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MY
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LOVER



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EROTIC ROMANCE



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MY LUPINE LOVER

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DEDICATION

To my own Majiktoka, thank you.
To everyone who inspired me, encouraged me, and basically kicked
my butt to write Vadim and Sasha's story. Here it is!

MY LUPINE LOVER

STORMY GLENN

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Chapter One

Sweet hell, that's my mate! Vadim Miroslav thought as a small man ran into the study of his father's study, quickly shut the door, and leaned against it. Vadim's eyes turned lupine black, his canines dropped down, and his cock filled. He was stunned!

Vadim had dreamed of his mate since he was old enough to know what one was, to have someone that was meant for him alone. He had fantasized about that special bond with someone until it was almost an obsession. He had just never envisioned one so beautiful. From the top of his honey-blond head to the bottom of his delicately formed feet, the little man was breathtaking.

Oh, and his scent. Part woodsy musk, part sweet summer rain, all masculine. Vadim inhaled deeply, imprinting his mate's wonderful scent on his senses. He could sniff the man every second of every day until he passed from this world with a happy smile on his face.

Vadim knew the scent of his arousal was filling the room when the gorgeous man suddenly turned around, his face filling with color when he spotted Vadim sitting behind a large wooden desk. They just stared at each other, lost in the discovery of their other half.

His cock hardened even more as he watched the small man's eyes also turn lupine black and his canines dropped, one white fang slipping over the edge of his lip. Damn, that was sexy. Vadim growled low in his throat when the sweet scent of the man's arousal

filled the room, entwining with his. He was as turned on as Vadim was. *Yes!*

“I...” the man began, taking a small step toward Vadim. A loud pounding on the office door stopped him, making him jump and turn to face the door. Suddenly, fear overrode the man’s arousal, filling the room.

Vadim jumped to his feet and gestured to the desk. “Come.”

The man, his fear almost tangible, ran across the room and dove under the desk to hide. Vadim quickly sat back down and scooted himself forward.

He grabbed his drink in one hand, his pen in the other, and bent over the papers he had been reading before he had been interrupted. It was all Vadim could do to hold the pen in his trembling fingers as he felt the length of the man press between his legs.

Vadim wanted nothing more than to drag him up, rip his clothes off, and explore every inch of his delicious skin. Vadim’s body tingled, and his mind clouded as he tried to concentrate on the papers before him. He nearly swallowed his tongue when he felt a small, delicate hand caress his thigh.

He knew that the scent of his arousal filled the room. It wasn’t such a bad thing. It would mask the man’s fear. But if the man under his desk didn’t stop soon, it wouldn’t matter who was coming through the door. Vadim would be helpless to stop himself from ravishing him.

The pounding became more insistent, drawing Vadim’s attention away from his throbbing cock to the unwanted interference. He turned his head to look just as the door swung open and three very large men rushed in.

It wasn’t unusual for strangers to be staying at his father’s compound. His father was the alpha of their pack and a very important man. People were always coming and going. Still, Vadim couldn’t remember ever meeting them men that came into the room.

“Can I help you?” he asked as calmly as he could, considering the man’s hand had just wrapped around his cock through the open slit in his robe. He set his drink down and sat back in his chair a little, spreading his legs to give his mate better access.

With arousal thick in the air, Vadim did the only thing he could think of considering the circumstances. Giving the three men his sexiest grin, he batted his eyelashes at them.

The largest of the three men grimaced in distaste. Oh, he was one of those, the breed of people who scorned gay men. One who looked down on them because he felt he was better than them, and who thought men should never mate with other men, just women. *Oh, goody!*

“We’re looking for our omega. Have you seen anyone?” the large man asked as he took a step back from Vadim. The two other men were quickly checking the bathroom and around the room.

“You,” Vadim replied. So, his little mate was an omega. Vadim knew he had smelled something different about him, but had been too overwhelmed by finding his mate to figure out what it was. It didn’t matter. The little man was his now.

“Besides us.”

Vadim could see that the larger man was clearly exasperated. The scent of disgust radiated from him.

“I can honestly say that I have not seen anyone that belongs to you.” He wasn’t lying, which was good considering a lie could have a scent just like everything else. The sexy man beneath the desk was no longer theirs. He belonged to Vadim now.

The alpha male glared at Vadim for several seconds. Vadim could tell that he was an Alpha just by the power emanating from him. All alphas had it, just as all omegas had the *omega* smell like his new mate. Vadim just hoped that his arousal would cover the omega’s scent.

Vadim stifled a groan and hoped that his eyes weren’t crossing, as the hand holding his cock tightened and moved. When one small

thumb moved up to softly caress the slit on the top of his mushroom-shaped head, he knew he had to get these men out of the room as soon as possible. He was moments away from coming.

“Would you care to join me?” Giving the Alpha his most seductive look and wiggling his eyebrows, he gestured to the bottle of whiskey on the desk.

The alpha looked him up and down, his lips curling in disgust. He abruptly turned and walked out of the room, the two other men following behind them. The door slammed shut behind them with a loud bang.

Vadim waited about two seconds before scooting his chair back and glaring down at the little man who had his hand wrapped around his cock. “You’re trouble,” he said, and chuckled through his clenched teeth.

The man laughed up at Vadim from under the desk. “Yeah, but I’m still your mate.” Vadim could see a hint of vulnerability in the man’s deep copper-brown eyes. He realized that his mate was afraid he would be rejected.

“Oh, you’re definitely mine now.” Vadim grinned as he leaned down to take the man’s soft lips with his. Oh, damn, he tasted just as good as he smelled, all sweet and tangy. Vadim just wanted to eat him up.

He nodded eagerly. “Yes,” he whispered.

“Are you okay with that? Does anyone have a prior claim on you?”

The man snorted. “You know it doesn’t work that way. There will be a few people who will not be happy about this, but you are my mate. You can’t change that, even if you wanted to.”

Vadim grinned. “You’re perfect, baby. I don’t want to change it.”

“Just wait. It’ll happen.” The man snickered again as he tried to climb out from beneath the desk. Vadim reached down, pulled him out, and lifted him onto his lap. The little man wiggled around on his

lap, which elicited a deep groan from Vadim as the man's ass rubbed against his aching cock.

Vadim leaned down to capture his lips again as he sat the man down on the desk, scooting between his open thighs. He thought he could die a happy man just kissing his mate, until a tight grip on his cock reminded him that he was naked except for his robe, and his mate was not.

Without lifting his lips from where they were plundering, he began stripping the clothes off his mate. Anything he couldn't pull off, he ripped off and tossed everything to the floor. Once he was naked, Vadim began to explore every inch of skin his hands could reach. As small as the man was, that was still a lot of skin, a lot of soft, silky, naked skin.

"I'm going to take you now, *majiktoka*, make you mine," Vadim growled the endearment in his native tongue. He watched his mate's eyes widen in surprise at his use of the words *little one*, knowing that he understood the foreign word.

Seeing the soft blush that covered his mate's face, Vadim was suddenly grateful for the natural lubrication produced in the glands under the head of his cock. He didn't usually keep lube in his study.

"Sashenka."

"Huh?" Vadim's brows drew together in confusion.

"My name is Sashenka, not *little one*," he grumbled. "As nice as it is, don't you think you should know that before you stick your cock in my ass?"

Vadim chuckled. His little man had a real headstrong streak in him, how enchanting. As big as Vadim was, most men didn't have the courage to stand up to him. He had been worried that his mate would be the same. He had just been proven wrong.

Of course, that didn't mean he wanted outright insolence. He was a dominant man, and he knew it. His little mate would soon know it also. "Doesn't much matter to me. I'm still gonna be up your ass in about two minutes."

He regretted his words immediately when he saw the flash of hurt in Sashenka's eyes, before trying to mask it by dropping his eyes and taking on a detached look. He didn't want to hurt his mate for anything in the world.

"Until I put my mark on you and make sure no one can take you from me, Sashenka, nothing else matters."

Sashenka nodded, tilting his head back and baring his throat. Vadim felt his cock harden even more at the submissive gesture. His little mate had no idea what a powerful aphrodisiac that was. Vadim could have used his hard cock to pound nails right now. *Hot damn!*

"Ah, majiktoka, you are so perfect for me," he groaned as he leaned down to swipe his tongue along Sashenka's long, swanlike neck. "I'm gonna love you like no one has ever loved you before."

"No one has ever loved me before," Sashenka whispered, his voice shaking with desire.

"What? You're a virgin?" That could be a problem. Vadim was so hot for his mate right now he didn't know if he could take things slow and easy.

Sashenka shook his head. "No, but no one has ever loved me before."

Vadim could hear the sadness in Sashenka's voice. Oh, his poor baby. He knew he was going to have to be extra careful with his little man. He needed to feel wanted and loved. But first, first, he had to claim him.

His grin was almost feral as he scooted down Sashenka's chest, while licking a trail along his golden skin. He found one brown-hued nipple with his lips and tugged gently. Sashenka went wild.

He started frantically humping his hips against Vadim's stomach as he clutched at his hair. His head thrashed on the desk. When Vadim used his teeth, biting down a little harder, Sashenka screamed. Arching into Vadim, he filled the space between them with his seed.

Watching his mate climax, Vadim was more turned on than he could ever remember being in his life. Sashenka was breathtaking in

his pleasure. He wanted to see that look on his face at least once every day, if not more.

As the dazed look began to clear from Sashenka's eyes as he looked up at Vadim in wonder. "Well, that's never happened before. That was... that was... wow!"

"You've never had an orgasm before? But I thought you said you weren't a virgin?"

"I'm not. That just never happened before."

"Just how old are you?"

Sashenka shook his head. "I'm twenty five. Why?"

"And you've never had an orgasm? Didn't you ever play with yourself? Or maybe with other—" He couldn't say it. The mere thought of Sashenka having another lover made him see red.

"No. My past partners didn't much care if I enjoyed myself or not." Sashenka's reply was so matter-of-fact that Vadim just stared at him in astonishment. His mouth opened and closed as he tried to think of what to say to that. Then he grinned.

"That's about to change."

"Promise?" Sashenka murmured, begging Vadim with his eyes.

"Most definitely." Vadim chuckled as he leaned down to take Sashenka's nipple into his mouth again. He was rewarded with a deep groan from his mate as he swirled his tongue across the hard little nub.

Vadim ran his hands down Sashenka's side, past his hips to his thighs. Grabbing them, he pulled them up and out, even as he scooted down until Sashenka's jutting cock was bouncing in front of him.

"Fuck, Sasha, you're perfect." And he was. He had a nice mushroom head, thick around, and just long enough. Oh yeah, Vadim was going to have fun with this. He leaned down and swiped his tongue over the top.

Vadim tasted a small drop of liquid from the small slit in the top, ambrosia. He could quickly become addicted to the way Sasha tasted. He licked his way around the head and down the thick veined sides.

As he moved down to lick at Sasha's balls, they drew up tight against his body. Sasha cried out again, his thighs quivering. Vadim lifted his head just in time to see white pearly seed shoot out of Sashenka's pulsating cock and all over his stomach.

Damn! He had just come again. Wanting to cash in on the euphoric feeling Sasha was experiencing, Vadim lowered his head and licked at his small, puckered hole. He swiped his tongue over it several times, all to the delight of his mate.

Before his cries of release could even quiet down, Sasha was moaning again as Vadim pushed a finger into his tight hole, then another, and then moved the two together. A third finger had Sasha pushing his hips back at Vadim.

Vadim stood up between Sasha's thighs. Withdrawing his fingers, he quickly grabbed his cock and pushed it against Sashenka's eager entrance. Holding his hips with one hand, he looked down at his mate.

"Are you ready for me, majiktoka?"

Sasha nodded his rapidly.

"Say it, Sasha, say you want me to claim you as my mate," Vadim demanded.

"Yes! Oh hell, yes, claim me!" he cried out.

That's all he needed to hear. Guiding himself in, Vadim pushed with his hips, past the first ring, then more, until he was seated all the way inside his mate. Oh fuck! The feeling was unbelievable.

Pulling out until just the head remained inside, he grabbed both of Sasha's legs, pushing them up against his chest. Then he pushed back in, slowly, inch by wonderful inch. He pulled out again repeating the slow process until Sasha was nearly crazed with need.

"Please!" he begged.

Vadim knew he didn't know what he was asking, just that he needed. Wrapping Sasha's legs around his waist he leaned over until the chests were pressed together, his face in the soft skin between Sasha's neck and shoulder.

As he smelled the deep scent of his mate's arousal his movements became more frantic. He knew he was nearing completion, just as Sasha was. He wanted them to come together as he claimed him.

Feeling himself beginning to peak he growled into Sasha's ear. "Now, majiktoka, come for me."

He sank his long canines into the soft flesh in front of him as he heard Sasha yell out his release. Thrusting deep one more time he groaned between his teeth as he filled Sasha, the sweet taste of his mate increasing his pleasure ten fold.

"*It's done, it's done, it's done,*" Vadim could hear Sasha repeating in his mind over and over again.

He grunted, withdrawing his canines from Sasha's neck, smoothing over the rough bite with his tongue. Lifting his head he looked down into his mate's tense face, a wide grin on his lips.

"It's done, Sasha. You're mine now and no one can take you away from me. You're mine forever."

"*Forever?*" Sasha whispered into his mind.

"*Yeah, majiktoka, forever,*" Vadim replied, using their mental bond to speak to his mate. To be able to speak to his mate on a level that no one else could, it was glorious!

But there was so much more to the mating bond than just speaking to each other telepathically. He would always be able to feel Sasha's emotions, to know if he was happy or sad, upset or excited. He would know even if his mate was upset, like now.

"What's wrong, Sasha?" he asked as he pulled himself from his baby and stood straight. He lifted Sasha until he was sitting up on the edge of the desk, wrapped a strong arm around him, and pulled him against his chest.

"What is your name?" he murmured.

Vadim started laughing.

"What's so funny?" Sashenka asked as he leaned back on his arms to look at him.

“Don’t you think that you should have asked that before I claimed you?” Vadim watched with quite a bit of enjoyment as Sashenka’s face flushed. He looked so embarrassed that Vadim decided to take pity on him.

“Vadim Miroslav, but most people call me Vad.”

Sasha grinned up at Vadim. The devilish little sparkle that came into his eyes made Vadim groan. He had created a monster. He knew what was coming even before Sasha began to speak.

“Can we do that again?”

He groaned, pulling Sasha’s head back down to his chest. He kissed the top of his golden head. “Any time you want, majiktoka.”

“Now?”

Pushing Sasha back against the desk surface, Vadim framed his face with his hands. “I knew you were going to be a problem the minute I saw you.”

Sasha grinned up at him. “But I’m you’re problem now.”

Chapter Two

Opening his eyes slowly, Sasha did not know where he was for a brief moment. When he felt a large body behind him move, an arm flop over him, he was suddenly filled with fear until the memories of the night before began flooding in.

He let out a deep sigh of relief as he relaxed back against Vadim's hard body. He was mated. Alpha Valeriya could no longer get to him. He belonged to Vadim now, although he wasn't sure Alpha Valeriya would see that as an obstacle.

Alpha Valeriya was used to getting whatever he wanted and he wanted Sasha. It was almost an obsession with him. For the last few years, he had been making Sasha's life a living hell, having him followed, and dictating to the pack that he was off limits, even as a friend.

Alpha Valeriya wanted him for something, although Sasha didn't know what. And he was making it nearly impossible for Sasha to get away. Sasha had just about been at his wits' end.

He had tried everything he could think of to escape, like hiding away on a fishing boat, hiring a boat to take him away, and even bribing other members of the pack to help him escape. He had been caught every time.

The alpha had caused Sasha to lose his job. He had dictated that Sasha was not allowed to work. No one could hire him. He had gone through whatever money he had saved months ago. He had to totally rely on the Alpha for his very food. It was humiliating.

He had, at the alpha's command, also become a social outcast. None of his friends were allowed to visit with him, or say hello on the

street, and he wasn't allowed to go out and socialize with others. He had no family of his own. Even his foster parents had been warned away. He had been cut off from everyone and everything.

He still didn't understand why he had been ordered to come on this trip with the alpha and his goons, unless it was just so he could keep an eye on Sasha. He was never allowed to go anywhere unescorted and never off the island.

Now, though, he had Vadim. He was mated. Mating within the wolf world was a sacred bond that overruled even the alpha's wishes. It didn't matter if one mated outside of his or her immediate pack. Everyone respected the bond, everyone except maybe Alpha Valeriya. Sasha wasn't so sure he would respect the bond Sasha now had with Vadim.

That thought scared Sasha so much that he felt tears fall from his eyes. He knew how vindictive Alpha Valeriya could be. He had seen it time and time again when those in his pack had tried to assist him. He was afraid that Alpha Valeriya would go after Vadim.

He was going to be really pissed when he learned that Sasha had been mated to someone outside of the pack. Not that he would have allowed Sasha to mate with anyone inside of the pack either. Sasha was twenty-five years old, and he had never been on a date. The alpha had made sure that.

The only physical contact he had ever had was with the alpha and those in his inner circle, and Sasha had hated every moment of it. The sex in itself wasn't that bad, but he at least would have liked to be able to choose whom he had sex with.

Sasha knew he was an omega, but somehow, he also knew that the alpha was wrong in what that meant. According to Alpha Valeriya, the omega of the pack was there to take care of the needs of the inner circle, sexual and otherwise, and whomever the alpha decided to reward.

That just felt wrong. It wasn't that he minded taking care of people. That was what he was good at. He enjoyed it. But he felt that

it should encompass the entire pack, not just the inner circle. And not necessarily in a sexual way either.

The omega should be there for everyone, to help when they were feeling bad, to calm them when they were upset and to act as a mediator between people. That didn't mean he had to have sex with them, just be there for them.

Of course, every time he tried, Alpha Valeriya had him punished, usually by giving him to one of his henchmen to play with. Most of them were not very nice. Sasha had been injured on more than one occasion. Luckily, shape-shifters healed fast.

Sasha scooted over until he was sitting on the edge of the bed. The noise of Vadim turning onto his back had Sasha looking over his shoulder at him. Damn, he was sexy. Sasha still couldn't believe that he was mated to this big man.

And he was big. Sasha had thought that Alpha Valeriya had been a big man at six feet, but Vadim would tower over him by several inches. Sasha doubted he himself would reach the middle of the man's chest.

And what a gorgeous chest Vadim had, all hard and rippled with a small amount of dark hair trailing down his stomach and under the blankets. Sasha stifled a chortle when he remembered he had intimate knowledge of where that hair led. He had explored every inch of his sexy mate last night, several times.

The aches and pains in his body told that he had been explored just as much. But they were good aches and pains. Each one told Sasha that he had been thoroughly claimed by his new mate, Vadim.

Reluctantly leaving his mate to sleep, Sasha stood and headed for the shower. He needed to clean up and get some food before he wasted away. After turning the water to hot, he stepped under the spray and reached for the soap while humming a happy little song.

He was just rinsing the soap off his face when he felt two large arms wrap around him from behind. Sasha yelped and started squirming around until he heard Vadim's laughing voice in his head.

“Ssshhh, majiktoka, it’s just me.”

Slumping against Vadim, Sasha wrapped his arms around his mate and buried his head against his chest. He took several calming breaths before slapping Vadim on the chest. “Damn it, Vadim, don’t do that!”

“Don’t do what, majiktoka?” he asked as his hands slid down Sasha’s wet body. He reached down to squeeze Sasha’s ass, and moved one finger down between his cheeks to caress his hole. “Don’t do this?” he asked as he slowly pushed one finger in, wiggling it around several times before adding another one.

“Damn, Vadi!” Sasha cried as his head fell back as Vadim added a third finger, stretching him. He never knew that could feel so good.

“Is this what I’m not supposed to do?” Vadim asked as he pulled his fingers out, lifted Sasha up in his arms, and pressed his back against the shower wall before quickly impaling him on his hard cock.

Holding Sasha by the ass, Vadim began thrusting into him, his movements quick and frenzied. His sudden, deep growl had Sasha laughing and dropping his head to one side to bare his neck to Vadim.

He could feel his aching cock rubbing between their bodies, each thrust of Vadim’s hips caressing the sensitive head into Vadim’s soft belly hair. It was almost as good as having Vadim’s hand wrapped around him, almost.

He was so close. His balls were drawing up against his body. Just a little more, that’s all he needed, just a little more.

“Vadi,” he cried out desperately, clutching at Vadim’s shoulders.

Vadim shifted Sasha’s legs over his arms and changed the angle of his thrusts, his hands still grasping his ass. Sasha saw stars when Vadim began to pound into him again, hitting his sweet spot with every hard thrust.

That was it! That was what he needed. Sasha cried out, his climax erupting between them as Vadim sank his teeth into the mating mark on his shoulder. His eyes grew dazed, and his canines dropped down as Vadim continued to pound into him at a furious pace.

Sasha couldn't help himself. While he felt connected to Vadim in a way he had never felt before, he needed more. Leaning forward, he bit into the soft flesh between Vadim's neck and shoulder, leaving his own mating mark on him.

As Sasha's canines sank in, he heard Vadim roar out his release. Vadim's orgasm exploded, filling Sasha as his fingers gripped the flesh beneath them. Vadim shuddered as Sasha released his teeth and ran his tongue over the bite mark.

"Fuck, Sasha, you are perfect for me!" Vadim growled as he slowly lowered Sasha's trembling legs to the shower stall floor. .

Sasha giggled as he reached for the shampoo. "That'll change."

Vadim shook his head even as he sat down on the small seat in the shower and tilted his head back for Sasha to begin shampooing his hair. "I don't think so, majiktoka. I don't think there is anything you could do or say that would change my mind about you."

"Wait for it." Sasha laughed happily as he began soaping Vadim's hair, his fingers gently massaging his scalp.

Vadim turned his head slightly to look back at Sasha. "I can see that you're going to be trouble."

"Told you." Sasha laughed. "Now lean back so I can rinse your hair."

* * * *

Vadim leaned his head back and allowed Sasha to rinse the soap from his hair. He never thought he would get so much pleasure just from someone washing his hair. It amazed him how much having a mate could mean to him.

He wondered what other things would change with Sasha in his life. He knew he would never be with anyone else now. He had no desire to. No one else could compare to the tight little body of his mate.

He never realized how sexy smaller men could be. He usually went for more robust men, biker types. He never envisioned that a man that barely reached mid way up his chest would snare his total attention.

Sasha was perfect, though. His long, lithe legs, rippled chest, abdomen, and that tight ass. Even the smooth, hairless skin covering his body turned Vadim on. Just looking at him had Vadim's cock hardening.

He wanted to take him again, but figured his little mate was sore enough. He hadn't exactly been easy on Sasha since claiming him. It was better to give him a little more time before taking him again. He didn't want him to become uncomfortable.

Once Sasha was done washing his hair, Vadim quickly soaped up and rinsed off. He needed to get out of the shower and get them both dressed as soon as possible if he was going to have any hope of keeping his hands off Sasha.

Turning the water off, he reached for a towel, quickly drying himself off. It was all he could do not to watch Sasha drying off, but he knew if he did, he'd never make it out of the bathroom without attacking his mate again.

After dropping the towel in the hamper, he made his way back to the bedroom dresser. He was dressed before Sasha walked into the room. Trying to keep himself busy and his gaze off of Sasha, he stripped the bed and threw the sheets into the hamper in the bathroom.

Walking back into the bedroom, he found Sasha dressed and sitting on the side of the bed, his hands twisting nervously in his lap. Sasha's bent head and feeling of desolation stopped Vadim in his tracks.

"Sasha? What's wrong?" he asked, coming over to sit down next to him.

Sasha shrugged. Vadim reached over and grabbed one of Sasha's small hands in his. He wasn't going to take that as an answer. "Talk to me, majiktoka. What has you upset?"

“What did I do? If you don’t tell me, how can I fix it?”

“Baby, you didn’t do anything. Why would you think that?”

Sasha shrugged again. Well, that still wasn’t an answer. Vadim reached over, picked Sasha up, and settled him on his lap. He wrapped both of his arms around Sasha and tucked his blond head under his chin. “Tell me. You know we shouldn’t have secrets between us.”

Sasha was silent for several moments before speaking. “Is it the bite mark? Is that why you’re upset with me? I didn’t mean to do it. I just couldn’t help myself. I won’t do it again, I promise.”

“Sasha, I’m not upset with you. Why would you think that? And the bite mark, it was hot. True, I never thought I’d have one, but now that I do, I’m glad you did it. It will let everyone know you have claimed me just as much as I have claimed you. In our world, it’s better than a wedding ring, although I wouldn’t mind one of those either.”

“You’re not mad at me? Then why are you ignoring me?” Sasha asked as he looked up at Vadim in confusion, his honey blond eyebrows drawn together in a frown.

