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# SHIFTERS

Shelli Stevens



## Primal Attraction

From the best selling author of Dating Season

*Primal Attraction*

*By*

*Shelli Stevens*

## **Primal Attraction by Shelli Stevens**

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### **Primal Attraction**

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## **Dedication**

Thanks to Deanna for encouraging me to write this story, and to Susan for doing a fabulous job editing it. As always, thanks to my family and friends for their constant support.

## Chapter One

"Prepare for landing on Old Centuron in ten minutes."

Sarina Mackenzie leaned forward, her shirt straining against her breasts as she glanced out the window of the aviation pod.

Amazing. She was here. She was actually here. The forgotten colony of Old Centuron. Her pulse doubled as she ran her gaze over the small planet below them. Lush canopies of green topped the expansive forest, and off in the distance, a mountain pierced the sky with jarring beauty.

"Do you think we'll find any human life down there?" she asked quietly, not turning away from the view.

She heard Reynard turn the page on his magazine before he sighed. "No. All evidence indicated that humans became extinct when the doomsday bomb went off one hundred years ago."

"Hmm." She pushed a wayward strand of white-blonde hair behind her ear. "But wouldn't it be amazing if somehow a few had survived? That—"

"Don't waste your time with such fantasies, Sarina. We're here to collect samples of the ground, water and plant life. We'll be gone within a few hours."

Sarina tore her gaze from the view and looked over at the tall, lanky frame of her fiancé. Really, he was the ultimate downer. Why was she marrying him again? Oh, right. She didn't have a choice.

As her father loved to point out, the marriage of Sarina Mackenzie

and Reynard Williams would create an alliance between the two most wealthy and political families on New Centuron.

"Really, I don't know why you insisted upon this trip in the first place. We have yet to confirm there are no possible dangers on this planet." Reynard set down the magazine and turned a disapproving look upon her.

"Well, that is why you brought along your entourage." Her smile turned sarcastic as she glanced at the three oversized thugs sitting stoically across the aisle. One of them jerked his gaze away after being caught staring at her—or her breasts—openly.

"Perhaps you should have chosen a blouse in a larger size."

Apparently Reynard had noticed the man's attention as well. She flushed and tugged at her blouse. The fabric clung to her body, emphasizing her large chest. She held back a sigh; Reynard never missed a moment to criticize her.

Turning her gaze back out the window, she bit down on her lip. The thought of having sex with this man made her nauseous. All part of the marital agreement of course. Fortunately she wasn't allowed to be intimate with him until they were wed. *In two weeks.*

A shudder ran through her body, and she closed her eyes. She opened them again and saw something grey move between the trees. She frowned and leaned forward. "Did you see that?"

"See what?" Reynard murmured without glancing up.

"I thought..." She shook her head. She was probably just tired from lack of sleep.

The pod jerked and then dropped rapidly towards the ground. Clutching the armrests, Sarina let out her breath on a hiss. Damn, she hated this part of flying. She heard the legs of the pod extend, then the vehicle slowed. The ship hit the ground, rocking the pod a bit before they came to a standstill.

Sarina raised her gaze and looked at Reynard. He still flipped through his magazine, looking almost bored. Her own heart pounded, and her throat grew tight with anticipation.

"Shall we get this over with already?" He tossed the magazine

aside and unfastened his lap belt. "Let's collect the samples and then get our asses home to New Centuron."

She fumbled with her own fastening and then stood up. What would it be like outside? All indications showed that the atmosphere would be hospitable. Wiping damp palms on her pants, she drew in an unsteady breath.

"Open the hatch and go outside," Reynard ordered the guard nearest to the door.

The man hesitated, and Sarina was surprised to see the flash of fear in his eyes. Then he went to the door and typed in the code to open the hatch. A series of beeps preceded the slow, upward swing of the door. The guard stepped down and took a few steps, looking around. A moment later, he turned around and gave a brisk nod.

Eager to have her feet on the ground, Sarina stepped out of the pod next. She paused in the doorway and inhaled deeply. The warm air coated her throat and expanded her lungs. It felt cleaner than the air on New Centuron, but then the vegetation on this planet seemed more expansive.

Sarina hopped to the ground. She strode away from the pod, following one of the guards who explored the area. They had landed in some sort of a clearing in the midst of the lush forest. Evergreen trees. She recognized them from her previous studies.

She inhaled the sweet, woodsy smell and walked toward the edge of the forest. The dense trees were close together, scraping into the sky at heights that competed with some of the buildings back on New Centuron.

She heard the sound of a river rushing, and though she looked in every direction, she could not see it. She adjusted the pack containing research tools on her shoulder and strode toward an opening between the trees. She stepped between two of the massive evergreens and hesitated as the light immediately diminished. Beneath the branches the forest grew dark, more forbidding.

Her steps faltered, and she swallowed hard, her glance darting around. The sense that she was being watched raised the tiny hairs on her arms. But that would be impossible. Wouldn't it? There was no life on this planet.

Her gaze swept between the trees as a chill moved down her spine. Yes. Something was watching her. She took a step forward and the breath locked in her throat. A pair of yellow eyes watched her from not even ten feet away.

"Oh, wow," she whispered, her pulse steadily growing faster.

The wolf continued to watch her, but did not move. Slowly, so as not to frighten the creature, she reached into her pack for her camera. Surely this type of discovery would gain her planetary recognition back on New Centuron.

"Sarina!"

Reynard's harsh cry from behind startled the wolf, and it turned to flee. The echo of a gunshot rang through the woods, and she screamed, watching in horror as the wolf stumbled and then limped off into the woods.

"You bastard!" Sarina spun around, anger burning her throat as she slapped down the barrel of the gun in the guard's hands. She was startled to find tears prickling at the back of her eyes. "Why the hell did you shoot it?"

"Don't be a fool." Reynard put himself between her and the guard. "You could have been killed. Why would you go off on your own? I gave strict instructions earlier that you were not to do so."

"I am not yet your wife, Reynard. This is *my* mission, and I call the shots." She drew in a shaky breath and looked at each of the guards. "The next man who tries to shoot a species I didn't even know existed might find himself left behind when we leave. Got it, boys?"

The guards all gave reluctant nods, except for the one that she'd caught watching her on the plane. The one who'd also just shot the wolf. She jerked her gaze away, uneasy by his presence. *Trigger-happy pervert.*

She set off again into the forest, calling over her shoulder, "I'm going to locate the river. I'll be back shortly."



## Chapter Two

The commotion came at the front of the village. Caden lifted his head, already on the move as a shrill cry pierced the air. Something was terribly wrong. His bare feet slapped across the dirt, his heart pounding in his chest.

When he reached the edge of the forest, a circle of people had already gathered around something on the ground.

"Make way," he ordered.

The crowd parted respectfully for their leader, and he stepped into the center to find the source. Darth sat on the ground, tears in his eyes as he cradled the naked, bloody body of his mate, Rosalyn.

Disbelief rocked through Caden's body; his brain struggled to accept what his eyes showed him. "Send for my grandmother," he yelled to no one in particular and knelt down to check for a pulse on Rosalyn.

He found the heartbeat, but it was faint and uneven. With the blood oozing out of the wound in her stomach, she'd be lucky to survive. He shifted his gaze to Darth and noted by his ashen face that the other man must've reached the same conclusion.

"How did this happen?"

"She returned to the village still in her wolf form." Darth's eyes flickered with anguish. "She shifted back to human and uttered three words."

Premonition raced down Caden's spine. "What were the words?"

"They have returned."

Caden drew in a ragged breath. His blood pounded, and his gut twisted with a mixture of trepidation and fury. *You were warned this day might come.*

"Stand aside for Anya."

The crowd parted again, and his grandmother stepped through, her aged face drawn tight as she stared down at Rosalyn. Her gaze lifted briefly to connect with her grandson's, and Caden swallowed against the bitterness in his throat.

His grandmother knew what had happened, sure as if she'd been there herself. She gave a slight nod and then opened her healing bag.

He stood and ran his gaze over the grim crowd. The fear in the women's eyes was visible, and most of the men appeared uneasy.

"Women, take the children to your homes and remain there until you receive notice to come out," he commanded. "The men will remain with me."

The women scurried back into the heart of the village, rounding up their children with impressive speed.

"Come." Caden jerked his head, leading the remaining men away from his Darth, Rosalyn and his grandmother.

"Is it the humans?" one of the men asked.

"I fear so." Damn, he wished there were a way to waylay the panic and fear that was sure to come. Hell, it had already started.

He glanced over at his grandmother, and she lifted her head to meet his gaze. She gave a slow shake of her head. Rosalyn has passed on. Anya placed a hand on Darth's shoulder, her words spoken to him inaudible. Darth gave an anguished roar, and thrust off Anya's hand. He laid Rosalyn's limp body onto the ground, and then took off into the forest.

The men around Caden went still; the mood in the air grew somber with the realization that the arrival of the humans had already brought death upon them.

"We will form several scouting parties and assess the situation." Caden tried to keep his voice steady. "They have shown they are willing to kill, and if needed, we will do the same. Let us go now."

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*There it is.* Sarina breathed a sigh of relief and broke from the edge of the forest, striding to the river's edge.

She glanced back at the heavy growth, and a tremble moved through her body. Though the air was humid, and her body now had a film of sweat on it, the forest had brought a chill down her spine.

Pulling an empty vial from her pack, she knelt beside the rushing river and submerged it into the water. Once it was full, she plugged it and set it back in her pack.

She stood back up and sighed, undoing the top button on her shirt to cool down a bit. Her gaze drifted around the landscape, and she shook her head. It was so beautiful here. The water crystalline and icy, no doubt from the melting snow on the mountain. New Centuron rarely saw snow anymore. Such a shame, but another brutal reality of an environmentally careless society. Maybe if they'd—

She froze, tingles running down her spine as she jerked her gaze back to the forest. Someone watched her.

\* \* \* \* \*

Caden took off for the dense woods and allowed the familiar transition to his wolf side take over. Fur spread over his body, his arms hit the ground joining his legs, and soon he charged through the forest, the air warm against his face.

For so long he'd hoped that the journal passed down through generations of his family had been wrong. That the humans would never return, and the Wolfan community would be left to the peaceful lives they'd so carefully carved out for themselves.

Hearing his men moving through the woods to the east, he turned west toward the river. Adrenaline and anger rushed through his blood. And hatred. Hatred for this pathetic species of human that could so easily take a life. Rosalyn was likely the most non-aggressive Wolfan in the pack.

He growled, increasing his pace.

The scent hit him before he saw the human. He slowed and then came to a stop, sniffing the air. A female human? He wove through the tree trunks, listening to the sound of the river as he grew closer. Finally the trees broke, giving a view of the river...and the woman standing alongside it.

The blood stirred hot in his body, and his eyes narrowed. She was beautiful, and much smaller than the people of his village. Even the women.

Her pale yellow hair was braided and fell to just above the sweet curve of her ass. Her hips swelled in a lush manner that just screamed for a man's hands to bracket them. Full breasts strained against the shirt she wore, and as he continued to watch her, she unfastened the top button and ran a hand over her collarbone.

Abruptly she turned and looked into the woods, and he saw the striking blue of her eyes. Could she see him? He dismissed the idea before it took root. Impossible. He had concealed himself all too well behind the brush.

Yet the human female had grown skittish, her gaze darting amongst the trees as her hands clenched into fists.

A large man stepped out of the woods and slowly approached her. *Apparently I wasn't the only one watching.*

### Chapter Three

"You frightened me." Sarina wiped damp palms against her pants and gave the guard an irritated look.

How long had he been watching her, anyway? This was at least the second time she'd caught him doing so. There was something about this man that set off all kinds of alarm bells in her head. He was new to Reynard's entourage, this trip being the first time she'd laid eyes on him.

"Where is Reynard?"

He didn't reply, just continued toward her. Sarina stepped backward. Hell, she didn't even know his name. She knew nothing about him. The only thing she did know? She didn't trust him.

Cool water rushed around her ankles as he backed her into the river. "What are you—" She drew in a sharp breath at the knife he pulled from behind his back.

He grabbed her, pressing the tip of it against her neck. *No!* Her heart began a slow thud in her chest. She didn't move, all too aware of the tip of the knife against her throat.

"I've always wanted to fuck the richest bitch on New Centuron." He slid the tip of the knife down her neck, light enough not to cut her flesh. The blade reached the top of her blouse, and he made a swift slice downward. "And now I think I will."

An angry growl sounded behind her, and she stumbled back just as a blur of gray leaped onto the guard's back. Her eyes widened as the wolf's large jaws snapped around the man's neck. Blood sprayed, and the

guard's eyes rolled into the back of his head into certain death.

