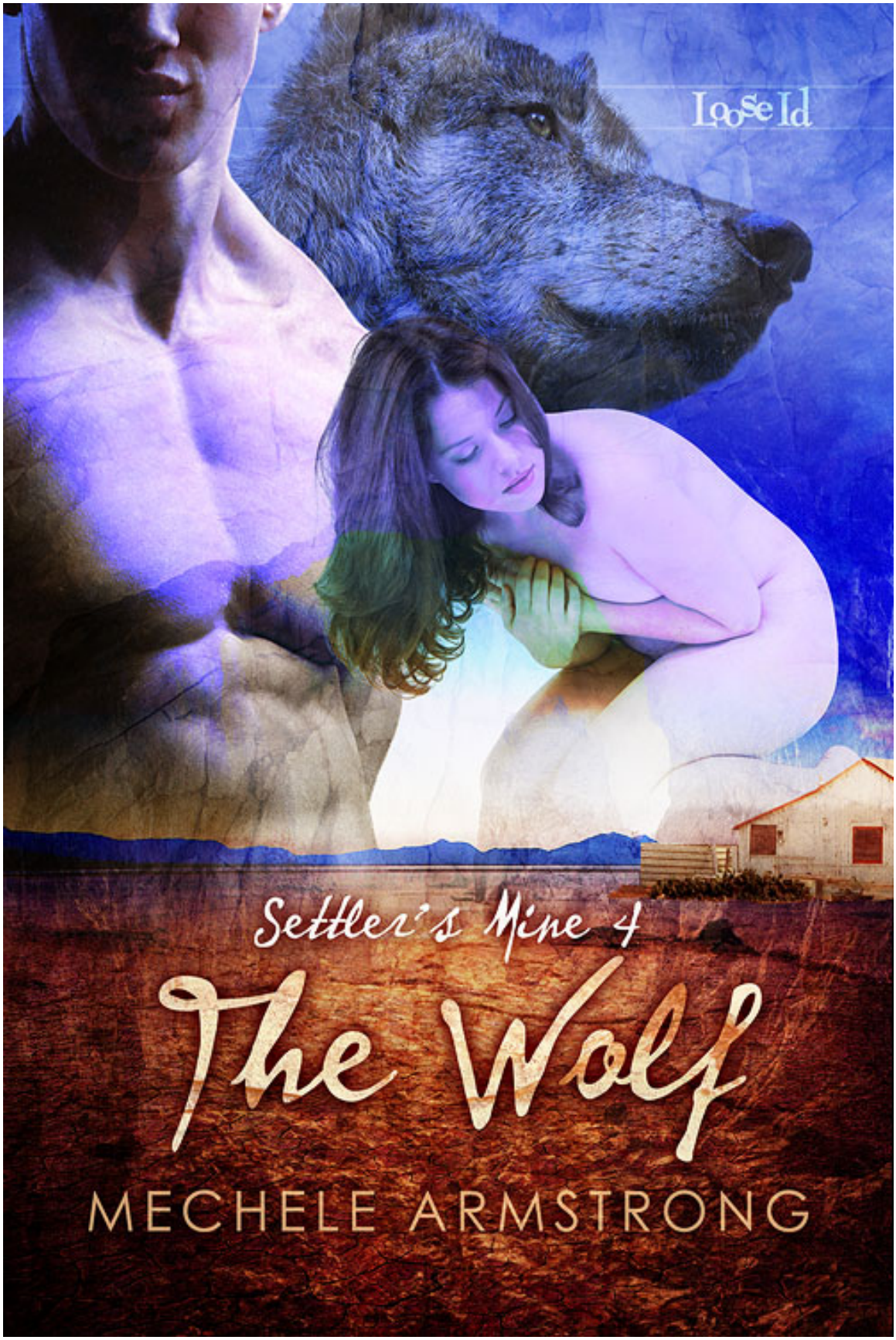
Loose Id
Settler's Mine 4
The Wolf
MECHELE ARMSTRONG

SETTLER'S MINE 4:

THE WOLF

Mechele Armstrong

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Settler's Mine 4: The Wolf

Mechele Armstrong

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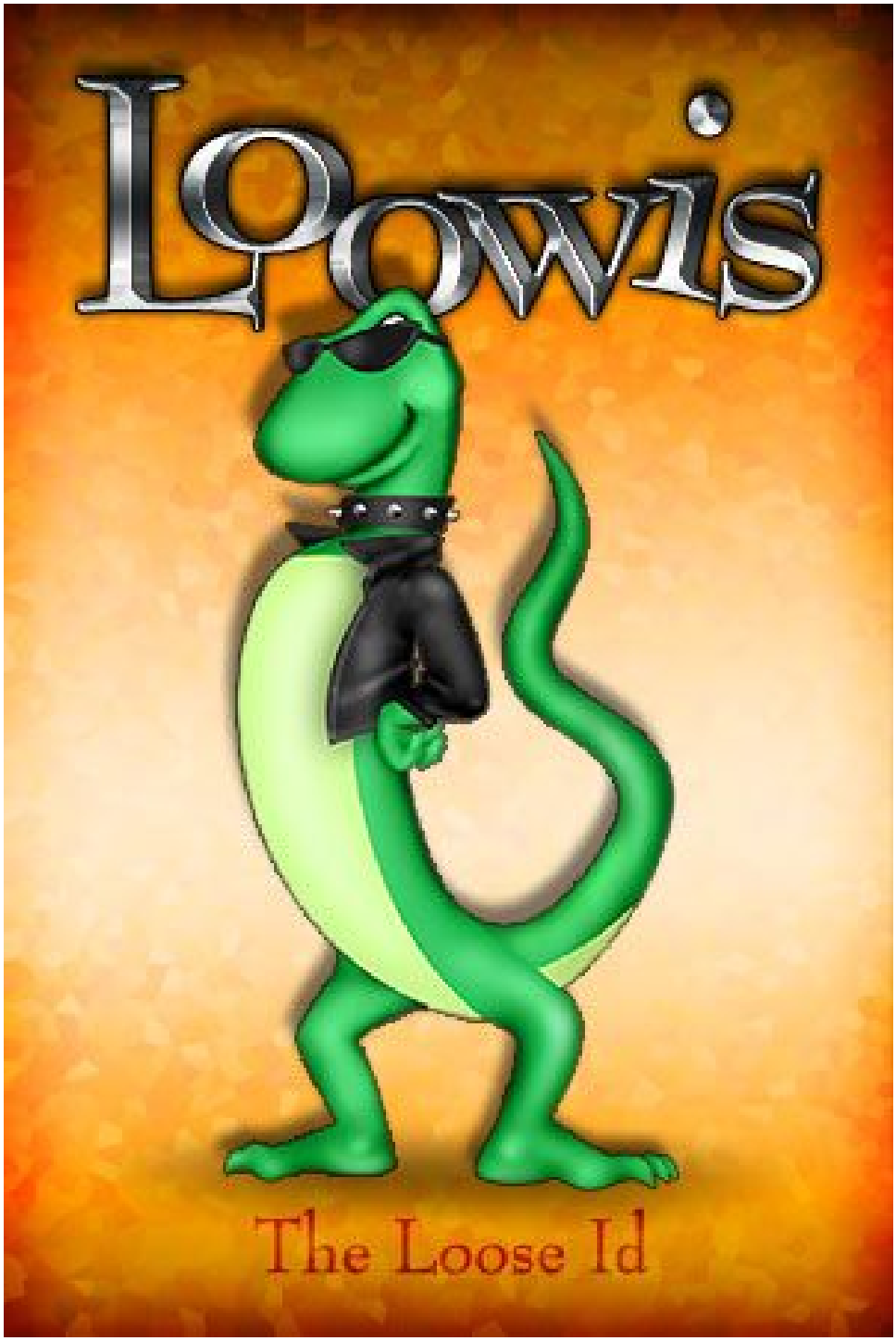

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Chapter One

Clyde paced behind the bar, his long, loping strides taking him in seconds from one side to the other. He grabbed a bottle of Tenaglian whiskey and his fingers fumbled with the glass as he poured it, sweat coating his body. His eyes narrowed as he surveyed the empty bar. Took a hit of the whiskey and let the burn take his throat.

Luckily the amber liquid wouldn't actually burn his throat as it would some other species. Although right now, he almost wouldn't care if it did. It would be better than the all-consuming heat inside of him. Maybe it would give him strength to hang on. To not lose himself.

God, he hated the feeling of not being in control. He prided himself on the careful will he exerted against what he was to stay loose. To be different. This descent always left him frustrated and raging. It made him the same as what he railed against. Hell, he was a wolf, not a sheep. The reason he'd been exiled.

He'd go down to the floor and do push-ups, but that would draw attention from those outside the bar. Last thing he needed was someone in his face. They'd probably come away without a nose. He was feeling too snappish to let anyone that close to him.

He sniffed slightly, letting the scents drift through his nostrils. A blended roll call of things near the bar. Couldn't let himself do a full scan because it would drive him insane. So many odors, he could almost be overwhelmed with the number, but his sensitive nose picked out specific ones to home in on.

Especially a female.

A woman in…her cycle. Right time. Fertile. Ripe for the taking. Ready for the fucking. So easy. He could take her. Ease this thing growing inside of him.

He inhaled more deeply, letting the scent roll across his senses. Reveling in the smell. His erection, a constant these days, solidified into a hardness that took his breath away.

His teeth bared in a sneer before he controlled his lips and brought them back under his control. That action hadn't been one he'd thought about doing. More proof of how far he'd gone down into the animal already.

He was slipping. Too fucking close to losing it.

He shook his head to clear it, more sweat breaking out on his brow. Now the scent of the woman haunted him. Bore into him. His fingers clenched the glass so hard that it shattered in his hand. He cleaned the mess up, ignoring the gash the glass created on his hand. It would heal.

Maybe he should have gone for push-ups. Luckily, the glass hadn't pierced him badly. Or maybe it would have been good if it had. The pain might have bought him some control. Kept his lucidity.

This woman wasn't what he needed. Too fragile. The Quatarians were too delicate for what he had to do. Though it wouldn't be long before that would cease to bother him. Soon enough, he'd take any female. Fragility be damned.

You cut it too close this time, my friend. You need to get out of here. Now.

He poured more of the whiskey into a new glass. Sucked it down without preamble or hesitation. Breathed in its fiery scent.

It wasn't what he needed either.

The heat didn't take away any of the burning inside of him. Any of the building tension. Only one thing would relieve him. Nothing he could find here.

He needed to wait, to get his affairs in order so he'd have something to come back to. He'd have five days of this misery. After that, he'd reclaim the life he'd built for himself. He'd get back his control. *Five days. You can do five days, you pussy.*

"Clyde?" Bren looked quizzically at him.

First time the man had ever come in without Clyde noticing his approach. "What?" Clyde resisted the urge to snarl. To snap at the big man. Who probably thought he could break Clyde in half. If he only knew… Clyde shook his head again. Bren didn't want to know. "About time you fucking got here. You're late." After putting down the glass, he reached over to pull out his bag, which rested under the bar ready to go.

"I've never seen you drink before." Clyde had never cussed at him either. Not wise to do that to the people who owned your bar. But Clyde was past caring.

Clyde shrugged and slung the bag on the floor. He put back the bottle of whiskey. "It's the same procedure as the last time that we went over it."

Bren arched a brow, then laughed.

The sound usually rolled across Clyde without incident, but today it made him even more agitated than he already was. Damn, but he needed to get out of here.

"It's been three years, Clyde. I think I need a refresher course."

Clyde pushed down his simmering blood. He could stand this a few more minutes. Sweat beaded on his upper lip as he moved in close to Bren to show him how to maintain the bar. His hands clenched by his sides, resisting the urge to pummel the man, who was the closest thing to a friend he had.

The man moved quickly to take down a bottle and read through the lists of drinks. Lists that Clyde himself never needed.

Clyde's fingers knotted into a fist. He could punch Bren. Put him down on the ground. Rip his throat out. Take his blood into his mouth. Crunch his bones under his teeth.

Clyde backed away. Had to get some distance before he did something stupid. This change always made him so damn out of control. Why he hated it so much.

Bren stopped reading, looked concerned. "Are you okay? You don't look so good."

"Fine." He couldn't manage any more than that. *Don't press me, Bren. I don't want to hurt you*. His instinct told him that Bren was male. A competitor. Who should be dominated. Taken out. The Alpha in Clyde was demanding that he subdue the other male. A primal urge, it recognized the Alpha that Bren was and wanted to challenge him.

Bren's mouth tightened. He didn't believe Clyde. Bren had always been smart. People tended to equate bulk with lack of brains.

Clyde never made that mistake, which was one others didn't make often with Clyde. Not and live to tell the tale anyway.

Maybe Bren could sense the danger, but he'd not gone a round with a Wolfton before. Not many had. His kind kept to themselves. Loners. Secretive. Didn't associate much with Quatarians. *Except for me*.

"Maybe it's a good thing you have a vacation scheduled."

You have no idea. He worked to fill Bren in on the bar happenings as much as he could, not getting into the other man's space to chance another reaction. Luckily for them both, Bren was a quick study and soon enough he was on his way off Settler's Mine.

When Clyde reached the shuttle, which was waiting for him in the bay, he swung in and closed the door. It *swooshed* shut behind him. The sound was comforting. Locking himself away from anyone he could hurt. The lack of smells soothed him. No smells resided to tempt him, to make his blood erupt in a hot flash of anger or a snarling slash of desire that would drive him over the cliff's edge.

He breathed through his nose fully for the first time in days. Yes, he'd almost let himself go too far. That he'd felt close to attacking Bren proved that.

At least it hadn't been Amory who'd agreed to keep tabs on the bar, though Clyde privately thought that Bren should have been the one to stick to security and not leave that job to Amory.

But if Amory had been at the bar with him in such shape, Clyde might have eaten Amory. Or at least had a snack. Amory wasn't quite the Alpha that Bren was, in Clyde's opinion, which while he was in heat, was the only one that mattered.

He bared his teeth at the thought of taking Amory down.

His heat was already upon him.

There'd be no time for pleasantries once he got where he was going. Good thing she didn't seek any.

He sat a minute, getting back his iron control. Soon enough he'd lose it and become the slave to his beast. He'd best keep calm while he could. Only five days and then he'd get back his free, stable life.

He set the controls for Prima Alta, a base on the outskirts of the Wolfton's planetary territory.

Only two things resided on Prima Alta. Whores and outcasts.

Meta was the whore, and he sure as hell was the outcast. It was the one place he could go and blend in. Despite his years on Settler's Mine, he never blended in there. He was always different from all the little Quatarians looking for their heartstones. Not anything he needed. His mate would be known to him, but not by a stone.

Maybe his pack brothers had memorized his heat schedule. If so, they'd be waiting for him to cross into Wolfton territory. They would be able to move against him more quickly then than if they were only relying on their sense of him reentering their territory.

His mouth curled as a growl bubbled up, echoing as the shuttle flew on its way. God, he hoped they waited for him. Then he'd get both a fight and a fucking.

Both of which, in a way, would last to the death.

*****

Angelica sat on the bench, legs pulled up under herself, looking out the back window. She ran a hand through her hair.

The long-range communicator buzzed from nearby. "Angelica?"

She slowly walked to answer it. Didn't want to. "Yes, Meta." If she hadn't answered it, Meta would've kept after her until she did.

"Is everything all right there?"

"Yes, Meta." Nothing had happened since the woman had left her on her own to travel to a client.

"I…feel as if I've forgotten something." The frustration sounded deep within the confines of her aunt's voice.

Meta was getting older. Not a good thing for a whore.

Angelica blew out a breath. "Well, I'm sure you can buy anything there on the planet you're visiting." Seemed odd to her and Meta both that the Wolfton had asked for the whore to come to him on such short notice. And made it worth her while. More than worth her while. The client had sent someone to pick her up while they'd still been negotiating terms. And he'd given her four times the going rate, according to Meta. She'd had only a few minutes to pack or the deal of a lifetime was off.

"I'm not worried about forgetting *things*." The stress on the syllable told Angelica what concerned her. "And I don't have my scheduler with me to check. I can't believe I left it home."

Angelica blinked. Neither could she. "I thought you packed it." Meta had intended to check it once she'd arrived and make other arrangements for anything she had scheduled. She hadn't thought anything was pressing and the client had given her a deal she couldn't refuse even if anything was.

"So did I. But it's not anywhere. I was in such a hurry…" Meta blew out a breath. "I must have left it there."

Angelica waited to see if Meta would ask her to look for the book. But she didn't.

Instead, she continued, "If anyone shows up, you send them packing. I've a few…clients that you don't want to mess with. I don't think any of them are due…but you never know."

A shudder raced across Angelica. She could imagine the proclivities of someone using a whore were questionable. And a Wolfton in heat could be demanding.

Meta's voice softened. "Going to tell me why you're visiting me yet?"

The words cut across Angelica like ice shards. They froze her soul. And it had been going so well. "Nothing's wrong." A lie. That Meta kept asking why she'd come, an indication that Meta knew something had happened.

"Hmmm." Meta's knowing voice grated down Angelica's nerves like a washboard. "I'll be back in a week."

A week? It was only supposed to be a few days. The client and Meta must be getting along fabulously. Which meant there were no other women there. Lucky Meta. "I'll be fine. And here when you get back, Aunt Meta."

She could almost picture Meta's mouth turned up into a curl. Oh, how Meta didn't like being reminded that Angelica was her niece because it reminded her of how old she was. And she didn't want to get old.

Meta said something under her breath.

"What?" Angelica imagined it was something about Angelica's parentage. "I didn't catch that."

"Nothing. Stay safe." Meta's voice dropped. "Later."

"Later."

Angelica hung up the comm. If only she could be as satisfied with her lot in life as Meta. Maybe there was a lot to be learned from a whore. Goddess knows, as an unmated Beta or second-status female wolf, she'd sure felt like a prostitute at times.

She went back to scanning the horizon.

What was she watching for? Wasn't like anyone was coming for her. Not here. Probably not ever.

As if on cue, the approaching shuttle flashed in the sunlight as it crested the horizon, then circled downward, and landed on the circular pad.