Vadim closed his eyes briefly in remorse before opening them and looking down at him. “I’m sorry, majiktoka. It’s not your fault. Well, it is your fault, but not the way you think.”

“What did I do wrong?” Sasha cried.

“Oh, Sasha, you didn’t do anything wrong. You’ve done everything right. No, majiktoka, it’s nothing you did. I wasn’t trying to ignore you exactly but—” he hedged.

“*What?*”

“I can’t keep my hands off you. Every time I see you, smell you, I want you. Don’t you understand? I’m trying not to take you again. I’ve already had you several times in the last twelve hours. You’ve got to be getting sore. I don’t want to hurt you.”

Vadim didn’t know what he expected Sasha’s response to be, maybe annoyance that he couldn’t control himself. Maybe even a bit

of anger. He certainly didn't expect Sasha to jump to his feet and start yelling at him.

"You what? You ignored me because you were aroused by me? What kind of shit is that? Did you ever think to ask me if I wanted you to take me again? Did you think to ask me if I was sore or not?"

Vadim watched with amusement and a little bit of awe, as Sasha paced in front of him, his hands placed firmly on his hips. His little mate was clearly pissed. Vadim didn't know whether to scold him for being disrespectful or to hug him for being so adorable.

"Did you ever think I might be going through the same thing you were? Whether I was as turned on as you? No! You just started ignoring me, not looking at or talking to me. Do you have any idea how that made me feel? We just mated yesterday. How am I supposed to know you didn't want to hurt me?"

When Vadim saw tears falling down Sasha's face, he quickly grabbed him and pulled him back into his arms. He stroked Sasha's back trying to sooth him.

"I'm sorry, majiktoka, I didn't mean to make you feel bad. I was trying to look out for you, not make you upset. Don't be angry with me."

Sasha slapped at Vadim's chest, frustrated. "I'm not mad at you. I just...don't do that to me again."

"I won't, majiktoka, I promise. Next time, I'll tell you before ignoring you."

Vadim watched with amusement as Sasha's mouth briefly opened before snapping shut. Sasha glared at him until a small giggle slipped out of his mouth. "You have such a smart mouth."

"I do?" Vadim asked in surprise.

"Yeah, and later I will take all the time you want exploring that mouth, but right now, I need something else in my mouth besides your cock. I'm hungry. Feed me."

Vadim groaned at the image of his cock in Sasha's mouth. He hugged Sasha to him briefly before standing up, setting him down on

his feet. "Don't say mouth and cock in the same sentence or we'll never leave this room."

"Room service?" Sasha giggled, his eyes twinkling.

* * * *

Vadim was surprised by the devilish devilish little glint in Sasha's eyes as he watched Vadim over the top of his sandwich he was eating..

Vadim watched him scoot down in his seat then suddenly felt a small foot press against his groin. His eyes snapped up to Sasha's. He raised an eyebrow at the grin on Sasha's face.

"Sasha! You shouldn't put your foot there while we are eating," Vadim growled. He reached under the table and grabbed Sasha's foot. Spreading his thighs, he placed Sasha's foot up against his suddenly hard cock. "This is where it should be." He chuckled, watching the blush suddenly cover Sasha's face. He was groaning a moment later when Sasha began wiggling his toes against him, gently massaging the head of his cock.

Sasha was grinning at him when a throat cleared behind him. Sasha jumped in surprise and dropped his sandwich on the plate, hurrying around the table to stand next to Vadim.

Sensing his mate's apprehension, Vadim grabbed Sasha's hand and gave it a small squeeze. "*Relax, majiktoka, this is a good friend of mine.*"

"*How good of a friend?*" Sasha asked hesitantly. .

"*Not that good of a friend,*" Vadim replied, feeling Sasha's agitation. "*I will never share you, Sasha. You belong to me and only me.*"

Vadim could feel Sasha relax next to him, his posture going from stiff and nervous to friendly, but not too friendly. He was more at ease, but still cautious.

"I never want to be with anyone but you ever again, Vadim, please."

"You won't, majiktoka. You're mine now, and I don't play well with others."

Sasha smirked. "Oh, I don't know about that. You seemed to play pretty well with me last night," Sasha said out loud.

Vadim's mouth dropped open. Sasha was such a surprise to him. One minute he was cautious and scared, the next he was completely sexy. He growled as he pulled Sasha down to sit on his lap.

"Behave yourself before I have to do something bad." He chuckled as he swatted Sasha's ass playfully.

"Hmm, I might like to see that." Sasha giggled, wiggling his ass on Vadim's lap.

"Find a play toy, Vadim?" said an amused voice from the doorway, reminding them of their audience. Vadim looked up to frown at his best friend, Viktor Stylianos, who walked across the room to sit down in the chair Sasha vacated.

"I am not a toy!" Sasha spit out through clenched teeth, crossing his arms over his chest. He glared at the man, making his dislike clear in his eyes.

"Of course not, honey. I'm sure you always sit in men's laps and play with them," Viktor replied with a lecherous chuckle as he smirked at Sasha. Vadim didn't like the way he eyed Sasha up and down like a piece of meat.

"Viktor, it would be safer for your health if you refrained from making passes at my mate. You more than most should know that I do not share. Ever! If you wish to keep your teeth in your head, I suggest you keep your eyes off of my Sasha."

"Your mate? You found your mate?" Vik asked, as his stunned gaze quickly turned to look for the mating mark on Sasha's neck, turning beet red when he spotted it and the mirrored one on Vadim's neck.

He turned shocked eyes to Vadim's. "You let him mark you?"

Vadim could understand Viktor's astonishment. It was unheard of for someone of his ranking to allow his mate to mark him. Usually the inner circle was the one doing the marking, not the other way around.

"Of course. He's my mate. That makes him equal in my eyes. Besides, he's an omega."

"You mated an omega? Damn, how do you rate?" Vik shook his head, astonished. "You must have done something right in a previous life. You lucky fuck!"

When Viktor looked back at Sasha, Vadim smiled at the respect in his eyes. He was proud of the fact that his mate was an omega.

"Congratulations on your mating, Sasha," Viktor said. "I hope you and Vadim have many years together."

"What does my being an omega have to do with anything?"

Vik looked at him in surprise, his eyebrows shooting up. "Wha..."

"Sasha, you're an omega. That makes you extra special."

"Not if it means you share me with whomever you want to. You said you wouldn't do that. I don't want to be with anyone else. I told you that."

"Sasha, I said I wouldn't share you, and I won't. But being an omega does make you special," Vadim replied as he stroked his hand down Sasha's back trying to sooth him.

"How?"

Vadim looked over at Viktor, seeing the same concern on his face that he himself was feeling. How could Sasha not know what being an omega meant? Just what had his alpha been doing with his mate?

"Sasha, what do you think being the omega means?" he asked cautiously.

"As the omega, I'm responsible for taking care of all of the needs, sexual or otherwise, of the inner circle, as well as any person the alpha decides to reward," he whispered, hiding his face in Vadim's neck from embarrassment. He sounded like he was repeating a statement made by someone else.

Vadim's hand softly stroked the back of Sasha's head as he lifted his tear-filled eyes to Viktor's. Viktor just shook his head as if he didn't understand. Vadim didn't either. He had never heard of an omega being treated in such a horrible manner.

"Sasha," Vadim began softly, "who told you that was what an omega did?"

"Alpha Valeriya. Every time I refused, something bad would happen to someone in the pack. Alpha Valeriya said that it was my duty to the pack, to help keep the peace."

"What did—" Vadim cleared his throat. "What did he make you do, majiktoka?"

"*Can we not talk about it, Vadim? Please?*" he whispered to Vadim through their mate bond.

Vadim patted his back, and feeling Sasha's agitation, shook his head at Viktor. "*Okay, majiktoka, we won't talk about it right now. But eventually we're going to have to discuss it. I need to know these things, baby.*"

"Thank you."

"How about I tell you what we see as the omega's role in our pack, which I think is a little different than your pack. Not everyone sees things the way we do, but most packs do. In the past, omegas were the lowest man on the totem pole. They were the outlets for everyone's aggression and frustrations."

Sasha nodded.

"However, many years ago we found that the omegas were better serving in a different role. Omegas, like you, have the unique ability to calm people down. They are great ambassadors and intermediaries. They keep people from feeling aggression. I guess you could kind of call them aggression empaths."

"Aggression empaths?" Sasha asked, bringing his head up to look at Vadim.

"Sure. Haven't you ever been in a room and been able to tell who was ready to fight and who was not?"

“Of course.”

“Well, there you have it.” He smoothed the hair back from Sasha’s face. “Next to the alpha pair in my pack and the inner circle, our omega is the most important member of our pack. He or she helps keep the peace between us all, especially when people are feeling aggressive.”

“Do you share your omega between those in the inner circle?”

“No, baby, we don’t. We never share anyone who doesn’t want to be shared. Juliana, our omega, is a great lady. She is also mated to one of our betas. And, I can tell you, he would never share her with anyone, not even our alpha.”

Vadim could feel Sasha beginning to relax against him. “Rest assured, Sasha, I will never share you either. I don’t care who wants you. You belong to me now. That overrules everything, including what your alpha says.”

Sasha shook his head, starting to laugh. “You don’t know my alpha. He’s an egomaniac who thinks he rules the world. He won’t give me up easily. I hope you’re ready for that. He has some sort of obsession with me, I guess you could call it.”

“Obsession? Like he has the hots for you or...” Vik asked.

“I don’t know if I would say that, necessarily. But he certainly has a hard-on for me, something fierce.”

Vadim laughed. “Who the hell doesn’t?” He humped his hips against Sasha’s ass a couple of times. “I’ve had a hard-on for you since the moment I met you, and it doesn’t seem to be going away anytime soon.”

“God, I can only hope.” Sasha slapped his hand over his mouth as soon as if he had suddenly realized what he had said. His eyes met Vadim’s. Vadim just grinned.

“Sorry. My mouth tends to run away with itself sometimes.”

“Believe me, majiktoka, I don’t mind in the least.” Vadim chuckled.

“Speak for yourself, horndog. Some of us don’t have anyone to rev our engines,” Viktor replied dryly, snagging a piece of apple and plopping it into his mouth.

Sasha’s gaze turned to look over at Vik. “Do you like boys or girls? ’Cause I know a couple of both that would love to check under your hood. Maybe give you an oil change and change your spark plugs. You know, generally check out your dipstick.”

Vadim laughed so hard at the look of sheer astonishment of Viktor’s face that he had tears streaming down his face.

“Uh, I tend to swing more your way, little man, but I can certainly be flexible if the right mechanic came along.”

Sasha laughed. “I’ll see if I can get you an appointment. I wouldn’t want your dipstick to rust.”

Chapter Three

Vadim woke to the knowledge that his mate was not in bed with him. After the marathon sex they had had the night before, Vadim was surprised that Sasha could even walk, let alone get out of bed. That still didn't explain why his little mate wasn't in bed with him.

"Sasha, where are you, majiktoka? Don't you know you're not supposed to leave our bed before I wake up?"

He could hear the answering laughter in his head. *"I'm getting us something to eat before we both waste away."*

"Hmmm, trying to recharge your engine is more like it." He chuckled.

"And what's wrong with that? I need to keep my energy up. I'm a growing boy."

Vadim looked down at his awakening cock. *"So am I. Maybe you should hurry back here and take care of that for me."* Fuck! Just the thought of getting Sasha in bed with him again was making him hard as a rock.

He could feel the sudden pounding of Sasha's heart as he was filled with arousal. Hot damn, his little man was horny. Vadim couldn't wait for him to get back to the room. There was so much more to teach him, show him.

Sasha may not technically be a virgin but near enough. No one had ever taken the time to show him how wonderful making love could be between two people. He had just been used with no thought to his pleasure. It was much better when both partners were enjoying themselves.

"Hurry back, majiktoka," he whispered back to Sasha as he grabbed his hard cock. He gave himself a couple of long strokes while he waited for his mate's reply. But none came. All he could feel was the tremendous beating of Sasha's heart.

"Sashenka? Majiktoka? What's wrong?" He knew something was wrong. While Sasha's heart was still beating fast, he was no longer aroused. He was frightened. Vadim jumped to feet and pulled on a pair of jeans before racing from the room.

He ran down the stairs then down the hallway to the kitchen. Coming around the corner, he skidded to a stop, taking in the scene before him. Two men held Sasha, and another much larger man was hitting him. They were the three men from the night Vadim had met Sasha.

Vadim felt his canines drop and his claws extend, rage filling him as he saw a tear of sorrow fall down his mate's cheek.

"I'm sorry," Sasha whispered into Vadim's mind just as another fist landed on his face, knocking him to the ground.

Before he could stop himself or consider the outcome of his actions, Vadim jumped into the fray, his razor sharp claws digging into the first man he reached, ripping his stomach open, blood spraying everywhere.

The man grabbed his stomach and fell onto the floor. . Another man leapt at Vadim. He dodged him as he raked his claws across the man's face and arms. Vadim swung again, his claws ripping through flesh like tissue paper.

The third man, the one that was beating Sasha, jumped at Vadim, his claws swinging toward him. Vadim jumped to meet him. Claws and teeth met skin and bone. Blood hit the walls, the floor, the ceiling.

Several moments later, Vadim stood over three fallen bodies, his chest heaving. But he only had eyes for one, the little man lying on the floor by the wall. After jumping over the mangled bodies on the floor, Vadim stood in front of his mate.

Arching his back, he spread his arms and tipped his head backward, his loud howl of triumph nearly shake the walls. Adrenaline rushed through him at his victory. He had won the challenge. Sasha was his.

He squatted down in front his prize and drew in a deep breath, filling his lungs with the intoxicating scent of his mate. The sweet smell wrapped around him and embedded itself in every cell of his body.

Retracting his claws, he carefully lifted his hand to caress one soft cheek. His skin was so soft, so silky. Vadim wanted to rub himself all over his beautiful mate, to roll in his scent. He wanted to bury his aching hard cock deep within him.

The delicate features of his mate's face captured Vadim's gaze. He had a narrow Roman nose, high cheekbones, soft cupid lips, and long, dark eyelashes.

He was so engrossed in his examination of the little man that he nearly jumped when Sasha's eyelashes slowly raised and he looked up at him.

Vadim found himself inhaling deeply at the deep copper brown of his eyes, the little sparkles of gold flecks throughout. "Mine," he growled deep in his throat.

Sasha's eyes twinkled as he grinned up at Vadim. "Okay."

Vadim's canines rubbed over his lips as he grinned back at him. His heart pounded in his chest when Sasha turned his head to the side and bared his throat submissively to Vadim. Anticipation filled him.

His dominant, possessive side wanted to protect Sasha, to never let anyone hurt him again. The wolf in him wanted to claim the man, to mark him again so everyone would know that he belonged to Vadim. The man in him wanted to find the nearest bed and make love to Sasha until he couldn't walk.

He lifted his precious bundle into his arms, a part of him afraid that someone was going to take him away. Vadim knew he would fight to the death before he let that happen.

Lowering his mouth to Sasha's throat, between his shoulder and his neck, he licked, scrapping his rough tongue over soft skin. His mate was intoxicating, arousing. Vadim's cock was so hard, so excited, he felt like he was going to explode.

With a deep growl, he lowered his canines and sank them into the soft flesh to mark Sasha again. In the back of his mind, he acknowledged a high groan coming from Sasha as he came, humping his hips against Vadim several times.

After a few moments, Vadim licked the mating mark clean and lifted his head to gaze down at the man in his arms. He chuckled at the dazed look in his eyes. "Hey, majiktoka, how are you feeling? Do you hurt anywhere?"

Sasha shook his head, his eyes so wide that Vadim felt like he was drowning in them. As he stared up at Vadim, his mouth dropped open giving him a clear view of the canines that had dropped.

Vadim reached in with his finger and ran it softly over the tip. Sasha groaned, his eyes closing briefly. When he opened his eyes back up, Vadim swore there were flames of lust in them. It made his cock pulse in his jeans.

Vadim loosened his arms just enough so that Sasha could sit up but not leave the circle of his arms. Sasha looked around, his eyes widening in shock as he saw the blood-covered bodies lying a few feet away from them.

"Are they dead?" he whispered, as if he spoke any louder they might stand up and start beating him again.

Vadim grimaced as he looked over at the bodies. "Yeah, they're all dead." He glanced back down at Sasha, a tender look on his face. "I couldn't let them hurt you, Sasha. You belong to me and that means no one is allowed to put his or her hands on you but me. No one!"

"You don't understand. He was my alpha."

"I don't care who the hell he was. He had no right to hurt you like that." Vadim tilted his head to one side, curiosity filling him. "Just

why was he beating you anyway? Doesn't he usually go after you in a sexual way?"

Sasha shrugged. "He never really needed a reason, but this time he was upset because he found out that I had mated without his permission."

"So, he beat you up?" Vadim asked, incredulous.

"Yeah."

The way Sasha replied made Vadim angry. It was so matter-of-fact, like this was a common occurrence. "Sasha, how often did this happen? How often did he beat you?"

Sasha shrugged again. "I usually manage to stay away from him, but if I'm not around, he takes it out on someone else. It's my job to make sure that doesn't happen."

"You didn't answer my question, Sasha. How often did he beat you?"

"It usually only happens a couple of times a week. It's only when he's really stressed out, like today, that it gets really bad. I try to stay out of his way when he's like that, but his goons found me this time."

Vadim was incensed. He couldn't believe that Sasha was taking this all so easily, like it was something normal. He wrapped his arms tightly around him, pulled him close, and tucked Sasha's sunlight head under his chin.

"Well, he's gone now, so he can never hurt you again. I won't let anyone hurt you anymore."

Sasha giggled. "Yeah, well, just wait until I do something stupid and we'll see what happens."

Vadim looked up to see his father, Ivan, and several other men come running into view. He couldn't contain the low, threatening growl that rumbled through his chest as his father took a step toward him.

"Vadim? What goes on here?" Ivan asked as he looked around at the bloody bodies littering the floor, and then up to the small one held carefully in Vadim's arms. "What happened, my son?"

It took Vadim a moment to clear the haze in his mind before he could answer his father. His hands flexed several times. His jaw clenched, and his canines refused to retract. His arctic-blue eyes flashed.

“Vadim?” Ivan asked again.

“Mine,” Vadim growled, his hands tightening on the fragile body in his arms.

Keeping his distance, Ivan held his hands up. “Okay, Vadim. That’s fine. But you need to tell me what happened here.”

Vadim could feel Sasha rubbing his hands down his arms as he tried to calm him. Once his eyes cleared and he could regain his composure, Vadim took a deep breath.

“*Vadi?*” he heard Sasha whisper into his mind.

Vadim leaned over and placed a small kiss on his head. “*It’s okay, majiktoka. I’m fine.*” “Vadim? Why don’t you come with me and we can get you cleaned up? I’m sure your mate could use some care, maybe get cleaned up a bit?”

Vadim’s eyes fell to the man in his arms, just then taking in the blood on him, the rips in his clothing. Sasha could use some care, but only from him. No one else was going to touch him.

Without even looking down at the bodies on the floor, he stood up and stepped over them, following his father down the hallway to his personal suite. He walked straight to the bathroom, sitting down on the toilet seat. Sasha didn’t say anything, just watched him.

Vadim’s hands trembled as he began the slow process of peeling the wet, sticky clothes off Sasha until he was bared to Vadim’s hungry gaze. With each piece of clothing removed, he revealed a different treasure Vadim had discovered the night before.

A simple gold ring in one lightly-browened nipple. A starburst tattoo around Sasha’s bellybutton. Golden, tanned skin. Rippled abdomen. Long, slim legs that belied his short stature. A long, thick cock that should have belonged to a much larger man.

“Majiktoka, you are so damn gorgeous. You take my breath away. I can’t wait to get you in my bed again.”

Sasha laughed. *“Or the shower, or the countertop, or the kitchen table.”*

Vadim couldn’t have been more pleased with how stunning his man was. He was perfect. Vadim didn’t realize that Sasha was exactly what he had been looking for all of his life until he had him in his arms last night. And now he knew he would never let him go. He couldn’t imagine ever having anyone else.

He watched his father fill the bathtub before carefully lowering Sasha into the tub. Vadim kept one arm around Sasha as he used a washcloth to gently clean the blood and dirt from his body and ignored his father until he left the room.

Once he was done, he lifted him out and used the softest towel he could find to dry Sasha off. Only the best for his baby. Lifting him up, Vadim stood and walked back into the bedroom. He grabbed a blanket off the bed and wrapped it around him before sitting down in a chair, Sasha wrapped in his arms.

He lowered his head, sniffing the soft hair on the top of Sasha’s head. He smelled so unbelievable, like sunlight and summer rain. Vadim could smell him all day. He would never tire of his sweet scent.

“Vadim? It’s time to talk now,” Ivan said as he walked back into the room with his two of betas. Ivan sat across from Vadim, and the betas moved around the room before settling into their positions, with one leaning against the closed door and the other standing behind Ivan.

Vadim sighed. *“Quiet, majiktoka,”* he told Sasha, appreciating the telepathic ability between mates once again. *“Okay,”* Sasha replied as he burrowed into Vadim’s arms.

“I have claimed Sashenka as my mate,” Vadim began. “This morning, he went to the kitchen to get us some food. I knew

something was wrong, so I went to see what was happening. I found three men, two holding Sasha, another hitting him.”

He glanced over at his father. “I didn’t have any choice. They were hurting him, beating him up. He’s mine now.”

Ivan nodded his head. “Do you know who you were fighting?”

Vadim nodded his head. “He was Sasha’s alpha. But it doesn’t matter. Sasha belongs to me, and he had no right to put his hands on him.”

“It just might.”

Vadim cocked his head slightly to the side and looked at his father quizzically. “Who?”

“He was the alpha of a small pack from Vourdala Island, maybe fifty members all together. He was unmated as were his two betas.”

“Well, shit. That’s just perfect.” Vadim looked down to see Sasha yawning. He stood up quickly, walked to the bed, and carefully laid him down before pulling the covers up and tucking them around him.

“Get some sleep, baby. I will be here when you wake up.”

Vadim was pleased when Sasha pulled the blankets more closely around him. Sasha rolled over, closed his eyes, yawned and fell asleep. His little man was so tired.

He gazed down at him for several moments before running a hand through his shoulder-length, ebony hair in agitation. “So, what now?” he asked as he turned back to face his father.

“You killed an alpha, Vadim, and his betas. You know what that means as much as I do.”

Hell yes, he knew what that meant. By pack law, he was now responsible for the Vourdala Pack. He was now their alpha. It was now his duty to move to Vourdala Island and take over the pack and lead it.

“I don’t want it, father. Send Yuri or Niko. Let them have it.”

“I can’t do that, Vadim. You know how this is done. You took out the alpha of the Vourdala Pack. That makes you their new alpha.”

Vadim turned to face his father. He felt anxious, his shoulders tense. "I don't want to be an alpha. I never have. You know that."

"Then maybe you should have thought of that before you attacked an alpha, Vadim, and killed him." Ivan stood to his feet and began walking leisurely around the room. "You didn't even leave any of his betas alive."

"What was I supposed to do? They were hurting my mate. I couldn't let that happen." Vadim gestured to the man in the bed with his hand, his eyes still on his father. "He's...he's just so... well, look at him. There was no way he could defend himself against three of them. I couldn't let them hurt him anymore."

Ivan nodded his head again. "That's certainly understandable considering the situation. However, that does not absolve you of your responsibilities to this pack. They need you."

Vadim sat down on the side of the bed and twisted his hands together in his lap. "So, what now?"

"Well, as soon as your mate is better, you will have to go and take over your new pack. I'll send a few feelers out in the meantime to get the lay of the land. We don't know much about this pack. They tend to keep to themselves as much as possible. We will need to know as much as possible before you head in."

"And Sasha?" Vadim asked as he ran his hand down the Sasha's leg. "What about him?"

"He's yours. You claimed him." Ivan walked to the door, stopping to look back at his oldest son. "Vadim? You do know he's an omega, don't you?"

"Yeah, I know. I knew the minute I laid eyes on him." Vadim sighed deeply.

"You'll need to take special care of him. Not everyone believes that they have a special purpose in the pack as we do. It will be up to you to protect him."

“I would protect him even if he wasn’t mine,” Vadim murmured as he looked down at the sleeping figure in the bed. He was so damn perfect.

* * * *

Ivan watched his son for a moment, smiling at the possessive yet dazed look in his eyes. He remembered having that same look the moment he had met Vadim’s mother. He was happy for his son, he just wished it had come about in a different manner.

Gesturing to his betas, he walked out the door, shutting it quietly behind him. He began walking toward his office, knowing the two loyal men were right behind him.