She pressed her hand to her mouth, choking back nausea, and bolted back toward the woods. Once under the canopy of trees, she glanced back to the river just as the wolf lifted his head. Golden eyes locked on her, and a shudder racked her body.

*Run. You have to run.*

Her feet wouldn't budge, and she couldn't tear her gaze away from the wolf's intense, golden stare. Another tremble racked her body, and her heart pounded in her chest. Something about the animal made it seem...almost human.

The wolf padded out of the river, and moved slowly toward her. The image of the way it had killed the guard flashed through her head, and sent the needed rush of adrenaline through her. She whimpered and spun on her feet, charging through the forest.

A low growl followed her, and then the sound of the wolf pounding through the trees after her.

"No, oh please, no," she cried, willing her feet to move faster. Despair clutched at her chest and tightened in her throat. How the hell could she outrun a wolf? She couldn't. She waited to feel the sharp bite of its teeth in her flesh at any moment. Perhaps being killed by the guard's knife would have been a preferable, quicker death.

Gun shots rang out in the distance, followed by more howling and then the terrified screams of humans. Tears blurred her vision. The rest of her crew fought the same fate she did, it seemed.

The clearing in the trees lay just up ahead. She could see the pod, preparing to lift off. Without her? No!

A growl sounded close to her ear and then the wolf shot past her, circling around in front of her. She stumbled, her shoes digging into the ground as she attempted to stop. The wolf bared its teeth and slowly stalked forward.

She glanced beyond the wolf one last time to the travel pod and saw the bodies of the guards littered upon the ground. Nausea rocked through her. *This was it. The end.*

She looked back at the wolf again; ready to meet her fate.

Something had changed. The wolf's facial features had turned almost human. She blinked and shook her head, convinced the paralyzing fear inside her was screwing with her eyes. There was a crunching noise, similar to the sound of when a bone snapped, and as she continued to watch, human shoulders appeared beneath the fur.

Sarina stumbled backward, her eyes widening and her blood pounding in a potent combination of fear and horror. She grabbed the trunk of the tree, the only way she was able to stay upright as she watched the wolf transform into a large, muscular, completely naked man. His hair was black, his face a mass of hard angles.

A high pitched whine indicated the pod was lifting off the ground. Her last chance! Without pausing to analyze that *thing* in front of her, she bolted past him, rushing toward the pod.

"Wait!" she screamed. "Reynard, don't leave me—"

Arms snapped around her waist and jerked her backward. The air rushed from her lungs as she slammed against the chest of the man behind her. The forest swallowed her shrill scream as she struggled against him. She spotted a severed hand a few feet away, and her scream grew louder and more hysterical.

"Silence," he commanded. One arm slid under her ribcage and tightened just below her breasts.

*The thing spoke English?* She slammed her head backward into his, hoping to stun him into dropping her. He cursed and his grip tightened, while stars danced behind her eyes. What the hell was his skull made of? Iron?

"Foolish woman," he growled and grabbed her braid, tugging her head backwards so that her throat was bared, and she was rendered immobile. "Be still."

Icy sweat broke out all over body, and her heart beat so hard she knew he could hear it. With her head angled back, she had the perfect view of the pod flying straight up into the atmosphere.

She was alone on this planet. With this *thing*. All her crew had either been butchered or had abandoned her. Terror swept through her, leaving her weak.

"What are you?" The words left numb limbs.

"You know what I am. And *I* ask the questions, woman." As if to emphasize who had the control, he jerked her harder against his body.

She squirmed against him and dragged in an unsteady breath, inhaling his foreign scent. A heady combination of woods, sweat, and something spicy. There was nothing wolf-like about the shape he'd taken now. His hard thighs pressed against her buttocks, and she didn't even want to *think* about the thickness of his cock, which rested against her lower back. A cock which seemed to grow harder the more she struggled.

"For fuck's sake, stop moving." His words sounded choked.

She ceased in her attempts to break free, the idea of what would happen if she aroused him gave her a harsh jolt of reality. "You killed my people," she accused, tears welling in her eyes as she again looked at the bodies in the clearing a few feet away.

"Your people started this battle. We only defended ourselves." He spun her around in his arms; his hands bit into her shoulders. His gaze, now a golden brown, burned down into hers. "And it is you, the only person who lives, who will be responsible for the destruction. Now tell me your name."

\* \* \* \* \*

Caden watched the fear flicker in her gaze, but she lifted her chin in a clear effort to disguise it.

"Sarina Mackenzie, and I have done nothing."

The name sounded familiar, but he couldn't think past the anger that burned in his gut at her blatant lie. She had done nothing? His fingers bit into her shoulders. "You have spilled the blood of my people."

Her gaze again turned to the bodies of her deceased friends. "No. I say it again. It was not I who—" Her head jerked back, and her uneasy gaze locked on his. "That wolf that was injured. Was he...? What I'm trying to ask is—oh, this sounds crazy—did he have the ability to be both wolf and human?"

"Yes. *She* was a Wolfan, as all my people are. And she has since



died."

"*Oh, no.* I didn't realize..." The color drained from the woman's face, and her knees buckled.

Caden moved his hands down to bracket her ribcage to hold her upright, and his thumb brushed against the soft fullness of her breast. He heard her sharp intake of breath, and something hot flickered in her eyes.

He lowered his gaze to her chest. Her shirt was torn from where the man who'd attacked her had cut it. The top of her breasts were pale and lush, peaking above some band wrapped around them.

The air hissed out from between his teeth as desire stirred in his blood. Damn him for this weakness. This woman was evil. She represented every horror, fear, and loathing that had passed down through generations of his people. To desire her would be a betrayal to everyone who respected and looked to him as the leader of the Wolfan tribe.

*So why do you not remove your hands from her?*

"I'm...so very sorry," she whispered.

"Be assured that you soon will be."

Her gaze, full of both fear and frustration met his, and her tongue swept across her bottom lip. His gaze locked on the movement, and he bit back a curse. His cock jumped against her belly, and her eyes widened. This time he didn't question the flicker of desire and in her gaze. And then shock, as if she, too, was appalled at the attraction between them.

His hands tightened around her, and he smoothed his thumb over the soft flesh of her breast again.

She closed her eyes. "*Please.*"

Was it a plea was for him to continue touching her, or to release her? The hell if he knew.

"What do you plead for, woman?" he rasped.

Her eyes opened again and she blinked, seeming confused. "I...for mercy. What else could you imagine?"

What else indeed? He swept his thumb high this time, and brushed the tight peak of her nipple through the fabric.

"Perhaps something more primitive."

## Chapter Four

Desire and fury now warred in her eyes, and she planted her hands against his chest, attempting without success to push him away. "I would never...not with you. I don't even know what you *are*. You disgust me."

Her words were like the poisoned tip of an arrow into his heart. For so many years he'd known they were not normal—had been created out of a fucking experiment gone bad. But never had he let himself or his people be ashamed of who they were or what they'd become. They were good people, damn it.

Then some pale, yellow-haired woman dropped out of the stratosphere, killed a woman from his village and spouted vicious words with a poisoned tongue. Despite his intentions not to touch her, every drop of blood inside his body challenged him to prove her wrong. To prove the attraction between them was valid, no matter how wrong it may be.

He slid one hand around to her back and grasped her braid, jerking her head back. He ignored her startled gasp and moved his other hand down her lower back, pressing her hard against him. "Is that so?" he bit out, his mouth just inches above the sensual fullness of hers. "And just how do you intend to stop me?"

He crushed his lips against hers before she could reply. Her panicked moan opened her mouth enough for him to slide his tongue past her lips. So silky moist and hot; she tasted sweet and foreign. He gave into his primitive side and took everything from her that he wanted in the kiss.

He swallowed her furious cries, plundering her mouth with his tongue and exploring every crevice and texture in her mouth.

She struggled against him, her tongue stabbing against his—almost as her weapon of choice. He tightened his hand around her braid, adding enough pressure until she whimpered and ceased struggling.

With a murmur of triumph, he adjusted his stance and slid his hand down to her ass, bringing the cleft of her sex flush against his pulsing erection. He slowed the kiss, rubbing his tongue back and forth against hers. The friction of each stroke sent more blood straight to his cock.

The message finally reached his brain that she no longer pushed him away. Her arms slid around his waist to smooth over the naked muscles of his back. Her cries of protest had altered into cries of pleasure.

He worked his hand beneath the waistband of her pants, fanning his fingers over her ass cheeks. He trailed his middle finger down the crack of her ass, and she gasped, pulling her mouth away.

Seeing her bare throat gleaming white in the dark forest tempted him too much. He buried his face against the curve between her neck and shoulder, licking the fast-beating pulse.

He tugged down the stretchy band that covered her chest, and her large, pale, breasts sprang free. He bit back a groan as his cock jerked in response. Damn, she was beautiful. Lowering his head, he laved his tongue across one pink tip. Her flesh tasted sweet and smelled of flowers, and her nipple was hot when he closed his mouth around it. He grazed his teeth over one silky tip before drawing it between his teeth and biting down gently.

"Oh." Her guttural cry split through the quiet of the forest—and through the thick wall of his desire. Reality intruded with all the force of a cold shower.

*She killed one of your own. Stop this at once.*

He sucked her nipple hard, one last time. He knew that he might be on the verge of ending the sensual moment, but she was only just being dragged under.

Her words rang in his head. *You disgust me.*

He worked his hand down the front of her pants and cupped the surprisingly hairless mound of her sex. Sliding a finger between the plump lips, he felt slick moisture lick the tip of his finger. The hot folds of her cunt were a fucking magnet for his cock.

Grinding his teeth together, he lifted his head. "It doesn't take much, does it?"

Her lids fluttered open, her eyes hazy with desire and confusion.

His mouth twisted. "To get you so hot that you'd let some freak of nature fuck you."

Sarina blinked, stunned at how far she'd let things go. She shoved at his chest, and this time he let her go, sending her stumbling backward. Shock swept through her, and it felt as if he'd pumped ice water through veins that were nearly on fire.

Her cheeks burned, and she shut her eyes, hoping he wouldn't see the humiliation and fear there. But then that had been his intent, hadn't it? To prove that he could bring out some primitive, animalistic reaction to him. And he had.

Never in her life had she gotten so lost in a kiss. Certainly never with Reynard on the few occasions she'd allowed him to touch her. What plans did this Wolfan—hadn't that been what he said he was?—hold in store for her?

Would he force himself upon her later as retribution for the killing of the woman from his village? *Force himself? What a joke.* Even now her nipples were painfully tight, and there remained a heavy ache between her legs.

Sarina thrust aside the aroused voice in her head and brought out the realist. She dragged in a ragged breath and took another step away from him. "What are your intentions with me?"

His gaze grew hooded. "I have not yet decided. Come, we will return to my village."

The grip he took on her arm left little choice but to follow him. They moved deeper into the forest, moving steadily upward and then along a steep cliff.

The whole journey she tried to keep a mental note of the way back.

Because the first chance at escape she had, she planned to take it.

A clearing in the trees marked the outer edge of the village. Sarina's lips parted, her gaze drinking it all in. The buildings were outstanding; structures of what looked to be mud and rock, yet were complex and gorgeous.

As they drew further into the village, people started coming out of the buildings. None in wolf form, but all just as naked and human as Caden was. Did they not believe in clothing?

After a moment, the realization that they were nude took second priority. Their expressions became her new focus. Anger, fear and accusations—the range perturbed her.

Something slammed into her side and knocked the wind from her. She glanced down, her heart pounding, and watched a sticky glob roll down her body, leaving a greenish stain.

Her gaze darted up to the people of the village to see who might have thrown the filth. She turned her head, and a raw egg slammed into her cheek. Her cry was one of surprise rather than pain, but it drew Caden's attention. He glanced back at her, and his brows drew together.

He stopped walking and turned toward the group of people.

"Yes, I have brought a human prisoner. I will question and deal with her as needed," he said, his voice raised. "I realize it is difficult with Rosalyn's death so fresh in our hearts and minds, but I must ask that you bring no harm to the prisoner at this time."

He was their leader? And why did he defend her? Sarina's heart twisted at the thought of the woman Wolfan one of Reynard's guards had killed. No wonder they hated her.

The people watching her did not appear pleased with their leader's words, but no one threw anything more at her.

"Come." He grasped her arm again and led her into a smaller building.

Once she was inside, he pulled the thick wooden door shut behind them. All sounds from outside were immediately snuffed out.

She turned her gaze to the floor—nothing but brown, compacted dirt. The breath she drew in brought the sweet, earthy scent of nature. It

had a feeling of being outside, yet the warmth and security of a home.

"Is this your home?" she asked, her voice quiet.

