

Changeling Press

# SIXTY NINE ADIE



Kate Hill

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## **Kate Hill**

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Now that Hugo, the nasty werewolf from Triple Shot Tracy, has been imprisoned, all is well at the magic campground -- unless, of course, you're the wolf himself.

Hugo has been living under a curse. Considering his reputation, it seems to be well deserved. Only a certain type of woman can release him and he has spent ages looking for her. It seems his chance for freedom is over, until Sadie arrives with the power to set him free in every way.

But will his disposition, not to mention his archenemy, Charity the Werewolf Queen, ruin his final chance at happiness?

## Chapter One

The werewolf growled and paced the length of his cell. His blue eyes gleamed against the black fur covering his face. He was a fascinating creature. Standing on two legs, like a man, he had clawed hands and feet and a face that shared the characteristics of man and wolf -- an elongated nose and a mouth filled with sharp white teeth. His long, sleekly muscled, unclothed body was covered in a coarse black animal coat. Yet to Sadie, who stood watching him from a safe distance, he was beautiful.

In the magical world, Sadie was an expert on shapeshifters. Recently she had been contacted by the Princeton family who specialized in supernatural beast control along the area of Hot River outside the Wicked Wild. Hot River ran through the heart of the magical world, cleansing it and providing life. Sadie had spent years on its banks and prided herself in knowing the habits of just about every race of shapeshifter who lived along it.

In spite of this wolf's particularly dangerous nature, the Princeton brothers had decided not to kill him. They needed her expertise to either cure him or keep him contained. She'd spent the past five years in the Wicked Wild, the best place to study werewolves. No doubt if anyone could help the Princetons with their fanged, hairy problem, Sadie was the one to do it.

The werewolf stopped pacing and grasped the bars of the cell. He stared at her, his growls softening, and ran his tongue over his dark lips. Sadie's stomach tightened. She longed to move closer, to touch him, feel the hard muscles rippling beneath his animal coat, but at the moment he was far too dangerous. No doubt in his current state he would tear anyone who approached to shreds. She needed time to work with him, to help him harness his power and temper it.

Behind her, she heard the scuffle of boots on the stone floor in the dungeon where the beast was caged. She had almost forgotten the Princeton triplets -- Tripp, Oakes and Jeb -- stood behind her.

"Can you help him?" Oakes asked.

Sadie drew a deep breath and released it slowly, then turned and faced the identical blue-eyed, black-haired triplets. They were great hunters of primitive supernatural beasts, but when it came to rehabilitation of higher creatures, such as shapeshifters, they were sorely lacking in skills. Yet their concern for this werewolf seemed genuine.

"Possibly," she said. "His kind can be difficult to deal with, but I haven't seen one this cranky in years. Other than the female pack in the Wicked Wild, of course, but they have much more control over their powers. Still that's not surprising. Females handle the curse much better than males."

The triplets exchanged glances and Jeb said, "Maybe the females are so ornery because he's responsible for the state they're in."

Sadie's eyes widened and she jerked her thumb in the direction of the cage. "This is Hugo?"

"You know him?" Tripp asked.

"Who doesn't?" she snorted. "He has the worst reputation in the werewolf community. This changes everything." She turned back to the cage, her heart pounding with the excitement of a good challenge.

"Changes what?" Tripp demanded. "Does that mean you won't help us?"

"On the contrary, it has sealed the deal. I want him. If I can help one like him, that means my training has been worthwhile. I'll have to move him to my place."

Oakes stepped closer to her, his expression concerned. "I'm not sure moving him is a wise idea."

She turned to him and spoke with authority, "It's the only way. You said yourself you've had to monitor him day and night and still he's broken through every

magical seal you've placed around his cell. I can already see that the current seal isn't nearly powerful enough."

"And you have something more powerful?" Tripp said, his expression skeptical.

She lifted her chin and met his gaze. "That's why you called me, isn't it? I'm the expert on shapeshifters, not to mention I have extensively studied the same branch of magic as the wizard who placed this curse on him."

The brothers looked at each other. Tripp and Jeb nodded at Oakes who sighed deeply and said, "All right. You're our only hope of helping him. It's either you or we have to kill him. And trust me, that's the last thing we want to do."

"I understand. He's a magnificent specimen."

"The hell with what kind of specimen he is," Tripp growled. "He's our brother."

Sadie cocked an eyebrow. "I see."

"Tell us, lady, can you break the curse?" Jeb asked.

"No one can. Some beast-curses are breakable, but not this one."

The triplets looked stunned.

"Don't worry," Sadie said. "This curse can't be broken, but it can be controlled. If he wants to learn, I can teach him."

Tripp rubbed his stubbled jaw and shook his head. "You might have a problem there. If you think Hugo is disagreeable as a wolf, he's even worse as a man."

Sadie once again locked gazes with the gorgeous blue-eyed wolf and murmured, "We'll see about that."

"When do you plan to move him?" Jeb asked.

"As soon as possible. I can use your help to transport him to my house. Once we're there, I'll put him somewhere safe and place a magical seal around him. When he reverts to his man form, we can begin work."

"If he agrees," Oakes reminded her. "If he doesn't, we'll have to..." His voice drifted off and he ran a hand through his hair, agitated. "Damn Hugo. He's always been trouble."

"More trouble than he's worth," Tripp muttered under his breath.

"Somehow I doubt that," Sadie stated. Just looking at Hugo made her tingle all over. He emanated power and vitality, not to mention he was the most beautiful werewolf she'd ever seen. The very idea of taming him, helping him to harness that power and turn it in a direction that could help rather than harm the magical world was a challenge she couldn't resist.

As if sensing the changes that were about to take place, Hugo threw back his head and howled long and loud. His eyes, tinted red with anger, glared at her and the triplets. Growling savagely, he shook the bars and the cage creaked beneath his strength. Sadie's well-trained eyes detected ripples in the magical seal surrounding the cage. It wouldn't hold much longer.

"We need to act quickly," she said. "Get your transport vehicle."

"Lady, are you sure you'll be able to handle him?" Tripp demanded, glancing from Sadie to Hugo, who was still straining at the bars.

Pulling herself up to her full height, she stepped closer to Tripp and held his gaze. "You and your brothers called me because you know I am best equipped to handle this situation. I have lived among his kind and due to my advanced magical studies I have perfected the creation of a charm that repels the wolf curse. Because of it, I am not at risk of becoming like him, even if he bites me."

"What about if he fucks you?" Tripp said bluntly. "He didn't change all those women by roughing them up. He's not that much of a monster. Not yet. They went to him willingly."

"I assure you, my charm works regardless of the method the werewolf uses. Biting. Fucking. Even a curse itself will not penetrate the charm. If you don't trust me, you might as well shoot a silver bullet through your brother's heart right now. By looking at him, you don't have any other options."

"She's right," Oakes stated. "Jeb, get the truck."

Sadie drew another deep breath.

This was it.



She had spent her life hoping for an opportunity like this and she could scarcely wait until she and this gorgeous wolf were at her house. Alone.

\* \* \*

Sadie stood facing the Princeton triplets in the foyer of her big stone house deep in the Wicked Wild. Just moments ago they had secured Hugo in the cellar. The werewolf had been rendered unconscious to make transporting him easier, but he would soon awaken and Sadie wanted to be there when he did.

"I think we should stay until you're certain you can handle him," Tripp said.

"If I didn't know I could handle him, I wouldn't have brought him here," Sadie assured him. "Once you leave, I'll place a seal around my property. If anything happens to me, he'll be trapped here. No matter how you look at it, Hugo is no longer your problem."

"He's our brother," Oakes reminded her. "Just because we called you doesn't mean we've disowned him."

Sadie closed her eyes for slightly longer than a blink. These men were incredibly stubborn and she didn't want to waste time arguing with them. Still, she realized they took their job seriously. The magical community had entrusted them to stop Hugo from stalking the Hot River area. Should he escape, they would feel responsible.

