



A Total-E-Bound Publication



www.total-e-bound.com

Were Chronicles: Pack Alpha

ISBN #978-1-907010-20-0

©Copyright Crissy Smith 2009

Cover Art by Natalie Winters ©Copyright April 2009

Edited by Jess Bimberg

Total-E-Bound Publishing

This is a work of fiction. All characters, places and events are from the author's imagination and should not be confused with fact. Any resemblance to persons, living or dead, events or places is purely coincidental.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced in any material form, whether by printing, photocopying, scanning or otherwise without the written permission of the publisher, Total-E-Bound Publishing.

Applications should be addressed in the first instance, in writing, to Total-E-Bound Publishing. Unauthorised or restricted acts in relation to this publication may result in civil proceedings and/or criminal prosecution.

The author and illustrator have asserted their respective rights under the Copyright Designs and Patents Acts 1988 (as amended) to be identified as the author of this book and illustrator of the artwork.

Published in 2009 by Total-E-Bound Publishing 1 The Corner, Faldingworth Road, Spridlington, Market Rasen, Lincolnshire, LN8 2DE, UK.

Warning: This book contains sexually explicit content which is only suitable for mature readers. This story has been rated *Total-e-burning*.

Were Chronicles

PACK ALPHA

Crissy Smith

Dedication

To my husband and daughter who let me be myself and dream my dreams

Chapter One

Marissa took a drink of the coffee she'd picked up at the last gas station. The hot liquid burned her tongue and tasted like slug. It wasn't Starbucks that was for sure. She had flown into the Texas International Airport and rented a car to drive the rest of the way to the small town her sister called home. Her mind was busy thinking about how her sister Elizabeth had been so excited about moving here, but looking at the passing scenery of trees, trees, and more trees, Marissa didn't get it. It was so big and wide. No buildings, other cars, or people around.

Rolling her window down and turning Bon Jovi even louder on the stereo, she concentrated on the drive—not the reason for coming. She dreaded going into Pack territory, but Elizabeth was the only family she had left, and after finding her mate, Elizabeth wanted Marissa there for the mating ceremony.

That thought brought a smile to Marissa's face as she glanced at the invitation on the seat next to her. She wanted Elizabeth to be happy, and Greg sounded like a nice guy. She'd spoken to him numerous times on the phone, and he'd always been respectful towards her. And that wasn't common. A were who couldn't shift was an outsider. And everyone except Elizabeth had treated her that way her entire life.

Marissa had left the Pack she'd been raised in as soon as she could. Never to step foot on any Pack territory again. That was until later today. Elizabeth, on the other hand, had stayed until she met Greg, a member of a different Pack. After the initial meeting, he had offered her a teaching position at the elementary school and she had taken it. He had been courting her ever since with the blessing of her new Pack Alpha, Gage Wolf.

Marissa chuckled, thinking of everything Greg had done to win her sister's heart. He'd known he wanted Elizabeth and had patiently waited. It had taken Elizabeth a year to agree to the mating ceremony, but she finally did. Marissa knew one of the reasons Elizabeth had been holding off was because of her.

Marissa had the same instincts as any other were and with that came the need of a Pack, but she had given up on that a long time ago. She'd grown up alone and would always remain that way. In the middle between a shifter and a human. She had many gifts due to

her genes—the extended life span, the wolf traits, and some enhanced features—but not enough.

But Marissa would put everything she had into this week and the ceremony that meant so much to her sister.

The differences between her and Elizabeth had grown as they had aged. That was why Marissa had never visited Elizabeth's new home. She wasn't scared being in Pack territory; she just didn't want to face all the males and their egos. And from what she understood, the Pack's Alpha or leader was pretty young himself.

When around other wolves, the female wolf inside her demanded she mate with one of her own kind. So, as long as she avoided everyone except her sister as much as she could and kept her urges inside, everything would be okay. She would not act like the wolf she couldn't shift into.

And if the Alpha was anything like her old one, she'd just tell him where to stick it. The idea of telling the Alpha of a territory to go to hell made her smile wider and laugh harder. She wasn't seventeen anymore. She wasn't a scared little girl who had to follow everything someone told her. No, she was a grown woman. And she was going to enjoy the time with her sister.

She wasn't dressed to impress the Alpha or any men in the territory as she currently wore a pair of hip-hugging jeans and a tight pink T-shirt. The paint on her toe nails matched the colour of her shirt, as did the flip-flops. It was a far cry from the suit she wore everyday as an office assistant. She felt free.

When she almost missed the turn off to the territory gate and turned the car sharply to the left, the back of the car skidded around and kicked up dirt. Laughing, she straightened the car and slowed her speed. She didn't think Gage Wolf would be happy if she took out a couple of trees.

When she reached the gate, she stopped and waited for the guard. He didn't disappoint. A man over six feet came over to the window and leaned down, smiling at her.

"Can I help you?" he asked in a husky voice.

She took a deep breath and smiled back. If all the men were this good-looking, she had her work cut out for her trying to keep her distance. They'd flirt and tease with her, and she

had to be strong and resist, because as soon as they knew her secret, she wouldn't exist any longer to them. And no matter what she said to herself, the rejection always hurt.

"I'm Elizabeth Boyd's sister. I need directions to her house please."

His smile didn't change and he nodded. "Give me just a minute." He winked, then headed to the guardhouse and picked up the phone.

No doubt checking with the Alpha to make sure she could come in and play. With her own sister, no less, Marissa thought bitterly.

She kept her face friendly and thoughts to herself as he came back to the car. "Problem?"

"Not at all," he said, shaking his head, and gave her directions to her sister's house. "My name's Steve if you want to get together later," he added.

Not in this life. "Hmm, we'll see." She was careful not to commit to anything he could hold her to later. The laws of the Pack were much different than the laws where she lived. Marissa knew them all and had only ever broken one.

Shaking that unpleasant thought from her head, she drove through the gate. Looking back into the rear view mirror, she saw Steve standing with a smile on his face.

"Down, girl," she told herself. "This is Pack territory."

* * * *

Gage Wolf hung up the phone in his study and glanced at the clock. Elizabeth's sister had made good time. When Elizabeth had told him she wanted her sister here for the ceremony, he'd thought it was a good idea.

He remembered the conversations he'd had with Elizabeth about her sister when he was first considering accepting Elizabeth into his Pack.

Elizabeth was protective and worried about her younger sibling. He understood it must have been hard for a non-shifter to grow up, but he didn't get why Marissa refused to see her sister.

And that, he knew, was the main reason Elizabeth had held back on the ceremony for so long. Gage was determined to not allow Marissa to hold her sister back from what Elizabeth wanted. And she wanted Greg.

He looked up at the knock on his door. His second-in-command, Logan, poked his head in. "I'm taking off now."

Gage nodded.

"Want to go for a run later?" Logan asked as he opened the door wider to lean against the jamb.

"I'll be going by the Boyd house tonight," Gage told him, watching his friend and Pack member smile.

"I don't think you'll be the only one."

"What do you mean?"

The mischievous twinkle in his eyes was unmistakable. "Steve might have mentioned to a few of the guys how hot she is."

Gage shook his head. Steve hadn't wasted any time if Logan already knew. Gage didn't need any more complications. "She's not here to mate."

Logan laughed. "Well, that may be beside the point."

"She doesn't need to be bothered."

"Well, who is to say it would bother her. She is a were."

"Yes but still..." Gage trailed off. He wasn't sure why he already felt protective towards her. His best guess would be that Elizabeth had shared the secret of her sister not being able to shift and how it still affected her. While it wouldn't be a problem to his Pack members, he didn't want the girl hurt further by rejection.

"Well, then you might want to get over there." With that, Logan turned and left.

Cursing, Gage stood. He needed to set the ground rules down for this woman.

Gage walked up to Elizabeth's attractive two-storey house a few minutes later. Before he could ring the bell, the door opened and a young pack member stepped out onto the porch.

Gage stepped aside to let the man pass. Jeff looked surprised to see him before quickly dropping his eyes.

"Alpha."

Gage nodded his hello and stepped into the open doorway and right into the middle of a conversation in progress.

"I'm going upstairs to unpack. If you have any more visitors, tell them to come back in a week."

Elizabeth stood with her back to him, her hands clasped tightly behind her. It only took a few seconds for her to realise he was there, because she turned and faced Gage with a surprised look on her face.

"Gage," she greeted and he wasn't certain if it was in welcome or not. He could practically feel the tension coming off of her. "I didn't know you were coming by. I mean, I thought you might, but with some many..." She trailed off, looking nervously around her.

He only lifted an eyebrow. "I take it you've had a lot of guests?"

Elizabeth didn't look amused. "Yeah, and it's driving her crazy. I'm sorry. I don't know where my manners are. Please come in."

Gage entered the living room, immediately taking in the new scent and the others mixed in with it. He could have named the wolves who had stopped by. There was only one smell he didn't recognise, and that had to be Elizabeth's sister.

His nostrils flared as he took in the new scent. The fresh wood and spice smell of the newcomer had his body immediately coming to life. He knew that if her scent was so strong he was going to have his hands full keeping the available wolves away from her.

"I'll go get Marissa."

Gage laid a gentle hand on her arm. "I'll go up. I need to talk to her privately."

Elizabeth looked uncertain for a moment, shifting on her feet and looking upstairs.

"I just want to welcome her, tell her a few things about the ceremony, and make sure she understands some Pack rules."

Elizabeth nodded. Gage knew she was worried about not only her sister but him also.

"She...she's not always the nicest." Elizabeth looked away when she said it, and Gage knew it wasn't easy for her to be in between her sister and her Alpha.

Gage smiled and patted her arm. "Don't worry. We'll both be fine," Gage assured her.

That seemed to console Elizabeth, and she nodded. "I'll just be in the kitchen starting dinner then."

Gage listened as he made his way upstairs. He had heard the woman's annoyed comment while he stood at the door. He could also hear her muttering to herself from the far bedroom.

He walked into the bedroom and stopped in his tracks. It was one of the most amazing sights he'd ever seen—her butt was sticking out from under the bed with her legs tucked under her. She moved from side to side and felt himself growing hard.

He growled at the reaction, and she must have heard because there was a bang against the bottom of the bed, which was followed by a stream of curses.

She peered out from under the bed, then crawled out, rubbing her head.

"What the hell are you doing in here?" she demanded.

"I was going to ask you the same thing. Do you always crawl under beds?"

Marissa gave him the once over. Her attraction was immediate—he could sense it. Gage could hear her heart beat pick up and watched as she wiped nervous hands on her pants. She shifted from foot to foot and he could smell her arousal. The stubborn look on her face told him she was going to fight it.

"Gage Wolf?" Even though he was certain she knew exactly who he was, she phrased it as a question.

Gage nodded at the beauty in front of him. To say he was taken by surprise was an understatement. Where Elizabeth was pale and slender with blue eyes and blonde hair, her sister looked nothing like her.

For one thing, she was scowling at him even though he could smell her desire. She had long dark hair and crystal green eyes that were narrowed. It was quite obvious she didn't like her attraction to him, but he couldn't say the same. It had been a very long time since he'd felt this instant hunger.

"I am," he answered her unnecessary question. "And you are Marissa."

Marissa nodded, trying to swallow past the lump in her throat. His voice was deep and she could almost feel it wrapping around her. This reaction wasn't good and she needed to get herself under control.

He was absolutely, positively the best looking man she had ever seen. He was taller than she was—she'd guess over six-two. He wore black slacks and a button down shirt with the sleeves rolled up.

"Is there something you needed?" she asked, crossing her arms over her chest.

Gage followed the gesture with his eyes, and Marissa blushed when she realised she had just brought more attention to herself.

"I came to welcome you to my territory as is proper for any Pack Alpha," Gage said, taking a step closer. "And to go over some rules."

Marissa stiffened at his words. She shouldn't be surprised. She could guess what rules he was going to make sure she knew. She'd heard them all her life. Even steeling herself for them didn't keep the hurt out.

"You were raised in a Pack?" he asked.

Marissa nodded, though she knew he already knew the answer. Elizabeth already told her that Gage knew about her differences.

"I don't expect things will be such different here."

Marissa didn't either. "I understand," she said, stiffening her shoulders and fisting her hand at her side.

"Do you have any questions for me on how to behave?"

The pep talk she had given herself on the drive allowed her to speak calmly. "No, I don't believe I have any questions on my behaviour here. I assure you that I have no interest in your Pack. One week—seven days—I'll be here. I think you can deal with it as I have to. Then I'll be gone and you won't have to worry about me corrupting your precious Pack."

When she finished, something like surprise crossed his face briefly, and he growled. No one had probably ever spoken to him that way before. But Marissa wasn't going to be intimidated.

When he took a step closer, she could sense the anger from him.

"I'll warn you once about the way you talk to me. I don't know how your Alpha reacted, but that kind of disrespect will not be tolerated here."

Marissa didn't tell him that she'd never been brave enough to talk to her old Alpha like that. Marissa backed up as the Alpha stepped closer.

"Also, I know how long you are here for. I know a selfish woman like you wouldn't give up more than a week for the sister who loves her and has waited far too long to be happy because of her."

His words stopped her retreat. "Selfish? You just called me selfish."

Even with the smile that touched his lips, he didn't look any less furious. "I did."