Her eyes widened. Maybe she'd thought too soon.

Surely her pack wouldn't pursue her after the way she'd left. Not after doing what she had. Unless they were here to punish her.

She stared along the expanse of dirt and rock between here and the pad, searching for whoever would get out of the shuttle. Would it be someone she recognized? They'd never send an Alpha after her.

Who else would come?

Bounty hunters? Mercenaries? On a Beta female? Doubtful. Maybe it would be a few of her pack's hunters.

A man she didn't know crawled out of the shuttle. A big man. She could tell his size from his being next to the small shuttle. Well, maybe he wasn't tall. But bulky. He had a hulking appearance like most Wolftons.

Didn't mean he wasn't after her. Only that she didn't know him. But he was as likely to be here after someone else than her. He didn't look like a bounty hunter.

He pulled a bag from the shuttle and turned toward the simple house.

Her heightened senses took over as she watched him strut up the walk. Her first impressions were accurate. He wasn't tall, but his body was wide. He had a swagger that told of a rich arrogance of soul. And he was definitely Wolfton. She could tell by his stance. By his proud look and the way he held his shoulders. And a look that said not quite Quatarian. His scent would tell her for sure. But he wasn't close enough yet, no matter how advanced her nose was. A few more feet and maybe she could scent him. But that would mean he'd be within striking distance. If he was Wolfton…

She swallowed, her body a little shaky. What was he doing here? The pack wouldn't have sent a strange Wolfton after her.

A part of her cried "Run!" She wanted to run as fast as she could the other way. But if he was after her, others would follow him, even if he didn't find her. Better to face them now and get over the confrontation than to look behind her for the rest of her miserable life. She didn't want a life spent on the run.

Not to mention, if he was Wolfton, the running would make him inclined to chase her. Never a good thing with a Wolfton. They liked to chase too much. And once they caught you… Especially a woman, whether the male was in his heat cycle or not.

She opened the door and waited for the man to arrive on the doorstep. She could feel her muscles clenching as she prepared for his arrival. It would be fight or flight. And she geared up for both. Although, a Beta female against a large Wolfton male didn't sound like a positive thing.

His scent smacked across her with no subtlety whatsoever as the wind shifted to blow her way.

Wolfton.

Not only a Wolfton, but he was in heat. Her nostrils detected that odor about him, that strong musk, coming from him in waves. Her pussy perked up, dampening on cue as she

curled her lips, taking in the scent. He smelled too good. Good enough to eat. She licked her lips, nostrils taking in short bursts of his odor. Scrumptious.

Her lips puckered as if in front of his cock about to take him down. Her eyes almost shut with the arousal parking squarely in her chest.

The heat was yet another indication he wasn't there for her. Her eyes opened wide. He was there for Meta. A few minutes ago, she'd have said he was out of luck with what he was looking for and sent him on his way. Until she scented him. Now her feminine primal side roared to have a taste of the man. One little sip of the long drink that was the approaching Wolfton.

Even with her aunt's words rattling around in her brain, desire swelled to life in her body. Her pussy lips swelled, as did her nipples. She fought down the reactions, crossing her arms in front of her chest and stepping farther away from the door.

He sauntered up, looking around cautiously. Had he scented her and not Meta, though Meta's scent would be prevalent in her own home? Was Meta who he was here for? His face shifted at her appearance and answered her silent question. "Where's Meta?" His voice was little more than a growl. Looked like it was all he could manage. A shudder racked his frame as though speaking was difficult.

He did look for Meta. The only one who'd taken her in from her troubles. He wasn't after her after all, but after the woman who owned the house.

And he smelled too damn good. And looked even better up close.

Her nostrils caught his scent again. Musky. Wholly masculine. Almost a shame he wasn't there after her. She wanted to lick a drop of sweat from the skin on his neck. Taste his skin. "She's not here." Her pitch lowered. Too much. She sounded almost hoarse. Her instincts were taking over, even as her brain fought against this. She didn't even know this man.

"Where is she?" His voice deepened into serious growls and she'd never heard anything more authoritative. Or anguished. His eyes grew wild. "I need her. Now. Where is she?" He took a step closer. "Who are you?" His voice sharpened. "Why are you here?"

She took a good look at the large Wolfton standing in front of her. Impressive muscles. Broad chest. Short gray hair. Steel brown eyes that looked more wolf than anything else. Yes, he was an impressive specimen. She wouldn't look down to between his thighs. Powerful thighs. Her own thighs clenched together. Would he be hard? She was so needy. How could she be this needy for a man she'd never met before? "She's gone for a while." She'd left Angelica to hold down the fort. Of course the fort hadn't included a big horny Wolfton. Maybe this man was who Meta had forgotten. How had she done that? He seemed too impressive to forget.

He slanted his mouth, nostrils flaring. Taking in her own scent. He smelled her arousal. Somehow that made him all the more alluring, and he didn't need help. He opened his mouth as though letting the smell of her flow into him. "You're Wolfton." His voice evened out as though he was working on something deep within himself. His hands clenched by his sides. All his muscles remained tense.

She nodded, hesitantly. No sense denying what he could already smell. Somehow, she wasn't sure if that was a good thing or not.

"A whore?" He wasn't sure of how she would answer. She could hear the layering of his voice.

Heat moved up her cheeks. In practice, no, she wasn't. But in truth, she was what he'd termed in the question. "Yes."

His lip curled up. His face tightened. The look would have melted the paint off a shuttle. Would have fried eggs without a cooker.

He was not only in heat. He was in heat *now*. A heat that had almost gotten away from him.

His muscles tensed but he didn't seem able to bring himself under control. The animal was being unleashed. She could see that in his gaze. In the way his throat moved while his teeth gritted together.

The Wolfton was close to the surface. Bulging out.

Which meant he had no mate.

A big strapping Alpha like him without a mate? Without a pack of female wolves to satisfy his every whim and fancy? An Alpha who'd gone so far into his heat, his humanity was almost gone. She'd seen his difficulty speaking. His tortured movements. She'd serviced males in heat before. But never one so…gone as this one. It should scare her. But all she felt was excitement. And anticipation.

He lifted his head and howled.

The sound was raw in the distance. Mournful yet celebratory.

It made her shiver. Made parts she'd never known she had want to answer. Touched something wild deep within her. She backed away a step. Inside the house.

He followed and shut the door behind him, throwing the lock into place. Grabbed his shirt with both hands and pulled it over his head. "With Meta gone, you'll have to do."

Chapter Two

Angelica blinked at the rippling torso. Bared skin, slightly fuzzy with patches of hair. Muscles straining. Hard planes of chest. Her entire being shook with the force of her response to him. He was almost too much man.

He reached down and undid his leather pants. Poking free at the top, something peeked. The head of his cock. Thick and red.

Seeing that made her step back. What the hell was she doing? She didn't know him at all. Wasn't she trying to get away from being a whore to the pack? "Wait a minute…"

The growl that bubbled up from his chest was downright scary. She backed up another step.

He bared his teeth, lips thinning over them. Only a fool would call his expression a smile. "Going to run?" He slipped his pants off.

Another step back without answering him. She couldn't get her mouth to move.

He advanced on her with ease. Backing her up against the wall. The heat from his body accumulated along every nerve ending she had under her skin.

He inhaled, long and deep, nostrils flaring. A pulse ticked in his neck. "I'd like it if you ran."

She stared straight into his chest. He would. A light pelt of hair covered his pecs. The heat had brought about changes in his body. He probably wasn't usually so hairy. So feral. Her pussy dripped. Yes, she liked this side of him. The only side she'd seen. And therein laid the problem. "I don't even know you." She didn't duck her head, instead flashed her teeth at him. A challenge. The Alphas in her pack would not have tolerated such from her. She didn't run either. She wouldn't be cowed by him. She elevated her chin at him in a way that would show him defiance.

He didn't pull back from her, standing so they barely touched, but it was enough to keep her senses howling. "You're a whore. What does it matter?"

Her eyes scrunched up tight but didn't close as she glared at him. There was that.

Another line of thought ran across her mind. She could *choose* him. In the pack, she didn't choose anyone, nor did most of them choose her. Only tradition dictated what she did with them. Tradition dictated they fuck her, so they did. This could be her choice of a bedmate instead of having the choice made for her.

He could have demanded Meta, the one he was expecting. In a way, she was his choice, too.

He was in heat. He made her feel like fucking. Why not?

Why not let herself enjoy this round of sex with the man who made so much of her stand up and want to beg for his touch? Enjoy him and move on.

"You're right. It doesn't…" She couldn't finish when his body came closer.

Her agreement made him almost pounce on her as though he'd been waiting for her compliance. His heat filled her up with abandon. Her primitive female knew a good fuck when it saw one.

"Good." He pushed her against the wall, body melding to her.

His mouth didn't just claim hers, it plundered. It took, giving everything she gave back and more in a punishing kiss that left her breathless. His mouth slid against hers so harshly,

he stole her breath away, leaving her gasping for air, but his mouth wouldn't give quarter. It held fast to hers and thundered against her.

She could barely catch up to his lips and wasn't even sure she wanted to. She liked this out of control feeling that he brought out in her. Liked it a lot.

He rocked his hips against hers. His hard cock rubbed against her deliciously. Even through his pants, she could feel his large hardness.

He ran one hot hand down the side of her neck. He didn't have soft ones. No, his hands were rough and tumble. Scratched across her skin in pleasurable ways. Didn't glide easily. Yes, sex with him was going to be a little like that. Rough and not easy. She shivered.

His scent assailed her sense of smell, taking it over. So musky. So titillating. She could bathe in that scent all day long. Bathe in not only his body heat, but the heat of his cycle. The fire of his arousal.

She couldn't swallow. Could barely breathe. This assault on her senses brought up things within her trying for the surface. Her chest felt so tight.

Never had a man, not even one in heat, affected her this way. She'd never imagined a man taking her to such distraction before. Her whole being was consumed by the man in front of her, who took her mouth as though she was the best thing he'd ever tasted.

Keeping his mouth on hers, he pushed her more closely against the wall and inserted his leg between hers. Lifted her feet off the floor. His leg pressed into where she ached. Where the slippery feel of her was enough of a turn-on, yet she wanted more. Needed more against her to make the ache disappear.

Her thighs clenched around him with relentless squeezes. Tightly she coiled around his leg. Pressing into him as much as she could, she tried to move herself against him. Get as much of his touch as she could possibly manage.

Her breasts swelled, aching for his hands. They wanted his attention as much as the rest of her.

His mouth punished hers in a viselike kiss that centered on hers. He seemed to want to eat her reactions and make them his. And she let him. Not that she had much choice. He seemed to want to kiss her into submission. Which was fine with her.

His kisses stole what little breath she had until she gasped against his lips, and still he demanded more from her.

It wasn't quite enough to satisfy her longings either. If only she could rip off her clothes and take him inside her body. That would be enough to quench this longing thirst for him inside her. Maybe.

Her head moved back and forth until he captured it in his large hand.

She was trapped against him. Completely at his mercy. Her feet were off the ground and her core was up against his leg. And she liked the feeling of being held against him. Being kept like that. It made her feel small and delicate, something no other man had made her feel.

His hand wrapped itself in her hair. Tight. It pulled on her scalp. Made her head lean back as he ravished her mouth again and again. The slight pain kept her invested in keeping her head to the side, which gave his mouth that much more leverage.

He moved away as she tried to clench against him again. "I can smell you." His voice wasn't more than a low growl. "Don't try and escape me."

As if she would. Might have been her intention at one time. Not anymore. Not after those kisses. She wanted this as much as he did.

He moved down to kiss her throat. Raked his teeth over the sensitive skin. Nipped at the pulse beating there. His teeth lingered.

She froze, stilling herself. His teeth were sharp. Honed. Weapons for fighting when in a pack. He could tear her throat out if he wanted. She didn't know this man. Didn't know what he was capable of. As he was coming to a whore and without a pack, he might be capable of anything. Some of Meta's clients were out there, even for Wolftons.

His laughter brushed along her skin. "I won't hurt you. Unless that's what you want." He pulled back, somber brown eyes studying her. "But I don't think you're into pain." He blew a breath along her throat, drying the places that he'd kissed a second ago. "I think you're into pleasure. And what I can give to you." He dominated her with his body and her anxiety fled.

Hairs rose on her neck. "I don't like pain." Not in any way, shape, or form. He'd somehow gotten a glimpse into her to know that. She didn't know if that was a good thing or not. And he seemed to know what she did like. With his every move, he made her arousal go that much higher. Again, she wasn't sure if this was acceptable. Should he know this much about her? After being with her for two seconds?

He leaned down to kiss her, thrusting his tongue into her mouth and pressing his thigh up into her pussy, giving her no time to think about that at all. "What do you like?"

Was he kidding? How was she supposed to talk after that kiss and with his leg where it was? She could barely breathe, much less talk.

He lowered his leg. "You liked being trapped. With me in control. Tell me the truth. You do, don't you?"

She whimpered. She had. "Yes." She would like him around her. Dominating her. More than any of the pampered Wolftons ever had in her pack. Even in the few seconds they'd been kissing, she'd felt more than she'd ever felt before.

"The word is 'alliance' if you want me to stop." His gaze bore down into hers. "But if you say that, it all stops. For good."

A shiver rooted through her spine. He'd stop everything if she said that word. She'd have to figure out how far she wanted things to go and if she wanted them to stop. Good word choice, though. No one would say that unless they were discussing politics. And that wasn't normally a subject during sex.

He ran a rough hand down her neck again, fingers tantalizing her with his touch. “It’s going to be a bumpy ride.” His thigh came up again between hers. “You don’t come until I say you can.”

Her eyes widened as his mouth descended on hers again. Somehow the thought of disobeying wasn’t as pleasurable as the idea of doing what he wanted. His domination of that part of her shouldn’t turn her on so much, but the orgasm he’d give her afterward would be…mind-blowing.

She’d never given herself over to a male before so completely. Not even to the Alphas of her pack. ’Course they’d never been like this swaggering confident hunk of maleness who took her breath away. As a Beta, submission was supposed to be “her thing.” Only it had never felt right. With this man, it did. For the first time ever.

She gave herself over to the kiss. Letting him take her reactions, kiss her breathless, and letting go of any inhibitions. There was no room for them and for her desire.

His hand roamed her neck and went to her shoulders. He shifted back and both hands came together on her chest to rip apart the shirt she wore, leaving her bared in the front.

She gasped at the feel of the cool air on her skin.

Clyde could barely think with the vision of loveliness in front of him. The rip down her shirt exposed her breasts for all the world to see, which consisted of him. For his eyes. And his eyes only. Her breasts were heavy, not small, and had dark-tipped nipples along with her dark skin. Edible.

He shifted back so he could look at this woman he’d discovered out of pure chance. He’d been disturbed Meta hadn’t been there. At first. Now, he found himself overjoyed at the prospect of taking this young one. His cock twitched at the thought of her body under him as he rode her.

She wasn't small. Had meat on her bones, a good thing for a Wolfton. He didn't feel like he'd break her as he did with most Quatarians. She had a stocky build with curves and flaring hips and breasts. Yet there was a delicacy about her. A refinement that none of the other whores or pack members had ever provided for him. Her skin was a tan color nearest to amber, much like the Tenaglian whiskey he'd sucked down earlier. He might be a shade darker but not by much.

She was the most beautiful thing he'd ever seen.

That had been what made him howl. What made him pin her against the wall. What made him want to push her under him for long amounts of time and never let her go. Good thing she'd submitted before him. Because he wasn't sure he could control his inner wolf with her. His animal had never been so close to breaking him. And he'd wanted this to be her choice. He hadn't wanted to make her be with him. And she had chosen to give herself over to him. His greatest joy was knowing that.

She looked down her front, face aghast. "You ripped my shirt. I can't believe you did that."

He chuckled, low and deep. "So I did." He'd rip more than that from her before it was through.

Her green eyes twinkled with a merriment deep within, not disgust as so many women would have had. "Going to rip my pants off, too? Owe me a whole new wardrobe if you do. That could be fun."

He'd felt her submission to him when she was against him, her acquiescence to him over certain things. Interesting that she had the brass to bring up his ripping of her clothes. "Yes. It could be fun." He lowered his mouth and claimed her again. Put his hand on one of her breasts and began to massage. The nipple puckered under his wandering fingers. He could feel the nipple poking him as it elongated.

Her breathing sped up, as did her heartbeat.

She wiggled against his leg, shifting her body around him, trying to get him where she wanted.

Not that he'd let her.

He rocked back, adjusting himself around her. Hard to control the impulse to stick himself inside her. But he wanted this to last even more than he had when he'd started. It was the only thing keeping him grounded.

He wanted to see her face when she came. When he allowed her to come. Would she accept his edict? He thought so or he wouldn't have issued it.

She blanched immediately at his shifting of his weight. "You must be tired from holding me…"

He shook his head, taking his hand and stroking her other breast. So lovely. Her nipple did much as the first, elongating under his care. "Don't worry. I have you." He could hold her for hours and never get tired.

"I'm not light…" Her voice broke off as he pinched a nipple with his fingers. "I'm not…" Her voice sounded strangled as she continued. As though it was hard to think of her next words. And he deliberately caressed her to make it hard for her to think. Didn't like this line of conversation.

"Yes, you are light." To him, she was. He'd not have her worrying about weight when he was out to fuck her senseless.

She didn't argue, but her head leaned back. Even with the pleasure shining on her face, he could see she wanted to say more. To argue with him over this little thing. She was a mix of contradictions. Sexually she was submissive, but about other things, she'd be as aggressive as any Alpha wolf. And he found he liked that combination in her. His body wanted to slam against her, take her, make her his, have her submit to him in all sexual ways, yet he liked that she stood up for herself. His cock had gone from being hard to being something beyond that. The want was eating him up. And yet, somehow, she brought a calmness to him.

Otherwise he would have had her against the wall by now. He'd never met anyone who could take the edge off his heat. Oh, it was still there. But she'd taken away the heightening. Made it so he could think.

"You are light to me." Much lighter than the boxes he carried into the bar at least once a day. Full of things like Tenaglian whiskey. He'd much rather be holding her anyway. She felt so right in his arms, it almost made him go to his knees. Better not do that; she'd think it was her weight.

