreement. "Harrison, are you prepared to learn and report back to us?"

"Yeah, but now I'm wishing I kept my mouth shut," he grumbled, sitting with a pout. It was amusing to see a six-foot-tall muscular man act like a three-year-old.

"See? This is why I don't raise my hand in class," Derek teased. "That's what you get, teacher's pet."

"What are we going to do about Cassandra?" Remy asked, cutting the teasing men off. "I mean, she can't stay with us forever."

"Us?" Derek raised a brow at her wording. "You're an us now?"

"Shut up." To Jace's surprise, Remy blushed, much to the amusement of everyone in the room.

"Oh my gawd!" Harrison placed his hand over his heart and rolled his eyes. "Do my eyes deceive me or did Rem-fastest-ass-kicker-in-the-west-ington just blush?"

"I do believe you're right," Derek replied in the same falsetto tone. "Next thing you know, she'll be wearing pink and doing her nails."

She did have a set of pink panties, but Jace figured he'd keep that bit of information to himself for now.

"Even I'm at a loss for words." Kellen stared at Remy as if he were seeing her for the first time. "My Remington blushing."

"No, *my* Remington," Jace felt the need to point out the obvious.

"I guess," Kellen conceded.

"Can we get back on track here, people?" Remy, still battling the heat in her cheeks, turned her gaze toward Nico. "What are we supposed to do with Cassandra?"

"Watch her. Protect her but don't trust her. Not fully."

"I don't," Remy said softly. "She's hiding something, I just can't tell what yet."

"Give it time." Nico stood. "Remember, what's done in the dark will always come to light. Secrets and shadows never remain for long."

* * * * *

It was very, very early in the morning when Remy and Jace finally made it back home. Already she was thinking of Jace's house as home. She might as well just end her lease and move in because she couldn't imagine going back to her apartment now. Not after he'd asked her to stay forever.

The only thing marring her happiness with Jace was her inability to tell him how much he meant to her. Remy wasn't the kind of girl who could say "I love you" easily and since Jace had already said it first, anything she did would be anticlimactic. On the other hand, she wanted to let him know she cared.

Kicking off her shoes, Remy picked up the note she'd left for Cassandra on the kitchen counter, crumpled it in her hand and tossed it in the trash. "Probably didn't even know we were gone."

"It was still nice of you to do."

"Ugh, don't use nice and me in the same sentence. It gives me the chills." Remy opened the refrigerator and grabbed a bottle of water for herself and one for Jace. She was really starting to make herself at home here. Handing him the bottle, she bit her lip in thought.

"Okay, what is it?"

"What is what?"

"The question you want to ask me but don't know how to ask me."

"I'm losing my touch. I used to be able to hide all my telltale signs around you." Remy tipped the bottle back taking a swig of the water. "Now you can read me like a book."

"Is it so bad? We are mates."

"Yes, I guess we are. It just seems so...weird. I mean, I never imagined myself with anyone permanently."

Jace crowded her up against the counter. "You're stuck with me now. Hell, you announced it to the *Elitario*. Can't go back on your word. Wouldn't look good in front of the guys."

"Maybe I don't want to change my mind." She wrapped her arms around his shoulders and pulled him down for a kiss. "Just remember, this is a two-way street. You can't change your mind either. Even if you want to."

Jace stepped back, looking down into her face intently. "What's that supposed to mean?"

"Look, I know this thing between us happened kind of fast. And I know you said you didn't care I can't have kids." Jace started to interrupt her, but Remy held up her hand. "All I'm saying is, I hope you don't change your mind down the road because I'm a natural-born killer and I don't share my stuff."

"I ought to spank your ass."

"For speaking my mind?"

"No, for doubting my word."

"It's not as if I doubt you. It's just I don't want you to regret something later you said in the heat of passion."

"Fine." Jace placed his hands on her hips and picked her up. Startled, Remy dropped her water bottle and grabbed hold of his shoulders, quenching the girly squeal rising in her throat.

"What are you doing?"

"Proving a point." Jace carried her the few feet to the marble counter and sat her down. But he didn't release his hold on her. "Elizabeth. Dear sweet, fierce, loyal, deadly, sexy-as-all-hell Elizabeth, listen to me. If you never in your life believe anything else I say to you, believe this. I love you, and whether or not you can bear my child has little to do with it."