"Yes."

She turned to face him. "Will you tell me your name?"

His gaze grew hooded. "Caden."

He moved past her and walked into a room nearby. The bedroom? She swallowed hard, unable to tear her gaze away from the ridges in his back or his muscular ass. *Look away.*

She blinked and turned her head, looking around the rest of the house. It was small and simple. She walked toward the kitchen and shook her head in astonishment.

It was like stepping back into the twenty-first century. Everything was antique, from the stove to the refrigerator. As many times as she'd researched the last century of Old Centuron's existence—or so they'd thought—nothing compared to seeing it.

His hand on her shoulder drew a sharp gasp from her throat. She spun around, pressing a hand against her breast. He was still naked. The muscles of his chest were nearly eye level with her gaze. She moved her gaze down the patch of curls that led to his abdomen, and then to where his cock hung thick against his thigh.

"Don't your people wear clothes?" she asked hoarsely and averted her eyes.

"No. It only hinders us when we shift." He paused. "My people see no shame in nudity."

How the hell did they get through the day? Seeing each other naked...surely—

"Despite what your culture might believe, our people can control their sexual instincts."

"I wasn't thinking—"

"Of course you were." He backed her up until her bottom hit the stove. "Where have you come from, Sarina?"

"From New Centuron."

His mouth tightened and he nodded. "I suspected as much. And why have you returned?"

She ran her tongue over her lips. "I am a well-known, respected scientist on my planet. I only returned to the forgotten colony—"

"Don't say it." He leaned into her and gripped her forearms. "We are not, and never have been a *forgotten* colony. Do you understand?"

"Yes," she whispered. Her heart pounded, and heat speared through her body from where his fingers curled around her flesh.

"Tell me what you know about my people."

"I know nothing." The fear eased back into her belly. "I swear to you, until this morning I knew nothing about the existence of the Wolfan people."

## Chapter Five

Caden stared at her, watching the flicker of fear and frustration in her gaze. Could it be that she told the truth? It hardly seemed likely.

He moved his thumb against the silky skin of her arm and ground his teeth together. Sarina may fear him, but she was also aroused by his presence. As a Wolfan, his sense of smell was at least twice as sensitive as hers would be. The musky scent of her arousal went straight to his head, making his primal side fight for dominance.

That brief moment of insanity in the forest still lingered in his mind.

*And you just told her your people can control their sexual instincts. Apparently that didn't include you.* Damn, he needed to focus.

"How is it that you know nothing about our people," he demanded, "when it was your government that created us?"

"What?" Her eyes snapped wide, and her lips parted. She shook her head, horror now seeping into her gaze. "No... It isn't possible."

He knew the source of her horror. It was the reason he'd gone into his room when he'd entered his home. When she'd first given him her name, it had sounded familiar. It had only taken a moment to search the journal to see that she was likely a direct descendant of the former Ruler of Centuron. The man who had ordered the initial experiments.

"It *is* possible. And it *did* happen," he reiterated. "Are you telling me that you were unaware of what your ancestors had created?"

"I can't... Please, Caden." She shook her head and squirmed against



him, obviously wanting free of the prison of his arms.

"Tell me what you know."

She closed her eyes, looking almost vulnerable. "There was a doomsday bomb over a century ago. Only about three hundred humans escaped the planet before it went off, fifteen members of my family were part of those who fled. Any life on the planet was killed off—if not immediately, then within a year of the bomb."

Caden stared at her, the tic in his jaw the only indication of the rage brewing inside him. What kind of fool did this woman take him for? A doomsday bomb?

Her eyelids lifted, and her blue gaze locked on his with uncertainty.

"That is why I am so confused. There wasn't supposed to *be* any life here." Her voice broke. "That wolf's death could have been preven—"

"Don't bring Rosalyn into this right now," he roared and shook her. Her slight body rocked furiously in his grip. "I can't understand why you'd continue to lie to me."

"I'm not lying." She shook her head; a sheen of tears covered her eyes. "What the hell do you want me to say?"

"I want you to be honest with me." He had to get out of here. Before he did something stupid, like kiss her again. Or worse. Toss her on the floor and fuck her as if he was his wolf form in heat. "This is getting us nowhere. I will deal with you later."

"Where are you going?"

He turned and headed toward the door. "You will find the shower in the back of the house. Use it. When you're finished, you will not put on your clothes again, but stay as nature intended and as my people are."

"What?" The fire snapped back into her tone. "You've got to be kidding me. Walk around naked? There's no way—"

"When I return this evening there will be no more lies, do you understand?" He turned at the door and looked back at her.

"You're just going to leave me here?" Her voice rose, her gaze darting around the house.

"Yes."

"You can't." She scrambled to her feet. "Do you have any idea who

*I am?"*

Oh yes, he certainly did. And it might just work to his advantage.

He gave her a humorless smile. "Yes. You're my captive."

He turned on his heel and left his home with his blood still pounding, and an erection harder than any he'd ever had.

Cursing under his breath, he ran through his village and let his animal side take shape. He needed to get rid of some of this frustration and energy.

His bones stretched and adjusted; fur covered his skin as his body made the transition. He plunged into the forest in full-on wolf form.

Not for one moment did he think Sarina would be stupid enough to try and escape. The terrain was primitive, and his people were on edge after the death of one of their own.

Yes. Stuck inside his home was the safest place for her right now.

\* \* \* \* \*

Sarina dragged in breath and glanced around Caden's home. He'd even left the door unlocked. The cocky son of a bitch was that confident she wouldn't run. He was right.

Running her hand down the back of her neck, she sighed. She certainly was grimy, especially with the attack from the villagers, and a shower sounded nice. But then, what was a shower like on Old Centuron?

She set off through the house. The house wasn't exactly primitive. Truly, it had everything one needed for survival, and it actually appeared quite comfortable. It just wasn't loaded with all kinds of technology and gadgets like the buildings back home.

She located the bathroom and eyed the stall with a clear door warily. Another relic she'd read about. Hmm. Ought to be fun to try.

"Here goes nothing." She took a deep breath and opened the shower door.

Twenty minutes later she emerged; skin pink and tingling, and one hundred percent refreshed.

She dried herself with a long cloth she discovered under the sink

and then kept it wrapped around her body. *No clothes*. Ha!

The sound of the front door opening caught her attention. She swallowed hard and tightened the towel around her body. Had Caden returned so soon? Heat spiraled in her body and then moved between her thighs again. Why did he cause such a heated reaction within her body?

She walked out of the bathroom to see who was in the house. The elderly woman in the doorway brought a mixture of a relief and disappointment. Though why she was disappointed made no sense.

She lifted her chin and observed the woman. Unlike most of the village, this woman wore some sort of dress. Was she here to torment her as the other villagers had done? Not that the older woman could inflict much harm, being so frail.

"What is your name, my child?" the woman asked in a soft voice, seeming totally unconcerned that Sarina wore nothing but a towel.

"I am Sarina." She stared at the woman for a moment, unsure of her intentions.

"And I am Anya. Grandmother to Caden." The woman ran a speculative gaze over her.

Caden's grandmother? Sarina stepped closer and appraised the slight form of the older woman. Yes. There was a faint resemblance.

"You are aware of the trouble your arrival on our planet has caused, my child?"

There was no accusation in Anya's tone, only a heavy sadness.

Sarina's throat tightened and she gave a jerky nod. "I am aware. I would have prevented it if I'd only had the chance."

"I know you are not responsible." She crossed the room and sat down on a chair in the corner of the room. "Even if Caden does not yet."

This woman trusted her? Relief weakened her muscles at the thought of having an ally. "How do you know that?"

Anya's smile was faint, but in her gaze lurked the wisdom of years of living.

"I have seen the face of evil and can recognize such. You do not have that same darkness in your heart." She relaxed back in the chair and closed her eyes. "He is a good man, Sarina. Despite his actions, which may

have led you to believe otherwise. Please do not be so quick to judge our people. We are mourning the untimely death of one of our own."

Sarina bit her lip and looked away, guilt clawing at her belly again. Guilt for being acquainted with the group of men who'd caused the death. And Caden likely *was* a good person, as Anya stated. If only Sarina could convince him to trust her. Right now it seemed he despised her too much. Despised and yet desired her. She closed her eyes, her pulse quickening. Unfortunately the feeling was all too mutual.

"Were you aware of us when you came to our planet?"

"No." Sarina shook her head and opened her eyes again. "I thought the planet was void of any living creature. I should have realized..."

"Do you think the others that arrived with you knew of our existence?"

Sarina's mind flashed back to the scene of when they'd first landed; how the guards had seemed hesitant to exit the pod, though Reynard had appeared bored by the entire journey. It just didn't make any sense.

"I honestly don't know, Anya. I wish I did." Tears burned her eyes. "I feel like I'm stuck in an awful dream."

"I foresee great changes in your future." Anya gave a sage nod, and something in her eyes sent a shiver down Sarina's spine. "Things will soon be right. Give it time."

Sarina glanced away. "*Soon*, I would hope to be on a pod back to New Centuron."

There was no response from Anya. Sarina glanced back to her, and the woman stared straight ahead, appearing lost in thought.

"Why do you wear clothes when the rest of your people do not?" Sarina asked with mild curiosity.

"I do not shift."

"No? Do Wolfan reach a certain age and lose the ability?" Sarina walked to the window and looked outside. Caden's house rested at the top of a hill and the view of the village, and the forest beyond was magnificent.

"I never had the ability."

## Chapter Six

*What?* Sarina spun around, her eyes wide. "You never had it? But how is that...? Are you saying that you're not a Wolfan?"

"No. I am not."

Sarina's heart began a slow thud in her chest. "I don't understand. Caden led me to believe this planet only had Wolfan on it."

"They do. I am the only exception."

"How?" A new thought hit her, and she hesitated. "Your grandson also told me something quite...farfetched. He said that my ancestors created the Wolfan."

Anya stared at her with no visible reaction. "And you do not believe him?"

"Should I?"

"Yes." Anya sighed. "Caden has told you the truth, Sarina, and I will, too. I was a child when the humans still remained on Old Centuron."

Sarina shook her head. "That's impossible. You'd have to be over one hundred years old. Old Centuron was abandoned over a century ago after the doomsday bomb."

"I wonder why you were not told the truth." Anya's gaze was sad as she stood up, her hand pressing against her lower back. "The humans left seventy years ago. I was thirteen the day they abandoned the planet."

The breath locked in Sarina's chest, her mind reeled with shock. No. It could not be possible.

"I will tell you no more, Sarina." Anya walked slowly toward the

door.

"Anya, please, I must hear the rest."

"You will hear the rest from my grandson." She paused at the door and looked back, her expression solemn. "You will bond yourself to him, more than you already have."

Sarina's cheeks flamed with heat. How could the woman possibly have known about their intimate moment in the forest? And what the hell did she mean by bond herself to him? If she had it her way, she'd be on the next pod back to New Centuron the minute she figured out—damn. What the hell could she figure out? She was stuck here.

"Anya..."

The woman gave a brief smile and then disappeared out the door.

"Damn." Sarina closed her eyes, more confused now than she'd been hours ago.

The foundation of everything she'd believed about Old Centuron was built on sand.

\* \* \* \* \*

Caden returned from his run, changed back into his human form and drenched in sweat. Hopefully she'd taken that shower, because he was going to need to make use of it next.

He strode up the path that led to his house and spotted the familiar petite form of his grandmother.

"Where are you coming from?" he asked, closing the distance between them and kissing her wrinkled cheek.

"Your home." She gave him a probing look. "I was acquainting myself with Sarina. She's a lovely girl."

He narrowed his eyes, the breath hissing out from between his teeth. *Lovely girl?* And she'd already learned Sarina's name. How had she charmed his grandmother so fast?

"Have you seen or heard from Darth?" He changed the topic, rather than acknowledge Anya's comments on Sarina.

Her expression grew wary, and she turned her gaze to the village

below. "No. He has not returned since he fled after Rosalyn's death."

"Hmm." Unease clawed in his gut. Darth was someone who never did anything neutrally. He loved to the fullest—with his love for Rosalyn—but he also hated to an unhealthy level when he had cause. "He will return for the burial."

"I am not so certain." She turned her gaze back to him. "Be careful with that one. His soul is wounded, and he may not return the same man."

"I've known him my entire life. I'm sure—"

"Open your heart to change, Caden, because it will soon be upon us."

His jaw hardened. His grandmother often made cryptic comments, and they rarely fazed him. The part that put him on edge—she was often right.

"You have mistreated Sarina, and fortunately, you now realize it. I must go tend to Marie," Anya murmured and started off down the hill. "She should be having that baby any day now."