He moved his thigh to put her on her own shaky legs on the floor.

She looked curiously at him.

He tugged at the top of her pants. Looked like some sort of blue cloth. "Unless you want these ripped too, get them off." He stood back to let her get herself stripped.

"I thought you were going to owe me a new wardrobe." Her look was cheeky to him. Her eyes glowed mischievously.

"Take them off." He didn't play but issued his command with a tone that brooked no argument.

Her expression changed quickly. She immediately reached for the clasp and shrugged them down over her bare feet. She didn't take off her underwear but left them on. Bikini-style underwear. Wisps of hair peeked from behind the material.

He let out a smile. She hadn't taken her underwear down because he hadn't told her to. Told him so much about her. Yes, he liked this minx of a woman. She knew when to play with him and when to back down. "Nice."

Her head ducked a little.

"What's your name?" He needed to know what name to call out when he came. Which would be happening in a few seconds if his cock had its way. He'd try to keep things slow but it hardly seemed likely that was going to happen. Unless he could focus on her pleasure. On her submission to him. That would be his concentration.

"Angelica." She hesitated, looking as though she wanted to ask him something but not daring.

"You can ask your question." He gave her permission, which was what she sought of him. The beast rose up under his skin to growl. He liked this side of her.

Her voice came slowly when it finally emerged. Hesitantly. As though she wasn't sure of him. "May I ask your name?"

He nodded. Then, waited for her to say the words aloud, which he'd given her permission to do. He could have answered the inquiry from her asking permission. Instead, he made her ask the question outright.

She picked up on his cues. "What's your name?" Her lips curved into a shy smile as she finished the question.

"Clyde." He half-growled the word. He'd never expected this when he'd come searching for Meta. That he'd find this young beauty. She intrigued him more than any other whore he'd met.

"Clyde." The word dripped from her honeyed lips. She tried out the name again with another smile. "Clyde."

He liked the way she said his name. He looked at her again. Naked save for a small pair of underwear, Angelica wasn't merely lovely. She was gorgeous. The most beautiful woman he'd ever had the fortune of fucking. Hard to believe this Wolfton wasn't taking her turn under some pack somewhere. A puzzle to say the least. "Turn around."

She obeyed without a look back or a questioning word. Her back quivered under his gaze, and he stood and studied her momentarily.

He came up behind her and wiggled his cock against her ass. Ran his hands along her back to her shoulders and up her arms to her hands. Her skin was so soft under his fingers. So little was soft in his world. He liked the feel of her. Could spend hours exploring every little nuance to her flawlessness. "Do you remember what I said earlier? What I ordered earlier?"

She whispered, "You told me not to come. Until you said so." A swallow moved audibly down her throat.

He held her hands in place against the wall before releasing them. "Yes. Exactly right." Slowly, he lowered himself down her body. Until he came to her backside. As he hesitated, he thought about what rested just on the other side of her body. A precious spot.

He inhaled, taking in the selective scent of her fine musk as his hand slipped around to her front. Slipped a finger under her underwear as she scooted her ass backward to give him room.

A breath blew out of her like a bird sighing.

He made tiny circles over the front of her sex, playing in the soft hair that covered her without a thorough investigation. Maybe one day he'd get her to shave her sex. But not today. Today, he'd drive her mad.

She swallowed. "Should I turn around? To make it…"

He withdrew the finger. "Don't ever question me during sex." He let his wishes roll through the words. "Don't like what I'm doing, tell me. Like what I'm doing, tell me. But don't ever question my method." He could have let this go. But he wanted her to know what he expected. What he wanted from her at all times.

Her whole body shuddered. "Yes, Clyde."

"Yes, Clyde, what?"

Another shiver rocked her frame and her musky scent increased. "Yes, Clyde, I will not question you during sex."

"Outside of sex, question all you want. But when we're fucking…don't." He kept looking up at her from his spot on his knees.

Her head turned to the side to look down at him. Her eyes beseeched him to continue. As did her dripping pussy. He could scent her through the panties she still wore. She didn't speak, but her face egged him on.

Had she asked him to, he would not have continued. He would have withdrawn more. But her submission filled the ache inside of him. Made him want to give her everything he'd denied her.

She could be dangerous to him with what he felt about her and the situation he was in. Yet he couldn't resist her allure.

Chapter Three

"Remember, no coming." Clyde slid the finger back under her bikini underwear. Traced along the outside of her pussy, making runs across and little circles. Toyed with her. Enough to drive her nuts and to want his hand to probe deeper. He would. In time.

Her thighs quivered. "Yes, Clyde."

What he liked to hear. He kept his touch light, making passes that were barely there. Torturing her with his fingertips. Tickling her. Wasn't enough to get her off but enough to get her motor going. To think about what he'd do to her later. It would work up her anticipation. He'd need to figure out what exactly she liked during this exploration. And do it tenfold when the time came. Hopefully, multiple encounters would follow this trial run.

He shifted up farther on his knees and nipped one of her ass cheeks. Wasn't a bite, but a slight pressure of teeth. Didn't want to hurt her, but remind her he could.

Her whole body jumped. A gasp broke free from her lips.

He nipped her again in the same spot. Then pressed his mouth against her cool skin to soothe where his teeth had grazed. There was a little red mark, meaning her skin colored easily.

She leaned more against the wall and a tremble marched its way up and down her body. So responsive. Everything he did to her, she reacted to. He liked doing things to see what she'd do.

"Keep your hands up, too." He looked up to make sure her hands were still in the air where he'd placed them initially. They rested against the wall above her head.

She'd lowered them a little, but pushed them farther up at his command. "Yes, Clyde." She didn't even look up, just lifted her hands and kept them together.

Later, he'd bind her. Meta always had some fun things to try. But for now, he'd get the lessons started early with words. His instruction should be enough to keep her where he'd put her. Or she'd learn quickly that he'd not give her what she wanted.

An orgasm.

She wanted to come. And now that was his mission. Both to put it off and to bring it about.

He'd been so eager to come when he'd walked in the door. Until he'd noticed her natural leanings. Which were things he enjoyed. Usually he didn't play much with whores. Just banged them and got the hell out. But this…coupled with his extreme attraction to her…seemed to tell him that it was time to have some fun.

And fun they both would have.

He went back to her ass. God, what a fine one she had. It was curved and bodacious. Something for him to hold on to when he fucked her. He nipped again near her bikini line. He wanted to mark the skin. Make an impression. The desire to bite bore down on him in a way it never had before. He gritted his teeth together. Not now. Later.

A gasp escaped her lips as her body moved up in response to the nip. Then a low "Clyde?"

"Yes, Angelica?"

"May I please make noise?"

"Oh yes, baby." He liked a loud partner. And he'd bet Angelica would scream when she creamed. His cock tightened in anticipation of being covered in her juices. "Make all the noise you want. Good girl for asking." He nipped again to reward her, raking his teeth over her skin, letting her know how he appreciated the asking.

She moaned. "Thank you, Clyde."

She probably would have had trouble being silent. He had no desire to have her be anything but natural with him. It so happened that what she wanted and what he wanted slid in line together. Definitely a good thing.

Yes, he was going to enjoy this fucking so much. The little they'd done had taken the edge off of his heat. She was what he needed. What he wanted. And he planned to enjoy her to the fullest.

He grasped the edge of her bikini in his teeth and tugged on it.

She made another sound, a whimper.

He continued to pull on the material. Until the top came down some over her rump. Then he went to the other side and tugged some more on the cloth.

Interchanging sides, he continued to pull on her underwear, taking it down inch by precious inch. His mouth made nipping gestures and also laved her skin a time or two, slinging back her salty taste like she was his last sip of precious whiskey.

He glanced up.

Her hands were still above her head in the air. Even as her body moved around with his stripping of her, she'd kept them where he'd told her. Because he'd told her.

Exultation rushed through him.

She was his.

Through and through.

Every breath she took. Every motion she made. Every sound. All spoke one thing to him. She belonged to him. Everything she did belonged to him.

He wanted to howl with the strength of his knowledge, but contented himself with taking down her underwear the rest of the way. He pulled it down around her ankles. “Lift.” He carefully helped her lift one foot and then the other.

And he looked up at the gift he’d uncovered. Her ass for him to see. Such perfect rounded globes.

He spread her legs, looking up at the partial view of her pussy. He could almost see her pussy lips. He’d view her clit later, after he’d done some work and turned her around. She’d be moist and pink, maybe even red. Swollen. Wet. And all for him.

He rose up on his knees again.

Pulled her hips back from the wall ever so slightly. And spread her legs even more than they had been.

God, he loved her in this position. ’Course he’d enjoy her in any position. It was tricky, but he liked her turned away from him for this tantalizing. Later, he’d watch her come.

He started at her thighs. Licked and spread his tongue around the back of them, laving the soft skin. Going almost up to her pussy, but not quite reaching it.

Her back shuddered with each climb of his mouth along the back of her thigh. She’d anticipate and then bear down when he didn’t reach where she’d hoped that he would. She didn’t protest. She made little noises in the back of her throat. They might be pleasure, they might be frustration. Regardless, he tried to make them rise an octave.

Until finally, he shoved his head between her legs and licked up along her pussy’s back edge to find the opening to her channel.

Her whole body shivered.

He drove his tongue forward, into her hole, probing her entrance. A hard angle with his head back, but one he’d guarantee she’d never had before. Her juice ran down into his mouth. He smacked his lips together, enjoying her taste. He could taste her cream all day long.

He'd never enjoyed anything quite as much as her flavor.

He did all he could do, and then pulled his body back. She needed to come and he needed to see that. "Now you can turn around."

Angelica whipped around as quickly as she could. Ceding herself over to his command. And how wet that made her surprised her.

She was a Beta. Meant for this submission, though she'd always felt odd doing it. There was no oddness in her actions now. No one had ever done this so thoroughly to her before. Maybe if someone had, she wouldn't be here. Which would be a damn shame because she wouldn't be enjoying Clyde right now.

He chuckled, but didn't rise to his feet. "Anxious?" His gaze bore through her with the knowledge of how much she anticipated this.

And that didn't bother her. So he knew how much she wanted him. Big deal. She'd never been into the games of the pack and playing hard to get. She wasn't going to start now. She squared her jaw. "Yes."

His expression hardened with passion. Not just his gaze animated, but his nostrils flared. His lip curled. The man could sell that look for seduction and make a mint. "Good."

The word rippled through her like a stone thrown into water. He liked her eager. He liked her submissive to him in bed. And that made all the difference in the world to her. He might have started out wanting to fuck her because she was there. Because he was in heat. But now it had transcended to something different. He wanted to fuck *her*. Not any willing hole would do. He wanted *her*. That was obvious from the way he was treating her.

A smile flitted across her face.

He moved quickly, like the wolf he was. One minute, he was staring up at her. The next, his mouth was at her pussy. He inhaled deeply, a look moving across his face.

Her breath caught in her throat.

He closed his eyes, laying his head against the skin along her pussy. Seeming to seek a measure of control. And then his mouth went on the attack. He licked her slit, delivering that talented tongue into her, slicing up against her clit with uncanny aim.

Her hips thrust forward. God, he tongued her with an expert touch. Her head banged against the wall, though she barely felt it.

Again and again, he drew his tongue up her and down her. Flicked it against her. Twiddled her clit.

Her thighs shook with wanting to close around him and pin him there and open wide to get as much touch as she could.

He made her crazy with wanting him. Each time an orgasm bubbled up within her, she pulled away or squashed it down. It became a mantra in her head. *Must not come. Must not come*. She couldn't until he told her to. What if he never did? What if he kept her wanting her entire time with him? No. That wasn't him. He'd draw her pleasure out. Make the anticipation so great, she'd go nuts from it. But he'd eventually give her all that she desired. And it would be the better for it.

She trusted this man she'd only just met. After all, she'd put her submission in his hands. Her body against his. Her pussy in his mouth. She'd better trust him.

He didn't disappoint her. "Do you need to come, baby?" His voice rumbled up from his chest.

Her head flung back into the wall again. She didn't look down at him. Couldn't see his eyes or she might come. "Yes, Clyde."

"Ask." His voice sounded muted because he still poked around in her pussy. He slurped as his tongue came up to bundle against her clit.

She faltered in the asking when his tongue flicked her clit again. But finally got out the words. "Please…uh…may…uh…I come, Clyde?" Would he make her beg? Would he make her ask again? To show his power over her?

Not hardly.

"Yes. You may come, Angelica." He let the words roll across her pussy, knowing she felt them both physically and within. And as if to prove his point, he drove it home afterward with his tongue against her, spiraling in with a vigor that left her shaking with her hips writhing. He sparred with her clit, and they both were the winners of that battle.

The orgasm hit so fast once she'd been given permission that she almost fell from the strength of the waves across her. Only Clyde and the wall kept her upright. Swells of pleasure rolled across her in undeniable spurts. When one would seem to end, another would begin. She couldn't get away from this, even as her hips twisted this way and that.

One minute Clyde was on the floor, the next he was up and against her. She hadn't even noticed him rising in her lulled orgasmic aftermath. His body came across her. All her nerve endings stretched and yowled from his nearness. His hair prickled across her sensitive skin.

She felt like she'd been electrified with jolts of energy pinging across her every patch of skin.

"Lean back and spread." His voice sounded gruff. His lips were shiny with her essence as his tongue crept out to lap at the corner.

Something that used to make her embarrassed was seeing her wetness on a man's mouth. She felt none of that now. Only exhilaration from what had happened. She did exactly what he asked. Leaned back against the wall and made sure her legs were spread apart.

He grabbed her butt in his hands and lifted her. His cock slid against her middle as he pulled her up.

She shuddered, knowing what was about to happen. He'd take her. Make her his. Penetrate her. Maybe more than her body. She had to ask a question. "Clyde?"

"Yes?" His cock poked at her entrance.

"May I come again, Clyde?" She needed permission before it broke from her. She was so close to being there again. She'd beg if he wanted her to.

He grunted as his cock slid into her wetness.

She gasped. Even though she'd known it was coming, it was still a surprise. A moment of wonder.

He filled her and more. He wasn't yet seated all the way, but she felt stretched more than she'd ever been before. Her entire body focused on her opening and the feel of Clyde moving within her. She couldn't concentrate on anything else.

His chest heaved as he took a deep breath.

From the effort of holding her up. She started to say something, but caught her lip between her teeth. She must not question him. But she had to be getting heavy. Uncertainty made her stomach knot. It cut through the haze that he'd created when he'd entered her.

"Yes."

The word slipped out from Clyde, intruding into her thoughts. "What?"

His lips pursed as he slid himself in a little more, making her attention fall back to him. What he did to her. And the sensations that savaged her. Each rock against her took him in that much more. He was breaching her. Piercing her. "Yes, you may come, Angelica."

Oh, yeah. She'd forgotten the question when he'd slipped inside her and also with her thoughts about her weight.

Relaxation coursed through her body, knowing that he'd given her permission to see to her own needs. And trust in the man who held her. She'd not question him. Because she didn't have to. After all, one word from her and it would all stop. He seemed to know her better than anyone else ever had. "Thank you, Clyde."

He growled as the relaxing of her muscles allowed him to plow farther into her willing channel.

She pushed against him as much as she could, trying to get as close to him as he would allow. Her arms were still above her and against the wall. They ached from being up so long but she enjoyed the feel, knowing that she did as he'd asked.

He rocked against her again, taking his time, pressing his cock in deeper and deeper. Until he was fully seated. His grunts thrilled her, as did his expression. He seemed to be in deep concentration. On her.

He paused a long while.

Until she was sure she'd go nuts from the stillness and fullness of him inside of her. She managed to control her need to move. Her body shook. Her breathing was labored, as if her lungs were pushing the air uphill. She could barely get in enough air.

As if he'd been waiting for something that didn't happen, he pulled her against him and pushed her back, almost slamming her against the wall.

She whimpered. Another woman might have lost all her breath. But not her. The movement made her neck arch. So good. God, she'd never felt like this before.

Soon he was pounding into her, thrusting that big cock in and out furiously, rocking her against the wall behind her with such force, it trembled. He let out intermittent growls as he took her, going deep within her and trying to meet all her pleasure points.

She gave herself over to the reckless abandon. To the wildness that consumed her and him. To the fierceness that enveloped her. He took her breath away. And yet she wanted more of him than he was giving at that moment.

How stupid.

He was inside of her, wrapped around her, and she wanted more of him. She wanted to taste his throat… Sink her mouth into his neck.

Only it must not have been so stupid. Because he leaned his head up and kissed her. A frenzied kiss that had everything to do with being closer. She tasted herself on his lips. Tasted her musk on his tongue.

Her body shuddered again and she moaned against his lips.

He pulled away. “Angelica.” His voice was raspy and winded. As though he’d been running a great distance.

She nodded against him and let him take her lips again. He didn’t have to tell her what he’d meant with calling her name. She knew what he wanted. What he needed. This man was deeper inside of her than anyone else had been.

He lowered his head to her neck.

She moved her head to the side, allowing him access without being told or moved that way by him. Again, somehow she just knew.

A scary prospect. How could a man who’d come into her life for such a short time so easily be so in tune with her that she knew what he thought?

Only she didn’t know what he was going to do. So when his teeth sank into her neck, she jerked with surprise and hurt.

At that moment of teeth contact, her orgasm fired across her body like a kiln being heated. Pleasure and pain mingled together in a heavenly combination that had her writhing so hard his hand slipped on her sweaty butt. He managed to keep hold of her and shifted his hand, keeping her steady, despite the slipperiness of her skin.

He wasn’t tearing out her throat. Only one bite. No sucking.

He’d marked her.

Her eyes closed as her orgasm powered down.

He thrust against her again. Seemed to be trying to break through to the other side of her. “Angelica.” She opened her eyes. His face twisted with a glow that let her know he was on the edge.

On the edge of a climax.

“Angelica, do it.”

An order without specifics. And again, somehow she knew what to do. She licked her lips and then lowered them. To his neck. The urge to mark him had been there before. She'd willed it away. Now it came on strong again. She wanted to sink her teeth into his easy flesh. She had his permission, so she did.