"Well, let me tell you something, Mr. Wolf. I wouldn't be here if I didn't love my sister. I wouldn't set foot on this territory if it had not meant so much to Elizabeth. I gave my blessing to her a long time ago." Marissa took a deep breath as she wound down. She realised she was explaining herself to him, and not wanting to give him an information he could use on her later, she quickly tried to cover her outburst. "Not that it's any of your business."

Marissa backed up until she felt the wall at her back, and Gage closed the distance between them.

"You do know who I am. My status here?"

Marissa didn't trust the smooth smile or easy tone. "Yes."

"So are you trying to piss me off? Any intelligent person would know better than to tell an Alpha a Pack member wasn't his business or make the comments as you have." When he reached forward and grabbed her arm, it was too fast for Marissa to avoid. "I feel sorry for the troubles you must have given to your Pack Leader."

The electricity that flowed through Marissa's body at Gage's touch drew a startled breath from her. He must have felt it too, because he immediately let go of her. Marissa stared at him as neither spoke for several minutes. She grasped at anything she could say to make him go away.

"I don't have a Pack Leader. But I do know how to address the Alpha of a Pack who had been kind enough to let me visit. I apologise. My attitude and disrespectful comments were uncalled for." Fear and uncertainty had her lowering her eyes to the floor in a submissive gesture. It galled her to show any submission to him, but his touch unnerved her.

She could feel his stare even though she wasn't looking at him and barely stopped herself from shifting on her feet. The urge to run coursed strongly through her body.

When he finally spoke, she was so surprised her eyes met his.

"Very well then. Now I believe your sister is downstairs about to have a fit with us up here arguing so I suggest we finish this another time."

Marissa nodded, relieved he would leave now. Maybe he was just as unsettled as she was.

Gage took his leave without another word to her. Marissa sat on her bed and thought about what had just taken place. She looked up at a sound in the hall, she saw Elizabeth standing at the entrance of her guestroom with wide eyes and a frown.

"Don't start," Marissa warned her sister.

Elizabeth shook her head. "Gage is a nice man and a good Alpha."

Marissa smiled even though she felt her face wanted to crack. "I'm sure he is," she lied.

Chapter Two

Gage wasn't surprised at the knock on his office door, though it did annoy him. Logan opened the door and walked in without hesitation. He grinned at Gage as he sat and lounged on the couch.

"What?" Gage asked, not in the mood for any more games tonight.

"Sam said he ran into you after you met with the Boyd woman." Logan paused for dramatic effect. It was something Gage usually found amusing. Tonight wasn't one of those times. "He said you seemed agitated."

Gage snorted in response. "I am not agitated."

Logan nodded, his expression growing serious. "No, I didn't think so. If you were agitated, you might be pacing your office like a caged...wolf."

Gage didn't miss the twitch in Logan's lips. His second kept the smile from his face this time, but barely. "I am not pacing."

"No. Absolutely no pacing going on here." Logan agreed too easily, proving that he was finding too much humour with his Alpha.

"I have had enough with foolish talk for one night, so knock it off." Gage barely kept the growl out of his voice.

Logan's blue eyes sparkled. "Things didn't go so well with Elizabeth's sister, I take it?"

Gage snorted again and went back to pacing. "She's rude, stubborn, and..."

"Beautiful?"

Gage swirled around. "How do you know she's beautiful?"

To Logan's benefit, he kept a straight face. Logan only gave a careless shrug. "A lot of the men were quite impressed with her."

"She is not here to be hit on by every available male in the territory," he said strongly. Too strongly even to his own ears.

"Well, since she was raised in a Pack, I don't think we should have too much trouble with her," Logan predicted. No doubt trying to be helpful.

Gage didn't respond.

"Being raised in a Pack she already knows most rules and our laws," Logan continued.

“Oh, she knows the rules all right. Knows how to ignore them.”

Logan nodded as if he understood. “It’s not the first time you have encountered a rogue or undisciplined wolf. What makes her different?”

That question was what was bothering Gage. “I don’t know, but get me everything you can on her.”

Logan stood and left Gage once again alone in his office.

“Let’s see what secrets you have, Marissa Boyd,” he said quietly.

* * * *

After dinner, Marissa claimed being tired from her trip and locked herself in her room. Elizabeth’s future mate had joined them for dinner and Marissa had to admit she liked him even more than she thought she would.

It was obvious that he only had eyes for Elizabeth. He had kept looking at her with stars in his eyes. Marissa didn’t miss the subtle touches that passed between the two of them either.

Marissa was thrilled for her sister, but there was just a hint of jealousy down deep. She tried to push it away, but it was there—just as it had always been.

Deciding a bath would soothe her, Marissa filled the tub with hot water and relaxed into the marble enclosure. Her sister’s house was nice. It wasn’t too fancy but very homey. She thought it matched her sister just as this territory seemed to match her.

Marissa sighed, thinking about the territory. She had been shocked when the Alpha Gage hadn’t demanded she leave. She had been rude to him. She didn’t know of any other Alpha who wouldn’t have punished her.

And he would have had every right. She was his guest and was expected to follow his rules. It might have been more complicated if she had a Pack Alpha standing for her, but she had no one. She didn’t have anyone in her corner and help her smooth things over with him.

Thinking about Gage had her temperature rising. Oh, he was a good-looking man, although there was more to him than just that. There was power there—that was unmistakable—but she sensed something different in him than her old Alpha. Even though they had argued, she didn’t have the same fear of his power as she did others in his position.

It was like she could feel the compassion inside him for others. That could only lead to trouble.

She'd given her heart once to a wolf, and it had ended badly. Very badly. She wouldn't repeat that mistake. Although the Alpha was tempting. So very tempting that Marissa found herself rubbing her breasts thinking about him.

This wasn't a normal reaction for her. She could always resist her urges. The wolf inside her might not like it, but she could do it. Her only fear was that Gage could push past her defences and make her vulnerable.

As she dipped a hand under the water and rubbed the ache between her legs, she made a vow to herself right then and there. She would never be vulnerable again. Even if it left her sexually frustrated.

She let her fingers rub over the swollen folds of her sex before dipping inside. The pressure of two fingers entering felt so good. With her other hand, she pulled and pinched her nipple. The slight pain added to her arousal.

As she closed her eyes, it was Gage's face that popped into her head. What would he do if he walked in and saw her touching herself?

Weres were very sexual, and Marissa had stronger urges than most women she knew. Her friends back home were fully human so they wouldn't understand the burning she constantly felt.

Would Gage drop to his knees beside her? Place his hand with hers? Pump his thick fingers inside her?

Marissa let out a low long moan at the thought. Her fingers moved easily between the folds of her core, building the release she needed. She wondered what he looked like without his clothes. His tanned arms had been revealed earlier. Even with his clothes, she could tell he was built. She'd bet he had a wonderful body.

Fingers moving faster, Marissa lifted her hips as she finally reached her climax. Biting her lip, she came slowly but fully with thoughts of Gage teasing her.

* * * *

Gage stared at the information in front of him. "They just let her go?" he asked, looking over to Logan.

The other man glanced up from the pages he was reading. "Apparently."

Gage shook his head. "Something's wrong here. They didn't even try to keep track of her."

Logan placed the papers he had in his hands on the sofa next to him. "This is not telling us anything. It leads to more questions than answers. You need to talk to this girl again."

Gage nodded as he looked past Logan to the window in his office. Thoughts of Marissa Boyd had kept him up last night. The full moon was only six nights away, and every wolf got distracted as it came closer, but he was more than just *distracted* by this woman. If the hard-on he was sporting was any indication, he needed to do more with her than just talk. It'd been years since he'd felt this hot for any woman.

"Alpha?"

Snapping his head up, he didn't miss the amusement all over Logan's face. "I'll go talk to her."

"Elizabeth should still be teaching, so you should have all morning alone...so you can talk privately."

Gage barely contained his groan. Not only had he been hard since first seeing this woman, but it seemed his Beta was determined to get him together with her.

"I'm just going over to talk to her," Gage stood, stretching his back from sitting too long at his desk.

"Of course, Alpha," Logan agreed, not bothering to hide his huge grin as he left Gage's office.

If he didn't satisfy himself with Marissa, maybe he would come back to the house and take Logan down a few notches. That wouldn't take care of the most pressing problem but it might make him feel better.

He had a feeling that any amount of time spent with Marissa was going to test his control.

Marissa stood on her sister's back porch, looking out at the woods that surrounded the house. It was so beautiful here.

She remembered a time when she hated having to be around crowds. In the time since she'd left her Pack, she had gotten used to people and the noise. What she had once hated now served the purpose of keeping her from having to admit that she'd never have what her sister did.

They used to stay up late talking in the room they shared about the perfect place to make a home. This territory was everything they'd wanted growing up and Elizabeth had finally found it.

Back then, Marissa still had hope that one day the Pack would accept her. She no longer carried that hope. It had been replaced by the bitterness that she didn't belong anywhere. Even as the wind called for the wolf to run, she couldn't.

The thick green grass cushioned her bare feet as she stepped onto it. The wolf inside moved restlessly to be let out. Her skin prickled and she shivered. The wolf needed to be released. Normally she would do this with sex, but this was not the place. It was going to be a painful and agonising week.

Moving farther away from the porch towards the edge of the trees, Marissa felt her wolf jump inside her skin. God, how she wished she could shift. Could let the wolf completely free like it wanted, like it needed.

But that wasn't going to happen. She couldn't shift and no one had figured out how or why this happened to some. Her DNA was not like her sister's or a mortal human's. She was caught somewhere in the middle.

Resigned and unhappy, she turned back towards the house and stopped short when she noticed the man who stood on porch watching her. Her wolf growled its approval, demanding she take this available male.

Gage watched as Marissa's eyes widened. She licked her lips, and his cock jumped in his jeans. He'd been surprised to find her staring into woods like she was ready to go running. He didn't know much about non-shifters. They were not common. Only a handful of them existed. But the intensity of her stare was like that before a shift.

He quickly covered the distance between them. Marissa didn't move away from him when he reached her. Her green eyes had started to glow.

"The wild calls to you?"

She nodded and licked her lips again.

"How does it make you feel? Not being able to shift?" He wanted to know more about her. He wanted to reach the woman, and the wolf, under the skin.

She looked so sad he wanted to wrap his arms around her and tell her everything would be okay.

She cleared her throat twice before speaking. "Trapped."

She had started shaking and he reached for her. "Does it hurt?" He couldn't imagine how it would feel for his wolf to be trapped.

When she only shrugged a shoulder, he continued, "What can I do?"

Her gaze met his before dropping to his lips. When she sucked her bottom lip, he felt the last thread of his resolve slipping. Yanking her to him, he took control of her mouth. She didn't fight him, but opened immediately. He plunged his tongue inside, dominating the kiss. Her low moan only drove him on farther, harder. With one hand wrapped in her hair, holding her head still, he used the other to bring their bodies closer.

Her lips moved against his. Her hands clawed at the shirt on his back. Knowing she was as out of control as he was amazing.

It seemed there was much more to this woman than he had thought. With one kiss he was afraid he had become addicted. She tasted like heaven.

She yanked at the soft black shirt he wore.

He moved his mouth to her neck where he nibbled the sensitive flesh.

"Yes," she encouraged. "Yes." Kneading the muscles on his back. Dragging her nails down painfully.

Gage hissed before lifting her so she could wrap her arms and legs around him, letting her rub against the steel rod hidden by jeans.

"Please." She rubbed herself harder against him. "Please."

Gage knew he should stop the mating before it went too far, but he didn't. It wasn't his wolf in control, but the man. And the man wanted this woman under him naked, bucking, begging, and the wolf was urging him on.

"Oh God. I'm burning for you. Please." Marissa's mouth was everywhere on him. He could swear he felt her canines lengthen as she licked and sucked his neck.

Hitching her higher around his waist, he walked deeper into the trees. They would give him plenty of cover as he took this woman.

Chapter Three

Marissa felt her back meet the grass as Gage laid her down. His weight quickly covered her, sending electric currents through her body.

His eyes met hers briefly before he reclaimed her mouth. This kiss wasn't as forceful as the last, but more coaxing. As if he was trying to get her body to trust his. Her body didn't care about trust—it just wanted him hard and fast.

When his mouth started to trail down, she took the opportunity to pull off his torn shirt. She yanked the remaining material from his body. He sat up between her legs and she felt his gaze burn into her as he slowly lifted the T-shirt she had dressed in earlier. He had more control, more patience than she did, and when Marissa raised her hand to help, he slapped it away.

"Mine," he growled at her.

Marissa tried to close her legs in hope of relieving the ache between them, but he only spread his knees wider moving her legs with him. If she had been naked, she would have been spread out wide for him. The way she wanted to be.

"Gage. Now. Please now."

He bent his head and smiled at her. "Giving the Alpha orders, little one?" He ran his tongue over the silky cup of her bra. "You shall be punished for that."

When he licked one hard nipple through the silk, Marissa's body jerked. "Oh please."

Running his teeth over the opening clasp of her bra, he chuckled. "You will beg, little one. Before I am finished, you will beg." He used his teeth to tear open her bra.

Marissa thought she might explode right there when his hot moist mouth covered her nipple. She lifted her hands to the back of his head to hold him to her. Her body screamed for more.

Without removing his mouth, he grabbed her hands and placed them over her head. "Keep your hands there," he told her before moving to the other breast and nipple.

Marissa tried—she really did—but when his body started moving down hers, her hands automatically to his shoulders. Gage growled and nipped at her wrist. The sharp pain had

her gasping and arching into him at the same time. He placed her hands back over her head and gave her a stern look, before trailing his tongue down her body.

