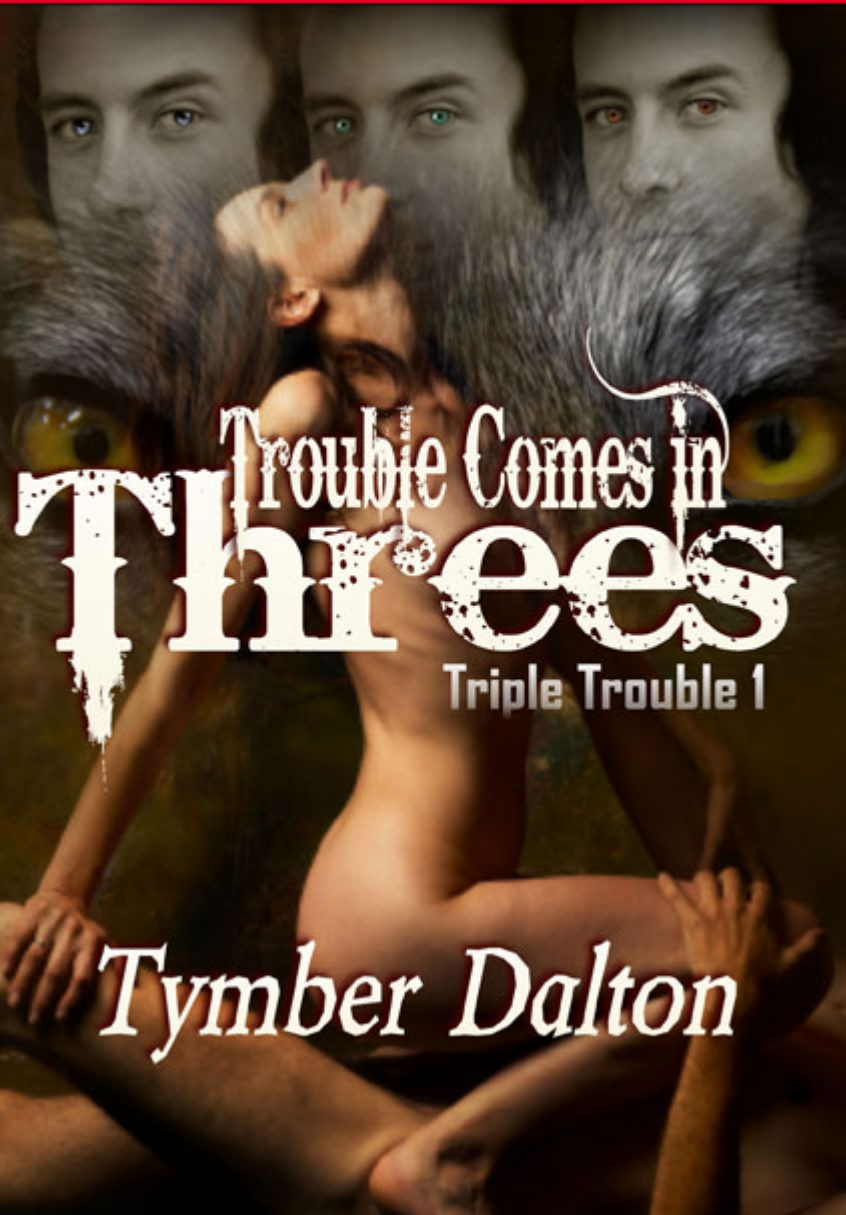


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TROUBLE COMES IN THREES

Triple Trouble 1

Tymber Dalton

MENAGE AMOUR



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DEDICATION

This one's for Steph, my "psychic twin" who reeeeeeally wanted a story about triplet Scottish kilt-wearing shape-shifters.

TROUBLE COMES IN THREES

Triple Trouble 1

Tymer Dalton
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Chapter One

Brodey lifted his nose to the breeze. “Ah, smell that?”

His brother, Cailean, wrinkled his nose. “Smell what?”

Brodey flapped the front of his kilt and grinned. “Freedom!” He playfully rolled the R in a brogue he hadn’t really spoken in many, many decades.

Cailean groaned and rolled his brown eyes. “I’ve never seen a guy who enjoys going kilt-commando as much as you do.”

The First Annual Arcadia Highland Games were in full swing.

Apparently, so were Brodey’s nether regions.

“Why the hell don’t you wear a kilt every day if you love it so much?” Cailean teased.

“Because I don’t like getting into fights with redneck assholes at the stockyards and auctions who call it a skirt.” Brodey took another swig from his beer. “Where the hell did Ain get to?”

“I dunno. Last time I saw him, he was helping Mark set up the heavy games.”

The two youngest of the Lyall triplets studied the crowd. “Doesn’t seem the same, does it?” Brodey asked.

“What?”

He shrugged. “Not like the real thing.”

“It’s Florida in July. What the fuck you think it’s supposed to be like, Edinburgh?” Cailean quipped. “I wanted to settle in Oregon when we decided to leave Maine. Noooo, you two assholes decided to move down here.”

“Oh, come on, Cail. You’re the one who talked Ain into moving to the States in the first place when we left Scotland. I would have been happy going to Australia,” Brodey griped.

“Not this *again*. Ninety fucking years of you whining about the same shit. I’m tired of it. You know what they had in Australia back then? Kangaroos, koalas, crocodiles and convicts. You try mating with one of those options, be my guest, asshole.”

Brodey was always sullen when he had a couple of drinks in him and hadn’t been laid in a few weeks. He finished his beer and tossed the plastic cup into a nearby trash barrel. “Asshole,” he grumbled.

Cailean tried to reign in his irritation. “Do us all a favor, Brodey. Go find some chick, get laid, and don’t come home until you do.” Brodey was the middle boy, middle being relative. Only fifteen minutes separated Cailean and Aindreas, the oldest.

But those fifteen minutes were the difference between Ain being Prime Alpha, and Cailean being the Gamma Alpha. Beta Alpha Brodey’s mercurial mood swung between the two extremes, from Cail’s laid back, contemplative style, to Ain’s sometimes intense kick-ass tude.

Usually, Brodey was more brawn than brain, their resident bonehead. Which was why Cail got stuck doing the bookkeeping for the ranch.

The Lyall boys were identical Alpha triplets except for their eyes. Aindreas had piercing grey eyes, while Brodey’s green gaze charmed quite a few ladies. Cail’s sweet brown eyes rarely failed to get him a

girl—when he could get away from the ranch. They all had jet black hair as of yet untouched by grey.

Not bad, considering they'd celebrated their two-hundred-and-thirty-eighth birthday that past May and didn't look a day over thirty.

Brodey scanned the crowd. "Most of these chicks are either married or jailbait." He snorted. "Or they fell out of an ugly tree and hit every branch on the way down."

Cailean was sick of Brodey's persistent whiny bitching. "I'm going to find Ain," he grumbled. Unlike Brodey, he wore tighty-whities under his kilt, as did Aindreas. He pushed off from the light pole he was leaning against and headed toward the competition area. He heard Brodey behind him.

"Wait for me, jerk."

Cailean didn't slow his pace. It was freaking hot, and he was sick of his brother. Both of them, actually. You didn't hear him grouching. He sucked it up.

He didn't look around as he made his way through the crowd, his mind running in a way he wished his body could. He'd spent more time in the woods lately, stretching his legs and pounding through the brush until he exhausted himself.

That's why he almost missed the faint scent at first. A sweet, fragrant, clean, delicious aroma that made his mouth water and his dick stand up and scream.

He stopped in his tracks. Brodey plowed into him. "What the fuck?" Brodey griped.

Cail held up his hand and closed his eyes, turned in a slow circle, oblivious to the people around them. "Smell that?"

"Aw, fuck me, don't bust my balls—"

"Shut up. Close your eyes."

After a long moment, Brodey's hushed moan. "Holy shit!"

Cail opened his eyes. "You smell her, right?"

Brodey's eyes were still closed. And his kilt looked more than a little tented due to lack of underpinning restraint for his willful cock.

“Yeah!” His green eyes popped open. “We’ve got to find her!”

“We need Ain.”

“Fuck that, we need to find *her*!” Brodey frantically looked around. “Where is she? *Who* is she?”

Cail shook his head. “I don’t know.” He set off, found a stronger whiff. If it was night or no one was around, they could shift and track her. They couldn’t very well change into wolves in the middle of thousands of people in a crowded fairground. Might draw some attention to themselves.

They headed off, desperate not to lose her scent, the One they’d searched for since they came of age.

Their perfect mate.

They ran, sniffing, now totally ignoring everyone else, trying to find her.

Her.

Their One.

That both of them instinctively recognized her scent—*her* scent—was proof enough for Cail. Plenty of times one of them had met someone, but the other two didn’t react.

They had to find Her.

The men ran.

* * * *

“Laney, wait.” Bill shifted the heavy video camera on his shoulder and tried to keep up with her.

Elain Pardie was in no mood for bullshit, especially from her goddamn photographer. “What?” she shot over her shoulder.

“I’m sorry, okay? I thought it was funny.”

“It wasn’t. And how many freaking times do I have to tell you, do *not* call me Laney?”

He finally caught up with her and grabbed her arm. “You were Laney in school and when we were both carrying cameras. Sorry,

Elain, but old habits die hard.”

She shook free. “I’m trying to make a serious name for myself. Bullshit like that doesn’t help.” The bullshit in question being Bill set her up to ask the guys participating in the caber toss what they wore under their kilts.

“It was supposed to be funny.”

“I’m sweating my ass off in the middle of Arcadia in freaking July,” she growled as she stomped back to the truck. Her shoes were a goddamn mess, the sugar sand from the parking field coating them with grey dust. “That was far from funny.”

He had the keys in his hand as they approached the van. She needed to get back to the station and cut the story before the five o’clock news. They didn’t have time to cover all the events or even see half the demonstrations, but they had enough footage to work with.

She wouldn’t have minded talking to that one guy, the one with the grey eyes, black hair and firm legs, who watched her interview the event organizer.

She’d love to find out what he was wearing under his kilt. That was the kind of guy who should be wearing a kilt, not most of the beer-belly bubbas who had donned them for the day. Too bad he looked so stand-offish.

* * * *

“We’ll never find her like this!” Brodey whined. “I’ve gotta shift.”

“How the hell you gonna do that here? Get real.” No wonder Ain always made him babysit Brodey. Cail was the cool-headed one. Brodey the bonehead could be counted on to find trouble.

Cail followed Brodey around the back side of a row of wagons selling food. An Italian sausage vendor had a long, canvas skirt snapped around the bottom of his rig. Before Cail could stop him,

Brodey dropped to his knees and rolled under. Seconds later, he handed out his clothes.

“Fuck! No, Brodey!”

But it was too late. A huge black wolf with piercing green eyes scrambled out from under the wagon and took off at a full run in the direction of the scent, leaving Cail to juggle Brodey’s clothes.

“Fuck!” He ran after him, trying to keep up.

Shifted, Brodey could easily follow the scent. It grew stronger as he raced toward the parking lot. He ignored the people who exclaimed as he brushed past them with his nose to the ground, trying not to lose her.

Mate. Her. Their One.

Desperate, he thought he’d lost her trail as he passed through the front entrance, then realized she’d spent some time there milling around. And he picked up a man’s scent with her.

Now tuned in to both, it helped and angered him. A man, with *their* mate.

Brodey was vaguely aware of Cail yelling for him in the distance but he couldn’t risk losing her scent.

* * * *

Elain pulled off her sports jacket and hung it in the van while Bill cranked the thing and got the air going.

“Why the hell are they holding this in the middle of summer?” she grouched. “It makes no sense.”

She slid into the passenger seat but didn’t close her door, trying to let some of the heat out. They’d have to drive back to Venice, to the station, so she could get the story edited and filed.

Bill was securing the camera and mic packs in back. “Beats the hell out of me. You’d think they’d want to do it in winter when the snowbirds are down.”

* * * *

Aindreas swore under his breath. *Where the hell did those two bozos go?* Something was going on, he'd felt it while that reporter was interviewing Mark, but he couldn't get away to investigate.

There was something about her. He stood upwind from her, but imagined she smelled good from the way she looked. He normally wouldn't mind asking her out. Unfortunately, some lucky guy already had her heart, judging by the rings on her left hand. Reddish auburn hair and blue eyes.

He sighed. One day they'd find Her.

Mark finished talking with the reporter and walked back to Aindreas to chat. Aindreas nervously tried to tune out his instincts, but the more he did, the more he realized he couldn't ignore the feeling anymore.

Once he had a chance to get free he went in search of his two younger brothers. Cail could bust his balls all he wanted about the mere minutes in their ages, but if those two assholes didn't spend their days acting like frat boys, maybe they'd see his point of view. He was Prime Alpha and had a job to do.

Unfortunately, despite traveling all over the world, he hadn't managed to do the most important job.

Find Her.

His father and the other Clan elders had warned that when they came of age the three brothers might never find the One for them, to be their mate. Alpha shifters had to find their One, they couldn't mate for life with just anyone like other shifters could. Twins weren't uncommon, but twin shifter Alpha litters were rare, and they had to find their One together. It proved difficult to get two brothers in agreement on a woman.

Try three. Especially three Alphas.

They were the only known set of living Clan Alpha triplets.

Lucky them. Might as well slap wings on a fucking pig. That

thing would probably fly before they located the only One for them.

And at this rate, they might never find Her.

Ain tracked them and...

Aw, hell no. Please tell me he didn't!

Sure enough, when Ain closed his eyes near the Italian sausage trailer, he smelled where Brodey the bonehead had gone from two legs to four.

Fuck!

What the hell would make him shift like that? And why the hell hadn't Cail stopped him?

He picked up his pace, searching for his brothers.

* * * *

Brodey ran, tongue lolling in the heat. Her scent smelled stronger. He was so close. *Please don't let her leave!*

He looked up to avoid a car and that's when he spied the news van, one of five parked off to the side along the fence.

And her scent led right to it.

His heart thumped.

There was a man standing by the open door. In the passenger seat...

His heart nearly stopped as the hot summer breeze carried her scent to him. It was all he could do not to shift right there and pull her from the van and into his arms.

Her. All the bullshit myths about feeling her scent through every cell of his body weren't just bullshit after all. This was way different than any of the false alarms over the years.

The guy was about to close the van's side door and she started to reach for hers. Brodey ran up and barked.

The woman pulled back. "Holy crap, that's a big dog!"

The man backed away.

Whew! The cameraman, they work together. Brodey turned to the

woman, then he did something he once swore his pride would never allow him to do.

He sat up on his haunches, whined, and begged.