"If there is any chance of helping your brother, I'll be the one who can do it," she said. "Now please let me do my work. I need to be alone with him so that he can learn to trust me."

Tripp snorted. "Trust you? A woman? We told you that his involvement with a woman got him cursed to begin with."

This time Sadie didn't try to keep the annoyance from her face. Oakes stared at her, his brow furrowed, then he glanced at his brothers and said, "Let's go. This is her area of expertise."

Sadie sighed deeply. "Thank you."

Jeb opened the door and he stepped outside, followed by Tripp. Before Oakes left, he turned to her and said, "If anything goes wrong, call us. We're trusting you so you need to trust us if you need help."

"I will," Sadie said, holding his gaze. "You have my word."

Once the brothers left her property, Sadie closed her eyes and focused all her strength on creating the magical seal. Moments later, her property was secure. She rested for a short time, then made her way to the kitchen where she gathered her supplies before heading to the cellar.

On her way down, she glanced absently at the stone floors and walls decorated with pictures and tapestries. This house had belonged to the witch who had raised her after her family died. Sadie's heart ached with bittersweet memories of her guardian.

She'd been alone in this house for a long time. Now she would once again share it, this time not with an old, motherly wizard, but with a young, virile werewolf. A savagely handsome werewolf.

Just thinking about Hugo made her clit ach and nipples turn pebble-hard. That fuzzy fetish of hers wasn't something she liked to brag about, nor was it something she could deny. She liked beast-shifters and Hugo was the most fascinating one she had ever met.

She walked down the long, winding stairs to the cellar. Since their studies mostly focused on magical beasts, her guardian had built a few large cages in the cellar to house their specimens. Hugo now occupied one of them.

At the moment he lay on the bed, his arms and legs tied with magical bonds. She approached and placed her bag of supplies on the simple wooden table beside the bed. Her gaze fixed on him. Her heart pounded with anticipation.

Still in his wolf form, he remained very still except for the rise and fall of his chest. The compulsion dust Sadie had used to make him sleep would soon wear off. Once he reverted to his human form, she would be able to talk to him. Until he learned to control his power, trying to reason with him while he was in wolf form would be a waste of time.

He growled softly and twitched, his eyelids fluttering. Sadie stared, anxiously waiting for him to open those gorgeous blue eyes.

The werewolf grimaced, his sharp teeth exposed, and he shifted uneasily. Slowly the fur receded from his body until only a light dusting of dark hair remained across his chest, forearms and calves.

Sadie tingled all over. He had been sexy in his beast form, but as a man he was incredibly handsome with a chiseled jawline, a hawkish nose and a full, sensual mouth. His wavy black hair hung to his shoulders. Sadie restrained the urge to run her fingers through it; mostly because of the ferocious look he was giving her.

Again he growled and it seemed even more disturbing since he was in his man form.

"My name is Sadie," she said in a soft but confident voice. "Do you remember how you got here?"

He continued glaring at her in silence for several seconds more, then he spoke in a deep, husky voice that dripped with sarcasm, "My loving brothers brought me here."

"They're more loving than you know," she informed him. "They could have killed you."

"It would have been preferable to this," he snarled and struggled against his bonds. She knew he was quite strong, but the bonds would hold.

"You don't even know what *this* is yet," she said. "I've spent most of my life studying shapeshifters, werewolves in particular. I also study the branch of magic responsible for your curse."

Abruptly he stopped struggling, narrowed his eyes and studied her with a calculating expression. As a beast he might be on the dumb side, but she sensed as a man he was cunning. His brothers had warned her of his intelligence. She needed to remain cautious.

"What exactly do you want with me?" he asked quietly.

"I want to help you."

He gave a snort of laughter then glared at her. "There's no such thing as a *helpful* woman. You're all trouble."

"Perhaps the trouble isn't with women, but with you. I know you were cursed because you tried to steal Kyra, the intended bride of the wizard, Mato."

"After learning her true nature, I must say it would have been a worse curse if I'd won her."

Sadie chuckled softly. "That's true. Kyra isn't the sweet, innocent little thing she appears to be, and that's great for her sake. Otherwise she would be miserable bound to someone like Mato. He can be difficult, to say the least."

"How would you know?"

"Long ago I studied with him. That's why I know I can help you, if you let me."

"Help me." He curled his lip, closed his eyes and shook his head slightly. "For the past three years I have traveled all over the magical world searching for the woman who can break this curse. Do you know how many times I've tried?"

"Yes. It's no secret the damage you've caused in your search for freedom. Over sixty women have become werewolves because of you."

"Sixty-eight." He opened his eyes and stared at her, his expression harsh and goading. "Apparently you're trying to become sixty-nine."

She smiled indulgently. This man was so arrogant, yet in spite of his outward toughness she sensed vulnerability deep inside him. He was a strange contradiction. For centuries his family had defended the magical community against evil, but he had chosen not to join the family business. Instead, he became one of Cupid's helpers. Rather than use his magical skills to hunt and kill, he had instead turned toward helping others find love. Surely a man like that had a good side. No doubt the curse had much to do with the evil turn he had taken, seducing and changing women into the same kind of beast he was forced to become during the full moon. If left unchecked, the werewolf curse would send its victim down a path of evil and eventually devour him. If she could teach him how to control his power, then there was hope of rescuing the good man buried deep inside him.

She knew from talking to his brothers that he had always had a fierce side and an interest in the Wicked Wild. So often in the magical world people thought in terms of good and evil. A person was either one or the other. People thought that anyone who dwelled in the Wicked Wild had to be evil. Sadie knew this wasn't true. More often than not, people had both good and evil inside them. Over the years, she had come to realize a person needed to master both in order to fully grow.

"I can help you if you let me," she said.

"By keeping me in bonds?"

"Until you learn to control the beast inside you, it will be necessary to keep you restrained when you're in wolf form. There is a magical seal around my property, so you're stuck here until I choose to let you go."

"Or until I kill you," he snarled and once again strained against his bonds. After a moment, he stopped struggling and lay panting. "Eventually, I will break these."

"I know," she said. "But if you agree to let me help you, that won't be necessary. I'll release you from them."

"Oh, I promise," he said smoothly.

"Something tells me you're being less than sincere. Maybe you need some time to recuperate. I know changing shape uses a lot of energy. Once you've rested, we'll talk more. Would you like a drink of water before I leave you?"

"Fuck you."

Sadie turned on her heel and stalked out of the chamber. It was best to leave him alone for a while. Let him think about what she'd told him.

## Chapter Two

Hugo lay fuming. How dare this insolent bitch hold him captive? It was bad enough when his brothers had taken him into custody. He had actually been hoping they'd kill him. They had such an overdeveloped sense of justice that he felt certain they would believe execution was the only way to deal with him. Of course he had forgotten that family meant almost as much to them as their duty. Their sentimentality had stolen Hugo's one chance at peace.

Though he had always had a wild nature and an interest in the dangerous side of magic, he had never considered himself evil. He had never imagined using his powers against anyone who didn't deserve it. He always believed magic should be used more for pleasure than pain, which was why he had decided to work for Cupid.

Love and lust were two of the most glorious pleasures in life. Hugo had enjoyed bringing couples together -- until he was assigned to match the enchantress, Kyra, with the wizard, Mato.

Mato was ancient, with a nasty disposition, and Kyra, well... She was very beautiful, with dark skin and hair the color of ink. When she looked at a man with her lovely amber eyes, it was difficult not to fall under her spell. Hugo, with his lustful nature, had been no exception.

He'd been a complete fool and thought he had fallen in love with her. Little did he know she was really using him to make Mato jealous so he would provide her with a better marriage settlement -- common practice among certain magical people. A wizard provided his mate with jewels and other items that would remain with her even if the marriage ended.