Liquid fire slid over her, around her, and in her. Marissa desperately tried to grab onto anything to keep her hands still. Clawing at the grass and dirt, she dug her hands in, trying to anchor herself. She'd never felt this hot, this needy. He was torturing her.

Skipping the cotton shorts she wore, Gage slowly brought one of her legs up and ran his tongue behind her knee. Her moans told him what she liked. He followed the path from her knee to the edge of her shorts.

"Yes. Yes," she repeated over and over, her head moving from side to side.

Gage slowly started to peel the shorts off. The crotch was wet and he paused to smell.

"Little wolf is dripping for me," he said, his husky voice in contrast to his slow exploration. He wanted her, she knew that. But he was taking his sweet time.

"Yes. Yes, I am," she admitted.

He pulled her shorts all the way off and threw them behind him. With a gentle touch, he ran one finger over the crotch of silk panties. The only barrier left on her. "Wet. So wet and hot."

Leaning over, he closed his mouth over the silk and sucked. Then, with a quick yank, removed them.

"Oh. God. Oh. Please." Marissa moved her legs together to hold him in place.

Pressing both hands on her thighs, he opened them back up. "Do you not have any control over your body?" he teased. "Hold still."

Hold still? Was he joking? She was going to go insane.

He pulled away from her enough for her to see him.

"Don't stop!" she demanded, desperate to feel him inside her.

Lifting that elegant eyebrow, Gage gave her an annoyed look. "Orders again? You just can't help yourself, can you?"

Before she could respond, Marissa found herself flipped and on all fours. She dug her hands and knees into the ground. "Yes. I mean, no. I mean...please just take me."

Marissa felt his arousal through his rough jean material as he leaned his body over hers. "Is this what you want?"

"Yes. Oh please, yes."

Gage's hand left her, and he released himself from the confines of his jeans. He ran his hands down her flank and over her curves, pressing his naked body against hers. Marissa almost yowled in pleasure.

Marissa arched for him. If she could just get him inside... She started to reach back with one hand.

"No. Don't move," he ordered.

She screamed in frustration, but he only laughed at her.

"No control." Placing a kiss in the small of her back, he pulled away again.

Marissa turned her head to complain and was shocked by the feel of his hand on her ass.

Smack.

"Ahhhhhhhhh." Bracing herself with her hands, Marissa trembled. "What?"

"Need to learn manners." *Smack.*

Marissa cried out again.

"Need to learn restraint." *Smack. Smack.*

"I...what...No!"

"Someone should have taught you to follow orders a long time ago." *Smack.*

Tears formed in her eyes. Marissa had never been treated like this. This wasn't some sex game. This was real—punishment—and it hurt. And it felt good. How could it feel good? She'd never been one to enjoy pain with sex, but with Gage, it seemed to fit perfectly.

Gage landed three more slaps with his hand. She lifted up each time, meeting his hand. The sharp pain only made her hotter. Made her hungrier for him. She'd never been spanked in her life. Her clit throbbed. She could taste blood from where she was biting her lip. Her mind filled with emotions she didn't understand but didn't really care about.

He stopped spanking her and rubbed his hands over her ass. As he slipped a finger between her folds, she couldn't hold back a moan. He thrust his finger inside before pulling out and positioning himself behind her.

One hand drove into her hair and he yanked her head back as he plunged inside her willing body. He filled her completely with the first thrust, causing her to scream. She hadn't gotten a good look at his cock before, and she now knew that he was well endowed.

As he moved in and out with deep slow strokes, Marissa felt her body stretch to accommodate him but the stretch felt amazing. Each time he pushed into her body, she slammed herself back to meet each thrust.

Their rhythm flowed like a dance as the speed picked up and he rode her harder. She kept her head bent and her eyes tightly closed and tried to hang on to the magical feeling of belonging. Both of his hands now held her hips tightly as his strokes grew shorter and more desperate. Unable to hold out any longer, Marissa lifted her head and cried out into the wild as her orgasm ripped through her body.

"Yes. Let me hear you," he told her, pounding inside harder.

Three more thrusts and he exploded inside her, releasing his seed deep inside and taking her through completion once again.

Marissa gained all her senses back slowly. The grass which she had collapsed on was wet, but she hadn't noticed earlier. Her cheek rested in a patch of dirt that her hands had clawed at earlier.

The weight of Gage, while heavy, was comforting. Breathing in, she held his masculine scent. When he started to lift off her, she barely held back a sigh at the loss of his warmth. Gage fell onto his back, but she kept her eyes closed. Her hair was probably messed and she no doubt had a sleepy, satisfied look.

He surprised her when he reached over and covered her shapely bottom with his palm. "You okay?"

"Uh huh."

Damn if she didn't sound content and relaxed even to her own ears. The tension in her body seemed to have disappeared completely. When Gage leaned over and replaced his hands with his lips, she couldn't find any reason to tell him to stop. Being with him had been the best sexual experience of her life.

Her eyes were still closed when, using the lightest pressure, he nipped then licked at her skin. Then awareness slammed back into her.

Her eyes flew open and she lifted her head. "You *spanked* me!"

Throwing one arm over her legs to hold her in place as she tried to turn over, Gage said, "So I did."

Marissa shook her head at him. "But...you spanked me."

Continuing to run circles over her with the tip of his tongue, he grunted his agreement.

Heat followed Gage's tongue as it traced along her body. What was going on with her? What was going on with *him*? He had to realise he had just mated with a non-shifter. She knew some Packs mated with humans and some kept it hidden, but she didn't know of one who would risk openly mating with a non-shifter. And he was the Pack Alpha!

Marissa jerked away so quickly that, in his surprise, Gage released her.

Once on her feet, she began to look around desperately for her clothes. Her shirt was next to Gage's hand. She didn't think the house was too far away, so maybe no one would see her if she ran quickly.

Gage sat, looking up at her. He watched her as if he knew she wanted to run from him. But while she going into full panic mode, he looked like it pissed him off.

"This what you're looking for?" He held the T-shirt out to her.

Marissa nodded and dropped her eyes. The wolf inside Gage would acknowledge the submission, but the man might not be so easily fooled.

"Well, come and get it," he challenged.

Marissa took a careful step to him. She just got within arm's length of him and leaned forward to grab the shirt, and damn, if he didn't grab her first. He turned quickly, holding both wrists, until she was on her back.

Following her first instinct, Marissa wiggled and fought. He only pressed more of his weight down and growled at her.

"Stop fighting me and stop moving around. I'm not hurting you," he told her.

Marissa glared at him but stopped moving.

"Now. Would you like to discuss this like adults or do you need to go over my knee?"

Despite the shiver of excitement the threat sent through her, she shook her head. "*That* is not going to happen again."

Gage leaned down until their lips were only centimetres apart. "Oh, I believe it is. I believe it's just not in you to behave."

Trying not to let his proximity cloud her mind, Marissa closed her eyes and tried to be reasonable. She took a deep breath before speaking again. "Gage. You don't understand."

He frowned as he looked down at her. "About what exactly?"

"Do you know what we just did?" Her voice rose and Marissa hated that.

"I have a pretty good idea." He rubbed intimately against her, showing her that he still had life in him yet. "Do *you* need a reminder?"

The electricity between the two of them was so hot Marissa was surprised her hair wasn't on fire.

He bent and licked her from collarbone to ear. "Have you forgotten already?"

"Oh...I..." She didn't get any farther when his mouth covered hers. With her wrists still bound in one of his hands, she was helpless to push him away or bring him closer. She was able to wrap her legs around his waist. He rubbed against her swollen wet opening as he seduced her mouth.

"No, you don't need a reminder, do you? You remember just fine," he said softly. Then, with his gaze holding hers, he entered her slowly.

Marissa thrust her hips up, taking him completely. "More."

"Yes, more." Gage kept his pace slow and deep. Releasing her hands, he cupped her hips to hold them, not allowing her to set the pace.

"More. More."

Almost pulling completely out before slamming back in, he gave her what she needed. "This isn't something you can just ignore, Marissa."

"Just...protecting...you..." She spoke between pants as he picked up speed.

Gage raised her legs over his shoulders, taking him deeper with the next thrust. "I'm...the...Alpha." He gritted his teeth to keep from coming before her.

Her muscles gripped and massaged him each time he entered her. She was so wet, allowing him to easily pump in and out, but the fit was tight and felt better than any women he had ever been with. It was almost as if her body had been made for him.

When normally that thought would have sent him running, with Marissa, he found himself getting lost in the thought.

As Gage slammed into her harder, Marissa cried out. Her climax came quick and hard, making her arch, taking him in further. She milked him with her body, feeling like velvet around him. Releasing inside her, Gage shook as his seed poured into her.

Chapter Four

"Marissa..." Gage didn't know what to say to express his feelings. To tell her that she was his.

Reaching up, she cupped his cheek and his heart twisted in happiness at her intimate gesture. "I'm not trying to be difficult here, but by being with me..."

Gage caught a familiar scent and stiffened as his head snapped up. Now was not the time for visitors.

"What?" Marissa pushed at his chest.

Standing, Gage pulled Marissa up with him. "Someone's coming."

"Who?" She went in search for her clothes once again. Her shirt was right beside where she'd been laying. She blushed as she picked it up.

"I know who it is and they are deliberately making enough noise so we hear them."

"So they know we're here?"

Turning around, Gage kissed her forehead. "Your shorts are tangled in the tree root."

He watched as she pulled her shorts and shirt on quickly. She looked over at him, and he didn't miss the look of hunger in her eyes as she looked at him still without his clothes. Then she looked towards his clothes in a silent message. Gage wasn't in any hurry to put them back on and wished she hadn't been either.

"Gage."

"You have a great body."

"Gage. Someone is coming," she whispered with a look of horror on her face.

"They're already here." Turning, he faced his second-in-command.

Logan kept his head down and his smile hidden as he faced his Alpha. It wasn't the first time he'd seen him naked as they routinely ran together.

Now thinking more clearly, Gage was glad Marissa had covered herself up. He didn't want anyone else to see her.

"Alpha," Logan greeted, keeping his head down respectfully. Gage knew it was more for Marissa than him.

He crossed his arms over his chest. "Logan." Marissa had moved behind him even though she had pulled clothes on.

"I...uh...Elizabeth came home to have lunch with her sister and got worried when she wasn't in the house. She called up at the main house so I came over...to...uh."

"Oh God." Marissa dropped her forehead onto Gage's back.

Gage saw Logan unsuccessfully try to smother a laugh. "We'll be right up."

Nodding, Logan started to back away.

"Take the short way," Gage ordered.

Marissa kept her face hidden in Gage's back until he passed. "Oh God."

"Relax." Stepping away, Gage bent down and grabbed his jeans. "We're adults."

Her face was red and she kept her eyes on the ground. "I am so sorry. I didn't know she was coming home," she mumbled, but he heard her clearly.

Gage shrugged into what was left of his shirt. "Wouldn't have mattered. Once I saw you standing at the edge of the trees, I would have had you anyway."

She didn't respond to his announcement but turned away. "Have you seen my panties and bra?"

Recognising the change in subject, Gage decided to let it go for now. "Bra's by the tree, although I believe it's toast."

Marissa picked it up. "Panties?"

Gage pulled them out of his pocket. "They were under my pants."

Marissa held her hand out.

Gage just smiled at her and stuffed them back in his pocket.

"Gage."

"Come on." He reached out for her hand and pulled her towards the house.

"Gage, give them to me."

"No."

"Why do you want them? Some kind of trophy?"

Laughing, he continued to pull her. "Whatever you want to think, Marissa." He couldn't very well tell her that they smelled like her and he planned to carry them with him at all times he was away from her.

"Just don't see why you'd want to keep them," she complained but didn't say anything else.

Walking into the house, Marissa felt a new wave of embarrassment. Not only was her sister there but also the man from the woods and Elizabeth's mate. Marissa tried to pull her hand away, but Gage tightened his grip.

"Marissa, I was worried when you weren't in the house and didn't leave a note. I'm sorry I..."

Again Marissa tried to pull her hand away but couldn't. "It's okay, Elizabeth," she tried to assure her sister.

How could she explain to her sister in a room full of strangers that the mistake was her own? She didn't want Elizabeth blaming herself. Marissa was the one to mess everything up. All she had to do was control herself and she couldn't even do that. Two days and she was already breaking laws.

"No. I shouldn't have called up to the main house..."

"Elizabeth, it's fine." Marissa waved a hand—unfortunately, it was the hand still holding her torn bra.

Elizabeth gasped as Logan and Greg laughed out loud.

Whipping her hand behind her back, Marissa pulled on the other one, and Gage finally released her. When she would have run upstairs, he put a firm arm around her waist and held her in place.

Marissa wished the floor would open and swallow her. But instead of making excuses about what had obviously happened, Gage just held her tight against him. Knowing he needed a way out and away from her, she tried to come up with anything she could to get rid of him.

"I need to take a shower," Marissa said to no one in particular. She was surprised when Gage smiled down at her and turned to the others.

"Gentlemen, why don't we leave the ladies to clean up and have lunch?"

Everyone agreed and the men headed for the door.

"I will see you later tonight, Marissa," he whispered in her ear before releasing her and walking away.

Marissa waited for the front door to close before lifting her head. Her sister stood with her arms crossed over her chest and the look of disapproval written all over her face.

"Don't," she warned Elizabeth.