Chapter Two

Holy crap! That was the biggest freaking dog she'd ever seen in her life!

"Bill, what is he doing?"

Bill nervously shook his head. "Whatever he wants to do. I'm not touching him."

The dog, or maybe wolf hybrid, was jet black with gorgeous green eyes.

Wow, she never knew dogs had green eyes before.

He put his front paws up on her leg, nuzzled her, and whined.

She wasn't much of a dog person, hadn't had one in years since she was a kid. She liked them well enough but didn't have time for one now.

She carefully pushed him down. "Okay, boy. Whatever you are. Sorry, go home or find your family or whatever."

"What is a dog doing loose around here?" Bill asked.

"How the hell should I know, Bill?"

"Want me to get one of the deputies? I think they were doing demos. Maybe he's one of theirs."

"Yeah, good idea. Looks like a K9 dog."

Bill walked off but the dog sat there, staring at her with those intense eyes, still whining. He didn't seem unfriendly.

She got out of the van and knelt by him, feeling through his dense fur for a collar, finding none. "Who do you belong to, boy?"

The woman's intoxicating scent, yet another not-so-bullshit metaphor, sent Brodey's head buzzing.

You. I belong to you.

He rubbed his head against her leg.

A moment later, the cameraman returned with a deputy.

“No, he’s not one of ours.”

Brodey wrapped himself around her legs, trying to get as much of her scent on him as he could.

“Well, what do we do with him?” she asked.

The deputy shrugged. “I can call Animal Control.”

“But they’ll take him to the shelter,” she protested.

“Well, unless you want to take him. He sure as hell seems to like you. A dog like him, there’s got to be someone looking for him.” He laughed. “Hey, that’s perfect. You can put a lost dog story on the air.”

The woman sighed. “I don’t want him to get euthanized.”

“Then I suggest you take him.”

Brodey jumped inside the van. The cameraman looked at her. “I’m not making him get out.”

She rolled her eyes. “Fine. Let’s get going. We’re going to be late.”

They shut the doors and pulled away.

It was only after Brodey forced his way between the front seats to lay his head on her lap, his eyes closed, inhaling her scent, that he realized what he’d done.

Aw, fuck. Ain and Cail are gonna kill me.

* * * *

Cail scanned the parking field. He’d totally lost the scent. Not just the woman, but now Brodey, too.

Fuck!

They were parked near the fence in exhibitor parking. He dropped Brodey’s clothes into the back of their truck and then ran to where he lost the scent. Aindreas walked up a few minutes later.

“Where have you two been?”

“No time for that now. I can’t find Brodey.”

Aindreas dropped his voice. “Why the fuck did he shift?” he growled.

“No time for that!”

“Yes, time *right now*.” He fixed Cail with his grey eyes. Cail had to defer to the Prime.

“We were following a scent. It’s Her, we smelled Her! The One!”

Ain groaned. “Fuck me. You two assholes are killing me. Ever hear the story of the wolf who cried mate one too many times?”

“Smell for yourself!”

Ain shook his head but closed his eyes. All he could smell now were cars. There was a hint of something, very faint, but in the dry dust and with all the cars and people who’d been through there, and livestock in the cattle complex next door, he wasn’t anywhere close to declaring Her found. “All I smell right now is the ass whooping I’m itching to dish out to you two. Where the hell is Brodey?”

“I don’t know! He shifted to try to find her. I’m telling you, we both smelled her!”

A car honked at them and they stepped out of the way. They spotted a deputy nearby, directing traffic into the parking lot. Ain took a chance.

“You didn’t happen to see a huge black dog around here, did you?” Ain asked. “He...uh...slipped his leash while we were trying to get him out of the crate. He’s supposed to be part of the herding demonstration.”

“Oh! That was your dog?”

Ain felt his gut roll. “Was?”

The deputy smiled. “He’s okay. He jumped into that news crew’s van and they took him. She didn’t want to send him with Animal Control.”

Inside their truck, Cail quietly sat in the passenger seat while Aindreas screamed and pounded his fists against the steering wheel in anger. When he finally got himself under control, he glared at his

brother.

“Now we have to figure out which fucking station it was since Deputy Dipwad didn’t notice.”

“Well, how many could there be?”

“They were all here at some point in time today, asshole. From Tampa down to Naples, and even crews from Orlando and Miami. Mark said there were at least twenty different TV crew passes issued for stations from around the state.”

Cail cringed. “I’m sure he’ll call.”

“A fucking NEWS CREW! Could he try any harder to put us on the fucking radar? One thing. One *goddamn* thing. I wanted to spend a day helping out an old buddy, have some fun, relax and chill, and you two fucking assholes can’t stay out of trouble when my back is turned?”

“It was Her,” Cail insisted. “I swear to the Goddess, man, it was Her. We both smelled her.”

Ain started the truck and backed out. “You better hope so. Because if she’s not, I’m going to neuter both of you and it won’t be an issue anymore.”

* * * *

Brodey was in heaven. Goddess help him, he didn’t want to move from his spot. He’d learned Her name was Elain. He read it when she hung her press pass on the rearview mirror.

Beautiful!

She hesitantly rested her hand on his head and scratched him behind the ears.

“He’s big,” she said to the man, whose name he’d learned was Bill.

“Probably a wolf hybrid. They get big.”

“You want to take him?”

“Are you shitting me? My wife would kill me. Our cat hates dogs.

You volunteered, you're stuck with him."

"He seems clean, no fleas, he's not even dirty." She scratched him behind the ears again.

Brodey knew if he was a cat he'd be purring.

Somewhere in the depths of his brain it registered that he'd fucked up royally, and that when he finally got back together with Ain and Cail, they were going to kill him.

But he'd found Her.

He knew it.

* * * *

Ain drove them home to their cattle ranch fifteen minutes from the fairgrounds. Three thousand acres, lots of woods, and a perfect place to lay low.

"I'm gonna kill him," Ain muttered.

Cail grabbed Brodey's clothes from the back of the truck and followed his brother inside. "What do we do?"

Ain glowered at Cail. "You are gonna sit your ass down and stay the hell out of trouble while I try to figure out where Bonehead went." He booted up his laptop and did a search for Florida TV stations, printed a list, and started calling. Being a Saturday, most of them were staffed by skeleton crew who gave him the same old, "Yeah, if we hear anything, we'll let you know," line. If they even answered at all.

After an hour, Ain gave up and went to the kitchen to fix himself something to eat.

* * * *

Brodey followed Elaine from the van into the TV station, never allowing himself to get more than a few steps away from her. No one would separate him from her again. Ever.

He was oblivious to all others. When she sat, he immediately

curled at her feet, part of him always touching her.

Her.

His Mate.

Mine.

After she finished her work, she looked down at him. “I suppose you’re going home with me, dude. We’ll have to stop and get you something to eat.”

He followed her out to her car and immediately jumped into the backseat when she opened the door. As she drove, he closed his eyes and rested his muzzle on her shoulder over the back of the seat.

When she stopped at a shopping plaza he worried he might have to stay in the car, but she let him get out with her.

“I guess I don’t have to worry about you running off the way you’re glued to me,” she said with a laugh.

Their destination—a pet store. Inside she bought him a collar and leash, bowls, and a huge bag of top-dollar homeopathic dry dog food. When she put the collar around his neck he pressed his head against her.

Please. Keep me. Mine.

She could lead him by a leash or by his dick, he didn’t freaking care. As long as he was with her.

Her.

The kibble wasn’t too bad, sort of like beef-flavored dry cereal. He’d eaten worse. When she went to bed, he carefully crawled up onto the mattress next to her and breathed a sigh of relief when she didn’t make him get down.

Elain spent a restless night dreaming about a hunky, kilt-clad guy with black hair. She recognized him as the guy she’d seen at the Highland Games—figures—but he had the dog’s green eyes in her dream, not the piercing grey eyes he’d had in real life.

Far be it for her to fight a damn good wet dream. Especially considering it was the only kind of two-person sex she’d had in over a

year. She rolled over in bed and plunged her hand between her legs, squirming against the sheet as her dream lover showed her how much he packed beneath his kilt.

A lot.

In her dream, he sank his thick cock inside her, fucking her hard and fast in a way no man had ever fucked her. As her dream lover fucked her, her fingers stroked her clit, drawing her close to release.

Brodey softly whined. He was vaguely aware of a puddle of drool forming under his muzzle as he watched her finger herself. It was all he could do not to shift back and help her. He knew he couldn't help her like this.

Not that he didn't want to—fucking Ain and his Prime edicts. Don't reveal yourself to Outsiders. No lupine loving unless we're mated.

Fuck. Once Prime laid down the law, he had to obey it.

She smelled soooo good. The sweet, musky aroma of her dream passion practically bowled him over. There was no way she couldn't be their One.

He drooled.

The next morning, Elain awoke hours before dawn, then took a shower after walking Brodey. Apparently she had to be at work early. "You're going with me," she said to him. "Lucky you, the boss likes dogs. Maybe he'll take you."

Brodey whined.

He realized he fucked up, but he couldn't lose her. There was no way to call Ain and Cail, they had to be going batshit by now.

The night spent with her only cemented his conviction. She was, without a doubt, their mate. Never before had he felt like this, ever.

He rode with her to the station and followed her around all morning. When it came time for the morning news, he realized too late he was a star of a segment. He'd been too busy inhaling her scent and listening to her lyrical voice to pay attention to her actual words.

"...so if you know who he belongs to, or if you can prove you're

the owner, please contact me here at KVPN at 555-6822, extension 206.”

Aw, fuck.

At lunch, she snuck him a few pieces of bread from her sandwich. He gently took them from her hand, making sure not to nip or slobber on her.

Elain patted his head. “I sort of hope no one claims you.”

As stupid as it was, and as much as she didn’t want or need a dog, he was sort of nice to have around. He wasn’t anything like any other dog she’d ever had. Definitely smart and well-trained. Someone had to know who he belonged to.

When she was ready to leave at three, no one had called. She admittedly felt a little relieved about that.

“Let’s go, boy.”

Brodey followed her outside to her car. It was only as they were driving home that he finally noticed her rings.

What the fuck?

That was a wedding band, no mistake, on her left hand. And an engagement ring.

His heart curled. *No, please, Goddess, no!*

She couldn’t be married, she couldn’t belong to someone else, not when she was perfect for them!

He tried to think rationally. There was no scent of a man at her house, not even a hint of one. Widowed?

As sick as it sounded, he could only hope, because otherwise that might mean long-distance relationship.

And that would mean she was off-limits.

Brodey whined.

Chapter Three

Cail avoided Ain most of the day, spending much of his time surfing the Internet websites for the various TV stations and online found pet ads. By seven, Ain was nastier than ever and Cail didn't even attempt to speak to him.

At seven-thirty, Cail found it and breathed a sigh of relief. On the KVPN website, a video clip, Brodey staring up at...

Her.

He couldn't smell her but the obvious look on Brodey's face told him that was her.

And she was...

Fuck. A TV reporter.

Cail groaned and leaned back in his chair. *Son of a bitch.*

"What?" Ain called from the kitchen.

"You'd better come see this." He played the clip for Ain, who closed his eyes and groaned.

"That stupid fucking asshole." It was the reporter who'd interviewed Mark at the Highland Games. The married one.

"That's Her."

"She's a goddamn reporter! I don't give a shit if you two dicks want a piece of ass—"

Cail stood, angry. "That's *Her*! We both smelled her, I'm telling you!"

Ain glared. "*No more. Stop. Now.* How many other times over the years have one of you claimed you found Her? I'm sick of this shit! Besides, didn't you see her hand?" He pointed at the screen. "She's

married, asshole.”

Cail’s heart fell. No matter what, they were bound by the Code of the Ancients. That meant you didn’t take another’s mate, even if she was the One for you.

“No,” he whispered, collapsing into his chair, devastated.

“Yeah. So suck it up.” Ain played the video one more time and wrote down the number. “I’ll call her and ask her where I can meet her to pick up our ‘dog.’” He stormed out of the study.

Cail stared at the frozen image on the screen. Ain didn’t understand because he hadn’t smelled her. He was vaguely aware of Ain calling, speaking, then hanging up.

“Voice mail,” Ain said from the living room. “If the phone rings, *I* answer it.”

Cail didn’t respond, still staring at the screen.

* * * *

Brodey moped. Elain patted the couch for him to jump up next to her. He did but he couldn’t take his eyes off her rings. There were scattered pictures of her around the house with others, as a child and adult, but nothing he’d label a wedding picture. He couldn’t very well snoop through her desk until she was asleep.

In her closet, only women’s clothes. No hint of a man except in an old, leather jacket he suspected was nearly as old if not older than her.

His heart ached, his body ached to hold her, his dick ached to plunge inside her and claim her. Not that he could until after Ain took her for them, but still...

Brodey whined.

Before she went to bed she dialed into her office voice mail. He watched as her face fell. She looked at him. “Your name’s Beta?”

Brodey whined again and laid his head on his paws. *Dammit, Ain and Cail must have seen the video.*

She jotted something down and then hung up. She looked nearly

as upset as he felt.

Elain knelt next to him. "Hi, Beta."

Brodey raised his head. That Ain had used birth order instead of his name spoke to how truly pissed he was. There would be no hope of staying with Elain, even shifted, once she took him back to Ain. Prime declared, and Beta followed. That was the way.

He licked her face, enjoying the sweetly salty taste of her flesh. Truly perfect.

"I guess I'm taking you back to your daddy tomorrow."

Well, close enough, babe.

"I've got the day off, so I'll drive you home. I'll wait until tomorrow morning to call though."

Brodey consoled himself that he'd get to sleep with her one more night.

* * * *

The next morning, Ain grabbed the phone on the second ring. "Aindreas Lyall."

"Mr. Lyall? My name is Elain Pardie. You called about the dog."

Ain breathed a sigh of relief. He'd spent a restless night waiting for her call, and it was now eight in the morning. "Yes, thank you. I'm so glad you found Beta. We've been very worried about him."

"How did he get loose?"

"We were doing a herding demonstration and somehow he slipped out of his crate when we weren't looking. A deputy told us he left with a news crew but we weren't sure which one."

"Well, I have the day off. I don't mind driving him home. If you'll give me your address, I'll get a bite to eat and bring him back for you."

Cail stood close and listened. It was Her! Even through the phone her voice carved a chunk out of his soul. How could Ain *not* feel it? Once he smelled Her, he had to agree she was their One.

His brother gave her directions and then hung up and glared at Cail. “You *will* shift when she gets here.”

“Why?”

“Because we don’t have papers on our ‘dog,’” Ain growled. “If she sees you, his twin, she’ll turn him over without question.”

Cail had no choice.