“I want you to put out a few feelers. I want to know everything about the Vourdala Pack. Vadim will need to know as much as possible before heading in there. I also want you to contact the pack and let them know that their alpha is dead and my son is now their alpha.”

Both men nodded, and one headed off to get on the phone, the other following behind his alpha. “Should we inform Nikolai and Viktor of these new developments?”

“No, not yet. Give Vadim a little while before that. We’ll inform them tomorrow morning. While he hasn’t officially stated that they will be chosen as his betas, we all know that they will be. They have been Vadim’s best friends for most of his life. I don’t see him choosing anyone else.”

“And Anya?”

“Oh, I’ll tell her, but definitely not until tomorrow. She’d never give them any peace.” Ivan laughed, picturing his little wife. Vadim’s mother would go crazy if she knew the position her oldest son was in. And she’d take everyone else with her.

His son needed as much time as possible to come to grips with the idea that he was now an alpha before his mother found out. He had

never wanted it, and had always avoided the responsibility as much as possible. Many outside of their pack thought he was weak because he didn't want to be an alpha. Ivan knew better.

Vadim didn't like to fight, but he would if he had to. Ivan suspected that he would be doing a lot of it in the near future. He hadn't exactly been truthful with his son when he said that Alpha Valeriya hadn't left anyone in charge of his pack. He had. But the entire council of elders felt that Vadim would better serve as the alpha of the Vourdala Pack.

Alpha Valeriya had gained a reputation as a cruel and unjust alpha, who used his position of power for his own needs. He was in several conflicts with other packs as well as being suspected of stealing, bribery, and illegal activities.

Vadim would be a much better choice, even if he didn't want it. With his omega and mate by his side, Ivan had no doubt that Vadim would transform the Vourdala Pack into a pack to be proud of.

Chapter Four

How in the hell do I get myself into these messes? Vadim thought to himself as the ferry he stood on pulled into dock in the small seaport at Vourdala Island. He couldn't believe he was about to step onto an island that was almost totally inhabited by shape-shifters, and that he was their new alpha.

Alpha. Now there was a laugh. He had done everything in his power *not* to become an alpha most of his life. Avoided fights, stayed out of pack politics, and even bitten his tongue with his father so many times that it must look like Swiss cheese by now. Yeah, and that had all worked so well for him too.

He didn't want to be responsible for anyone, let alone several someones. Now he had an entire island of people that would be looking to him for direction, guidance and leadership. What did he know about leading a pack of wolves?

He wouldn't be in this position if he hadn't kept his nose out of trouble. But no, he had just had to step in and protect his mate from an attack by the alpha of his pack. He still couldn't believe that the previous alpha had attacked Sasha because he had mated. It just didn't make sense.

Vadim smiled when he felt a hand grasp his. He looked down at the little man beside him. The top of Sasha's honey-blond head barely reached his chest. His hands were nearly half the size of his. He was just so small and delicate. Sometimes Vadim was afraid of breaking his mate.

But, so far, Sasha had shown his true colors as an omega. He may be small, but he was a spitfire. He stood up for what he believed in

and what he wanted. He was not afraid to express his opinion, even to Vadim.

Sasha was also a very good diplomat, and often calmed Vadim when his temper was raised. Over the last few days, his little mate had proved time and time again what a phenomenal mind he had. Sasha was very intelligent.

The days before they had left for Vourdala Island had been an eye-opening experience for Vadim. Having a mate was unlike anything he had ever envisioned. Some good, some not so good.

Sasha's health and well-being, fear of hurting him because Vadim was much larger in size, and wondering if he could make his little mate happy. These things worried him constantly.

However, the littlest thought of Sasha, his scent and his mere presence in his mind had Vadim hard as a rock. Having someone to hold at night, to make love to, to whisper with in the dark, that made everything worth it.

"Are you excited to be getting home, majiktoka?"

Sasha nodded eagerly. "Oh yes, I can't wait to show you everything. There are so many people for you to meet. You're gonna love our little island. This is a great place to live. Just you wait and see."

Vadim lifted Sasha in his arms and set him down on the edge of the wide boat railing. He stepped forward to stand between Sasha's legs and wrapped his arms around him.

"You think so, huh?" Vadim reached over and pulled on Sasha's nipple ring through his shirt. He had discovered during their short time together that Sasha's nipples were particularly sensitive and played with them as often as he could.

He had also discovered that his little mate came at the drop of a hat. It was a great ego booster, especially considering that he had never experienced an orgasm before Vadim had made love to him.

"Vadi," Sasha whispered as he dropped his head back and clutched at Vadim's arms with his hands. Vadim grinned as he

watched Sasha in the throes of passion. He was still astonished at how breathtaking he was every time he came.

He leaned down and swiped his tongue over the mating mark on Sasha's neck and scrapped his teeth across the bite. Sasha groaned, grinding his hard cock against Vadim.

"I want you to come for me, majiktoka," Vadim whispered against his ear before sinking his canines deep into Sasha's soft flesh. He reached down between them, unfastened Sasha's pants, and freed his cock.

Vadim stroked Sasha quickly. He knew his baby was close. Lifting his head from Sasha's neck, he covered his mouth with his to muffle his cries. His little man was very vocal. He was, in fact, a screamer. And Vadim loved every sound he made.

As he ran his thumb over the top of Sasha's cock he felt his body go stiff and he erupted all over Vadim's hand before sagging against him. Vadim lifted his hand and licked at his fingers, his eyes connecting with Sasha's dazed ones.

"Fuck, that is so hot!" Sasha groaned as he watched Vadim lick away his seed.

Vadim chuckled. "Time to pay the piper, majiktoka." He lifted Sasha and turned him around to bend over the boat railing, pulling his jeans down enough to bare his ass to Vadim's hungry gaze. Now he knew why guys liked their women to wear dresses, easy access.

He unbuttoned his jeans before rubbing the last of Sasha's come over his sensitive hole. He grinned when he pushed a finger in and realized that Sashenka was still feeling the effects from this morning's loving. *Perfect!*

Lining up his cock, he pushed in to the root in one lunge. Damn, that was good. Vadim knew that they were in public, but he just couldn't help himself. He needed Sasha and needed him badly.

Grabbing Sasha's hips, he began rapidly pounding into him. He knew that he had to be quick before they were discovered. But as

excited as he was, it wouldn't take long. Having Sashenka wrapped around him was just so amazing.

"Fuck, majiktoka, you are so tight. I love being inside of you."

"Shut the hell up and fuck me harder!"

Vadim groaned at Sasha's demand even as he complied, pushing harder into him until he felt him start to shake. His baby was going to come again. Vadim leaned forward and covered Sasha's mouth with his hand as the man spurted all over the boat railing.

The sweet smell of his mate's seed combined with the tight grip he had on Vadim's cock sent him over the edge right after Sasha. Vadim muffled his loud groan in Sasha's neck as he came, filling his mate with his release.

He stood there for several seconds, his chest heaving, until a discreet cough behind them reminded Vadim of where they were. He turned to see his best friend and new beta, Viktor Stylianos, standing several feet away, his eyes respectfully out on the water and not on them.

Vadim stood back and pulled up his pants before helping Sasha into his, with an arm around the trembling man's waist to hold him up. Sasha's eyes were still dazed, but the grin on his face was huge. Vadim couldn't help but chuckle.

"You okay, majiktoka?"

Sasha giggled. *"Oh yeah, I just can't feel my feet."*

Vadim swung Sasha up into his arms. *"Problem solved, majiktoka."*

Sasha swatted Vadim's shoulder. *"I am not going to be carried home. What would everyone think?"*

"That I adore you? I'm addicted to you? Can't keep my hands off of you? That you're sexy as hell? That I get hard just looking at you?"

Vadim watched Sasha's eyes go all glassy as he stared up at him in surprise.

"Really?" he whispered.

"Most definitely."

Sasha buried his face in Vadim's neck as he laughed. "Okay."

Vadim couldn't help but chuckle as he carried his mate over to the front of the ferry and joined his two new betas. It had not been a hard choice when he had to choose his betas. Viktor Stylianos had been his best friend since before he could walk. He couldn't remember a time that they hadn't been friends.

His second choice for his beta was his younger brother Nikolai. He was just a couple of years younger than Vadim. He was the third member of the "Triad of Trouble," as his mother called them. They tended to get into mischief together, the three of them.

"We're gonna be pulling into port in a few moments," Viktor stated as Vadim and Sasha joined them. "It looks like we have quite the welcome wagon waiting for us."

Vadim looked out toward the crowd of people waiting on the docks. There had to be at least twenty people standing there. He grimaced. Peachy, a welcoming party. Just what he needed.

"Uh...Vadi?" Sasha started, pulling on his arm to get his attention.

"What, majiktoka?"

"Do you remember the night you claimed me and you asked if anyone had a prior claim on me?" he asked nervously.

"Yes," Vadim replied, his muscles tightening. He wasn't going to like this. He just knew it from the hesitant way Sasha was talking.

"Remember when I said that there might be a few people that wouldn't like it?"

"Yes."

Sasha pointed toward the dock. "They're waiting over there."

Vadim's eyes followed to where Sasha was pointing. "All of them?"

"No. Most of them, I think, will actually be very happy for us. But there are a couple of people that will not be. They might even cause trouble. My alpha—"

"I'm your alpha now," Vadim growled possessively.

“The *old* alpha kind of promised me to the next in line and his friends.”

“*He what?*” Vadim nearly roared as he stared down at his mate.

Sasha cringed and buried his face in Vadim’s neck again. “*I’m sorry,*” he said mentally.

Vadim took several deep breaths, trying to contain his anger. He could feel Sasha trembling in his arms and didn’t want to scare him. He knew he had a temper, but Vadim never wanted Sasha to be afraid of him.

He was just so shocked. It was nearly unheard of for someone to be given away if they were not mated, even if it was by the alpha of the pack. It made Sasha seem like a piece of property and not a person.

Vadim leaned over and nuzzled Sasha’s hair. “*It’s okay, majiktoka. I’m not angry with you. I’m just upset that someone would treat you like a piece of property. Don’t worry. They will never get their grubby little hands on you. You belong to me now and I do not share!*”

“*Are you sure?*” Sasha asked as he lifted his head to peek up at Vadim.

“Yes, majiktoka, and I will make it crystal clear to them also. You belong to me. You are the mate of the alpha now. That comes with some power for you. It is the duty of everyone one in the pack to protect you, and if they don’t understand that, they will when I’m through with them.”

“Vadim, I don’t want to cause any problems, especially since you are going to have so much work with getting settled. Maybe we should just wait. I mean—”

“Sashenka, you are my mate. Mine! No one, and I mean no one, has the right to touch you without my permission. If anyone does, I expect you to tell me immediately and I will handle it.”

“But, Vadim—”

“No buts, Sasha. As your mate and your alpha, I am telling you now, no one better mess with you. If they do, you are to tell me. Understand?”

Sasha giggled, which surprised Vadim. “You’re so sexy when you get all dominant and possessive.”

Vadim nearly jumped out of his skin when Sasha leaned over and ran his tongue up the edge of his ear. He shuddered, his arms tightening around his mate. Damn! Just one little lick and he was ready to throw his mate down on the deck and ravage him.

“You’re playing a very dangerous game, majiktoka,” Vadim growled. He leaned down and captured Sasha’s lips with his. He licked, nipped and generally attacked his mouth.

“Uh... Vad? We’re pulling into the dock.” Viktor chuckled. “You might want to stop playing tonsil hockey with Sasha and pay attention. Your new pack is waiting for their alpha.”

Vadim lifted his head and, growling, bared his teeth at Viktor, who quickly held up his hands in a submissive gesture. He was just about ready to rip into his beta when Sasha slapped him on the shoulder.

“Stop it. He’s just being a good beta. You don’t want to meet your new pack with your tongue stuck down my throat.”

“Who says?” Vadim chuckled. He laid a quick kiss on Sasha’s lips then lowered his legs to the deck floor. He reached down, grabbed Sasha’s small hand in his larger one, and gave it a little squeeze.

“Stay close to me, Sasha. I don’t want you out of my sight.”

With Vadim leading the way, his hand still gripping Sasha’s, and with Viktor and Nikolai flanking them, they walked off the ferryboat and onto Vourdala Island. They headed for the small group of people standing just off the dock.

“Okay, Majiktoka, you’re going to have to tell me who is who, and who I can trust,” Vadim sent to Sasha as she came to a stop before the group.

“I am Vadim Miroslav.”

One older man stepped forward. He bowed his head slightly in respect. “Alpha Miroslav. My name is Gregor. Welcome to Vourdala Island.”

“You have been informed by the council why I am here?”

“Yes, Alpha. The council contacted us a few days ago. They informed us that Alpha Valeriya and his betas had been killed in a challenge and that you are the new alpha.”

“Very good.” Vad could see a little twinkle in the man’s eyes, telling him that he was not sad to see the old alpha go. Interesting.

“These are my betas, Viktor Stylianos and Nikolai Miroslav.”

Gregor nodded to both of them. “Welcome.”

“Majiktoka? Tell me about Gregor. Can I trust him?”

“Yes, Gregor has always been here. He was born into the Vourdala pack and only has its best interests at heart. He would be a good one to talk to about all the pack business. He’s a good advisor. Valeriya hated him.”

“Then I will probably like him.” Vadim chuckled.

“I understand that you are familiar with my mate?” Vadim asked as he pulled Sasha forward to stand next to him, wrapping a protective arm around him. He wanted everyone to know that he had claimed the man as his.

“Sashenka?” Gregor asked, the surprise on his face quickly turning to a huge grin. “Congratulations, Alpha. You couldn’t have a better mate than Sashenka. He will serve you well as a mate and the pack omega.” He cast a quick look to the side of the group of people before looking back at Vadim, his voice low. “He will serve you best if he is kept safe by your side, Alpha Miroslav, and away from—just keep him with you.”

Vad nodded, eyeing a small group of men standing off to the side and glaring at Sasha. "I understand, Gregor, and appreciate the care you have for my mate. Sasha has informed me of his issues with several members of the pack. It will be an issue no more."

Gregor watched Vadim for several moments, as if measuring him and his words for their worth, before nodding with a happy grin coming over his aged face. "I believe you just may be correct, Alpha Miroslav."

"Please, it's Vadim. Alpha Miroslav sounds so formal. We are a pack, a family."

"Very well, Vadim, and thank you." He nodded his head toward Sasha. "I have been concerned for quite some time, but was unable to do anything about it. It's hard to go against an alpha, especially one like Alpha Valeriya."

"I understand. And I want to assure you that, while I have never served as an alpha before, I was my father's second and Ivan Miroslav is, I believe, a just and fair alpha. I learned everything I know from him."

"Ivan Miroslav? He's your father?" Gregor looked dazed for a moment. "I should have known that. I don't know why I didn't make that connection before. How could I not have seen that? I must be getting slow in my old age."

"Not to worry, Gregor, I'm sure you have plenty of good years left in you. Now, would you please introduce me to the rest of my pack?"

"Of course, of course." Gregor led Vadim around, introducing him to the people assembled. When they reached a group of three men, Vadim could feel Sasha shudder fearfully beside him. He knew these were the men the old alpha had promised his mate to.

"Alpha Miroslav, this is Casimir Valeriya. He was the nephew of Alpha Valeriya. Since Alpha Valeriya had no direct lineage, Casimir had been appointed his next in line."

Vad nodded. "Casimir." He did not shake his hand.

“These are his close friends, Yahn and Kando,” Gregor continued.

Casimir tilted his head and eyed Sasha, who was half hiding behind Vadim. He smirked when he saw the tight grasp Sasha had on Vadim’s hand.

“I assume you know my mate, Sasha?”

Casimir’s shocked gaze swung over to meet Vadim’s. “Little Sasha is your mate? Alpha Valeriya promised him to me.”

“I am aware of that,” Vadim replied, waiting to see what Casimir’s game was.

“You are new to this pack, Miroslav,” Casimir replied, not giving Vad the respect of addressing him as alpha. “You do not understand how things are done here. I was promised Sasha by the alpha of this pack. What the alpha says is law, is that not so?”

Vad nodded, feeling Sasha fidget nervously at his side. “Yes, I would have to say that is so. The alpha’s word is law.”

“*Vadim!*”

“*Hush, majiktoka, I want to see where he is going with this. Trust me.*”

“As such, Sasha should be turned over to me. It is the law.”

Vad couldn’t wait to wipe the smirk off of Casimir’s face. Hell, he wanted to rip his throat out just for looking at Sasha. But cooler heads must prevail. “Do you know how Alpha Valeriya and his betas died, Casimir?”

“I assume it was some sort of challenge.”

Van nodded. “Yes, you could say that. But it was less of me challenging them and more of them challenging me. You see, they tried to take something that belonged to me, something I hold very dear.”

Vadim pulled Sasha close to his side, one strong arm wrapped around his little man. “Sashenka is my mate. Where I come from, that bond is the most important bond, superseding even the laws of an alpha. Isn’t that correct, Gregor?”

Gregor nodded his head, a self-satisfied smirk crossing his lips. “Yes, Alpha Miroslav, that is true, even here on Vourdala Island. The mating bond overrules everything, even the words of an alpha. However, I would like to point out that as the new alpha of this pack, you do have the right to countermand any law set down by the previous alpha. That is your right.”

“Thank you, Gregor, I had forgotten that.” Vadim raised his voice, speaking loudly so that everyone could hear him. “As the new alpha of this pack, I realize that there is a lot for me to learn. However, on this, I want to be perfectly clear.”

His gaze traveled over each member standing there, meeting his or her eyes. “Sashenka is the most important member of this pack, both as my mate and as the pack omega. It is the responsibility of every member of this pack to see to his safety and protection. Any transgression against him is transgression against me.”

His gaze settled on Casimir and his two friends once again. “Do I make myself perfectly clear?”

Vadim could see the rage thundering through Casimir and his friends. They were not happy about this turn of events. He knew he was going to have to keep an eye on these three. They were going to be trouble.

He was especially suspicious when Casimir started to smile again. He had something up his sleeve. Vadim couldn’t wait to hear what it was.

“Well, we will certainly do everything in our power to keep little Sasha safe, won’t we, boys? We wouldn’t want anything to happen to him.” Casimir swept his arms wide. “In fact, right here in front of our pack, as the next in line for alpha, I pledge to do everything to see that Sasha is well cared for.”

So, that was his game. Casimir thought he would become alpha after Vadim. Boy, was he in for a surprise. “I’m sorry, Casimir, I thought you would be better informed than this. I know that Alpha

Valeriya had no lineage to carry on after him, so he made you next in line.”

“Yes, and as you are mated to Sasha, and obviously Sasha is not going to be able to provide cubs for you, that would still make me next in line,” Casimir interrupted.

“Normally, that would be true. However, I have just become mated to Sasha. I was not a monk before him. In fact, my sons should be arriving in the next couple of days. Both of them are next in line for alpha.”

“Your sons?” Casimir spat out. “*You* have sons?”

“Yes, actually, I have two. If anything were to happen to me before either of them are old enough to assume my position, I have designated Sasha as their guardian along with my beta, Viktor, who is also their uncle, to act as alpha in my place. At least until my sons are old enough.”

* * * *

Sasha hid the smile on his lips by burying his face in Vadim’s arm at the angry look that came over Casimir’s face. This was better than a soap opera. Casimir had assumed he would still be in line for alpha because Vadim had mated with a man. It was wonderful for Sasha to watch his little bubble burst.

He knew about Vadim’s sons. He had yet to meet the little boys as they were off visiting relatives. The youngest was Vadim’s biological son, Ivan, who he had with Viktor’s sister, Ana. He was just a year old. Unfortunately, she had passed away when he was born, but Vadim made sure that all involved kept in close contact.

Vadim hadn’t been in love with the little boy’s mother, nor had she been with him, but they had been good friends and had decided to create a child together to carry on for them. Since Ana’s death, Vadim had been a fulltime father.

Vadim's second son, Marika, was three years old. Marika's biological parents had died when he was just a toddler. Their father had been a good friend of Vadim's father, and made Vadim the boy's godfather. When his parents had died, Vadim had taken the boy in to raise as his own.

Sasha had no idea when he mated with Vadim that he would become an instant parent, and he wasn't quite sure how he felt about it. He didn't know much about children. He wasn't even sure what his roll in their lives would be. Vadim hadn't told him.

Gregor stepped forward and clasped his hands together in glee. "You have sons, Alpha? That is wonderful. It has been ages since we have had young cubs in the reigning household. Oh, my wife will be so thrilled. Ever since our daughter got mated and moved off the island, she has been so lonely, no cubs running around and all. Can I let her know that the cubs will be coming?"

"Certainly, Gregor. While Sasha will be their primary caretaker, I am sure he can use all the help he can get."

"I'm going to be caring for your sons?" Sasha exclaimed to Vadim in his head.

Vadim turned to smile down at him. *"Of course, majiktoka. They are your sons now, too. Unless you don't wish to care for them?"*

"No, I do. I just didn't think you'd let me."

"Why ever not? You're my mate, their father just as much as I am."

"Vadim, I've never been around cubs before. I didn't even have much of a job before working in the bakery, and Alpha Valeriya cost me that job. No one else would hire me. Alpha Valeriya said I wasn't qualified for anything but being the omega." Sasha balanced from foot to other, agitated.

"Majiktoka, all you have to do is love them and care for them the way you do me. The rest will come."

"But..."

“No buts, Sasha. If you truly don’t want to take care for them, I will find someone else, maybe Gregor’s wife. But I’m hoping you will. You will be great at it.”

“Are you sure? I don’t want to screw this up.” Sasha said. Taking care of children, let alone the alpha’s children, was a huge responsibility. No one ever gave him anything important to do. The old alpha said that he was too stupid to do anything important.

“Majiktoka, the only way you can screw it up is if you don’t really care about them. Children need love, just like the rest of us. Anything else after that doesn’t matter.”

Sasha couldn’t contain his grin as he looked back up at his mate, the sudden emotions filling his heart for Vadim shining in tears in his eyes. *“Thank you, Vadi. I won’t let you down.”*

* * * *

Vadim hugged Sasha close to him, giving him a long squeeze. He loved it when Sasha called him *Vadi*. It was Sasha’s own little pet name for Vadim, one that only he used. It made Vadim feel special.

He was also delighted that Sasha seemed to really want to care for his children, even if he was afraid. It was asking a lot for a new mate to take on the cubs from a previous relationship. That didn’t seem to bother Sasha at all.

“You’ll be wonderful, Sasha. Just wait and see.”

Vadim turned back to Gregor, a smile still on his face. “Gregor, could you show us to the alpha’s compound? I would like to have a look around and get settled. It has been a long day and I am sure that my mate could use some food and a hot bath.”

“Certainly. Please, come this way. I am sure that Sasha also knows the way. Oh, Sasha, that reminds me, would you like me arrange for someone to pack up your apartment and move your stuff to the compound?”

Sasha shrugged. "I hadn't thought about that. I guess I will be moving out of my little apartment."

Vadim looked down at Sasha in concern. He sounded sad about moving into the alpha compound. "Sasha? Would you rather that we stay in your apartment?" If that was what Sasha wanted, that is what they would do.

"No, it's just an apartment, a place to keep my stuff. I just never thought I'd be moving into the alpha compound. Besides, my place is with you now, wherever you are. It doesn't matter much where I live as long as we are together."

"That's right. Look at it this way, majiktoka, you have a whole new place to arrange and decorate any way you want. You especially need to get a nursery ready for the boys before they get here, or where will they sleep?"

"A nursery?" Sasha squeaked. "You want me to decorate a nursery for the boys? Vadi, I don't know anything about decorating. What if—"

"I'm sure Gregor's wife would be more than happy to help you. However, I have every confidence in you. You are not stupid. You'll figure it out."

Sasha still didn't look like he believed him. Vadim could just feel his teeth clenching at the lost look on Sasha's face. Someone, or several someones, had convinced Sasha that he wasn't good for anything besides being their play toy.

Vadim would truly like to get his hands on whoever had done that, but he was afraid that he already had. If he could, he would dig the old alpha back up and rip him apart all over again. Sasha was smart, compassionate, and caring. He had so much to offer him, the pack, everyone. But someone had convinced him he had nothing to offer.

It was going to take a lot of work to convince him of his worth. A task that Vadim knew would be a long one to complete. Giving him the responsibility of caring for their children was the first step in his master plan. Eventually, he wanted Sasha to be confident on his own.

One arm around his mate, he began following Gregor up the street and away from the dock. From the corner of his eye, he saw Casimir and his goons glaring at him and Sasha. They would need watching. Casimir had given up too easily. Vadim feared he wasn't done dealing with him. But for now, getting settled in his new home was more important.

"Now, about this compound," he said.