"You didn't learn the first time?" Elizabeth asked, concern evident in her tone and by the softening of her expression.

"It was an accident."

"An accident?" her sister repeated with no amusement. "Tell me, just how do you accidentally get naked and have sex with the Pack Alpha?"

"How do you know I had sex with him?"

Elizabeth just lifted a brow.

"Okay, fine, I had sex with him!" Marissa started out the room.

"Why?" Elizabeth asked, following.

"It's not like I planned it." She couldn't explain it to her sister until she was able to explain it to herself yet.

"Marissa, he is my Alpha." Elizabeth's voice rose, and it reminded her of when they were kids and Marissa had once again gotten herself in some sort of trouble.

"I know."

"I can't believe you did this." The disappointment she heard doubled the guilt Marissa already felt.

Reaching the guestroom, she pushed the door open. "You know, he did have a say in the matter."

"Yes, he did." Elizabeth sighed. "I'm sorry, but you know what happened last time. This is my Pack, and that is my Alpha. I won't let you ruin that for me."

When Marissa turned, her eyes burned with tears. "I didn't mean to ruin anything."

Elizabeth's sigh was audible. "You know that male wolves for some reason think they are above the law. I'm sure Gage wasn't thinking about it at the time, but you should have."

Marissa *knew* she should have. "I'm sure he thought he would be able to keep it quiet. Brandon always told me not to tell anyone about us and I'm sure that's what Gage will tell me later."

"If this got out..." Elizabeth took a step back and had tears in her eyes.

"I'm sorry, Elizabeth." Marissa couldn't be any sorrier for her actions. Once again, she would be responsible for them losing everything.

Her sister sent her a sad smile. "Maybe it would be best if you left. Tonight."

"Okay." Turning towards the bathroom, Marissa felt the first tear fall. It *would* be best. For everyone concerned.

* * * *

"We have a problem," Logan walked into the Alpha's office without knocking.

"What?" Gage looked up from the papers in front of him.

"Greg just called. Elizabeth sent Marissa home."

"She what?" Gage's voice rose as he jumped up.

Logan took a step back. "After we left, Elizabeth sent Marissa back to California. She's probably already to the gate."

Yanking up the phone, Gage had to control his temper to keep from crushing the piece of plastic.

"Guard house," the guard on duty answered.

"Tom. Has Marissa Boyd driven through yet?"

"No, Alpha. No one's been through for about fifteen minutes, and that was Sammy and Kyle."

"She doesn't leave," Gage told him.

"But--"

"Don't let her out," he ordered. "I'm on my way." Slamming down the phone, he turned to Logan. "Get Elizabeth up here now."

Logan nodded and backed out of the room.

"What do you mean I can't leave?" Marissa banged her fist on the steering wheel. She shouldn't have been surprised. She'd known Gage wasn't finished with her.

He didn't understand that she had to leave. For both their sakes. She knew she should have said goodbye but had decided to take the coward's way out.

"Open the gate!" she ordered to the poor guard. It really wasn't his fault.

"I'm sorry, ma'am, but I have orders you are not to leave territory."

"I don't care what your orders are. I'm not a Pack member and you can't keep me here."

"I'm sorry, ma'am."

"Listen here, let me out!" she pleaded almost desperately. She had to get out of there. It was best for the Pack. They had to understand that.

"No, he won't."

Marissa jumped as Gage came around the side of the car. "What the hell are you doing here?" she asked, although she was afraid she knew.

Gage nodded to his guard, who looked relieved to be dismissed from dealing with her. "Where are you going?" Gage kept his voice low and calm. His eyes were hard as he looked at her.

She looked away from him. Guilt and shame kept her from meeting his gaze.

"I asked you where you were going," he said sharply.

Tightening her hands on the wheel, Marissa kept looking straight ahead. "Home."

Gage yanked the car door open. "Move over."

"No."

Reaching down and unbuckling her seat belt, he pushed her towards the passenger seat. She didn't have any choice but to move before he sat down in the driver's seat.

"Hey! Hey! You can't do this!" She grabbed at his wrists and hands.

Gage ignored her and put the car in reserve.

"Gage, stop!"

When the road was wide enough, he turned the car and headed back towards the houses.

"Gage, please stop." She didn't want to fight with him. She didn't want him to give her the lecture she knew was coming.

"Let me leave, please. On my own. I promise not to come back."

"Let you leave?" His voice rose. "Do you really think I'm just going to let you take off without a word?"

"This isn't about you, Gage. I...I just have to leave."

"No. You're not running, Marissa."

"She asked me to leave!"

Gage looked over at her as he navigated the road. "Because of me."

Marissa looked away.

"That's what I thought."

She sat quietly next to Gage. She didn't have anything more to say.

* * * *

Elizabeth sat with her hands in her lap, nervously rubbing them together. She hadn't expected Gage to take her sister's leaving well, but she hadn't expected to be ordered to his office.

She glared at her future mate who stood next to the bar talking quietly with Logan. Greg had called Logan when Elizabeth explained why Marissa had left. Greg hadn't been happy either. Didn't they understand she was trying to protect them and everyone in the Pack?

She jumped up when Gage walked in with her sister in tow.

"Sit," he snapped at Marissa, pointing to a chair.

Elizabeth saw her sister start to refuse until Gage turned those fierce grey eyes on her.

Marissa lowered herself into the wingback chair with her back to the window.

"Out," he ordered the two men.

Gage nodded at Elizabeth to sit. Once she was settled back on the couch, he sat behind his desk. Elizabeth tried to catch her sister's eyes but Marissa wouldn't look at her.

She really should have handled the situation better, but she was scared Gage wouldn't let her mate with Greg now. She'd almost lost her position once in a Pack because of her sister. Of course, that hadn't been Marissa's fault. She'd been young and in love, and Elizabeth couldn't blame her for what had been out of her control.

"Explain," Gage looked at her, speaking quietly.

Elizabeth ran her sweaty hands over her pants. "I believe it best if Marissa leaves."

"Because of what happened earlier between her and me?"

"She doesn't belong in Pack territory." Her heart almost broke at the sound of Marissa's breath catching. She didn't want to hurt her sister, but she didn't have much of a choice.

"Yet you asked permission for me to let her come. Now you want her to go?"

"Well, I didn't know... I mean, I..."

Gage nodded before looking at Marissa. "How do you feel?"

Marissa's face was blank and her eyes had turned cold. It was an expression Elizabeth hadn't seen on her sister's face since she left their former Pack.

"I was leaving, wasn't I?" Marissa told him, her face and tone not giving away any feelings.

"Just like that?" Gage continued to speak calmly. When Marissa didn't answer him, he looked back at Elizabeth. "I'm beginning to think I have missed some important information about your old Pack."

"I told you everything, Alpha. I didn't hide anything!" This was it. He was going to kick her out. Tell her she can't mate with Greg.

Instead he looked back at Marissa. "In the woods, you said you were trying to protect me."

Marissa glared at him. "Yeah, so?"

"Protect me from what?"

She didn't answer. Elizabeth was used to her sister's attitude but could see Gage was losing patience. She opened her mouth to answer, but Gage cut his gaze to her and shook his head. Elizabeth closed her mouth and looked at her sister. Marissa still wouldn't look at her.

"And you will harm me, Marissa?" Gage asked as they both watched her sister.

Marissa only shrugged. Elizabeth wanted to come to her sister's defence, but knew she couldn't help her. It broke her heart that once again Marissa would be thrown out of Pack territory.

"Answer the question," Gage said louder, making Marissa press back into the chair.

"The law," she finally told him.

"What law?" Gage looked from Marissa to Elizabeth with a confused look.

Marissa crossed her arms over her chest in response.

Gage looked over at Elizabeth.

"The one against mating with a non-shifter," Elizabeth answered.

"The law against mating with a non-shifter," Gage repeated.

Marissa jumped up from her seat. "Can I leave now?"

"Sit down!" he snapped though he didn't raise his voice.

Elizabeth almost fell over in shock when her sister dropped back down in her chair.

"Who told you about this law?"

"Our Alpha," Elizabeth answered.

His gaze never left her sister's face. "And what did he tell you would happen?"

"Because she...she was..."

"Because I fucked his son not only could I be kicked out of the Pack but so could my entire family," Marissa exploded, jumping up and smashing her hand onto his desk. Elizabeth jumped, but Gage didn't show any reaction.

"And were you all?" Gage asked, even though he knew the answer.

"I agreed to leave and never return so my sister still had a Pack to protect her," Marissa answered, anger burning in her eyes.

He stood and came around the desk. She didn't step back but stood straight when he stepped in front of her.

"Marissa." He wanted to hold her. To comfort her.

"And I'm willing to go now so you don't have to kick her out. No one else needs to know. I'll leave quietly," she told him.

Gage gently cupped her cheek, but she jerked away from him. "I'm sorry for everything you have been through."

Marissa remained stiff so he turned back towards Elizabeth. "While it may have been that Pack's rule, it is in no way a law. I have never heard of anything more ridiculous."

"If that's true, then..." Elizabeth trailed off, and Gage knew she was piecing together that they had been lied to.

"It's true," he assured her, then looked back at Marissa. Reaching for her, he drew her to his side.

"Then Marissa didn't have to leave."

He watched the play of emotions on Marissa's face before her eyes chilled again and she pulled away. "You don't know what you are talking about." Her voice was barely above a whisper.

Gage shook his head. "Why do you think we have a council of former Alphas to police the Packs? It's to protect the members, not to hurt them." He could see Marissa started to shake in front of him. "My father is one of the council members and I can assure you that, whether you can shift or not, he would have never allowed you to be mistreated. There is no such law."

"It is a law!" Marissa yelled.

He knew she wasn't trying to convince him but had come to terms with it.

Her eyes started to swim with tears and Gage's heart broke for her.

"Oh, Marissa, I'm so sorry," Elizabeth moved towards her.

Marissa held up a hand to stop her. "Whatever. It doesn't matter."

Elizabeth looked at him and he nodded. "Go out and find Greg. We'll finish up here and I'll drive Marissa back to your house."

"Marissa has her own car. And it's already packed," Marissa interjected.

Gage didn't even look back at her but kept his gaze on her sister. "She'll be okay here with me."

"Okay...I'll...see you both later." Elizabeth quickly made her exit.

"Come here, baby," Gage said once his office door closed.

"I want to leave."

Gage closed the distance between them and wrapped his arms around her. "Yes. I think you do. But not yet," he told her gently.

"No." Marissa tried to pull away. "Now. I want to leave now."

"It's okay, baby." Gage held her tight as the tears she'd been fighting started to fall.

As she cried in his arms, anger swelled inside him at the Alpha who had pledged to take care of her then turned her out without a Pack, without her family.

Tears streaming down her face she looked up at him and pressed her lips to his in a desperate kiss. Glad to be able to take some of the pain away, he let her kiss him and tightened his hold around her.

Chapter Five

Marissa pressed herself against Gage. His body was strong, solid, and everything she needed right now.

Gage's arms tightened around her as he kissed her back. When he pulled away and looked at her, Marissa felt her heart skip. She could get used to this man being there for her. And that was scary.

"Upstairs. I want you in my bed," he whispered in her ear.

Marissa shivered at his declaration. No more hiding. No shame in being with a wolf. She didn't have to hold back her needs with him. "Okay, upstairs."

Gage took her mouth again, this time with more force. Marissa gave herself to him willingly. He lifted her off her feet easily and she wrapped her arms and legs around him.

"We'll also talk about your punishment for talking back to me. Again."

Marissa scraped her teeth over his neck. "Maybe later."

Gage chuckled. "Much later."

They barely made it up to his room without her ripping his clothes off. Luckily they didn't run into anyone to slow them down. Gage kicked his bedroom door closed as Marissa teased him with her tongue on his neck and ear.

When he dropped her carelessly onto the bed, Marissa bounced, laughing before she looked around the room. "Oh wow."

Gage already had his shirt over his head. "Yeah. Strip."

Ignoring him, Marissa knelt on the giant bed and took in the large room. "This room is huge."

Although there were no lights on, she could see clearly enough. The bed was up two steps on a platform. To her left were balcony doors and to her right a sitting area with couch, table and chairs, and a flat screen TV. A door on the far wall would probably lead to a bathroom.

"You're not undressed," Gage practically growled at her.

Marissa looked at him and took in the naked body in front of her. Lean and muscular. Tan with no tan lines. She made quick work of removing her clothes and scooted closer on

her knees. "Your room distracted me. Now you have distracted me." She licked a small circle on his chest.

Gage pulled her back by her hair. "Strip for me."

Marissa pressed a kiss into his chest. "Please let me do this, Gage." She needed to feel in control. Since first arriving, she had felt like her life was spiralling around her and she was only a passenger.

His eyes softened, telling her he understood. "Okay, baby."

She reached out and pulled him onto the bed. He let her lay him on his back before she straddled his waist. Marissa took her time kissing Gage's lips, running her teeth over his neck and chin, before lavishing his chest. Keeping his hands at his sides, he allowed her to explore his body. And what a body it was. She breathed in his scent. Rich, dark, and male. She rubbed her face and body against his as she moved down.

"Marissa." Gage tried to pull her back up, moving his hands into her hair, but she continued to lower herself to the object she wanted most. His gorgeous, fully erect cock. Licking from the base up, she felt him let out a rush of breath. Then with just the tip of her tongue, she teased the head.

"Marissa," Gage hissed out, raising his head to look down at her.