Fucking Prime edicts anyway.

A little after eleven, Ain stuck his head in the front door. Cail had been working on bookkeeping for the ranch. “Go shift and get your ass out here. She’s coming.”

“Bastard,” he muttered. But he stood, stripping his shirt as he walked to their shared bedroom. He left his clothes on the bed and shifted, then trotted out the front door. Ain had left it standing open for him.

When she pulled into the driveway, Cail fought the urge to race to meet her and jump into the car when she opened the door. He spotted Brodey in the backseat. When she opened her car door he nearly fell over from the sweet scent.

Her.

There was no doubt.

From the slightly glazed look in Brodey’s eyes, he knew he was right.

Ain walked from around the side of the house but didn’t get too close. “Hi, Ms. Pardie?”

“Elain’s fine.” She opened the back door but Brodey was in no hurry to get out.

Cail didn’t blame him.

Ain saw his hesitation. “Beta, *come*.”

Prime voice. Brodey dipped his head and slowly jumped out. He paused next to Elain, nuzzled her hand before he slowly walked to Ain and lay down in front of him.

Cail dashed up to her and nosed her hand before Ain could order

him back.

He closed his eyes and deeply inhaled. *Her...*

“Gamma, *come.*”

Fuck.

With his tail between his legs, Cailean turned and walked over to Ain, lying down next to Brodey. He couldn’t resist leaning over and sniffing his brother’s coat. He smelled like Her.

Elain shut the car doors and walked over, stopping behind them. “Wow, they look identical. How do you tell them apart?” He was *the* guy! The same hunky kilt dude from the Games. *And* her dreams. *Yowza!*

His grey eyes tore something right through her. Today he wore snug jeans that she’d love to help him out of, and a button-up work shirt that covered far too much of his firm torso.

“Their eyes. Beta’s eyes are green. Gamma’s are brown. And their personalities. Beta’s a whiner.” He looked down at his dogs. “Their other brother, Alpha, has grey eyes. He’s around here somewhere.”

The deep, resonating tone of Lyall’s voice stirred something inside her. “Well, I’m sorry you were so worried. We would have hung around a little longer, but I was on deadline. I didn’t want to send him to the shelter.”

“It’s okay, Ms. Pardie. We appreciate you taking care of him.”

“Elain, please.”

“Elain. My brothers will want to thank you personally. They’ll be out in a moment.” He looked down at his dogs. “House. *Now.*”

The two dogs immediately stood and trotted toward the house.

“They’re very well-behaved.”

“Normally. Yesterday was unusual. I hope he didn’t cause you any trouble. I’ll be happy to reimburse you for anything you spent on him, and for your time and gas to drive out here.”

“No, that’s okay.” Elain stepped a little closer, but was it her imagination he stepped away?

Ain had to step back. *Aw, fuck! The assholes were right!*

As she stepped closer, he took another step back. He had to, or he would grab her and kiss her. He tried to focus on her wedding rings. *Taken. She was taken.*

He wanted to cry but he'd never let his brothers see. No matter how his heart was breaking.

Cail and Brodey appeared a moment later and stood behind Ain. He sensed their tension, their eagerness to be with her.

He had to get her out of there. *Now.*

Elain stared. *Holy crap, times three!* They were identical hunks, wearing different shirts, the other two brothers barefoot but in jeans and work shirts.

No, wait, not quite identical. One had green eyes, one had brown, while Aindreas had grey eyes. And the green-eyed cutie's hair was the same thick, black mop but slightly longer than his brothers' neatly trimmed hair.

"My brothers, Cailean," Aindreas nodded toward the brown-eyed babe, "and Brodey," he indicated the green-eyed gorgeous guy.

"Pleased to meet you," she replied, hoping she didn't drool. What the hell was *wrong* with her?

The two brothers smiled and nodded but made no move to step forward. They stood behind Aindreas. She got the impression he was in charge even though they were obviously triplets.

Weird.

"Again, thank you so much for driving all the way out here," Aindreas said. "We greatly appreciate it."

"No problem." She licked her lips, struggling for a reason, any excuse, not to leave. "Um, do you train dogs professionally?"

He crossed his arms. "We're a working ranch. Some skills are necessary."

Aindreas tried not to breathe through his nose, which made his problem worse. The breeze was blowing from behind her, putting him downwind and bringing her scent right to him. He could taste her on the wind as he inhaled through his mouth.

“I’d love to see a demonstration sometime.”

He curtly nodded. “I’d be happy to, but I’m afraid today we’ve got a lot of work to do. Perhaps another time. Thank you for taking the time to bring him back, and have a safe drive home.”

Well, okay then. Grey Eyes turned and started toward the house, leaving the other two brothers standing there staring at her like they wanted to talk.

She was about to say something when Aindreas turned. “Brodey, Cailean, we have a lot of work to do. *Now.*”

The way he emphasized the last word, she almost felt compelled to follow them, and nearly took a step forward toward him.

The two men bashfully smiled, turned, and followed him into the house.

She swallowed hard, feeling a little...empty. How freaking stupid was that? Elain realized a moment later she was still standing, alone, in the Lyall’s yard. She reluctantly got in her car and left.

For the next two days, every time she had a moment to herself she thought about the brothers. And how much she missed Beta. She took what was left of the dog food and dropped it off at the Humane Society shelter, along with the bowls and leash and collar.

Stupid. She never should have got her hopes up.

She kept trying to come up with excuses to call Aindreas Lyall, wanting to set up an appointment to get a demonstration, and knew she couldn’t. Not from his chilly response.

He’s probably married. Or gay. Or sociopathic.

But as cute as he was, not to mention his two brothers, a gay, married, sociopath might not be a bad thing to have in her life.

Would be worth it to not be alone anymore.

She twisted her grandmother’s rings on her finger. They’d been helpful keeping the creeps away. It was only after she’d talked with Lyall that she realized she still had them on. *Damn.* The one time she really wanted a guy to ask her out and she probably queered it.

Terrific.

* * * *

Brodey and Cail no sooner had the door shut behind them that they were after Aindreas, begging. “Please,” Brodey said, “you can’t tell me you didn’t smell Her!”

Aindreas glared. “Drop it. *Now*. She’s married, asshole.”

“No! I don’t think so! There was no man—”

“NO MORE!” Andreas roared. “Do *not* talk to me about her being the One again. Period. *End of subject*.” He stormed out the back door, slamming it behind him.

Brodey wanted to cry. Fucking Prime edict.

He dragged Cail into the bedroom and closed the door. “It’s Her!”

“What about her husband?”

“There was no man there, anywhere, not even the scent of one! The only men she had contact with while I was with her were her coworkers. She didn’t even talk to any guys on the phone unless it was work related.”

“What about her rings?”

Brodey shook his head. “I don’t know. I didn’t have a chance to do any snooping. All I know is there hasn’t been another man in her house in I don’t know how long. No men’s clothing in the closet. Nothing.”

Cail chewed on his lip. Brodey knew if someone could find a loophole around the edict, Cail would.

“We need to go talk to her.”

Brodey sighed. “Ain said we couldn’t.”

Cail grinned. “No, he said we couldn’t talk to *him*.”

Brodey’s grin matched his brother’s. “Genius!”

Chapter Four

Cail and Brodey waited a couple of days to let Ain settle down. He acted surly and bad-tempered. Cail suspected Ain had sensed Elain Pardie was their One.

But as Prime, once Ain had seen her rings he'd shut down, knowing he had to enforce the Code regardless of how irrational his refusal to talk with them was. With Brodey and Cail now forbidden to talk to Ain about it they had to be sneaky.

Brodey and Cail waited until they needed a trip into town for groceries. They grabbed quick showers, changed clothes and jumped in the truck before Ain could figure out their plot. They headed straight for Venice.

Brodey directed Cail to the TV station. The sight of Elain's car parked outside brought a grin to both men's faces.

"Yes!" Brodey cheered.

They walked in and stopped at reception. It was a little after two, maybe they could talk Elain into a late lunch with them.

Brodey smiled at the receptionist. "We're here to see Elain Pardie. Brodey and Cailean Lyall."

The receptionist smiled and nodded. "I'll call her." Normally, Brodey would try to get into the woman's pants, she was a cutie.

But not now. Not since they'd found their One.

A few minutes later, Elain walked out and both men resisted the urge to step forward and hug her. Brodey had agreed to let Cail handle the talking.

"We wanted to know if we could take you out to eat. I'm sorry we

were busy the other day, lots of things going on. We realized we might have come off as a little rude.”

Elain’s heart raced. These two hadn’t come off rude, but Aindreas sure as shit had. Even though she’d had a sandwich a few hours ago and wasn’t really hungry, she nodded. “I’d love to. I need to finish a couple of things, then I’ll be ready.”

“We’ll wait out here for you.”

“Okay!” She looked from Cailean’s brown eyes into Brodey’s green gaze. Something about his eyes looked oddly familiar. Deep inside her, something contracted in a hot and pleasant way. This was trouble. Double trouble. Twin hotties.

Make that triple trouble.

Except as cold and distant as the other brother acted, maybe that wasn’t an issue.

She raced through a few calls, her hands trembling. *Stupid. They’ve got to be taken. And how could you pick one over the other?*

She shivered as a deliciously naughty thought crept to mind. She stamped it into submission. No, *hell* no. That was just...

Having the two brothers would be a h-h-hottttt fantasy, but never something that would happen in real life.

They were still waiting when she returned. “Where to?” she asked.

Cailean smiled. “Wherever you’d like to go. Our treat.”

How about back to my house and to bed?

Argh!

She licked her lips. “There’s an Applebee’s down the road.”

The brothers nodded.

They followed her. She wanted to accept their invitation to ride with them in their truck, but somehow she didn’t trust herself.

The restaurant lot was full. She had to park behind the building in an adjacent parking lot. At least it was shady there. The brothers parked next to her, between her car and the restaurant. Nervously trying to make small talk, she walked between them to the restaurant.

While they waited to be seated she fought the urge to take and hold their hands.

What the *hell* was wrong with her?

They didn't take their eyes off her and that was no exaggeration. And not in a creepy, Internet stalker kind of way either. A passionate intensity that totally drenched her panties.

She hoped she didn't leave a damp spot on her skirt.

She could barely think straight around these two men. They had a three-hour meal, mostly talking instead of eating, and she learned they were cattle ranchers on the family spread in Arcadia, last of an increasingly rare breed in Florida.

"So where's your other brother?" she finally asked.

Cail, as he'd asked her to call him, shrugged. "Ain's busy. Lots of work to do." He winked. "We escaped. We're playing hooky. We wanted to see you."

She couldn't stand it anymore. "Your wives won't mind you having a long lunch with a strange woman?"

They grinned. "We're not married," Brodey said.

God, his green eyes were gorgeous!

"No girlfriends, either," he added. "Single and available."

She thought she might have moaned. *Fuuuck me!*

"What about you?" Cail asked, nodding toward her left hand. "How long have you been married?"

She blushed. "No, I'm not married. Not even dating."

Did both men suddenly freeze? Cail spoke again. "What about your rings?" he asked in a careful, cautious tone.

"I just wear them to keep from getting hit on. They belonged to my grandmother."

The men looked at each other and broadly grinned.

"What?" she asked.

Brodey laughed and seemed to relax. "Nothing. We just thought you were married."

"Oh, no. Never been married. Haven't had a relationship or even a

date in over a year.”

She couldn't put off the inevitable. “Well, thank you both, this was wonderful. I have an early day tomorrow and need to get home so I can get to bed. Three a.m. wake-ups come way too early.” She'd love to crawl between the sheets with either or both men.

Her heart fluttered at the thought. Well, maybe not heart. The sensation was centered lower, between her legs.

The men paid the bill and walked her out to her car. Cail walked between the vehicles ahead of her, then turned to face her.

“You're beautiful, Elain,” he whispered.

She gasped at the emotion in his voice. How could he have this effect on her? “Thank you.”

She was aware of Brodey stepping close behind her. The heat from his body washed through her even though they weren't touching.

“Very beautiful,” he whispered in her ear.

She closed her eyes, fully aware that she was rapidly approaching an uncharacteristic loss of control with these two guys.

When Cail kissed her, his gentle, feather-light touch made her moan. She grabbed his head and buried her fingers in his hair, crushed her lips against his.

Brodey definitely moaned behind her and pressed his body into hers. She felt his hard erection through his jeans, and as he forced her against Cail, she felt his as well.

Cail dropped to his knees. She was vaguely aware that even though they were mostly shielded by the two vehicles, they were still in public.

Brodey's hands cupped her breasts through her shirt as he pulled her against him. “Close your eyes and relax,” he whispered against the side of her neck. “No one's around.”

She threw her head back against his shoulder, glad to take his advice, instinctively sensing these two men wouldn't let anything bad happen to her.

Cail ducked under her skirt. She didn't protest when he tore

through the crotch of her panties, then pushed her legs a little further apart. His tongue, scorching hot, circled her clit before dipping deep inside her.

She moaned. This had to be another hot dream. Shit like this just did *not* happen in real life!

Brodey kissed her, his tongue and hers dueling as Cail quickly brought her to the most explosive orgasm she'd ever had in her life.

Weak and unable to move, she let Brodey hold her. Cail stood, then unlocked their truck's passenger door.

"My turn," Brodey said as he effortlessly lifted her to the seat and pushed her onto her back. Before Elain could protest, he'd thrown her skirt up and buried his face between her thighs, her legs draped over his shoulders.

Elain closed her eyes and moaned. Cail's fingers laced through hers. "Give it to him, baby," he encouraged. "Jesus, you're perfect."

Brodey's tongue probed her, fucking her, then lavng her clit before plunging deep inside her again.

If they were this good with their mouths...

Holy fuck!

She exploded, crying out as her climax hit. Then she lay on the seat and gasped for breath.

As reality crept back in she realized what she'd just done. She'd let two guys, strangers, make love to her. In public.

Embarrassed, she sat up and pushed her skirt down. But the men looked...

She'd never had a guy look at her like that before.

Like they were in love.

"Are you okay?" Cail asked.

She nodded. Brodey helped her out of the truck, then he pulled her into his arms again and kissed her. She wanted to—

No!

"I need to get home," she mumbled, fumbling for her purse and keys, which she'd dropped.

Cail stroked her cheek and leaned in, nuzzling her, inhaling deeply like he was smelling her. “Can we come with you? Please?” he softly asked.

She shook her head. “No! No, I’m...I’m so sorry. I don’t know what got into me...” She reddened, her hands shaking as she tried to unlock her door. She couldn’t be alone with them! She didn’t know what the fuck was wrong with her, but if she was alone with them she would be well and truly fucked.