It was heaven. Pushing her teeth into his skin. Another orgasm blossomed out, taking her into ultimate wide petals of bliss.

He pounded against her. His own seed spilled forth as he climaxed, spattering his come over and over again.

They both panted, dripping sweat and hearts racing.

Each of them had a bite on the right side of their neck.

Surprisingly, hers didn't hurt. Yet. From the way it had felt when he'd done it, it was going to.

Marked.

She'd never been marked by a male before. Every Wolfton would know that she was his as long as the mark remained. It was the same as peeing on her. Luckily, her kind didn't do that with females.

He slowly lowered her.

What a strong Wolfton he had to be. To have held her up all that time. Even now, he didn't stretch, but simply set her on her feet as if holding her had been nothing. To him, it hadn't been.

On shaking legs, she stood on the hard floor. Looking at the male who'd skyrocketed her passion so high she might never come down.

Why didn't this Alpha have a pack? And an even better question? What was he doing hooking up with a whore who was really a simple Beta?

Chapter Four

Clyde blew out a breath.

What had come over him?

He'd never used his teeth on a woman before. Nor had he had one use hers on him. He wanted to push his hand up to feel the wound on his neck, but refrained. He'd check it out later. After all, he'd told her to do it. Sexual wounds were never bad and usually healed quickly. Hell, what had he been thinking?

She looked up at him with doe eyes full of wonder. And he wanted to be the wolf to pursue the doe and eat her up. In a good way.

Later.

"Do you have a bed here?"

She nodded. Bit her lip a little shyly. He shuddered, knowing what those teeth could do. "Yes. Do you want to go up to it?"

He nodded. Stretched out his shoulders. His muscles were tense. The heat still blew hot breath over him. But she'd taken some of the wildness away. He didn't know how. He'd never experienced that before.

"I'm sure I was quite heavy to keep holding up." She took a step toward a doorway, presumably heading to her bedroom.

He stayed where he was, watching her walk.

After a minute, she looked back to see him not following. She stopped in the middle of a step. "What?"

"You're not heavy." He'd not had any problems keeping her suspended. After all, he was a Wolfton. And a strong bastard. "I don't want to hear you talk like that."

Her eyes lowered but she didn't answer.

"Well?"

"Well what?" Her eyes didn't rise, but her hackles did.

He felt her irritation shining out at him, didn't have to see the evidence. The promise of a challenge bucked up his wolf too. "I won't hear you talk like that."

"You don't…"

"I'm not the boss of you? I don't own you?" He grinned at her once he said what she'd been going to say. He could read her. Somehow what she was feeling telegraphed to him. "When we're fucking, I am."

"But this isn't fucking, now is it?"

He studied her face, which sent a direct challenge to him. She dared him to question her. "You're a Beta female." It was a guess. But no Alpha would have allowed him to fuck her up against a wall. Not without a fight. Yet her attitude now wasn't wholly Beta, but more Alpha in nature.

Her lips thinned. "Yes." Her shoulders straightened along with the rest of her into an exclamation point.

She didn't like being Beta. That was obvious. And with her behavior outside the bedroom, he could see why. However, her behavior in the bedroom was a different story. And he wanted to read the entire tale. That meant knowing her inside and out.

"And you're an Alpha." She flung out the words when he didn't say anything in response. It sounded as much a challenge as her agreement about being a Beta. "What's your point" wasn't said, but was implied.

"Yes." He didn't deny what he knew himself to be. Though it had never brought him anything but grief. He liked what he was, despite the trouble it had caused. He could already tell that wasn't the case with her. What messes had it gotten her into?

Her head swayed from side to side, as though processing this information. "How come you don't have a pack?"

Again, she spoke with a little bit of bravado. Completely different from her behavior when they'd been having sex. He'd bet she hadn't fit in well as a Beta outside the bedroom. "Long story." He shrugged. Not one he was telling right now.

She stood for a second, staring at him as though he'd start talking. "Not going to tell me?" She narrowed her eyes at him.

Fuck. An Alpha female would gnaw at him until he told the story. Looks like she would, too. "We can either fuck or talk. I'd rather fuck."

Heat rose up her neck in pink splotches. "Come on then."

He watched her ass move from side to side as she walked and promptly forgot everything except watching her move. Yeah, he could take this view all day.

But he didn't have more than a few days. That brought him back to reality. He took a sniff, testing the air. He'd heard no shuttles landing and smelled no enemies approaching. He'd hear or scent them coming long before he saw them. He'd better have enough time to enjoy this little one. Or he'd get pissed.

His cock swelled as he continued to watch her going up the steps. Liked the way her ass swished from side to side as she walked. Did she know her effect on him? Did she try to magnify her movements? He wanted to plunge into her from behind. Doggy-style or ass

fucking. He didn't care. Only needed to be within her welcoming depths. Could hardly wait until they arrived at her room.

The next round, he wanted in a bed. She deserved that much.

He faltered on the steps. Since when had he worried about a whore's comfort?

Finally, they landed in a bedroom. A small one. With a huge unmade bed and a few other random pieces of furniture. The room was off to the side of the hallway. Tucked out of the way.

"It's humble, but it's home right now." She waved a hand, indicating the room.

Not much of her existed in this little space. She hadn't made the room hers in any way. He'd bet on that. A picture of a flower extended above the bed. A red iris. He knew it because of what it resembled. Other males called it the pussy flower. Looked like Meta's handiwork.

The only sign that might be Angelica was the unmade bed. Meta always had things neat and pristine. "Meta's room still across the way?" Meta's room would have the implements of her trade. There might be something fun there to use on Angelica. His cock poked out more, attracting her attention. Naturally, her gaze caused him to swell even more.

"Yes." Her tone sounded puzzled but she didn't ask him why he wanted to know.

"Wait here." He tumbled back out the room, heading for where he remembered Meta's room to be. It was there. He found a large wooden chest.

Before he took anything out, he found a paper bag, which Meta had obviously recently purchased. New toys. They were still in the packages.

He took his time, taking the things out of the plastic, cleansing them, and placing them in a bag before he hurried back to Angelica.

Her eyebrow rose as he came back into the room carrying the medium-sized black bag by his side.

She was still where he'd told her to be, hadn't even moved from the spot she'd been in when he'd left her. His eyes narrowed. "You're a good girl, Angelica. And you'll be rewarded." He put the promise of everything he could deliver in his eyes and his voice. Her doing what he'd told her to made his chest tighten. He'd never known such a simple action would get to him this much.

She looked down at her toes, but not before he saw the lift of pleasure on her face, which filled him with a different sense of longing. The one to put that look on her face daily.

She'd be fun to get to know.

He shook his head, sobering. He'd be running soon enough back to Settler's Mine, leaving her behind. Whatever they had was temporary at best. She'd expect nothing else from him as she was a whore. And he was an outcast.

But he'd enjoy what he had with her while he had it. It would have to be enough to get him through to his next heat. Maybe she'd even still be here.

He placed the bag on the bed. Opened the top of it. The zipper came down with a loud ripping sound.

She jumped slightly. Turned her body to look at him, but stayed where she stood in the middle of the room, not moving from the spot.

He wanted to pull her under him and fuck her for being the submissive that she was. He gritted his teeth as he reached into the bag of tricks.

Funny, but he usually would have had sex a few times by now, instead of only once. Somehow, she tamed his heat. Made him more invested in her pleasure instead of banging her for his satisfaction. Odd.

"Come here, Angelica." He'd found what he wanted to use.

With a swallow, she tiptoed over to him so quietly he barely heard her. Ducked her head down, looking at her toes. Such a perfect look.

He reached over with a sure hand to pull up her chin. "Look at me." His gaze sought hers out.

"Yes, Clyde." She swallowed again as her eyes met his.

"Hold out your hands."

"Yes, Clyde." She held out both hands in front of her. She wasn't shaking or nervous. She was in her element.

Any sign of unease and he'd have stopped. But her calmness made him sure of his actions. He slipped rope bonds up over her hands onto her wrists. They would keep her hands together. He moved swiftly to the bed and looped a longer rope up on the headboard. When the time came, he'd tie the wrist bonds to that rope.

He saw a delicate shiver move across her back.

She looked down at the bonds holding her hands. And blew out a deep breath. She seemed captivated by the ropes holding her.

"Too tight?" He ambled back to her side.

"No, Clyde."

"Good. If you ever don't like something, or it hurts, I want to know." He wanted to give her what she wanted, not hurt her. This was about satisfying her. Which would bring about his own pleasure.

"Yes, Clyde." Her low, throaty voice made his pulse pop.

He sat down on the edge of the bed and spread his legs apart. His gaze met hers again. "Suck my cock."

A sweet pink tongue came out to massage her lower lip. "Yes, Clyde." A smile gathered.

His chest constricted. He liked making her do things, but it was even better knowing how much she enjoyed his actions and his commands. He felt responsible for her pleasure. And would take that responsibility seriously.

She lowered herself to the floor, kneeling before him. On her knees, she crept over to the bed.

He spread his legs a hair more apart and watched her approach. He leaned back on his hands with his hips at the very edge of the bed.

So lovely. He wanted to nip that ass and ride her already. Her mouth on him was going to be sensual heaven.

She drew up on her knees in front of him. Placed her bound hands on his knee to steady herself. Her mouth lowered and pressed a kiss to his thigh.

A tease.

A test.

A small one, but an act of not doing what he'd asked. And that wouldn't do. She wanted him to command her. And that meant her doing what he'd commanded.

He reached down and pulled her head up by her hair. "I said to suck my cock. Anywhere but there, and I'll go to bed for sleep."

A shudder rocked her and her voice was husky. "Yes, Clyde. Sorry, Clyde." He'd never heard such eagerness from her before. He'd passed a test with her. Kept her on the track of obeying him. "Yes, Clyde."

He released her head and it dipped down again.

Glorious lips descended on his cock. Her warmth and wetness surrounded him. Enveloped him. Took him into a warm cavern. His hips bucked a little off the bed.

She slipped her mouth around the tip of his cock and suckled slightly. Barely enough to register on his radar, but reminding him what he had to look forward to.

He leaned his head back. Sensations raced through him.

She sucked again and again, her mouth slowly moving up his length. Her teeth never scraped him. Her lips were wide enough so that wouldn't happen, but tight enough to let him feel them around him.

He closed his eyes and concentrated on the sensations of her mouth. On the burgeoning pleasure building up inside him. His entire body filled with it. Shocks ran up and down his nerve endings, along with molten heat.

He felt about ready to explode like a volcano. He wanted to come, but wanted to prolong this moment as much as possible. Wanted his time with her to be as long as he could make it. He concentrated on holding himself off.

Her mouth went back up to his tip. Then back down to his base. Intimate torture that kept him spinning in arousal's clutches.

His hips thrust forward. He groaned, leaning back on the bed and bracing himself up with his arms.

In and out, she took him, taking him as far down her mouth as she could. This time, when she slipped him almost out, she let him go. "May I touch your balls, Clyde?" The desperation in her voice was acute.

She'd asked before she'd done what she wanted. Because he hadn't given her permission. "Yes, Angelica."

Like he wouldn't have given her permission for that. But that she'd asked spoke what lesson she'd learned earlier. He liked to dominate during sex but he'd never taken it this far, yet he was finding he enjoyed it more than he'd thought possible.

Her soft touch on his balls made him hiss. They drew up close to his body, not trying to get away from her hand but trying to send him into the explosion that hovered ever so near.

She placed her mouth back on him and he almost came off the bed. Her mouth coupled with her fondling of his balls launched him into the stratosphere.

Sweat coated his body. His heart raced, sending blood accumulating into his cock, making it harder than ever.

A couple more passes up and down of her mouth, and his orgasm jetted from his body in spurts. "Angelica!"

Her mouth worked to catch what seemed to be his never-ending come. After it had finally ceased, she licked her lips, tongue creeping out to get all the spatters.

He shuddered both with the force of his orgasm and with the sight of her lapping up his essence. He'd never thought anything like that would affect him so much. But it was intimate. A woman drinking in your semen couldn't be anything but intimate.

And he didn't do intimate.

Whores didn't swallow.

A hooker didn't put her whole heart into a blowjob, even when he paid well. Not like this one. She'd put her soul into what she'd given to him, and he recognized it for what it was.

A gift.

Nor did whores submit to his every whim. They had limits. She had none. He sensed she would do whatever it took to please him.

He blinked as a slow smile spread across her face.

Whores didn't smile. They demanded what money was left on his tab. Hell, they hadn't even discussed what he owed. His heart pounded in his chest at her reactions to him.

Which begged the question.

If Angelica wasn't a whore like she'd told him…what was she?

*****

Clyde slowly moved up on the bed. "Come here, Angelica."

Her feet moved almost before she thought about it. Obeying him, of course. Something about his voice when they were getting sexual made her yearn to do whatever he asked. Most men tried to dominate her in other areas of her life, but in the bedroom, they were pansies. He made the Alphas of her pack look like jokes, and the Betas look like wimps. In

the room she most wanted domination -- the bedroom -- she could push them over with one little finger and do what she wanted. Especially with her hand around their cocks.

Not Clyde.

He'd made her obey him even when she'd been about to suck his cock.

And she'd liked it. She was terribly wet and horribly achy. Swollen. Needy. Even after having had sex once already today. And multiple orgasms.

Why did she find him so intoxicating? So addicting?

She sat next to Clyde, pushing up on her still bound hands and awaiting his next command.

He didn't disappoint. "Lie down. On your stomach."

Without hesitation, she rolled onto her stomach and lay down. Her face plopped into the mattress and laid there.

His gentle fingers picked up her head and lifted.

She helped and he slid a small pillow underneath to lift her head up slightly. "Better? Keep your head to the side." He pulled her hair to the side too.

He was trying to make her comfortable.

Her stomach clenched, as did her parts between her legs. No man had ever seen to her comfort during sex. The few she'd had, they'd seen to their own needs. Yeah, they might have gotten her off, but they'd never checked to make sure she was okay. "Yes, much better. Thank you, Clyde."

His lips lifted in a curl of a grin. "Good." He took her hands in his and pulled them up toward the head of the bed. He used the clip to attach them to the rope he'd already put up there.

The instant she heard the *click* that told her she was bound, a dreamy feeling settled over her. Wasn't quite sleepiness or tiredness. It was lethargy but it was a good kind. A safe

kind. She'd never felt quite so tingly before. Her pussy throbbed and swelled, even as she went into a space in her head, telling her she was in the right spot.

She heard him rummaging and a slither went across her foot. She almost jerked it back but caught it in time. Didn't want to get punished again for not doing what he'd said. After all, she was so close to getting something she wanted.

He pulled the rope across one ankle and anchored her to the footboard. It wasn't tight at all; she could move the foot about a foot or two. But it was enough to let her know she was bound. The scratch of the rope against her skin let her know that.

She licked her dry lips. She still could taste him. Wasn't entirely great tasting, but wasn't unpleasant. Mostly salty.

Another rope slipped across her other ankle. It came into place, and she heard him secure it as the footboard rattled with his touch.

Her arms trembled. A swallow moved down her throat.

All four limbs were tied. She was bound. And loving it.

"Remember what our word is?" Clyde's voice rumbled across her.

She didn't raise her head to see him, simply lay there, head to the side, letting the feeling wash over her. She'd never dreamed she would enjoy something like this, yet her tingling, leaking pussy told her otherwise. "Yes." Her voice sounded dreamy. In fact, this seemed like something out of a dream. A very good, erotic dream.

"If you need to move your head away from the pillow, say 'pillow.'" He gave her a second code word so that she'd stay safe.

He moved around. She could hear him rummaging in the bag he'd brought here. What did he have in mind?

He came up on the bed and sat by her backside. His hand moved to caress her, pressing on her lower back and relaxing her even more.

One hand slipped away and moved down over her butt to her slickened pussy. She moved back up to give him access. A finger pressed up her seam before shifting into her wetness.

She moaned. Moved slightly, thrusting her hips against his finger. She couldn't get away from this, not even if she wanted to. The touch was exciting enough in itself. To be tied up like she was, was even more so.

He removed the hand after four or five strokes and reached down between her legs as if retrieving something.

Something cold and hard pressed between her thighs as his hand shifted underneath her to explore.

She tensed slightly, wondering what he could be putting there as she lifted her head from the pillow.

Chapter Five

"Relax, Angelica." His order voice made all her muscles go slack. Only his voice could be so calming when she felt like a storm was about to erupt in the center of her body.

"Yes, Clyde."

At the end of her words, a buzzing sound started. And the hard object was pressed into her again.

A vibrator.

Her entire body snaked out in a series of spasms as with undeterred accuracy, he pressed the small vibrator against her clit, keeping his hand under her body.

The series of shocks than ran through her were electric. The buzz made her thighs clench, only she couldn't wrap her legs around it. Could only squirm in the limited capacity of the bonds.

It was almost too good as he increased the speed slowly. Almost bringing her instantly to climax, but not quite putting her where she needed to be.

The experience was such that she almost missed what he was doing to other places. But his hand caught her attention as it slid over her butt. Something cool was applied to the slit. Something liquidy. Gooey.

The vibrator pressed harder against her pussy. More into her clit. Its buzzing made her crazy. Her body jerked with the feel. Her eyes clamped shut, trying to push out all the other sensations and focus on the ones on her pussy. All the muscles, clenched, finding it impossible to relax.

"Scream for me when you come, Angelica."

That wouldn't be a problem. She shifted her weight against the vibrator, trying to sort out her wayward body. Bring herself closer to the sensations, be more in the moment. All her energy focused on one little piece of plastic.

And then something hard pressed against her ass. Starting around the hole and dipping inside.

A dildo.

He'd lubed her up and now was pressing a dildo into her back hole as the vibrator slowly dived against her pussy with relentless pleasure. The pressure on her asshole split her cheeks apart as the tip dived into her.

She'd never been taken like this. She'd put herself in his hands. And he was giving her things she didn't even know she'd wanted.