Chapter Five

Vadim chuckled as he followed Gregor through the town, the crowd from the docks following behind them. Sasha was so excited to show him everything he was practically bouncing. He was animated as he pointed everything out.

“Oh, and this is Pauline’s Pleasures. It’s a bakery owned by Pauline Dresden. She makes the absolute best croissants in the world. They practically melt in your mouth. You have got to try one. And her éclairs, yum! I could eat them all day long.”

Vadim saw a little round woman standing in front of the bakery. From the way she was beaming, he assumed she was Pauline.

“Maybe we can arrange for her to have some croissants delivered to the house each morning for breakfast?” He raised an eyebrow toward Pauline, who eagerly nodded.

“I would be most happy to, Alpha Miroslav.”

“Please, call me Vadim. We’re a pack now.”

Pauline flushed, nodding her head. “Thank you, Alpha, err, Vadim. I will have some croissants delivered first thing in the morning. If there is anything else you desire, please let me know. I want your transition here to be as peaceful as possible.”

“Thank you, Pauline. I’m sure it will. If it’s not too much to ask, can I set up a monthly tab with you to be paid at the end of every month? I’m afraid that my mate may be eating here a lot.”

Pauline looked confused, as did several people surrounding them. “A tab?”

“Yes. If you would prefer that we pay each time, I will understand, but a tab would be easier, wouldn’t it?”

“Ah... Alpha Miroslav, our previous alpha didn’t pay for anything,” Gregor began. “He said it was our responsibility as the pack to support him any way that we could. We do not mind continuing that practice. We understand that you take care of us, protect us and in return we care for you.”

Vadim’s mouth dropped open and snapped shut with rage. He felt Sasha push closer to his side, his arms wrapping around him, his hand stroking his chest, soothing him.

“*Vadi?*” Sasha whispered quietly into his mind.

“*I’m okay, majiktoka, just upset,*” Vadim replied, patting Sasha’s arm to reassure him. He turned to look at Gregor. “How often does this happen and how long has it been going on?”

Gregor shrugged, looking around to each person there in confusion. “It’s always been this way, Vadim, ever since Alpha Valeriya’s father was in power many years ago.”

“What all did you provide for the alpha?”

“Everything.”

“Everything? Explain.”

“Well, we provide the compound upkeep as well as the personnel that serve in the compound. Those around the village provide all of the food and items needed to operate a pack. Plus we all donate twenty-five percent of our income every month for pack needs. But I don’t understand. Why are you so upset? Isn’t this how it is done in other packs?”

Vadim shook his head. “No, it is most definitely not done that way in other packs. Maybe in some packs, but not most of them. I see that I will have to go over the accounts. Gregor, I think that you and I need to have a long discussion about how this pack was run before I came here.”

“Ah, yes, Alpha, if you say so. But I still do not understand.”

“You will, believe me. Until then, I would prefer to not discuss it in public. I think that there needs to be some changes around here.

After I decide what those will be, we will have a mandatory pack meeting.”

“Yes, of course, if that is your wish. Do you want to see more of the village?”

Vadim nodded. “Yes, please, show me more.”

As they started walking again, the Old World feel to the small village fascinated Vadim. It was such a picturesque little village. Small buildings, no more than two or three stories tall, lined the cobblestone streets.

There was a bookstore, a bakery, several art galleries, a couple of specialty stores, some markets, and restaurants. There were even a couple of sidewalk cafés. It was all very quaint. He began to wonder why he didn’t see more people around.

“Gregor, just how many people live on the island?”

“Oh, well, let’s see. There are sixty-seven adult shifters, another five pre-shifter cubs. There are also ninety-eight non-shifters that are family relations and twenty-three that are not. So all together, I believe we have nearly two hundred villagers.”

“My father thought it was smaller than that. Why so small a pack?”

“Not many people want to live out here on an island. It is an acquired taste, you might say. Our winters are long and cold, our summers hot and short, with a lot of rain in between. There’s also not a lot of excitement here. We’re basically a fishing village. And we are the only village on the island.”

“Just how big is this island?”

“We cover three hundred and forty square miles. It is twenty miles from one side of the island to the other. But this is the only area that has a village. The other end of the island is covered in woods, where we run and hunt. The water side beyond the woods is a sheer cliff.”

“Sounds wonderful. How much land is set aside for running and hunting?”

“Nearly sixty percent of the island.”

“That much?” Vadim was impressed. That was a lot of land to run and hunt on.

“Yes, the rest encompasses the village, our personal homes, and some farmland. We do not grow much here, but there are a few farms here and there. Man cannot live on fish alone,” Gregor chuckled.

“You do realize that I know nothing about fishing, right?” Vadim asked. He heard Sasha chuckle beside him. “*Smart-ass!*” he growled at him.

“No need to, Vadim. I, myself, am not a fisherman either. We have people here who do and love it. Many of them wouldn’t move from here if you paid them. Like I said, living here is an acquired taste. Those that do love it.”

“Sasha told me that I would love it here. So far, I do. It seems very nice here, very laid back. I can’t wait to see what else you have to offer.”

Just then, Sasha stumbled. Vadim caught him before he could fall to the ground. Sasha’s face was beet red when he looked up at Vadim. “Oops!”

Vadim laughed. He couldn’t help himself. He leaned down and swung Sasha up into his arms. “You must be more careful, majiktoka. I would be very upset if anything were to happen to you.”

Sasha grinned. “Then you’re gonna have an ulcer real soon. I told you I was a klutz.”

“No one is that clumsy.”

Gregor and a few people from the crowd around them started laughing at Vadim’s statement. “You obviously haven’t spent enough time around your mate. His jumbles are nearly legendary around here. However, he does keep us amused.”

Vadim frowned. He didn’t like the idea of people making fun of his mate. It just didn’t sit well with him. His father had warned him that other packs did not treat their omegas as respectfully as theirs did.

For some unknown reason, he hadn’t expected to experience that lack of respect here. He should have known better. So far, he had not

been impressed with the leadership of the previous alpha. He was proving to be quite the self-serving jackass.

Still, Vadim was going to have to educate his new pack on the proper treatment toward an omega, especially one that belonged to him. No one was going to mistreat his mate if he had anything to do with it.

“I’d say we are about done with show-and-tell for today, Gregor. I need to get my mate home to a hot bath and a hot meal. He’s had a long day and I’m sure he could use something to eat.”

Sasha smiled when Pauline stepped forward to hand him a croissant. He tore off a piece and held it out for Vadim to take. Vadim tried to glare down at him, but was helpless in the face of Sasha’s little smile.

He leaned down and took a bite, his mouth watering at the delicious taste in his mouth. He closed his eyes while he chewed. Opening his eyes, he saw the knowing grin on Sasha’s face.

“Told you,” he giggled, popping a small piece into his own mouth.

Vadim turned to find Pauline, giving her his biggest smile. “I have never tasted anything so wonderful, Pauline. No wonder Sasha loves your croissants. I can’t wait to see what else you can create. This was delicious.”

Pauline beamed under her Alpha’s approval. “Then I will make sure to add a few extra to your breakfast basket tomorrow.”

“Oh, you’re gonna have me fat in no time. I can see it now.”

Sasha winked up at Vadim. “Don’t worry, Vadi, I’ll help you work it off.” He didn’t realize that Vadim had heard him until he saw Vad’s lecherous grin. Everyone around them laughed. Blushing, Sasha buried his face in Vadim’s chest, much to Vadim’s delight.

“Come on, majiktoka, I want to see our new home.” He grinned down at Sasha. “Then you can help me work some of this off.”

Vadim was still chuckling at Sasha’s embarrassment a few moments later when they approached a large set of black double iron

gates. Beyond the gate, Vadim could see a large stone building. It was huge. Much bigger than he was used to living in.

He turned to look at Vik and Niko, seeing if they were as astounded as he was. Yep! They were staring at the building with their mouths open, just like him.

“This is the alpha compound?” Vadim asked as he turned to look back at the building.

Gregor nodded.

“Just how big is it?”

“Well, it has fifteen bedrooms, twenty bathrooms, a formal dinning room, a formal lounge, a study, a library, two salons, a music and media room, an office, a meeting room, a kitchen, family dining area and lounge, servants’ quarters, and a ballroom.”

“Is that everything?”

“There are stables behind the house and a shop for repairs.”

“And that’s everything?” Vadim whistled deeply when Gregor nodded. “Just how many people live here?”

“The alpha, his immediate family, and his betas.”

“That’s it? That’s like, less than ten people. No one else lives here? What about the servants? The guards?”

Gregor shook his head no. “The alpha didn’t like to have other people here. Of course, Casimir and his two friends lived here with him, but that was all besides his betas.”

Vad’s astonishment fled immediately. “Well, that’s going to change. They can have Sasha’s apartment after he moves his stuff here.”

“Now, see here—” Casimir began, reminding Vadim that he was still around.

Vadim turned his cold stare on him. “Yes?”

Casimir glared at Vadim but backed down. He knew he couldn’t win against Vadim, at least, not in a fair fight. “I assume we can stay the night tonight, alpha?”

“I’m pretty sure that Gregor can make arrangements for you for tonight. He can also arrange for your personal items to be packed up and delivered to your new dwellings. Unless you have direct pack business, I do not expect to see you here.”

“Do you really think that is fair, Alpha? We have done nothing to harm you or yours.”

Sasha started to say something. Vadim turned his eyes toward him and he quickly shut it. Vadim pulled him back into his arms to lean against his chest.

“I am sure it does not seem fair to you, Casimir. But my mate’s comfort comes before yours. So far, I have not been impressed by your behavior toward him. If you prove that you can be respectful, then fine. Until then, I will reserve judgment.”

Casimir glared at Vadim, the hatred in his eyes clear to see by everyone. Vadim knew what was coming. He had been expecting it. Since he needed to make an example of someone, Casimir was just as good as anyone else. He was even better since he needed to be taught some manners.

He slowly lowered Sasha to his feet and pushed him slightly behind him toward Vik, as Casimir took a threatening step toward him. *“Stay with Viktor, Sasha. Do not leave his side for any reason. This won’t take long.”*

“I challenge you, Vadim Miroslav, for position as alpha of the Vourdala Pack.”

“You really don’t want to do this, Casimir. You can’t win, even if your two friends join you. I’m giving you one chance to take back your challenge.”

“No, this is my pack, and you do not have a right to come in here from wherever you came from and just take over. This pack was promised to me along with your little whore. But once you’re gone, I’m going to teach him who’s his master.”

Well, that tears it. “Very well, Casimir. You can’t say I didn’t warn you. Gregor, would you please make sure everyone stays back. I

don't want to see anyone get hurt. You also might want to have someone go for the doctor. Casimir is going to need him, if he lives."

Vadim stood in place with his feet spread apart, his hands loose at his sides, and his eyes watching Casimir move around him. He waited, biding his time, for Casimir to make the first move. It wasn't long in coming.

Casimir's two friends grabbed him from behind as Casimir jumped him from the front. Vadim could hear people around him yelling about the unfairness of the two other men jumping him, but he had expected nothing less from Casimir.

With a rough laugh, Vadim attacked, tearing the two men off his back and throwing them several feet away. He slashed Casimir across the face, ripping deep into his cheek. At the same time, he felt Casimir's claws rake across his side.

He roared, grasping Casimir by the throat and pushing him back. One of his buddies slashed at Vadim's back, making him arch in pain. He swiftly swung a leg around, sweeping the man's feet out from beneath him.

As Casimir reached for him again, Vadim jabbed his claws deep into the man beneath him and ripped at his throat. He knew from the gurgling sound coming from him that this one was out of the fight.

Swinging around, he shook Casimir off, reaching for the next man. He wanted to save Casimir for the last. Using his hands and teeth, he dispatched the second man before turning back to face Casimir.

"Now for you." He laughed as he advanced on him. Casimir looked frightened for just a moment before turning and running, Vadim right on his heels. He caught Casimir within just a few feet, jumped on top of him, and pinned him to the ground.

Vadim held him down with a strong hand wrapped around his throat. "Do you yield?" he growled at him. Casimir glared up at him, jerking his body several times to dislodge Vadim.

Letting his claws sink into Casimir's throat just enough to draw blood, Vadim asked him again, "Do you yield?"

Casimir's shoulders slumped as he slowly nodded his head. "Say the words, Casimir, so that everyone can hear you," Vadim demanded.

"I yield," he spit out, his face flushed with anger.

Vadim stared down at him for several quiet moments before releasing him and standing up. He turned to look at the stunned faces of his pack. His voice was cold, hard, as he spoke loud enough that all gathered there could hear him.

"This pack is mine. Sashenka is mine. Any threat to either is a threat against me, and I will eliminate anyone that tries to take them from me. I hold this pack by the power of my body, the force of my mind, and the devotion of my heart. Any who dispute this, step forward now."

He watched and waited to see if anyone would step forward until he slowly heard someone clapping. Another joined in, and another, until the entire crowd was clapping and cheering their new alpha.

Vadim felt a long shudder shoot through his body. Arching, with his head falling back to point up to the moon and his arms out, Vadim let out a long deep triumphant howl. The members in his pack echoed it with howls of their own.

He took several deep, cleansing breaths as he calmed down, catching Sasha in his arms as the little man launched himself at Vadim. Hugging him close, Vadim winced at the pain in his side and back.

"*Oh, Vadi, I was so scared. Are you all right?*" Sasha whispered as he buried his face in Vadim's chest.

"*I'm fine, majiktoka. Nothing a hot bath, a good meal, and a little rest won't cure.*"

Smacking Vadim on the chest, Sasha glared up at him as his hand fell to sit on his hips. Vadim couldn't keep a smile from crossing his

lips. His mate was in a fine little snit. Vadim figured that he was about to get chewed out by his mate. He was right.

“Play your little games all you want, but it is not okay for you to let yourself get hurt. Do I make myself perfectly clear? You belong to me now, and I refuse to sit around while you get hurt. The next time you decide to prove a point, do it without bloodshed!”

“Sashenka!” Gregor said in admonishment.

Vadim could see that he was shocked by Sasha’s behavior. He couldn’t blame Gregor. He had just seen Vadim take on not one, not two, but three full-grown wolves by himself, and win.

“I mean it, Vadim. I will not back down on this. You could have been seriously injured. Just look at you, your shirt is ripped, and you have scratches all over your side and back. What if something serious had happened to you? Then where would I be?”

“Sashenka!” Gregor tried again.

“*What?*” Sasha yelled as he whirled around to glare at Gregor.

“Do you really think you should be talking to your alpha that way?”

Snorting, Sasha rolled his eyes. “Oh please, he wouldn’t hurt a hair on my head. Besides, he may be the alpha, but he is my mate. I can talk to him any damn way that I please. He knew what the outcome was going to be before he accepted the stupid challenge. He should have kept himself from getting hurt!”

Vadim merely crossed his arms, smiling, as he watched his mate turn his anger on Gregor. He wanted to laugh, but thought now would not be an appropriate time. Sasha was small, but his temper was bigger than life.

It gratified him that Sasha wasn’t afraid of him. He never wanted to scare him. It was also good that Sasha was comfortable enough with him that he wasn’t afraid to get angry with him. Besides, he was just so damn cute when he was angry.

“He knew the outcome of the challenge?” Gregor asked Sasha, his doubt clear in his voice.

Sasha stopped yelling to stare at Gregor in surprise. “Of course he did. Have you seen how big he is? Casimir was an idiot to take him on, even with his two friends. You do remember that Vadim became alpha by taking out Alpha Valeriya and his two betas, right?”

“Well, yes, but—”

“No buts, Gregor. He knew exactly what he was doing. However,” Sasha said as he turned back to glare at Vadim, “knowing the outcome, he should have kept himself from getting hurt! And they call me stupid.” He snorted.

Vadim laughed. He enjoyed watching his mate give Gregory a piece of his mind. The utter confusion on Gregor’s face was just an added bonus. .

“Alpha Vadim?”

“Not to worry, Gregor. My mate is correct. I should have kept myself from being injured.” He gave Sasha a tender glance as he wrapped his arms around him. “I promise, majiktoka, I will endeavor to not be injured the next time I decide to play.”

“You’re not angry that he was yelling at you?”

“Hell no. Sasha has the right to yell at me. He’s my mate. He is only concerned about me. Doesn’t your mate yell at you when you do something stupid?”

“Well, yes.” Gregor chuckled. “But, you’re the alpha.”

“I’m still Sasha’s mate. If anyone else was to talk to me that way they would end up like Casimir, but with Sasha, I think it’s wonderful. It means he cares about me. If he didn’t, he wouldn’t take the time to be mad at me. Besides, I think he’s adorable.”

Chapter Six

Curious, Sasha looked around as they entered the alpha house. In all of his dealings with the old alpha, he had never actually been inside this large building. He had done everything in his power to avoid being anywhere near the man.

He had been mostly successful. This last time, though, the alpha had demanded he accompany him to the pack's council meeting. He had no choice when confronted with a direct order from his alpha, so he had gone.

Thank goodness he had, or he never would have met his mate. Glancing over at the large man, Sasha wondered how he had ever gotten lucky enough to have such a man be his. Vadim was strong, muscular, and sexy as hell.

It didn't hurt that he thought Sasha was hot too. It actually gave Sasha somewhat of a thrill to know that the big man lusted after him, but in a good way. Many men had lusted after him. Look at Casimir. But Vadim was different.

There was just something about him, something special. Sasha had no doubt that Vadim could wipe the floor with him, but he never used his strength to harm him, rather he used it to keep Sasha safe. No one had ever done that for him before.

It was a unique feeling. As were the other feelings Vadim inspired in him. Sasha was still reeling from the knowledge that Vadim belonged to him. It just didn't seem possible. Nothing like this ever happened to him.

"Sasha, come look at this. Have you ever seen anything like it?" Vadim asked, breaking into Sasha's musings. He turned to look over

at Vadim again and saw him eyeing a white marble statue of a wolf sitting next to the entry to the formal lounge.

He walked over to join him, his arm slipping easily around his waist. Vadim was right. The statue was carved so well that it looked almost real. It was a real beauty. Sasha wondered where the previous alpha had gotten the exquisite piece.

“It’s gorgeous. Makes you wonder how the Alpha paid for it? I mean, look at this place. It’s a damn palace. Hardwood floors, marble entryway, wainscoting, grand staircase, and the furniture? Have you ever seen furniture like this outside of a magazine? This stuff, the decorating, the artwork, the furniture, it must have cost a fortune.”

“You do have a point, Sasha. If this is just a simple fishing village, where did the money come from to pay for all of this? I think I am beginning to see a pattern here, but until I get a chance to look at the books and such, I can’t be sure. However, if I’m right, the people of Vourdala Island have been getting fleeced by their alpha for quite some time.”

“Fleeced? As in, sheered the wool off the sheep? Milked us dry? Squeezed the last drops of blood from the turnip?”

Vadim turned to look down at Sasha, his mouth hanging open at his sarcastic words. “What?” He laughed.

Sasha shrugged. “Well, it doesn’t surprise me. I don’t think that anything that man did could actually surprise me. I told you he was an egomaniac who thought the entire world owed him. He would have felt that taking money from the pack was his due as the alpha.”

“Okay, I get that, but sheered the wool off the sheep? That’s a little harsh, don’t you think? Do you really think the pack is that stupid?”

Sasha shook his head. “No, not at all. But after a while, they all learned to keep their heads down and look the other way when things happened that weren’t right. I can’t really blame them. Their very lives and those of their families were in danger. But that still doesn’t make it right.”

“Why didn’t anyone say something to the council? They would have stepped in. That’s what they are there for.”

“When? We aren’t normally even allowed off the island. How were we supposed to speak to the council when we couldn’t get off the island to speak to them? It wasn’t like we could send up smoke signals or anything.”

“Sasha,” Vadim admonished at Sasha’s sarcastic tone.

Sasha felt himself blush with shame as he dropped his head down to his chest. It wasn’t Vadim’s fault that Alpha Valeriya had been such a jerk. He had done nothing to show Sasha that he was anything but an honorable man. Sasha shouldn’t be taking it out on him.

“I’m sorry, Vadi. I know you’re just trying to figure things out.”

Vadim yanked on Sasha’s hand and pulled the small man into his arms. He wrapped his arms around him, leaning down to kiss the top of his head. “It’s okay, majiktoka, I know you didn’t mean it.”

Sasha tilted his head back to look up at his lover. “It’s just that this pack, these people, they are really great. Most of them would give you the shirt off your back. Over the last several years or so, ever since Alpha Valeriya came into power, I’ve watched them turn from a wonderful caring pack to people that are afraid to even have cubs.”

“Why would they be afraid to have cubs?”

“Cub tax. Pack initiation fee. And god forbid you decide to get married,” Sasha answered sadly.

“Cub tax? Pack initiation fee? What in the hell are those?” Vadim asked, totally baffled. “I’ve never heard of such a thing.”

“The cub tax is the tax parents have to pay when their child is born and then each year after that on their birthday until the child is eighteen. The pack initiation fee is the fee they have to pay to have their child initiated into the pack. Luckily, that is just a one time thing.”

“You have to pay a fee to have a cub? Why?”

Sasha waved his hand around the great room that they were standing in. “Duh!”

Vadim chuckled. “Okay, *Sasha*, I get it. I guess the same can be said for the pack initiation fee? But why wouldn’t pack members want to get married? Another tax?”

Sasha shook his head. He could feel his face heat up and he knew it glowed red. He quickly lowered his head and buried it in Vadim’s chest.

“*Majiktoka? What is it?*” he whispered softly into Sasha’s mind. Sasha just shook his head.

“Gregor?” he finally called out. .

“Yes, Alpha? Gregor answered as he quickly walked over.

“Why don’t pack members want to get married?”

“I don’t think that it is that they do not want to get married, Alpha Vadim,” Gregor said, hedging.

“But?” Gregor began to turn just as red as Sasha had. “Gregor? I want to know, and I want to know now.”

Gregor nodded. “Yes, Alpha Vadim. It was the policy of the former alpha that on the wedding night of any pack members, he got to...well, he...that’s to say he...”

“Gregor, I’m starting to lose my patience,” Vadim growled.

“*The alpha got to spend the wedding night with the bride and the groom before they were able to consummate their marriage,*” Sasha murmured quietly into Vadim’s mind.

Sasha watched, as Vadim didn’t say anything, just closed his eyes. He gently stroked his hands down Vadim’s arm, trying to calm him. Sasha could feel the barely controlled rage filling his mate, again. There seemed to be a reoccurring theme here.

Finally, Vadim opened his eyes. His eyes were nearly black, heavy with rage. Alpha Valeriya had a lot to answer for and Vadim had a lot of work ahead of him. This pack was totally screwed up. He doubted that he would be able to figure it all out any time soon.

“Alpha Vadim? Do you wish to continue this practice?” Gregor asked.

“No! I do not wish to continue this practice,” he growled.

Out of the corner of his eye, Sasha saw Nikolai and Viktor making their way over to where they were standing. He was sure that they could hear the agitation in Vadim's voice.

"Vadi, please, it is not Gregor's fault. I told you, we were not allowed to leave the island. We had no way to stop this. Alpha Valeriya had several pack members around him that were stronger than we were. We couldn't stop this."

Vadim took several deep breaths. "Let me make this perfectly clear so that there are no misunderstandings, Gregor. Sasha is my mate. Therefore, at no time will I be participating in anything sexual with anyone but him. If there are couples on this island who wish to get married, they can get married. I will not be demanding time with them."

"And the cub tax?" Sasha reminded him.

Vadim nodded. "There will also not be any cub tax or pack initiation fees. I am sure that there are a lot of other, *fees* that Alpha Valeriya had in place that I will be abolishing in time. I need to figure this all out first."

Gregor nodded happily. "I would be more than happy to sit down with you and go over all of these policies that Alpha Valeriya had implemented after you have settled in, Alpha Vadim."

"Thank you, Gregor. I would greatly appreciate it. From what my Sasha has told me, this pack has a lot of wonderful people in it and they have been getting screwed for quite some time. You understand that it will take a lot of work to turn this pack around, don't you?"

Gregor nodded. "Yes. But this pack is worth it. Earn their trust and respect and there is nothing they won't do for you."

"We'll see. I'm almost afraid to find out what other little goodies Alpha Valeriya has left for me. Sasha was right. He was an egomaniac who thought the world, or at least this pack, owed him just because of his position."

Gregor chuckled. "I believe Sashenka described our former alpha to a tee. He did think that he was a godlike man. He believed since he

ruled the pack that they owed him everything, even their very existence, to his whim.

“Come on, I’ll show you the rest of the house.”

“House, shmouse. This place is a nightmare,” Sasha whispered as he and Vadim followed Gregor from room to room. He hated this place. Besides the fact that he was afraid to breathe in case of breaking something, this was no place to raise cubs.

“You don’t like the alpha compound, majiktoka?”