Literally.

Wait, why is that a problem?

“I’m...thank you for lunch.” She avoided their eyes and reluctantly pulled out of Brodey’s grasp. At first she wasn’t sure if he’d let go of her, but he reluctantly did after placing a tender kiss on the back of her hand.

She locked her doors and took a deep breath before starting her car and backing out of the spot. She had to pull over on the way home to calm herself. And she cried.

Once home she took a shower, crying even harder. She didn’t know if it was because of what she’d done, or what she didn’t do—refusing their request to come home with her.

One thing was for certain, she felt even hornier now than before, the memory of what they’d done to her bouncing around in her brain.

She grabbed her shower massager and used it to have three more orgasms that weren’t nearly a fraction as satisfying as the two the men had given her in the parking lot.

And she was still horny.

Elain wasn’t sure she’d ever fall asleep. Finally, two hours before her alarm went off to wake her for work, she did.

* * * *

Cail and Brodey watched her drive off. In silence they climbed into the truck and Cail started it. They sat there with the air running

and their eyes closed, inhaling the traces of her scent that still lingered in the cabin.

“You felt it, right?” Brodey whispered.

“Yeah,” Cail said, his hoarse voice full of emotion. “I don’t give a shit what Ain says. She’s our One.”

“Goddess, I wanted to fuck her.”

“We can’t.”

“I know.”

Cail opened his eyes. “We can’t even get a goddamned blow job from her,” he grumbled. “Not until we figure out how to get Mr. Prime Asshole to listen to us and get off his fucking high horse.” He angrily shifted the truck into reverse and backed out of the space.

Code of the Ancients—Prime first when finally taking their One mate. Normally that applied to twins but since they were triplets it still had the same effect. Ain had to be the first to take her like that. Any of them could sleep with other women until they were mated, but with their One it had to be Prime first.

And now, of course, that they’d found their One, they couldn’t sleep with anyone else anyway. Not that they’d want to even if they could. No other woman could ever compare.

They barely remembered to buy groceries before they returned home. Aindreas was too mad to scream. When he got close enough to them to smell them he froze.

“What the hell did you two do?” he growled.

Cail and Brodey exchanged a nervous glance. Cail scrambled for an approach Ain wouldn’t clamp down on and that wouldn’t be squelched by the Prime edict. “Some women wear wedding rings when they’re not married. As a way to keep men from hitting on them.”

“Do *not* tell me you went and saw her.”

The brothers kept their mouths shut.

Ain turned, pacing, running a hand through his hair. Between his rage and the totally fucking distracting smell of Her on them, he

couldn't think. He wanted to grab them and slap the shit out of them and then smell them where they still bore her scent.

"I told you to drop this. How could you defy me?"

"You told us not to talk to you," Cail shot back. "If you'd quit being an asshole, let us talk to you, we can solve this whole thing in five damn seconds."

Aindreas stormed out the back door, slamming it behind him. He looked only marginally calmer when he returned a few minutes later. "Okay, fine," he spat. "Get it out and over with."

Brodey and Cail exchanged another glance. Cail spoke. "They're her grandmother's rings. She's not married, not seeing anyone. She only wears them to keep from getting hit on." He glanced at Brodey again. "She's not taken."

"What did you two do to her today? You know damn well we're not forcing a woman to be with us."

"Believe you fucking me, there was no force involved." Cail related the events in the parking lot.

Ain moaned. "You stupid assholes. How could you do that to her?"

"What? We didn't take her, we didn't mark her!" Not that they could without Ain anyway.

Ain shook his head. "She needs to be able to make her mind up about this. If she really is our One..." He groaned, sat, hung his head. "No, you didn't mark her, but it's going to be agony for her now."

Brodey knew he wasn't always quick on the uptake but this really confused him. "What the hell are you talking about?"

"She has to submit, dumb fuck. Willingly. I already told you guys years ago that when—*if*—we found our One, I would *not* force her. I wanted someone who willingly wanted to be with us. You haven't told her anything about shifting, mating, marking, the ceremony, any of that. If she decides she can't handle it, she's not going to be able to walk away and never look back. Not after what you two losers did to her. *And* she's a fucking reporter!"

Cail's heart fell. "Oh." He hadn't thought about any of that. It hadn't been an edict, so honestly, he'd forgotten.

"You weren't listening to us," Brodey whined. "We needed to find out what was going on."

"Yeah, and did you think maybe you could have called her up and arranged for her to come over for dinner?"

"You told us not to talk to you about her!"

"Well, you were sneaky today anyway, weren't you? What difference would it have made?"

Brodey fell silent. Ain shook his head. "Dammit."

"Maybe," Cail said, "she will want to be with us. Ever think about that?"

"How will we know? How will we know it's because she truly wants us or because now she's so fucking horny that she can't see straight?"

"Is that a bad thing?" Brodey asked.

"Goddammit!" Ain advanced, his fists clenched. "I told you I wanted a willing mate! That the old ways of taking one whether she wanted it or not were over in our line!"

"We didn't force her," Cail protested.

"You didn't give her a chance for informed consent!"

"We could tell she was the One!"

"But how is she supposed to know we're the ones for her?"

Cail and Brodey couldn't answer that.

Ain stormed out again. This time, when he hadn't returned in twenty minutes, Cail went looking for him. He found Ain's clothes on the back porch.

He'd shifted.

"Well, that conversation's over for now," he snarked, walking back inside. Yes, he'd been to plenty of ceremonies over the years where the woman was less than willing at first. But an Alpha never took a mate unless certain they were their One. Ever. And always, by the end of the ceremony, the mate—usually a woman—was happy to

be taken no matter how much she protested and fought at first. Most Alphas were male, but there were a few women who took men. Like their Alpha cousin, Mary.

After attending a particularly traumatic ceremony decades earlier, Ain had sworn they'd never do that. Cousins of theirs, twin Alphas, had found a woman. She'd fallen for one, the Prime, but not the other. It didn't matter, because both men knew she was their One.

And now, forty years later, the three of them were still happily together and expecting their fifteenth pup.

Cail and Brodey had missed that ceremony but it had a profound effect on Ain. He'd insisted even if it meant letting their One go, they would not force her.

But it hadn't been an edict either.

* * * *

By the end of the next afternoon, Elain was a wreck. She couldn't concentrate on anything but the memory of the feel of the Lyall brothers' tongues on her. She was about to leave for the day when her desk phone rang. She almost let it go to voice mail then decided to answer it.

"Elain Pardie."

"Hi, it's Brodey."

She closed her eyes, her sex suddenly drenched with a flood of moisture as her belly clenched. "Hi," she whispered.

"Are you okay?"

"Yeah." *If not getting you out of my mind is "okay."*

"We'd like to know if you'd please come to dinner at our place Sunday. Around seven?"

Her hand nearly crushed the receiver. A chance to see the two brothers again? *Sure!* But what about...

"I don't know if that's a good idea. I get the impression Aindreas isn't very fond of me."

"No! That's not true. He's the oldest, that's all."

Maybe not the weirdest tangent, but whatever. “You’re triplets.”

“It’s a birth order thing. Uh, in our family, it’s sort of a...tradition.”

Her bullshit buzzer sounded. “Thank you for the offer but I don’t think I can take you up on it.” Even though the thought of refusing nearly drove her to tears.

“Please?” He sounded desperate. “Please, Elain, we’d love to have you over for dinner.”

Without will of her own, she shivered. “Okay,” she whispered.

* * * *

Brodey hung up and squeezed Cail in a bear hug. “She said yes!” Ain had stayed out all night running apparently, and was still gone. They were scheduled to have a Council meeting at their place on Sunday anyway, so that was perfect timing.

“Maybe by Sunday night...” Cail didn’t finish, a broad grin taking over.

“I hope to hell so, brother.”

Ain returned later that night. He went straight to the shower without speaking to them, then into bed. They waited an hour, until they knew he was asleep to go to bed, not wanting to disturb him.

Not wanting him to ask questions.

But Brodey and Cail were in agreement that they knew she’d want to willingly be with them. There would be no force needed for her to accept all three of them.

Chapter Five

Ain didn't speak to his brothers the next morning either. He grabbed a travel mug of coffee and headed to the barns on the other side of the property without bothering to eat breakfast.

That actually relieved Brodey and Cail. No chance for Ain to say no or cancel their plans.

Sunday morning, they left Ain asleep in bed and ran out to the store for groceries. Steak, salad, home-baked bread, a nice wine. They would have a wonderful dinner, talk with her. Surely by the end of their meal, before the Council meeting started, she'd want them as badly as they wanted her. The Council wouldn't gather until midnight. Otherwise, they'd have to wait a complete moon, till the next meeting, to mark her. Thank the Goddess at least they could mate with her before then if she didn't agree tonight.

Ain wasn't in the house when they returned, but they'd seen him in one of the fields in the work truck, taking feed out to the stock. Perfect.

By the time Ain returned to the house at six, Brodey and Cail had already showered and changed clothes. Ain sniffed the air.

"What's going on?"

Cail leveled his gaze at him. "Don't ask questions we don't want to answer, bro. Just get a shower, dress decent."

"Is she coming here?"

"Please, just do it. For once?"

Ain didn't press the issue. In a few minutes, Cail and Brodey heard the shower running in the master bath.

* * * *

Elain didn't think she could stand the wait. She had a strong suspicion she wasn't leaving the Lyall brothers' house until sometime, hopefully very late, on Monday. Fine with her, because she was so friggin' horny she could barely sit still. No matter how many times she used the shower massager or a vibrator or even her own hand, it did little more than take the rough edge off her need.

She'd never felt like this before. She was beyond the point of caring if it made her look like a slut or not, she was willing to get a little wild with those two men if they could make her feel a fraction as good as they did the other afternoon. Screw it, she was twenty-seven and had been a good girl, relatively speaking, all her life.

Time to have some fun.

She went shopping and bought herself a cute blue sundress that left nearly all of her shoulder area exposed. She imagined their lips would feel damn good kissing her there.

Forget panties. They'd be in the way.

She hoped.

No bra either.

As she looked in the mirror one final time, she realized she was dressed to get fucked.

Oh, please, God, I hope so!

She arrived at five till seven. Brodey and Cail waited for her on the porch, huge smiles on their faces.

As weird and nervous as Elain felt, she leaned in to hug them. That, however, felt right. More than right. Like she could stand there and hug them all night.

Or more. A *lot* more. Hugging them left her with a peaceful, calm feeling so strong she had to force herself to step back from their embrace.

Cail rested his hand on the small of her back and led her inside.

The old Florida ranch style house was large, the walls lined with planks of golden pecky cypress. A huge flatscreen TV hung on the wall, two large, comfortable couches and a chair in front of it, surrounding a coffee table. Large dining room table, and two hallways she assumed led off to the rest of the house.

In the large eat-in kitchen, a smaller table for four was set. Heavenly aromas assaulted her.

"We didn't put the steaks on yet," Brodey said, holding a chair out for her. "How do you like yours?"

"Rare, please."

Cail smiled. "Girl after our own hearts. I'll go put them on." He carried a plate of four steaks out a back door and she spotted a large, expensive professional-grade stainless barbeque on the outside deck.

Brodey sat next to her and took her hand. "I can't tell you how glad we are you agreed to come to dinner tonight."

She nervously smiled. Her earlier *Yippee, I'm gonna get laid!* bravado faded fast as her nerves took over. "Me too. Where's Aindreas?"

"He'll be out in a minute. Shower."

She flushed as she imagined how he looked in the shower. She had to bite back the comment, "*Does he need any help?*"

"Can I get you anything to drink?" Brodey asked. "Iced tea? Wine? Soda? Beer? Anything."

"Tea is fine." Maybe drinking wasn't a good idea. It would suck to get sick and then puke instead of having fun.

He fetched her drink. "Sugar?"

"What kind?" she purred, hoping to regain a little of the upper hand, not that she had it in the first place.

He laughed and leaned in close. She thought he'd kiss her, but he nuzzled his nose against hers. Somehow, the gesture was even more erotic.

"Whatever kind you want, baby. As much as you want."

"Yes, please!" she gasped.

He grinned and brought her the sugar bowl and a teaspoon.

They both looked up as a door opened. Aindreas' hair was still damp from the shower, and he looked damn good in khaki slacks and a button-up shirt. He walked into the kitchen and paused at the doorway. Brodey sat back. It was almost as if a silent conversation passed between the two men.

Aindreas finally spoke. "Thank you for joining us for dinner, Elain," he said.

He sounded like his brothers, and yet he didn't. His voice felt deeper, more resonant.

"Thank you for having me here tonight." *God, please let them have me!*

Aindreas poured himself a glass of tea and sat across the table from her. His grey eyes glittered, appraising. "I hear my brothers took you to lunch the other day."

Elain felt the deep blush in her face, wondered how much more they'd told him than that. She tried to speak, cleared her throat, licked her lips, and tried again. "Yes, they were very kind to take me out to eat." *Holy Christ, that sounded wrong.*

Aindreas smiled and hoped it wasn't too obvious how his eyes traveled her body. Goddess, she was gorgeous! As her face turned pink he struggled not to get out of his chair, sling Elain over his shoulder and carry her to bed. There was no mistaking it, they'd got it right, for once. Their One. Their mate.

If she'd have them.

No mate of his would ever beg for them to stop or plead for mercy. She would never cry in fear or scream or fight.

She would willingly want to be with them.

He prayed she would.

He briefly closed his eyes and inhaled. So close. How had she tasted? He hoped he'd get his chance soon enough. Yes, Cail and Brodey finally did something right, doing this on a Council meeting night. That would be enough time to win her over or scare her off.

Tease or not to tease? “They said they enjoyed their... conversation with you.”

Brodey sat there like a moron, silently watching them talk, his head following the conversation like a tennis game.

“We had a very nice...chat.”

She’s feisty. “I hope you and I get to have a nice...chat later.”

She flushed even deeper. His cock throbbed in his pants. Thank the Goddess he was sitting down.

“So do I,” she said, finally meeting his gaze again.

He swallowed hard.

Cail returned with the steaks. “All right, four rare. Elain, let me know if yours needs more cooking.” Cail dished out the meat and sat but Ain never took his eyes from Elain’s, waiting for her to look away first.

She finally did with another sweet round of color rushing to her face.

Ain let the other two brothers take over the conversation for a while but he never hesitated to hold her gaze whenever she looked his way. Sweet blue eyes he could get lost in, and her shoulder-length hair perfect for him to wrap his fingers in while she sucked his cock.

Eventually she directed a comment to him. “Aindreas, do you think I could get a demonstration tonight? With the dogs?”

“That can easily be arranged.” He smiled. “And feel free to call me Ain.”