Caden knew better than to offer assistance down the slope. His grandmother was independent and stubborn, and would have scoffed at his attempt.

He glanced back at his house and took in a deep breath. She'd been right about one thing. He had been overly harsh with Sarina.

Sarina...who was inside his home right now, likely all clean and damp from a shower. And naked as he'd instructed. The blood rushed faster in his veins. *Focus, you pathetic bastard.*

Grinding his teeth together, he walked to the front door and went inside. A quick glance around the house didn't reveal her presence. His pulse jumped, and he strode towards the bathroom.

Sarina came around the corner before he'd taken two steps. Her fingers combed through her hair, and a towel hung wrapped around her body. Hmm. Obviously she ignored his order to remain naked.

She spotted him and stumbled to a halt. "You're back."

"Did you miss me?" His cock stirred against his thigh, and all his intentions to be good vanished.

## Chapter Seven

"We need to talk." She tightened the towel around her body and ran her tongue across her full mouth.

"Yes, we do." He closed the distance between them and slid one hand up her neck to cup her jaw. As wrong as it may be, he still wanted her.

He'd planned to apologize for his earlier behavior, but seeing her like this had made the apology die on his lips. He'd put it off, because he'd likely have a hell of a lot more to apologize for in a minute.

She drew in a shaky breath, but didn't pull away. "There's no reason for you to touch me while we talk."

"There's no reason for me not to."

"Except that I don't want you to." Her nostrils flared, but there was heat in her gaze again.

He gave a soft laugh, amused she would try to deny the desire that was between them.

"Don't you?"

"No."

"Liar." His grip on her chin tightened, and he lowered his head. His tongue flicked across the seam of her tightly compressed lips. "I can smell the arousal that you have for me."

"No." Her head shook in jerky movements, he didn't miss the heavy shift in her breathing.

"No?" He pressed his hips flush against her. His cock ground into



the soft swell of her belly. Her soft answering moan spread fire through his blood.

Reaching under the towel and between her thighs, he cupped the mound of her sex. Hot moisture had already dampened the smooth folds, and he rubbed his palm back and forth, his blood pounding through his veins as warm cream met his hand.

She whimpered, and he lifted his head to look at her, expecting to see resentment or disgust. Her eyelids were narrowed, the eyes beneath them heavy with arousal.

"No?" he asked again, his voice husky, and slipped one finger between the hot folds of her pussy and into her slick cunt.

She made a ragged gasp, and the walls of her vagina clenched down on his finger. Damn she was tight. Perhaps human women were built different down there.

He pulled his finger from her sheath and moved it up to circle her clit. Her answering moan brought more blood to his cock.

"Please. This doesn't provide the answers we both seek," she whispered. "We must speak. Your grandmother—"

"I would rather *not* discuss my grandmother when you're naked in my arms," he muttered thickly. "When all I can think about is having your clit in my mouth."

She groaned and closed her eyes, a tremble visibly racking her frame.

With her body trapped between him and the wall, he used both hands to reach down and grasp the top of the towel. Curling his fingers over the fabric, he jerked it out of her grasp and away from her body.

"Much better," he murmured, running his gaze over her exposed curves.

He stared at the pale mound of her sex and the wet pink lips between. His growl of approval reverberated in his chest. Confident she would not fight him, he went to his knees in front of her. He closed his hands over each slender thigh, then used his thumbs to part her swollen pussy lips.

Her clitoris lay between, pink and swollen, glistening with her

arousal. Leaning forward, he slid his tongue up her slit, tasting the musky sweetness of her cream.

She gasped, and her knees trembled. Her hands came down to grip his shoulders. The taste of her went straight to his head. It consumed him, making him almost dizzy, but he couldn't get enough. He forced his tongue to be rigid and thrust it into her cunt, again and again. She cried out, and her hips jerked against him.

Dragging his tongue back up, he rubbed it over her clit. Back and forth, then circling the swollen bud. The longer he licked her clit, the wetter she got and the louder her cries became. Her thighs began to tremble under his hands, and then she gave a choked cry. He continued to tease her clit through the orgasm until her legs gave out, and she fell to her knees on the compacted dirt floor.

He cupped her face and crushed his mouth down to hers, sliding his tongue in a possessive kiss. She pulled away, gasping in a breath. "Caden..."

His name on her lips was the only reminder he needed of what he should—and shouldn't—be doing. With the most intimate taste of her still lingering in his mouth, he set her aside and stood up.

"So much better than talking sometimes, don't you agree?" he asked, his voice unsteady. "But at least I know there are no lies in that."

Her cheeks reddened, and she couldn't hide the humiliation in her eyes. Her mouth tightened, and in a blur of movement, he watched her hand grab the ceramic bowl off the table next to her.

He raised his hand to stop her, but she'd already slammed it onto the back of his skull. Pain radiated through his head, and then everything faded to black.

## Chapter Eight

Oh, shit. She had to get out of here, and fast. What the hell had she been thinking? Knocking him over the head with a bowl? A bowl, for goodness' sake! As if that would stop him for long. It amazed her that it'd stopped him at all. But it had.

He'd given her the most incredulous, murderous look before his eyes had rolled to the back of his head, and he'd crumpled to the ground.

Sarina clutched the towel around her and ran from the house. One glance down the hill into the village, and she knew that would be the poor path to take. Too many people would see her escape.

Where the hell she was going? Anywhere was better than here. She circled around the back of the house and rushed into the woods.

The hill sloped sharply downward without a path. Rocks and branches stabbed into her bare feet, but she barely felt it, so intent was she at just getting the hell away from here.

Lord, she'd done it again. Gotten sucked under by that tidal wave of passion that always hit the moment Caden got within inches of her. She closed her eyes. Her clit still ached, and when she thought about his tongue on her, it pulsed harder. And then when he'd pressed a finger inside her—oh, the pressure had been almost painful, but at the same time, so damn exquisite.

Reynard had never evoked such a response from her. The dry kisses had left her...well...dry. What a horrible mess this all was. She groaned and continued down the hillside.

Surely Reynard would have reported the tragic circumstances to their families by now. Would they think her dead? He may have seen Caden stalking her in wolf form.

She shook her head. She needed to stop thinking about this, and just focus on getting as far away from these Wolfan people as possible.

*And where are you going? The pod left hours ago.* Borderline hysterical now, she shoved aside the voice of reason.

She heard the sound of a river rushing and plunged on toward it. Surely it was the same one from earlier and would lead her back to where they'd landed. Maybe Reynard had left her a communication device, something to contact him by.

Her foot caught in a root protruding from the earth, and she fell, tumbling down the rest of the hill. She hit the ground hard enough to get the air knocked from her. Lying still for a moment, she blinked back tears. It was almost comical, rolling down a hill in a towel. Almost, but just a tad more horrific than comical.

The sun had gone down, and the light of day had been diminished to just a faint glow. Even that would be taken away from her shortly. She glanced up into the sky, but instead of seeing two moons, only saw one. That wouldn't be much help.

Sarina stood and adjusted the towel around her, a shiver wracking her body. She wandered through the trees, following the sound of the rushing river until she reached it.

Waves of water rushed past her, spraying her with a light mist. The river itself was wide, probably at least thirty feet across, and definitely appeared too deep and fast moving to cross on foot.

She glanced left and then right. Her sense of direction was shot. Who knew where she was in relation to where her pod had landed? Taking a deep breath, she set off towards the left, hoping she was on the right track.

Cool air whipped at her near-naked body, and created chaos on the loose strands of her hair. Damn, she never should have taken it out of the braid in the shower. She'd left New Centuron at the end of a cold winter, and it certainly felt like the weather on this planet was in a similar cold

streak.

*Keep going. You have to.* She increased her stride, walking until her feet were numb and her teeth chattered uncontrollably. How much time had passed? How far had she even gone?

She stopped and turned in a circle, trying to see something in the pale light of the moon. Damn it. Her knees shook, and she fell to the ground on the bank beside the river. She was completely lost. And unless she figured out where she was real soon, she would probably die of exposure.

A branch snapped, and she jerked her head up to see a wolf step out in front of her. Every muscle in her body went rigid, her breath locked in her throat. It wasn't Caden, she could tell that right away. This wolf was fatter, and darker in color. Had Caden sent someone after her?

It began to shift, the site just as shocking as it had been earlier when Caden had shifted. The transition finally completed, leaving a naked man in front of her. He stood just inches from her and stared at her with narrowed eyes, such hate in his gaze. She stumbled backward.

"Did Caden send you?" she demanded, lifting her chin. Tears prickled the back of her eyes. "I won't return. I want to go home."

"You want to go home?" he repeated flatly.

"Yes." Her voice cracked on the one word, and she blinked back tears.

"Caden didn't send me."

He hadn't? Who was this man? Would he help her? She could only try. The worst he could do was return her to Caden.

"Can you direct me to where my pod landed earlier?" she pleaded. "I promise to leave your planet and never return. I'm so sorry for the pain that my people have caused."

The man in front of her seemed to grow more tense, and she heard a low growl in his throat. Maybe pleading for his help hadn't been the wisest choice.

"Your pod is across the river," he said finally in that same toneless voice. "I saw it land not long ago. They have returned to search for you."

"You saw them? Oh, how wonderful!" Excitement set her blood

pounding, and she clenched her fists at her side. "But...I need to cross the river?" She jerked her head to observe the rushing water and swallowed hard. "How?"

"It is not deep. You can walk across."

She glanced back at him, still uncertain. "Truly?"

"Yes."

"And my people are there?"

"Yes. They are looking for you."

"Why are you helping me?" She shook her head. "I can't imagine Caden will approve."

"It doesn't matter. Nothing matters anymore."

Her brows drew together. The way he spoke was so flat and sad. *Stop over analyzing, Sarina. This is your chance. Now, go!*

She took a step into the frigid water and gasped. Looking back at the Wolfan one last time, she gave him a hesitant smile. "Thank you."

When he didn't respond, just continued to watch her with that vacant stare, she turned and began to cross the river. The icy water sucked at her ankles, then her calves as she went further out.

The bank on the other side loomed closer with every step, but the water was now up to her thighs and she wasn't even halfway across.

"Keep going," he called. "It won't go past your waist."

Her teeth chattered and she took another step. The water rose to her hips and everything below her waist went numb.

"You're almost there."

She hesitated, and then took another step. The bottom dropped off, and she struggled to find her footing, but the water rose over her head. Fear and panic clogged in her throat as she tried to bring herself to the surface. The rushing river sucked her completely under, ripping the air from her lungs and sending her spinning down stream.

## Chapter Nine

Caden sat up, rubbing the back of his head, and blinked. He stood and winced. Fuck, his head pounded something awful.

He moved through his home, not really expecting to find her, but hoping like hell she hadn't been stupid enough to go out on her own.

A few seconds later, he knew she had. Damn it. How much time had passed? He glanced outside and noticed the sun had set recently. That gave her at least an hour's start. Lord knew what kind of trouble she could've gotten herself into by now.

He pushed open the door and circled his house, shifting with each step. Once he had reached his wolf state, he stopped and smelled the air to track her scent.

She hadn't left the way he'd brought her into the village. No, she'd gone down the hill behind his house. He plunged through the trees, following her scent which blazed like a trail of fire. His padded feet slapped the earth, carrying him through the forest, which he knew inside and out.

Her trail remained hot, staying along the river and then, just as suddenly, it went cold. What the hell? Ice moved through his veins, and he glanced into the river. She wouldn't have been foolish enough to try and cross it, would she? The undercurrent had claimed many lives among his people.

He padded toward the water and saw the footprints near the riverbed. *Fuck*. Fear ran rampant through his veins. The thought of her

petite, fragile body being dragged down river filled his head.

No. No, no, no! He took off running again, following the direction the river flowed. He spotted her a few minutes later. Across the river, in a heap on the river bed. She wasn't moving.

Without even bothering to think of the danger to himself, he shifted back into his human form and ran into river. The water sucked at his legs, trying to tug him under. He grunted and forced his feet to move forward instead of letting himself be swept down into the current.

He reached the middle, and knowing the river bed would get several feet deeper, he jumped as far as he could. The river caught him, pulling him down stream as he struggled to swim against it. The muscles in his biceps and legs burned as tried to stay his course.

He lost a few hundred feet, but still managed to get across the river. Pulling himself onto the opposite bank, he sprinted back towards Sarina's limp form. He fell to his knees beside her and slid a hand under her back, lifting her upper body. Her flesh was icy to the touch; her skin had turned the faintest bit blue.

Pressing two fingers to her neck to check for a pulse, he also laid his ear against her breast to listen for her heart. The blood in her body still moved, but she obviously was unconscious.