Oh, she could definitely get used to this. She opened and took him deep into her mouth. Gage groaned and dropped his head back down. Adding her hand, she stroked and sucked him deeper into the back of her throat. He was salty and her body responded as his hips bucked to press himself deeper into her mouth.

"That's it. Suck me, baby," he murmured to her approvingly.

Marissa did. Tipping her head back, she took him as far as she could while sucking him deep.

"Stop," he ordered.

She hummed and swallowed, trying to push him over the edge. To make him lose control like he always seemed to manage with her.

"Stop!"

Marissa gave him one last lick before looking up. He stared down at her. His eyes glowed, showing just how close she had been to making him lose control and spill into her mouth.

"Come here," he commanded, and she didn't see any reason not to get what she wanted – him deep inside her.

She moved up his body slowly, arousing both of them with the rub of her body on his. When she was straddling his thighs once more, he gripped her hips. Lifting herself, Marissa took Gage's hard cock in her hand and teased her pussy lips with it. Moaning, she continued to tease them both until he growled.

She took just the tip of him inside as she bit her bottom lip, trying to control her need. Sliding down slowly, she felt her body adjust to his girth. When he was fully inside, she rocked forward.

Gage moaned, or maybe it was her – she couldn't tell anymore. He felt so good filling her. As if he was the only one who belonged there. Still gripping her, he began to thrust up to meet her every time she rocked. Marissa cried out, throwing her head back. She rode him faster as his hips lifted to meet her. Gage matched her speed, pulling her down harder each time.

"Yes." Marissa leaned forward, her hair streaming over both of them, making a curtain around them.

She was almost there. That sweet release was only a few strokes from taking her. They moved in a rhythm that built in intensity, but it wasn't enough.

Slipping one arm around her waist, he flipped her onto her back. He must have felt the need for more, too, because he slammed and pounded into her harder.

"Oh, oh," Marissa panted out. She was there, ready to explode.

"Stay with me," Gage grunted out, plunging inside incredibly fast and hard.

Marissa felt her body spasm. Reaching up, she grabbed his arms. "Yes. Harder."

Roaring as if his control was gone, he took her not only as a man takes a woman but also as a wolf would take his mate. She was still screaming when the first orgasm passed and another hit stronger, taking all her breath away. Gage threw his head back and yelled out his own release before collapsing on top of her.

* * * *

The day of the ceremony was busy for both Elizabeth and Marissa. Marissa took extra time to help her sister get ready – drawing her sister a hot scented bath, fixing her hair and make-up before helping her dress.

“That dress is beautiful. *You* are beautiful,” Marissa told her sister, trying to hold back the tears.

“I can’t believe it’s finally here. I’m going to perform the mating ceremony.”

Marissa leaned over and kissed her sister’s cheek. “Not if you don’t hurry.”

Laughing, Elizabeth twirled around. “I’m ready.”

Taking her hand, Marissa smiled. “Then I better get you there.”

As she started to lead her from the room, Elizabeth pulled her back. “I’m sorry,” she said quietly.

“There’s nothing to be sorry about,” Marissa assured, and meant it.

Elizabeth stood in front of her, and Marissa knew that regardless of how long she had avoided this talk, it was going to happen now. Or her sister wouldn’t go.

“I love you,” Marissa started, going with honesty. “I will admit that over the years I’ve been jealous of you. I didn’t want to be different. I wanted to be either a were or a human.”

“Oh, honey.”

Marissa shook her head, cutting off Elizabeth’s sympathy. “No. It’s not your fault and it’s not mine. Talking with Gage and Logan, I realised we both had a bad deal. We both deserved a better Pack than what we got.”

“If I would have known...”

Marissa hugged her and then cupped her cheek. “But you didn’t. Please, I want to give you this day. I want everything to be perfect for you. I’m okay.”

“But...”

“I’m okay, Elizabeth. Please believe me.”

“Okay.” Elizabeth took a deep breath and Marissa was glad her sister hadn’t cried. They didn’t have time to fix her make-up. They were already late.

“So, let’s go!” Marissa ushered towards the door.

Elizabeth smiled but didn’t move. “One more question.”

She knew what was coming. Even knowing didn’t help with the answer.

“What about you and Gage?”

"I don't know."

"But you do care about him."

"I do," she admitted. "But I'm not a Pack member. I don't belong here. I have to go home soon."

"You could stay. Be part of the Pack. We could be close again." Elizabeth spoke of everything Marissa had already thought about.

"I can't. I'm sorry, but I just can't," Marissa told her softly. "Please don't let this ruin your day."

Elizabeth smiled but it didn't reach her eyes. "No. I won't let anything ruin today. I just wish you'd think about staying."

"What if I promise to visit more?"

Finally Elizabeth's smile reached her eyes and lit up her face. "Are you going to be coming to see me or Gage?" she teased.

Gage paced his office while Logan sat back comfortably on the couch.

"Nervous?"

"Of course I'm not nervous," Gage growled.

"She sure is something."

"Yes, she is. Everyone loves Elizabeth."

"I wasn't talking about her."

Gage stopped in front of him, noting the smug look Logan had. "What?"

"Have you talked to Marissa about staying longer?"

Gage went back to pacing. He'd tried to talk to her about Pack life. After all, committing to the Pack wasn't committing to him. But she changed the subject every time he brought it up. She was due to leave the next day. Every time they were alone together, he broached the subject. And she successfully distracted him.

"So you're just going to let her go?" Logan shook his head.

Gage knew he was only trying to help. There was a reason Logan was his second. The Pack respected him because he was fair, and Logan was like a dog with a bone. Never giving up on something he believed in.

"Maybe you don't deserve her then if you're just going to let her go."

"Watch your step, Logan," Gage warned.

"Excuse me, Alpha, but you are more than just my leader. You're my friend. I haven't seen you this relaxed...this happy in years," Logan pleaded. "And we both know it's because of her."

Gage walked across the room to stare out the window. He knew it was true. Marissa gave enough of herself to be intriguing yet held back, making her a challenge. She would spend time with him every night—sharing her body with him—yet she insisted on returning to her sister's house to sleep. She kept a distance between them and he wasn't sure how to push the issue without sending her running.

"It would be a mistake to let her go. Not only does she need a Pack to protect her, but you're in love with her." The last was said quietly, but to Gage's ears, it might have well been yelled.

Gage spun around, denial on the tip of his tongue. Then he felt the change in the house, in him. Elizabeth and Marissa had arrived. "They're here."

Logan nodded. "So let's get started."

They greeted the two women outside the door. Marissa smiled up at him and Gage felt his heart swell. He *was* in love with her. Even if it had only been a week, even if he hadn't told her yet. The wolf inside him had chosen her and the man couldn't have picked better. But Gage knew she would be harder to convince.

"Hi," Marissa greeted, looking beautiful in her short summer dress.

"Hello." Gage leaned down and kissed her mouth. The blush that stole her face would have been cute if it didn't tell him what he already knew. She was okay with what they did in private, but publicly, she still shied away.

"I...um..." She nervously shifted from foot to foot. "Thanks for doing this."

Gage nodded and hugged her to his side. "You can thank me later," he whispered into her ear.

She gasped, and Elizabeth and Logan laughed out loud.

"Most of the guests have arrived and Greg is already outside," Logan, ever the peacemaker, announced.

The look of relief that crossed Marissa's face was comical. "She's ready," she responded, avoiding everyone's eyes.

Gage laughed, letting go of Marissa. He knew he shouldn't tease her in front of others, but now that he had admitted to himself that he was in love with her, he wanted to shout it from rooftops.

But first, he had a ceremony to perform.

"You look beautiful. Greg is very lucky," he told Elizabeth, kissing the top of her head.

"No. No. I'm the lucky one. I know that. He has been so patient with me for all these years." Elizabeth took a deep breath. "I love him."

"I know you do, honey. And it's time to do this." Marissa hugged her sister.

Logan offered Marissa his arm. "Allow me to take you to your seat, my lady."

Shyly Marissa put her arm through Logan's. She liked him. He'd never treated her differently even after the embarrassing scene in the woods.

Logan led her out the back door to where the ceremony would take place. Gage would follow when it was time for the ceremony, escorting Elizabeth. As they headed to where the chairs had been set up, Marissa looked around, taking in the full picture. White lace and ribbons had been hung up. Her sister and Greg would stand under the arch while Gage performed the ceremony.

Light-hearted, Marissa smiled at the guests and Logan escorted her to the front.

She felt the unsettling sensation of eyes on her before understanding who stared at her. Turning her head, she met the pair of dark brown eyes, eyes she knew so well. Eyes that had haunted her dreams for more years than she wanted to remember.

Almost stumbling in surprise, she was glad Logan was there.

"What's wrong?" he whispered.

"Nothing," she lied. He would know it was a lie. Not only could he smell it, but also she had started to tremble. She didn't know what Brandon was doing there but it couldn't be good. She watched Logan look over also and knew she wouldn't have a choice in telling Gage.

"Who is he?"

Tearing her gaze from Brandon's, Marissa held onto Logan. "My old Alpha's son," she whispered.

Logan got her to their seats in the front row. He would sit next to her for the ceremony – that had already been decided. She was now grateful for the arrangement as she could feel the other man's eyes on them as they sat.

When the music started, announcing Gage and Elizabeth, Logan placed his arm around the back of Marissa's chair. She tried to relax as she concentrated on her sister.

The ceremony was beautiful, and watching her sister commit to Greg brought tears to Marissa's eyes. It also served to take her attention away from the other guests. She watched Gage as he stood with pride and presented Greg and Elizabeth to the Pack and guests.

When his eyes met hers, Marissa felt a shiver of excitement through her entire body. He was like no other man she'd ever met. While he was domineering and demanding, he still remained calm and kind. She would have never thought that all the traits he carried could be found in one man, a wolf, and a Pack Alpha.

She felt Logan's arm nudge her, reminding her it was time to stand and walk to the reception. Marissa purposely kept her gaze straight ahead, avoiding any guests. She didn't know why Brandon was here and she should have no fear from him now, but years of fear were hard to just replace. The promises and threats he'd made were still fresh in her mind.

Logan led Marissa to her sister, and as they hugged, he motioned for Gage to step aside. Marissa held her sister, then Greg took her in his arms and kissed the top of her head.

"I always wanted a sister. My mother had eight boys."

Laughing through happy tears, Marissa tilted her head back. "Well, you got one now. You have no idea what you're in for."

Also laughing, Greg kissed her cheek. "I'll hold you to that, Marissa."

Marissa understood the warning. She wasn't done with this Pack. Greg considered her family and wouldn't let her disappear out of Elizabeth's and his lives.

"What is it?" Gage asked, never taking his eyes off Marissa as he saw tears sparkle in her eyes. He knew she was thrilled for her sister, but he just wanted to hold her.

"I believe we have an unwanted guest," Logan kept his voice low so only his Alpha would hear.

Gage watched Greg kiss Marissa's cheek in a brotherly gesture. "Who?" he asked, distracted.

"Marissa's ex. The Alpha's son."

Shock had him giving his full attention to Logan. "Where? What did she say?"

"She was upset, although she tried to hide it."

"Find out what he's doing here," Gage ordered.

Logan nodded as they turned back towards the happy couple and Marissa in time to see a man place his hand on Marissa's back.

Marissa turned and stepped out of his reach. "Brandon," she greeted but her eyes remained cold.

"You look beautiful, Marissa." He placed a kiss on her cheek before he turned and shook hands with Greg. "Congratulations."

"Thank you." Greg looked between the new man and Marissa, knowing something wasn't right but unsure what to do.

"Congratulations, little wolf." Brandon also kissed Elizabeth's cheek.

"Thank you." Elizabeth's voice was soft. She sent her sister a panicked look. "Wh...what are you doing here, Brandon?"

"I escorted my cousin."

Gage had seen enough and moved in beside Marissa.

"Gage." Her eyes pleaded with him as he stepped up to the small group.

She didn't want a scene, Gage recognised that. He was also the Alpha, and if anything happened his Pack would step in and that would be a mess.

The man turned to him. "Alpha." He nodded in respect. "That was a wonderful ceremony. One of the best I've ever witnessed."

Gage smiled and nodded back to the man before running his hand over Marissa's back and settled his arm around her waist.

He saw her flush, but she didn't move away from him. The other male's eyes narrowed slightly.

"Uh...Gage, this is Brandon. He is the son of the Pack Alpha where we grew up." Marissa shifted like she wanted to move away from him, but Gage tightened his grip.

"Nice to meet you." Gage didn't move.

"Actually I am now the Pack Alpha of the territory. My father has retired," Brandon said, keeping his eyes on her.

Gage kept calm. That announcement changed things. If Brandon was a Pack Alpha, he couldn't challenge him without permission from the council that policed the Packs.

"Congratulations then," Gage told him with no feeling.

Marissa looked from one man to the other. Gage knew she was almost desperate to get away from Brandon. They would have to talk about what happened between the two later, but right now his main objective was to help her out of her distress.

"They're starting the reception. We should take our seats." Gage told her sliding his hand to hers. "If you'll excuse us," he said to Brandon but didn't wait for a response.

He walked away taking Marissa with him while Greg and Elizabeth followed.

"I get the feeling I missed something," Greg murmured to his mate, but Marissa and Gage heard him.

"That man is responsible for almost every problem we had in our old Pack." Elizabeth's voice held more bitterness than Gage had ever heard from her.