Blinking, Remy fought back the tears swimming in her eyes. "But with Cassandra being pregnant now, we know somewhere out there is a cure for our infertility. It's only a matter of time before the rest of our Pack is able to breed again."

"You're not listening to me. We will have a child. One day. It may not grow in your body or come from my seed, but I swear to you, you will be a mother. A great one."

"Promises, promises."

"It's a fact, she-wolf." Jace brushed his lips across her cheek, kissing away a fallen tear. "Besides, look who you're talking to. I'm the watcher, the seer of our clan. Don't you go doubting my gift."

"I thought it was a curse."

"Do you always have to have the last word?"

Remy tilted her head to the side as if she were pondering his question. Jace tightened his grip on her hip and gave her a warning growl, forcing Remy to smile at the sound. She'd make a Wolf out of him yet. "What a silly question, Watcher Boy. Of course I always have to have the last word."

"Then get on with it, she-wolf."

Jace nuzzled her neck, his breath whispered across the mark she wore proudly, causing Remy's body to shiver in his embrace. "I love you."

Jace froze in mid nuzzle and slowly pulled away from her. Her words didn't exactly get the reaction she'd been expecting. It wasn't as if she'd been expecting balloons and a parade or something, but she had expected him to look as if he were happy.

"What?"

"Nothing."

The hell it was nothing. "Is that all you're going to say?"

Jace slyly smiled. "I thought you wanted to have the last word."

"Ass." Remy grumbled as she pushed at his shoulders. She didn't push too hard though, she didn't want to actually move. Just to put up a bit of a fight. She may not be all that feminine, but she wasn't stupid.

"Say it again," Jace teased.

"Gladly, ass."

"Oh sugar," Jace picked her up and spun her around. "You and your sweet-talking. No wonder all the boys fall at your feet."

Remy wrapped her legs around his waist and tightened her grip around his shoulders. "No, it's because I knock them down."

"You're so fierce."

"You know it."

Jace began to walk out of the kitchen with Remy firmly attached to him. "I know you love me."

"Allegedly," she teased.

"Oh no, she-wolf." Jace fumbled with the doorknob to the bedroom and pushed it open with his knee.

"If you let me down, this would go a lot smoother."

"You want down?" Without further delay, Jace placed his hands under her arms and lifted her up off him then dropped her on the bed.

The jarring fall startled Remy into laughing. "Fool."

"For you, baby. Just for you. I suppose I better close this, we don't want to scare your sister." Jace closed the bedroom door.

"Then I guess you'll have to learn how to keep the noise level to a minimum."

"It's not I who does the howling, she-wolf."

"Sure you're not." Yawning Remy rolled over and stretched out on the bed, her body sinking into the cerulean comforter as she wiggled her toes.

"Tired?" Jace massaged her shoulders, releasing the knots in her muscles.

Remy nodded. "Hmm, that feels nice. Much more and I'll be out like a light."

"Too bad."

Remy glanced back over her shoulder. Although Jace's touch was soothing rather than sexual, his face was a different story. As tired as she was, the hungry look in his eyes made her perk up and take notice.

"Aww, did Watcher Boy want some loving?" Remy teased, using her old familiar taunt in a whole new way.

"You know, I always hated when you called me Watcher Boy, but now, it's kind of like our thing."

"You are so twisted." Remy rolled over on her back, stretching her arms high above her, causing her T-shirt to rise. She had worn her own clothes to the meeting, but had taken her bra off in the car on the way home. Her nipples were stiff under the thin fabric. Just having Jace in the same room made her feel excited.

"But you like me this way."

"No, I love you this way."

"Getting used to saying it, aren't you?"

Joining her on the bed, Jace held her arms above her head and took a nipple in his mouth. He sucked on it through the thin material of her T-shirt and Remy hummed in appreciation. He held both of her hands in one of his and pushed her top until it was up around her neck.

Her nipples begged for attention and Jace nibbled and licked at them until they were hard little points. Finally releasing her hands, Jace pulled her T-shirt off, throwing it over her shoulder. Getting up on his knees, he stared down at her.

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"What?"
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"Just looking."

Licking her lips seductively, Remy ran her hands over her breasts and down her stomach to the waistband of her jeans. Slowly she unsnapped them, pulling the zipper down. As she braced her feet against the bed, Remy raised her hips and tugged at the material until she could kick off the pants. She started to slip her hands inside her jade silk panties but he grabbed her wrist.