Sasha shook his head. “Not really. I mean, look at this place. It’s more like a museum than a home. It’s cold and unwelcoming. There’s nothing here that would put someone at ease. It gives me the shivers.”

“So change it if you don’t like it.” Vadim shrugged.

“Change it? You mean like redecorate it? I don’t have the money for that,” Sasha replied even as he began looking around and planning on what he would like to change.

“You might not, my love, but we do. So, unless you plan on putting in gold plated toilet seats, don’t worry about the cost. Change anything you like. This is your home too, you know. I want you to be happy here.”

“*I like it when you call me that.*” Sasha smiled up at Vadim, squeezing his hand.

“*Call you what?*” Vadim asked curiously.

“*My love.*”

“Good. You are my love, my mate. You’ll be hearing it a lot, so you had better get used to it.” Vadim chuckled. “*But just to let you in on a little secret? I like it when you call me Vadi. Everyone calls me Vadim. No one but you calls me Vadi,*” he said for Sasha only.

Sasha blushed as he ducked his head. “*I like it too. I can think of a few other things I’d like,*” he said as he looked up at Vadim through his eyelashes.

Vadim raised an eyebrow in query as he looked down at his mate. “Oh? Do tell, my love, please.”

Sasha could feel his face blush again at the suggestive tone in Vadim's voice.

"I think later tonight when we are alone, you should explain all of the things you would like, in great detail." Vadim smirked.

"Okay." Sasha giggled, his eyes shining up at Vadim with lust.

* * * *

Vadim closed the bedroom door as quietly as he could, then walked down the hall to the stairs. His mate had fallen asleep almost before they finished eating dinner. It had been all he could do to not join Sasha as he carried him up to their bed.

Unfortunately, he had other things he needed to do before he could join Sasha. Like figuring out how much damage Alpha Valeriya had done, and what it was going to take to fix it. He was pretty sure that he had a lot of work ahead of him.

Walking into the study, he found Viktor and Nikolai sitting in front of the fire, each with a glass of whiskey in their hands. He quickly poured himself his own glass and, sitting down near them, stared absently into the roaring fire.

He had a lot to think about. He just had to figure it all out and prioritize it. Sasha and his comfort came first along with his sons. Then the pack, and then everything else. Righting the wrongs done by Alpha Valeriya would go a long way toward accomplishing all of that.

It was just a matter of what to do first. Vadim glanced over at his two best friends and grimaced as he took in the look of disgust on their faces. So, they were feeling it too.

"Any ideas?"

"Perform a voodoo ritual, bring his ass back, and kill him again?" Viktor asked sarcastically.

Vadim rolled his eyes as he slumped back in his chair. "Don't I wish."

“Have you ever seen a pack so messed up?” Nikolai asked.

“I don’t think there has ever been a pack so messed up. You wouldn’t believe half the stuff Sasha and Gregor told me today. Alpha Valeriya had these people so under his thumb that he ruled it like it was his own little fiefdom. It was like he thought he was their king or something.”

“Yeah, he was one sick puppy.”

“Is it worth it, Vadim?” Nikolai asked a few moments later.

Vadim turned his head to look over at his younger brother. “Is what worth it?”

“Having a mate? Is it worth all this shit? I know you didn’t want to be alpha. You always went out of your way to avoid any fight or challenge so that you wouldn’t get caught up in something like this. Is Sasha worth it?”

Vadim leaned forward, resting his elbows on his knees as he swirled the dark liquid around in his glass. “You’re right. I never wanted the responsibility of being an alpha. I never wanted to be responsible for anyone except my immediate family and myself. Now I have an entire pack that is looking to me for guidance. I would give anything not to be in this position.”

Vadim was silent for several moments as he thought about how to put into words the feelings he had for Sasha, for having his mate. He wasn’t sure there were words to relay what he felt for his little mate.

“I’d give anything but Sasha. If ruling this pack is the price I have to pay to have Sasha in my life, I’d gladly do it a hundred times over.”

“It’s that good?” Nikolai asked, disbelief clear in his voice.

Vadim nodded, a small smile crossing his features at the thought of his mate sleeping upstairs. “It’s better than good, Nikolai. It’s everything.”

“You’re welcome to it,” Nikolai smirked. “Me? I hope I never find my mate. Turns you into a sappy fool every time.”

“You know, I used to think that too.” Vadim chuckled. “And then I met Sasha. There really is no way to describe the feeling of finding that one person that is meant for you. It’s like he completes me.”

“They’re not going to get it until it happens for them, Vadi,” Sasha whispered in Vadim’s mind as he walked into the room. The blanket he was wrapped in fell all the way to the floor trailing behind him. Vadim smiled at his mate as he automatically opened his arms for him.

Sasha sauntered over and sat down, curling up in Vadim’s lap and turning up his face to receive a kiss.

“Hi, majiktoka, did you have a good nap?” Vadim asked, nuzzling the side of Sasha’s neck.

“I couldn’t sleep without you there,” Sasha pouted, causing everyone else in the room chuckle.

Vadim tucked Sasha’s head against his chest. “Why don’t you try and get some sleep now. Viktor, Nikolai, and I have a few other things we need to discuss before we can go to bed.”

Sasha didn’t even nod. He just curled tighter into Vadim’s arms, pulled his blanket around him, and closed his eyes. Vadim smiled affectionately down at him, his hand coming up to softly caress the side of Sasha’s face. He really was adorable.

“Uck! You two make me sick. Now, just look at you, all lovey-dovey and shit. You didn’t even know each other a month ago, and now you can’t sleep without one another? How pathetic is that?” Nikolai snorted.

Raising his head to look over at his brother, Vadim lifted an eyebrow. “There’s a lot more to mating than not being able to sleep without each other, Nikolai. You really should try it before you dismiss it so easily.”

“As if. Why would I want to get myself permanently hooked up with someone when I can play the field? No, better you than me. I have a lot of life left in me before I cave in. Maybe when I’m old and need someone to take care of me or something.”

Vadim chuckled. “There is a lot more to having a mate than having someone take care of you, Nikolai.”

“Oh yeah? Like what? Constant worry? Never having a thought to yourself? Only being able to have sex with the same person for the rest of your life? No thank you.”

“*I bet I could show him.*” Sasha giggled at Vadim as his hand worked its way out of the blanket to gently squeeze Vadim’s cock through his pants.

Vadim swallowed hard, looking down quickly to make sure that the blanket covering Sasha covered both of them. He tried to keep a straight face while Sasha quietly unbuttoned his jeans and pulled his suddenly aching cock out of his pants.

He knew the scent of his arousal had started to permeate the room. How could his betas not smell it? Viktor was just rolling his eyes, but he was stroking his own cock through his pants. He seemed to be taking things into his own hands. Nikolai stared at them, his eyes glazing over with lust. He was practically drooling.

Vadim wanted to laugh, but he was too busy trying not to groan. Sasha had started stroking him, his finger playing gently with the small slit at the top of his cock and the glands just under the head.

“Sasha, my love, if you don’t stop that, I will not be responsible for my actions,” he growled between his clenched teeth.

Sasha’s eyes were hooded as he gazed up at Vadim. “*Who says I want you to be responsible?*” He had a devilish twinkle in his eyes as he turned so that he was straddling Vadim’s lap. Holding the ends of the blanket, he pulled it open.

Vadim nearly swallowed his tongue. Sasha was naked under his blanket. “*Sasha.*”

“*Yeah, big boy? Something you wanted to say?*” Sasha smirked.

Vadim held Sasha by the hips to steady him as Sasha moved his legs until he could settle himself down over Vadim’s hard, jutting cock, sliding it back and forth between his naked cheeks.

Vadim's jaw clenched briefly as he tried to control his raging lust at the sight of his beautiful, naked mate. He glanced at the door then back at Sasha. Upstairs was too far away. He needed his little mate now.

Glancing past Sasha's shoulders, he saw that Viktor and Nikolai were entertained elsewhere, their eyes closed, their heads leaning back in their chairs. They were each stroking their own strong erections. The scent of arousal in the room was so strong that it overpowered almost everything else.

"Vadi," Sasha sang out, gaining his attention again.

To hell with it, Vadim thought as he flipped him around until he was facing away from him, his back coming to lean back against Vadim's heaving chest. He grabbed the blanket and draped it over Sasha, covering his naked body from Viktor and Nikolai's suddenly interested gazes.

"Open your eyes, majiktoka, watch them. See what you do to them," Vadim said into Sasha's mind as he reached down to test his readiness. .

"Are you watching, Sasha?" he whispered into Sasha's mind again as he started rubbing against Sasha's eager entrance. *"Lean forward, majiktoka."*

Sasha put his hands on Vadim's knees and leaned forward, arching his back and bringing his ass up. His glazed eyes never left the two men before him. Viktor and Nikolai were gazing back at him, their hands slowly stroking their long cocks to draw out their pleasure.

Vadim palmed each side of Sasha's ass, pulled his cheeks apart, and bared his puckered hole to his hungry gaze. He felt Sasha shudder against him as he rubbed his thumb across him. He chuckled. *"You close, Sasha?"*

"Oh hell yes!" Sasha's eyes rolled back when Vadim whipped the blanket off him and reached around to stroke his cock. At the same time, he pushed his finger into Sasha's ass.

“Then come for me, majiktoka. Show them how beautiful you are when you come.” He pulled Sasha back to lean against him as he gazed over at Viktor and Niko’s shocked gazes. They were seeing Sasha at his finest, in the throes of passion. There was nothing on earth as beautiful to watch.

“Vadi!” Sasha cried out as he began to hump himself against Vadim. He moaned again as Vadim quickened his strokes, bringing Sasha to the very edge. One lick across the mating mark on Sasha’s neck and he erupted, spilling out over both of them.

“Damn, Vadim, he’s incredible,” Viktor hissed as he continued to stroke himself.

Vadim grinned as he pushed Sasha forward, so that he was lying over his legs and his head was resting on Vadim’s knees. His ass was nicely raised just where Vadim wanted it, ready and eager for him.

“You haven’t seen anything yet,” he said as he pushed himself into Sasha’s warm entrance and groaned at the tight feeling of his mate wrapping around his hard cock. Grabbing Sasha by the shoulders, he pulled him back, and Sasha immediately slid down on Vadim’s cock.

“Vadi,” Sasha exclaimed, his spent cock beginning to come back to life.

“My God!” Viktor exclaimed, astonished. “He’s getting hard again.”

“Told you.” Vadim’s chuckle turned into a long moan as Sasha lifted himself up and sat back down, impaling himself on Vadim’s aching cock.

Sasha braced his hands on Vadim’s knees, his legs on the outside of each of Vadim’s. Using all of his strength, Sasha began pumping his hips against his, pounding Vadim’s cock into his ass as hard as he could.

Vadim clasped Sasha by his hips and, quickly taking over, lifted him then slammed him down repeatedly. He could feel the glands

under the head of his cock beginning to swell. He was only minutes away from coming.

“Stroke yourself, Sasha. I want you to come again. Show them why you’re so special,” Vadim commanded.

“Fuck, Vadim, he’s going to come again?” Viktor groaned in astonishment.

“My Sasha is very- responsive. Watch and learn.” Vadim pulled Sasha back and sank his canines into his mating mark. One hand moved around to tug at Sasha’s nipple ring. As expected, Sasha cried out loudly as he erupted again, spurting his seed over their thighs.

Vadim watched with pride as Viktor’s eyes rolled back into his head, and his cock erupted, white cream wetting his hand and lap. Nikolai was only seconds behind him. Their loud groans of completion filled the room.

Oh yeah, his little mate was special. He could bring a room full of horny men to their knees, including him. Vadim’s body arched as he thrust up into Sasha one more time, filling him with his very essence.

“Oh God, Sashenka...fuck, majiktoka!” he cried out.

Sasha leaned back and wrapped his arms around Vadim’s head. Vadim felt Sasha’s tongue move across the mating mark he had given him. Vadim shuddered, his arms tightening around him.

“My Vadi.”

Chapter Seven

Sasha nervously glanced around the nursery. The boys were due any time now, and he had just finished the nursery. He hoped they liked it. He hoped Vadim liked it. He hoped he had done a good job decorating it.

It was hard for him to believe that in a matter of hours, he would be a full-time parent. It was a big responsibility. And one that scared Sasha right out of his mind.

“Stop worrying it to death, majiktoka. You’ll do just fine. The boys will adore you just as much as I do,” Vadim whispered into Sasha’s mind, interrupting his discouraging thoughts.

Sasha rolled his eyes. It was the same argument that Vadim had given him every day.. Sasha was glad that Vadim had confidence in him, but it still didn’t alleviate his misgivings.

“Come to me, majiktoka. I have need of you,” Vadim commanded, which sent a shiver down Sasha’s spine.

“What’s wrong?” Sasha asked, already making his way downstairs. As he walked down the hallway to Vadim’s study, he carefully looked at the changes he had made over the last couple of days.

Gone were the statues, vases, artwork, and priceless pieces of furniture. In their place were carefully chosen paintings and more comfortable furniture. Items Sasha wasn’t afraid to be around.

Vadim had arranged for everything that Sasha had removed to be carefully packed and put into storage until it could be catalogued. Through conversations with Gregor, Vadim had learned that many of the items Sasha had removed belonged to members of the pack.

He wanted to return them to their original owners, but first he had to figure out who they were. No one had come forward. Vadim knew that they were waiting to get to know him. Many of the pack members were afraid he would be just like their previous alpha.

The only thing he could do was to keep going like he was and hope that they would eventually accept him. Gregor was being a big help in that area. He had met with Gregor several times for pack business and was coming to respect the older man's quick mind and honesty.

Sasha smiled as he opened the study door and walked in to find Gregor sitting across from his mate. They were busy at it again. Gregor had been here so much in the last couple of days that Sasha was thinking about asking him to move in. He was becoming a regular fixture around the alpha compound.

His wife, Mary, was another great fixture at the compound. Sasha didn't know what he would have done without her over the last couple of days. Besides being a great cook, her decorating ideas and her tidbits of advice on raising children were golden for Sasha.

Sasha walked around the table Gregor and Vadim were sitting at and leaned against Vadim, sitting on the arm of his chair. He leaned over and kissed him on the shoulder.

"You rang?"

Vadim sat back in his chair, grabbed Sasha around the waist and pulled him down to sit in his lap. "I missed you, majiktoka. I needed to see you. Good enough?"

"Works for me," Sasha giggled as he settled himself against Vadim's strong chest. Hearing laughter coming from Gregor, he turned his head to look at him with an eyebrow raised in query.

"Sorry, Sashenka, but I enjoy watching you with your mate. You're more carefree, lighthearted, and happier than I have seen you in a long time. It's good to see. You give a lot more this pack, much more than I think even you realize. You deserve to be happy."

“I agree, Gregor. Sasha does deserve to be happy. I’m hoping to do just that,” Vadim replied, softly stroking Sasha’s hair. “He’s certainly given me more than he will ever realize. It may have been only a couple of weeks, but I couldn’t imagine my life without him in it. And I hope I never have to.”

Sasha, burning with embarrassment, buried his face in Vadim’s neck. It made him all warm and fuzzy when Vadim said things like that to him. He was constantly surprised that the big alpha wasn’t embarrassed to say mushy, emotional things to him.

Most men seemed to be that way, but not his mate. No, Vadim told Sasha as often as he could how much Sasha meant to him. It was an unusual thing for Sasha, but one that he was growing addicted to. He just hoped it continued.

“Gregor, could you give Vadim and me just a moment? I have something I need to discuss with him,” Sasha said, suddenly raising his head to look across the table at the man.

“Of course, Sashenka. I will just go and check on my wife. If I am correct, she should be preparing dinner, and hopefully dessert, right about now I just might get to lick the bowl.” Gregor chuckled as he stood up and left the room.

Sasha waited until Gregor had shut the door before turning back to Vadim. He wasn’t quite sure how to ask Vadim for what he wanted, mostly because he wasn’t used to asking for things he wanted.

“Is something wrong, majiktoka?” Vadim asked.

“No, no, nothing is wrong. I just wanted to ask you something, and I felt it was better done in private,” Sasha said quickly, trying to reassure his mate.

“Ask away then, my love.”

“Well, I’ve been thinking. It seems to me that Gregor is proving to be quite the advisor to you. Mary has done the same for me. I don’t know how I would have gotten the nursery finished in time for the boys if she hadn’t been there for me.”

“And?”

"I think that we should ask Gregor and Mary to move into the alpha compound. I know that Gregor can only be your advisor because you already have Vik and Niko as your betas, but having him closer to advise you would be a good idea. Having Mary here to help out with the boys and everything would be a big help to me."

"Sasha, do you want Mary here because you don't want to care for the boys?" Vadim asked quietly.

Sasha looked up at Vadim in surprise. "God no. I mean, yes, I am nervous about caring for the boys. I've never taken care of children before. But you said you wanted me to, and that you think I can. You still you still believe that, right?"

Vadim smiled, leaning over to kiss Sasha on the head. "Yes, Sasha. I have complete faith in you. You are going to be wonderful with them. I have no doubt about that at all. But I am still confused as to why you want Gregor and Mary to move in here."

Sasha shrugged. "I think that it is a good idea to surround yourself with intelligent, competent people. You have Viktor and Nikolai already."

"And you," Vadim added.

"And me." Sasha laughed. "But seriously, Vadi. I think we should ask them to move in with us. I think it would be a good move. Gregor has a lot of knowledge and experience with this pack. And Mary...Mary knows more about raising children than anyone I have ever met. They both have a lot they can teach us."

"Okay," Vadim simply said.

"Okay?" Sasha looked at him cautiously. "That's it? No argument? Just okay?"

"Sasha, I was already considering it. I just hadn't made a decision on it yet. I wanted to talk to you about it first. Now that I have, I can go ahead and ask Gregor to be my official advisor."

"What about Mary?"

“Well, she’s already cooking and housekeeping. I know she’s just doing that to help out. However, I think we should make it official, give her the house keys and everything. What do you think?”

Sasha eagerly nodded. “Thank you, Vadi,” he whispered before leaning in to give Vadim a long, drawn-out kiss.

When he finally lifted his head, Vadim grinned as he looked at Sasha. “Is there anything else you want? I’m hoping to work my way up to a blow job.”

Sasha’s breath suddenly quickened at the lustful look Vadim gave him. He could smell his arousal filling the air around him. It only heightened his own growing arousal making him hard as a rock.

“You don’t have to earn a blow job, Vadi. I’ll give you those for free.”

Sasha slid down to kneel on the floor between Vadim’s legs, reached to unzip his pants, and pulled his straining erection from his pants.

Vadim’s head fell back as he let out a long groan. “Oh fuck, Sasha, that feels so damn good.”

Sasha grinned around the hard cock he had just taken into his mouth. It seemed that Vadim liked him sucking his cock almost as much as Sasha liked doing it. It was something he looked forward on a nearly daily basis.

He flicked his tongue over the small slit on the top. The heady taste of the pre-cum that was gathering there burst onto his tongue. Feeling the tightening of Vadim’s body, Sasha engulfed him as far as he could and sucked hard and fast.

He wanted Vadim to come. He needed it almost as much as Vadim did. Bobbing his head and using every tool he had in his arsenal, he also began to gently massage Vadim’s silky sac. The stiffening of Vadim’s body and the long groan of his name rewarded him.

“Oh, fuck, Sasha!”

Sasha knew his mate was close when his hands bunched up in Sasha's blond curls, his hips lifting up to meet Sasha's mouth as he started humping. Feeling a bit adventurous, Sasha stuck his finger in his mouth along side Vadim's cock, thoroughly wetting it before dropping down to rub it around Vadim's puckered hole.

He felt Vadim's cock thicken as he arched, his hands pulling Sasha's mouth down on his cock as he climaxed deep in Sasha's throat. Vadim was racked with shudders as he spilled his release.

Sasha quickly used his tongue to clean Vadim, prolonging his pleasure with each swipe, until he was clean. He sat back, wiping his mouth, and then put Vadim back in his pants and zipped him up.

Looking up at his spent mate he couldn't help but laugh. Vadim's head leaned back against the chair. He had a contented, serene smile on his face. His hands were gently threading through Sasha's curls.

Sasha stood to his feet and climbed onto Vadim's lap, his legs straddling him. He watched Vadim until his eyes slowly opened.

"Damn, Sasha, you're so good at that. There's nothing in this world like having your mouth wrapped around my cock."

"Nothing?" Sasha asked, wiggling his ass against him.

Vadim chuckled, grabbing Sasha's hips to stop his movements. "Well, maybe not nothing. But it's near the top five anyway."

"Really? Top five, huh? What are the other four?" Sasha wiggled his eyebrows at Vadim, getting the laugh he had been hoping for.

"How about we discuss this later tonight? Right now, you need to ask Gregor and Mary to join us so that we can invite them to move in."

Vadim stood, putting Sasha on his feet. He pushed him toward the door and swatted Sasha on his ass as he made a grab for his groin. "Go, gorgeous, before I lose control and can't keep my hands off you."

Sasha walked out of the study to find Gregor and Mary. It was easy to find them. He just followed his nose and the wonderful scent

of home-baked bread. Mary was busy cooking while Gregor talked with her.

Pausing in the doorway, Sasha watched them. They seemed so comfortable with each other, like they actually enjoyed being around each other. Sasha hoped that Vadim and he would be the same way when they had been together as long as they had.

“Hey, Vadim would like to talk to you two for a moment in the study,” he finally interjected.

Mary glanced at Gregor, a worried frown on her face. Sasha walked over and patted her on the shoulder. “It’s nothing bad, I promise. Just come to the study and see what he wants.”

Mary nodded and followed Gregor out of the kitchen and down the hallway to the study. Sasha walked behind them, smiling when Gregor reached over to hold Mary’s hand. Just being around them made him feel good.

Walking into the study, Sasha made his way over to Vadim’s side, noting that Viktor and Niko had joined him in the room. As if taking a page from Gregor and Mary, he reached over and grabbed Vadim’s hand.

“Gregor, Mary, I’m glad you could join us. I asked Viktor and Niko to be here as well because this concerns them as much as it concerns you. Sasha came to me to discuss something he wanted, but I had already been thinking along the same lines and I, we, have a proposition for you.”

He squeezed Sasha’s hand again. “*You want to ask them, majiktoka? They might see it as less of an order if it came from you.*”

Sasha was once again reminded of how caring his mate could actually be. He cared about anyone that came into his radar. Once you were in his life that was it. You belonged to him, and he would care for you and protect you with his life. What an alpha! What a man!

“Vadim and I would like the two of you to consider moving into the alpha compound. Gregor, Vadim needs your years of experience

and wisdom to assist him in healing this pack. Having you here at the compound would make that a lot easier.”

Looking at Mary’s stunned face, Sasha took a deep breath. “Mary, I know you have been cooking and cleaning for us to help out, but we want to officially offer you the position as compound housekeeper. Having you has been a great asset to me, and I’m not sure I ever want to experience it without you.”

“I know that you probably need time to discuss this between the two of you and I want you to take all of the time you need. There is no hurry. Both Sasha and I would like to have you here full-time. I’ve spoken with Viktor and Niko, and they agree.”

Sasha looked nervously at Gregor and Mary. He didn’t know what he would do if they didn’t accept. Deal with it, he guessed. But he sure hoped that they would. Having them here would be so wonderful.

“If you decide that you don’t feel comfortable moving to the compound I would still hope that you will take the positions. I also don’t want either of you to feel that you have to move here. That decision is totally up to you,” Vadim said, trying to assure them.

Sasha bit his lip as he waited for them to answer. He was so worried that they would say no.

“Majiktoka, it’s okay. If they say no, they say no. That doesn’t mean that they won’t be around, just that they won’t be living here on a full-time basis. Don’t take it personally if they refuse. They went through a lot with the old alpha. Until they know me better, it’s prudent for them to be cautious.”

“I know, my love. It would be so wonderful to have them here. I never really knew my own parents and my foster parents and I have been estranged for many years. I want them to be here. But not just as people that help us out. I want them to join our family. Does that make sense?” Sasha asked, worried that he was sounding whinny.

“Yes, majiktoka, that makes perfect sense. In fact, I think that is a wonderful idea. But we have to let them make the choice.”

Sasha warmed at the soft affection and understanding in Vadim's voice as he replied to him. It made him feel all warm and fuzzy inside when Vadim talked to him like that.

"Alpha, are you sure this is something you want?" Gregor asked.

"Yes, Gregor. As Sasha pointed out to me when we discussed it, having people around me whom I trust is the best use of people in this pack. While I am alpha, I still feel that I have a lot to learn and you can teach me. Your years of experience and your knowledge of this pack will be a great asset to me."