When Mato discovered their affair, he had placed the werewolf curse on Hugo, saying that if he wanted to act like a wolf, seducing innocent young women, then he would have the physical characteristics to match.

Kyra might have been young, but she sure as hell wasn't innocent. If anyone had been a naïve fool, it was Hugo.

As the curse took a tighter hold upon him, his bitterness toward women grew, especially when he learned the only way he could break the curse was through the love of a desperate woman. Now Sadie had told him even that was a lie and there was no cure.

She claimed to know how to control the beast inside him. As if he would ever believe *any* woman again.

Just thinking about this entire situation made him furious. He struggled against the bonds until he lay panting and sweaty but no closer to freedom than he had been a couple of hours before. He was an avid practitioner of magic and tried every spell he knew to break through the empowered bonds holding him, but Sadie's magic didn't respond.

Damn this woman!

He closed his eyes and tried to regulate his breathing. Then her scent grew stronger. The delicious aroma of peony and her own delicate, natural musk. His cock stirred and he detested his uncontrollable lust. Hugo's second biggest curse was that he loved women as much as he hated them. Sadie in particular stirred his interest. She was infuriating, but there was something about her that called to him. Though her face was rather unusual -- heart-shaped with slanted brown eyes and a longish nose -- he found her to be incredibly beautiful. She was tall with luscious curves. Hugo imagined what it would be like to make love with her.

Sadie stepped into the cell, her gaze sweeping him.

"I see you haven't been resting at all," she said. "Trying to escape, were you?"

"No. I always sweat like a bull in mating season," he said sarcastically.

In the sink across the room, she poured a glass of water and dampened a facecloth. She approached and bathed his face with the cloth, ignoring the way he tried to turn his head away from her. Unfortunately, he was at her mercy. She lifted his head and held the water to his lips so he could drink. Hugo resisted the urge to spit the liquid in her face. Not only was he quite thirsty, but from where he lay if he spit, he would probably just miss her and drench himself.

"Why are you making this so difficult?" she asked, placing the cloth and glass aside, then sitting on the edge of the bed he was bound to. "What do you have to lose if you let me help you? If your brothers take you back, you face execution."

"It's preferable."

"To what? Living with a power you can't control? You're right about that, but I know I can help you. Then you could live a normal life again."

"Normal? As a werewolf?"

"Other people have done it. You might even find some benefits from the beast. Best of all, you won't have to be alone. And you have been lonely, haven't you?"

"No."

"Really?" She placed a hand lightly on his chest and he wondered if she felt the pounding of his heart. He wished he had some clothes, anything to cover the massive erection inspired by her nearness. "How long has it been since you were close to someone? I mean really close, a physical and emotional connection that didn't result in your partner turning into a wolf just seconds after climax?"

He stared at her, tight-lipped, though inside strange and uncomfortable feelings darted through him. She was right. He was lonely, so lonely that he didn't like to think about it. Instead, he buried his feelings and concentrated on his magical research, looking for a way to rid himself of this curse.

"We can make love, Hugo," she said, her hand trailing over his ribs. Her touch was so soft and alluring.

"You want to be a werewolf?" he demanded gruffly. "Because that's what will happen."



"No. Your curse can't hurt me," she said. "We can make love. I find you very attractive, Hugo."

"What do you plan to do? Fuck me while I'm tied up?" He tried to sound harsh, but already his body was pulsing with desire.

"I'll let you go if you promise to behave."

"I never behave."

"Then if you promise not to try to hurt me. I *can* defend myself very well when necessary."

"Got a gun with silver bullets handy?" He curled his lip in a wicked grin.

Part of him wanted to shake her, while another part desperately wanted to fuck her. Yet he didn't want to be responsible for another disaster. He'd already ruined enough women, turned them into beasts. He no longer had any hope of finding one who could cure him.

"I know I have the reputation of being a fucking bastard," he said. "And the truth is, I'd love to suck those gorgeous tits of yours and fill your fragrant pussy with my cock. But another truth is that fucking me puts hair on your chest. Literally."

"Not me. That's a promise." She leaned down and slid her hands beneath his neck. Her full, pink lips hovered over his and she stared into his eyes. Never had he seen such a look of complete honesty on a woman and it incited an emotional battle inside him. "Let me show you that you can still have pleasure and closeness. We can satisfy each other, Hugo, and then we'll talk about getting your life back. What do you have to lose?"

He drew a deep breath. She was right. He no longer had anything to lose at all.

"Fine," he said.

"Good." Her mouth covered his and he closed his eyes, enjoying the kiss. Their tongues met, thrusting against each other, so warm and wet. She tasted delicious and felt even better.

The bonds loosened from his arms and legs and he instinctively embraced her, pulling her onto him. Her big, soft breasts pressed against his chest and his swollen

cock lay trapped between their bodies. Damn, he wanted to tear off her clothes and feel her bare flesh against his.

He slid his hand beneath her plain black T-shirt and caressed the soft, warm flesh on her stomach and back. Finding the clasp on her bra, he smiled slightly and opened it, then tugged her shirt up. Sadie pulled off both the T-shirt and the bra, baring half her gorgeous body.

Hugo's desire leapt at the sight of her large, round breasts, the nipples stiff and ripe for his touch. Hanging just between her beautiful breasts was a large pendant suspended from a thin gold chain around her neck. He touched a fingertip to it and said, "That's the biggest pearl I've ever seen."

"It's magical," she said, taking the necklace between her fingertips. "In it I can see what's going on around my property, almost like a human surveillance camera, but smaller and prettier."

"It certainly does look pretty right where it's hanging." He grinned roguishly and tugged her down toward him.

Sadie placed her hands on the bed while he took one of her irresistible nipples into his mouth and sucked deeply. Sadie gasped and moaned with delight. Her hips thrust against him as she rubbed the cleft between her legs against his swollen cock.

He was already so aroused by this unbelievably sexy woman that his cock felt ready to explode. He was no stranger to lovemaking, but no woman had ever stirred his emotions as much as Sadie, perhaps because she seemed to read him so well.

He began sucking her other nipple while at the same time fondling the breast he'd just left. He gently pinched one nipple, then used the tip of his tongue to circle the other.

Hugo relished the texture of her areola, noting the little pleasure bumps that sprang to life beneath his teasing tongue. He used his teeth to tug on her large, sensitive nipple, and she cried out. "Oh, Hugo! Yes, oh, yes!"

With a growl that was somewhere between human and animal, he shifted their position so she lay flat on the bed and he loomed above her. Gazing into her eyes, he

felt such a tangle of emotions that he groaned. At the moment he didn't want to think, but wanted only to feel pleasure. Obviously she didn't care about consequences, so why should he? Judging by the look in her beautiful dark eyes, she wanted this every bit as much as he did.

There was just enough room on the bed for him to stretch out beside her. He continued sucking and licking her nipples. He unzipped her jeans and slid his hand down her panties to fondle her soft mound. He kneaded it with his whole hand, then pushed two fingers into her drenched pussy.

She moaned and her hips thrust upward. Hugo explored her soft, wet cunt, then withdrew his fingers and rubbed her clit. Again she moaned beneath the slow, steady rhythm of his fingers. He knew by her scent and the echo of her racing heartbeat that she was on the verge of coming.

Sadie panted and squirmed as Hugo rubbed faster. Then her hips thrust up hard and her belly clenched and unclenched. Waves of orgasm struck her and he once again thrust his fingers into her, relishing the sensation of her hot, wet flesh pulsing around him. If only it was his cock inside her instead of his fingers, but he had time for that. He wanted to savor every moment, and that meant tasting her before fucking her.

While she recovered, he pulled off her shoes and the rest of her clothes. Finally he settled back onto the bed and guided her legs over his shoulders. Clutching her smooth, tight ass, he lowered his head and devoured her clit. He sucked and lapped it and she squirmed with rekindled passion, but he held her steady and continued his relentless teasing.