His chest tightened with emotion as he lifted her into his arms. Glancing around, he tried to figure out the best course of action. Crossing the river was out. There was no way he could get them both across; they'd be sucked under. The river narrowed a few miles to the south, but it would take too long to carry her that far, and she needed warmth *now*.

The cave. He growled and fled into to the forest behind him. He hadn't been there in months, but it had everything they needed to survive. It had been his safe haven, a place to retreat when he'd needed time away to meditate and regroup his thoughts.

"Foolish woman. Why the hell did you run?" He tightened his grip on her as he wound through the trees. Her body felt like a block of ice in his arms, so damn cold.

A few more minutes passed, and he reached the base of a small mountain range, and then the mouth of his cave could be seen. Caden



hurried her inside the darkened tunnel. He kept walking; the path familiar to him even in the pitch dark. Veering off into one of the many sections within the tunnel, he found the makeshift room.

He moved along the rock wall until his feet brushed the bed of leaves and blankets. Laying her down on it, he reached to check her pulse again. Relief flooded through him to find it pounding a bit stronger now, and her skin wasn't quite as cold to the touch.

Still, he needed to get a fire going. After tucking one of the blankets tight around her body, he hurried back out into the forest to find wood.

\* \* \* \* \*

*So cold.* Sarina's body shook so hard it woke her. She was naked, save for the blanket that covered her. She gripped it tighter, unable to keep her teeth from chattering. Where was she? She attempted to open her eyes, and realized they were already open. Everything was black.

She sat up, the effort monstrous with how weak she was. Fear speared through her body when she blinked and still could not see. Had she lost her vision?

"No."

She reached out in front of her, trying to find something solid. Her fingers collided with cold, solid rock. Hysteria gurgled in her throat, and she stood up, trying to walk along the rock. She banged into another wall and cried out.

"Caden!"

There was no response, and she sank to the ground with a whimper. What was the last that she could remember...the river? Oh no, she'd tried to cross the river. Everything after that was blank.

"Caden!" she screamed again. "Help me, somebody! *Please.*"

A light flickered off in the distance, so fast she almost thought she'd imagined it. Then it flickered again, lighting up the room for the briefest second.

"Sarina? Hold on, I'm coming."

Caden's faraway voice sent waves of relief through her. Though

who would have guessed she'd find herself at a point where she was excited to see him.

She folded her knees up to her chest, wrapping her arms around them. Shivers continued to rock her body, and she reached for the blanket, pulling it over her shoulders.

The light grew brighter, and Caden appeared in front of her. He held some sort of torch that lit up the room. "How do you feel?" He sank down to his knees and reached out a hand to touch her shoulder. "Damn, you're still ice cold."

"I kn-know."

He set the torch into a holder into the wall and then sat down on the ground, reaching for her. "Come here."

She didn't fight him, but let herself be drawn into his lap. He pulled the blanket around them and kept his arms around her. She laid her head against his chest, rubbing her cheek against the coarse hair on his body and breathing in his spicy, woodsy scent.

The heat from his body spread to hers, slowly warming every little inch of her. The shaking subsided, and her breathing grew steadier as calmness descended upon her. She closed her eyes against the flickering light of the torch and listened to the rapid *thump-thump-thump* of Caden's heart.

"When I realized you'd gone into the river..." He trailed off, his words thick. "Sarina, why did you run?"

She bit her lip. "How could I stay? You don't trust me. Everyone in your village hates me for what my people have done."

He hesitated. "I think I may have judged you too harshly. I was angry and hurting."

"You had every right to be. What my people did..."

"It isn't what *you* yourself did." His hand moved up and down her back, the gesture soothing and spreading tingles throughout her. "I'm sorry for the way I treated you before. That I didn't believe you."

She pressed her cheek tighter against his chest and closed her eyes.

His lips brushed across her forehead, and she trembled, but this time for a different reason. "Are you still cold?"

She shook her head against his chest, her hair fanning out down his hard abdomen. Her own pulse skipped a beat, and she swallowed hard. Heat spread through her body, tightening her nipples and bringing a heavy throbbing between her legs. Why did he affect her this way?

"Sarina." Her name was spoken on a breath that feathered across her cheek.

Her heart pounded harder, and she dragged an unsteady breath in. The realization that she wanted him to touch her wasn't as shocking as it should have been. More so, the idea of him *not* touching her made her body ache in protest. She wanted this—she wanted him.

Sarina turned her head until her lips brushed his chest. "Touch me, Caden. Please."

His chest rose with his quickly drawn breath, and then he tilted her chin up with gentle fingers. "I won't stop this time, Sarina." His voice turned hoarse. "I can't."

She met his searching gaze and gave him a small smile. Lifting a hand, she ran it down the stubble of his left cheek. "And I won't ask you to."

He groaned and rubbed his thumb over her bottom lip. She opened her mouth and drew the tip inside, flicking her tongue over it. "Sarina, sweetness."

He moved his hand to cup the back of her head and lowered his head. His lips brushed across hers, without force or urgency this time. Everything inside of her melted a little, and she sighed, opening her mouth to him. His tongue pressed between her parted lips, slipping inside to stroke in a tender caress against hers. Lifting her hands to his chest, she trailed a finger around one of his nipples, pressing herself closer to him.

He growled and deepened the kiss. His other hand slid up to cup her breast, his thumb sweeping over her nipple. Sarina gasped against his mouth, the ache between her legs increasing.

He lifted his head slightly, his breath warm against her mouth. "Do you like it when I touch you, Sarina?"

"Yes," she whispered, her eyes closing. "Please, don't stop."

His thumb swept across the sensitive tip again; this time he caught

it between two fingers and squeezed lightly.

"Mmm. Caden. *Please.*" She caught his wrist, running her tongue over her lips.

"What do you want?" He moved his hand back down her stomach, and then oh, so lightly between her legs. "Do you want me to touch you here?"

Her next breath was ragged. "Yes."

He curled a finger into the folds of her sex, and she groaned as hot fire licked through her body.

"Let's get more comfortable." Standing, he carried her over to the corner of the cave and back to where she'd first woken.

Caden laid her down on some form of makeshift bed covered by a blanket. Cool air moved down her body, and she reached for him, needing the heat of his body on top of hers again. With a soft laugh, he obliged, half lying on top of her while propping himself up with an elbow. He drew one finger down the valley between her breasts and her nipples tightened even further.

"Beautiful." He lowered his head, and a second later she felt the first wet swipe of his tongue across the tip.

"Oh, yes," she whispered and pushed her fingers into his thick, soft hair.

His tongue stroked again before he drew the nipple into his mouth and sucked in the sweetest rhythm. Each flick of his tongue sent darts of heat between her legs until she could feel the wetness between her labia.

He used his other hand to massage and mold the opposite breast, stimulating both at once. After a moment, he switched his mouth to the other side, grazing his teeth over the stiff peak. Warm pleasure spread from her fingertips to her toes, centering low in her belly. She lifted her hips, wanting his hand on that aching spot between her legs. His mouth. His cock.

He must've picked up her urgency, because he slipped one hand off her breast and slid it down her stomach. The tips of his fingers swirled around her belly button, before oh, so slowly trailing over the folds between her legs.

He lifted his head from her breast and stared down at her, his gaze heated. "You're so wet for me."

"You doubted I would be?" she murmured, parting her legs.

His gaze stayed locked on hers as he pushed one finger between her folds to slide deep into her cunt. A tremble rocked her body, and her eyes slammed shut. There it was again, that wonderful, exquisite pressure.

"You're so tight." He leaned down again to lick her nipple, while fucking her with agonizing slowness with the one finger. "So wet."

He kissed his way up her neck and then caught her mouth with his again. His tongue plunged deep, then made slow thrusting motions; mimicking the actions of his finger inside her.

Feeling the silky rigidity of his cock against her hip, she reached down and wrapped her fingers around his erection.

Caden groaned against her mouth; his hips flexed and his cock thrust against her hand. "Sweetness, you have no idea how good that feels."

"Mmm. If it's anything like when you touch me, then I have a pretty good idea."

Moving her hips against his hand, she slid her fingers up and down his length, fascinated by the feel of him, like hot satin wrapped over iron. All thoughts fled her mind as he brought his finger up to her clitoris and began a slow massage over the swollen kernel.

"Caden." Her hips jerked and she gasped.

"Stay with me. Just focus on the pleasure." He applied more pressure and moved his finger faster, at the same moment she felt him slide another finger inside her. She closed her eyes, her fingers moving faster around his cock. His mouth disappeared from her breast, and his cock slipped out of her hand.

She opened her eyes again, just in time to see his head disappear between her legs. A moment later his mouth latched onto her clit. A choked gasp escaped past her lips as fire licked through her blood. He kept sucking her clit, his tongue flicking against it while he penetrated her with that maddening finger.

Guttural moans and whimpers filled the cave; it took a moment to

realize they came from her. The pleasure spiraled, higher and higher with each flick of his tongue. She gripped his hair, her thighs tightening around his head as the pleasure peaked. Lights flashed behind her lids, and her stomach clenched as wave after wave of spasms rushed through her.

Still shaking from her climax, she barely noticed him preparing to enter her until his thighs forced her legs open wider. The thick head of his cock probed at her entrance. He grasped her hips, then without hesitation, plunged deep.

The pleasure blurred with the sharp edge of pain, and she couldn't hold back the scream that erupted from her throat.

## Chapter Ten

*A virgin?* The thought just barely pierced through the thick fog of desire in Caden's head. He forced himself to remain still inside her, grinding his teeth together to regain some control. Turning his gaze down to her face, he was stunned to see the sheen of tears in her eyes.

"Sarina?"

She gave him a strained smile. "I'll be all right."

Guilt ripped through him, even with her hot, tight cunt squeezing the life out of cock. He should stop. How had he not realized she was virgin?

"Caden, *please*." She lifted her hips, propelling him deeper inside her.

The air hissed out from between his teeth and he groaned, his fingers tightening around her hips.

"It's all right now," she insisted, dragging a fingernail down his chest. "The pain has passed."

Watching her eyes, he could see that the discomfort had faded, and they were once again hazy with pleasure. Still, he wanted to bring her back to that state of complete delirium. With the tart taste of her cream still in his mouth, he reached down to rub the clit that he'd thoroughly enjoyed sucking earlier.

She gasped, her mouth opening as her tongue dashed across her swollen bottom lip. The muscles of her vagina clenched and unclenched around him; he could feel her getting creamier around his cock again.

Still rubbing, he moved just the slightest bit inside her, watching her face to see if he hurt her. Pleasure flickered in her gaze, and she lifted her hips. Encouraged, he began a slow steady thrust, not rushing her. The effort was so great he could feel the veins in his forehead straining. Her breathy cries started again, and she moved her body awkwardly, her inexperience showing in her attempts to meet his thrusts.

Damn. He closed his eyes, knowing he wouldn't last long. Rubbing her clit faster, he plunged deeper and harder inside her, increasing his pace until they were both breathing hard and groaning.

Her cunt clenched around him, and she screamed, her body shuddering as she climaxed. Watching her face pinched with pleasure, seeing the flush that spread over her breast, pushed him to the limit. He gasped; his sac tightening before he exploded inside her, emptying himself again and again until he was drained physically and mentally.

Gathering her into his arms, he rolled onto his side and brushed a kiss against her damp forehead. "You were a virgin?" he murmured into her hair. "How is that possible?"

She gave a husky laugh. "Do you need the physical explanation? Or..."

"You're a grown woman. A beautiful grown woman." He cupped her breast, rubbing the nipple possessively. "Here a woman rarely reaches past twenty years without having made love."

Sarina shrugged and lowered her gaze. "I assume it is similar on New Centuron. Only...it was required that I be a virgin for the marriage I was being forced into. Our families are very well respected and old fashioned in some manners."

Jealousy came swift, invading every cell in his body. His fingers tightened around her breast. "You were to be married?"

"Yes. Quite soon, actually." She sighed and kissed the side of his neck. "And there would have been a physical exam an hour before my wedding to ensure I was untouched."

That he'd been the one to benefit from her forced virtue pleased him more than it should have. Still, the question burned sour in the back of his throat. "Do you love him? This man you were to marry?"



Her gaze darted back to his, wide eyed with obvious shock. "Not at all. I had no choice in the arrangement."

"Will he come back for you?" The question was out before he could stop it.

"I have no idea, actually."

Her answer didn't matter, anyway, because he knew if her fiancé were to return, Caden would kill him the moment he stepped foot onto Old Centuron.

*Mine.* He nuzzled her hair, breathing in the flowery scent. Even before they'd made love, he'd known he would never let her leave this planet. Whether she knew it or not was another matter.