Sasha watched as Gregor looked over at Mary for several moments. He knew they were talking to each other mentally. While he loved that ability when talking with Vadim, it was frustrating when done by others. He wanted to know what was happening.

Finally, Gregor turned to look at Sasha and Vadim, a large smile crossing his lips. "Mary and I would be delighted to move into the compound, Alpha Vadim. I agree that it would be easier to get done what we need to do to heal this pack if we were all close at hand."

"There is one more thing you need to consider before you decide. Sasha and I don't want you to just be here as advisor and housekeeper. We want you to be part of our family, our immediate family. While we have some of the connection because we pack, this would be an even closer connection."

"That means no hiding in the kitchen at dinnertime," Sasha added quickly. "You have to join us at dinner every night, just like a normal family."

"Majiktoka, there is nothing normal about our family," Vadim whispered into Sasha's head.

Sasha frowned up at Vadim. "There may be nothing normal about our family, but would you give any of them up? Besides, Ivan and Marika need to see us do normal family things, like sitting down to dinner every night."

"Sasha—" Vadim started only to be cut off by Sasha.

"I'm serious. They both need to see us do family things together. How else are they going to learn what a family means? They have you and me as their parents, Viktor and Niko as their uncles. And now they have Gregor and Mary as their grandparents. They need those ties to grow and develop into good people."

"You want us to be grandparents to your sons?" Mary asked quietly, clearly astonished. Sasha looked over at her just in time to see Gregor pulling on her hand, trying to keep her quiet.

"What did you think we were asking when we asked you to join our family?" Vadim asked, taking the words right out of Sasha's head.

"But...but what about the grandparents they already have? Won't they feel..."

Sasha walked over and took Mary's hand in his. "Mary, there is nothing written anywhere that says you can only have two sets of grandparents. You and Gregor loving them will only give them two more people to love them. It doesn't take anything away from their other grandparents."

"I just don't want to make them feel displaced."

"Mary, do you think that Viktor or Niko feel any different because I'm in Vadim's life? Or that the boys won't care about me because they have Vadim? Did your own daughter stop loving you when she moved in with her husband's parents?"

"No, but..."

"Is there some reason you don't want to join our family?" Vadim asked, making Sasha turn his head and look at him suddenly.

Sasha hadn't thought of that. Maybe he was asking too much of Gregor and Mary. Maybe they really didn't want to be part of his little family. They had said yes to moving into the alpha compound. Maybe he should have just been happy with that. Again, he was hoping for too much.

With a wobbly little smile, Sasha dropped Mary's hand and moved back to stand next to Vadim. He kept his head down so that

Vadim wouldn't see the tears in his eyes, tears he was trying desperately to keep from falling down his face.

"Please excuse me for a moment," he murmured quietly before turning and quickly leaving the room. As soon as he was out the door, he started running. The tears he was trying to contain started flowing down his face as he ran outside and headed for the woods.

He was so stupid. Of course they didn't want to be part of his family. It wasn't their fault, really. Alpha Valeriya had made everyone so hesitant about being friendly with Sasha that he wondered that they were even talking with him now.

Sasha still couldn't figure out why Alpha Valeriya had picked on him. Sure, he was the omega of the pack, but did that mean he had to be miserable too? Did that really give everyone the right to treat him the way they did?

Sometimes, it seemed like his only value was what he could do for his alpha and his pack. If something were to happen to them, he would be useless. He had no training for a real job, and he had no real skills. He was useless.

Sasha stopped suddenly, laughter overtaking him until he was holding his sides. He dropped to his knees, covering his mouth with his hand as his laughter turned hysterical. He had just one skill, being someone's fuck toy.

That's all he had, his body. He didn't even really have any possessions or money. When he had packed the stuff up from his apartment, everything that was his, truly his, had fit inside of two cardboard boxes.

He couldn't really figure out why Vadim was with him other than the mating bond. He was sure that if Vadim had been able to choose his mate, it wouldn't have been him. Vadim would have picked someone that could be an asset to his position as alpha, someone stronger, like Viktor.

Maybe he just wanted things that were not meant for him. Maybe that's what being the pack omega was all about. Sasha had always

known that being the omega meant he was supposed to take care of the pack, and most importantly, his alpha. Maybe that was all he was supposed to have in life.

It actually made pretty good sense to Sasha, the more he thought about it. He was an omega. It was his job to take care of the pack, to give to them whatever they needed. Nowhere in the omega handbook did it say he got something in return.

Even if it did, he was obviously asking for more than was his due. He should be satisfied with what he had, not ask for more. He had Vadim, who seemed to really care for him. Alpha Valeriya was gone from his life. And he had been entrusted with one of the most important jobs in the pack, caring for the alpha's children. Vadim had even let him decorate the alpha compound the way he wanted.

Sasha wiped the tears from his eyes as he realized that he was stupid for wanting more. Here he was bemoaning his life when he probably had more than most omegas had. He should be grateful, not greedy.

"Majiktoka? Are you okay, my love?"

"Yes, I'm fine. I just needed to get some air. I'll be back in just a moment," Sasha replied as he stood and turned back toward the alpha compound. He stuffed his hands in the pockets of his jeans as he walked, kicking at some stray leaves as he went.

He would just keep his head down, do what was asked of him, and stop hoping for more. He would learn to be grateful what had been given to him. He really did have a lot more than a lot of people. It was time he started appreciating that.

Sasha stopped by the bathroom to clean his face before walking back down the hall toward Vadim's study. He stopped before the doorway, took a couple of deep breaths, plastered a smile on his face, and then walked in. He went to stand next to Vadim's chair, smiling across at Viktor and Niko. Gregor and Mary were gone. Sasha figured they had gone home. He wasn't going to ask if they were moving into

the house as servants or family. That wasn't part of the deal he had made with himself.

"Aren't the boys supposed to be here pretty soon?" he asked to break the heavy silence in the room.

Vadim nodded, looking at his watch. "Yes, as a matter of fact, they are. Why don't we walk down to the ferry port and wait for them? Maybe we can stop by Pauline's on our way and pick them up a little something?"

Sasha gave his first real smile since walking into the room. "Yes, I'm sure they'd like that. Pauline makes these great wolf-shaped sugar cookies with blue frosting and sprinkles. I'm sure the boys would love them."

* * * *

Vadim smiled over at Sasha as he stood to his feet. He grabbed Sasha's hand and walked with him out of the study toward the front door. Viktor and Nikolai close on their heels. He turned to look back at them, lifting his eyebrow in query.

He wanted to know if they had a clue as to what had happened to Sasha. He was obviously upset about something. Vadim could feel that much. He just couldn't figure out exactly what had upset him.

That's probably the part of being mated that he really hated. He could feel Sasha's emotions, but he couldn't tell why he was feeling them unless Sasha shared that information with him. And until he did, Vadim would just have to accept it.

It was frustrating and painful because he wanted to fix all of Sasha's pain. He didn't think his emotions would get so involved when he became mated, but Sasha was quickly becoming one of the three most important people in his life. And that scared him.

Chapter Eight

Sasha was feeling much better by the time they reached the dock. As he saw the ferry pull in, he started to become excited. He could feel the anticipation coming from Vadim, Viktor, and Nikolai. They were all as eager as he was to see the cubs.

It seemed to take forever for the ferry to dock and come to a complete halt. Sasha was nearly jumping out of his skin by the time the gate came down. He stood on his tiptoes trying to see over the small crowd of people coming off the ferry.

Where were the cubs? All of a sudden Sasha heard a high-pitched squeal, and Vadim dropped his hand and rushed forward with a large grin on his face. Sasha tried to follow him, but the sudden rush of people cut him off. Before he knew it, he had lost sight of Vadim.

Did there seem to be more people on the dock than normal? Sasha was getting jostled left and right. He couldn't count how many times someone stepped on his feet or pushed him as if he wasn't even there. Before long, Sasha started to get claustrophobic.

Rolling his eyes, he headed back toward the alpha compound. If he stuck around, he was sure to get hurt, and then what use would he be to anyone? He'd just head home and wait for Vadim there.

Just as Sasha reached the end of the pier, he felt something hit him in the back hard enough to push him toward the edge. Before he could stop himself, he was waving in his arms as he went over the side with a loud yell.

As the water covered his head as he sank, Sasha thrashed around, trying to get back up to the surface. But the water was so dark he didn't know which way to go.

“*Vadim!*” he screamed as he started to run out of air. He could feel slimy things brush against his legs, which sent him into a panic. Sasha screamed Vadim’s name again as the darkness began to close over him.

Just as he started to lose consciousness, a large hand reached down through the darkness, grabbed him, and pulled him up to the air above. As soon as he reached the surface, Sasha started taking in deep draws of breath.

He felt someone lift him up, hand him to another set of hands, and then another, until he was carefully laid on the dock. Coughing, he opened his eyes to see Vadim leaning over him. He looked nearly frantic.

“Sasha, are you okay? What happened? How did you end up in the water? I thought you were right behind me but then...and then I heard you screaming. What happened?”

Sasha started to answer him, but just as he did, he saw Casimir and Kando standing off to one side, sly smiles on their faces. He knew just from the look on their faces that they had been the ones to push him into the water.

“I slipped,” Sasha replied, watching Casimir’s satisfied reaction.

“You slipped?” Vadim almost yelled.

“*Please, just let it go,*” Sasha said mentally as he coughed again to hide his silent communication with Vadim. He felt Vadim stiffen next to him before sending him a small nod.

“You slipped?” Vadim began as he lifted Sasha to his feet. “You really need to watch where your going, Sasha. I wouldn’t want anything to happen to you. Let’s get you back to the house, and then you can meet my cubs.”

Sasha gratefully buried his face in Vadim’s chest as he was carried up to the house. He knew two things. Casimir hadn’t learned the lesson Vadim had given him, and now Vadim’s celebration about his cub’s homecoming was ruined. Just great! Could his life get any more complicated?

* * * *

Vadim's heart still pounded in his chest as he carried Sasha to the house. There was more going on here than Sasha slipping on the dock. He'd bet his life on it. He didn't have anything to go on, just a gut feeling. But that gut feeling was screaming.

He glanced over his shoulder to where his father and mother were walking carrying his cubs. His father was giving him that look, the one he had hated as a child. It was the one that said he knew something was going on and he was planning on getting to the bottom of it, come hell or high water.

His mother, Anya, looked worried too. She kept glancing at his father, then to Sasha, and back to his father. Vadim knew that they were talking to each other. He had seen them do this numerous times.

His parents' first visit to his home and it had to start out with Sasha going into the water off the pier. He hadn't slipped as he said he had. That much Vadim knew. Everyone here might think that Sasha was a klutz, even Sasha. But Vadim knew better.

Sasha moved with a gracefulness unlike anyone he had ever seen. He didn't walk across a room. He glided. Every movement he made, from how he used his long, delicate hands to the little sashay in his hips when he walked, was smooth and elegant.

There was no way that he could have slipped and fall off the pier. However, that meant someone had to have pushed him, in which case, Vadim was going to have to rip someone's throat out. No one threatened his mate and got away with it.

As they reached the house, Vadim turned to those following him. "I'm going to take Sasha upstairs to get warmed up and changed. Gregor, would you please show my parents to the nursery and have Mary get them something to eat? I'm sure they're hungry after their long trip. I'll be down soon."

Vadim waited until Gregor had let his parents and cubs off before turning to Viktor and Nikolai. "I don't want anyone on the grounds except those that live here, and I mean no one. We need to talk after I see to Sasha."

Viktor and Nikolai nodded. Vadim turned and carried Sasha into the house and up the stairs to their room. Once inside, he shut the door with his foot, took him to the bathroom, stripped him down, and put him under the hot shower water.

Once Sasha was warmed up, he dried him off and carried him back to the bedroom. He set Sasha down on the bed, went to the dresser, and pulled open several drawers until he found something for him to wear that would keep him warm.

Coming back with clothes, he found Sasha sitting on its edge, his head down and twisting his hands together, much as he had right after he had first claimed him.

Vadim sat down on the bed next to him and lifted his mate onto his lap. His arms wrapped tightly around Sasha as he felt reaction to almost losing his mate, his love, begin to set in. He could feel himself trembling.

He felt tears prickling the edges of his eyes at thought of what had almost happened. Sasha really was becoming the center of his world. He didn't know what he would do if anything happened to him.

Vadim suddenly needed to feel him, to know that he was safe and alive. Vadim grabbed a handful of Sasha's hair and tilted his head back. He watched with a fierce satisfaction as Sasha's eyes widened.

He felt out of control as he turned and lowered Sasha onto the bed and moved over him until he covered Sasha from chest to feet. He let go of Sasha's hair to cup his face and hold his head still as he lowered his lips to his.

He didn't just kiss Sasha. He consumed him. He took no prisoners, demanding a response from Sasha as he explored the depths of his mouth with his tongue. Biting at his lips, he devoured the sweet taste of his mate.

By the time Vadim lifted his head, Sasha's lips were red and swollen. His breathing came in rapid movements from his chest. He looked up at Vadim, his eyes glazed with passion.

"Vadi," he murmured almost silently. As he reached his hands toward him, Vadim grabbed them and pushed them above his head against the mattress.

"Keep them there, Sashenka," he ordered. He saw Sasha's eyes widen even more at his use of his whole name. He never called him by his full name, always referring to him as Sasha or his majiktoka, his little one. Sasha looked shocked. *Good!*

Vadim moved his face down Sasha's body until he found his beautiful nipple ring. He swirled his tongue around it before gently pulling on it with his teeth, which elicited a sharp cry from Sasha.

As he reached for the other nipple with his hand, he felt Sasha's cock hardening against his abdomen. His little man was getting aroused. He couldn't be more pleased. Sasha needed this just as much as he did.

He needed to feel the connection that he could only get when he was making love to Sasha. It went beyond physical. It was emotional, spiritual. It touched the core of this being and bonded him to Sasha in a way that he didn't share with anyone else on earth.

He also needed his baby to come unglued, for Sasha to be so filled with desire that he was begging for Vadim to take him. It was essential that Vadim reaffirm his claim on his mate, to know that Sasha was his and only his.

Vadim pulled, tugged and licked at Sasha's nipples until he was squirming beneath him. Only then did he move farther down his body, kissing and licking his way down until he could reach his cock.

He took a moment to admire the hard cock, the beautiful mushroom head, the small leaking slit in the top, the thick-veined sides. Sasha wasn't huge, but for his body size, he was massive.

With a wicked grin, he leaned down and, licked the drops of pre-cum leaking from the top, savoring the sweet, addictive taste of his

mate. When Sasha reached for him, he captured his wrists and held them down to the mattress at his sides before leaning down to take his cock in his mouth.

He was generous with his loving as he licked up each side of Sasha's cock. Even as Sasha arched and ropes of creamy white liquid shot from his cock, Vadim continued to stroke him with his tongue.

When Sasha's cries had died down to small whimpers, Vadim placed Sasha's hands on his thighs and pushed them up to his chest. Holding his hands over Sasha's so he couldn't escape, he leaned down and circled his hole with his tongue.

He did this again and again, gently pushing in with his tongue and around the edges again until Sasha's cries began to rise again. Scooting up to his knees, he flipped Sasha over onto his knees and heard a slight cry from Sasha at his abrupt move.

The sight that met him as he looked back down at Sasha's ass was almost more than he could take. Sasha's tight little ass, with his small pink puckered hole was right there, right in front of him.

With a loud growl, Vadim grasped his cock and aimed it at Sasha's ringed entrance, pushing in just enough to let loose his hand. Gripping his hips to hold him in place, Vadim thrust himself deep inside of Sasha.

Closing his eyes at the exquisite pleasure of Sasha's muscles tightening around his aching cock, Vadim began rapidly thrusting into him, over and over again. He could feel himself moving toward the climax that was only moments away.

He reached up with his hands and took Sasha by his shoulders. Leaning over him, he used Sasha's shoulders as leverage to hold him in place as he plunged into him. Leaning close to his ear he growled deeply, "Mine!" before sinking his canines deep within Sasha's soft flesh.

As Vadim let himself go, releasing his seed deep within his lover's body, he distantly heard Sasha cry out his name before

slumping onto the bed. He wanted to let loose his teeth, to cradle and caress Sasha.

But the pleasure he was experiencing was too great. As much as he wanted to stop, he couldn't. Each heavy thrust into Sasha's welcoming body brought a new level of pleasure to Vadim until he couldn't think of anything else.

Vadim continued to push himself into Sasha until he peeked again, roaring out his second release so loudly that the windows shook from the force, before slumping over Sasha's still form. His heart beat rapidly in his chest, his breaths coming in quick session.

Finally, as the feeling began to come back to his spent body, Vadim rolled over onto his side, taking Sasha with him. He pulled out of his beautiful mate and rolled him onto his back. Vadim was a little worried that he had misused his tiny mate until he saw the satisfied smile on his lips.

Shaking his head, Vadim stood up and walked to the bathroom. He briefly stopped to clean himself up before coming back with a wet washcloth for Sasha. He lay down next to his sleeping mate and began cleaning him.

He carefully wiped Sasha off. Once he was done, he tossed the washcloth toward the bathroom and crawled up on the bed, pulling Sasha up with him.

Vadim chuckled when he realized that Sasha was still hard. The damn thing would not go down. As he gazed at Sasha, an idea began to percolate in his head. In all of the years he had known he was gay, he had never been on the receiving end of things. He knew that Sasha had never been on the giving end either. Who better to initiate him than his mate?

Rolling over to the nightstand, he reached in the drawer and pulled out a bottle of lube, squirting some on his fingers. He knew that werewolves produced a natural lubricant from the small glands just under the head of their cocks, but since this was going to be his first time, he wasn't taking any chances.

Vadim got to his knees and reached behind to his hole. He had put his own fingers in there a time or two so he knew what to expect, but the lube was still cold, making him wince a little.

Inserting one finger, he began moving it around before adding a second. He tried using the scissors motion that he used to stretch Sasha, but it was hard to do on himself. After trying several times, he gave up, and just stuck another finger in.

Once he felt he was sufficiently stretched, he straddled Sasha's body. Grabbing Sasha's still-hard erection, he pushed it gently against himself, pushing down with his body just enough to hold him in place before reaching up to shake Sasha awake.

"Sasha, open your eyes, majiktoka. You don't want to miss this. Come on, baby, open your eyes," he encouraged softly as he gently patted his cheek. He chuckled as Sasha's eyes began to flutter. "Come on, majiktoka, open your eyes for me."

Sasha opened his eyes to see Vadim leaning over him, sexy smile on his face. "Vadi."

* * * *

Sasha's brow furrowed as he realized that Vadim was straddling him. He could feel his hard cock pressing against Vadim's body. His eyes widened as Vadim slowly lowered himself on to his erection.

"What..." *Oh fuck, that felt good.*

What was Vadim doing? He always...he never...well he just didn't, but the soft groaning coming from Vadim's throat as he began moving his hips, impaling himself on Sasha's cock, said he did.

Sasha watched with shocked eyes as Vadim's cock began lengthening, hardening into steel. He reached down, captured him, and stroked him. He was glad he did when Vadim's movements became frantic with need.

Keeping one hand on Vadim's cock, he reached up with the other to start pulling at his nipples.

“Harder,” Vadim demanded as he pushed himself down faster and faster. He was nearly scooting Sasha up the bed.

Sasha pinched his nipple between his finger and thumb and pulled, not letting go until Vadim’s head fell back. Vadim yelled, his seed shooting out of his cock to land on Sasha’s stomach and chest.

Only then did Sasha let the strong feeling of Vadim’s muscles contracting around his cock pull him over the edge and into releasing his own exquisite climax.

He could still feel his cock pulsating inside of Vadim moments later as he collapsed down on him, his head buried in the crook of Sasha’s neck. He brought his hands up to stroke his hair, his back and his beautiful ass.

“Vadi,” he whispered. “Care to explain what just happened?”

“Not really,” Vadim chuckled as he pushed himself off Sasha and rolled to his side, pulling Sasha up against him until they were face to face.

Sasha could see that he was a little embarrassed. His face was flushed and he wouldn’t quite meet Sasha’s eyes. “Vadi?”

Vadim raised his eyes to Sasha’s. “Did you know about that little spot inside?”

Sasha couldn’t keep the laughter from his voice as he replied, “What little spot?”

“Well, when you... there’s this spot just inside and when you...”

Sasha rolled his eyes. “Vadim,” he began as he covered Vadim’s lips with his finger, “of course I knew about it. Why do you think I like making love with you so much? It’s a great little spot, and your gorgeous cock hits it just right nearly every time.”

Vadim’s face flushed again. “That’s why you like it so much? You even seem to get off on me putting my fingers in you. Is it because of that spot?”

Sasha nodded. “I like your cock more because it fills me up at the same time, but yeah, you hit that a few times and it’s like nirvana. Besides,” Sasha said as he rubbed his hands down Vadim’s chest,

“having you inside of me is the closest I can get to you without crawling under your skin.”

“Majiktoka, you’re already under my skin. I don’t ever plan on giving you up. You’re already an addiction to me. Now that I know about this, I’m not sure I’m even going to let you out of this room.”

Just as Vadim finished making his announcement, there was a knock at the door. “Vadim? Your father would like to see you and Sasha down in the study,” they both heard Viktor say before his footsteps could be heard walking away.

Sasha looked up at Vadim, smirking. “You were saying?”

Chapter Nine

Sasha was nervous as he followed Vadim down the stairs to the study. Vadim's father, Ivan, had basically given them a summons. Apparently there was something he wanted to discuss with them.

He was afraid to find out what it was. So many different scenarios were going through his mind that he didn't see Vadim stop, and he ran into his back. Vadim immediately reached behind him and grabbed Sasha, steadying him.

"Whoa, Sasha. Slow down."

"What do you think your father wants to talk to us about?" Sasha whispered as he pressed himself against Vadim's back.

"He probably wants to know the same thing that I do. Who pushed you off the pier?" Vadim replied as he pulled Sasha around until he was standing in front of him. He gently cupped his hands around Sasha's face and tilted his head up so that he could look down into his eyes.

"You didn't slip off that pier, Sasha. You know it as well as I do. Someone pushed you and I want to know who."

Well, hell! This just sucked. Sasha didn't want Vadim getting into another fight, and he knew that the second he told Vadim that Casimir and Kando had pushed him into the water, Vadim was going to tear them apart.

"What makes you think I didn't slip?" Sasha said, trying to put off the inevitable. He knew that at some point he was going to have to come clean with Vadim, even if it was just for his own safety, but did it have to be in front of his father?

Ivan Miroslav was not known as an alpha with a lot of mercy. In fact, he was considered rather harsh and ruthless. Even Alpha Valeriya had been hesitant to cross him. What chance did he have against him?

“Sasha,” Vadim began, “why are you afraid to tell me who pushed you? I know it wasn’t your fault. I need to know who it was so I can protect you. What if this person tries to go after you again? Or what if next time it’s one of the boys?”

Sasha’s eyes widened in fear. He hadn’t considered that Casimir and his cronies might go after one of the boys. He had thought that it was just a personal vendetta against him because Casimir hadn’t gotten his way. What if it was a vendetta against Vadim, with Sasha and the boys as targets?

“It was Casimir and Kando,” he said hurriedly. “I didn’t see them do it exactly, but I felt someone push me. Then, once you had me back up on the pier, I saw them standing off to one side. It was just the way they were smiling. I knew they had done it.”

Vadim nodded, pulling Sasha close to him for a hug. “I suspected that it was Casimir the moment I learned you had gone into the water.”

“It’s nothing I can prove, Vadi. I didn’t see them push me.”

“I know, majiktoka, but my gut is telling me that this is not over. Casmir and his buddies are going to try something like this again. We need to be on our guard until we can prove they did this.”

Sasha sniffled. “I just don’t understand why they won’t leave me alone.”

“I don’t know, Sasha. Obviously, Casmir and his buddies, hell, Alpha Valeriya as well, they all seem to have some sort of obsession with you.”

“Well, I hate it.”

“Come on, majiktoka, let’s go see what my father wants, and then I’ll take you upstairs to meet our boys.”

Sasha lifted his head from Vadim’s chest, smiling up at him. *Our boys*, he liked the sound of that. It was another one of those things that made him feel all warm and fuzzy inside. Vadim had quite the ability to do that to him.

As warm and fuzzy as he was feeling, his steps were still slow as Vadim dragged him into the study to face his father. He didn’t want to do this. He really didn’t. He was positive that Ivan was going to tell Vadim that he just wasn’t worth it.

Vadim could have had anyone he wanted. Just because they had a mating bond didn’t mean that they had to be exclusive to each other. Sasha didn’t want anyone else, but that didn’t mean that Vadim had to stick to him.

Sasha was sure there was somebody out there more worthy of Vadim than him. Pretty much anyone. Ivan was sure to point this out to his son, especially after today. What father wanted his son to be with a complete loser?