Sadie came a second time, more quickly than he'd imagined. She was hot, this Sadie. She loved physical pleasure every bit as much as he did and this turned him on even more.

He thrust his tongue inside her pussy and to his pleasure it was still pulsing with the force of her climax.

By now Hugo's cock really did feel on the verge of bursting. The frustrating ache had become almost unbearable. He desperately wanted to fuck her.

Without further hesitation, he covered her body with his. Sadie spread her legs wide to accommodate him. She seemed as eager to feel him inside her as he was eager to fill her.

Still he moved slowly, savoring every moment as he thrust his rock-hard cock deep inside her.

"Hugo," she breathed, her strong fingers biting into his shoulders. Her neck arched back and she thrust her hips against his.

He kissed her throat, then her lips, all the while pumping steadily into her in spite of how he longed to lunge hard and fast to appease the almost unendurable tension. Now that the moment was here, he didn't want to rush, no matter how much his body screamed for relief.

Sadie used the soles of her feet to stroke his calves, then she locked her legs tightly around him. Finally overcome by need, Hugo thrust hard and fast. She came within seconds, her body hot and tense beneath him. The pulsations of her soft, slick flesh around his cock drove him over the edge. With a raw cry, he came and she continued clinging to him until he collapsed on top of her.

Their panting breaths mingled and for several moments Hugo remained on top of her before moving aside.

Sadie cuddled close to him as they recovered, then she brushed his mouth with a kiss, straddled him again and asked, "How did that feel?"

He stared at her with a guarded expression, then a wicked grin touched his lips and he cupped her breasts, squeezing gently, and said, "Liberating. At least for me."

"I told you, I'm safe from your curse. We can do this anytime." She bent and kissed him, thrusting her tongue between his lips. He grasped her upper arms and pulled her down so they lay breast to chest. His tongue met hers, then he gently bit and sucked her lower lip.

When the kiss broke, her gaze fixed on his and she spoke softly, not wanting to destroy the moment, "Give me a chance to help you control your power. What have you got to lose?"

## Chapter Three

Hugo didn't reply immediately. What did he have to lose? More than Sadie could imagine. The desire for partnership had been his downfall from the first. He wanted a woman who shared the dark place in his soul, his love for the freedom and danger of the Wicked Wild, though at the same time he wanted loyalty and love. Or at least that's what he had wanted once. He would have been willing to give the same in return, but he had stupidly fallen for the wrong woman. Looking back he could see it had been lust, not love, he had felt for Kyra. He'd changed so much since then and he'd learned a lot, but that knowledge had come at a price.

For years he'd searched for a way to break the curse that turned him into a mindless beast each full moon. Actually, mindless wasn't the right word. He was still able to think and had vague memories of what he did while in his beast form, but during that time his primal emotions took over. His savage instincts and desires ruled, burying his intellect and making him dangerous.

It was rumored that only a woman desperate for love could break his curse. He'd tried everything from courting lonely women to making love with those hungry for physical release. Each time, the results had been the same. His curse had passed on to his partner.

He had expected the same to happen to Sadie. The woman had been so self-righteous, believing she could "help" him. She'd taken him captive. Utterly humiliating. Then with her carefully chosen words, she had struck at a place in his heart he thought had long since hardened. She'd tempted him, taunted him with the promise of fulfilling his physical and emotional needs. At the time, he thought the best way to teach the bitch a lesson was to give her what she asked for.

Usually right after making love, his partner changed into a beast. The first time the magic was always so strong that a full moon wasn't necessary. To his surprise, Sadie remained just as she was -- a beautiful woman with soft, human skin and calm, dark eyes that stared at him without the disgust, fear and loathing he was accustomed to. Even his own family looked at him like that, not that he blamed them. Regardless of whether or not he had been cursed, they had never been able to forgive him for not joining the family business. As much as he respected their work, it wasn't right for him. He'd never fit in among those knights in shining armor. Everything was so simple in the Princeton family. People were either good or bad. Right or wrong. There was no in between. No extenuating circumstances. Fuck it; there was no room for individuality.

Sadie caressed his cheek and said, "Hugo?"

It struck him that she was the kind of woman he'd searched for all his life -- one who seemed to understand him. Not to mention she lived in the Wicked Wild, yet he sensed no evil in her.

He had become so jaded that he almost hadn't noticed how alike they were, or had been. Maybe he hadn't started out evil, but he had certainly turned down that path.

"How do you intend to help me?" he asked, keeping his voice aloof. He didn't want to surrender too quickly.

"Your curse can never be broken. You will always be a werewolf, but you can learn to control your power. I can teach you how to focus, even through the change. You will have the strength and agility of the wolf, but retain your intelligence."

That was almost too much to wish for.

"How do you know this is possible?"

"I've worked with many shapeshifters and I have learned techniques that will help. We'll use mind control exercises similar to the ones we practice when studying magic. I won't lie and tell you it will be easy. Harnessing the beast's power is especially difficult for men. Women handle it much better, as you know by the behavior of the female pack you created."

"I didn't create the pack."

A smile touched her lips. "Only the she-wolves in it."

He sighed and shook his head in disgust. "You have me there."

"They live in relative harmony here in the Wicked Wild. Of course they fight when they have to and they hunt, but when in wolf form they are not mindless creatures. In many ways you have given them power they never would have had."

"So I did them a favor? Somehow I don't think they agree."

"At the moment, you can't think about them or anything else you might have done in your beast form. Your actions were beyond your control. From now on, however, you won't have that excuse. I'm offering you a chance to take back your life and see that you don't hurt anyone else. If you don't at least try to let me help you, then your brothers will have no choice but to execute you."

Hugo wanted to say that might be best all around, but his survival instinct was too strong. He hated being in this position and he detested ultimatums.

"Why do you want to *help* me?" He sneered the word.

She caressed his face and trailed her finger over his lips. He sensed her desire for him. His enhanced senses could smell it and hear it in her heartbeat, but that was no reason to risk her life attempting to tame a werewolf.

"Because if I can help you, then I can help others like you, but most of all because I think you're worth it. You're not evil, Hugo. I have lived in the Wicked Wild long enough to have crossed paths with truly evil creatures and they are not like you."

"Many would argue with that observation."

"I don't care what other people say. I trust my instincts and follow my own path."

"And accept the consequences?"

Staring into his eyes, she stated, "Always."

He stroked a tendril of black hair from her face. She was a complex woman. Arrogant and courageous, but also kind. It had been a long, long time since anyone had treated him with kindness and in spite of himself he softened toward her.

"I might hurt you, kill you even, without intending to," he said.

"I know, but we'll take precautions. When you change, I'll keep you in the cellar with a magical seal around your cage. In time, that will not be necessary because you will learn to control yourself."

"You sound so sure of that."

"I have to be, and you must be, too. You are your own master, Hugo. No matter what happens you can't forget that, or else the beast will continue to grow stronger and stronger until you no longer have the strength to fight it."

"I know," he whispered. "I can feel it happening."

"Will you let me help you?"

For a long moment they held each other's gaze, then he said, "Yes."

"Good. We'll begin training in the morning. Good night, Hugo." She brushed his mouth with a kiss, then curled up beside him.

He lay for several moments, staring at the ceiling. His thoughts churned so much he knew he wouldn't fall asleep easily. Not to mention it had been so long since he'd slept beside someone that it felt strange, but not unpleasantly so. Actually, he wanted to tug her into his arms, sleep with her lush body close to his, but something prevented him from reaching out to her.

"Hold me," she murmured.

"What?" he asked sharply, his heartbeat quickening. How did this woman seem to know his every need?

She glanced at him over her shoulder and asked, "Will you hold me please? If you don't want to you don't have to, but --"

"No. I...don't mind." He gathered her close and she wiggled into a more comfortable position.

Her shapely ass rubbed against his cock, making it stiffen. Hugo closed his eyes and tried to resist the urge to fuck her again. Finally, she sighed with contentment and settled to sleep.