When a Wolfan chose a mate, it was for life. There was a fire between them, and that link that had seemed to connect them when they'd first met. He'd known then, though he'd tried like hell to deny it. It was only when he'd seen her body lying so still on the side of the river bank that he had realized the importance of who she really was.

"Why did you try and cross the river?" He smoothed a hand down her hair. "You could have drowned. Do you realize that?"

Her body trembled beneath his touch. "Yes...I thought the same thing. But he insisted I could cross without difficulty."

"He?" Caden stilled, his heart thudding a bit faster.

"Another Wolfan. He was trying to help me." She pulled away slightly and looked up at him, her brows drawn together. "I couldn't understand why, because I knew it wouldn't please you."

Anger spread through his blood. It didn't please him. Not in the least. Who the hell had tried to help her?

"He told you it was safe to cross the river?" he asked, keeping his voice neutral.

"Yes." She nodded. "He said my people had returned, and that the pod had landed just across the river."

"Your pod returned?" His body went rigid, his arms tightening around her. So soon? It seemed highly unlikely. "Did you see it?"

She shook her head. "No. I didn't. And honestly...I'm not sure he was telling the truth, but that wouldn't make any sense. What reason

would he have to lie to me? Why would he have sent me across the river if it wasn't safe?"

Because who ever it was had wanted her dead. There was only person who would have had that kind of motivation. The thought curdled in his belly. "What did he look like?"

"It was dark. I'm not sure I could give a good description, other than he was darker than you and a bit heavier." She bit her lip and her eyes narrowed. "Although he had a streak of grey on one side of his head."

Darth. Exactly whom he'd suspected. Fuck, this was not good. The man had deliberately tried to kill Sarina. Yes, he was hurting, and rightfully so. But to take another life? Someone who was not directly responsible for Rosalyn's death? That was beyond rational mourning, and the worst part was that the man was still on the loose.

"That man who tried to help you..." Should he even tell her? Damn. She had to know, in case he approached her again. "He was the mate of the wolf that was killed."

She stiffened and closed her eyes, burying her face against his chest. "Oh no. He...he wanted me to die in that river, didn't he?"

Caden stroked a hand over her back. Again visualizing what could have happened. "I fear so. You must be careful of him, Sarina."

"Perhaps it's best that I just leave the planet—"

"Leave?" The idea ripped at his soul. *Never*. "We have no means to transport you back to New Centuron, and I doubt they'll return."

She didn't reply, and a moment later he felt the hot moisture of her tears on his chest.

"Sarina..." He kissed her forehead again. "I'm sorry."

"No, you're right. I don't know what I was thinking." She drew in a steadying breath. "It's just all so new to me."

"I know. And the Wolfan people will come to accept you."

"Will they?" she questioned. "Your grandmother told me something...something that shook everything I was raised to believe."

"What did she tell you?"

"She told me that she was alive when my people left New

Centuron. But I don't see how that could be possible."

"She told you the truth." His blood pounded. She was ready to talk, ready to listen. "Do you now acknowledge that there wasn't a Doomsday bomb?"

She hesitated, and when she answered, her words trembled. "I think my people were led to believe something that didn't happen. I believe you, Caden. I don't see how your people could be here if such an event had occurred. Will you tell me the whole story? How the Wolfan people came to be?"

He drew in an unsteady breath and closed his eyes. As always, the topic of their creation sent bile up his throat and bred anger in his belly.

"I have my grandmother's story, as well as a journal passed down through generations of my people. We were an experiment ordered by the government." He cupped her chin, turning her head to look at him. She needed to know it all. "The orders for the research came directly from The Ruler—your great-grandfather."

She flinched, though she didn't appear too shocked. Apparently she'd known her bloodline well. "Go on."

"It was a complex plan that dealt with gene splicing of both human and wolves. To create some form of super human or something. Hell, I don't know what they were thinking." He shook his head. "What I do know is that it didn't turn out as they'd expected. Instead of creating what they'd intended, they created us. A human that had the ability to live as half man and half wolf, changing whenever the urge struck."

Her gaze softened, searching his face as her fingers moved over his chest. "Then what happened?"

"Then the government realized what they'd inadvertently created, and we became the biggest freak show on the planet. They put us in cages and began analyzing, testing, and finally dissecting my people."

"Oh, that's terrible," she whispered, obviously horrified.

"So we did the only thing we could. We fought back for control, and we got it." He drew in a long breath, images of a scene he'd never experienced danced behind closed lids. "It was brutal and violent, but in the end it was clear that the Wolfan people would be the dominant life

form on Centuron. So the humans fled."

She met his gaze, her own heavy with shock and sadness. "Caden, I had no idea."

"It happened before either of us had been born, sweetness. And it sounds like the survivors that left here to start a new life on New Centuron chose not to tell their descendants of what really happened." He touched her cheek and offered a small smile.

"How is it that your grandmother is not a Wolfan?" she asked suddenly.

"She told you that, did she?" His grandmother must have trusted her more than he'd realized, to have divulged such information. "Anya was a child when the experiments began. Her parents feared the experiment before it had even begun, so they hid her existence for years. And then, when the unaltered humans abandoned the planet, she was the only one who was not Wolfan."

Her brows drew together. "How is it that you're Wolfan? If you're her grandson..."

"Anya is not my biological grandmother; she was my grandmother's sister. My biological grandparents were killed in a fire shortly after the birth of my mother." He smiled. "So Anya raised my mother, and she has always been who I consider my grandmother. She never married. We were all she ever had."

"I see." She bit her lip. "What I don't understand...and I'm not sure I ever will..." She dragged in a breath. "Is why my people let me come here, then? By all appearances they'd abandoned Old Centuron for good."

"That's what I'd like to know."

"I'm so sorry, Caden. No wonder you hate me."

"I don't hate you, Sarina," he said vigorously "You had no more to do with that experiment than I did with the battle that ultimately drove your people away."

"I know. Still..." She sighed and brushed a kiss against his chest.

Caden groaned, the blood in his body moving south. She moved her hand over his stomach, and his cock jerked.

Her startled gaze lifted to his. "So soon? You could do it again?"

His stomach bounced with laughter. "Yes, sweetness. I could do it again."

"Hmm." Excitement glinted in her eyes, and she drew her swollen bottom lip between her teeth. "I'd like to as well."

She scooted away from him and reclined on her back, running a hand over her breast. "Make love to me again, Caden. Please."

Seeing her nipple peak under her own touch made his mouth water. He lowered his gaze to the swollen folds of her sex and knew he couldn't resist. He moved toward her, pushing her hand aside and using his own to cup the full weight of her breast. Dipping his head, he drew the rigid tip into his mouth and sucked.

"Mmm." Her fingers clutched his hair, and she arched her back.

He switched to the other breast, laving the tip and reaching a hand between her legs to rub her clit. She moaned softly, and her ass lifted off the blanket. He released her nipple with a popping noise and rose to his knees. Cupping her ass in his hands, he wedged himself between her thighs and prodded her entrance with his cock.

Her slick juices greeted the head of his erection as he slid inside her. He gently sank into her, knowing she would be swollen and tender from her first sexual experience not even an hour ago.

He took his time, penetrating her slow and steady. Each thrust into her hot, tight center locked the breath in his chest. Sarina's soft cries echoed in the cavern. He watched her stomach tighten and her breasts quiver each time he pulled from her, only to slide back in.

He reached down to rub her clit, increasing the steady pace of his penetrations. Her nails clutched the blanket as her hips lifted against his thrusts. With the tightening of his sac, he knew he wouldn't last much longer.

She gasped, and the walls of her cunt squeezed him; hot cream coated his cock as she orgasmed. Caden groaned and closed his eyes as his own climax rocked him. He exploded inside her, coming until his balls tingled, and his mind was empty.

Lowering her legs back to the blanket, he eased back down beside her, and she immediately scooted close to him. *Hell*. If the link between

them had been strong before they'd mated, it was damn near unbreakable after the fact.

"We should rest now," he murmured, stroking a hand down her back. When she didn't answer, he realized she already had fallen asleep. He closed his eyes tightened his arm around her.

*Mine.*

## Chapter Eleven

Sarina winced and paused to stretch her aching body. They'd been walking along the river for at least an hour. She considered herself in excellent physical condition, but the walk back to the village had taken a toll. The ache spread throughout her body, and it felt as if literally every joint and muscle were inflamed.

"How are you doing?" Caden turned to look back at her, his gaze narrowed with obvious concern.

She forced a smile and shrugged. "I'm all right. Are we getting close?"

"Just a bit further, and then we'll be able to cross the river. The village is only about ten minutes from that point. Do you want to rest?"

Her smile tightened as she shook her head. If she sat down to rest, she might never get up.

By the time they reached the village, her legs may as well have been made of liquid. Her head pounded, and her mouth felt so dry it was difficult to move her tongue to wet her lips. Caden kept an arm around her waist, seeming to know how much the journey had drained her.

People in his village watched their approach, their gazes full of hesitation and apprehension. Their expressions changed to amazement and shock as they moved further into the crowd. Caden's arm tightened around her as he nodded to his people.

Sarina glanced around warily. Was it possible they knew what had happened between her and Caden? That they'd become lovers? Her face,

already flushed from the walk back, burned hotter.

"I want everyone to understand something," he called out to the crowd. "Sarina is not the one who took Rosalyn's life. She is an innocent party and means no harm to the Wolfan people."

A ripple of murmurs ran through the crowd. Sarina spotted Anya off to the side, a slight smile on her face as she watched them. Caden dipped his head toward her and murmured, "I will tell my people later, but first I will take you home."

"Tell your people what?"

"That you are my mate, of course."

"Your *mate*?" Shock ripped through her, and she jerked her head to look at him; the movement sent stabs of pain through her body. She reached up and clutched her temples. "Ooh."

"Sarina?" He gripped her elbow and swung her in front of him. "What's wrong?"

"My head." She groaned and her knees wobbled. "My everything. I feel...oh wow, I feel horrible. Everything hurts."

"For how long?" He cursed and swept her into his arms just as her legs gave out.

"It started this morning," she mumbled, going slack in his arms. "It got worse as the day passed."

"Why didn't you tell me?"

She jostled in his arms as he ran towards the house, the pain in her head pulsing and sending sparks of pain behind her closed eyelids. "Caden." She whimpered. "What's happening to me?"

"I don't know, sweetness. But I'll find out. I promise."

He kicked open the door to his house, rushing her through the rooms until she felt herself being lowered onto a bed.

"Sarina, I must go find my grandmother. She is the healer. Will you be all right?"

"Mmm." She couldn't form any more of a response past the throbbing in her head and entire body.

"Shit." His worried curse was spoken softly, and then the room went silent. A moment later she heard his return, and a wet cloth was laid



across her forehead.

"I'll be back shortly. Just rest." This time after the hurried footsteps, he didn't return.

The damp cloth did little to ease the pounding in her head. She'd had headaches before, but nothing like this. It felt as if her brain were trying to burst from her skull. As if every muscle and bone in her body was suddenly too small for her skin.

Unbearable pain swept through her, draining any last energy she had, and then the blackness swept in.

\* \* \* \* \*

"What's wrong with her?" Caden paced the room, casting frantic glances to where Sarina lay pale and motionless on the bed.

Anya knelt at Sarina's side, her wrinkled hand pressed against the pulse on her neck. Her eyebrows drew together in a frown, and she stood back up.

"Did you bed her?" she asked sharply.

His jaw went rigid, and he drew in a calming breath. Why the fuck was she asking if he'd gone to bed with her, when Sarina appeared to be at death's door?

"Yes. Sarina and I have become lovers," he acknowledged.

"When was the first time? Did you spill your seed inside her?"

"What?" Heat stole up his neck, and his fists clenched.

"It is imperative that you answer me, Caden."

He thrust a hand into his hair and sighed. "Last night. We first made love last night. And yes, I spilled myself inside her."

Her frown disappeared, and her expression turned thoughtful as she glanced back at Sarina.

"Are you worried I may have impregnated her?" he asked.

"Oh, I am certain you have done so, or will soon." She made a dismissive wave with her hand. "But that is irrelevant."

"Then what is this about?" He went to Sarina's side again and picked up her clammy hand. Her mouth was drawn tight, a clear

indication of the pain she was in. "What is happening to her?"

"She is changing."

His head whipped back to his look at his grandmother  
"Changing?"

"Yes." Her sharp gaze locked on his. "She is becoming Wolfan."

The air locked in his lungs, and his blood pounded faster through his veins. *Wolfan*. Sarina was becoming a Wolfan?

"How?" The choked word tore from him.

"You exposed her to it when you mated." Anya turned and walked into the kitchen. "I foresaw this happening, but thought it best not to tell you."