"No, let me."

Jace hooked his fingers on the sides of the panties and gently slid them down her long, brown legs. His hands caressed her thighs and calves as he moved lower, drawing out the anticipation. No matter how many times he touched her, it always felt as if it were the very first time. "Jace, please."

"I love it when you beg so prettily."

Remy whimpered as Jace finally bent his head and his tongue parted her soft folds to taste her. With eyes closed, Remy surrendered her body to his delicious torture. Arching her hips, she tried to push her heated flesh onto his talented tongue, but Jace wasn't having it. Pulling back, he blew on her sensitive nub. "I don't think so, shewolf."

"Jace." She growled. "Don't tease me."

"Teasing implies I'm not going to pleasure." Jace swiped his tongue against her clit. "I'm simply delaying your pleasure."

"Bastard."

"Let's see what other naughty words I can get you to say." Jace toyed with her clit, licking it, teasing it with his teeth, nibbling her erect bundle of nerves until Remy thought she would go insane.

With every stroke of his tongue, Remy's breath quickened and she grasped the comforter in a death grip. Still Jace forged on. He suckled the tight bud into his mouth and intense pressure bordering on pain, yet feeling so damn good, tore through her body. Remy couldn't keep her cries muffled any longer. "Fuck...yessss...Jace..."

Chuckling, Jace began to double his efforts to drive Remy out of her mind with pleasure. It wasn't enough for him to just torture her with his mouth, the bastard had to get his fingers involved in the action. Sliding his fingers deep into her pussy, Jace began to finger-fuck her as he licked her clit.

Her hips gyrated as he fucked her with his fingers. Thrust after thrust brought her closer to her release. "Jeeze...yes..."

Suddenly Jace withdraw his fingers from her soaked pussy and placed them against her rosette. His fingers, wet from her juices, slid into her ass, sending Remy over the precipice and her body began to shake uncontrollably as she came hard. Jace continued his assault of her senses, exposing her clit to the air and blowing across it, sending shivers throughout her body. He withdrew his fingers, much to her dismay, and began to kiss his way up her stomach. When Remy finally opened her eyes, she saw Jace kneeling over with a cocky grin on his handsome face.

"Now it's my turn." Remy sat up and pushed Jace down until he was lying flat on the bed.

"So you want to be in control, huh?"

"Oh yeah."

"Who am I to stand in your way?"

Remy began trailing kisses down his chest to his stomach. Jace sucked in his breath when she reached his groin, but she just laughed lightly and stroked down his thighs and calves, ignoring his cock but for the brief wisp of hair she trailed over the tip. As his cock was leaking pre-cum, she knew Jace was close and wanted to tease him at little.

Finally, she reached up and grasped his cock in her hand then leaned down to swirl her tongue around the head. Holding his balls in her other hand, she fondled them gently, eliciting a welcoming growl from her mate. Jace had wrapped his hands in her hair, guiding her head as she took him deep in her throat. But just as she started to suck his cock in earnest, he pulled her back.

"I want you to ride me, baby."

Chapter Twelve

Remy looked up at him, her hand still around his cock and her full lips wet from tasting him. She smiled at widely. "My pleasure."

"No, both our pleasures."

Jace hissed with delight as she licked across the head of his cock one last time before scooting her body up to straddle him. Taking his cock in her hand, she rubbed it between her legs, coating him with her juices. Although he enjoyed her touch, he wanted to feel the grasp of her warm, wet pussy squeezing him tightly.

Remy's eyes were closed and her body was moving in countermotion to her stroking, her hips rocking against his hardness. Grasping her ass in his hands, Jace halted her motions and she opened her eyes in question.

"Now, Elizabeth. I need you now."

"So much for me being in control," she pouted.

"How about the illusion of control? Back up, baby." Jace waited until Remy moved off him before reaching into the nightstand table and pulling out a condom. As he tore into the package, Remy touched his hand.

"Uh, Jace, honey." Her voice was filled with humor.

"Yes."

"No womb, remember, so no chance of kids." Even though there was humor in her voice, it didn't quite reach her eyes.

Jace tossed the condom back on the table and sat up so they were eye to eye. "There may not be a chance of you carrying our child, but you will mother our child."

"Whatever." Remy pushed him back down and straddled him once more. "I'm healthy. Blood test and all that jazz."

"As am I."

"Then no condoms. It's just you and me from now on."