* * * *

It was after nine by the time they all pushed back from the table. “Where are your dogs anyway?” Elain asked. She wished Beta was inside so she could say hi to him.

“They’re outside in the barn tonight. Didn’t want them begging.” He looked at his brothers. “Why don’t you two go out there and get them ready? We’ll be along in a few minutes.”

Cail and Brodey nodded and walked out the back door.

Leaving her alone with Ain. He stood and offered his hand. Her heart raced in her chest as she laced her fingers through his.

What *was* it about these three gorgeous guys? What was their game? Part of her instinctively knew she shouldn't be doing this but she was past the point of caring. If men could play around, why couldn't women?

When he pulled her into his arms she offered no resistance. He kissed her. His tongue gently traced and parted the seam of her lips and she pressed her body against his. Something in his touch also soothed her, calmed her, made her feel better than she had over the past few days. When he lifted his face from hers he smiled, but it looked sad.

"What's wrong?" she asked.

"You're wonderful."

"You guys don't get out much, do you?"

He laughed and stepped away, much to her regret. He took her hand. "Let's go."

Two of the dogs were in the barn, sitting, waiting. Cail and Brodey were nowhere to be seen. Apparently this barn was mostly for equipment and storage and offices, because there were no stalls or horses or cows inside and the concrete floor looked relatively clean. She pet Beta, happy to see him. He happily whined as she scratched him behind the ears. Gamma nudged her hand and she pet him, too. Both dogs eagerly rubbed against her legs.

"Shouldn't we wait for your brothers?" she asked.

Ain shrugged, leading her through the barn to a large corral behind it. It was dark outside but the corral was well-lit. Inside, a small flock of about fifteen sheep huddled by the back fence.

"They probably went to check on something." He turned to the dogs. "Beta, Gamma, walk up."

The two dogs squeezed through the rail fence and walked out to the flock, then stopped, waiting.

“Normally in competition,” Ain explained, casually leaning against the fence, “there are a bunch of things you have to do with the flock, specific patterns, drive gates, pens, things like that.” He looked at the dogs. “Lift.”

Moving as a carefully choreographed unit, both dogs slowly circled the sheep, gently nudging them away from the fence without breaking their huddled group.

“There are specific commands we use for competition. Here in a working setting, especially dealing with cattle, we don’t always use those exact commands. These sheep are only for training and exhibition. Normally the dogs are working cattle.” He looked at the dogs. “Away to me,” he called out.

The dogs began moving the sheep around the pen in a counter-clockwise direction. When they were almost at their original starting point, Ain called out, “Look back!”

Both dogs stopped and looked at him.

“Come-bye.” The dogs worked the sheep around the pen clockwise. At the starting point again, Ain called out, “Look back!”

The dogs stopped and did, waiting.

“Beta, shed two. Gamma, hold the rest.”

Elain looked at him. “You’re kidding?”

He smiled. “Nope. Watch.”

Sure enough, the green-eyed dog split two sheep off the end and carefully drove them toward the gate where Elain and Ain stood. Gamma kept the rest of the sheep in a tightly balled mass toward the back corral fence.

When Beta had the sheep in front of them, Ain called out, “Send ‘em back.” Beta circled around and started the sheep toward the flock. Gamma stepped away and allowed them to rejoin the group. “That’ll do.” Both dogs trotted back to Ain and sat, waiting.

He turned to her. “It’s more impressive when it’s a hundred head of cows that weigh nearly a thousand pounds each.”

“I bet. How many cows do you have?”

“Right now, we’ve got nearly two thousand head. We raise and ship high-end breed stock all over the country. That part of the operation is based on the other side of the property, away from the house. We like our privacy. Our employees use the other gate.”

They returned to the barn, the dogs following. She walked alongside Ain. When her hand brushed his, a thrill ran through her as his fingers gripped hers. The other two brothers were still nowhere to be seen.

Somehow, she had a feeling that was planned. Whether by them or by Ain or all three in cahoots, she didn’t know yet.

She didn’t care.

The dogs sat and stared at them as Ain pulled her into his arms. “Why did you come here tonight,” he hoarsely asked.

She felt his rock-hard erection through his slacks. “Because your brother asked me to.”

“But why did you accept?”

His grey eyes pierced into hers. She couldn’t lie. “Because I wanted to see what would happen,” she whispered.

He kissed her, crushing her lips, holding her body tightly against his.

More than happy to let go and give herself to him, she softly moaned into his mouth as one of his hands gripped her ass and he ground his hips into her.

As suddenly as it started, he practically pushed her away. He stepped back, nearly tripping over the dogs. “I can’t do it like this.”

She took a step toward him. “Do what? Like what?”

He grabbed her hands. “We need to talk to you. Tell you some things. All three of us want you.”

She nodded, mustered her courage. “I’m willing to have a wild weekend with you boys. I’m beyond caring what it makes me look like. Did your brothers tell you about the other day?”

“You don’t understand—”

“I don’t care! I won’t tell if you won’t. I know it’ll just be for fun.

I won't ask any of you guys for anything, just a really hot night. I'm on the Pill, I brought some condoms if you don't have any, so let's play."

He looked at the dogs. "Shift."

"What?" She did a double-take as the two large black dogs suddenly turned into Cailean and Brodey before her eyes.

The air exploded out of her lungs.

Chapter Six

Ain reached for Elain's hand as she stumbled. He grabbed a saddle blanket and led her to a nearby bale of hay, guiding her to sit. Her eyes looked wide as she stared at the two naked men sitting on the floor before her.

Ain stepped back and started unbuttoning his shirt. "We've got a pretty big secret. I don't know where to begin."

She stared, speechless.

He looked at his brothers. "Back."

They were two black dogs again.

"How...what...how..."

"Shape-shifters," he said, removing his shirt. He kicked off his shoes. His slacks were next, he hadn't bothered with underwear and his stiff cock sprung free as he stripped.

Elain's brain tried and failed to process what she'd just witnessed. Ain had stripped—holy Christ his cock was gorgeous!—and changed into a dog, then back.

"I'm the Prime Alpha." Ain watched her shocked look grow even wider as he walked to stand in front of her.

She stared at him.

"You aren't dreaming, and we didn't drug you. This is real."

Elain stared, speechless. *What the holy fuck?*

"We're over two hundred and thirty years old," he said. "Long story short, shape-shifters aren't a myth. And you're our One."

"One what?" she whispered, not sure of her voice.

"The One. For us. Mate."

That broke through her shock. “Huh?”

He knelt before her and took her hands. His face softened. Something in her wanted to reach out and hold him. “We’ve never found our One before. Alpha shifters mate for life. Which is pretty long, if you haven’t guessed. It’s not like the movies, you have to be born one to actually change. When we take a mate, it changes them in some ways, too. A non-shifter mate takes on a lot of their shifter mate’s power. Or mates’—plural—in this case. Most shifters are male.”

“Whoa!” She looked at them. “All three of you?”

He playfully smiled. “I thought you said you wanted some fun.”

“I...I do...I did...what the fuck?”

He gently pulled her to him and kissed her. She felt the resistance melt from her body at his touch. When his hand slid under her dress, Elain moaned, wanting more.

He pushed back the fabric and dipped his head between her legs. When his tongue gently swiped at her clit she felt reality loosen and her world exploded after only seconds. She cried out as the unquenchable ache she’d felt ever since the parking lot adventure was at least temporarily sated.

The other two brothers shifted to men again and gathered close. She stared at them, wondering if she’d just lost her mind.

Ain looked at her. “I can’t—we can’t do more unless or until you agree to be our mate. I will not force you.”

She already felt the urgent throbbing start again, wanting release, needing them. “Yes!”

He shook his head. “You don’t understand. You would be ours, forever. Only ours. All three of us.”

Elain looked at their faces. Brodey and Cail looked desperately hopeful. Ain looked sad.

His words suddenly broke through her sexual haze.

“Forever?” she asked.

He nodded. Releasing her hand, he sat back. “We mate for life.

You would have to quit your job—”

That got her attention. “Whoa!” She sat up and pulled her dress down. “What? Quit my *job*? It took me three years to make it from photojournalist to on-air. I’m not quitting!” She decided to hold off on trying to process the other crazy bullshit for a few minutes. One thing at a time or her brain would fry. *This* she could handle.

Ain nodded. “Okay. There’s more, but if that’s a deal-breaker then there’s no use explaining it.” He stood and picked up his clothes. She looked at the other two men and started to reach for them but they sadly stood and backed away.

“Wait!” She looked up at them. “We can’t just play?”

Ain shook his head. “It doesn’t work like that. When we meet our One, you can’t undo it once you consummate. And I won’t force you to be with us if you don’t want to be.” He pulled on his slacks. He carefully tucked his stiff cock inside as he zipped them.

“What?”

“I’m sorry, Elain. You are the One for us. I refuse to take a mate unless she’s totally willing.”

“Why can’t we just play?” she asked again. The need had returned with a vengeance, quickly taking away her ability to think straight, much less speak.

“It doesn’t work like that.”

Rage set in. “So you...what...hypnotize me to make me think something weird’s going on, get me all fucking hot to trot and leave me hanging?”

His wry smile only served to piss her off more. “I just got you off. We’re the ones left hanging.” The other two men were also stiff. They’d retrieved clothes and were pulling them on.

“This is crazy!”

“I know. It’s hard to believe. The old ways were when an Alpha shifter found his One, he took her, regardless of whether she was attracted to him or not. Once it was consummated she felt it too because of their connection. I won’t do that. I can’t do that.” He

turned away from her. "I'm sorry."

"Sorry?" She didn't know what else to say.

"It'll take a few weeks before you start to feel normal, probably. Hopefully."

Weeks? If she stayed as horny as she'd been for the next few weeks she'd end up in the hospital.

She angrily stood. "Oh, no you *fucking* don't!" She pointed at Cail and Brodey. "You two assholes did something to me the other day and now I can't seem to feel anything but horny! What the fuck did you do?"

Ain nodded again. "That's because you feel it. You feel the connection too. I'm sorry." They'd almost finished dressing.

This felt like a good time for a temper tantrum. "No. Fucking. Way! You assholes do NOT get to leave me feeling like this with a simple, 'I'm sorry,' bullshit excuse!"

"If you become our mate, that feeling would go away, being with us. We will kill and die for you, love and protect you. Spend our lives doing nothing but trying to make you happy, spoiling you rotten, and I mean that literally. But you have to submit to the Alpha. I know it sounds like bullshit, but it's a shifter thing. We're bound by the Code. In this case, we're triplets, we're all Alphas. So you have to submit especially to the Prime."

"You?"

He nodded.

Love? That word belatedly hit her brain. "How the fuck can you say you love me? You don't even know me."

"You're our One. We can't not love you. You would complete us." He turned to leave the barn.

"Where are you going?"

"Inside to clean up the kitchen. We have to do the dishes." The other brothers started to follow him.

"You've *got* to be shitting me? You're walking away?"

Ain turned. "Then submit," he softly said. "That's all you have to

do.”

She stared at him. The whole crazy shape-shifter stuff was trying to bubble its way to the surface but so was the incredible, aching need deep in her belly.

“Why? Why do I have to do that?”

“It’s a shifter thing. I’m sorry. We don’t make the rules.”

“You’re what, asking me to be your personal love slave?”

His eyes blazed. “No! We’re asking for the chance to love and cherish and protect you for the rest of our lives.”

Part of her wanted to drop to her knees right then and beg him to take her. Like the other afternoon when he ordered his brothers into the house, she’d wanted to follow. A deep craving she couldn’t explain, a primal urge.

Her brain, however, rebelled against the concept.

“I can’t,” she said, near tears as her inner conflict threatened to rip her soul apart.

He nodded and sadly smiled. “I understand.” He turned and walked toward the house.

She stood there in the barn, staring at them. *No. Fucking. Way!*

Hypnosis? Date rape drug? Well, maybe not date rape because they didn’t fuck her. But what the hell?

Rage washed through her. She stomped down the path after them, catching Ain’s arm on the front porch. She spun him around. “You mean to tell me, beyond the crazy bullshit I’m still not sure how you pulled off, that I’m standing here *begging* all of you to fuck me and you won’t?”

He crossed his arms. “The second you say you agree, we’ll carry you to bed and make love to you all night long. But in submitting, you are agreeing to be ours. We will not force you.”

“Uh, isn’t that force, telling me I’d have to quit my job? What the fuck? How do I even know I’d like you assholes in the morning, much less want to spend ‘forever’”—she used finger quotes—“with you?”

“You would. Just like we know we’d still love you in the morning.”

“Oh, because I’m ‘the One?’” More finger quotes.

He nodded. “Exactly.”

“Okay. For shits and giggles, tell me this. What else would happen?”

“There’s a Council meeting tonight, in a couple of hours. They would verify the mating and witness the marking—”

“Whoa! Time out!” She stepped back. “You’re talking *group* sex?” Of course, that’s what she was already thinking before, but only with the triplets.

“No. When Alpha shifters take a mate and mark them, the Council witnesses the marking. It’s different for twins, and of course us, than for just two people. There’s normally no need for the Council to verify the mating when it’s a single shifter, only the marking. When more than one shifter is involved in the mating, they need to verify all have been joined before the mate is marked.

She stared at him, her mouth gaping. *Okay, mental overload. Brain officially, totally fried.*

She stormed past him into the house, grabbed her purse, and back out again. Not fast enough to miss the heartbroken looks on Cail and Brodey’s faces. Elain stopped on the front porch, where Ain still stood. “Why can’t I play with those two instead of you?”

He shook his head. “It has to be all. And Prime has to be first.”

Figures. “Asshat!” It sounded lame but was all she could think of. She stomped to her car, slammed the door shut, then sat staring at Ain. He stood on the porch, watching her.

Crazy to the Nth degree. Creepy voyeuristic shape-shifting men getting their jollies watching...

“ARRRRGGGGHHHH!” she screamed, punched her steering wheel. The ache between her legs was a full-blown cramping wave she couldn’t ignore.

Ain stood on the porch and watched her.

She started the car, turned around, and drove toward the road. By the time she reached Highway 17 fifteen minutes later, where it intersected downtown Arcadia, Elain had to pull over and curl into a ball on the seat. Between crying and her body's desperate need, she couldn't go any further.

"FUUUUCK!" she screamed as she lay on her side and kicked at the door. What had those bastards done to her?

Something, that's for sure, because she'd never felt like this before. The memory of Ain's hand around hers, his arms around her, the feel of Cail and Brodey's hands and lips and tongues...

Those were the only thoughts that brought her the slightest bit of comfort or relief.