"You foresaw this?" Anger began a slow burn in his gut. "Why did you not tell me?"

"Would it change anything?" she asked, looking back at him and raising an eyebrow. She grabbed a cup and filled it with water. "Would you have *not* chosen her as your mate had you known what would happen?"

"Sarina is my mate," he said fiercely. "Her becoming Wolfan will not affect that. In all truth, it will help her to adjust to her new life here."

"Yes. So what is the problem?"

"How will she feel about this?" He sighed and shook his head.

"In the long term, she will be fine."

But the short term, not so much. His bit his tongue from spitting out the bitter words. Damn it.

"When will she be well again? How long does the transition take?"

Anya shrugged and sipped her water. "Twenty-four hours at the most. There is not a lot you can do for her, save remaining by her side. She will be unconscious most of the time."

He shook his head. "How do you know all this? How do you know that this is what is happening to her?"

"Caden, not all our people were changed from the experiment. Early on, there were those who were still human, but as they mated with the Wolfans, they changed," she murmured, sadness flicking in her gaze. "It is the reason I never mated. I was...afraid. And yet I ended up living

the rest of my life as the last remaining human.”

Caden lifted his head and drew in a deep breath. Ah, so that was why. He’d always wondered why Anya had never taken a lover.

“I will leave you now. Take care of her.” His grandmother gave a slight smile and glanced at Sarina’s sleeping form. “She will need you when she wakes.”

His grandmother left the cabin, and he was once again alone with Sarina. He turned his gaze back to her. She lay so pale and still, the peace occasionally broken when her body would spasm and her sharp whimper of pain would cut through the silence.

He hoped the transition didn’t last much longer. With a sigh, he climbed into bed and pulled her body flush against him; wishing like hell he could transfer her pain to himself.

## Chapter Twelve

Sounds from the village woke her. People talking and moving about. *Crack*. Someone was chopping wood. The amplified sound resonated in her head. Sarina opened her eyes. She was alone in bed—Caden's bed. Her gaze drifted around the room, drinking it all in. Everything seemed brighter, more defined.

She sat up in the bed, expecting to feel her head pounding and the unsettling weakness that had taken hold yesterday. There was nothing. She tested her muscles, stretching her arms above her head and tilting her neck from side to side.

Her stomach grumbled, and she pressed her palm to it. When was the last time she'd eaten? The smell of meat teased her nostrils, and she climbed out of the bed and wandered into the kitchen.

She wasn't sure what was more tempting: the site of Caden's naked body, his muscled back and firm ass, standing at the stove cooking, or the meat that he fried in the pan.

He turned suddenly and his gaze landed on her. "You're awake."

So many emotions in those dark eyes. Wariness, concern, and desire. Surprised at the soft growl that came from her throat, she licked her lips and crossed the room towards him.

"Yes. I am."

"How are you?" he asked, pulling the pan off the stove and reaching a hand out to touch her cheek.

"Hungry," she murmured and slipped her arms around his waist.

Lowering her head, she grazed her teeth across one of his nipples peeking through the hair on his chest.

"Are you? I've just cooked some—"

"Originally I was hungry for food, but now..." She raised her gaze and gave him a devilish look. "I think I'm hungry for something a little more...primal."

A little shocked by her own desires and brazenness, she sank to her knees in front of him and placed her hands on his thighs.

"Sarina." His choked gasp only made her laugh.

"Yes, Caden?"

"I think we may want to wait a bit before we do this."

"Why?" She licked her lips, staring at the thick cock that swelled under her gaze.

To think that had been inside her? It was massive. Leaning forward, she drew her tongue across his steely, hot flesh and moaned at the musky saltiness.

"Sweetness." His fingers delved into her hair and held her still—not that she intended to go anywhere.

She laved the swollen head, especially intrigued by the tiny hole on top. Opening her mouth, she slid his cock past her lips and let him thrust it inside. His groan filled the kitchen and encouraged her—made her realize she was definitely doing something right.

Reaching between his legs, she cupped the heavy sac that hung beneath his cock and tested it in her palm. He cursed, his hands tightening in her hair as his flesh jerked in her mouth.

"Mmm." She squeezed his sac again and began to move her mouth up and down on his cock.

Faster and then deeper, she only sought to bring him pleasure. It became her only focus. She lifted her gaze as she sucked him, to assure herself he was being pleased. He had his eyes closed, and his mouth was twisted downward as if in pain.

She drew back. "Am I hurting you?"

"Only if you stop," he said thickly and pushed her mouth back to his cock.

Sarina laughed, knowing the sound vibrated against his flesh, and hoping it was a nice feeling. His answering grunt confirmed it.

*Mmm.* The salty taste of him stirred something primitive deep inside her. She wanted all of him, wanted him to finish in her mouth. She sucked harder, moving her mouth up and down on his length.

*"Sarina."* His grip on her hair tightened, and he grunted.

A second later the first warm spurt of his cum emptied in her mouth, and then more came. She swallowed each taste. *Mmm*, he tasted good. And the power she had at this moment! She squeezed his sac again, encouraging him to empty himself completely.

"Oh, shit." He pulled from her mouth and fell to his knees beside her, pressing her face against his chest. "Sweetness, that was...oh, damn."

*"Mmm."* She pulled away and licked her lips. "For me too."

His breaths were ragged for a moment, his eyes remaining closed. Then he opened them again and wariness replaced the passion.

"We need to talk."

Hmm. That sounded a little more serious than she wanted to deal with right now. "How about the food you promised a few minutes ago?"

"Talk first."

"Eat first," she insisted and stood up, glancing in the pan at the meat he'd been frying. She inhaled the spicy scent and sighed. "I haven't eaten since yesterday afternoon. I'm ravenous, Caden. Please. Talk later?"

He sighed, didn't look happy, but nodded. "All right."

She waited as he stood up and pulled two plates from the shelf, placed thick slices of meat on the plate, and then grabbed them each a glass of water.

Sarina licked her lips and sat down at the table. Why the heck she craved meat so much made little sense to her. Perhaps it was something in the air. On New Centuron, she'd engaged in a strict vegetarian diet.

When Caden finally set the food in front of her, she devoured it within moments. He ate his a bit slower, while his gaze never left her.

The thirst came next, and she grabbed the glass of water and downed it in just a few swallows. Her thoughts turned to what had just transpired between them; everything had happened in the past twenty-

four hours. What did this man do to her? How could he create such chaos with her hormones, and worse yet, her heart? She had to get off this planet. Quick. Before she did something stupid, like fall in love. Though she wasn't certain she hadn't already fallen.

She stood up to refill the glass and then turned to face Caden.

"You said earlier there was no means to transport me back to New Centuron. Was that true? Aren't there any antique travel pods that could be restored to return me to New Centuron?"

Caden's stomach clenched, and he had to fight the urge to flinch. She wanted to leave? After everything that had transpired between them?

"Why?"

She avoided his gaze. "Because...well, as you said, it is unlikely my people will return. So maybe I should try to find a way to return to them."

"Why would you want to? I thought you had no interest in the man you were to marry."

"I don't. But New Centuron is still my home. My father is there, and my family."

She mentioned nothing of friends. Was her connection with New Centuron really so strong?

"Are you close with them?"

"What kind of question is that?" Her words were defensive, but he'd seen the flicker of loneliness in her eyes.

"A valid one, apparently."

"Whether we're close or not is irrelevant; they're blood," she replied, her cheeks reddening. "They would want to know if I was alive. And you didn't answer my question about the pod."

"No. We don't have a pod, Sarina." He grabbed his plate and damn near tossed it into the sink. "And I don't think they'd take you back, even if we could get you home."

Her head reared backward and her eyes widened. "And what do you mean by that?"

*Tell her. Just fucking tell her what you've turned her into.*

His jaw clenched. "You could be carrying my child."

Not exactly the more shocking of the two things he needed to tell

her, but it still hit its mark. She blanched and placed a shaking hand on the counter.

"I hadn't thought of that." Drawing her lip between her teeth, she looked toward the bedroom. "At home I would have been given an injection the night before my wedding to prevent a conception."

"Yes, well, we don't have *injections* here. And when I came inside you we took one hell of a gamble." *Not to mention I turned you into a Wolfan.*

She shrugged; her bravado obviously false. "We won't know for sure for a bit. Where do we go from here?"

"Sarina...why won't you accept that you're my mate?"

"Your *mate*?" Her head swiveled and shock alive in her gaze. "It wasn't a dream. I thought maybe...absolutely not. It's impossible."

How could she just brush off everything that had happened between them? "You don't believe that. Not for a—"

"I don't *belong* here, Caden. I don't!" Her hands fisted. "I'm not like you people. I'm not Wolfan!"

"Yes, you are." Damn it, he had absolutely no tact. He should have begged his grandmother to break the news to her.

She blinked, her mouth hanging open. Then she shook her head, a slow movement as the confusion in her eyes was replaced with anger.

"What kind of game are you playing?"

"I wish I were." He approached her and reached out a hand to touch her shoulder but she knocked it away. His mouth tightened, but he made an effort to keep his voice steady. Comforting. "Sarina. When we made love, I gave you more than the possibility of a child."

She stared at him, unblinking. Understanding dawned in her eyes, and then came the horror and fear.

"No. It's impossible." Her lower lip trembled, and she shook her head.

"It's *not* impossible. Though I thought it was until Anya informed me what was happening to you. You were sick, Sarina," he reminded her. "Don't you remember any of what happened in the last twenty-four hours? The transition has already completed."



"No. No." Her gaze darted frantically around the room, her chest rose and fell. "There has to be some kind of antidote."

"Come on, Sarina." His words came out harsher than he'd intended. "Don't you think we would have used it on ourselves if there was?"

Before he realized her intent, she hurled a glass at him, nearly clipping him in the side of the head.

"How could you do this to me?" she screamed, her eyes tearing up as she reached for a plate. "I hate you!"

"Stop it!" He gripped her wrist, halting her sudden violent streak. Her words cut deep. *I hate you.* Guilt and anguish rocked his body. "If I had known this would happen..."

"What? You wouldn't have slept with me?" she taunted, her lips drawing tight. "I somehow doubt that."

The anger died, leaving only wariness. He sighed and shook his head. "I'm sorry, Sarina. But it wouldn't have changed the fact that you're my mate. You're just scared right now, and you have every right to be. But it will be easier on you this way—"

"Easier on me?" She jerked her hand away and paced the cabin. "How can you have any idea what's easy on me?"

The muscles in his body went taut as he watched her. She needed to calm down. If she didn't calm down—

She froze and stared down at her hands, before her gaze swung back to him. "*Oh.* It's happening. Right now. Isn't it?"

"Yes." She was shifting. It could happen when one's temper became too much to control.

"No." She spun around and bolted out the door.

Caden moved after her, but stopped when his grandmother stepped onto his porch.

"Let her go, Caden," she murmured wearily. "The girl needs time to accept what is happening to her. She'll want to be alone when she makes her first transition and learns how get by in her alternate state."

He shook his head, his chest tight. "She'll never forgive me."

"She will. She loves you, Caden. Even though she may not realize

the importance of the fact, she knows you are her mate.” Anya patted his shoulder. “She will return.”

Down the hill he could see Sarina tearing off into the forest, a little shaky in her newly-born wolf form. Shit, he wanted to be with her for this first moment, to see if she was as beautiful a wolf as she was a human. But then, he knew she would be. His gut twisted. He wanted to watch her taste the freedom of being a wolf, feel the excitement.

*Give her time.* Did his grandmother have any idea of hard that truly was? Sarina would be lucky if he gave her an hour. Because, damn it, he needed to be with her again. Soon.

## Chapter Thirteen

She should have been more horrified. Sarina's heart thudded in her chest as she ran through the forest. Each passing moment made her steadier on her feet as she adjusted to her new form. A wolf. She was a fucking wolf!

Back on New Centuron, there had been talk of diseases a woman could sometimes catch during sex with the wrong type of guy, but this...this was a whole different story. He hadn't given her a disease; he'd turned her into some bizarre human/wolf shifter thing.

Her paws slapped the earth as she increased her pace. With a growl, she wove between trees and bounded up a hill; her pulse pounded, and adrenaline raced through her veins. It wasn't even hill, she realized, but a small mountain. And she'd scaled it in an insane amount of time, a climb that would've taken the average human hours. *I'm enjoying this.* As crazy as the idea seemed, she knew it was true.

Reaching a vista that looked out over the forest; she slowed her pace and paused for a breath. Her tongue lolled as she ran her gaze over the land. Trees for miles and miles, with a crystalline lake sparkling off in the distance. A thin curl of smoke rose from a break in the trees, and calmness descended on her. Caden's home, the village. Her home.