"It's been just you and me for a while now, Remy."

"What can I say, I'm a slow learner," she teased.

"Well, welcome to Jace's remedial class of fucking. Please grab the nearest cock and climb aboard." Reaching down between her legs, Remy spread her lips wide and guided his cock into her waiting entrance. Bit by bit she slowly lowered her body. Jace could feel her muscles yielding to the pressure as her pussy clasped him snugly.

"How am I doing, Teach?" Remy's words were halting, as if she were having a hard time speaking. Jace knew the feeling well.

"You're a bright pupil. I might have to move you to the head of the class. Now you're in control. You set the pace, she-wolf."

Instead of immediately moving, Remy leaned down to brush the tips of her breasts across his lips. Jace opened his mouth to capture one of her nipples and sucked it into his mouth. Remy's nails were digging into his shoulders as she braced herself and her low moan was one of delight. Releasing her breast with a pop, Jace turned his head to its mate, swirling his tongue around the berry-brown nub.

"Jace, I don't think can I stand any more."

Jace gently bit at the tip of her breast one last time before reluctantly allowing her to sit back for a moment to catch her breath.

"Move for me, baby."

Remy began circling her hips, rising on her knees and experimenting with finding a perfect a rhythm. Jace held on, stroking his hand over her curves. Just seeing his pale hand move against her dark flesh had Jace's cock aching. She was beautiful. She was sexy. She was his.

Finally setting a pace, Remy began rocking back and forth, her pussy working his cock as if it were a fulltime job.

"Damn, baby." Jace gripped her hips in his hands, breaking his word to let her set the pace. She just felt to damn good. Jace moaned as her body contracted around his cock.

So tight. So hot. So wet. Her pussy was a virtual wonderland of pleasure. "You fuck so good, she-wolf."

"You're...not...bad..." Remy's nails dug into his skin as she rode him, "yourself...fuck, Jace..."

"You want it, baby. You got it." Jace gripped her as hard as he could and turned her rocking motions to straight up and down fucking ones. His cock, so hard and thick, drove into her wet, tight pussy over and over. The vision was breathtaking. Her body taking his offering, swallowing his shaft time after time until their rhythm was just a blur of motions.

"Yes! Yes!" she cried, her voice rising to glass-shattering levels.

Mindful of their guest, Jace reached up and covered her mouth with his hand, ceasing her muffled cries but not the low moans drifting out.

She was an animal. So wild and primitive in her passion. Head thrown back, Remy's hand left his shoulder and cupped her breasts, squeezing her erect nipples between with her fingers.

"That's right, baby, play with your nipples for me."

Bearing down on him, Remy ground against his cock as she exploded around him. Her legs tightened around his hips as she rode her orgasm to completion. The walls of her tight pussy contracted around his cock, milking him as he pounded into her. The tight sensation and muttered moans had Jace spiraling out of control.

With a savage groan of his own, he pulled her down onto him and came pouring into her heated core.

Jace clasped Remy's collapsed body in his arms and listened as her labored breath slowly regulated as they lay there. He could stay with her in his arms like this forever and thankfully would be able to.

"Do you need to go for a run, she-wolf?"

Remy lifted her head, shaking it in denial. "No, too tired."

"Poor baby." Jace rolled her over and pulled the comforter, which had been kicked to the bottom of the bed, over her rapidly cooling body. Remy mumbled her thanks but was already half asleep from exhaustion.

Closing his own eyes, Jace recalled the hurt look in Remy's eyes when he had again mentioned their child. If only she could see what he did.

* * * * *

Jace found himself back in recognizable territory, walking through the forest. Unlike the last dream he had, the pathway was clear and the reason why was the woman walking by his side. They soon heard the sounds of the babbling brook through the clear night air and found themselves in the familiar clearing. He watched as she looked around her surroundings before turning back to him.

"Do you always dream this same scene?"

"Not exactly, she-wolf. This is the tableau for my dreams, the actual scenes change often."

"Hmm, interesting. So, what's the movie tonight?"

"Just watch and see." Jace grimaced as he realized he was starting to sound like Vlad with his cryptic answer.

The air around them shimmered a bit before finally coming into focus. Remy was kneeling on a blanket spread over the ground. Instead of her usual uniform of jeans and a T-shirt, she was wearing a poppy-colored halter dress and the loose waves of her hair were tied back with a ribbon.