Holding her soothed him in a way he hadn't imagined possible and soon he drifted off too.



\* \* \*

The following morning after breakfast, Sadie and Hugo started the day with some exercise -- a jog then a swim in the river that ran through Sadie's land. Afterward they sat in the great room on the burgundy carpet in front of the fireplace. The weather was far too warm for them to light a fire, but it was a comfortable place to sit and meditate.

Sadie taught him some simple meditations to help him focus and said that eventually they would work toward more complex exercises.

"The most important thing is to latch onto a particular thought while you're in the process of shifting shape," she explained.

He snorted. "That's not easy."

"No. It's not. I realize the shapeshifting process hurts, but these meditations will also help with the pain. Once you become more experienced, the pain will diminish greatly. Many of the werewolves I've worked with said it fades to little more than an annoyance. You will also learn to change shape at will."

"If that's true, then I can prevent the change from happening at all."

"No. During the full moon, all werewolves change. You have no choice. But you can learn to change at any other time. If you want to run through the forest in your wolf form, or if you need to defend yourself in combat, you can summon your power and it will be there for you."

He tilted his head to one side, a slight smile tugging at his lips. "That could be useful."

"Yes. It could. But right now close your eyes and concentrate."

"Yes, ma'am."

She shook her head and grinned, then brushed his mouth with a kiss. "*Concentrate*. I'm going to reinforce the seal around the property."

"I won't be changing until midnight of the next full moon."

"You're not the only danger in the Wicked Wild. I'm just as concerned with keeping certain people out as I am with keeping you in."

"I should warn you that if the female pack knows I'm here, they might attack this house."

"Don't worry about them. I'm more concerned with the Wildmen."

Hugo's brow furrowed. "Last I heard they were miles north of here."

"A colony has moved just a few miles downriver from here. The dragon population up north has expanded so much this year that the Wildmen have been driven south, so we've inherited them. Aren't we lucky?" she asked, her tone sarcastic.

Wildmen -- seven-to-eight-foot tall cannibalistic men covered in shaggy hair -- were among the oldest and most dangerous inhabitants of the Wicked Wild. Usually they stayed in the colder climates and hunted animals for food, but they had a taste for all sorts of flesh, including human. They were also known to kill and eat their own weak, old and injured. A werewolf of Hugo's size could probably defeat one Wildman, however they traveled in groups and were experts at fighting as a unit.

"Why do you live out here?" he asked.

"I like the Wicked Wild. It's never dull and there are less restrictions on the kind of magic one can practice out here. When it comes to studying werewolves and other shapeshifters, your average sweet fairy magic isn't very helpful."

"Why the interest in shapeshifters?"

"My oldest brother was bitten by a were-leopard. One night he killed my entire family. I was the only survivor. When he reverted to his human form and realized what he'd done, he killed himself."

Hugo stared at her, stunned. "How old were you?"

"Eleven. The magical council took me into custody and a witch who was an expert in shapeshifters took me in. She wanted to show me that not all shifters are violent and out of control. If not for her, I would probably still be terrified not only of shifters, but of life in general."

"You're..." He sighed and closed his eyes for a moment. "You're a remarkable woman, Sadie. After what happened, I would think you'd hate anyone like me."

"I've followed your case for quite a while, Hugo. You're one of the most feared werewolves around because you hunt so close to civilized people and because you have passed on your curse to so many women. However, to my knowledge, you have never killed anyone."

"I've been lucky, but I'm not sure how much longer I'll be able to control myself."

"You *will* control yourself. Remember what I told you. You have to believe in yourself."

"Then I better get back to my meditation."

She smiled. From the moment she'd set eyes on him she knew he was a special man. There was a connection between them and now more than ever she wanted to see him take his life back.

\* \* \*

Sadie spent the next few hours in the upstairs room she used as her magical workshop. When she was satisfied with the new seals she created, she returned to the great room and found Hugo still seated on the rug, his eyes closed and brow furrowed in concentration.

A smile tugged at her lips.

"Hugo," she said softly and stood behind him, gently sweeping her hands over his forehead, "you're trying too hard."

"I have to."

"For this particular exercise, you have to relax. It's time for a break. Are you hungry?"

"Yes. In every way." He grasped her wrist and tugged her onto the floor beside him. He licked his lips, a sexy gleam in his eyes, and kissed her.

Sadie slipped her arms around his neck and relished every caress of his lips and thrust of his tongue against hers.

He broke the kiss and pulled off her skirt and panties, then rolled her onto her stomach, grasped her hips and guided her onto all fours.

"Stay," he ordered, his hands still firm on her hips.

She glanced at him over her shoulder. The way he took charge when they made love turned her on so much that already she could scarcely wait for him to fill her with his cock. She loved the way he claimed her with power and tenderness.

"You're very beautiful", he said, caressing her ass. He covered it with soft, moist kisses. All the while his hands stroked her back and thighs. One arm slid beneath her so he could fondle her clit. His fingers rubbed her sensitive flesh and she squirmed with desire.

He nipped her bottom, then kissed her lower back.

"Your skin is so soft," he said. "I never get tired of touching you."

"I love how you touch me, too, and I love touching you."

"Do you?"

"Oh yes," she murmured, her breath catching as he mounted her from behind. His long, thick cock thrust into her pussy and his fingers once again teased her clit.

They fell silent for several moments as he pumped into her, driving them toward orgasm but not allowing them to leap over it.

He pulled out of her, guided her onto her back and covered her body with his. Bracing his hands on either side of her head, he once again filled her pussy with his thick erection. He began thrusting slowly and steadily, pushing her back toward orgasm. While he directed their passion, he covered her face with gentle kisses. His lips brushed across her eyelids and he playfully kissed the tip of her nose.

Sadie purred with pleasure. He covered her mouth with his and thrust his tongue between her lips. She moaned and responded enthusiastically to his kiss.

Wrapping her legs around him, she ran her hands over his back, loving the feel of his powerful muscles beneath his warm, smooth flesh. He doubled the speed of his pumping hips. The wonderful friction of his hot flesh against hers drove her over the edge.

Crying out his name, she clung to him as the orgasm broke over her. She expected him to come, but instead he stopped thrusting and remained still, his body tense as her pussy throbbed around his cock.

He slowly withdrew from her and settled onto his back. Sadie rolled toward him and rested her cheek against his chest. She heard his heart pounding and opened her eyes to gaze at his cock that stood stiff and glistening with her juices.

At that moment she wanted to pleasure him, drive him to orgasm just as he'd done to her.

Sadie knelt between his legs. She massaged his inner thighs and stared at his thick, beautiful cock.

He grunted softly and she lifted her gaze. Seeing the desire in his gorgeous blue eyes rekindled her passion. She licked her lips, clasped his cock and took the head into her mouth. While she licked and sucked his erection, she stroked his cock and fondled his balls. Her tongue swept over his velvety cock head. She tasted her essence combined with the droplets of pre-come leaking from the little eye on the crown of his erection.

"Hell, Sadie," he panted, his muscles tense. "It feels...so good."

She moaned softly in response and sucked him faster and harder. Her hand gently squeezed his tight balls and she felt little tremors of delight coursing through him. She didn't pause but teased him to the edge then pushed him over by flicking her tongue against the underside of his cock head.

Hugo's body arched. He groaned with pleasure and came long and hard.

When he finished, he lay with his eyes closed, his full lips curved into a contented smile.

At that moment it fully struck Sadie how much she cared about this man, not just to see if she could tame his beast, but because she truly wanted him to be happy. Even more, she sensed they could possibly have a future together. They were more alike than she'd ever imagined.

## Chapter Four

After nearly two weeks of training, Hugo began to make progress. Though he wasn't ready to shift shape at will, Sadie had started teaching him the steps toward doing so. Most important of all, he started to believe that maybe he could live with the curse. Sadie wanted so much to tell him that the power of the werewolf, if used wisely, was more a gift than a curse, but she needed to be patient. Eventually he would understand that.