Marissa shrugged a shoulder and tried to pull away from Gage. He didn't give. He could still feel the other man's gaze on them.

Seated between Gage and Logan, Marissa pulled at her hand once more. "Let go, Gage," she complained so low only he could hear.

He was hanging on by a thin shred of control. His heart raced and his blood boiled in anger towards Brandon for everything Marissa had gone through. Plus suspicion as to what he was even doing here.

He looked over at Logan and could see the same feelings were going through his second. Whether Marissa was part of the Pack or not, she belonged to Gage.

He had never been so close to turning because of loss of control in front of any members of his Pack. He looked around and nodded at the Pack Enforcers. It was their job to protect their Alpha. Each one was keeping a close eye of their leader, sensing something was not right.

Marissa scooted her chair closer to him. Under the table, she placed her free hand on his knee. "Look at me, Gage," she whispered next into his ear.

He did and she smiled.

"I'm okay. I won't let anything mess tonight up."

Not caring who was looking, Gage framed her face with both hands. "Neither will I."

Marissa dropped her gaze. "Please, Gage."

She wasn't comfortable with public displays. He understood that even if he didn't like it. He dropped his hands from her face. "He's not to get near you alone. Do you understand?"

Marissa nodded even if it galled her to have him give her orders.

"Marissa." His voice was a low growl.

"I understand," she told him quietly.

"Make sure, Marissa. You have no idea of the consequences," he warned.

"I promise, Gage."

With that, he relaxed next to her.

Chapter Six

Marissa intended on keeping her promise. She didn't want trouble for anyone. She didn't know why Brandon would even come to her sister's mating ceremony, but he couldn't touch her. She told herself that over and over again.

The seating placed her with Gage and Logan while members of her and Elizabeth's old Pack took up two tables across the yard. The other tables were filled with Gage's Pack. Everyone was behaving properly, but one wrong move from either Alpha could spell disaster. Wolves were territorial about almost everything, but particularly about their women. She didn't want a Pack war at her sister's ceremony.

Gage or Logan stayed with her the entire time. After pictures were taken, dinner served and cake cut, the dancing began. Marissa danced with Gage, then Logan, but her attention was never too far from the man in the back keeping his eyes on her.

Walking to get a refill of champagne, she stopped to talk to a few of the females who had openly befriended her from Gage's Pack. If they knew she was a non-shifter, it didn't seem to bother them. Logan was talking to two of the Enforcers, but kept an eye on her from a short distance.

Marissa received her refill and turned from the table, running into Brandon. She tried to step around him, but he moved also. She looked for Gage or Logan, but they were several feet away from her involved in conversations.

Sighing, Marissa pulled her shoulders back and met Brandon's gaze. "What do you want?" she snapped.

Brandon stepped towards her. "Interesting seeing you interact with another Pack."

Marissa dropped her eyes out of habit, her confidence leaving her as he spoke with authority.

Satisfied, he moved even closer. "We have a lot to talk about."

"We have nothing to talk about," she said to her feet.

"Oh, you are very wrong. As Alpha of the Pack, I now have access to all the data on you and your family."

"So?"

"So as your Pack Alpha—"

"You are *not* my Pack Alpha," she interrupted.

Lifting his hand, he brushed her hair off her face. "Actually I am."

"I was kicked out of the Pack. You have no power over me."

"Well, funny thing about that. My father never turned in your papers to the council to let them know you were leaving the Pack. As law states, a member cannot leave the Pack and go rogue without a trial or the proper paperwork. You still belong to the Pack. To me."

"No." Marissa stepped back, shaking her head. She wouldn't go back to his Pack. She'd die before ever returning to him and giving him power of her once again.

Brandon laughed. "Yes, it's true. And by Wolf law, I have full control over you for your safety and wellbeing."

"You don't know anything about laws. You are a liar just like your father."

Anger flashed in his eyes and Marissa felt true fear. Her throat went dry while her heart pounded. Reaching out, he grabbed her arm. Marissa frantically looked around for Gage or Logan, not seeing either.

"No one's going to come to your rescue this time." He yanked her to him.

Marissa could feel his breath against her cheek.

"And be careful of your words. I will not let you disrespect my father."

"Let me go!" Marissa desperately tried to pull away from him, the need to run and hide almost overbearing.

"Or what?" Brandon ran his cheek over her hair. "You are mine. And you will be coming back to the territory with me."

Tears filled Marissa's eyes. This wasn't happening. This couldn't be. "No."

"What? Don't want to leave your lovers?" He spat at her. "Just how many of the wolves here have you spread your legs for?"

Marissa shook her head and again tried to pull away.

"I already know you are fucking the Alpha and his Beta. Is it just those two or did you take them all?"

As he shook her, Marissa's head snapped back painfully. They heard a growl before she was knocked away from him. Looking up from where she'd fallen on the ground, she saw a blur of movement as two males went down on the ground.

It took a moment for Marissa to recognise the man fighting with Brandon as one of Gage's guards.

"Stop!" she yelled to the two men. They didn't hear her...or choose to ignore her.

It wasn't until there was a second growl and Gage ordered, "Stop" that all movement ceased around her.

Marissa looked up to see his furious eyes boring into her. The muscle in his cheek jumped as he clenched his teeth. Marissa immediately dropped her eyes.

"Sam, go to my office," he told his guard, keeping his voice even, not giving away what he was thinking.

Sam picked himself off the ground, looking one last time at the man he'd taken down. "Yes, Alpha."

"Marissa, come here," he ordered next.

Marissa moved quickly to obey. Wrapping his hand around her wrist, Gage held her next to him. Logan stepped into the middle of the group and nodded at his Alpha.

"I believe our guests have overstayed their welcome. Now that the couple has left, they shall be escorted out." Gage's voice was low and deadly. Daring anyone to challenge him.

"I'll see to it, Alpha." Logan nodded and reached for Brandon, who pushed his hands away.

Standing on his own, Brandon faced off with Gage. "I agree we should be leaving. We'll just be taking Marissa with us," he said smugly.

Marissa stepped behind Gage, using him as a shield. She wasn't going with Brandon. She didn't think Gage would make her, but if what Brandon said were true, he might not have a choice.

"I don't think so." Gage didn't sound amused as Brandon stood in front of him.

Brandon smiled. "As her Pack Alpha, I will be returning her home."

"Pack Alpha?" Gage looked over his shoulder at her. Marissa shook her head. "I think not."

"She was born into my Pack."

"And left your Pack at the request of your Alpha."

"Really?" Brandon challenged, crossing his arms over his chest. "I have no paperwork supporting that."

"Of course not." Gage nodded as if he understood.

Marissa panicked. "Gage."

"Hush," he ordered. "Well, then I suppose you have the paperwork stating that she does belong to your Pack."

The smile faded on Brandon's face. "I do. Not with me though."

Gage shook his head. "I cannot in good conscience turn over a female who I don't know truly belongs with you."

Brandon took one step forward. "You would start a war over this slut?"

Marissa gripped the back of Gage's shirt. She didn't think Gage would turn her over to the other man, but doubt still made her stomach tighten with nerves.

Gage didn't move but met the other Alpha's stare. "Would *you*? You are in my territory now."

Brandon relaxed his stance. "We'll see about this." He turned and walked away, his Pack members following him.

"Make sure they all leave, Logan. Then I want you in my office."

Logan nodded first to his Alpha and then to the other Enforcers who had surrounded them. They all left silently.

Turning, Gage grabbed Marissa's arm and pulled her towards the house.

"Party's over," he threw back over his shoulder at the other members of his Pack, having them disperse quickly.

Marissa remained quiet as Gage led her away. In the shoes she wore, she kept tripping. Gage didn't slow his steps, however, he just tightened his hold. Marissa didn't fight, scared and unsure of her future and what Gage would do.

Sam jumped up when Gage walked into his office with Marissa. Gage pointed to the couch and waited for Marissa to sit before turning to his Enforcer.

"I apologise for my action, Alpha. I have no excuse for starting a fight with another wolf without your permission."

Gage nodded. "Yes. Especially another Alpha."

Sam's eyes widened. "I can only say that I was protecting the woman that my Alpha had taken as his own."

"And for that I thank you. Stand down, Sam, you are not in trouble."

Sam relaxed. "Is everything okay?"

Gage shook his head and walked behind his desk. "I don't know. But I have a favour to ask."

"Anything, Alpha," Sam agreed without second thought.

"We have a problem with the other Pack. Marissa will be staying here at the main house. I would like for you to go to Elizabeth's house and bring Marissa's belongings here."

Gage saw Marissa open her mouth and then close it quickly.

"Then we are on high alert. I want a full watch. Especially around the house."

Sam nodded. Logan knocked and entered the office. Gage acknowledged him with a tilt of his head.

"Then I would like you stay here at the house with Logan and I, in case there is any trouble."

"Of course, Alpha."

Gage dismissed Sam and turned to Logan.

"They're gone. The gate is closed and locked. I have four men on guard there," Logan informed him.

"Good. Make sure Sam has the others doing rounds." Gage told him even though he knew Logan would take all the precautions that were needed. Still he felt better knowing everything would be in order to protect Marissa.

"Yes, Alpha. No one will get in without permission."

Gage wanted more security than that. "I want no one else leaving."

"I'll make sure of it," Logan promised and Gage knew he would be taking care of things personally.

Gage looked over at Marissa. She had been silent the entire time. "Get me what you can, Logan."

He didn't need to tell Logan more for his friend to understand that he wanted everything on Brandon and the other Pack. Logan glanced at Marissa before he nodded and silently left the office.

Gage walked to Marissa and wasn't surprised when she leaned away from him. Now was the time for comfort.

"Come here," he said.

Slowly Marissa stood and took his hand, keeping her eyes down at her feet. Gage gently led her from his office and up the stairs. Once they reached his bedroom, he let her enter first. Marissa walked into the large room and sat on the edge of the bed.

Dropping to his knees in front of her, Gage gripped her hands. "Marissa."

Marissa didn't hold back her tears any longer. "I'm sorry, Gage! I'm so sorry."

Getting up and sitting next to her, he wrapped his arms around her. It broke his heart to see her so upset. "Shh."

"I...I...don't know what to do!"

Gage held her close to him and tried to make her feel protected. "I'll take care of it. Take care of you," he promised her and meant every word.

"He'll start a war. I don't know why. But I know he will," she managed to get out between sobs.

"Shh. Baby, let him try," Gage told her as he stroked her back.

"I don't want anyone hurt because of me. I don't understand why he's doing this."

Picking her up, Gage took her to the head of the bed and pulled the covers down. He placed her gently down. "Please don't worry, Marissa. I will take care of this."

Tears still streaked down her face. "I won't go with him."

"I know, baby. I wouldn't let you even if you wanted to." Gage wiped the tears from her face before bending down and kissing her cheeks, nose, eyes, forehead before placing a light one of her lips.

"Sleep now. I'll be here when you wake." Gage waited until her eyes closed before he stood and thought about what to do next.

* * * *

Gage stood from where he sat at the table in his room. True to his word, he worked up here instead of his office. He studied the papers he'd gotten when he'd first looked into Marissa. Logan and Sam were in his office trying to find something else—anything else.

A phone call to another Alpha—Lamont from three territories away—had helped. He had even offered to send his best Enforcer and son Cain down if Gage needed any help.

Grateful to have the older Alpha behind him, Gage relaxed. As Lamont had stated, there had always been something wrong with Marissa's original Pack. And while they would probably find papers to claim Marissa as theirs, Gage could turn around and file a claim that Marissa had been thrown out and had not been protected by her Pack. Gage knew he had a good case for that. Marissa had been on her own for the past ten years.

It also meant that Gage would have to take her into his Pack to file those papers and keep her from Brandon. He didn't mind having her there. She'd be a good member, but he wanted more. He wanted a commitment from her. He'd found his life-mate.

The light knock on the door took his attention from his thoughts. Walking quietly to the door, he opened it to Hannah, one of the older females who helped with his house. She had worked for his father before him and had always been a surrogate mother to him.

"I brought you both some bread and soup. And made her some tea," she told him.

Gage opened the door wider to let her come in with the tray. She placed the tray on the clean side of the table before looking up at him. Hannah had been with the Pack for fifteen years. She had come to his father after a member in her old Pack had assaulted her. Her Alpha hadn't done anything and Hannah had run away. Gage's father had gladly taken her into his Pack and his home. She had cooked for the wolves and kept his house ever since.

"You're doing a good thing," she said, and Gage could see tears in her eyes.

Gage shrugged at the admiration in her eyes. "I'm not only doing it for her."

"I know." She placed one hand on his cheek. "She wouldn't make it there. It would take everything out of her until she slowly died."

Gage placed his hand over hers, sharing comfort with her. "I will protect her. Even if it costs me my life."

"I know." She smiled sadly. "And that is why I choose to follow you like I did your father." She left him with that.

Gage walked over to Marissa. She was curled up and had dried tears on her face. Running his fingers over her cheek, he watched her blink awake.

"Hi," he greeted once her eyes opened.

She blushed and looked away. "Hi."

Leaning over her, he took her lips. Marissa opened for him before wrapping her arms around his neck. Gage moaned into the kiss and pressed her back into the bed. The power

and control she held shimmered beneath the surface. She pulled at his shirt, finally getting it over his head. Reaching up, she ran her tongue over his chest. The muscles under her mouth quivered and his breath brushed against her cheek.