"Are you fucking kidding me? As if I would ever dress like that." Remy pointed at the image of herself. "Change it."

Jace laughed at her indignation. "I can't change it, she-wolf. This is the vision."

"Pretty damn convenient for you." Remy crossed her arms, giving him a hard glare.

Jace watched as the dream Remy began pulling food out of a hamper and spread it out as if setting up for a meal.

"Oooh, a picnic, what's for dinner?" Her sarcasm came through loud and clear.

"Shh, you're supposed to be watching."

Remy rolled her eyes. "It's not as if she can see or hear me. In fact, she is me. A disgusting version of me, but me nevertheless."

Jace pulled Remy into his embrace, wrapping his arms around her. Leaning close to her ear, he whispered, "Pay attention."

Remy sighed dramatically but stayed silent and watched the scene unfold.

There was rustling in the woods and a small toddler came running out, quickly followed by an image of Jace himself. Although he'd seen many images of Remy with this child, this version of the dream was one he'd never experienced before. In fact, it was the first time he'd ever seen himself in one of his visions.

The child had spotted Remy and, with a leaf in one hand and a twig in the other, raced toward her at breakneck speed. Holding her arms wide, Remy caught the young girl as she barreled into the hug. The other Jace joined them as Remy dutifully looked at the treasures the child presented to her, oohing and ahhing over them.

"She doesn't look anything like me," Remy whispered, her taunting about how she couldn't be seen or heard forgotten.

On one hand, Jace had to agree with her. The child had sandy brown hair, which at one time looked as if it might have been braided, but several strands had escaped and now hung loosely around her face. He couldn't tell the exact color of her eyes from this distance, but they were a lighter color, gray perhaps. Most telling, however, was her pale skin, a stark contrast to Remy's cocoa features.

On the other hand, he could see Remy's fierceness and strength of character in the child's face, her love of life. "I stick by my story. This is our daughter."

"I didn't think you could control your dreams."

"Normally, I can't. In fact, I'm not really controlling this one. But I've had many visions of you with our child and when I went to sleep last night, I remember thinking I wanted to show this to you."

Jace didn't know if she realized it but Remy was softly stroking his arm as she watched their little family picnic. He wondered if she was going to say anything more about the vision.

"We look like we do right now. Well, almost, except for the crazy clothes I'm wearing."

"Let it go."

"You're not the one who looks like a Stepford wife."

"You don't look like a Stepford wife. Besides, I think dresses are sexy."

Remy turned in his arms, her lips pursed. "No, you think dresses are accessible."

"That too."

"My point is," Remy poked him in the chest as she spoke, "this could be us tomorrow for all we know."

"Exactly." Vlad's voice startled them both and they broke apart.

"I should have known you'd show up," Jace said dryly.

"Of course I'd show up. I'm your guide, aren't I?"

Remy stepped forward. "So what do you mean 'exactly'?"

"Just like you, nipote, your aiutante wants all the answers handed to her."

"Damn right I do."

"You must prepare for the arrival of your child at any time. You don't know when or where it will happen. Just as in life, you must be open to all possibilities."

Remy turned to look at Jace. "He really sounds like a fortune cookie sometimes."

"I know. Annoying as hell, isn't it?"

"If you both weren't so..." Vladimiro shook his head before continuing. "Just remember what I told you before, *nipote*. This isn't over yet. There is much more to come and sometimes the answers are there, just hidden in the shadows beyond our regular vision."

"Mumbo jumbo," Remy grumbled as she turned to look back toward the dream version of them. "She looks happy with us."

"But of course." Jace took her hand in his. "You're her mother. How else would she look?"

"I'm a mother." Her voice cracked as she spoke. Surprised, Jace looked down at her and watched as tears poured down her face.

"Remy." Pulling her into him, Jace held tight to his little warrior woman. "I didn't show you this to hurt you."

"I'm not hurt," she denied, pulling back so he could see her face. Though tears stained her cheeks, a smiled graced her lips. "I'm happy, Jace, and in love."

"With our daughter?"

"And with you."

"Sweet-talker." He would never grow tired of hearing her say she loved him. And for the first time in his life, Jace didn't consider his visions a curse. It was a blessing, just like the woman he held dearly in his arms. "This is only the beginning, Elizabeth."

"I know, Watcher Boy. I know."