The word *submit* ran through her brain and something about it soothed a part of her soul.

No!

She'd worked too hard to give up her life for three hard bodies.

Three hard bodies who seemed to want her, only her.

She sat there for a long time, crying, screaming, thinking.

Aching.

It was nearly eleven.

Ain walked onto the front porch when she drove up. He didn't move, didn't come to greet her.

She sat there and stared at him through the windshield for another five minutes before taking a deep breath and getting out. Driving toward the house, her discomfort had somewhat lessened but it still felt damn bad.

Elain walked up to the porch. "What do you mean by submit?"

"Prime is in charge. That's the way it is. We're all Alpha."

"I mean, do you pimp your women out?"

Even in the dim light from the porch fixture she saw his face redden in rage. "I would kill any man who dared touch you."

She smirked. "What about your brothers?"

"You know what I mean."

“No, I don’t! That’s the *fucking* point! You’re asking me to promise you forever when I hardly know you and I can barely think, when it feels like someone’s fucking twisting my clit and my guts into knots and springing crazy shifter shit on me that I’m still not sure I believe, but...*fuck!*” She hadn’t planned on crying again, but she did. She dropped to her knees and sobbed.

Ain didn’t move toward her. His voice softened even more. “Elain, I am so sorry it happened like this. I really am. This is what I did not want to happen. I never wanted you to feel any discomfort. I wanted you to fall in love with us and want to be with us willingly, not because you felt compelled to. I swore that we would not force our mate, if we found her, to be with us. I failed to realize my stupid brothers wouldn’t think about the consequences of their actions with you the other day.”

He knelt to meet her teary gaze but didn’t move from the porch. “We will love you and protect you and take care of you. We will never cheat on you. We will cherish you and do whatever we can that’s in our power to make you happy, we are bound by the Code to ensure your happiness. Honestly? I seriously meant it when I said we will spoil you rotten. But the one thing—the only thing—we ask in return is you have to submit to us.”

“Why can’t I keep my job?”

“Because for one, it’s hard to keep a low profile in TV. If you were in nearly any other profession, I would let you make the decision. For another, most mates don’t want to work outside the home.”

“What, get me barefoot and pregnant?” she bitterly spat.

The thought of her belly round with his child made Ain’s cock throb again. “Not like that. It’s like we wouldn’t want to be that far from you for any length of time. Or you from us. It’s practically a physical need, to be with your mate.”

“But you want kids.”

“Eventually.” That was the truth. “Not right now if you don’t want

them. If you decided you never wanted kids, we wouldn't force you. We will never force you. That's totally up to you." Frankly, he wanted years to play with her and knew his brothers did, too. They'd have many years to have pups, if she wanted them. It didn't have to be right now.

"So, you're not worried about me saying no and leaving and telling people what you are?"

He smiled wryly. "I can see that conversation going well. 'Hey, let's go film these guys turning into wolves.'"

She froze, then sobbed again. "I'm losing my fucking mind."

He wanted to go to her, hold her, console her. He couldn't.

"If it's any comfort, trust me, you'd be getting your way around here most of the time. We would treat you like a princess, sweetheart. I promise."

Apparently it wasn't a comfort, because she sobbed harder.

He was aware of Cail and Brodey stepping out the front door. He silently warned them not to touch her. He was also aware of the Council members drawing close. They were expecting ten tonight, ones who lived in the area.

Ain stood. "We can make you feel better," he softly said. "Or you can wait it out and in a few weeks it'll probably be bearable, if not better. Then you won't have to quit your job. It would break our hearts, and we would hate like hell to lose you but I will not force you to choose us. We only want to make you happy."

He motioned his brothers to go inside. He stood and followed them, gently shutting the door on the sound of her sobbing.

Brodey looked near tears, as did Cail. "We can't leave her out there like that," Cail said. "Dammit, she's a wreck!"

Ain's face hardened. "It's you two's fault, asshole. You did this to her. This is what I did *not* want to happen. Thanks to you, she's in misery right now."

"Well, you sure as hell didn't hesitate to sample the goodies out there in the barn earlier," Brodey angrily shot back.

Ain hated himself for that, too. “It didn’t make matters worse. You’d already done the damage. At least it gave her a few minutes of relief.”

The sound of the door opening startled them. Elain stood in the doorway, tears running down her face. She threw herself at Ain. He caught her and she wrapped her arms and legs around him as she kissed him.

Brodey kicked the door shut and followed them into the living room. Ain tried to set her on the couch but she wouldn’t let go. He turned and sat and she ground her hips against his.

“Please,” she begged. “Please make it stop. Anything, just please make me feel better.”

He finally peeled her arms from around his neck and held her wrists firmly clamped in his hands. “Look at me, Elain,” he said.

She met his gaze.

“Us and only us. And you will be the only woman we are ever with, ever again.” She was so beautiful. Their One.

She nodded.

Chapter Seven

She'd agree to anything short of murder to make this unscratchable itch go away for good. She felt Ain's stiff cock between her legs as she rubbed herself against his slacks.

"You must agree to willingly submit to us," he said. "We swear to spend our lives making you happy, we promise."

She nodded. "Wait, what about protection?"

"You're on the Pill?"

She nodded.

"Shifter perk. No STDs. But if you want, we'll use something."

"No." She wanted this feeling gone. Now.

He kissed her and she was vaguely aware of him reaching between them, pulling up her dress and unzipping his slacks. Then his hard cock slid inside her and she gasped, shuddering.

Gone. The worst was gone.

She sobbed with relief and closed her eyes as she dropped her head to Ain's shoulder. Vaguely aware of Brodey on one side and Cail on the other, she didn't care whose hands were where as Ain fucked his huge cock inside her. One of them found her clit and rubbed it. Someone else reached inside her dress and pinched and rolled her nipples in their fingers. When she cried out as she climaxed, she heard Ain grunt with satisfaction. He grabbed her hips and pounded into her several times before she felt him coming inside her.

Peace. A warm, relaxing cloud settled over her. After days of unrequited agitation, it was almost like the world's best beer buzz.

Submission goooooood.

They didn't move, didn't speak. Ain's hands gently stroked her back while Brodey and Cail each curled an arm around her shoulders. After a few minutes Ain stood, still holding her, his cock still inside her, and carried her into their bedroom.

She kept her eyes closed but felt him gently lay her on a bed. The mattress dipped as the other brothers knelt on either side of her. Then Ain kissed her and she knew regardless of what would happen, this had been the right decision.

He withdrew, leaving her slightly sad and empty. She opened her eyes and watched him remove his clothes. Apparently Cail and Brodey had stripped on the way into the bedroom because they were already naked. They lifted her dress up and over her head, and each bent to take a nipple into their mouth.

She closed her eyes again and moaned. Brodey released her breast, then she felt more movement on the bed. She cracked an eyelid open and Brodey and Ain had switched position. *Jeezus pleezus, they were identical like this, too.*

Brodey lined up his cock with her ready sex and said, "Look at me, babe."

Unable to resist, she did.

Slowly, almost torturously slow, he pressed in until his pubic bone rubbed against her clit. He softly groaned. "Do you want me to fuck you, baby?" he hoarsely asked.

She nodded.

He lifted her legs over his shoulders and stroked his cock into her, driving deep, filling her.

Ain lifted his head from her breast as his fingers stroked her clit. "Come for us, baby," he whispered. "We want another one from you. We're going to make up for what you went through, we promise."

She threw her head back and moaned. Everything they did felt right. Never before had she felt like this. He gently pinched her clit in time with his brother's strokes. Before long she felt another climax

start.

Brodey's last several strokes drove hard and deep and he moaned with her as he finished. Panting, he carefully lowered her legs and kissed the base of her throat. "Beautiful," he murmured. "You're so beautiful."

After a few minutes, Brodey withdrew and Cail switched places with him. He stroked her thighs and slipped inside her, stretching his legs along hers, holding his weight on his arms. At that angle, every stroke he took deliciously slid along her throbbing clit in a way the other two hadn't.

With Ain and Brodey gently biting her nipples, Elain gave up trying to help. She tangled her fingers in Ain and Brodey's hair and closed her eyes and enjoyed the overwhelming sensation. Cail seemed to last forever. When she was about to suggest he go ahead and enjoy himself, a deep, burning tingle started between her legs and she realized she was about to come again.

"Fuck!" she screamed, tightly gripping the other men's hair, bucking her hips against Cail.

He waited a second, then finished, dropping to lie on top of her, his head on her chest.

She let go of Ain and Brodey and wrapped her arms around Cail. Drifting off to sleep looked like a damn good option at this point. She knew she'd be sore in a good way in the morning, but the damned unscratchable erotic itch was gone.

So was her heart.

These men owned it, and she knew it. It didn't make sense, it sounded trite and stupid, but she knew it was the truth.

They lay there for a few minutes when Ain lifted his head. "Shit. Council in fifteen." He sat up. "Shower."

Elain didn't want to move. Fuck the Council. She wanted to lie there and go to sleep with her men.

Her men!

That would take some getting used to.

Cail kissed her and got up. Then she felt one of them—Ain, it turned out—pick her up and carry her.

“Sorry, baby, but we need to clean you up.” One of the other men started the shower and when Ain tried to put her down, she kept her arms wrapped around his neck.

He laughed, a sound that twisted her heart in a good way. “This won’t take long, then we’ll come back here and sleep until next week if you want. How’s that sound?”

“Promise?”

Cail nudged in next to her. It amazed her she could already tell them apart that much, his voice sounded slightly softer than his brothers, and his scent was subtly different. “Absolutely.” Cail soaped a washcloth and scrubbed her down while Brodey nuzzled the back of her neck.

Between the three men they quickly got her cleaned up and out of the shower in less than five minutes, although all three looked stiff and ready for another round.

Ain had a large, fluffy towel ready for her. He wrapped it around her and held her, nuzzled her ear. “Trust us. Please. No one will touch you but us, I promise. Pretend it’s just the three of us.”

That sliced through her mellow like a chainsaw through warm butter. “What?”

“It’ll only take a few minutes. Please, trust us.”

She swallowed hard but nodded. What the hell had she agreed to? Now with one problem solved, reality came knocking.

When she was dry, Ain handed her the sundress and she slipped it over her head. She thought the men would get dressed but they didn’t, walking naked with her to the front door.

“What do I do?” she said.

“Just follow me,” Ain said. “Do what we say.” He stopped and turned to her. “This is an ancient ceremony. We have to do things a certain way. We can’t change it. I promise we won’t hurt you, but you have to trust us.” He kissed her and she fought the urge to melt

against him.

She didn't bother to put her shoes on. She followed them down the path to the barn. Inside were ten of the largest dogs—except for the guys—she'd ever seen in her life. Most looking like wolf hybrids of some sort.

Gathered in a large, loose semi-circle, they made no sound, intently watched.

Brodey had been carrying a blanket and something else that looked like a small plastic bottle. He spread the blanket on the floor in the middle of the semi-circle. Suddenly, the three men shifted into dogs again.

Elain swallowed hard. *Oh boy.*

Ain's grey eyes nailed her. She was aware of Brodey and Cail somewhere behind her, but she wasn't sure where. Ain sat in front of her on the blanket and looked at her. A low, rumbling growl started deep in his throat. She realized all three were doing it. They stopped.

She wasn't sure what she was supposed to do.

All the other dogs growled. *Oh, yeah, right, like I can ignore THAT and pretend they aren't there.*

When they fell silent, all were still.

Ain stood and walked forward.

He growled again, only different. In her mind, his soft voice whispered.

Submit.

Her heart raced. She glanced behind her, but the other two brothers lowered their heads and rumbled again.

She turned back to Ain. Closing her eyes, she sank to her knees.

Soft chuffing sounds from the other dogs. Shifters? Wolves? What the fuck was she supposed to call them other than canine perverts? *Whatever*, apparently she'd done the right thing.

Ain stepped forward and lifted his head. She wasn't sure what to do, so she crouched on the blanket on her hands and knees. *Please, God, let 'em shift back before they do anything. I don't care what they*

are, I don't want to do it with a dog!

She felt Ain's warm, dense fur along her neck and shoulders, then her heart nearly stopped as something firm gripped the back of her neck, pointed but not so hard that it hurt.

Teeth.

Another soft, rumbling growl.

She felt gentle pressure as he pushed down.

Elain lowered herself to the blanket, ass in the air, and closed her eyes as the pressure released. Then his fur again, pressing against her, standing over her. He growled, echoed by Cail and Brodey.

Our mate, the soft mental voice whispered.

The others chuffed.

Then he was gone. She didn't look. *Okay, that wasn't so bad.*

She felt a hand stroke her ass through the dress. *Whew! Okay, definitely not bad.* She dared look and saw Ain kneeling behind her. Brodey and Cail had also shifted back. Brodey knelt in front of her while Cail stood to his side. Ain lifted her dress and she closed her eyes again. This would be a lot easier, whatever happened, without the other eyes on her, even if they were dogs.

The other two men helped pull her dress off. She heard a soft noise and looked again, saw Ain had the bottle Brodey had carried.

Aw, crap. Lube.

And sure enough, he pressed a lubed finger against her virgin rim. That's when she started to sit up and he placed a firm hand in the middle of her back as she looked over her shoulder at him.

"Please," he whispered. His eyes pleaded with her.

"I've never...not there," she whispered. "Please, no."

The firm hand became gentle, stroking. "You have to submit," he whispered. "We have to do this."

Two hands closed over hers and she looked. Cail and Brodey laced their fingers through hers. "Please," Brodey whispered, so softly she suspected even the other whatevers couldn't hear.

Cail nuzzled her forehead, gently kissed her. "It's okay, babe," he

whispered.

She dropped her head to the blanket and tried not to cry from embarrassment. It didn't hurt, but she damn sure didn't want her first time like this to be in front of a bunch of strange mutts.

Ain gently worked lube into her, still stroking her back with his free hand. Then she felt his fingers withdraw and a moment later, more lube and two fingers pressed for entrance. She tried to bite back her nervous moan, but she couldn't.

He hesitated, waiting.

After a few minutes he worked up to three fingers and she tried not to tense when she knew what was next. His large cock pressed against her and she froze, afraid. He waited, stroking her back, then curled around her.

"Breathe," he whispered into her ear. "Relax." He finally pressed through the first resistance and waited for her to adjust.

It was hard to breathe and relax, especially with the uncomfortable burn in her ass as his cock stretched her, but she did her best. After a moment he slowly pressed forward until he was fully sheathed inside her.

Then his strong arms encircled her. He sat up, pulling her against his chest, her head against his shoulder. He tenderly kissed her cheek. "Relax, sweetie," he whispered.