Her ass tightened as she tried to relax her muscles. Had to give him good leverage to work the dildo in. Would it hurt when it was lodged in all the way? A shiver slid down her throat with a gulp. She turned her head to the other side, still keeping her eyes closed. Crept into her own space in her head to keep herself cool. Didn't want to freak out. The pressure intensified.

He drove slow, going down only fractions at a time. Sliding the cool plastic against her flesh, not giving ground but motoring down into her.

His other hand worked to keep the buzzing toy against where she needed it most. Harder and harder he pressed, then eased it off before going harder again. It kept her mind off the goings-on in the back.

Penetrated on one side and having intense pleasure on the front side. Her brain couldn't focus on any one thing but instead fragmented into one concentration at a time.

She needed to come.

He pressed the vibrator in to the right spot. Her head lolled back.

The orgasm started at her center and ripped her body apart at some imaginary seam. Or at least, that's what it felt like. It bowled her over like a freight shuttle, taking her along for the ride and lifting her whole body up in the air.

She screamed, hardly aware that she was unconsciously obeying his command. All she was aware of was the dildo now scooting deep within something that had never been breached and the intense sensations brought to her clit by the vibrator.

When the orgasm finally stopped, she rocked her head back a little before shifting it again on the pillow. Her body felt as though she drifted on a cloud of arousal. Would he stop? Give her time to recover? Or motor on with the sensations?

She was at the threshold of another orgasm. She could feel it at the surface. Beckoning to her. One little tap and she'd go over the edge.

He continued, not stopping or even stalling, but continuing his descent with the dildo and his pressure with the vibrator. She was caught between a rock and two pieces of plastic, and neither would release her.

Wasn't long before she lifted her body in the air, hamstrung, screaming again. "Clyde!"

She took a while to come back to herself. Her whole body shivered, with an intense tingling that felt like everything had been torched.

She lowered her torso onto the bed, panting. Her whole body was coated in sweat, which was supposed to cool her down, but all she felt was heat. Her heart wanted to beat from her chest. Her lungs didn't want to give her enough oxygen. Couldn't collect enough for her body's needs.

She couldn't take any more.

If he continued with the dildo and vibrator, she'd shatter into a million pieces, maybe even a trillion, and not in a good way. The pleasure had become too wild, too widespread. Her body was in sensory overload.

She needed a break.

Not to mention a certain part of her longed for his personal attention. Longed for his possession. She wanted his cock inside her now. No waiting.

She needed to tell him that. To tell him what she wanted. Only she couldn't. He was the one to decide where their sex went. He was the Dominant. She was a submissive. He knew what was best for her.

Her eyes shut with her dilemma.

Most men she'd been with did their own things to her in the bedroom. Didn't want to do her like she wanted. Wanted to lie back and not be Dominant where she needed it, but in life outside of the bedroom, they'd not wanted her to take charge. So far, he'd been solicitous both places. But she couldn't ask him to stop. It wasn't a part of the game they played. As he'd demonstrated earlier, he'd punish her if she wasn't the submissive he wanted.

Before she could speak a word or decide anything else, he pulled out the dildo and shoved away the vibrator with shaking hands.

Somehow he knew what she wanted. Knew her body as well as she did. No man had ever come so close to doing what she wanted when she wanted.

His voice was thick as he said, "Get up on all fours."

Had he left her enough play in the rope for that? Of course he had. He was Clyde. He'd probably had this in mind when he'd tied her.

He moved beside her to give her room.

She had enough slack in all the ropes to lift up onto all fours. Her heart surged with the success of the attempt. She'd done what he wanted. Her chest constricted as her skin heated. Done what he'd asked.

But he'd come already. Twice. Surely he'd not recovered yet, especially from her giving him head.

Only the press of his rigid cock against her ass told her he had had enough time to recover from his earlier orgasms.

It was going to be a long, hard night.

*****

Clyde bit his lip to seek a measure of control as he tossed the dildo to the floor to wash later. The vibrator he laid on the bed. It might come in handy later. He wanted to pound into the woman in front of him. Take her wild and frenzied. And while that might happen, he needed to take a moment to get a handle on his emotions.

He loved her body when she came to an orgasm. She was a wonder. One that he hadn't yet explored everything about. And he intended to do that. He would know all about her. He would get to know her every nook and cranny. He'd taste them all. He'd get to know her every little quirk.

How? When you'll be gone in days?

He closed his eyes against the onslaught of his own thoughts. How indeed. Yet a big part of him wanted to know more about this woman than he ever would hope to do in the shortness of their acquaintance.

Damn his status. Of course if he wasn't what he was, he'd still be an Alpha in a pack, never would have given the Beta female a second look because of pack politics.

Fuck them all.

Opening his eyes, he found her ass wiggling seductively in front of him. Her hips swayed in her position on all fours.

She cocked her head over her shoulder, looking at him. "Have I displeased you, Clyde?" Her lips trembled.

Not on a bet. "No, baby." He pressed his cock against her bottom. Moved it from side to side, letting her feel him and how much he wanted her. Again. How many times had he come? Shouldn't that have taken the edge off him like it had from his heat? But still he wanted her with a ferocity that ensured he'd get his way.

She moaned.

The sound drove him even higher. He gritted his teeth. He had to get a handle on what was left of his will.

"Lean farther forward."

She did, going fully up on her hands and knees and pushing her ass into the air. "Yes, Clyde."

How much he enjoyed her doing his will took him again by surprise. His hips rocked against her. He'd never thought about a woman obeying him in this fashion. He'd fucked them to get what he needed and moved on. There had been no sexual games. He'd not wanted a woman to obey him because she was paid to. Yet the feel of this with Angelica was alluring. Captivating. Addicting.

She was addicting.

He grasped a hip in each hand and centered himself. Pressed his cock into her pussy. First the head. Then slowly he eked in the rest of him.

Held on to her to keep some measure so that he did take it slow. Until he was fully seated in her depths.

He stilled, letting her feel his full penetration. "Like my thick cock in your pussy?" He nipped at her shoulder.

"Yes, Clyde." She panted. A whimper escaped after that. "Oh, yes, Clyde."

She wanted him to move. Wanted him to fuck her senseless.

It was amazing how well he knew this woman. How well he could tell her every wish from little words dropping from her lips.

He'd give her what she wanted. On his terms.

He nipped her shoulder again, raking his teeth over the smooth skin. Liked the feel of hard against soft.

And slowly, he moved himself out of her. Not all the way but to the edge of his cock. And the edge of his control. His body tensed at the alluring feel. He threw back his head, trying to find something to center him.

Clutching at her hips, he moved in, going deep again.

Her breath caught, releasing as he bore down. Her walls clutched at him, coating him with her moisture.

Damn, but she was tight. And the tightness around him made him that much crazier with want and need. Her wetness roped him in. Covered him. Made him slick.

In and out, going faster and faster. Soon he began to pound. His hips slapped against her ass as the pace picked up exponentially.

His lips curled; he couldn't get quite deep enough. He moved her hips, angling his, trying to get in as deep as he could.

Become one with her. That mantra repeated over and over with each quick beat of her heart.

Be as deeply burrowed inside her as he could possibly manage. Worm his way in and take her. Make her his.

She made little pleasure sounds deep in her throat. Arched her back and lifted her head. Her body squirmed, trying to press herself closer.

He felt his world narrow down to the place between his legs. His whole body tensed in anticipation of what was to come.

He moved his head and bit her on the shoulder. Pierced her skin. Tasted her.

In that instant, his come spouted from him and into her willing depths. It shot out of him with a speed before unknown.

She cried out, an orgasm taking her as well.

He released her shoulder and pumped out the last of his climax. He still pounded into her body, getting the last of the thrusts out.

Then, he laid his head on her back for a few seconds, trying to calm his breath and heart. Their sweat mixed together in the touching of their skin.

An intermingling.

He moved to the side, lying down beside her.

She collapsed on her stomach, still tied to the bed. Her breathing was labored and fast. She rolled her head around to gaze at him.

He reached out to press a strand of her hair back out of her face. Stroked along her angular jawline. He'd never seen hair quite that color. It was the color of cherrywood. Not quite a red but not quite blonde. A melding of the two.

She nuzzled his hand.

"I'm going to leave you tied. For now."

Her breathing hitched and her hips twitched. "Yes, Clyde."

"Be a good girl and I might leave you tied all night." He laughed, rubbing his hand down along her chin.

"Yes, Clyde." The anticipation in her voice filled his cock with renewed vigor. Her breathing picked up again.

At the rate it was going, it might take all night for him to finally sate himself. And then some. And what a time it would be.

*****

Angelica slowly came to consciousness. She rolled over and encountered something hard lying beside her.

Clyde.

She hadn't forgotten. They'd had a rousing night of hot sex. She'd lost count of the number of times they'd fucked. He was relentless and he'd pounded her body so hard, a few times she thought she might break. The only reason they'd stopped was that they were both about to pass out from exhaustion.

He'd been the most rousing lover she'd had to date. She'd lost count of her orgasms too, and of the times she'd felt like begging for something and he'd done exactly what she'd wanted. She'd barely begun to scratch the surface with this man. Yet the deeper she got, the more she found him irresistible. The more she liked what was under his surface.

They'd discussed nothing long-term. They'd lived in the moment of sex and enjoying each other.

He'd asked little to no questions about her past. Nor she about his.

And while this didn't exactly bother her, it didn't set well either. They should be talking about their pasts. She'd shared her body with him. Many times. He seemed to know her better than anyone else ever had. Yet he didn't know her secrets. Her present-day worries or concerns. Her joys.

The desire to share everything with him shouldn't be there after only one night. But it plagued her like a dark coin that wouldn't leave her pocket.

No, she needed to enjoy what they had in the now. And worry about whatever happened later. There would be plenty of time for talking. She'd see to that.

Funny how she was already thinking of him in terms of not letting him go. Not anything she'd expected.

She twisted her hand, testing.

She'd been released.

She vaguely remembered him hovering over her with a smile before she'd closed her eyes. She'd wondered how he could be standing as many times as he'd come to orgasm. God

knows, she couldn't have stood. Her legs had felt like liquid, even lying on the bed. They still did.

He'd kissed her wrists and ankles as she'd been drifting off to blissful slumber. He must have released her even as his mouth had lingered over her skin.

She'd slept so hard, she'd barely even dreamed. Hadn't slept that good since…she couldn't remember when. Maybe as a child? Under her mother's arm?

Clyde made her feel safe. In more ways than one. She didn't have to put up pretenses around him. She'd let him be the guard last night. Her protector. Her Dominant. Her lover.

Her hand reached over to the hard lump beside her. She didn't open her eyes. Her fingers met furry muscles and explored the fuzzy landscape.

Fuzzy landscape?

He'd been hairy but not overly so. Not this much. Now, the hair tickled her fingertips and wisped around them.

Her eyes flung open to look at the man next to her.

Only it wasn't a man at all who slumbered next to her but a huge wolf with a long tongue hanging from its mouth. Thick gray fur the color of stone. Long legs. And a large head with black-tipped pointed ears.

A wolf lay beside her. Asleep.

Huge.

Fangs.

She did the only thing she could call to mind. Not exactly the best thing. She scrambled up on the bed.

The wolf's eyes opened with a start at her movement. Familiar brown eyes grew wide to the world and the wolf sat up. It got up on all fours on the bed, standing. Its gaze darted around the room, scanning as though for a source of stress.

Angelica remained in her position on the bed, legs pulled up under her. She made herself look smaller. Didn't want to look like a threat.

The wolf blinked at her and opened its mouth. A series of growls burst forth, then the wolf stopped. And let out a whine.

The eyes looked confused. And so familiar.

Clyde had been lying beside her when she'd been drifting off to sleep. After undoing her bonds.

"Clyde?"

His nose twitched as he scented. Then his large canine head nodded.

He could understand her. And it was Clyde.

In wolf form.

In wolf form.

Her arms came up around her to wrap themselves as if warding off a chill. Shudders rocked her body.

Her hand went up to her neck. To the bite mark that he'd made. Not the first one he'd created on her, was it? In fact, that had been the second time he'd sunk his teeth in. And upon lovemaking later that night, he'd bitten her at least twice more. Multiple times he'd marked her as his. *As his*. She'd marked him a few times herself.

It hadn't occurred to her the significance of his desire to mark her nor hers to mark him, so caught up in the lust had she been. Not that that would have stopped her…

He whined again, looking down as though he couldn't believe the change in himself. And he had to know the reasons behind the shift as she did.

While female Wolftons could change form from puberty, males had to wait a little bit longer before they could take their wolf form.

They could only shift to lupine *after* they'd found a mate.

Chapter Six

Clyde tried not to panic. He bounced around on the bed. His heart pounded and his breath motored through his stupid dog snout.

Not dog, wolf.

Didn't matter. He was still in a form that he'd never been in before. And it felt…strange. He had four legs. A tail. A long snout. Was covered in fur. Nothing seemed to work the way it had been when he'd been human. It all made different sensations course through his body.

He growled again. Didn't like this at all.

Angelica unfolded herself from her spot on the bed. She looked much less anxious than she'd been a few minutes ago. "Clyde, you can understand me, can't you?"

He nodded. His tongue went out of his mouth. He quickly pulled it back inside. Couldn't have that. He didn't like this form. Didn't feel in control of it. At least he didn't lose his mind in this form. Although, running, not necessarily after anything, was the first thing on his mind.

He sat on his haunches and rubbed a paw over his face. A claw caught his lip and pulled. He smacked the paw back on the sheet. His lip burned where it had caught. How did

wolves do things like that without hurting themselves? He licked carefully across his elongated teeth. His mouth didn't feel the same. It was longer. His tongue was longer. Weird. He continued to explore things in this new form.

"Clyde?"

He looked back up into her sweet face. He wanted to go to her. Take her…in what? His paws? Dammit, he couldn't hold her like this. Couldn't be with her. He yipped. It was supposed to be a bark but it didn't quite come out that way. He didn't like this one bit. Being out of control. In a form he'd never been in before. He couldn't do what he wanted. And the animal had its own ideas about what it wanted. Never a good thing.

"Can you change back?"

Hmmm. Good question. How did one change back? He'd not consciously changed to wolf. He'd been a man when he'd gone to sleep. Obviously during the night, something had happened. He curled his lip, trying to figure things out. How the hell had he changed? And how did he morph back to Clyde? What if he was stuck forever? He growled. No, he'd find a way to retake his human form. He was a Wolfton after all. Females had been doing this since puberty. He stood up and shook his body. Stupid animal. He quickly sat back down again.

"Try concentrating on your human form."

He focused on himself as a human. On becoming Clyde again. At first, nothing happened. He growled again. This wasn't as simple as it looked when he'd seen others do it.

"Keep trying." Her voice was steady and encouraging.

Easy for her to say. Finally he focused, his face straining, and he felt popping in his muscles. His joints kicked back. His teeth shrank. He looked down to see his back legs getting longer and his torso moving down to human size. The hair sucked back into his skin.

He'd done it!

After a minute, he sat on the bed, Wolfton man again. "Shit." His voice sounded gravelly and hoarse so he cleared his throat. It hadn't sounded quite human. Of course he hadn't been human a second ago. "Shit." That was better and more like himself.

Angelica bit her lip as she looked at him.

He shook his body, getting rid of the residual tingles from being a wolf. His whole body prickled as if little needles were probing it. "Shit."

She didn't say anything and turned her head away from him. He couldn't see her expression but that she'd turned away from him spoke volumes.

What was her problem?

The reason for his change.

He closed his eyes. Yes, he knew the reason why he'd changed. A Wolfton man couldn't change shape. Until he had sex with and marked his mate.

His eyes reopened and his gaze drifted to her neck. Yeah, he'd marked her a few times during sex. Never even occurred to him until he'd heard her move, woke up to being a wolf, what was going on. Wolves could mark during sex, but with a mate, there was a compulsion. A drive to mark them. His chest constricted.

He blew out a heavy breath. "Angelica…"

"No. No. It's fine. Your first word was 'shit.'" She pasted on a bright smile but even he could see the pain in her eyes. Her entire body remained slumped. Not to mention, she'd brought the subject up. "I didn't expect a declaration of love or anything." She shrugged shoulders that didn't seem to want to move up.

"I said 'shit' because I've never been a wolf before. It's a little disconcerting." He ran a hand through his hair. Much like when he'd been a wolf and his paw had come up. This was more successful as he didn't have claws. He swallowed, still unsure about being an animal. He'd always hated his time in heat. Being a creature didn't sit well with him. Especially as he'd done the shifting outside of his own control. "I'm not even sure how I shifted." It hadn't

been because of the mating, but while he'd been asleep. That he was now mated was a little disconcerting as well. He'd never expected to claim his mate.

"You must have done it while we were dozing." She shifted her weight, making the mattress creak. "No, Clyde, it's cool. I mean we were in for temporary fucking. That's all. That shouldn't change now. Nothing's changed."

Clyde opened his mouth to reassure her. To tell her that everything would be all right and that this changed everything.

Only he couldn't.

He was an outcast. He had no pack. On the whole, Wolftons were social creatures. And the pack brought with it protections he simply didn't have on his own. He lived a lonely existence among Quatarians who had no real idea about Wolftons. He'd never gotten along much with his own kind after things had gone awry, so he didn't find it too hopeless to live as he did. In fact, in some ways he liked how he lived. No bullshit politics or assholes to answer to. And every pack had its share of both. But how could he ask a mate to live like that? Or even worse, children?

His skin prickled with a chill. He'd used no protections. Wolftons couldn't have children except with their mates, so he hadn't worried about it. Now he'd found *her*. That special her who belonged to him. Even though the change had just happened, they'd been mates from the beginning of time. Which meant he'd had unprotected sex umpteen times and a baby could result. "Angelica, where are you in your cycle?" If she was fertile, there was no way she couldn't be pregnant.

Her face blanched, coming to the realization that he had. She started counting on her fingers. A relieved look overtook her face. "I'm too far out for a pregnancy."

His breath exhaled, one he didn't even know he'd been holding. There was that at least. Until he figured this out, he didn't want her carrying his child. His skin prickled, all

the hair rising up and waving. His child. His mate. All he managed to grind out was, "Good." His feelings didn't change the timing of this.