Early one morning she left him in the dungeon, deep in meditation. Today she intended for them to train outside and she wanted to make some preparations. She stood in the kitchen packing lunch into a basket when she felt a ripple in the seal around her property. Gazing into her magical pearl -- the one Hugo had admired earlier -- she saw a tall, angry-looking, red-haired woman standing on the edge of her land facing the front of her house.

Sadie closed her eyes and sighed. She had been expecting this.

It was Charity, the werewolf queen.

There was no way to avoid the inevitable.

Sadie left the house and walked down the dirt path to the place where Charity stood growling softly. The woman's piercing gray eyes fixed on Sadie with a look that brought the most powerful men to their knees. But Sadie was a woman and could match Charity in every way.

Not that she wished to fight with the werewolf queen. She considered Charity a good friend. The beast woman had welcomed Sadie into her pack and allowed her to learn from them. Sadie would always be grateful for her hospitality and she wasn't insensitive to the wolf women's anger toward Hugo. She had known from the first it would be nearly impossible to help him without offending Charity and her pack, but in

the long run everyone would be better off if Hugo learned to control his powers. She needed to convince Charity of this, yet she had no illusions that it would be an easy task. The females of Charity's pack wanted him dead.

Though no one else could pass by the protective seal, Sadie as its creator was able to step through unhindered. She stood facing Charity. At five feet ten inches, Sadie wasn't a short woman, but she needed to tilt her head up slightly to meet Charity's gaze, for the werewolf queen stood six-feet one-inch tall. Her eyes blazed with anger and Sadie got the feeling she was restraining herself from slipping into her beast form.

"You have him here," Charity said. "That bastard Hugo is in your house."

"Yes," Sadie stated, her voice calm. "He is here and here he will remain until I can teach him to control his power."

"Hugo doesn't want to control his power. He never did. That's why he was cursed. For a lack of control and a lack of respect for everyone and everything except his own desires."

"Charity, I know you have reason to be angry with him."

"Too right! My women and I have sworn revenge against the monster who made us what we are. No one will stand in our way. Not even you, Sadie."

"I agree he was wrong in what he did, but from what you told me, none of you were forced."

"We were lured!"

"You suffered just because you wanted some love. It was wrong and cruel, but you have turned your misfortune into an empire. When I lived with your pack, you told me that you have come to embrace your power. You control it, not the other way around. That's one of the strengths of the female werewolf -- the ability to think rationally even when the beast takes over your body."

"Don't try to change the subject, Sadie. There is no avoiding the fact that he deserves punishment."

"He has suffered, too, Charity."

Now the werewolf queen looked really mad. She growled savagely, baring her teeth and clenching her fists as she stepped so close to Sadie their bodies almost touched. “You *dare* talk to *me* about his suffering?”

“I know. You have no reason to care about him, but at least think of others. If he learns to control his power, then there will be no more attacks, no more unsuspecting women changed in the midst of lovemaking.”

“Killing him would provide the same benefits as well as justice. Why does this man mean so much to you? I thought you were on our side.”

“I am.” Sadie shook her head, exasperated. “That sounds like a contradiction and I must admit I have some selfish reasons for what I do. I want to know if all my years of study have been worthwhile. If I can help him, then I can help others as well. Doesn’t that mean something?”

“It would if you were practicing your techniques on anyone but Hugo. He was dangerous even before he was cursed. Always flaunting his good looks and tempting women, especially with all he learned from Cupid. A man like that didn’t need additional lessons in seduction. We were so foolish to fall for him.” Charity paced the dirt ground, then paused and kicked a root with her bare foot. Like most shifters in the Wicked Wild, she rarely wore clothes or shoes, so her feet had toughened up so much she didn’t even flinch.

Charity turned to Sadie with a discerning look. “Have you fallen for him? Is that what this is about? I know how shapeshifters attract you.”

“That’s ridiculous,” Sadie lied.

“Is it?” Charity’s face elongated a bit as she summoned her wolfish powers. She sniffed the air, then curled her lip. “The scent of fucking is in the air. Faint, but still here. Don’t let him get to you, Sadie. He *will* destroy you.”

“He doesn’t have the power to destroy me.”

Charity gave a wry laugh. “That’s what we all thought. I respect you, Sadie. I know you mean well, but believe me when I tell you the only justice will be in killing Hugo, and I won’t give up. He might be safe behind your magical seal for now, but you



won't be able to keep him here forever. As soon as we have the opportunity, my pack and I will give him the punishment he deserves."

Without waiting for a reply, Charity turned and fled, her flaming red hair whipping behind her and her long legs devouring the path until she finally disappeared into the trees.

\* \* \*

Two days later, just before dawn, Sadie and Hugo lay sleeping in each other's arms when they were awakened by a terrible pounding against the magical seal surrounding her property.

"What the hell is it?" Hugo demanded. "It sounds like the Wildmen might be trying to break through the seal."

Sadie looked into her magic pearl and her stomach tightened. Charity and her werewolf warriors were using their combined strength to break through the seal. It wouldn't hold under this attack.

"It's the werewolf queen and her pack," Sadie said.

"Fuck," he muttered and stood, pulling on his trousers and boots. "They want me."

"Most likely." Sadie also pulled on her clothes. "You stay here. I'll talk to them."

"No. They want revenge and won't leave until they get it. There's no point in you risking yourself."

"They won't harm me."

"Then you don't know Charity very well. There's nothing charitable about her."

"That's not true. Hugo, listen to me --"

The entire forest seemed to rock. Sadie and Hugo stumbled into each other's arms. Their gazes locked and she said, "It's too late. They're through the barrier. Let me deal with them."

Ignoring her completely, he pushed her aside and headed for the door.

Sadie followed him and just as they reached the bottom of the long staircase, the front double doors burst open and the werewolf women, most in their full beast form or

halfway between woman and beast, poured into the house, surrounding Sadie and Hugo.

Charity strode forward, her gray eyes even more piercing against the red hair covering her face and form.

"Charity, listen to me," Sadie said. "Don't do this."

The werewolf queen growled, grasped Hugo by the back of the neck and jerked him closer. She swept her tongue across his lips and he spat away her kiss.

"What's the matter, lover?" she said, her voice deep and rumbling in her beast chest. "At one time you liked the feel of my tongue on you."

"You liked all our tongues," shouted another woman from the crowd. "And our tits and cunts."

"You took our love and left us cursed," Charity said. "Now we will have our revenge. Does it surprise you that we can change shape at will and that we can speak and think in our beast form?"

"No," Hugo replied calmly, his gaze meeting Charity's. Sadie was surprised by how cool and collected he appeared. He wasn't fighting, as she had expected him to. "You want me, then take me. Leave Sadie out of it."

Charity curled her lip and grasped his face in her clawed hand. "Of course we will. Sadie is not our enemy. That title is reserved solely for you."

With another savage growl, she jerked her hand away from his face, leaving several bloody scratches on his cheeks. Sadie winced. She needed to find a way to stop this madness. These women had a right to hate him, but she also knew they enjoyed their new life in the Wicked Wild. They relished the power of the werewolf. Surely that counted for something.

Sadie grasped the werewolf queen's arm and said, "I won't let you do this, Charity."

"You have no choice," Charity snarled. "Interfere and we will destroy you, friend or not."

"There is another way to settle this."

Again Charity growled. "You don't want to challenge me, Sadie. You'll lose."

"We'll see."

Hugo glanced from one woman to the other and asked, "Sadie, what is she talking about?"

"Never mind, Hugo. Go with them and I'll come for you soon. Charity, if you kill him, we will be at war."

"My girls and I love war."

"I don't, but I'm still very good at it," Sadie warned.

"In accordance with our laws, this man will be executed at noon today. You have until then to act, if you really believe he is worth the destruction of our friendship."