The idea of leaving Old Centuron twisted in her gut, and she knew then that she didn't want to leave. Not this beautiful planet, and certainly not Caden. Her mate. Why had she denied it? She closed her eyes. It had been a knee-jerk reaction, one any human would have experienced.

But now, after running wild for a while and having time to think...it felt right. Having this primal wolf side of her, and knowing that Caden had given it to her during their love making. It was a gift from her mate. Perhaps this had always been her destiny.

When she'd snapped at Caden that she'd hated him, he hadn't been able to hide the anguish her words caused. Her throat tightened, and guilt spread through every inch of her body. She raised her head and howled. Crying out for forgiveness, and crying for Caden to come to her.

\* \* \* \* \*

The pained wolf's cry echoed faintly through the village. Caden's head snapped up from where he fed the fire in the center of the village; his heart pounded with hope. *Sarina*.

"She is Wolfan now?" Karen, a respected woman from village stood nearby, watching her children run wild, and gave him a thoughtful glance.

"Yes." No further explanation was needed. His chest swelled with pride as he added, "She is my mate."

"We assumed as such when you returned with her yesterday."

Karen placed a hand over her swollen stomach. This would be her fifth child, Caden realized with some surprise. Karen was close in age to him; they'd been classmates. She'd been with her mate for years now, and had always questioned when Caden would find his. Who would have realized it would happen like this?

"Do you think the village will accept her?" he asked, knowing Karen would know of whom he spoke.

"Of course." She glanced at him, her smile wry. "She is your mate, which alone gives us little choice. But more so, we know now that she was innocent in Rosalyn's death. She will be accepted, Caden, have no fear in that."

Off in the distance *Sarina* howled again, and the sound echoed through his blood. The urge to find her made him restless.

"Go," Karen urged. "She is waiting for you."

What was he waiting for? From her cry, it sounded as if she obviously had forgiven him. He pushed aside his hesitation, and with a swift nod to Karen, took off into forest. He shifted immediately, raising his head to the canopies of the trees and howling in response to his mate.

*I'm coming, Sarina.* His heart pounded with each slap of his paws on the ground. *I'm coming, my love.*

\* \* \* \* \*

Caden's howl of response carried up to where Sarina still stood on the mountain. She had yet to change back to human, and in fact was almost reluctant to do so.

She lay down on cliff, resting her head on her paws, and waited for him to find her. The glint of silver in the sky flickered so quickly she questioned whether it had been real.

Staring at the same spot, she waited to see it again. It winked silver again, but grew bigger in size. Her pulse slowed, fear crept into her throat. Someone from New Centuron had returned for her.

*Oh, no.* She needed to get down there to intercept them before another tragedy occurred. The pod slowly descended toward a clearing in the trees. It looked to be the same spot they'd initially landed.

Rising on her legs, she spun and charged back down the mountain, grateful for her wolf form now. If she didn't get there first...if another Wolfan were to be present when someone emerged from the pod...

*No. Don't think like that. You can stop this. You'll just tell them to leave. Assure them that you're okay, have them forward the message to your family, and then send them on their way.*

She wove in and out of the trees, hoping she was heading in the right direction. Breaking through an especially dense group of trees, she moved into the clearing. The silver pod had landed, and the door had been left open.

Someone had already exited the pod? She looked around, her pulse pounding double time.

"Hello, little wolf."

\* \* \* \* \*

She wasn't on the mountain. Caden walked around, unease in his gut. He turned his gaze over the land below and froze. The silver pod gleamed in the opening among the trees.

*No.* Panic and terror coated every muscle in his body. Would she leave him? Had she gone down there to return to her fiancé? Like hell would he let her go. He'd fight for her. This was her home. He was her mate, damn it.

With a roar, he turned and ran down the mountain, determined to make her stay or die trying.

## Chapter Fourteen

*Reynard?* Sarina turned around and stared down the barrel of a gun. *Oh, no.* She was still in wolf form.

*Don't shoot.* She sent the words silently as forced herself to shift back to human. Reynard stumbled backwards, his eyes widening with horror.

"Don't shoot me," she repeated aloud this time.

"Sarina? What the fuck—"

Back in her human state, she stepped forward and winced. Everything felt a little tender, overly tight. This had been the first time shifting to human from her wolf state, and she hadn't known what to expect.

"Stay back!" His hand tightened on the gun.

"Reynard, put down the gun," she pleaded, taking a step toward him.

"Where are your clothes?" His gaze moved over her. Lust and shock mixed in his eyes.

She winced. Damn, how could she have also forgotten she was completely naked standing in front of her former fiancé?

"Why did you return, Reynard?" She lifted her chin. "When you were so quick to abandon me?"

"I didn't abandon you. You were getting eaten by a fucking wolf! Or at least that's what should have happened. I planned this perfectly," he snarled. "How the hell are you still alive?"

*That's what should have happened?* She blinked, shaking her head.

"I don't understand. You planned *what* perfectly?"

"Your fucking death!" He shook his head. "When Tom obviously failed to slit your throat by the river, I assumed you'd die by one of the Wolfans. Hell, I saw him grab you!"

His horrific words swirled in her head. Reynard had *wanted* that guard to kill her? Then his other statement registered in her head.

Her jaw clenched and she drew in an unsteady breath. "You knew...? You knew about the Wolfans?"

"Of course I knew, Sarina." His mouth curled downward into a sneer. "I always thought it was a bit funny that you, the brilliant fucking scientist, had no idea of their existence. Had absolutely no idea why humans had to run away to New Centuron."

Shock robbed her of the ability to speak. She stared at him, wondering who the hell he really was and how he'd known.

Finally she looked away, her fists clenched at her sides. "Why did you want me dead?"

"Do you really think I'd go along with the merger of the Mackenzie and Williams families? Combining the blood lines?" He gave a harsh laugh. "Hell no. I intend for there to be one power house on New Centuron, and it won't include your pathetic family. The Mackenzie influence is losing power, and it only had any to begin with due to a relative who's been dead for almost a hundred years now."

"So you brought me here to kill me?" she asked, raising an eyebrow. How had she not realized just how far off the deep end Reynard was? "Why not just do it on New Centuron?"

"Why should I have? When I could take you here and make up any excuse on how you died. Your father believed me. And you know, he didn't even shed a tear. Just offered your ugly older sister as a consolation prize." His gaze narrowed. "Of course I turned him down. Proclaimed myself in mourning. Don't I just look heartbroken?"

She ground her teeth together, refusing to rise to the bait. It didn't surprise her that her father hadn't been affected by her supposed death. They'd never been close. She was just a means to an end.



"And now you've become one of them, haven't you, Sarina? One of those barbaric Wolfans."

"They're not barbaric," she snapped, then made an effort to reign in her temper. "Why are you here? If you thought I was dead, why return to the scene of the crime?"

"I came for what I always come for. The gold."

She stared at him, her mind whirling to put all the pieces together. "What you *always come here for*? How many times have you been to this planet, Reynard?"

"At least once a year since I was ten." His glance moved around the forest. "My father and his father before him have been returning for years to find gold. This planet is loaded with the stuff."

It all made sense. How the Williams had grown to be one of the wealthiest families on New Centuron. In reality, all these years they'd been pillaging Old Centuron of its resources.

She shook her head. "And you never encountered a Wolfan?"

"I knew of their existence. My grandfather spoke of two wolves that he encountered once." Reynard grinned, looking almost proud. "He trapped them in a one of the caves in the mountain and burned them alive."

The blood drained from her head and nausea swept through her. Caden's grandparents. It had to have been them.

"You sick fuck. Get off this planet." Her voice shook. "Get off this planet, and don't you ever come back."

"I can't do that, Sarina. And finding you alive has certainly posed a new problem." He took a step towards her. "One I intend to remedy."

No. He was going to kill her. Cold terror swept through her body, from the top of her head to her clenched toes.

"Reynard, you don't need to do this. I'm happy here, and I have no intention of leaving Old Centuron," she coaxed, keeping her eyes trained on the barrel of the gun.

"Can't do that. You know about my family and its connection with gold here. You're a liability." He cocked the gun and smiled. "Sorry, kid."

The roar came from right behind them, loud enough to make them

both jump. The wolf was a blur as it leapt at Reynard. His jaws snapped, and his claws dug into Reynard's chest.

Sarina stumbled backward, tripping and falling onto her bottom as the scene unfolded just yards from her. So much blood and screaming; then came the gunshot. Wolf and man both went still, and then the wolf rolled off to the side with a whimper, and its bloodied underbelly was exposed.

*Caden?* Time seemed to stop. Her heart tightened as if it were being pressed between two rocks.

"Sarina!"

Still staring at the wolf on the ground, it took a second to realize Caden's voice came the edge of the forest. A moment later he burst from the trees and ran to her, pulling her to her feet.

"Sarina, sweetness..." His arms circled her waist, and he pulled her hard against his chest. "Are you okay?"

She nodded, tears burning her eyes as she lifted her head and looked beyond him to Reynard's dead body and the wolf lying so still on the ground.

"I thought...Oh, Caden, I thought it was you."

Caden set her aside gently and turned to observe the scene. He walked to the pair on the ground and knelt down by the wolf. "Darth," he murmured.

Sarina pressed a hand against her mouth. The wolf shifted, and the familiar eyes of the man who'd tried to let her drown in the river stared up at her. His lips moved, but his words were almost inaudible. "I'm sorry."

Reynard lifted the man's hand and squeezed it. "There is no shame in what you have done. You saved Sarina's life, my friend. You have honored yourself."

"It's time...Rosalyn awaits...." Darth's eyes drifted shut. His body went slack against the ground. His hand slid from Caden's.

Sarina choked on a sob and blinked back tears. Caden stood again and wrapped his arms around her. She melted into his solid, warm embrace, pressing her cheek against his chest and listening to the heavy

thudding of his heart.

He smoothed a hand down her back, and she felt him press a kiss to the top of her head. "I should have gotten here earlier."

She shook her head. "It's my fault. I called for you from the mountains, and then saw the pod and left. Darth died saving my life."

"A life he once tried to take," he reminded her gently. "I think by saving you, he was hoping to redeem himself. He didn't want to live anymore without his mate."

A shuddering breath rocked her body, and she sniffed back more tears.

He was silent for a moment, but his arms tightened around her. "Are you going to leave me now, Sarina?"

Her stomach clenched and she pulled away so she could meet his unreadable gaze. "Do you want me to leave you?"

His jaw clenched, and his gaze slid to the pod "You told me if there was a pod, you would leave. That you didn't want to be stuck here."

"Yes, but that was before..."

"Before what, Sarina? Before your fiancé returned?" he demanded, his words thick with emotion. "Before Darth lost his life defending you?"

"Before I realized I was in love with you!" she shouted, her eyes tearing up again.

Caden's gaze lowered to hers, his brows drawing together. "You love me?"

"Yes," she whispered. Her whole body warmed with the words. "I love you, Caden. And I have absolutely no doubts anymore that you were always meant to be, and always will be, my mate."

"Oh, sweetness." He cupped the back of her head and pulled her close. "You have no idea how much of a relief it is to hear that."

"I'm sorry I lost it back at your house. It was just—"

"A shock, I know. Your reaction was completely justified." He lifted her chin and brushed a tender kiss across her mouth. "As long as you're staying now, I don't care what the hell you initially said."

She laughed and nuzzled his chest, dropping a kiss over where his heart lay. "I'm staying. You couldn't get rid of me if you tried."

"I'm not going to try." He growled and slid a hand up her waist to cup her breast. "What I'd like to get rid of is that pod."

Fire licked through her body at his touch, and she purred, pressing herself close to him. "Why get rid of it?" She met his gaze through her lashes. "There's a perfectly good pull-out bed in there."

"Is there now?" he murmured, his thumb sweeping across her nipple. "Why don't you give me the tour?"

She winked. "Oh, I'll give you much more than a tour, Caden."

She'd come to Old Centuron for research, and instead had found her destiny. She took the hand of her mate, her heart swelling with love as she led him into the pod and the beginning of their life together.

**The End**

### **Author Bio**

Shelli Stevens has always adored romance novels. Her ideal romance, both to read and write, is one that'll not only get you a little hot under the collar, but also gives you a good laugh every now and then. She is a musician, a second degree purple belt in Tae Kwon Do, and most importantly, a mom. She has been a supervisor for an International Phone Company, a Network Analyst, even a Medical Assistant, but her passion has always been writing.

Shelli currently lives in the Pacific Northwest with her daughter where she is Vice President of her local RWA chapter. She loves to hear from readers and tends to frequent the blogosphere.

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