“Father,” Sasha heard Vadim say as he followed him into the room. He bowed his head in Ivan’s direction before walking over to one of the vacant chairs to sit down. He kept his eyes lowered to his hands and twisted them nervously in his lap.

“Vadim, I’m glad that you and Sasha could join me. Is everything okay? Sasha has had no lasting effects from his little swim off the pier?”

His little swim? Sasha covered his mouth to keep in the giggle that was about to bust free. Yeah, right, his little swim. That’s what they were going to call it. *Sasha’s little swim off the pier*. They could reminisce about it at pack gatherings.

Sasha bit down on his lip as he realized that his thoughts were becoming chaotic. After everything he had been through in his life, it had finally happened. He was losing his mind and right in front of his mate’s father. *Just perfect!*

“Sasha is much better. Thank you for asking,” Vadim said as he sat down in the chair next to Sasha and gestured for his father to sit down across from him. He waited until his father was seated before continuing.

“So, Father, what is it you wanted to talk to us about?”

“I wondered if you knew who pushed Sasha into the water. He was pushed, I assume?”

Sasha’s head flew up in astonishment at Ivan’s words. He knew that Sasha had been pushed off the pier? If he knew, who else did?

“His name is Casimir Valeriya. He was the nephew of Alpha Valeriya and next in line for alpha. Before I mated Sasha and became alpha here, Sasha had been promised to Casimir and his friends as a reward by Alpha Valeriya.”

“Seriously? I don’t think I’ve ever heard of something like that being done since the old days. I mean, sure, it was pretty common a hundred years ago, but I had hoped that we had moved into the modern century. I guess not.”

“Things do seem to be a bit backward here, as I’m finding out. Alpha Valeriya had his own little kingdom going here. It’s taken Gregor and me several days just to figure out everything he had his hands in. Most of it was totally illegal or against pack law in one form or another.”

“Gregor? He was the older gentleman that escorted us to the nursery? I seem to remember meeting him years ago at one of the pack council meetings. As I remember, he was very high up in the inner circle of the alpha at that time. How is it that he’s here now?”

Vadim chuckled as he looked over at Sasha. “That was actually Sasha’s idea. Gregor has been a great asset to me in learning the workings of the pack and figuring out what crap Alpha Valeriya had been up too.”

“Don’t forget Mary,” Sasha added quietly.

“No, of course not, majiktoka. I would never forget Mary.”

“Mary?” Ivan asked.

“She is Gregor’s wife and our resident housekeeper, cook, parenting advisor. You name it, and she does it. I’m not sure Sasha and I could have made it the last few days without her mothering us. Besides that, she cooks almost as well as Mother does.”

“Don’t tell her that,” Ivan chuckled.

Sasha saw Vadim wince out of the corner of his eye. “Oh yeah, that would be bad,” he said.

“Really bad,” Ivan said as he stood and began walking around the room. He looked deep in thought, and Sasha didn’t want to interrupt him, but he was curious as to why Ivan and Vadim seemed to think it was a bad thing that Mary cooked almost as good as Vadim’s mother.

“Vadi? Why shouldn’t your mother know how well Mary cooks?” Sasha asked quietly.

“Because Mother is a fabulous cook. She prides herself on it. And you do not want to cross that woman. I’m not even sure my father has ever crossed her. She’s known through out our pack as a woman with quite the temper.”

Sasha looked at Vadim in astonishment. His mother had a temper that even scared the alpha? She seemed like such a nice woman. In the days before they had come back to the island, Anya had been nothing but wonderful to Sasha. The two ideas did not make sense.

“I don’t believe you. Anya is a wonderful woman, and I think it’s mean of you to make fun of her.”

Vadim burst out laughing. “Sasha, we’re not stupid. We are not making fun of my mother. We’re just cautious. You’ve just never seen her when her nose is out of joint. Believe me when I say you don’t want to.”

“I still think you’re being mean. It’s not nice to talk about your mother that way. You should be grateful that you even have a mother. Some of us don’t,” Sasha harrumphed, crossing his arms over his chest and glaring over at Vadim.

“Surely you have a mother too, Sasha. You certainly didn’t hatch out from under a rock,” Ivan said as he came back over to sit down in his chair.

“I don’t remember my mother or my father. Both of my parents died when I was very young. I was raised by foster parents until I was of age, at which time Alpha Valeriya deemed me untouchable. So, they kicked me out.”

“They kicked you out?” Ivan asked, sounding outraged.

Sasha shrugged. “Yeah, they live over on the other side of town. Except for pack functions, I haven’t seen or spoken to them in nearly seven years. Alpha Valeriya didn’t allow it. He said that my duty was to the inner circle and having friends or family outside of that would interfere with my duties.”

Sasha wasn’t surprised by the shocked look Ivan gave him. Putting his life into words did make it sound kind of pathetic? Would this be just another reason that Ivan could use against him?

“Who were your birth parents?” Ivan finally asked several tension-filled moments later.

“I don’t know. I just called them Mom and Dad,” Sasha said, shrugging his shoulders again.

He was surprised when Vadim reached over, picked him, and transferred him to his own lap. Sasha laid his head on Vadim’s chest as he felt his arms wrap around him.

“Well, you have a family now, majiktoka, and lots of people who consider you a friend. Just think of all of the people in your life. You have me, the boys, Viktor and Nikolai, Gregor and Mary, my parents, even Pauline. There are a lot of people that care about you, majiktoka.”

Sasha nodded his head, wondering if Vadim was right. Could he consider all of the people Vadim had mentioned as his friends and family now? He still didn’t even know if Gregor and Mary had agreed to move into the house as family members or servants. And he was too afraid to ask.

“Sasha, can I ask you something?” Ivan asked.

Sasha lifted his head and looked across to Ivan. “Yes, anything.”

“Why did your former alpha cut you off from everyone? That is what he did, isn’t it?”

Sasha nodded his head. “Yes, basically, but I don’t know why. The day I turned eighteen, he told my foster parents that I needed to move into my apartment so that I was closer to the alpha compound. The funny thing was that my apartment wasn’t any closer than my foster parents’ house.”

“What happened after that?”

“Well, for the first couple of years, I worked for Pauline down at her bakery. But, after the Alpha started threatening her, I quit. I couldn’t let her take the heat for hiring me, you know? I had some money saved up, but that ran out several months ago. Since then, Alpha Valeriya provided everything for me.”

“Wha... what did he ask for in return?” Vadim asked in a voice low and rough. Sasha could tell that he was angry even though he tried to hide it. Besides the fact that he could feel his emotions, Vadim had this small tick in his jaw when he was angry.

“You already know what he made me do,” Sasha replied. He didn’t really want to put to words the things he had to do as the omega for the inner circle of his pack. Luckily, he hadn’t had to do anything with anyone outside of the inner circle, just them, and that was bad enough.

“Yeah, I know. I’m sorry, majiktoka, that you had to go through that. You know that’s not how we treat our omegas, right? I explained to you how important they are to us, to the pack. What Valeriya did was wrong.”

“I still don’t understand why he did it, though,” Ivan interjected. “I understand that you’re an omega, but surely there have been other omegas in the pack. Why treat you like you were his personal play toy?”

"I'm cute?" Sasha asked with a sarcastic grin, which sent both Vadim and Ivan into deep chuckles.

"Yes, you are certainly cute, Sasha, but there had to be something else, something we're missing. It just seems too weird for Valeriya to isolate you like that. Is there anything you can think of, no matter how irrelevant it might seem?" Ivan asked.

Sasha thought about it for several moments, but he couldn't think of a thing. Alpha Valeriya had just seemed to have it out for him. He started to shake his head when he suddenly remembered one thing. It seemed kind of weird, but...

"I don't know if this is what you mean, but I wasn't allowed to talk about my parents, even before I turned eighteen. My foster parents would punish me if I even mentioned them. After I moved into my apartment, if I talked about them or asked about them, Alpha Valeriya would punish me."

"And you don't remember who your parents were?" Ivan asked.

Sasha shook his head. "I remember that Mom had the lightest blonde hair I had ever seen. It was like spun sunlight. She always had it in a long braid down her back. And she smelled like summer rain and flowers."

Vadim smiled as he looked down at the pensive face of his mate. "You must get that from her. I thought you smelled like summer rain the moment I met you. It's one of my favorite smells," Vadim whispered as he leaned his head against Sasha's.

"What do you remember about your father?" Ivan asked

"Not much. I spent more time with my mother. Dad always had his head buried in some book. Mom used to complain constantly about all the piles of books all over the house. I remember as a child playing hide-and-seek from my father around all those books. There were tons of them all over the house."

"So, maybe your father was a scholar or something," Ivan said, rubbing his chin thoughtfully. "You know, there's an elder back at the council that has been around for many years. If your father were a

scholar, I'd bet they'd have known each other. Do you have any pictures of them that I might show him?"

Sasha shook his head. "No. Alpha Valeriya wouldn't let me keep anything having to do with my former life. He took it all and burned it."

"Are you sure he burned it or did he just tell you he burned it?" Ivan asked, still rubbing his chin.

Sasha shrugged. "I don't know. I assume he burned it. He told me he did. Do you think he could have been lying about that?"

The look he received from both Ivan and Vadim had Sasha turning slightly red. It clearly said "Duh!" So, okay, it made sense that the alpha wouldn't be above lying, but why would he lie about burning Sasha's stuff?

"So, what now?" Sasha asked, looking from Ivan to Vadim, then back to Ivan.

"I'd say we start looking for anything that might have to do with Sasha. Hopefully, we will find something. In the meantime, I'll ask the elder if has ever heard of Sasha's parents. Sasha, if you remember anything else about your parents, you let me know. Every little thing could help."

Sasha nodded. "I still don't understand what my birth parents have to do with why Alpha Valeriya did what he did."

"The two may not have any connection, but we have to start somewhere, majiktoka. There has to be a reason beyond you being an omega that he acted the way he did. And before you say it," Vadim said as he held up his hand, "yes, I understand that he was nuts. But I still think there's more to it than that."

Sasha rolled his eyes. He really thought that they were making too much of this. It was just a coincidence that Sasha was an omega that had been orphaned at an early age, wasn't it?

"Okay," Vadim began as he set Sasha on his feet, "I think we should shelve this conversation for now. I have a couple of young men to introduce to my mate. We'll catch up with you later, Father."

“I’m just going to make a few phone calls. So if you could tell your mother I’ll be in here?”

Vadim nodded as he reached down, grabbed Sasha’s hand, and pulled him toward the door. “No problem. I guess we’ll see you at dinner then?”

Ivan nodded.

Just as Sasha and Vadim reached the study door, Ivan called out to them. They turned to look back at him. Sasha was a little confused by the tender look Ivan had on his face as he looked at him.

“I’m very glad that Vadim has found you, Sasha. He has been looking for you for a long time. I was beginning to worry that he would never find you. Now that he has, I can see the difference in him. He’s finally at peace and I have you to thank for that.”

Sasha’s mouth almost dropped open in surprise. Ivan was glad that Vadim had mated him? Of all the things Ivan could have said to him, that was the last thing he was expecting. He wasn’t quite sure how to answer him.

“Uh, you’re welcome?”

Ivan chuckled at Sasha’s tentative response. “I know we don’t know each other very well, Sasha, but I hope that changes in the future. I want you to consider Anya and myself as your adoptive parents just as much as if you were our son. You have given us something that no one else could have. You’ve brought happiness to our son. That means more than we can ever repay you.”

Sasha nodded, a little dazed by what Ivan was saying to him. They thought he had brought peace and happiness to Vadim? Didn’t they understand that he had done nothing? Vadim was the one that had saved him. He couldn’t let Ivan continue to think he had done anything.

“I really didn’t do anything. If anyone has done anything here, it’s Vadim. He saved me. He’s protected me and kept anyone from hurting me. He’s given me everything, a real home, people that

respect me, a family. Everything I have is because of him. I didn't really do anything."

"Excuse us for a moment, Father. It seems that Sasha and I have some talking to do. If you see Mom or Mary, please tell them that we will be up to see the boys as soon as we are done."

Sasha let out a small squeak when Vadim picked him and threw him over his shoulder, carrying him down the hallway and out the front door. He began yelling at Vadim as soon as they reached the front steps.

"Vadim! Put me down right now. Where are you taking me? Vadim!"

He rolled his eyes when Vadim just laughed and swatted him on the ass. "You'll see when we get there, my love."

"Vadim!" Sasha growled, receiving another chuckle from him. That so infuriated him. It was times like this that he wondered why he was attracted to such a bigger man. Vadim was using his larger size to get his way. He knew that Sasha was too small to fight him.

"I swear, Vadim, I'm going to put slugs in your shoes if you don't put me down." *Slugs?* That's all he could think of? Couldn't he have said snakes or razor blades? Even dog crap would have been better. He really needed to learn how to threaten someone better because he sucked at it.

Sasha grunted as Vadim pulled him down from his shoulder and around until he was sitting in his arms. He glared up at him and clenched his teeth when he saw the grin on Vadim's face.

"Slugs?" Vadim laughed.

"Yeah, yeah, I suck at threats. So sue me."

"I'd rather kiss you," Vadim murmured.

Sasha watched Vadim's eyes lower to look at his lips. He licked them slowly, smirking at the low groan that came from Vadim. His breath caught in his throat when Vadim quickly lowered his lips and captured his in a long kiss.

He couldn't help adding his own groan to Vadim's. Kissing him was like licking a light socket. Electrical shocks went straight from Sasha's lips down his body to his cock. He could do this all day.

Vadim lifted his mouth from Sasha's while lowering him down to stand on his own two feet. Sasha let out a little groan of protest. He really didn't want to stop kissing Vadim. It was really, really good.

"Vadim."

"Sorry, majiktoka, but you know we need to talk."

Sasha pulled himself from Vadim's arms, turned, and walked a couple of steps away as he looked out over the wooden area they were standing in. Funny, Vadim had brought him to the exact spot he often went to get away.

"Sasha," he heard Vadim whisper as his strong arms wrapped around him from behind. "We need to talk about this, majiktoka."

"I don't want—" Sasha said in protest as he started shaking his head.

"You're not getting out of it this time, Sasha. I've kept my mouth shut every time you said you didn't want to talk about something. I'm not going to do it this time. This is too important to me."

"Vadi," Sasha whined.

"Oh no, you're not going to use that tone on me. It's not going to work this time. I want to know why you think you haven't done anything for me. Why do you think you haven't contributed to this relationship just as much as I have?"

Sasha swung around, staring up at Vadim in astonishment. Was he serious? Vadim had given him everything, and he had given Vadim nothing, which made sense. He had nothing to give him except his body, and he got as much out of that as Vadim did.

"Vadi..."

"Listen to me, baby," Vadim said as he reached down, putting his hands around Sasha's face. "I may have provided you with a house to live in, but you've made it a home. And the people in your life who

care about you care because of you, not me. I had nothing to do with it.”

“No, that’s not—”

“Yes, Sashenka, it is true. Do you have any idea what it’s like for me, knowing that every night I get to hold you? That I can talk with you about my day, and you’re actually interested? That at the end of each day, no matter how good or bad my day was, you’re waiting for me?”

Sasha’s eyes widened at Vadim’s words. He never knew that Vadim felt that way. He always looked forward to the end of the day when he could cuddle in bed with Vadim and talk with him. He thought it was just him.

“I thought you did that for me,” Sasha whispered.

“Afraid not, majiktoka, that’s all for me. I look forward to it almost as much as waking up with you in my arms every morning. I never want to go a day without you. It just isn’t worth it.”

“I don’t under... understand,” Sasha said as tears began to form in his eyes. Vadim didn’t do those things because he wanted them. He did these things for Sasha. He was the one who needed Vadim, not the other way around.

“It’s very simple, Sasha. I love you.” Vadim chuckled.

“How can you love me? I don’t have anything to give you. Everything I own fits into two cardboard boxes. I have no money, no job skills. I can’t even give you a family because I don’t have one. I have nothing.”

“There is only one thing I want from you, Sasha. Nothing else matters to me, not your money or your possessions, or even your family connections.”

“*What?*” Sasha cried out. “Whatever it is, you can have it.”

“I just want you.”

Um, okay. That didn’t make sense. Vadim had been with him so many times that Sasha had lost count. And it wasn’t like he was

turning him down. Hell, he was in favor of it. If Vadim wanted him right now, out here in the woods, he'd find the nearest flat surface.

"You have me, Vadim. I've never said no to you," Sasha reasoned.

"No, baby, you've never turned me down, and I appreciate that. But that's not what I'm talking about. Although I wouldn't be thrilled, I would still want you if you were paralyzed from the eyebrows down. This isn't about sex, majiktoka."

Sasha was confused. He looked up at Vadim, trying to read his face, to understand what Vadim wanted from him. If he had it, it was Vadim's.

"I want you, Sasha, everything you have to give me," Vadim began.

"You have me. What—"

"Let me finish," Vadim said, covering Sasha's mouth with his finger. "I want you, your caring, your gentleness, your advice. But most importantly, I want your heart."

Sasha continued to stare at Vadim in confusion. He winded when Vadim blew out an exasperated breath. He could see that he was starting to get agitated.

"I want you to love me."

"But you already have my love. I wouldn't be with you if I didn't love you, Vadim. Haven't I shown you that I—"

Sasha looked up at Vadim, bewildered. "You don't know that I love you," he said in wonder as if a light bulb had just gone on over his head. "Vadim, everything I do for you I do because I love you."

* * * *

Vadim could feel his heart beating rapidly in his chest. He could hear the soft sounds of the creek nearby. He could smell the scents of the forest filling his nose. But if he dared to open himself up to Sasha, what would he feel?

“Sasha,” he whispered.

Sasha reached up, grabbed one of Vadim’s hands from his face, and brought it down to cover his heart. “*Feel what I feel, Vadi.*”

Vadim stared down at Sasha for several moments wondering if he was brave enough to fully open himself up to Sasha. He knew that if he opened himself up, he was giving Sasha the power to hurt him, or to love him.

Closing his eyes, Vadim opened the bond between them, little by little, until it began to flow on its own. Before he knew it, the floodgates crumbled around him and the bond opened fully.

With a loud cry, Vadim dropped to his knees and wrapped his arms around Sasha so tightly that he heard him cry out. It was overwhelming. He felt tears spring to his eyes and fall down his face as he felt the love Sasha had for him move through their mating bond.

“*Sasha,*” Vadim whispered silently, almost in awe of the fierce love Sasha had for him. Why had he never realized how Sasha felt? How could he have not known? It was in every fiber of Sasha’s being until he almost glowed with it.

Vadim didn’t understand until now how much he needed to know that Sasha loved him. In this one moment in time, the feeling of Sasha’s love had become more important than breathing.

“*See, Vadi, I do love you.*”

Vadim wondered how he had gotten so damn lucky. “*I love you, majiktoka.*”

Chapter Ten

Sasha held Vadim's hand as they walked back toward the house a while later. He had a lot to think about. He didn't want to make a mistake, to say the wrong thing. The moment between him and Vadim had been precious. He didn't want to mess it up.

Sasha glanced up at Vadim from below his eyelashes. There were so many things he wanted to ask him. He was still reeling from Vadim saying he loved him. He just couldn't believe it. It was his fondest wish.

"I can feel you doubting, Sasha. Don't. I meant it when I said I loved you, and I do," Vadim said, not even looking down at Sasha.

"Why me?" Sasha finally asked. Maybe that was his biggest question. Why would a man like Vadim choose him to love? He wasn't anything special.

"Why not?" Vadim chuckled. "First off, look at you. You're the sexiest thing I've ever seen in my life. But, besides your looks, you have an even more beautiful heart. I really don't think you see yourself the way the rest of us do."

"You think?" Sasha said sarcastically.

"Come on, Sasha. No one sees himself or herself the way others do. That's part of life. Since I'm obviously the more intelligent of the two of us, maybe you should just defer to my better judgment."

"More intelligent!" Sasha yelled, coming to a sudden stop. "What makes you think you're more—"

Stopping Sasha's angry speech before he could finish, Vadim let out a loud laugh as he picked Sasha up and twirled him around. He finally lowered Sasha to the ground, keeping his arms around him.

With a small smirk, Sasha tilted his head back and looked up at Vadim. "If you were more intelligent than me, you would be bending me over that stump instead of flapping your lips."

He watched as a smile spread over Vadim's face as he eyed the stump. "That stump over there?" he asked, nodding with his head toward the stump sitting just inside the edge of trees.

Before Sasha could say yes, Vadim picked him up and carried him over to the stump. He slowly lowered Sasha's feet to the ground. His grin was wicked as he looked down at Sasha for several moments before abruptly turning him around and bending him over the stump.

Sasha felt all of the air leave his lungs as Vadim pushed him down onto the stump. He started to push himself up when he heard a rip in his jeans. He dropped back down to the stump and rolled his eyes. He went through more jeans around Vadim.

But maybe it was worth it, Sasha thought a moment later when he felt Vadim caressing his bare ass. He had to bite his lip to keep from groaning as Vadim pushed a finger deep inside of him. Oh, hell yeah, it was worth it.

After a moment, he realized that Vadim wasn't stretching him. He seemed to be searching around with his finger for something.

"Vadim, what are you doing?"

"I'm trying to find that damn spot," he growled, which made Sasha chortle.

"Your cock would be a lot better than your finger. As big as you are, you get it almost every time."

"I want to make sure that I get it *this* time!"

Sasha wanted to laugh but knew now was not the time. Still... "Just fuck me already," he demanded. A moment later, he heard Vadim chuckle as he added another finger and stretched him until he was ready.

"It's gonna be hard and fast, majiktoka. You ready for it?" Vadim asked a moment later.

"Yes, fuck, yes, just do it," Sasha cried out desperately.

The next thing he felt was Vadim filling him from behind, and then Vadim was pounding into him. His movements were hard and rapid, just as he had warned. Sasha had to grip the edges of the stump to keep himself in place.

Vadim was unrestrained, wild, as he thrust into Sasha again and again, building them both toward a climax. If Sasha hadn't been holding onto the stump, he would have been pulling at his hair. The pleasure was so intense he thought he would pass out.

"Vadi, claim me, Vadi," Sasha begged, tilting his head to one side and baring his neck to his mate. He heard a satisfied growl come from Vadim just before his long canines sank deep into the flesh between his neck and shoulder.

That was all it took for Sasha to find his release. His eyes rolled back in his head as he pushed his hips back against Vadim, his cock pulsing as he filled the front of his jeans with his seed.

He distantly heard a loud roar in his ear as Vadim climaxed. He could feel the tightening of his muscles milking every last drop of fluid from Vadim's sensitive cock. A soft stroke of his tongue on Sasha's neck followed by a quick kiss, and Sasha felt Vadim pull from him.

Sasha let out a yelp when Vadim slapped him on the ass. "Now, who's the most intelligent?"

"I am." Sasha laughed as he turned over to look up at Vadim.

"You think so, huh? I'm not the one heading back to the house with my ass flashing everyone." Vadim chuckled as he stood to his feet, reaching down to grip Sasha's hand and pull him to his feet.

"I wouldn't be flashing everyone if you'd keep from ripping my jeans," Sasha complained.

"You want me to stop?" Vadim asked, with an eyebrow raised and a smirk on his lips.

"I didn't say that exactly but maybe we should start carrying an extra pair of pants with us when we go for walks? Or at least hide

some out here in the woods. I do not relish having your mother see me with my ass hanging out.”

Sasha expected Vadim to laugh at what he said. Instead, he raised his head and looked around. His eyes were harsh and intense. Suddenly, he grabbed Sasha and pushed him behind his bigger body.

“Run, Sasha, now!” He roared as he pushed Sasha toward the house.

Sasha ran, his heart thumping wildly in his chest as tree branches smacked him in the face and broken limbs on the ground tripped him. Falling forward, he landed heavily on the ground with a silent thud.

Hearing a growling behind him, he turned over, his eyes widening with fear as he heard a loud gunshot and watched Vadim fall to the ground. Crawling quickly forward, Sasha scooted over to kneel next to him.

A shocked cry sprang from his lips as saw blood darkening the back of Vadim’s shirt. Someone had shot his mate. But why wasn’t he moving? It was just a gunshot. Werewolves could take gunshot wounds, unless it was a silver bullet.

Sasha leaned down and sniffed at the wound, his nose crinkling in distaste. It was silver, which meant whoever shot Vadim knew he was a werewolf. Sasha felt the skin at the back of his neck begin to prickle. He was no longer alone.

Turning his head, he saw three gray wolves creeping up on his position. Casimir! Why did that not surprise him? Logically, Sasha knew he should run for help. He wasn’t big enough to fight off one wolf, let alone three. But he couldn’t leave Vadim lying there defenseless.