She didn't react, but he could tell that went over like a pipe full of lead. Her face drew up in a cringe.

This was turning into a pisser of a morning. He blew out a long breath, his hands twisting into fists. How did he not make this worse? "Angelica, look…let me explain some things…" How did he explain? Without hurting her already scorched feelings? He blinked. When the fuck had he started to care about her feelings like this? That she was hurt was like a needle going into his heart. He didn't usually consider others' feelings. That wasn't being caused by the mating. He'd known mated Wolftons who'd been at each other's throats. What the hell was going on? He liked this about as much as the change.

"No." She held up a hand. "We don't need to talk. We…have other things to do. You don't owe me anything, Clyde."

Did he? Shouldn't he explain to his mate why he wasn't thrilled about having one? After all, the reason men fucked everything in sight was to find a mate. To reproduce. Most males would have been thrilled to find their mate in Angelica. Even if she was a Beta. And a bedroom submissive. His cock hardened thinking about the things they'd done last night. And the things he still wanted to do with her.

Her gaze lowered to his lap. A smile curled up the edges of her lips, replacing her cringing face. A much better look. She took a deep breath as though to buck herself up. "Told you we had other things to do." And it was obvious what those other things were. It was obvious what she wanted to do.

Yet she'd never reach for him. Without being ordered.

His whole pelvis moved up off the bed as if it had a mind of its own, straining for her touch. Imagining what she could do for him was not as good as the real thing. And the real

thing was in front of him. Conscious thinking went out of his head. All he could think of was her fingers stroking around his cock. “Touch me, Angelica.”

She moved closer and her hand went around his length. She blew out a soft sigh as though this was the best thing she could ever do.

He stretched out his legs to give her more room. To give her ample space for what he wanted her to do. What he’d ordered her to do. She was all too willing to touch him and there were a few awkward moments when he had to push against her to scoot back. She didn’t want to let go and wouldn’t. He couldn’t tell her to. But they finally got into a comfortable position that suited them both.

Her fingers curled around him and created a tunnel that he could go in and out of. Up and down, she moved around him.

He leaned back, head swiveling. Gave himself over to the sensations of her hands on him.

Only little thoughts kept creeping in.

His mate.

Ones he hadn’t let himself feel because of his situation, but now that he wasn’t thinking about all the reasons they couldn’t be together, the emotion that his mate was before him took over.

His mate.

No one else’s. His.

His cock shuddered as his hips thrust forward. His entire body spasmed.

His mate.

She had her hands on his cock. Looked at him with this beautiful gaze as if he could do no wrong. Did what he’d told her to do with such efficiency.

His mate.

He'd never expected to find her. Especially in this unlikeliest of places. Never expected to find anyone to be with his sorry ass. Except for times of heat, and that was only whores. And a mate was even more than that.

A mate was forever.

Now he had something he'd never thought he'd find.

Knowing she was his made his heart do flutter things it never had before. And he didn't like that either.

Because he wasn't sure if he could have her. If he should have her. His life was a fucked-up mess. She made him vulnerable. And there were those who would use her in a way they never could the whores.

But he liked what she was doing to him and he leaned back into that, letting her do her work. Put the thought out of his head. About the situation and what to do. He could concentrate on that later. Right now, he'd focus on having this woman. Enjoy the moment with her.

It might be all that they had.

She felt good as she worked his cock around. Her fingers seemed to know him, how he wanted to be touched. How hard to tug on him. How tight to squeeze.

"Don't make me come."

Her head lifted, eyes wide with surprise.

He smiled, not answering the questions he saw in her gaze. What she didn't know would cause her pleasure later on. He could come and then be erect again. But he'd rather have her do things this way, at his command.

She took him to the edge of that precipice, close to falling off, but not quite there. It was like she knew his body as well as he did. Maybe even better. And she knew how to dance him to the corner, but never turn it. And each turn back made him anticipate the end

even more. It drew him out and made him vibrate all over. Made everything seem more vibrant.

His hips bucked wildly from all that she did to him.

Her hand released him as he was about to make the ascent close to climax yet again. "Clyde, I…have done what you told me." She ducked her head toward the bed and sheets. A little pink went up her cheeks.

"Yes, baby, you've done well." He reached out a hand to stroke down her face and along her neck. Saw the puncture wounds on the shoulder, standing out quite vividly against her golden, creamy skin. Liked seeing his mark on her. A surge like never before swelled through him. It was belonging and happiness all rolled into one. It made his stomach clench. His chest tighten. And his teeth want to do it again.

He had similar marks on him. And somehow that made him feel all the more possessive about her.

"Lie back and spread your pussy." He moved toward the ropes, which lay on the floor beside their bed. Time to give her some pleasure back. Make her his yet again.

Her eyes shut briefly as she complied with his order. Her legs moved a little stiffly and slowly.

He'd hurt her when he'd not reacted well about him being her mate. He'd bet that caused her hesitation now. She hadn't said much though, like so many women would have. Hadn't left him with yelled words and cursing. Or fought him like an Alpha female might have.

But he could read the message in her eyes.

She was good for a fuck, but not as a mate.

She was trying to move past that sentiment, but he could tell what was going on in her brain.

And he had no way to ease her anxieties. Sentiment didn't begin to cover the situation. And what he couldn't be to her.

Hell, he was a clear and present danger to the woman.

Angelica moved into position where he'd told her. She couldn't help her hesitation. Her hanging back.

Clyde didn't want to be mated to her.

It was evident in his face and his words when he'd thought about their mating. She'd tried to retreat from a man who wanted her for sex, but not as a mate.

Only she couldn't. She couldn't leave him yet. Her body didn't want to. And though her mind thought it would be wise, her soul couldn't reconcile that.

The problem was hers, not his. Despite knowing that, she couldn't help her hesitating reactions, even as she cursed herself.

They'd started this adventure with him asking her if she was a whore. She'd agreed that she was, without explaining why. He'd made no promises, said no pretty words. He'd been after sex to ease his heat, which he would have paid her for after the sex was over. And that was all. She'd given her body to him, knowing what they had was temporary, knowing what he was after.

And she had no regrets.

Being mates didn't alter anything about the way they'd started off. It didn't automatically change his feelings about her because they were mates.

He'd thought she was a whore. And that hadn't changed much.

So why should she be upset about this?

She pushed down the feelings she had no rights to and instead focused on the man in front of her. She'd do what she'd set out to do in the beginning.

Enjoy sex with him for as long as it lasted.

She leaned back as he picked up the ropes in both hands. Her heart pounded and her mouth dried. Anticipation was her friend these days with Clyde. The things he did to her made her cream with incredible buildup. He knew how to push her. How to get her skin tingling. Her parts swelling. How to touch her in all the right places.

She'd never known sex could be like this. Sure, she'd liked it before. But this…this was wondrous. A shiver rocked her.

What would he do to her this time?

He advanced toward the bed with the ropes in hand, his face pinched in a look that spoke his concern. But he didn't say anything to her about her faltering steps. Rumbled, "Turn over."

She flipped onto her stomach. So he was tying her facedown again. He seemed to like that position. Maybe he'd take her doggy-style again. She couldn't contain her giggle. How appropriate for Wolftons.

He threaded the ropes through the headboard and knotted them around her wrists. Then did the same thing to her ankles.

Feeling the ropes go around her, feeling them tighten around her skin was the most erotic sensation. Heat spread across her body, along with sweat. Her breathing hitched, then raced along. The ropes being tied spread a calmness across all her limbs. Made her pussy clench as if it tried to go up inside her body. She entered a space in her mind. That no one could touch. That was calm, almost peaceful, despite the firestorm pounding around her skin. The bonds made her feel oddly free.

"Too tight?"

She shook her head. "No, Clyde."

"Remember our code word?"

"Yes, Clyde." Her voice came even more breathy as the time neared for him to be starting stuff with her. She'd never thought giving herself over to a man could be this liberating.

"Who's your Alpha?"

She swallowed, trying to drum up moisture in her too dry mouth to answer him. She must answer him. "You, Clyde." Of course, he was more than that to her. Her eyes closed.

He would leave her behind. Never look back. And where would that leave her? Without a man to do this with. No, she wouldn't crumple thinking about what would be. Just couldn't think about the subject now. There'd be time enough to remember him after he was gone. Now, she would enjoy this sensual time. Enjoy the play on her senses. Find pleasure in him.

The deliciousness curled up sensations in her belly. It tightened around them and the serenity that this seemed to bring. Her pussy swelled, moisture driving up in her folds. Waiting for his touch.

"Good answer." He moved toward her middle and sat beside her. He fiddled, draping something over her middle and securing it.

She lifted her hips to give him better access as he fumbled around. Pushed something in tight against her clit. Then something down and up into her pussy. She couldn't tell what he was doing. A strap scratched around her. She heard the *click* of it being fastened.

More languidness weighted down her limbs.

She gasped at the slick penetration when it came. Her muscles clenched around the soft plastic. Some type of a dildo. But what had he put around her middle?

She didn't have to wait long to find out. He'd strapped some sort of belt on her. Why? The vibrator started humming almost before she realized her question. The belt held the vibrator against her clit and the penetrating dildo inside her.

Her hips quaked under the assault of both toys. The mattress did its part to hold both in securely. And every time her hips shifted, the dildo shifted position. Her heart pounded so hard she could barely hear. Her body broke out in chills. Her head ripped back as her body tensed around what was invading her.

He shifted higher around her. Something cool slipped along her backside. Into her back hole. She could barely tense her ass cheeks so shuddery was everything else.

Something slipped gently into her back hole. A little bit. The barest of penetrations. A millimeter if that. But her whole body shook, knowing it was there and what was to come. She was being tormented on three fronts. Penetrated on two. Her focus couldn't shift to one thing without coming back to the other two.

And she loved every minute of it. "Oh, Clyde." She made a trill noise after the words. Her throat dried as she contended with the pent-up urges to scream.

His laughter was raw and agitated. "Soon as this dildo slides in you. I'm going to replace it."

She shivered heavily, whole body breaking into a sweat. What would he replace it with? She wanted to know for sure. Needed to know. She kept quiet, not asking, instead focusing on the buzzing against her clit. Her muscles tightened, shifting the dildo more.

"I'm going to replace it with my cock. Take you back there. You ever been…?" The question wasn't fully asked but obvious. He hadn't asked about the dildo, which had been her first time with one, but this was more personal. He'd breach her with himself. Instinctively, she knew that was why he'd asked.

"No, Clyde." Would he be pleased? She raked her teeth across her bottom lip. She wanted him to be pleased.

This time the laugh was almost sinister. It caused ripples along her stomach. "I'm going to breach your virgin hole. With my big, thick cock. And after I clean up, I'm going to take your pussy. Sit and let you ride me."

His words sent her over the edge. Moisture slipped from her pussy in waves of intense far-reaching bliss. The orgasm made her butt cheeks clench up, tensing to tighten around the dildo, making that slide deeper, before relaxing in the wake. Her mind splintered as well as her body. Had she screamed? She wasn't even sure.

She slowly came back to herself. And herself was good. He didn't let up with the dildo, going slowly into her back hole, widening it. Stretching it.

Until he pulled the plastic out and squirted more lube.

The vibrator continued to hum along her clit and the other dildo remained inside of her. Both these things wouldn't let her desire come down any from a plateau but kept raising the bar. Higher and higher she rose with the frenzy of her senses, moaning. Her body wouldn't stop moving, couldn't stop moving. Everything felt tensed. She probably made dozens of little noises but they hardly registered in her psyche.

Grunting, he came over her to rub his cock where the dildo had breached. He sucked in a breath as he began to press down on her. Slowly, he worked a much more pliant piece of flesh into her back hole.

He didn't pound, but took his time, sliding into her with measured thrusts of his hips. His hands held him up on either side of her.

She turned her head, facing the other direction. Blew out a breath as her body shivered. Not from cold, but from the intense heat that he boiled all around her. She was being steeped like the world's limpest tea bag.

His hairy skin slipped across her with each pass of his hips, not exactly scratching, but it tickled.

Even when another orgasm ripped through her, he continued his assault on her back hole, taking her as if he had all day to do this.

She couldn't take much more.

His slowness made every dip deeper, made every slide of the front dildo that much more nerve-racking.

In short, it turned her on as much as if the pace had been fast.

When he was finally seated deep within her, he stilled a minute, then pulled back. Came forward again. He set a rhythm of ever-increasing pace until he was pounding against her back hole. Which in turn moved the vibrator and dildo around, amounting to a sweet combination that wouldn't let her come down from an intense orgasm that seemed to keep going and going and going.

Her heart was about to give out and she couldn't take enough air into her lungs. All her skin burned in a fire of his control.

He lifted his head and sank his teeth into her other shoulder. Marked her. It made her scream. "Clyde!"

And his pulsing cock delivered hot jets of come, pumped into her round after round until he collapsed on top of her.

She couldn't catch her breath or come down. Her body collapsed.

His hot breath warmed the back of her neck before he pressed a quick kiss. An aftershock rocked his body and he grunted. He jerked against her.

His hand slid around to turn off the vibrator. Then, he pulled his spent cock from her hole. And unstrapped the belt.

How could he even move? She couldn't. She'd never imagined anything making her feel quite like this. Her body was coated in sweat. And her throat felt raw as though she'd screamed a few times too many. Her breathing didn't want to quiet, nor did her heartbeat. Both were racing.

Chapter Seven

Clyde left her lying on the bed, still tied up. Angelica heard water running. He must be washing himself and their toys.

He came back and chuckled. "Comfortable?"

"Yes, Clyde."

He moved around and she felt something warm and wet scrub her butt. He had a washcloth and he gently washed her where he'd been so rough earlier. Only she hadn't minded one bit. He'd been slow when he'd needed to be and fast when he'd needed to be. The man seemed to know how to please her. And delighted in doing so.

She turned her head to look at his face.

His lips curved up into a grin as he concentrated on her ass.

Yeah, he was pleased with himself.

Her stomach rumbled and an aftershock rocked her. Hungry for him and food at the same time.

He tossed the cloth to the floor and went to her ankles. He took the ropes from them, untying her. Then walked around and did the same to her hands.

The bonds slipping off somehow pained her. She liked them around her. She gritted her teeth against the weird feeling.

"Flip over, baby."

She did so without hesitation.

He picked up a second washcloth, still warm, and commenced cleaning up her front side. His cloth paused around her breasts, diving down under them. And did so again around her pussy. He scrubbed methodically and gently at the same time. And her whole body tingled as the water first warmed, then cooled her skin. And it vibrated from what she'd been through. She didn't think her nerve endings would ever stop reporting how awash in sensation they were.

No one had ever washed her like this before. And somehow that heated her too. This careful care of his playground.

He finished and tossed the second washcloth on the floor with the first. He picked up a bottle of lotion from the table. She'd been using it at night to keep her skin from drying out. It was sweet smelling and oily.

He poured a generous amount in his hands and slowly rubbed the lotion all over her front side. His hands rubbing along the energized skin felt akin to heaven. He didn't linger, but spread it all around with strong and careful motions. "Flip back over."

She did so again without question.

For the first time in her life, someone was taking care of her. Her body pressed into the mattress. It told her this was real. His solicitous care was happening. It wasn't overtly sexual but it drove her motor running again. Her heart pounded even as her muscles became wet noodle-like again.

He concentrated on her back, but didn't miss any part of her. His fingers along her spine made her grow weightless. It was like all her sensations came to that one point in her spine. The last ridge. And when he touched that, it radiated out to everywhere.

He finished and she heard him move around.

She felt like a dumpling. Like nothing would move right. Between the earth-shattering climax and the lotion, she couldn't even muster the energy to lift her head. It was as if she were drifting on a cloud. She could almost feel the cloud moving. Funny how the sensation when she was tied was much the same, only she kept her alertness then. It was like when she was tied, she went into her own private space. This wasn't that good, but it came the closest of anything else she'd experienced in her life.

He came back on the bed and began to brush her hair.

She moaned as he brushed through her tousled locks with care. His fingers went through it as well.

"Can you sit up?"

With heavy limbs, she did manage to lift herself up and come to a sitting position. "Apparently, I can."

He chuckled and his finger ran around in a circle. "Turn around, Angelica."

"Yes, Clyde." She turned and displayed her back to him.

He finished brushing her hair, getting out every tangle.

"You're good with a brush. Are you a hairstylist?"

"No." She could hear the higher-pitched tone of his voice as he tried to figure out whether she was teasing.

She was teasing him. His own easily styled hairdo told her he wasn't a hairstylist. "So what are you?" The question was out of her mouth before she realized she should call it back. It could be seen as questioning. Especially to an Alpha. Betas weren't supposed to ask questions of the Alphas. And he'd said he didn't like that during sex. But so far he hadn't shown he didn't like her behavior outside of the bedroom.

"I'm a bartender."

She turned her head around to face him. “Really?” She didn’t picture him as much of a people person. Another speculation that maybe she didn’t know him as well as she thought she did. She bit her lip.

“Uh-huh.” He lowered the brush. “On Settler’s Mine.”

Her lips drew up. That wasn’t Wolfton territory. That was Union Alliance territory. It was Quatarian land. Especially as Settler’s Mine divvied out heartstones. Heartstones were the way Quatarians found mates. What was he doing there? She’d sensed he didn’t have a pack, but to not even live among his people? Her brows creased. “That’s not Wolfton…”

“I know.”

There was a reason behind why he wasn’t living on a Wolfton planet with a pack. Hard to believe he wasn’t. He was such an Alpha. He would’ve made a good leader to a pack and there were several in dire need of one. “Why --”

He interrupted her. “Not now.”

Probably not ever. She was reminded again that they were only temporary. Bedmates. Nothing more. But she didn’t let the reprimand show on her face. He didn’t deserve her uncalled-for emotions. “Well, what shall we do now then?”

His smile grew to huge proportions. His cock had resumed its erection while they’d been talking.

“Oh.” The man was insatiable. Good thing she was a Wolfton or she’d never be able to handle him. His heat drove him, but she had a feeling even when he was not in heat, his appetites were huge. Yet another riddle. How come a man with his hunger, his zest for sex, lived without a Wolfton female by his side? How come he had to seek out a whore to ease his heats? Most females in a pack would be glad to service him anytime he wanted them to.