As Charity spoke, several of the werewolves approached Hugo and used magical restraints to bind his hands and feet. They attached a thick collar to his neck and fastened a heavy chain to it. Charity took the leash and jerked on it, leading him outside. Though he kept his proud posture, he moved awkwardly beneath the weight of his bonds.

Sadie watched him go, her stomach tight and heart pounding. She knew what she had to do. There was no other alternative. She must fight the werewolf queen for Hugo's release.

\* \* \*

Hugo grunted in pain as yet another wolf woman raked her sharp claws down his back. He had been captured a few short hours ago, but already the women had taken years worth of vengeance out on his hide. He'd been whipped, clawed, bitten and dragged around the dusty clearing in the center of their village. Now he dangled by his hands between two thick poles while random women abused him as they saw fit. His arms ached and his body, drenched in blood and sweat, felt like one enormous sting.

"Bastard!" A woman named Margo spat in his face.

He blinked his eyes clear and forced a leering grin. "That's what you liked about me, Margo. You said bastards turned you on."

"Bastards don't turn *me* on," growled another woman. Louise. "I just liked men with black hair, but not anymore." She grabbed a handful of his matted hair and jerked hard, nearly snapping his neck before she succeeded in ripping out a chunk of hair and skin.

"So I'm guessing you like the bald look now?" he said with a hoarse chuckle.

Charity approached and the other women backed off. The werewolf queen circled him, her arms folded beneath her large, pink-tipped breasts.

"You surprise me, Hugo," she said. "I thought you would put up more of a fight."

"What's the point?" he asked. "You want revenge and I suppose you deserve it."

She paused in front of him and raised a sleek reddish-brown eyebrow. "Could it be that Sadie was right about you?"

"That depends. What did Sadie say?"

"It doesn't matter. Within the hour you will be dead."

"It's about time."

"Do you want death?"

"Most of the time."

"Then why haven't you put a silver bullet through your own heart? Cowardice?"

"Hardly," he snorted. "More like a masochistic tendency."

Charity smiled coolly. "You have a point there. On the other hand, life does have some magical moments, doesn't it? Before you die, you might like to know that your curse has become a gift to us."

"Then why the torture routine? Oh. I forgot. Pain turns you on."

Her smile broadened and she grasped his nipple and twisted it. "You remembered. I'm flattered."

"You should be, considering you have such a forgettable face."

The werewolf queen growled and stalked off, though she didn't get far.

"Charity!" Sadie called in a thunderous voice.

Hugo strained to look at her as she stepped out of the trees and across the village toward the queen. Like the werewolves, Sadie was completely naked. Her long, silky black hair hung free down her back and her dark eyes blazed.

"In accordance with your laws, I challenge you for this man's life," Sadie stated.

A sinister grin tugged at Charity's lips. "Very well. Since he is scheduled for execution within the hour, we must do this quickly."

"Sadie, stay out of this," Hugo demanded. The last thing he wanted was for her to fight a werewolf out for revenge. Charity had been a tough bitch even before she achieved her shapeshifting ability.

Charity cast him a scathing look and said, "You're hardly in a position to give orders." She turned back to Sadie and motioned toward the stone circle in the center of the village. "After you."

Sadie walked into the center of the circle and Charity followed.

The rest of the women gathered around. Several holding torches stood around the circle.

"If either of us tries to escape the fighting ring, she will be burned," Charity said in a voice that carried throughout the village. "If I lose, the man and Sadie go free. If I win, they both die."

Panic overcame Hugo and he began struggling against the bonds. Pain shot through his shoulders and arms and blood dripped from his chaffed wrists. "Sadie, don't do this!"

She cast him an affectionate look, a faint smile on her lips, and said in an uncharacteristically deep voice, "It's too late."

Charity howled, her muscles rippling as the change overtook her.

To Hugo's surprise, Sadie howled, too. Coarse black hair sprang out on her body and her facial features elongated.

Within seconds, the two wolf women faced each other, one black and the other red. They leapt at each other, their bodies locked. Claws ripped and teeth tore.

Hugo continued struggling while at the same time straining to see the battle. Why hadn't Sadie told him she was a werewolf? An even better question was, who had cursed her?

Sadie yelped as Charity bit her shoulder deeply. Their bodies twisted and Sadie pinned the werewolf queen face down in the dirt. Their position reversed and then they rolled across the circle and crashed into the rocks on one side. For several moments, the tangle of limbs was so confusing that Hugo couldn't decide who was winning. Then came the sound of snapping bone and Charity howled in pain from where she lay face down in the dirt, Sadie on top of her.

After a moment, Sadie released her and stood, panting, while two of the wolf women assisted their injured queen. Charity rose to her full height and shrugged off her assistants. She and Sadie changed back to their human shapes.

Hugo couldn't help thinking how fiercely beautiful Sadie looked, her shapely body gleaming with sweat and streaked with dirt, her nipples pebble hard and her eyes more intense than he'd ever seen them.

The werewolf queen's broken arm dangled at her side and her face was pale with pain, but when she spoke her voice was strong. "You have won this challenge. The man will go free, but neither of you are allowed on this territory again. To cross our barrier will mean death. You, who were once our sister, are a member of this pack no more."

Sadie, her face grim, nodded. "I'm sorry this had to happen, Charity. I still respect this pack and will always consider you family."

For several moments, Sadie and Charity held each other's gazes. Hugo felt a twinge of regret mixed with relief. Obviously Sadie had a close relationship with this pack and he had destroyed it.

At a motion from Charity, Margo reluctantly released Hugo from his bonds. The pain in his arms was almost unbearable and he was shocked to find his shoulders weren't dislocated.

## Chapter Five

Sadie approached and began examining the multitude of wounds on Hugo's chest and back.

"Are you all right?" he asked.

"Yes, but you look terrible. I have some salve that will heal these injuries in a couple of hours. Can you make it back to the house?"

"Yes."

"Then we should go."

They left the village and traveled to a nearby stream where they both washed. Sadie once again examined his injuries, some of which were quite deep. "Thank you," he said, taking her face in his hands. "No one has ever done anything like that for me before."

She smiled slightly.

"Why didn't you tell me you're a werewolf?"

"I..." She sighed and shook her head. "I don't know."

"That's not an answer."

She nodded. He was right.

"How did it happen to you?" he asked.

"I asked Charity to bite me."

He stared at her, stunned.

Sadie continued, "I guess that's why I didn't want to tell you. I was afraid if you knew about my connection to the female pack, you'd think I didn't truly want to help you. I was going to tell you eventually."

"When we first met, it was the morning after the full moon, but you weren't in your wolf form. How is that possible? I know once I change, I stay in my wolf form for almost a full day after."

"Like other werewolves, I'm forced to change during the full moon, but I'm able to change back once the sun rises. It's a technique I'll show you once you've mastered what I've already taught you."

"Why did you ask Charity to bite you?"

"I spent my whole life studying shapeshifters. At one time they terrified me, but the more I learned the more I realized what a gift such power is. Charity and her pack were like family to me. They let me live with them and learn from them. At first she was reluctant to bite me, but I can be very convincing when I want something."

"Yes. I know that, all right."

"Just like I wanted you. Safe. Happy. In control of yourself."

"There's no guarantee for any of those things, except for one," he said.

"Which one?"

"Happy. When I'm with you, Sadie, I'm very, very happy."

"I'm so glad." She slipped her arms around him, then pulled away. "Am I hurting you? You're very cut up."

"No." He enfolded her in a firm embrace. "It feels good."

For several moments they held each other, then they stood and walked home.

\* \* \*

Toward the end of the week, Sadie needed to gather a special moss for one of her magical spells. Hugo accompanied her and they left early in the morning. They followed the river for a couple of miles to the area where the moss she required grew plentiful. When they finished collecting enough moss, they sat in a clearing enjoying the lunch they'd prepared.