She was aware of Brodey crowding close in front of them. When she felt his cock between her legs she realized what was happening.

Ain felt her tense. "Relax," he whispered. "Please."

Fighting back a sob, she relaxed in his arms.

Having Brodey slide inside her erotically stretched her, filling her with sensations she'd never had before. When he started playing with her nipples, the little remaining discomfort soon transformed to pleasure.

She gasped, panting. Ain slid one hand lower, between her legs, and found her clit. She moaned.

Okay, that was damn good.

A gentle hand caressed her cheek. She opened her eyes and Cail stood there, looking down at her, his stiff cock...

Oh boy.

She met his eyes and he nodded.

Why not? Hell, maybe she'd wake up with food poisoning in the hospital or something and this would all have been a dream. She closed her eyes and reached for him, pulled him to her. She wrapped her lips around his cock and enjoyed the soft, deep rumbling that swept through his body.

Well, damn. He must like that.

He gently fisted her hair and she gave up trying to think or even hold herself up. Her men were in control, taking her along for the ride.

Ain gently nipped her ear. "Come for us, baby," he whispered. "Please."

She was about to tell him there was no way in hell she'd ever make it when she felt it start, shocking her, then ripping a loud cry from her lips, muffled by Cail's cock in her mouth. As she came she suddenly felt Ain's teeth clamp down hard on her right shoulder, breaking the skin probably, but that only served to drive her further and faster over the edge. Then all three men were moving, thrusting, groaning. She tasted Cail as his seed pumped over her tongue and didn't even have time to consider the taste—not bad, actually—before another blast of her own hit her, rocking her, setting off explosions behind her eyelids.

All strength gone, she went limp in their arms and trusted they would hold her. She winced slightly as Ain and Brodey withdrew. One of them, Ain, lowered her to the blanket and protectively curled his body around her, holding her tightly against him.

Then Brodey snuggled in tight on her other side while Cail stroked her hair.

Exhausted, she dozed.

She awoke to being carried, wrapped in the blanket, in Ain's

arms. She closed her eyes again. If they needed her, they'd say so.

She heard them walk through the house, then she smelled chlorine and heard water rumbling.

Ain kissed her forehead. "Let's sit in the hot tub for a little while, baby," he whispered.

She nodded.

He set her on her feet but kept one arm around her, unswaddled her from the blanket, then picked her up and stepped in. She heard the other two men get in but she didn't open her eyes, content to stay curled tightly against Ain's chest in the comfortably warm water.

Hands tenderly stroked her arms, held her hands, rubbed her feet. She'd be...well, fucking sore in the morning. All over. She had no idea how long they sat there because she kept dozing off. As exhausted as she was, physically, mentally, and emotionally, she also felt safer and more secure than she ever had in her entire life.

A gentle finger touched her lips. "Open, sweetie. Take these." She thought that was Cail. He popped two capsules into her mouth, followed by a straw. She swallowed the medicine, then drank the cold water, all without opening her eyes.

"Tylenol PM," he said. *Yep, definitely Cail*, she thought. His voice bore a softer edge than the other two.

She snuggled against Ain's chest again and drifted. At one point she felt them swaddle her in a towel, was aware of the men talking, and then the feel of cool, crisp sheets against her skin. Ain's warm, firm body protectively curled around her.

She slept.

Chapter Eight

When Elain opened her eyes, she instinctively snuggled tightly against the warm, firm body pressed into her back.

Ain.

She knew it without looking, although she wasn't sure how.

He kissed the back of her neck and pulled her closer. "How do you feel?" The deeper quality of his voice confirmed her suspected identification.

She was afraid to move too much. Starting with her toes, she carefully wiggled and stretched parts. Her leg muscles, especially her thighs, offered up a protest, and she was a little raw around the edges, so to speak, but nothing she couldn't deal with. Her shoulder ached where he'd bit her. Overall she felt like she'd been twisted into a pretzel, stretched, then put together inside out by someone reading the human being assembly instruction manual backwards.

Other than that, damn spiffy.

"I'll live."

"But will you enjoy it?"

She laughed and carefully rolled over to face him. His playful smile made her heart thump. Yep, she had it bad for him. "I think so." The blinds were drawn but she saw it was daylight outside from the way sunlight struggled to peek around the edges. They were alone in the bedroom. She realized it was a huge freaking bed, and the bedroom door was shut.

"What time is it?"

"Nearly noon." He brushed his fingers along her cheek. "Are you really okay? Want me to get you more Tylenol or something?"

“Not right now. I’m too comfy for you to move.”

“Then I’ll stay right here.” He pressed a kiss to her temple.

She closed her eyes again and relaxed. “Where are the others?”

“I made them pull their weight today. They’re doing chores. I usually run the outside end of the operation. Cail handles the office stuff, Brodey does whatever we tell him to do.”

“It’s good ta be da Prime, huh?”

He laughed. The deep, rumbling sound stirred her insides even though she was still too damn tired to do anything about it. “Yeah, it does have its perks sometimes.”

“I don’t know anything about you,” she softly said. Awake and without the horribly debilitating horniness, now she could think straight.

“Ask.”

“Anything?”

“Anything.”

She tipped her head back to look into his eyes. “Where were you born?”

“Outside of Aberdeen.” The way he said it, he rolled the R a little and her breath caught in her throat.

“Not the one over in Palm Beach?”

He laughed and shook his head. “Not even close.”

“You guys are Scottish? Like, from Scotland Scottish?”

He grinned. “Aye, lass.”

“Holy crap!” she breathlessly said.

“What?”

“Say some more!”

“Some more what?”

“Talk like that!”

He laughed and rolled onto his back. “Baby, please don’t ask us to quote *Braveheart*. I’m so sick of that movie I could scream.” He looked at her. “We spent a lot of years learning to not speak with a brogue when we came to the States. Then after we left Maine, it took

me nearly ten years to quit saying *ayuh* when we moved here to Florida.”

She pouted.

“Oh, honey, do *not* pull the puppy dog eyes on me this fast,” he chided. “Give me a day or so.”

“How long have you been in Florida?”

“We moved here in 1948.”

Okay, now was the time to start dealing with the crazy shape-shifter stuff. She carefully, with his help, sat up. “What’s going to happen to me now?”

He propped himself up on one arm. Elain tried not to stare at his firm abs. “You mean by being our mate?”

“Yeah.”

“You felt the first thing last night. Being able to hear us with your mind. But it’ll take a while to kick in full-time. Usually several weeks, if not months.”

“So that was real?”

He nodded.

“What else?”

“Aging slows way down. Beyond that we’ll have to wait and see. It’s different for every mate. Being with three Alphas, it could mean you become pretty strong in some ways.”

She needed a moment to come to terms with all of that. The previous night felt fuzzy, hazy in her mind. “I thought there could only be one Alpha in a family.”

“Pack,” he gently corrected.

“Pack. Why do you three live together?”

“Triplets. It’s different. We’re identical.”

“No you’re not. Your eyes are different.”

“For all intents and purposes we’re identical. If you have two brothers who are different ages and both Alpha, good luck getting them to live together long term in the same house. It won’t happen. We’re the only known triplets. There are some twins, but even with

twins sometimes only one's a shifter. When that's the case, they usually don't live together. Or if one's an Alpha and one isn't, even if they're both shifters, they can have separate mates. There are very few twin shifters where both are Alpha. Then they have to live together to find their One. In multiple litters, the Alpha shifters have to share their One."

She studied his face. "Why did you make me do that last night, up the ass? I'm not happy that my first time was like that."

He reddened and looked away. "I'm sorry. It was part of the ceremony. I told you, they had to verify the mating. We won't ever make you do that again if you don't want to."

She might want to, but not in front of an audience and certainly not in the next few days until her body recovered from last night's lupine Lambada. She snorted. "Thank God you weren't quadruplets."

He snickered. "Yeah, that would have made things logistically challenging. At least with twins you get a little choice how to do it." He met her eyes, looked worried. "Are you really okay?"

"Physically, yeah, I'll be okay. Mentally I'm still...adjusting."

He leaned in and brushed a tender kiss across her lips. "We should go down to the courthouse tomorrow and get married—"

"Whoa!" She pushed him back. "Stop right the fuck there!"

"What?"

"You're making me quit my job *and* you're just going to fucking drag me down to the courthouse to get married? Are you shitting me?"

He frowned. "We need to work on your mouth, too."

She threw back the covers despite the pain it caused her and climbed out of bed. She didn't see her dress but a T-shirt hung from the closet doorknob. She pulled it on and it fell nearly to her knees.

"Where are you going?"

She stomped to the door. "This is my daily temper tantrum. I guess if I'm your One you'll just have to learn to fucking live with it." She flung the bedroom door open, but before she was halfway

through the living room Ain had his arm around her waist and had tossed her over his shoulder like she weighed nothing.

“No you don’t, babe. You’re not leaving here like that.”

She started thrashing and kicking and realized it was like pounding on a tree. Back to the bedroom. He kicked the door shut behind him and dumped her on the bed. “You aren’t going anywhere until you’ve had time to recover. You need your rest.”

She tried to get up and he knelt over her.

“Let me go!”

He pinned her to the bed and fixed his gaze on her. “*Stop*,” he said, his voice deep and coming from somewhere powerful.

All will drained from her. *Fuck!*

He softened his voice. “Elain, honey, please. Just *calm down*. Don’t go off half-cocked.”

Despite not wanting to cry, she did. “Dammit, this is not fair!”

“I never said you couldn’t have a wedding,” he calmly said.

“You said we were going to the courthouse!”

“You never asked if that was negotiable. That was my *idea*, not a final decree. A rational person would have said, ‘But I don’t want to get married at the courthouse.’ And I would have said, ‘Then what *do* you want to do?’ And a rational person would have said...” His voice drifted off. He looked at her, and she realized he was waiting for her to fill in the blank.

In a soft voice she barely recognized as her own, she said, “I want a real wedding.”

He leaned in and kissed her, then released her hands and sat up. “Okay. That’s progress. This is a two-way street, you know.”

“Well, maybe a rational man would have said, ‘Honey, I’d like to get married at the courthouse, but what do you want to do?’”

He thought about it and nodded. “You’re right.”

She blinked. “What?”

“You’re right. I’m sorry.”

She blinked again. “Huh?”

He smiled. "I'm sorry. I apologize. You're right that after what happened last night, that probably came out sounding wrong."

She stared at him in disbelief. "You're apologizing? That easy?"

"Um, yeah. Just because I'm Prime doesn't mean I'm an asshole. At least I try not to be. What part of 'spoiling you rotten' did I not make clear?"

She sat up and looked at him. "Really? I can have a wedding?"

"We need to set down some ground rules first."

"Ah. Okay. Is this where you become an asshole?"

"Is this where you become Bridezilla?"

She fell back against the bed. "Holy crap." She squealed in protest when he flipped her over and swatted her, hard, across the ass.

"What was that for?" she screamed.

"A warning." He leaned in and kissed her, distracting her. "You're too beautiful to swear like that."

"You are *sooo* not going to spank me on a regular basis, dude."

He fixed his eyes on her and she melted again.

"Oh, really?" he asked.

Unable to speak, she nodded.

"Then you'd better clean up your mouth. I'll give you some time to work on it. I don't care if you swear occasionally, but try to find some more ladylike alternatives."

"You're on thin ice, dude."

"I like swimming in cold water."

She tried for a stony face and couldn't maintain it. She finally laughed. When she did, he smiled.

"Get the tantrums out of your system now, baby. I don't want to be like that with you. I know this is a lot to learn, just let us teach you." He pulled her into his arms. "Let's go over some ground rules. You need to do what we say. Usually we'll give you a say in the matter, but we get the final vote. There's going to be times it doesn't go your way, and you have to accept that."

She frowned. "I'm not a kid."

“Considering we’re over two hundred years older than you, uh, yeah, you’re a kid.”

“Don’t you dare pull the ‘because I’m older’ bullshit.”

He frowned. “Mouth.”

She stuck her tongue out at him. He tried to frown, but he laughed. “You either like getting spanked or you’re in for an eye-opening experience.” He sighed. “Most of the time, there won’t be an issue. There are going to be times you have to adhere to certain protocols. Like around other Council members, other shifters. And if you don’t follow those, we won’t hesitate to correct you. In public.”

From the stern tone of his voice she knew he was serious.

He continued. “You can’t play us against each other, either. We catch you doing that, you’re definitely getting spanked. If you ask one of us something and they don’t give you an answer you like, you can’t come running to someone else and try to get your way.”

“But you’re in charge!”

“And I stay that way because we have clear communication around here. I would strongly suggest you learn to get all three of us together to talk about stuff that matters. Big stuff. Then the three of us can put our heads together and come to a decision. If you want something and ask only one of us and they say no, that’s it.”

“That sounds pretty dam—dang petty.”

He smiled when he heard her catch herself. “No, it’s to preserve order. I’m not going to overrule one of them unless it’s something serious, like a violation of the Code. They know the Code as well as I do, so I doubt that’s an issue.”

“And what exactly is *that*?”

“You’ll learn it. We’ll teach you. I also suggest you learn to ask questions before jumping to conclusions or getting upset without all the information.”

She reddened. “I’m sorry. I pitch a good tantrum.”

“So I see. There’s no reason for that.” He leaned in and kissed her. “Give us a chance to show you how much we love you. I promise, in

a few months, you'll understand." He thought for a moment. "We need to get your stuff moved here and discuss what you want to do with your house."

Sadness again. "I really have to quit, huh?"

He nodded. "I'm sorry, sweetheart, but there's too much risk. If you were in a low-profile profession and you worked locally, I would let you keep your job if that's what you wanted. What happens in ten or twenty years when you don't look any older? We have to keep a low profile. Right now, everyone thinks we're the grandsons of the original owners."

"What if I wasn't on the air?"

He studied her. "What do you mean?"

She swallowed hard. She didn't want to give up her job. Being crew was better than nothing. "What if...what if I go back to behind the scenes? One of the producers is going on maternity leave in a couple of weeks. I could volunteer to fill her slot. I wouldn't be on camera."

"You're living *here*. With us. That means two hours a day spent commuting, there and back. That's a lot of driving."

"I know."

He studied her for a long moment. "Do you have any vacation time coming?"

"A week."

"Can you take it this week?"

She melted under the power of his eyes. "I guess."

He leaned in and kissed her nose. "Take the vacation time. Call them today and arrange it." He sighed. "I will *not* give you an answer today about you keeping your job. However, I will think about it and give you my answer at the end of your vacation time. But if you bug me or the others about it before then, I will tell you no. Understand?"

She nodded. "What do I tell my boss about needing vacation?"