* * * * *

The cool air whipped through Franklin's beige fur as he ran over his land. The winter weight of his fur was long gone now, which permitted him to enjoy the brisk morning air. While others enjoyed running at night in Packs, Franklin preferred the solitude of first light. Away from the masses, he could be one with nature and with himself.

His morning ritual would have to change soon though. At least the solitary part. He had a cub to think about, to show the way as he had Remington when she was just a child. Except this time he would mold the newborn from the beginning. With Remington, he had to work with a semi-blank slate, erasing all memories of her family along the way.

This child would be completely moldable and all his.

With his backyard in sight, Franklin sprinted faster. The rolling green of the untouched land gave way to flat plains. His modest brick home belied the largeness he strived for, instead presenting an unpretentious face.

Suddenly he noticed he had a visitor waiting for him, reclining on his lounge chair as if he didn't have a care in the world. Ballsy.

Franklin skidded to a stop in front of the lounging Were and growled. Much to his amusement, the man stood and rounded the deck, opening the back door for him. With a skill developed over time, Franklin eased out of his wolf form and into his human one, all within a blink of an eye.

Stretching, he worked out the lingering kinks in his shoulders before reaching over to the barstool and retrieving his robe.

"Did you have a good run, sir?"

"Always." Tying the stash, Franklin turn to the young Were and eyed his protégé speculatively. "And you, did you have an interesting meeting?"

"The Coyotes failed, sir."

"Did they?" Franklin raised a brow as he rounded the bar and made his way to granite counter. Without asking, Franklin poured himself and his visitor a cup of coffee. "I think not."

"But they didn't capture her as you wanted."

Franklin chuckled. People would never learn. "I assure you, young pup, things happened just as I intended."

"You knew Remy would show up and stop them."

"But of course." His visit with Remington couldn't have gone any smoother. Franklin knew dropping the bombshell of Cassandra would send Remington scurrying over there to check out what she would consider her foe. As if Cassandra could ever hold a candle to her. "Just as I knew the forged medical records would ensure Cassandra would need to be on bed rest, which would entail..."

"Remy inviting her to live with her?"

"But of course." After handing the Were his cup, Franklin, his own cup in hand, walked into his pantry and activated the hidden switch to slide the far wall back, opening the entry to his cellar. "Remington has never been good about leaving well enough alone."

The two men made their way down the stairs into the dark underground room. Even though the former wine cellar was now a prison, didn't mean it had to lack class. It had all the comforts of home with taupe walls, leather chairs and a bar with a dash of something extra, such as prison bars. And of course what good was a prison without a prisoner?

Pausing in front of the cell, Franklin took a sip of his coffee and sighed. He loved mornings.

"I see he's given up on changing."

"I'm not sure if he's given up or just worn out." Franklin admired the sedated man's drive. Despite being held captive for four months, David hadn't given up his fight for freedom. It was commendable. Foolish, yes, but still commendable.

"They know he's missing."

"It took them long enough." If he had to have opponents, the least Franklin could hope was they'd be worthy foes. "It doesn't matter now of course. Cassandra will be nearing her fifth month soon. We now know the fertility drug is a success."

"What are you going to do with him?"

"Well, release him of course. I'm not a monster. Just a proud grandfather."

"And what do you want me to do now?"

Franklin turned to his apprentice and smiled. "What traitors do best of course, blend in."

"I'm not a traitor." The yellow eyes of his apprentice widened in delight. "I'm a revolutionary."

"Long live the revolution," Franklin toasted, amused at the Were's words. A revolution. How delightful.

About the Authors

Lena Matthews spends her days dreaming about handsome heroes and her nights with her own personal hero. Married to her college sweetheart, she is the proud mother of an extremely smart toddler, three evil dogs, and a mess of ants that she can't seem to get rid of. When not writing, she can be found reading, watching movies, lifting up the cushions on the couch to look for batteries for the remote control and plotting different ways to bring Buffy back on the air.

Liz Andrews is an Ohio native who loves rooting for the home team. When she can manage to unlock herself from the ball and chain that connects her to the Internet, she enjoys reading, going to the movies and hosting dinner parties for friends. In the real world, Liz has an MBA and works in the hospital business. However, she much prefers to escape into the world of books. She has admired and read various writers for many years and is happy to have finally joined the rank of author.

Lena and Liz welcome comments from readers. You can find their websites and email addresses on their author bio pages at www.ellorascave.com.

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