She picked up a fat berry and held it to his lips. He took the berry into his mouth and ran his tongue playfully over her fingers before he ate the fruit. She was about to



reach for another berry, but he pushed the basket of food aside and tugged her onto his lap.

"The meal can wait," he said against her lips then kissed her.

Sadie closed her eyes and surrendered completely to his kiss. She wove her fingers through his hair, enjoying its coarse texture and relishing his delicious scent.

Hugo broke their kiss and ran his lips along the side of her neck, then he took her earlobe in his teeth and teased it with his tongue. Sadie relished every moment. She loved the feeling of his warm, powerful body against hers.

Her clit ached with need and she straddled him, rubbing her soft mound against the hard bulge in the front of his trousers.

"Oh, Hugo," she whispered, arching against him.

He guided her onto her back and raised her shirt. Luckily her bra had a front clasp. He opened it easily and massaged her bare breasts.

"You're so beautiful, Sadie," he said. He lay beside her and flicked his tongue over first one nipple, then the other.

Sadie moaned softly as he began lazily licking her breasts. He lapped the soft flesh around her nipples then took one of the tight little nubs between his teeth and gently tugged on it. He teased it with the tip of his tongue and Sadie cried out softly, pleasure washing over her.

She held his head closer, her heart pounding with desire while his attention switched from one breast to her other. Finally he lapped his way down her belly and swept the tip of his tongue over her navel. He tugged her pants and underwear off, then lifted her legs over his shoulders and licked her aching clit. A shudder of pure desire tore through her and she grasped handfuls of his hair.

"Please, Hugo," she moaned. "Oh please."

"My pleasure," he murmured and began lapping her clit. He licked and sucked on the swollen little nub. Every now and then he groaned with need. His scent grew stronger, mingling with hers as his pleasure grew.

That wonderful, frustrating ache became even more intense. She moaned and writhed, but his hands on her buttocks held her steady. To increase her pleasure he swept his fingers between her ass cheeks and gently teased her sphincter to the same rhythm of his tongue on her clit. The pleasure was so intense that she came fast and hard.

Her heart pounded and everything went black so that her entire being focused below her waist. Pulsations rolled through her and he didn't stop licking until he had drained the last bit of pleasure from her satisfied body.

She had little time to rest before they sensed something was wrong.

Sadie opened her eyes and saw that Hugo was already on his feet. He looked anxiously around, his body tense and ready for action.

"Do you smell that?" she asked.

"Yes. It reeks."

"Wildmen," she said, fear crawling through her. "We need to get out of here. I'm going to change to my beast form. It's better protection."

"I can try, but I don't think I can yet."

"Don't bother. You haven't had enough training yet and even if you could do it, it would take too long. We need to move now."

She closed her eyes and breathed deeply, feeling the ache crawl through her as she allowed the wolf to take over. Seconds later, she stood in her beast form, her senses even sharper than before. She motioned for Hugo to follow her but before they made it out of the clearing, three enormous Wildmen, each close to eight feet in height, stepped out of the trees. Their yellowish eyes glared at Hugo and Sadie and they bared their sharp teeth and tightened their fists on the thick clubs they carried. The one nearest to Sadie swung at her and she dodged the blow.

She and Hugo had no choice but to fight for their lives, though their chances of escaping were slim. Even in her beast form she wasn't strong enough to overpower three Wildman.

One of the Wildmen swung his club at her again and Hugo leapt on his back. He raked his nails across the creature's eyes, blinding it. It screamed and ran backward into a tree. Hugo grunted in pain, but he didn't let go. Sadie knew another such blow would cause him serious injury if the first one hadn't already. She growled and sprang at the Wildman. He swung blindly with his club but she avoided the blow and sank her fangs deep into his shoulder.

Pain exploded in her head and everything went momentarily black.

"Sadie!" Hugo shouted, then she heard him growl.

Another Wildman picked her up and threw her into a tree. She grunted in pain and landed hard on the ground. As she pushed herself to her feet she heard deep, ferocious growls and saw that Hugo had managed to summon his beast form. His fangs bared and eyes flashing, he battled with two Wildmen. The blinded one staggered into the woods. Sadie let him go and in spite of the pain in her ribs went to join Hugo in the fight. Not that he needed any help. He had already torn out the throat of one Wildman who staggered, then collapsed onto the ground, while Hugo faced the other. The enormous Wildman brought his club down toward Hugo's head, but the werewolf quickly shifted his stance and the club struck a nearby boulder instead. Hugo sank his teeth into the Wildman's arm and refused to let go, even when the creature tried to shake him off violently. Finally, Hugo released the mangled arm and the Wildman raced off, screaming in pain.

Hugo threw back his head and howled long and loud. Sadie gave an answering howl and he turned to her, his blue eyes blazing. Her heartbeat quickened and she stepped closer to him.

He circled her, sniffing the air. The ferocious look in his eyes faded slightly and he reached for her. She held out her hand to him and their clawed fingers brushed each other. He made a soft, affectionate sound deep in his throat.

Standing so close, her breasts brushed against his chest. She tilted her face upward as he bent his. Their elongated noses touched and primitive desire flooded her. Hugo placed his hands on her hips and pulled her even nearer. She felt his cock

pushing against her and growled softly. Hugo gave an answering growl and swept his warm, wet tongue over her lips.

A hawk cried out from a nearby tree and Hugo jerked away from her, his red-tinged eyes sweeping the area. The moment was broken and he was once again a primitive beast. He turned and raced out of the clearing.

Sadie tracked him downriver. When she noted his beastlike footprints change to their human shape, she turned back to her woman form. Her entire body ached, but changing shape had helped her heal more quickly. If her ribs had been broken during the fight with the Wildmen, they were already well on their way to healing.

Moments later, she saw Hugo walking toward her in his man form.

"Sadie," he said and jogged to her. Taking her in his arms, he kissed her and caressed her face. "Are you all right?"

"Yes. Just a little sore. How about you?"

"I'm fine. I did it," he said, a glimmer of hope in his eyes. "I changed at will."

"Yes." She smiled. "And just in time. I'm afraid I underestimated you, though. I didn't think you'd have a chance against those Wildmen, even in your wolf form. I guess your reputation for being the fiercest werewolf in these parts wasn't exaggerated."

"For the first time in my life I'm glad of it. Also, it was different this time. I wasn't completely in control of myself, but I wasn't totally out of control. I recognized you and my main focus was on helping you. I..." He paused and momentarily closed his eyes.

"What is it?" she asked, concerned. She placed a hand to his cheek. "Hugo?"

"I love you, Sadie," he said quickly, as if afraid of the implications of those words. She understood his reluctance to admit his feelings for her. In truth she hadn't expected him to do so this soon, but she was thoroughly pleased he had.

"I love you, too, Hugo," she said.

He kissed her again, then held her tightly. Their naked bodies pressed close and the warm breeze soothed them.

"I'm sorry for the grief I caused you, with Charity's pack and with my bad attitude when we first met."

"You have nothing to apologize for. We're in this together, you and I."

"This is the first time in a long time I've had hope, Sadie. Thank you for that."

She smiled. "You're welcome. Now what do you say we go home?"

"Sounds good to me. When we get there I'll show you another kind of wild man." He playfully wiggled his eyebrows and she laughed, snuggling close to his side as they followed Hot River toward home.

## **Kate Hill**

What do trips around the world, endless nights of breathtaking sex, and a muscular, 6-foot 3-inch, brown-haired, blue-eyed significant other have to do with Kate Hill? Absolutely nothing, but she can dream, can't she? In reality Kate is a single, thirty-something vegetarian New Englander who loves writing romantic fantasies. Visit her online at <http://www.kate-hill.com>, [www.myspace.com/katehillromance](http://www.myspace.com/katehillromance), or join her newsgroup at [groups.yahoo.com/group/katehill](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/katehill). Stop by Kate's Amazon blog at [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com).