Gage used his lips on her shoulders, then pulled the straps of her dress down her arms. She still wore the dress from the ceremony and he wanted it off her. Reaching behind her, he unzipped it, baring her to him.

The rest of the clothes were quickly removed as they touched and kissed each other's skin. When he positioned himself over her, he held her legs open with his own. As he entered her slowly, they watched each other.

Marissa lifted her hips up to allow Gage to slip in smoothly all the way. He filled her, and she started to move under him. Gage kept his strokes slow and deep, watching the emotions in her eyes as he brought her pleasure. Her mouth opened and small sounds came from her. Gage grunted as the natural pace picked up, his body demanding he take her, the wolf demanding he claim her.

Crying out, Marissa wrapped her legs around his waist, taking him deeper. "Yes. Gage Oh yes."

"Mine," he growled. "Mine."

"Yes." Marissa eyes glowed, showing the rare glimpse of her wolf. "Yes, Gage, take me."

Gage slammed into her over and over. "More. I want more."

"Yes," she cried out.

"Tell me you're mine. Mine."

"Yes. I'm yours. Take me Gage. Claim me." The words came out, flowed from her without hesitation.

That was all Gage needed to hear. He pulled out and turned her over. He placed her on all fours and entered her quickly, going all the way to her womb.

Gage thrust into her fast and hard. He slammed into her, holding her hips, his mouth running over her back. When he felt her body start to tremble and she cried out her release, he opened his mouth. His canines lengthened, and he bit down, sinking his teeth into her shoulder. Her blood filled his mouth and he claimed her as his own.

Licking at the wound, he cleaned it as he found his own release, pulling her along with him one more time.

Empty and satisfied, he turned her back over and took her mouth. He shared her blood with her, licking the inside of her mouth before biting down on his tongue, filling his mouth with his own blood. He held the back of her head firmly as he forced his blood into her mouth.

With the claiming and blood exchange finished, they collapsed as mates.

Chapter Seven

Gage held Marissa in his arms and caressed her body. She hadn't said anything since they'd finished the claiming, but she hadn't pulled away either. Her body remained relaxed and soft against him.

When she rubbed against him, he felt the wetness between her thighs—evidence of the claiming and mating still running through her body. Cupping her round curvy bottom, he lifted her up and onto his thighs.

"Ride me, baby. Fuck me."

She did. Moving up on her knees, she took him inside. She rode him fast, lifting herself up and down, her clit rubbing against him while he played with her nipples.

"Mine." He lifted his mouth to take one pert nub inside.

Marissa cried out, riding him faster, taking them both to a fast but powerful climax. Sweating and panting, she fell on his chest.

Gage held her tight. "I love you."

Marissa jerked and brought her head up. "What?"

Gage laughed at the expression on her face. With a hand in her hair, he brought her mouth inches from his. "You heard me."

"But—"

Gage nipped her lip. "I've claimed you. Why would I do that if I didn't love you?"

"To protect me. To keep me in your Pack."

Gage's stomach dropped. Was that what she really thought? Was that why she did it, allowed him to claim her? Gage started to move her off of him.

Marissa tightened her legs, holding Gage under her. Inside her.

"Marissa."

Marissa just shook her head. "I'm sorry."

Gage sighed. He'd been stupid. Thinking she would fall in love as fast as he had. But he'd known the first time he saw her looking defiant and angry that she was the one who would take his heart.

Using his strength, he lifted her off of him. She growled but he ignored her and stood.

"Where are you going?" she asked.

Gage didn't even turn around. "To shower. We still have a lot to do to take care of your old Pack."

Marissa watched his back as he walked into the bathroom and slammed the door. Well, that hadn't gone well. The wolf inside her complained and demanded she go after her mate.

She knew she should have told him that she loved him too. And she did. The first time he kissed her, he had taken her heart along with her soul. He was everything to her, but giving him knowledge of that was hard for an independent woman.

Huffing out an irritated breath, Marissa stood and walked to the bathroom. She smiled when the knob turned in her hand and she opened the door. She could see Gage, through the glass, with both hands braced against the wall and his head bent under the spray. Pulling in all her courage, she opened the glass door and stepped silently behind him.

He jumped as she touched his back. "What are you doing?"

Marissa leaned into him, pressing her naked body against his. "Helping you shower." She reached over and picked up the soap from the dish.

Using shaking hands, afraid of rejection, she began washing his body. Running her soapy hands over his shoulders, down his strong back, to the sculpted ass she wanted to sink her teeth into, she took in his scent. Mixed with sweat, soap, and her own.

Kneeling behind him, she began to run her hands up and down his legs. She slipped her hands over his body and massaged the flesh as she washed.

When she massaged his cheeks then ran a finger between them, his body shivered. Marissa liked the reaction. Gage had introduced her to so much in the past week. Maybe, just maybe, she could do the same for him. To show him how she felt.

She wasn't a hundred percent sure what she was doing. Her hand worked on its own as she washed and touched him. Her fingers found themselves between his legs, running over his anus before slipping forward to massage his sac.

He shuddered at her touch and she moved with more confidence. While massaging his sac and then his thick cock, she used her other hand to run over his tight hole. Slowly and carefully, she slipped just the tip of her finger carefully in and out.

His breath rushed out and he groaned. His hands on the shower wall started to shake. Marissa continued to stroke him with one hand while she pushed her finger into the back entrance that had never been penetrated.

His hips moved as she grew in confidence and fingered the prostate. If what she'd read in books was right, he would enjoy this. She knew he'd never had it done before—they'd talked about all their sexual experiences and likes. He'd told her this was something he was willing to try with the right partner. And *she* was the right partner, the only one he would have from now on, and she was a mate who wouldn't share.

She matched her rhythm on his shaft, the strokes in and out of his ass, finally pushing her finger all the way inside. His hips moved forward, rubbing against her hands before slamming back against her finger. Gage picked up the speed with his movements and Marissa added a second finger. He groaned and she knew he was close to climax. The hoarse cry that tore out of his throat echoed around the bathroom as his body bucked and he started to spill his seed over Marissa's hand and the shower tile.

Once he'd released, Marissa took her hands from him and started to kiss her way up. When she reached his shoulder, she bit into it. Gage's body jerked under her. When she slipped between him and the shower wall, she met his eyes.

"I love you Gage. I have from the beginning. And you are mine too."

Emotions broke out over his face, and he wrapped his arms around her and kissed her all over her face.

He ignored the light knock on the door. When the knock came again, he lifted his head and yelled. "Go away!"

The knock sounded again and they heard Logan's voice. "I apologise for interrupting Alpha."

"Then don't," Gage complained, keeping contact with her.

"Yes, sir. I wouldn't, except we have a visitor that has arrived."

Gage's face shut down before he reached over and turned off the water. Grabbing a towel, he wrapped it around his waist before looking back at her with hot, promising eyes. He handed her a large towel before yanking the door open.

"And just who did you let in without my permission?"

"Your father, Alpha."

Marissa's heart sank.

Gage laughed, surprising her. "I should have guessed. We'll be right down."

"Yes, Alpha." Logan stepped away from the door and Gage beckoned for Marissa to leave the bathroom with him.

Gage pulled his clothes on quickly while watching her do the same.

"I hate to see you cover that beautiful body," Gage teased.

Pulling on her jeans, Marissa sent him a dirty look. "Well, I'm not meeting your father without clothes on."

Gage stalked towards her. "Okay, how about just without the panties?"

Marissa moved out of his reach. He could have caught her, but he was trying to relax her. It was obvious she was nervous about his father being there. "Come on! It's your house now too."

"Absolutely not! It's bad enough we both have wet hair so he'll probably guess what we were doing!"

"Oh he'll more than guess since we smell like each other and sex." Gage wrapped an arm around her waist as she tried to pull her shirt on.

"Stop that!" Marissa ordered, but he didn't miss the smile playing at the corner of her lips.

Once she was dressed, he held out his hand. "Then let's go get this over with then so we can get back to what we were doing."

Marissa put her hand in his and he pulled her from the room.

"What's he doing here?"

"He probably heard about the trouble."

They walked into the living room just as Logan handed Gage's father a glass filled with brown liquid.

"Father," Gage greeted.

The man stood and walked over quickly. "Son."

The two men stood for a moment before laughing and embracing in a big hug. The embrace lasted several minutes before the older man turned his eyes to her. Stepping away from his son, he took in Marissa.

She looked practically ready to run. Gage knew his father would understand and put her at ease. Even before any of this happened, Gage had told his father about her.

"You must be Marissa."

Marissa nodded and dropped her eyes. Gage wanted to tell her that wasn't necessary, but his father moved first.

"My daughter," he said softly as he hugged her to him. "I welcome you into my family."

When he pulled away, Gage noticed the surprise on her face and knew his father hadn't missed it either.

"I am so pleased to meet my son's chosen."

Marissa glanced over at Gage, and he smiled at her reassuringly. She relaxed visibly and looked at his father.

"It is nice to meet you too." Her voice was soft but strong. Showing her strength even when she was afraid.

His father took her arm and headed for the couch. Gage followed and sat in a chair across from them. Logan remained by the door, still on watch.

"We'll have plenty of time to get to know each other better, but first, let's discuss this situation with the other Pack," his father told Marissa as they sat.

Thirty minutes later, Marissa was arguing with both men.

"There should be no challenge!" Her voice rose above the rest.

Gage shook his head. "He will challenge me. And I have to accept." He knew she didn't want him to, but she had to understand where he was coming from. Protecting her was his duty.

"You don't have to do anything," she argued.

"He must protect his mate." His father spoke the words Gage had been thinking.

Frustrated, Marissa stomped to the window and looked out. "I don't want anyone getting hurt because of me," she said more quietly.

Gage wrapped his arms around her, and rested his chin on the top of her head.

"Baby, even if we weren't mated, which we are, I would accept a challenge from him for everything he put you and your sister through." He turned her around so he could look in her eyes. "I love you. I will make sure you are always protected."

Reaching up, Marissa cupped his cheeks. "I love you."

As their lips met in a soft kiss, all of their troubles seemed to melt away. As the kiss went deeper, he heard someone clear their throat from across the room. They broke away, but Gage held onto her.

"Sorry," she mumbled, embarrassed.

Gage's father's eyes were bright with unshed tears. "It's understandable. I can remember—" His cell phone ringing cut him off.

The conversation was quick and brief. Marissa knew Gage could hear what was being said on both sides of the phone. Her hearing, while good, wasn't *that* good. When the phone call was over, Gage hugged her tightly.

"There will be no challenge," Gage's father announced.

Marissa relaxed. "Really?"

He nodded. "Seems Brandon's father stepped in and won't allow him to take this any further."

"Oh thank God!" Marissa kissed Gage quickly. "What's wrong?" she asked when he didn't say anything.

Gage smiled and kissed her back. "Nothing, baby. This is good. Why don't you go upstairs and change, and we'll take my father to town for a steak dinner?"

Marissa nodded even while she looked suspiciously at him. He knew she would still worry, but he didn't want her involved in the next discussion. She looked over her shoulder before she opened the door and he sent her what he hoped was a relaxed smile.

Gage waited until he heard the bedroom door open before speaking. He looked at his father and then his Beta.

"This isn't over. No matter what they say. They are up to something."

Logan took a few steps from his post by the door. "I saw his face when he said Marissa belonged with him. It doesn't matter what his father told him."

Gage's father rubbed a hand over his face. "I agree with both of you. And since he is Alpha now, he doesn't have to follow what his father says."

Gage thought of when Marissa had told him that she loved him. He hadn't cared about the other Pack. He'd only cared about having her in his arms for the rest of his life. He wasn't about to give that up.

"From everything I've read and what Marissa's told me, I don't think he'll come at me through proper channels."

"An ambush, maybe?" Logan suggested.

"Or they may just try to take her," Gage's dad mused out loud.

"They won't get her," Gage assured the men. "They would have to get through me first."

His dad nodded, but worry was etched on his face. "That doesn't mean that they won't try."

"Let them. I would love a chance to go after that entire Pack for what they did to Marissa." He fisted his hands in anger just thinking about what his mate had gone through. He slowly unclenched them and ran a frustrated hand over his face.

"You need to keep a calm head," his father advised, walking over to refill his glass.

"And what would you do?" Getting angry, Gage began to pace the room.

His father took his time refilling his drink and took a sip before responding. "I'm no longer the Alpha of the Pack, so it doesn't matter. What does is how you handle this threat to your Pack."

Gage took a deep breath before speaking. His father had always run the Pack fairly, and they'd thrived under his leadership. "I understand I can't go looking for trouble. But if they bring it to me, I will be ready for them. The only way they'll get to her is to come into my territory."

Logan cleared his throat and drew both men's attention. "So she's not leaving?"

"Of course not!" Gage shouted.

Logan nodded and dropped his eyes in a submissive gesture.

"Damn! I'm sorry, Logan. I didn't mean to take it out on you."

His father walked over and threw his arm around Gage's shoulder. "I think I'll take a rain check on dinner. Logan can keep me company. You need to go see your mate."

Gage went without looking at either man. Who would have thought falling in love and claiming a mate would make him feel so out of control?

Chapter Eight

"Would you like to repeat that?" Marissa asked even though she was certain she heard Gage correctly.

"You need to make arrangements to have your stuff sent here," he told her.

He currently prowled the bedroom floor, looking very much on the edge. He had been sweet and loving last night, and that morning when he'd woken her in the most pleasurable way. Now, fifteen minutes later, he was issuing orders.