“Remember what I said while we were fucking?” He moved from the bed to a chair in the room. The chair creaked under his weight.

Angelica's eyes crinkled up as she tried to recall. Then she remembered a stray comment he'd made. One that had almost driven her over the edge to orgasm. "Yes, Clyde. You want me to ride you?" She made it a question. Letting him tell her what he wanted her to do.

His face relaxed into a pleased look. "Yes." He held out his arms to her. "Come ride me, baby. I need you." The latter was bit out between clenched teeth.

An admission.

He didn't seem aware of saying something that shook her to her core, even as she knew that she couldn't pin any hopes to it. He wanted her, that much she knew, but he'd said he needed her. And probably wouldn't remember saying it in ten minutes. Despite the fact he wanted her, it didn't mean he wanted her in his life. The same with need. Because he needed her this second didn't mean that he needed her in his life.

She got off the bed on trembling legs. Her pussy ached slightly. Yes, good thing she was a Wolfton. Even as it was, he was pushing the limits of her endurance. He would have killed anyone less than she was with his demands and roughness. Not to mention they'd not eaten anything since they'd been fucking. It was standard for a wolf in heat to take his partner over and over again. They'd probably not eat until he went out of his heat.

"That's it. Come to me, Angelica." He settled back in the chair, putting his arms wide. "Put your pussy on me."

She licked her lips. Even with what he'd already given to her, she was eager to have him a dozenth time. They'd had sex at least that many times. Or maybe more.

She stopped right in front of him. Staring down. "How do you want me, Clyde?" Her voice sounded husky. A pant almost broke a word or two in half. Her entire body trembled. She shouldn't feel this much arousal and yet she did. She wanted him again.

His voice sounded brittle. "On me." His eyes stared up into hers. Such need and want wandered in them, it made her weak in the knees.

She spread her legs and came up, her pelvis above him, squatting down on the chair. The sensation of coming over him, their skin grazing, made her jump.

His hand grasped her hips and helped to maneuver her in position. It wasn't easy to maneuver herself around, but she managed it with his help.

His cock probed at her entrance. She could feel it sticking against her, looking for the right place to be.

She pressed forward, shuffling her feet on the floor. She needed that cock within her. Needed to be one with him. More than anything else in the world.

His cock pressed into her pussy, but not at the right angle to go in. He gritted his teeth, trying to make this work. Did he want this as badly as she did? From the expression on his face, she'd say yes.

She frowned, trying to wiggle around so he'd enter her. Even with both of their trying, it still wouldn't go in.

She groaned. She needed this. Why wasn't the position cooperating? She wanted to ride him, but would settle for him entering her.

He reached down between their bodies and snaked his cock into the ready position, pressing his tip inside of her. "There you go, baby." One small press of her hips and the rest of him entered her.

The sensation of him sliding down her passage from this angle was delicious. "Uhhhhh." She loved that moment of him entering her. It always took her by surprise no matter how much she'd expected the move, which was why she gasped each time. It was pure bliss. Made her whole body tense.

The look on his face said he enjoyed it more. His eyes rolled back in his head, his head thrown back.

So he was as wanting of her as she was of him. How odd. They'd both had climaxes not too long ago. Yet they each wanted the other again.

So naturally she had to rev up the pace of her grinding down on him so that he definitely would enjoy it more. She wanted to cede pleasure to him, roll him in it.

His hands remained on her hips, steadying her. He pressed on her to keep her down around him longer.

She adjusted her pace to his silent command. Stayed down on him a few minutes before rearing up and then settling back down again. Did what he'd asked her to without asking.

She watched his face upon every fall of her body. Saw the tightening and relaxing of his face. The puckering of his mouth. Watching him gave her insight into what he liked. Not to mention she enjoyed seeing his face. Knowing that she'd done that for him. Of course, he allowed her to ride him, but still, she was the cause of his reactions. Her pussy tightened around his cock.

He groaned.

She caused the reaction. Her chest expanded as she tried to move air around her lungs.

He reached down between their bodies to find her clit with one hand. His fingers had unerring aim as he slid against it and began to twiddle the piece of flesh.

She swallowed, enjoying his fingers against her clit. She ground herself tight against him, moving toward him as much as she could. Gave him as much access as she could.

The hand that was on her hip tightened, as did his body. His face twisted almost as if he was in pain. Then smoothed as he concentrated.

She redoubled her efforts, keeping her body bearing down on his.

One, two, three strokes. Hips bucking upward in his wildness. "Angelica!" His head rolled back and his eyes pinched shut.

She rode the storm with expert timing, keeping herself on the bucking man that was Clyde.

One last thrust, and he was done. He leaned his head back against the chair, panting. She could see the pulse ticking time in his throat. "You're incredible, Angelica."

She smiled. “Good, Clyde.” She wanted to be that for him. No one else had ever called her that before.

He looked up into her face.

She reached out with her hand to stroke along his jawline, her gaze skimming his features, wondering what it was about him that called to her. She noticed he had a freckle under his hairline. She rubbed up along his cheek, his skin smoothly gliding along hers. She could touch him for hours. Never get tired or bored.

He shifted his weight and nuzzled against her hand. Pressed a quick kiss into her palm. His pink lips met her golden skin in a pucker.

She yawned and stroked his face. His skin was so smooth. And the look in his eyes held her captive.

“Tired?”

“A little.” All the activity and not much sleep. No food. She hadn’t been ready to rise when she’d awakened next to a wolf.

“If I go to sleep, will I wake up…in a different form?” He frowned, lifting his head slowly.

He was worried he’d change into a wolf while they slept. She could see why waking up in a different form would be off-putting. “I don’t know if you’ll change. You need to work on changing shape.” The more he did the changes, the more control he’d have of it. “Why don’t you change now?”

He looked dubiously at her. “Change now?”

She nodded, sliding off his lap. “Yeah, why don’t you shift? Change form. Get in some practice.” She had been so leery and thinking about mates, she hadn’t gotten a good look at his wolf form. She’d like to see him again in wolf form.

“You want me to change?” He spoke slowly, as though he wanted to be sure she understood.

"Yes." She nodded.

He took a deep breath. Leaned forward. His face pinched up. "I'm not sure I know how to change. It just happened before." His hands went awkwardly to the chair sides before settling down by his side.

She rubbed her hand over her forehead, trying to think of how to help him. She'd been doing it so long, it seemed easy to her. Like second nature. "Remember what I told you, you need to focus. To concentrate." She couldn't help but blink. She'd been changing since the time of her first menses. She knew more than he did about how to do this. Not a common occurrence in their relationship thus far. She took a deep breath. And concentrated.

Ligaments and tendons began popping. Her muscles contracted. Bones elongated. Skin stretched. Her energy went into the change.

After a couple of moments, she faced Clyde as a wolf. Her tail thumped as he looked down at her.

"You're a beautiful wolf." His voice sounded as if it were full of wonder. "One of the prettiest I've seen."

She opened her mouth and her tongue lolled around at his compliment. There had been some vanity in the change. She'd wanted to hear his reaction to her wolf. She barked at him with a small yip, trying to encourage him to change. Maybe seeing her doing it would help him. Her tail plunked against the wall.

Clyde took a deep breath. Muttered, "Show-off."

She yipped again, thumping her tail. Looking highly innocent, she gazed up at him with big eyes.

Not that he was buying it from her. She had been showing off a little. She was a pretty thing. Much more delicate looking in wolf form than in human form. Her lines were almost sleek, yet muscular. Her hair was a light gray, almost white, but not exactly. Her eyes looked

the same. Even if he hadn't known it was her, he would have by the eyes. So full of life. Of a spark. Of a soul. She had eyes older than her years.

He took a deep breath. He could do this. Focused on being a wolf. She made it sound so easy. *Focus*. He could hear her pretty voice. Easier said than done.

She yapped. Her bark was shrill, high-pitched, and annoying when she did it again. It might have been meant to be encouragement, but it sounded like harassment.

He raised his eyebrow and snapped his fingers.

She ducked her head, looking contrite. But her eyes didn't duck all the way down; they continued to watch him. And he could see the faith in her eyes that he would figure out this change.

Such a belief in him. His chest constricted. Time to get this done. He cleared his mind, thinking about nothing else but becoming a wolf. Concentrated. Focused his mind. Took a deep breath.

The first pop of ligaments took him by surprise. He almost lost his concentration. No, he focused all his energy on becoming a wolf. He'd never done anything halfway. Didn't intend to start doing that now. He shook as he concentrated his mind and resources on shifting to wolf form.

After a second, he stood on all fours on the floor. His tail brushed against the chair as he flexed his spine.

He'd done it. Been successful in changing.

Wow. He's as gorgeous in wolf form as he is in man form. Man oh man, am I in trouble with this one.

He turned to respond to her offhand comment. Only he realized he hadn't heard it with his ears. Her voice has been clear, soft-spoken, and direct. And all inside his mind…

He'd somehow read her thoughts. She'd projected them into his mind, apparently without meaning to.

How was that possible? He sat down on his haunches and looked at the gorgeous wolf next to him. One of the weaknesses of being in wolf form, he couldn't talk to her. He frowned, lips curling up.

He didn't know a lot about mating. He'd never cared when he'd been with the pack in his younger days. Had only cared about fucking, unconcerned if he found his mate or not.

Maybe this was a mating thing.

He opened his snout and then shut it quickly. There was one way to test this newfound ability. He focused his mind again much like he had with changing form.

"*Can you hear me*?"

"*Of course I can hear you… Oh! Oh*!" Her eyes widened in surprise. Her gaze sought his as she abruptly sat down. But there wasn't as much surprise as he would've expected.

She knew what was happening. He could see that, even with her wolf face. "*Care to share what all this is about*?"

Her mouth opened in what might have been a smile.

"*Let me guess, it's because we're mates*?" There was going to be a lot to get used to because they were mates.

"*Spot-on*." She got to her feet. Shook herself off from tail to head. Hair flew from her body in waves. "*What do you want to do now*?"

He wasn't ready to change back yet. If he wasn't going to fuck her in this form, he would have to switch eventually, but he wanted to explore this new body first. Not to mention, as hard as changing into it was, he didn't want to go through changing back right away. She didn't seem to have any problems, so maybe it would get easier with time. He could only hope so. "*I don't know. What do you want to do*?" She'd seemed to have something in mind.

Her eyes lit up like warm leaves on a spring morning. "*Let's run*."

Run? He'd never run in his life. 'Course he'd never been a wolf before today either. She had to be kidding.

Her large head nodded so fast it almost made him dizzy. She was more hyper in her wolf form than her human one. "*Run. We're built for speed*." Her impish eyes sought his. "*But I bet once we get out of here, you can't catch me*."

He'd bet this body was fast. It had long limbs. Thick pads on his feet. Built for speed, huh? She wasn't the only one. He ran his tongue along his sharp teeth. They were built for other things too, that he wouldn't remind her about. A race against her was what she wanted. Catching her could be fun. Even in this form. "*You're on. I bet*…"

Only she took off before he could finish.

Chapter Eight

"*Hey! I thought you said once we get outside*." Clyde watched her tail moving quickly toward the doors.

Angelica's laughter echoed in his mind. "*Outside is where you won't catch me. I never said I wasn't starting early though*." She trotted even faster as he loped toward her.

So she liked to play, did she?

He followed closely behind her. His libido soon began to catch up with him again. Her wolf was attractive to him as a wolf. Maybe when he caught her they'd both change and have a little session where he showed her how much he enjoyed her. Of course it felt a little strange to be attracted to a wolf, at least for his brain, even if he too was in wolf form.

Soon as they reached the door, there was a problem that he spotted right away. He hung back, seeing if she'd realize that he was no longer following.

Neither had hands to open the door.

She paused at the door and looked up at the handle they'd need hands to open. Looked back at him and then cocked her head to the side. "*What*?"

Now she'd noticed it too. Well, shit. He stared at the door handle, which rested at eye level. Lifted a paw. Could he turn it the right way? *This could get interesting*. He'd have to

figure out a way to slam up there and get the handle down. Or one of them would have to change shape so they could exit. Once he saw her in human form, there'd be no going outside. He'd take her on the floor right there.

"*Wimp*." Her teasing voice came as she jumped up and knocked the handle down easily with her front paw. The door slid open. "*Meta wouldn't make a door she couldn't get out of in wolf form. After all, we like to run*." She leaped through the open door with joyous abandon, all four legs up in the air.

"*Who you calling wimp*?" He growled as he trailed behind her. Yes, his wolf definitely liked her and liked the view of being behind her. He wasn't sure how to handle attraction in this form. But at least his wolf wasn't rearing to take over. Like it sometimes did during heat. This, this felt almost comfortable. Like he and his wolf had finally made friends.

Her chortle echoed in his brain. "*Got to catch me first*."

"*Oh, I'll catch you all right*." And enjoy the pursuit. His legs tensed up in anticipation of running. Catching her would be a pleasure. He'd take her down before she knew what hit her. They'd change back. And then, he'd take her.

She took off, this time sprinting with legs flying fast over the dirty rock surface. Her feet barely seemed to touch the ground. She was quick, even more than he'd thought she'd be. She seemed to almost fly across the ground.

He took off after her. "*When I catch you, I'll lick your pussy from top to bottom*."

"*Really*?"

"*Really*."

"*Maybe I should get caught then*." Her movements slowed.

"*Make it too easy, and I won't do anything to you*."

"*Oh*." She started running full throttle again, keeping in front of him.

He stayed behind her, deliberately keeping a distance but not letting her get out of sight. "*I'm going to eat you up. Tickle your clit. Drink your juice*."

She stumbled, but quickly righted herself and loped quickly several paces in the lead. Her tail was up in the air like a sail.

"*After I lick my fill, bring you to come until you're weak, then I'll stuff you full of my cock. Maybe do first your asshole. Then, your pussy*…"

She hit a rock and almost fell in her inattention.

Each time she stumbled after him speaking to her, it made him feel like a king. Yeah, after their game of chase, he was going to have such fun with her. He salivated, thinking of all the fun he'd have with her. This play would only whet his appetite.

Round and round they ran. Each time he'd get close, she'd put on an afterburn with her running and scamper away from him. But not too far. She'd come close to him every so often and then dart away, inviting him to follow. Her tail continued to billow in the air.

She wanted to be caught.

And he intended to be the one who caught her. Didn't mean he wouldn't play with her first. Times he could have caught her, he didn't move quick enough. Times he could have wrestled with her, instead he'd turn his back, so she'd move away.

Until finally, he couldn't take any more of the teasing. His jaw set in a determined line. His eyes narrowed on her rump. He flexed his muscles, stretching himself out.

Time to catch his prey.

He put his running into overdrive and ran her down. She'd spent a lot of energy playing with him. So she wasn't too hard to catch up with. Not to mention she wasn't trying to get away that hard. "*Caught you*."

She panted. "*Yeah, yeah. But now that you've caught me, what are you going to do with me*?" She turned around to give him that cheeky openmouthed grin that her wolf seemed so fond of doing.

He maneuvered closer to her. "*All the things I told you*."

"*Hmmm*." It was an interested "hmmm." One that made his hair prickle up on his spine. Damn, but he wanted her. Shouldn't that be easing by now? After all, how many times had they fucked in the last twenty-four hours?

They sort of jumped at each other, wrestling a little in their wolf forms. He nipped at her neck.

She backed away, then came up to him and nibbled at the bottom of his mouth, licking it with her tongue.

A submissive move.

He towered over her, even when she stood. He drew up to his full height, making himself even taller.

She lowered to her belly and then flipped, showing her underside. She howled, the sound plaintive in the air.

He yapped back and stood over her. He shook his head, his ears moving around like radar dishes. His wolf had taken over for a second. Had done what came naturally to it. How often would that happen? He could feel his wolf's attraction for her female wolf. It was something separate from the attraction he felt for Angelica. And it was more primal. Deep. Abiding affection that outshone most anything else in his world.

Because she was his mate.

The wolf recognized her. It knew her. It was as possessive as he was.

He looked down at the female under him. Beautifully splayed out with complete and utter trust in him.

He growled, long and low. "*Mine*."

A shadow of something passed over her face. "*What? What did you say*?" She didn't look as at ease now.

She'd heard him. While it wasn't a denial, his wolf reacted as such with bared teeth. It wouldn't tolerate even an offhand denial of what they were. His animal wouldn't take no for an answer. "*Mine*."

A shiver raced across her. He saw it start at one end and move all the way across her body. "*Oh*." Her eyes shut a moment. And he barely heard her next word. "*Mine*." Her eyes flew open all the way. Her breath hitched in her throat.

He froze, attempting to control his reaction to what she'd said. Resisted the urge to ask her to repeat it so he'd hear it again. He wanted to jump on top of her. The wolf in him howled on the inside.

He saw her scanning his face for verification that he'd heard what she'd said. Like with him, he had a feeling her animal had taken over and said what it wanted to say. He didn't give her any indication he'd heard her from what he could control. 'Course his breathing, heart rate, and pulse all sped up because he couldn't control them. He panted.

Hearing that from her was like a boon. And he wanted to be with her. To take her in the most intimate of ways. "*What? What did you say*?" He finally repeated her lines from earlier. But he doubted she'd say it again like he had with the reaction he'd shown her.

"*Nothing*." She lurched her snout up in the air to nip at his chin again.

Was it a chin? Did wolves have them? Whatever it was. He didn't want to think about what he'd said to her, nor she to him. "*I think we need to change back. So we can do all those things that I promised you*."

It was literally two seconds later that he was looking at a woman instead of a wolf staring back up at him with the same eyes. "Okay."

"*Dammit. You're fast*." He frowned. And skilled. That meant time for him to change. Would she hear him?

"I'm a quick one." She had heard his comment. She giggled with a grin that reminded him of her wolf. "Think about all the things you want to do to me. All the things you said

you were going to do. And more. And you can't do them until you change." She bit her lip, then licked it.

He needed no further encouragement.

Focused his mind. Let his concentration grow. They both built inside of him with an internal tension.

And within minutes of carefully shifting his brain and his body reacting, he'd changed to a man.