"The truth." He stroked her cheek and she closed her eyes, enjoying the feel of his warm flesh against hers. "That you need some

personal time.”

“Oh fu...dge.”

“What?”

“My mom’s coming to visit in eight weeks. She’s supposed to stay for a month.”

“So?”

“What do you mean, so?” She waved her hand at the bedroom. “I guess we can get by on the wedding. How do we explain all of us being in the same bedroom?”

He smirked. “This house has eight bedrooms. Who’s to say who sleeps where?”

“Oh.” *That was easy.* “And back to the subject of a wedding, how do we exactly do that? Polygamy is illegal in Florida.”

“You legally marry me.”

“Prime perk.”

The corner of his mouth turned up in a smile. “You’re getting the hang of it. We’ll have a ceremony for Brodey and Cail, too. They’ll wear wedding rings. Just because I’ll be your husband in legal designation doesn’t make them any less your husbands. Getting married is a technicality. It’s to legally protect you, make sure you have full rights to our assets, because the only thing that matters to us is what happened last night.”

She rubbed her shoulder. “Did you have to bite me so fu...freaking hard?”

“Let me look at it.” She turned and he pulled up the T-shirt, ran his fingers over her shoulder. “It’s mostly healed already. And it looks beautiful on you. That’s proof to others of our kind that you are well and truly taken.” He leaned in and feathered his lips over her flesh. She closed her eyes and tried to hold back a moan at how good it felt. Then he kissed her shoulder and dropped her shirt.

“Yeah, you guys well and truly took me last night, all right,” she snarked.

He was going to reply when the front door opened and slammed

shut. Brodey and Cail crowded through the bedroom door with broad, beaming grins on their faces.

“She’s awake!” Cail said. They pushed and shoved and Brodey made it to her first and kissed her, followed by Cail.

“Why aren’t you outside?” Ain asked.

“We’re done with the morning stuff,” Brodey said. “Time for lunch.”

“That was record time for you two assholes.”

“Hey! How come you get to swear and I don’t?” she complained.

Ain leaned in and kissed her, deeply, distracting her. “Because I say so,” he said with a smile.

“Argh!”

Cail laughed. “You realize he’s teasing, right? He’s just a little traditional. He wants you to be more ladylike.”

She looked at Ain. When he winked she felt her stomach flutter with desire and her aggravation at him sailed right out the window.

Chapter Nine

The men cooked her a delicious brunch while she called and arranged her time off. After, Cail and Brodey went outside to finish working and Ain carted her back to bed when she tried to argue about going home to get some things.

“You *are* going to rest today.” He glared. “That’s an order.”

Her will melted again. “Fine!” she huffed.

He’d pulled on a pair of shorts. She still wore the T-shirt. He reached for the TV remote and stretched out in bed next to her. “You went through a lot last night.” He curled an arm around her. “I want you to rest. You don’t have to go today.”

“I’m not an invalid.”

He nuzzled her forehead. “We know, sweetie. Please, just rest today. Let us have fun spoiling you rotten, okay? We spent a lot of lonely years waiting for you.”

That softened her. If she was complaining about a year since her last relationship, she could only imagine...

“Then at least talk to me.” She reached for the remote and turned the volume down on the TV. “Tell me about your family.”

“We’ve got ten brothers scattered around the world. Shifters. Another fifteen siblings that have already died. Our parents died over twenty-five years ago in a car crash.”

“I’m sorry.”

He shrugged. “The old movie fantasy is just that. We can shift whenever we want, although full moons give us extra energy and stamina. We heal much faster than a human, our bodies can take a lot more punishment, but we can still be killed.”

“So our kids...” She didn’t want to think about that. At least she’d had her Pill for the day. Thank God she kept the packet in her purse.

“I don’t have exact numbers, obviously. Most shifters are male, there are few female shifters. Not every child a shifter has is a shifter. Maybe half of them. Some couples never have a child that shifts, some have every child with the right genes.”

He rolled to his side and stroked her cheek. “I meant it when I said you’re not going to spend your life pregnant. We would like to eventually have kids, but if you decide you don’t want any, then that’s it.”

He laced his fingers through hers and brought her hand to his mouth, kissed it. “I know there’s a lot to learn about what we are, and yes, we will have final say on things, but I also meant it when I said that we will devote our lives to making you happy. We have to protect our secret. We have to abide by Clan protocols and the Code of the Ancients.” He smiled. “But once all this settles down, you’re going to find you’ve got a lot more power over us than you might think you do right now.”

He spent the afternoon answering her questions. It was obvious she was a reporter because he never got a chance to ask her anything.

She was surprised to find when she floated a few trial balloons for wedding ideas that he was agreeable within certain limits. He didn’t want a huge crowd of people, fine with her, and the station couldn’t film it for obvious reasons. The budget he allowed her was many times what she expected and had ever planned to use in her wildest dreams.

An idea hit her. “How much money are you guys worth?”

“Does it matter?”

“I’m curious.”

“Cail does the bookkeeping. Let’s just say you don’t have any worries.”

“Humor me. Give me a ballpark.”

He shrugged. “He told me when he did taxes this year our

declared assets were around sixty million. That's not all cash, obviously. We've got real estate, investments. And that's not counting some off-shore accounts and the Swiss bank accounts."

She blinked, trying to absorb that information. When she could finally speak again, she asked, "Then why are you running a cattle ranch?"

He shrugged. "Have to do something. We like it. We like the area, it's easy to stay under the radar. In another fifteen or twenty years we might talk about moving again somewhere else." He rubbed her legs and back for her, both relaxing her and setting off a flurry of delicious sensations in her belly.

She'd pulled the T-shirt off. Seemed pointless to wear it. "I know something else you can do." She playfully wiggled her hips. She was still a little sore although the full-body massage he'd given her had helped.

He gently patted her ass. "Maybe later, sweetheart."

She rolled over and pouted. "I'm okay. Just a little sore."

"Maybe after dinner." He gave her a look she was quickly coming to think of as "the look." "Don't get pushy. We'll have a lot of years together."

Eventually she did fall asleep again. When she awoke alone in bed it was after six o'clock. She pulled on the T-shirt and walked into the kitchen. The men weren't there, but she heard them outside talking. She found a bottle of Tylenol and washed three of them down with water. She'd awoken with another thought that irritated the snot out of her.

Prime or not, Ain was getting a piece of her mind.

The men walked in a few minutes later and smiled when they saw her in the kitchen, until they realized she was upset.

"What's wrong?" Ain asked.

She crossed her arms and refused to look in their eyes or it would totally ruin her stewed mood. "You guys are just assuming I'm going to marry you."

The men exchanged a puzzled look. “But we were discussing what you wanted to do,” Ain said.

“And none of you jerks have even asked me to marry you!”

The men looked stunned, then laughed. Ain swept her into his arms before she could protest, with Brodey and Cail flanking them, pressing close, holding her between them. Ain kissed her and she knew, dammit, she *would* melt. She couldn’t resist him.

He dropped to one knee and produced a small box from the pocket of his shorts. Inside, a gorgeous sapphire and diamond ring that brought tears to her eyes. “Will you marry me?”

Okay, crazy mood swings, but she had a hunky guy. *Three* hunky guys. She eagerly bobbed her head. “Yes!”

Cail and Brodey each held one of her hands, and they knelt, too. Brodey asked first, “Will you marry me, too?”

She laughed. “Yes.”

“Don’t forget me,” Cail teased. “Will you marry me?”

Okay, they had her, from head to...well, tail. She laughed harder. “Yes, cripes, yes, I’ll marry all three of you.”

She pulled off her grandmother’s rings and transferred them to her right hand. Ain slid the engagement ring onto her left ring finger. “You need to learn patience, sweetheart. We were going to do this after dinner.” He stood and kissed her. Then Brodey and Cail each took turns kissing her. By the time Cail released her she wanted them to cart her back to bed and make love to her all night long.

Instead, Ain made her sit on the couch and watch TV while he helped his brothers cook dinner. *At least they’re not turning me into a scullery maid*, she thought. *Maybe he really did mean they were going to spoil me rotten.*

After a good dinner, Brodey scooped her into his arms and carried her to the bedroom while Ain and Cail took care of the dishes. “You look beautiful in my shirt, babe.”

“Oh, this is yours?” Come to think of it, it did smell like Brodey. She couldn’t explain why the men smelled different to her. It was a

subtle difference, something very faint, not like a cologne. Ain had a musky scent with almost a hint of something like eucalyptus, masculine. Brodey reminded her of cinnamon and nutmeg. Cail's unique scent conjured thoughts of fresh-cut hay, sweet and earthy.

Brodey gently placed her on the bed and curled up beside her. "Yeah." He kissed her.

Fuck, I'm sooo screwed.

A wave of need washed through her. She wrapped her arms and legs around him and tried to hump his leg.

He pulled the shirt up and gently sucked one of her nipples, drawing a moan from her. "How you feel?" he asked.

"I'm not swinging off a chandelier tonight, but don't leave me hanging."

He quickly stripped, then kissed her belly as he moved lower. "No, sweetie, I won't do that. Never again." He settled his mouth over her mound. That's where he was when Cail and Ain walked in.

"Told you," Cail said as he stripped off his shirt. "You owe me five bucks. Knew he couldn't keep his hands off her."

Ain didn't respond, just rolled his eyes and started stripping.

Elain didn't care because she was in heaven. Brodey had her squirming on the bed. When Cail pressed his lips to hers she grabbed him and fucked her tongue deep into his mouth, drawing an amused laugh. He managed to come up for air.

"I'd say she's in the mood to play."

Brodey clamped his hands around her thighs and drove his tongue into her sex. Ain stretched out on her other side and turned her face to his.

"Look at me," he whispered.

She forced her eyes open.

"We love you. We promise we'll take care of you, baby. We'll spend our lives making you happy, I swear it, we all do. Just trust us that we know what we're talking about."

She nodded.

He kissed her, and then Brodey did something delicious between her legs that set off a mind-blowing climax. She cried out as Ain whispered encouragement to her while she trembled on the bed between them.

Just when she approached the point she didn't think she could take it anymore, Brodey relented and lifted his mouth and replaced it with his stiff cock.

They both moaned as he thrust home. He pulled her into his lap and she wrapped her legs and arms around him. He pressed his lips to her ear. "I love you, sweetie. Jesus, I love you so much."

She shivered in his arms. She felt it from him. It wasn't just bullshit words from her men.

Her men.

He stroked her back as he rolled his hips beneath her. She pressed her lips to his shoulder when a persistent thought kept bumping against her mind.

She bit him.

He yelped, but his thrusts deepened, quickened, and she held on for the ride as he came. Then he gently lowered her to the mattress. "Holy fuck, that was great, babe! You okay?"

She nodded. She was still a little achy but she wouldn't let it interfere with her fun. "You okay?" She traced her fingers across the mark she'd left. Not hard enough to break the skin, but apparently enough to flip his switch.

Saying she'd kill for his broad, beaming grin wasn't an exaggeration. He nuzzled her nose with his, tenderly kissed her. "That was perfect," he whispered. "You're perfect. It's like you read my mind."

She looked at Cail and crooked a finger at him.

He grinned and rolled on top of her. "Yeeeeessss?"

Kissing him in reply, he slipped inside her and slowly stroked, a different style than the night before. As she sensed him rolling toward his orgasm, she had a thought and raked her nails down his back

before digging them into his ass.

“Do it,” she said, “Come for me, baby.”

He let out a loud cry and buried his cock even deeper, held still, his eyes closed.

She wouldn’t let him go, held him with his face resting on her shoulder. When he finally recovered he looked at her. “That was amazing!”

“It’s what you wanted, right?”

He smiled and nuzzled her nose. “Yeah.”

Ain grinned. “That’s fantastic! Usually it takes weeks for that to start happening.”

She shot him an annoyed glare. “Uh, what about last night?”

“I told you, the ceremony’s different. Usually it takes a while for it to kick in full-time after that.”

Cail kissed her and carefully rolled off her. That left Ain. She climbed on top of him and kissed him. “Your turn.”

He smiled. “I wasn’t going to say anything in case you were too sore.”

“Don’t expect anything else out of me tonight. Just enjoy yourself.”

He did. She wouldn’t deny feeling their thick cocks inside her was amazing. He rested his hands on her hips and thrust up into her. She stroked his chest. All three men were lightly fuzzed with fine, dark down, thank God they weren’t frickin’ furry.

He met her gaze and she felt it, his thought.

I love you.

She smiled and thought back, *I love you, too.*

He grinned. Then he grabbed her hips and finished in three strokes.

Cail and Brodey knew something had happened.

“What?” Brodey asked. “What is it?”

She looked at him. *I love your purple eyes.*

He looked confused. “What? Babe, my eyes aren’t...” Realization

dawned and he grinned. “So that *is* how you knew. Aw, fuck me!”

“Already did, sweetie.” *I love you.*

He laughed, leaned in and kissed her. *I love you, too.*

She turned to Cail. “Can you guys hear when I do that with one of the others?”

He shook his head. “I know you’re talking, but it’s like hearing it through a wall. It’s not clear.”

She met his eyes. *I love you.*

His broad, beaming smile and sweet brown eyes melted her. *Honey, you have no idea how much I love you.*

Ain grabbed her and gently pulled her down to the bed, into his arms. “Bed time. You can experiment with your new superpowers tomorrow.”

She laughed. “Superpowers?”

He kissed the back of her neck. “Yeah.”

Apparently Cail got to cuddle up on her other side that night. She suspected one of Ain’s Prime perks was getting to be by her side every night and that the other two would have to trade off.

All things considered, she thought she was handling this fairly well. Shape-shifters real, check. Hunky triplet love muffins who only had eyes for her, check.

Not just hunky...

“Hey, Brodey,” she mumbled.

“What, babe?”

“Speak Scottish for me.”

He laughed from somewhere on the other side of Cail. “Frrrreedoom!”

Ain and Cail groaned. “Don’t get him started!” they said together.

She smiled and closed her eyes and drifted to sleep in the arms of her men.

THE END

WWW.TYMBERDALTON.COM

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tymber Dalton lives in southwest Florida with her husband (aka “The World’s Best Husband™”) and son. She loves her family, writing, coffee, dark chocolate, music, a good book, hockey, and her dogs (even when they try to drink her coffee and steal her chocolate).

When she’s not dodging hurricanes or writing, she can be found doing line edits or reading or thinking up something else to write. She’s a bestselling writer published in several genres and loves to hear from readers. Please feel free to drop by her website to keep abreast of the latest news, views, snarkage, and releases.

You can also check out her other bestsellers, such as “Love Slave for Two” and “Love at First Bight,” available on the BookStrand website.

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