"My stuff?" Marissa kept herself calm, knowing one of them had to be. "I think we need to discuss this."

"What's to discuss? You are my mate. I can't leave my Pack or my territory, so you have to move here," he announced, looking at her like it didn't even need to be said.

Marissa took in his demeanour and knew this could turn bad, real fast. "Gage. I don't know that I want to live on Pack territory."

She saw the change in him immediately. His eyes went flat and cold, and his face hardened.

"You don't have a choice."

"I...I don't have a choice?" Her voice rose and she knew she was just as close to losing control.

"That's what I said. *You are my mate!*" he yelled.

"I may be your mate, but I don't belong to you, Gage Wolf!" she yelled back. Forget being calm. She wasn't going to let him dictate to her about her future.

"Actually, that is *exactly* what that means!"

Gage watched as Marissa's face fell and she jerked as if he'd just struck her. Damn, this was not going the way he wanted. He hadn't meant to bring it up at all, but he just wanted her safe in his home, in his arms.

"I didn't mean it like that," he said and took deep breaths to relax himself.

She turned away from him and he had to stop himself from reaching for her.

"I think it is what you meant, Gage. You may not be like my old Pack Leader, but you are an Alpha."

"I am in no way like your last Pack Leader. This Pack is nothing like your old one. The sooner you realise that the better off you will be."

"Maybe," she said softly, turning back towards him.

He could see unshed tears and it broke his heart that he'd hurt her. "Baby, I'm sorry..."

She held up a hand to stop him from approaching. "I know I have issues, Gage. You knew that coming into this. I can't just forget everything in my past. And you can't expect me to drop my entire life."

"You actually think that you can just walk away from me, from your mate? Marissa, think about this."

"I am. What happens ten years from now when I become too much trouble? Hell, it could happen in one year."

Ignoring the fact that she didn't want him to touch her, Gage embraced her. "That won't happen."

She tilted her head back and her eyes met his. "You don't know that." She moved from his arms. "I'm going for a walk, alone," she told him as she started out of the room.

"Marissa." Gage stopped her with words even though he wanted to use force. "Don't—"

She sighed and interrupted him. "I won't leave the territory, but I wasn't asking for permission."

Gage watched her walk away. The woman who had stolen his heart and held it in her hands. He would love her forever. He could feel it and the wolf inside him agreed. He knew he needed to be patient with her, that she had a lot to get past, but he needed her to start making her way to him. To his Pack. He needed her with him. It was more than just sexual. He needed her like he'd never needed another person.

And he wasn't certain he could suppress that need for long.

Marissa walked the woods behind Gage's house. The farther she got, the more peaceful she felt. It was only yesterday that her life had changed. She had seen her old lover, taken a mate, and committed herself.

She had no intention of leaving. She knew her place was here with Gage. It was the Pack she still wasn't so certain about. No matter how hard she tried, she couldn't help but compare them to the one she grew up in. As happy as she wanted to be, there was something in her head telling her that it wouldn't last.

Marissa walked farther into the woods until she reached the creek that ran through the middle of the property. She sat at the edge and stared into the water. It rippled and flowed past her as she let her eyes close and felt herself drift.

It was beautiful here. Even though she couldn't shift and run like the others, she could still feel at peace. She could be happy here, with Gage, with her sister. She was so tired of being alone. For the first time in her life, she had more than just her sister. She had a future, a chance, and an opportunity to have a family. Did she really want to chance walking away from that?

A sound behind her had her opening her eyes and jumping to her feet. Marissa took in her surroundings, not seeing anything at first. When there was movement to her left, she turned and narrowed her eyes.

A man stepped out from between the trees and she tensed. He waved and Marissa recognised the guard from the first day. She'd seen him a couple of times since and he had always friendly.

"Steve," she greeted after he walked to her.

"Sorry, didn't mean to startle you," he said as he smiled at her.

"No. No it's okay. I guess I was lost in my own world."

"I could tell. You didn't even hear us approach."

"Us?" she asked, looking behind him.

"Us." His voice was joined by several growls. Three wolves stalked towards her as Steve opened his arms as if in a welcome. "Meet my friends."

Marissa backed as far as she could without falling into the creek. Steve and the wolves crept closer, and Marissa frantically tried to find a way out. The wolves snapped and growled at her.

"What's going on, Steve?" Marissa asked.

"It's nothing personal. I actually like you."

"Well, I don't think those wolves are the welcoming committee. Why are you doing this?" she demanded.

"Because I paid him."

Marissa was so surprised when Brandon stepped from the trees Steve had come from she almost stumbled into the water.

Brandon laughed once she had righted herself. "Easy there, Marissa. Don't want you falling in now."

"Wh...what are you doing here?"

"Did you really think this was over? That you were done with me?" He took a step towards her. "I decide when we are finished."

"You already did. If I recall, you decided and then I was run out of the Pack," Marissa reminded him.

"Yes, well, I changed my mind. Who knew that you would turn out to be such a hottie? Or that you would fall in love with another Alpha?"

Realisation hit Marissa. "That's what this is all about." She glared at Brandon. "You don't want me, you just don't want anyone else to have me."

Brandon looked amused. His lips turned up and his eyes were shining. "Well, aren't you just a little conceited bitch?"

"Maybe, but I know I'm right." She looked from him to the wolves. "So what's your plan here?"

"It's simple. You come with me quietly or I'll have the wolves tear you apart. After they are done with you, I will send them to your mate, and then your sister, and anyone else I think you care for."

"You wouldn't..."

He smiled again and flashed his canines at her. "Oh, I would. I would."

"All right. I'll go with you." Marissa could only hope that someone would see her and stop Brandon from taking her.

Marissa walked from the creek in the direction of the house, being careful not to get too close to Brandon. The wolves followed behind her.

Brandon let her pass between him and Steve. Marissa held her breath.

"Not that way." He grabbed her arm and yanked her to him.

"What?"

"Not that way." Brandon started walking and pulled Marissa along with him.

She tried to dig her heels in, but her strength was no match to his. He easily dragged her as he walked in the opposite direction of the house. Away from Gage. No one would see them if they continued to head this way.

"Wait! What about my stuff?" Marissa tried to stall.

"Don't worry, you won't need anything," he assured her.

"What are you going to do with me?" Marissa could feel the tears fall. She couldn't go back with him. She had to trust Gage could protect himself, to watch over her sister. She just couldn't go with Brandon.

"Whatever I want," he said as he continued to take her farther away.

Desperate, Marissa did the only thing she could. She screamed as loud as she could. She didn't stop even as Brandon turned, pulled back his fist, and punched her.

"I told you to be quiet," he yelled as he struck her again, knocking her off her feet.

Marissa wasn't going to be quiet. Screaming was the only way to let Gage know she was in trouble.

"Shut up!"

With a hit to the side of her head, Marissa felt her vision blur. She put her hands in front of her, trying to ward off the blows.

Brandon stopped hitting her but remained on top of her. "I should have known better. You never did listen."

Marissa struggled, but didn't have much fight left in her. "Get off of me."

"I don't think so." He ran his hands over her body. "I should get to have a little fun with you before I feed you to the wolves."

Marissa didn't have the strength to stop him when his hand found its way under her shirt. Her stomach turned at the feel of his hands on her skin, but she wasn't dead yet and she would fight him with her last breath.

"I think you'll enjoy it too. Remember how good it was between us. How hot it was."

Marissa shook her head. "No. It wasn't that great. I've had better human lovers. And you don't even come close to Gage."

"You little bitch," Brandon spat as he wrapped his hands around her neck. As he squeezed, Marissa tried to grab his arms.

"You need to get out of here." Steve's voice barely reached her from somewhere to her right. "Someone would have heard her scream. You have to leave before they come."

"It's too late for that." Gage's voice was the last thing Marissa heard before she passed out.

Gage had been standing on his back porch with Logan, drinking a beer and staring into the woods when he heard Marissa's scream.

He didn't remember jumping off the porch or running to her. He didn't hear Logan behind him or Sam and the other guards change into wolf form.

He just ran to his mate.

He reached her and saw Brandon on top of her with his hands around her neck. She fought him like the true soldier she was. Taunting him with words when her strength wasn't enough. Hearing his guard Steve's voice warn the other man barely registered.

Brandon's head snapped up and their eyes met. The other man looked at him defiantly, but Gage could also see the fear. It wasn't enough for him. He wanted the other man's hands off his mate.

"Let her go, *now!*" he ordered in a low calm voice.

Brandon looked down one last time before removing his hands from Marissa's neck. He stood and faced off with Gage.

"What are you going to do?" Brandon asked smugly, but his gaze flickered around.

Gage could see Logan standing by Steve and his guards that were in wolf form had surrounded Brandon's wolves. The other Alpha was alone.

"Only what you deserve," Gage told him.

Brandon attacked. It was the opening Gage needed.

Both men changed in midair, coming down in wolf form biting and fighting. Gage easily got the upper hand and had Brandon by the throat.

Brandon's hind legs beat at his stomach, but Gage held on tightly with his teeth. He could taste Brandon's blood gush into his mouth and it tasted like heavenly victory. He shook his head, tearing the vulnerable throat even more.

This was the one that had caused Marissa so much pain. The man who had put the fear and distrust into her eyes. He would rip out his throat for doing it to any female, but the fact that he did it to Gage's mate made him want to savour the moment.

That's when Gage felt the touch to his own neck and Marissa's sweet voice next to his ear.

"That's enough, Gage." She stroked his fur. "He's not worth it. Let him go and face the council."

Gage growled, voicing his displeasure at her suggestion.

"Come on, baby. It will be more humiliating for him to have to face everyone than you killing him. He tried to take me against my will, he lost a fight with you, he will be finished as Alpha. As well as being in any Pack."

Marissa continued to stroke his neck and legs. Brandon had gone limp. Gage dropped the other wolf whose head landed on the hard ground with a loud bang. He was unconscious but alive.

Gage nuzzled Marissa and she wrapped her arms around him.

"It's okay," she whispered to him. "I'm okay."

Chapter Nine

Marissa ran between the trees, zigzagging and crossing her scent. The wolf chasing her was so close she could practically feel his warm breath on her. She jumped over a fallen log and changed directions, heading to the creek.

When the water came into view, she used the last of her energy and raced towards it. Before reaching it, she was knocked to the ground as the wolf's large bulk hit her. Marissa rolled as she fell and ended up on her back. Her breath came out in pants from the long, hard run.

The wolf stood over her, licking her face.

"Stop, Gage! Stop!" She pushed him away, laughing.

He gave a fake growl and settled down beside her. She closed her eyes and breathed in the sweet air.

It had been two weeks since Brandon had found her at the creek. She went back to this spot often but never alone. Brandon would stand trial, but his Pack was still out there. Steve had his trial last week and had been announced rogue. It was the worst punishment for a wolf other in death. He would not have a Pack to protect him and was literally alone. Gage had told her Steve was too much of a coward to come after them, but he didn't want to take chances. She had agreed to Gage's request that she not take walks alone.

Sometimes Logan would accompany her, or her sister, or one of the females she had made friends with, but most of the time Gage did. With Steve's betrayal, Gage would only let a handful of people around her. In the past, it would have driven her crazy, but now it made her feel more cherished. She loved the times they were alone out here. When she had the Pack Alpha all to herself.

Gage licked her arm and she opened her eyes. He stood over her, and she swore he was smiling down at her.

"Change back," she ordered. Ready for some of the human fun they had come out here for. Her body already tingled with need for her mate.

As he changed back, Marissa couldn't take her eyes from him. She no longer looked away when he made the transformation. Gage had given her the feeling of belonging she had always wished for.

Once in human form, he collapsed on top of her, his erection digging into her hip. She giggled and rubbed against him.

"Is my little wolf hungry?" he asked, raising his body just a fraction from her.

Marissa grasped the base of his cock and stroked him. "Always. Always hungry for you," she admitted.

He thrust against her hand, showing her he felt the same way. "Well, then I should take care of that." He slammed his mouth over hers and pushed his tongue inside.

Marissa sucked on his tongue, drawing out a moan from him. With hands shaky with need, he pushed her knees up to her chest and positioned himself at her hot, wet entrance. Without breaking the kiss, he plunged inside, swallowing her cry.

Once again, showing her exactly where she belonged.

About the Author

Crissy Smith lives in Texas with her husband, daughter, and three Labrador retrievers. The three dogs love to curl up under her computer desk and nap while she writes. It doesn't leave a lot of room for her but what's a woman to do?

When not writing or reading, she enjoys hunting, camping and shooting. But she has a girly side too and is addicted to pedicures and coffee.

She has been writing since she was a teenager and still loves everything to do with the paranormal. Her stories and characters all have a place in her heart. She loves the alpha male, the dominant werewolf, or the Master vampire which find their way in most of her books.

Learn more about the characters she has created at her website where they have their very own page. It will be updated from time to time to let you know what's going on with them. Also you can find out who will be in the next book.

Crissy is currently working on her first series for Total-E-Bound called Were Chronicles. She will introduce her readers to the hidden world of wolf shifters and their unpredictable mates.

Email: Cmsmith0328@yahoo.com

Crissy loves to hear from readers. You can find her contact information, website and author biography at <http://www.total-e-bound.com>.

Also by Crissy Smith

Savage Love
Seduced by the Neighbour

Total-E-Bound Publishing



www.total-e-bound.com

Take a look at our exciting range of literagasmic™
erotic romance titles and discover pure quality
at Total-E-Bound.