Not exactly as quickly as she, but he was improving. Considering this was his first day of changing to a wolf, he was doing pretty damn good.

She waggled her eyebrows at him. "Nice."

He moved so quickly she gasped as he descended upon her, going over the top of her, much like his wolf had done. "Uh-huh. Wait until I get started with you." He pinned her to the ground. "Then you'll be saying more than 'nice.'"

Her voice deepened into something throaty. "Oh, I hope so." Her breath came out in starts and stops. "I hope so."

He grabbed her hands and pushed them up above her head. "Leave them there." His words would be the bonds that held her in place.

"Yes, Clyde." Her voice took on that breathy quality that was so irresistible as her eyes glazed over with unhidden desire. A shudder rocked her frame.

He liked that sound in her voice. That look on her face. The reactions she had to him turned him on even more. Would this need of her ever end? He didn't want it to, yet it would have to. He pushed that thought away. Not for right now. *Live in the moment*. He shielded the thought so he wouldn't broadcast it.

His ears picked up sounds coming his way. Bad sign sounds.

He heard the whine as the shuttle crept into the planet's atmosphere. The telltale *swoosh* of landing gear coming down.

Someone was there.

They were running in stealth mode, but he could still hear them. They'd landed somewhere over the ridge. Not at the landing base, which was nearer to his and Angelica's position.

The hiss of a door opening made him pause. It broke the silence in the air like a serpent about to strike.

He gritted his teeth against the interruption. Didn't want to acknowledge it but had to. "Someone's here. Are you looking for company?" He rolled away from her, trying to configure the exact direction where the sounds were coming from. He centered himself to triangulate the arrival's location.

Why hadn't they pulled into the landing strip? They'd been running in a mode designed to evade most races' ears. But whoever was after him knew he could hear better than even most Wolftons. So it wouldn't be them trying to disguise their arrival in this way. Or at least, he wouldn't think so.

She sat up beside him, cocking her head to the side, listening. "I'm not expecting anyone. I wasn't even expecting you. What did you hear?"

She hadn't heard them. He shot her a look. "*Not expecting me*?"

"Well, I wasn't." She strained, looking as if she waited for something. "I don't hear anything. Are you sure someone's here?"

If only he could deny what he'd heard and go back to loving her. The noises were outside of her realm of hearing. He'd always had better senses than most Wolftons. Most Wolftons didn't come here unless they had a good reason, though. "Meta had to have me in her book as going into heat around now or any other expected clients." She kept careful track of her clients. "Someone touched down in a shuttle." He heard the door close. Muffled voices.

"She had to go away for a client. Unexpectedly. After she'd left, she thought someone was on her schedule but couldn't remember who. I'm thinking it was you." A soft smile curved Angelica's lips upward.

He blinked at her even as he melted in response to the smile. He moved a step closer. But something didn't sound right. He shook off her smile. "How unexpected was this client?" He'd never known Meta to forget anything. Granted, he'd not seen her much but during his times of heat. He'd gotten impressions from the woman that she was highly organized. Almost anal about keeping everything straight. Especially her schedule. It was one reason he'd kept coming back to her.

"Very unexpected. They called and insisted she come there. She'd never handled them before, but the amount of money they offered was too good to pass up." Angelica tucked her knees into her chest. "She didn't want to leave me alone, but had to satisfy her client."

And Clyde couldn't argue against that. He was now glad Meta had left and he'd met this lovely creature. His mate. Even now his throat closed off with the thought. He had to clear it before speaking again. "Why didn't she take her scheduler with her? Why didn't you look in it to see who was down?"

Angelica frowned, looking up at him suspiciously. "She left it here because she was in such a hurry with only fifteen minutes to pack. She thought she'd put it in her bag, but it wasn't with her when she'd called."

"Are you sure it's here? That it didn't go with her?" Too many coincidences were telling him that he'd stepped into something. Maybe they finally had decided to mess with his whore after all these years. Most of the time they chased him back to Quatarian territory and left him alone. It had always seemed more for show than serious. If they'd taken his whore off the planet to inconvenience him and taken her scheduler so she'd not make other arrangements for him, they were stepping up their reactions to him. Why?

"Well, I couldn't scan it for her so I didn't even look because her clients are confide… Why are you asking me so many questions about Meta?" She didn't seem jealous. Only curious as to where he was going with this line of questions.

He settled back down on his haunches, searching the view from the ridge. He inhaled, taking in scents. "It seems odd that she'd forget her book and this unexpected trip would take her away." He didn't add "when I was due." "And now we have company. I'm trying to figure out who it is, that's all."

"Why wouldn't they land on the strip?" She pointed in its general direction as she asked what he'd wondered from the first. "It's the best place to land here. Best terrain."

There was only one reason he could think of. Because they were trying to hide something. That they'd come in stealth mode supported that assumption. He didn't say that aloud. "I don't know. Be quiet a minute." He didn't think they would be able to hear him from this distance. Even most other Wolftons didn't have his ears.

He concentrated, listening. Could hear two sets of footsteps coming over the ridge. "I want you to stay out of sight. Head back for the house." Whoever it was, he didn't want them around his mate. He took her hand and scrambled behind a small work shed. They could still see but it gave them a little bit of cover. "Can you hear them?" Another way to tell how close they were.

"No. I don't hear anything. Who do you think is here?" She stared in the direction of the coming footsteps. A worry line creased her brow. She lowered her voice. "Now I hear them." She made no move to obey his order. No move to get herself out of danger. "Why are they here?"

His hands clenched up before relaxing. He needed her away from here. "I'm not sure." He reached up and ran his thumb across her forehead, smoothing down the crease. "It's probably a client of Meta's that she didn't have written down. I'll protect you if it's not. Don't worry." He continued to stroke her forehead. He liked her skin under his fingertips.

He tried to soothe her even as his worry grew. He wanted her away from the escalating confrontation. He hadn't even explained why he could be a target. "Now, you need to go back to the house. Right this second."

It wouldn't be his pack.

They'd come in force. The leader never did anything alone. He'd shown them before it would take numbers to bring him down. They couldn't be this stealthy in the concentration needed to take him out. He was overreacting with worry. Now he'd gotten her worked up, which meant she didn't want to leave him and go to safety. He worked to calm himself down.

"I know you will protect me."

Her simple words filled him with the most glory he'd ever had. She trusted him in all things. Nothing could be better than that.

Ever.

It had been a long time since anyone had depended on him. For anything beyond a drink or two. This, from this woman, filled him with feelings he couldn't describe.

Before they could move or say anything else, the two individuals crested the ridge. Marched into their line of sight.

Clyde didn't recognize them.

They weren't from his pack, just as he'd thought.

However, they were armed to go into battle. A phaser on each of them. He spotted other weaponry hidden, but not that well.

Clyde had been on Settler's Mine a long time. Seen lots of people. And he recognized these two. Oh, he hadn't seen them before. But he'd seen plenty of others like them.

Bounty hunters.

He took a deep breath and inhaled their scent. This close, he wouldn't miss on species identification.

Quatarians.

That explained the weapons. Wolftons didn't usually mess with such things. But that was good. The Quatarians wouldn't use scents to track them down. He could be right in front of them and they'd never know.

"*Who are these men*?" Angelica shrank back against him as though she could hide from them.

"*Bounty hunters. After me*." He answered, realizing this mind-speak talking was a boon if you were trying to be quiet. "*I need you to run for the house*."

"*I'm not leaving you*."

"*Yes, you are*." He pushed her. "*I need you to get there. Run. Lock the door. I'll handle these two*."

His pack was slipping to send these two assholes after him. Nothing he couldn't handle. They'd interrupted his fun was all.

And now they were going to pay.

*****

Angelica tried to argue with Clyde, but he sent her away anyway. To the house. To safety. He'd shoved her in the right direction, howled, and dived for the Quatarians, then sprang away, leading them on a chase. Away from her.

She sighed as she scurried for the safety of Meta's house. She understood his need to protect her, but she was a Wolfton. She could handle herself against Quatarians. And it was a little too reminiscent of the way every man before Clyde had handled her.

She paused at a sound.

The collaring hook took her by surprise when it landed on her and instantly slipped to her neck. It was held on the other end by a harness that one flipped out to catch prey. Mostly

it was used on Wolftons in wolf shape. But the long loop had worked on her and it came tight around her neck.

"Gotcha." The Wolfton's scent hit her before he turned her around to face him. He'd been some distance away with his snare set. "Hey there, bitch."

He was a big red Wolfton with a phaser at his side. Must be compensating.

She struggled against the collar, both hands on the sides, but couldn't get it off. It had locked in place. On the other end of the harness was the Wolfton's hand.

She'd walked into a trap. Dammit. She scanned, looking for a way out of this. She couldn't bring this danger to Clyde. Several more snares were set up around the perimeter of the house. They would all tie back to one harness that reeled in like a fishing line. If Clyde got hooked…

"Call for him."

"No." She tried again to pull away. Her heart beat a frantic note against her breastbone like a trapped hummingbird.

He yanked on the harness, making it pull on her throat, cutting off the air she so desperately needed in her lungs. "Call for him. Or I'll use this as a hanging noose." If it tightened much more, he would hang her. And never look back.

Oh, Clyde… She'd screwed up. She should've gone to the house earlier. Gotten away. Now they'd use her against him. Her head came up. No, she wasn't some weak Beta. And she'd find a way to get free.

The Wolfton's nostrils flared as he stared at Angelica. "You're full of his scent. I thought it was him until I saw you. I didn't understand before… He's your mate." The male cackled. "Wonderful. Even if I can't get him, that pack will pay me megamillions for his mate." The man guffawed with glee.

"Not unless you live until then." The growl came after the words and the attack was so violent, the harness tossed her to the ground.

She grabbed both sides of the collar and tried to force it from her neck. It wouldn't budge. She'd seen these things used before, but never used one. Dammit, it wouldn't come off. It was choking her. She held onto it, trying to ease it from her neck. Her hands shook as black spots swirled in front of her eyes.

And then suddenly, Clyde was there. He had cuts and a few bruises, along with parts of him bloodied. From the smell of it, not all of it was his blood. "Here." His hands tenderly saw to getting her free from the collar. He inched it little by little from around her neck without hurting her once.

What a man of contradictions. He could protect her like a badass but help her by being so gentle.

He let the collar and harness fall to the ground.

Her breath came with ease now that the strap was off her neck. Her heart still tapped a fast tempo though. She'd come too close to being taken.

"Come on." Grim faced, he pulled her toward the house.

Once they got inside, he flipped all the locks. They quickly dressed.

She approached him. Her legs still shook but she tried to get a handle on her quaking. "Who are they?"

"Bounty hunters. Or at least they were." His lips were still set in a tight line. He stared from the window at the shuttle strip.

She swallowed. "The Wolfton said he was after you." She'd never imagined that someone would be after him. She'd worried about someone coming after her. Never him. "Why are they after you?" The bounty hunter had said a pack would pay money for her because of him. What had he done?

"Long story."

"I have time."

His lips thinned even more. “No, we don’t have time.” He tugged on her hand. “We need to make a break for it.”

She didn’t move. “Make time. Tell me.”

He scratched his head. “We need…”

“You need to tell me what’s going on. Why are people after you? Bounty hunters. Others.” She captured his gaze with her own. “Please.” She needed to know before this went any further.

“Fine. But you’re not going to like it.”

Chapter Nine

The "please" must have gotten to Clyde.

Angelica needed to know, but if he'd wanted to be stubborn he would've been silent. She could have asked all day and if he hadn't wanted to tell her, he wouldn't have.

"They are after me."

"Why? Why are they after you?" Her voice thickened. This was a crucial question with an even more important answer. It would tell her so much about him. She held her breath. Would he be honest? Give her that much of an insight into him?

He blew out a heavy breath. His large chest rose and fell. "You want to know? The whole story?"

"Yes." She needed to know. What if she'd been sleeping with a murderer or something else? Even more scary was the mating. Neither were comforting thoughts. She had taken a chance and now it looked as if that had backfired on her. But the whole subject niggled at her too. She couldn't imagine someone who touched her so lovingly could be nasty. Or that anyone who treated her so well, with care and consideration, could be an asshole.

"I'm an Alpha."

She nodded at him, encouraging him to go on. She'd known that from the moment she'd met him, so it wasn't news. She assumed there was more to the story. She didn't move toward him, trying not to distract him and to keep him talking.

"My parents perished not too long after I was born. A fight with another pack over territory. The leader sensed I was an Alpha. He was a different leader than some. He didn't kick potential Alphas from his pack when they came of age."

Not a hard thing for other Wolftons to sense about Clyde. He practically broadcast it. "I bet that caused him trouble." Some packs did expel Alphas. Others didn't. It all depended on pack dynamics. But as Clyde was talking about his life story, there had been problems.

"You have no idea. No other Alphas were…as strong as I was." With someone else, she might have thought they were bragging. Not Clyde. He said it so matter-of-factly. It had to be the truth. "He began teaching me. Testing me. And then he had a son. It became a competition between us. Who was more Alpha than the other. Some of it he encouraged. Some was our nature. His son took…things that I did personally."

The rule in the pack was that the strongest Alpha took over. But some liked to see their lines run through leadership. The leader probably had sensed his son wasn't as Alpha as Clyde and wanted him to be. So he'd tried to make his son become stronger than the man who could challenge him the most for leadership.

"Our Alpha was older. He wanted someone to take over the pack before it was taken from him by force so he groomed his son to take over the head Alpha position. Even though he wasn't a good choice." Clyde paused. Looked down at his feet. His face took on a sheen of calmness, yet she could sense there was a storm underneath. The full story was yet to come. And it was going to be bad.

When he didn't speak again right away, she had to ask, "What happened?" They couldn't stop now. She needed to know his past. Her fingers curled. If only she could hold him for this moment.

"There was a raid. My leader's son froze up. He was no help to his men whatsoever. He got them all killed. His leadership was a joke under fire."

Unable to resist any longer, she reached over to touch his hand. Needed to be in contact with him even for that brief a moment and amount of skin. Give him some comfort. He looked as though he was remembering the worst time in his life. He probably was. "So how did that affect you?" A better question was how had the jerk of a son taken over. She waited for him to start the story again.

At first he blanched at her fingers, but then he allowed the touch. Even leaned into it as he started to speak. "The leader said no one could rule with that record. And that was unacceptable to him. So they blamed me instead of him for the deaths of those men."

She gasped. "You're kidding?" To do that would take away any honor from Clyde. He'd be reviled. Especially as he wasn't a leader's son and had no family. They would have kicked him out, if not killed him for the offense.

He shook his head, letting her know that this was not a joke. "I was banished for my sins."

Such nonchalance. At such a revelation. He'd been betrayed by his father figure. Banished from his pack for a crime he'd not committed. "They blamed you for his doing. Punished you for something you didn't do. Made your leave your home. My God." Her voice cracked. She was furious for the injustice of what had been done to him.

She'd chosen to leave her people. He'd had that thrust upon him. And had lived as an outcast ever since. No wonder he came to see whores when he needed his heat assuaged instead of trying to find a pack. With his record, no pack would have him. "I can't believe they would do that. You had no sins."

His smile was humorless. "Believe it. Because now, baby, you're right in the middle of this."

She stared up at him with eyes that widened slightly. “What do you mean?” She was in the middle of nothing. It had all been done to Clyde.

“You bear my scent in you. I heard the Wolfton say that. Because we’re mates, you smell like me.” His lips turned up to issue a growl, but not one of anger. One of possession. That wasn’t an unpleasant thought for him.

“That doesn’t mean anything.” So she smelled like Clyde. His scent was musky in a way she liked.

“It does to the Wolftons. To my pack. My scent will lead those after me to you. Every time. Because you’ll never shake the scent of your mate. When they can’t get to me, they can find you.”

Her hand flew to cover her mouth. She’d not thought of that. He was right. With his scent in her veins, anyone tracking him would be able to find her. “Why are they after you here? Now?” What had happened must have been ages ago. Why go to all the trouble now? How desperate were they for him? And how much would they use her to get to him? Dammit, her freedom might have come to an end.

“Because the old man is dead. The son is now the head Alpha. He kicked and kicks all the other Alphas from his pack so no one will challenge him. But rightfully that position is mine. And that eats at him. I’m the only one left who knows what happened. The rest he arranged to be killed. I’m the only one who could challenge him.”

“But…”

“He can only get me on Wolfton territory. Even bounty hunters won’t go into Quatarian territory to nab me for a Wolfton. They won’t pay well enough for that. So the only time he comes after me is during my heat. Pack is on tough times, according to a bounty hunter. Makes him more determined to get to me.”

“That doesn’t affect me though. I’m nothing to them.” She shivered. Nothing to him either.

"Ah, but you are. You're my mate." He swiveled his head as if trying out his neck muscles. "First thing I've ever had to lose since I've been back."

"Why do you keep coming back here? You have to know they'll find you." That made no sense.

He laughed. "Because I like tweaking my rival's nose." He ran a hand through his hair. "I like to bait them and show them how good I am. I forget sometimes on the Mine. How Wolfton I am. They remind me." He sobered. "But now, I have something to lose."

He repeated what he'd said earlier. Only this time it stuck to her insides like glue. To lose her would get to him. Her stomach bottomed out. She'd never mattered to anyone like that before. She couldn't think of anything good to say to that.

Clyde looked toward the window again. "Nothing's coming. We need to get you out of here before they do come. The hunters were only the appetizer."

"What's the main course?" She tried to peek out the window herself. Surely he couldn't mean what she thought he meant.

"My pack."

He did. Her mind twirled and centered on the subject at hand. Hardly knew what she was going to say until she said it. "I'm not going." She wouldn't go backward in her decision to be herself. Having sex with Clyde hadn't affected that.

"Like hell you're not."

Her head came up and she straightened her body. He might be Alpha, but he wasn't her Alpha. She hadn't left her pack to be ordered around by Clyde or anyone else. "I'm not." She pursed her lips. She wasn't and that was that. She wouldn't leave him to face down this threat alone. She was his mate and he was stuck with her by his side through this danger.

He acted so quickly, she didn't see him coming. Her senses were off. And he was quicker than she'd ever been.