Sasha quickly shed his clothes and shifted into the white wolf that proclaimed him an omega wolf. With his teeth bared, he crouched over Vadim’s body and growled out his warning to those approaching.

He didn't care how big they were. He would fight to the death if need be. He wouldn't let them hurt his mate. As soon as they were within reach, he lunged at them.

* * * *

"I swear, Ivan, I heard a wolf howling in distress. I know that sound," Anya said as she followed their small group into the woods.

"Are you sure that's what you heard? As far as I know, Vadim and Sasha are the only ones out here in the woods right now. Is there anyway you could have mistaken it for something else?" Viktor asked cautiously.

"Like what, a birdcall? I know a wolf howl when I hear it, Viktor Stylianos."

"Okay, okay, I believe you. But if it was a wolf's howl that you heard, then why? Who gave the howl? Vadim? Sasha? Someone else? And if they did, then why did they do it? What's going on?"

"Viktor? Instead of asking so many questions, questions I can't answer, why don't we head for the area where I heard the howl come from?" Anya asked, smirking at Viktor.

Viktor turned his head and rolled his eyes. "Point the way, Anya, please."

With a little laugh, Anya pointed Viktor and began walking into the woods. Ivan, Gregory, and Mary were hot on her heels. Viktor, with a rifle in hand, walked along side of her.

They may be wolves, but there were still things out in the woods that even wolves tried to avoid, like bears. Sometimes guns were better because most wolves could not win against a bear just because of their massive size. Viktor was glad he had his.

"It's this way," Anya directed as she headed deeper into the woods.

As they were all in human form, it was slow going. They also didn't know exactly what they were looking for. But it certainly wasn't what they found when they came to a small clearing.

The small clearing was covered in bright red blood. It looked like a huge battle had taken place. This fact was brought home to those staring in shock at the three wolf bodies lying around the clearing. It was obvious from the wounds on them and the amount of blood around them, that they were dead.

"Oh my God!" Anya screamed, pointing toward the middle of the clearing. "Sasha's gone feral. He's eating Vadim."

Viktor turned to the slumped and unconscious body of Vadim lying in the middle of the small clearing. A bloodied white wolf was half lying on him, half sitting beside him. He was licking and chewing at a small spot on Vadim's back.

"Shoot him, Viktor, before he kills Vadim!" Ivan demanded. Mary and Anya began to cry, holding on to each other as Viktor stepped forward, raising the rifle in his hands and sighting down on Sasha.

Viktor watched the white wolf stand, his legs shaky. The wolf took a small step toward them, his deep growl turning into a yelp.

He wiped the tears from his eyes as he looked down his sight to the white wolf straddling his alpha and best friend. If Vadim lived through this, assuming he wasn't already dead, he was never going to forgive Viktor for killing his mate.

Maybe he could just wound him? That thought in mind, Viktor took aim, pulled the trigger, and hit the snarling white wolf in the back leg. He watched as the wolf yelped, falling down to his knees.

His jaw dropped open as the wolf stood back up, straddling Vadim's body again. He could see blood seeping from the wound in the wolf's leg. While it wasn't a kill shot, it should have taken the little wolf down.

“Again, Viktor, shoot him again. He’s going to kill Vadim!” Anya screamed.

With a heavy heart, Viktor raised the rifle again. Sighting down the barrel at the wolf, he aimed for his head this time. “Forgive me, Sasha,” he whispered as he started to pull the trigger. But just then, the wolf cocked his head to one side, letting out a small whimper.

Viktor lowered the rifle hesitantly. “Sasha, do you know me?” he asked quietly. No one was more surprised than him when the white wolf dropped down to the ground and began crawling toward him.

When Sasha reached him, he rolled over to his side. Viktor knelt down beside him, receiving a quick lick on the hand he held out. He carefully stroked the wolf’s bloodied snout, receiving a few more licks.

With a little whine, Sasha jumped back to his feet and ran back over to Vadim’s side. He licked and chewed at the bloody skin on his back and lifted his head to whimper at Viktor before licking at the wound again.

“He’s gone feral. He’s going to kill Vadim, if he hasn’t already. Why didn’t you shoot him, Viktor?” Ivan demanded as Viktor quickly stood to his feet and went over to where Sasha and Vadim were.

“He’s not feral. He’s hurt,” Viktor replied as he knelt down next to Sasha. He began moving his hands over Vadim checking for injuries. When he reached the small wound in his back, the one Sasha kept licking, he heard Sasha whimper again.

“It’s okay, Sasha. He’s still alive, but he’s been hurt really badly. Can you shift? I need to know what happened here,” he asked as he stroked Sasha between his ears.

Sasha shook his head from side to side and whimpered again as he leaned down to lick at the wound in Vadim’s back. The misery and pain clear in his copper brown eyes was clear for Viktor to see.

“Okay, then just let me get a look at this wound and we’ll see what we’re up against.”

He watched Sasha take a step back and crouch. Looking back at Vadim, he began to probe around the bloody wound. There was just too much blood to see anything. Grabbing the shirt lying on the ground next to Vadim, he started wiping the blood away.

“Oh fuck!” he whispered, his eyes filled with shock as he looked up at Sasha before turning around to the stunned faces standing a few yards behind him. “I need a knife. Now!”

Ivan stepped forward and slapped a hunting knife into Viktor’s hand. He started to come around to stand by Vadim, but Sasha jumped back to his feet. He stepped over his mate’s body, bared his teeth and growled at Ivan.

“Are you sure he’s not feral, Viktor?” Ivan asked as he slowly backed away from the white wolf and his son. “He looks pretty ferocious to me.”

“No, he’s not feral,” Viktor replied as he dug at Vadim’s back with the knife.

“Then why the hell was he trying to eat my son?” Ivan demanded loudly, taking another step back when Sasha growled at him again.

“Because,” Viktor said, suddenly pulling something from Vadim’s back and holding it up for Ivan to see, “He was trying to get the silver bullet out of his back.”

“Silver bullet? Someone shot Vadim with a silver bullet? Who would do such a thing?” Ivan exclaimed, taking the bullet from Vik.

“My guess,” Viktor replied as he looked around the clearing at the other three bodies, “is that it was them. And, if I’m not mistaken, that’s Casimir and his buddies.”

“Casimir? The nephew of Alpha Valeriya?”

Viktor nodded even as he wiped away more of the blood on Vadim’s back. He could see that the wound was already starting to heal. A wolf couldn’t heal with silver in their body, which explained why Sasha was trying so hard to get the bullet out.

Sasha! Viktor quickly looked around for the little white wolf. He found him lying on the ground next to Vadim’s legs, his chest rising

and falling rapidly. He was still bleeding from the wound in his leg as well as the other numerous ones he had had before Viktor had shot him.

He wasn't healing nearly as fast as Viktor would have liked. They weren't immortal, and they weren't immune to injuries. Unfortunately, even wolves could succumb to numerous wounds.

Viktor moved over to kneel next to Sasha and lifted his head onto his lap. He softly stroked his head as Sasha whimpered up to him. "I'm sorry, little one. But you did good, you did really good. Vadim is going to be just fine, thanks to you."

Sasha whimpered once more, then slowly closed his eyes. For a moment, Viktor couldn't tell if he was still breathing. Reaching down with his hand, he placed his hand on Sasha's chest and tried to feel his heartbeat.

A moment later, he closed his eyes in gratitude. He was merely unconscious, but he was very injured, in part because of him. Vadim was going to kill him when he found out that he had shot his beloved mate.

Hearing a groan behind him, he turned his head to see Vadim trying to lift his head. He saw Anya let out a cry and run across the small clearing to kneel next to Vadim and rub the hair back from his face.

"Gregory, go get a wagon big enough to carry Vadim and Sasha, and hurry, damn it," Viktor yelled as he lifted Sasha up a little and pulled him over to lie next to Vadim. He knew Vadim would want to know about him the moment his head was clear.

"Vadim," Anya cried as she brushed his hair aside. Ivan came over to kneel down next to her, his hands gently moving over his son's body.

Viktor reached over and helped Vadim roll over. He was never more grateful than he was when Vadim opened his eyes and looked up at him. "Hey, Vadim, glad to see that you're still with us. How are you feeling?"

* * * *

“What happened?” Vadim asked, his brows drawn together in confusion.

“You tell me,” Viktor chuckled as he looked around the clearing again, then back at Vadim. “Looks like you had a party without me.”

Vadim shook his head a little, wishing that he hadn’t a moment later when pain pounded through his head. Fuck, that hurt. So did his back. What in the hell had happened? The last thing he remembered was joking with Sasha about the rip in his jeans.

“Sasha,” Vadim cried out as he sat up suddenly. He looked around for his little mate, finding him lying next to his legs, still in wolf form. He quickly crawled over next to him and stroked his hands over Sasha’s soft white fur, looking for injuries.

His front leg seemed to be broken, and he had a gunshot wound in his hind leg. He was also covered in numerous bites and scratches. Sasha was like one big injury. There was hardly anywhere on his body that wasn’t covered in blood.

His eyes were filled with tears as he looked up at Viktor in desperation. “What happened to him? Who did this?”

Viktor pointed to the bodies lying around the clearing, just behind Vadim. Vadim turned and noted the three dead wolves. He was still confused. He didn’t remember fighting with them.

Shaking his head, he looked back down at Sasha’s still form. “What kind of trouble have you gotten into this time, majiktoka?” he whispered down at his little mate. It was obvious that Sasha had been in a battle for his life.

Vadim just couldn’t figure out why he hadn’t been the one fighting. And how had his little mate fought off three wolves by himself? That just didn’t make sense, but the evidence was right there in front of him.

“Viktor.”

“Look, Vadim, there’s something you need to know. When we got here, we thought that Sasha had gone feral. We didn’t know he was trying to get the silver bullet out of your back.”

“I was shot with a silver bullet?” Well, that explained why he hadn’t been the one fighting. But why hadn’t Sasha gone for help?

“Yeah, your father has it. But, that’s not important right now. Like I said, when we got here we thought Sasha had gone feral. I...I shot him. I tried to make sure the shot wouldn’t kill him just stop him for attacking you.”

“You shot my mate?” Vadim roared, getting to his feet. “You shot Sasha? How could you shoot him? He would never hurt a hair on my head. He should have run for help, but instead he stayed here and fought three wolves that were trying to kill me all by himself. And you shot him for it?”

With each sentence, Vadim advanced on Viktor, his hands clenching into fists as he stalked at him. He felt an overwhelming urge to rip Viktor’s throat out and feed it to him. He had intentionally injured his precious mate.

“*Vadi*,” a soft voice murmured into his head from behind him.

Vadim whipped around, all of his anger at Viktor forgotten at the sound of his mate’s beloved voice. He ran back over to him and found him in human form this time. Dropping to his knees, he reached down to caress his cheek.

“*Majiktoka*, how are you feeling?” he whispered to him, feeling tears streaming down his face at the small smile Sasha sent him.

“Leave Viktor alone. He was only looking out for you,” Sasha whispered to him.

“Sasha—”

“I would have shot me too. Now do as I say and take me home. I’m tired, and I need a bath,” Sasha ordered as he closed his eyes again. “Guess your mother’s going to get a good look at my ass this time.”

Vadim smiled through his tears as he lifted Sasha into his arms before standing to his feet. "My mother's going to get a good look at a lot more than your ass, majiktoka."

"Peachy," Sasha murmured as he burrowed his head into Vadim's neck.

Vadim was still smiling as he carried his little mate through the woods, several bewildered faces following him. He knew that they didn't understand what had happened, but he did.

His little Sasha had protected him when he couldn't. He was considered to be the weakest member of the pack, the omega, and he had saved him, the alpha and strongest member of the pack, from being killed.

Vadim still didn't know how he had done it but he would be forever grateful that he had. He would be even more grateful if his injuries would heal in a timely manner so that he could show his little mate how much he loved him, again.

* * * *

"How is he?" Ivan asked as he handed his son a small glass of whiskey. He grabbed one for himself and sat down in one of the vacant chairs in front of the fireplace.

Vadim shrugged, sitting down across from his father. "Sleeping finally. He refused to go to bed until he had a bath."

"He's a stubborn one. That's - unusual behavior for an omega."

"Yes, but I like him that way." Vadim chuckled.

"Did he say anything about what happened?"

Vadim nodded, wincing when he remembered the things Sasha had told him. "Yes, he told me what happened but I want everyone in here when I repeat it. I think they all need to know exactly what Sasha did."

"He saved your life, Vadim."

"And you wanted him shot for it," Vadim growled.

“Vadim—”

“Don’t, okay? Just don’t,” Vadim said, holding his hand up to stop his father from speaking. “Sasha already explained it all to me and said that I need to forgive you and let it go. But to be honest, it’s going to take a while before I can forget that you all wanted him killed.”

“Get over it already. We’ve got more important things to discuss,” Sasha called out from the doorway.

Vadim whipped his head around at the sound of his mate’s voice, grimacing as he spilled his glass of whiskey. Sasha stood in the doorway with a blanket wrapped around him. Vadim’s eyes widened as he remembered the last time his mate had come to the study wrapped in a blanket, and nothing else.

“Please tell me you have something on under that blanket,” Vadim begged of his mate.

“Relax, big guy. I think your parents have seen enough of my naked ass today to last them a lifetime.” Sasha chuckled as he walked into the room and plopped himself down on Vadim’s lap.

Vadim chuckled, wrapping his arms more securely around Sasha. “So, what is so important that we have to discuss?”

“Well, we could start with my clothing allowance ’cause I’ve got to tell you, I’m tired of flashing everyone. My ass is cute, but I’d prefer if you were the only one to enjoy it.”

Vadim’s eyes flew to his father as he felt his face flush. He was surprised to see his father smiling instead of being upset over how blatantly Sasha talked. He would have thought his father would be upset. Apparently not.

“How about if I get you an expense account for your clothes? Will that make you feel better, majiktoka?”

“Definitely. Now, on to the next order of business, I’m hungry. Feed me.”

“You’re hungry? That’s at the top of your important list?” Vadim asked, astounded.

“Hey, I’m a growing boy. I need sustenance,” Sasha replied, crossing his arms over his chest and glaring up at Vadim.

Vadim rolled his eyes. “Fine. I’ll get you something to eat, then it’s back to bed with you.” He started to lift Sasha off his lap when his father stood, shaking his head.

“You just sit right there, Vadim. I’ll go rustle something up for your hungry little mate,” Ivan said as he made his way out of the study.

Vadim sat back down, cuddling Sasha to his chest once again. He couldn’t believe that Sasha was sitting here in his arms alive and well. He did have a few bruises, but most of his wounds had healed soon after he had shifted back to human form.

“So, why are you down here when you’re supposed to be upstairs sleeping? Isn’t that where I left you?” Vadim murmured against Sasha’s head.

“Yeah, but I missed you. You know I don’t sleep well unless you’re in bed with me,” Sasha complained as he turned in Vadim’s lap to straddle his legs. He pulled the blanket apart and leaned against Vadim.

“Sweet Jesus, Sasha, I thought you said you had clothes on,” Vadim exclaimed as his hand moved under the blanket, encountering the naked flesh of his mate. One touch, one feel of satiny skin, and his cock was hard.

“I lied.” Sasha grinned as he looped his arms around Vadim’s back and leaned in to claim Vadim’s lips in a deep, passionate kiss. Sasha’s hands began to pull at Vadim’s shirt, exploring the skin beneath.

Vadim was stunned by Sasha’s behavior. He was hardly ever the aggressor in their relationship. And even if he started it, he usually followed Vadim’s lead after a few moments. But now he seemed demanding and insistent. And Vadim couldn’t believe how much it was turning him on.

“Sasha,” he whispered as he pulled his lips from his, “is this such a good idea? My father could be back at any moment. Hell, anyone could walk in.”

“It’s a fabulous idea, and I think we’ve already established that I’m the intelligent one in this relationship. Now, shut up and kiss me,” Sasha growled as he pulled at the buttons on Vadim’s pants.

“Sasha!” Vadim burst out as Sasha pulled his hard cock out of his pants and began stroking him, making him even harder. Vadim loved the feeling of Sasha’s hands on his cock. His hands felt like steel silk wrapped around him.

Sasha stopped what he was doing abruptly and looked up at Vadim. “Look, I can put you back in your pants and we can sit here and talk about my clothing allowance until your father comes back or you can put that big cock of yours in my ass. Your choice, big guy. We have about five minutes here. Do you want to spend it talking or fucking?”

Vadim stared at Sasha for about two seconds before pushing him to his feet. “Over the arm of the couch, majiktoka,” He said, slapping Sasha on his ass.

He pushed his pants down his legs, his hand reaching for his cock, slowly stroking it as he watched Sasha quickly bend over the arm of the couch. Oh damn, his ass was right there. He reached over and caressed each rounded globe as he continued to stroke his cock.

Moving a step closer, Vadim rubbed his cock up and down the crack of Sasha’s ass. He could feel the pre-cum leaking from the head of his cock easing his way. Letting go of himself, he grabbed Sasha’s ass cheeks and pulled them apart.

He could see the head of his cock rubbing against hit tight, puckered hole. With each pass, Sasha shivered. Vadim cock was hard, jutting straight out from his body. He could stand back and push directly against Sasha’s entrance without using his hands to do more than hold his cheeks apart.

He went slow, watching himself press against Sasha and gain a little more ground with each thrust. It was so erotic to watch his cock sinking into his mate. By the time the head of his cock passed the first ring, Vadim was groaning.

“Can you take me now, baby?” Vadim asked, hoping that Sasha was...

“Yes!” Sasha nearly screamed.

With one long thrust, Vadim sank the rest of the way into Sasha. His head dropped back, and his eyes closed at the exquisite feeling of being inside his beloved once more. It was made all that more special by their near-death experience.

“Harder, Vadi, fuck me harder. I need to feel you in me,” Sasha demanded, reaching back with his hands to hold his cheeks apart. He had to rest his head on the seat of the couch to hold himself up.

Vadim reached up and gripped Sasha’s shoulders for leverage as he began pounding into him. Each stroke, each time Sasha’s muscles tightened around him, brought Vadim closer to his release. But he needed to be sure that Sasha came with him.

He suddenly pulled out of Sasha and flipped him over onto his back. Grabbing Sasha’s legs and pushing them up against his chest, he plunged right back in. Sasha fell back, his arms over his head pushing on the couch cushions as his back arched over the arm of the couch.

Wrapping one hand around Sasha’s thigh, he reached down with the other and captured his cock. He began stroking his little mate with each thrust of his hips. He looked down at Sasha, more turned on that he could remember being, as he watched Sasha reach up and pull at his own nipples.

“That is so sexy, majiktoka,” he groaned.

He watched with unbridled joy as Sasha began to shake and streams of come shot from his cock and landed all over him, Sasha, and the couch. With each spasm, Sasha’s muscles tightened down on Vadim’s cock, which sent him over the edge right after his love.

Vadim stiffened as he came, releasing himself deep with in his mate. He yelled out Sasha's name as he filled him with his very essence, his whole body trembling with the force of his climax.

As the strength left his body, Vadim slumped over Sasha's damp body and felt Sasha's delicate, little hands come up to stroke through his hair. It was at this moment, this single moment in time, that he truly felt complete.

* * * *

Viktor started running toward the study the moment he heard Vadim yell, his heart beating rapidly the whole way down the hallway. He could hear Ivan and Gregory close on his heels, and Nikolai and Anya coming down the stairs.

Reaching the study door he grabbed the handle and swung the door open, taking one small step into the room. Inhaling deeply, he stepped back and shut the door quickly behind him. He chuckled as he turned to the small crowd behind him. "They're going to need a few minutes."

Chapter Eleven

Sasha was all giggles as Vadim opened up the study door and let everyone in. He knew that Vadim was a little embarrassed at being caught fooling around in the study, but he wasn't. He would love Vadim wherever he could and to hell with everyone else.

Still, he was grateful that Vadim had ordered Viktor to get him something to wear and had let him get dressed before letting anyone in. He was serious about no one seeing his ass except Vadim.

He watched from his chair with some amusement as Anya sniffed the air, her nose wrinkling, before she turned her flushed face toward Ivan. Ivan just shrugged and went to sit down on the couch.

Sasha started laughing when Ivan suddenly leaned over and smelled the arm of the couch before quickly getting up and moving to a chair, pulling a confused Anya along to her own chair next to him.

"Knock it off, majiktoka. You're embarrassing my mother," Vadim whispered to Sasha, amusement filling his voice as he walked over to pick Sasha up before sitting down in the chair and settling Sasha back down in his lap.

"Sorry, love. But it's not like they've never gotten caught fooling around before." Sasha laughed back at him.

"Let's not talk about my parents and sex in the same sentence, okay? It just gives me the creeps."

"Spoilsport!" Sasha said as he stuck his tongue out at Vadim.

"Quiet, majiktoka. It's time for more serious discussion."

"Do we have to? Can't we just skip that part and talk about something else?" Sasha whined.

“No, we can’t talk about something else. I want everyone here to know what you did. Now here, eat something,” Vadim said as he reached for the plate of food Mary was holding out for him. Vadim stared at him until Sasha rolled his eyes and picked up a piece of cheese and shoved it in his mouth.

“Better?”

“Yes. If I keep your mouth full of food, it will keep you from flapping your lips,” Vadim said out loud.

“I can think of something else that I’d like to have in my lips,” Sasha giggled as he put another piece of cheese in his mouth.

“Sasha!”

“Oh, all right, have your little discussion. I’ll just sit here like a good little mate and keep my mouth shut,” Sasha griped out loud, which got a laugh from everyone except Vadim, who was glaring down at him.

“Geez, loving one moment and dominant wolf the next. Is it like this for you too, Anya?” Sasha asked, turning his head to look across at Vadim’s mother. But before she could answer, Vadim shoved another piece of cheese in Sasha’s mouth.

“I’m not sure it’s possible for you to keep your mouth shut, Sasha. Now chew,” Vadim demanded before settling Sasha more closely against his chest. He reached down and grabbed the edge of the blanket Sasha was wrapped in, pulled it up farther, and tucked it around him.

Vadim watched Sasha chew the piece of cheese before handing him a slice of apple. He smiled when Sasha rolled his eyes. But he did open his mouth, take the apple, and chewed it until it was gone. He had another piece of apple waiting.

Looking up at those in the room he was surprised to see them all looking at him with a stunned expression. “What?”

Ivan chuckled as he looked at his son. “You have an interesting bond with your mate, Vadim. Just exactly who wears the pants in your relationship?”

“Well, I certainly don’t. Vadim keeps rip—”

Vadim immediately slapped his hand over Sasha’s mouth to keep him from completing that sentence. “Don’t say it.”

Sasha just winked at him, his eyes filled with affection.

Taking a fortifying breath, Vadim looked back up at his father. “Don’t encourage him.”

“Me? What’d I do?” Ivan asked, trying to look innocent.

Vadim just ignored him and turned to look at the rest of the people in the room, noting their mutual amusement at his expense, he suspected. Oh well, what could he do? His mate was incorrigible, and his family found it amusing. Life could be worse.

“I asked you all to be here because I wanted to discuss the incident earlier today. After we got home, Sasha explained to me what happened, and I think it’s important for all of *you* to know what happened.”

He felt Sasha burrow against his chest at his words. He knew he didn’t really want to go over that horrible nightmare again, but everyone needed to know what his mate had done. It was important that they understood what they had almost done.

“Sasha and I were on our way back to the house when I smelled Casimir and his goons coming up behind us. I told Sasha to run to the house and get help, and he started to go, but you all know by now how well he listens.”

There were several nods and a few chuckles.

“Casimir shot me with a silver bullet, which incapacitated me. Sasha saw this, and he saw Casimir, Kando, and Yhan approaching me with the intent to kill me. He shifted and attacked them, protecting me.”

“He knew he was smaller, weaker, but still he tried to protect me. Now, somehow, my little mate was able to kill them all. I still don’t know how he did it, but I’m grateful that he did. Although, if he ever does something that stupid again—”

“It’s because he loves you, Vadim,” his mother interrupted softly. “If one mate loves another mate with all of his heart and soul, he can do anything in the name of that love, even fight a battle for their lives.”

Even Sasha lifted his head to look over at Anya in astonishment at her answer, along with everyone else in the room. She lifted her head to look at each one of them and pinned each with her intense gaze.

“That’s the only way he could have done it,” she finished, nodding respectfully to Sasha. “And I think that we all owe Sasha an apology, especially me. When we found you, I truly did believe that you had gone feral, Sasha.”

Nodding his head, he sent her a small smile. “I know what you saw, and can understand why you thought what you did. There is no apology needed, Anya. Vadim is your son, and you were just trying to protect him.”

“As were you. No matter what we saw, we did not have the right to try to kill you. We should have handled it better. I will be the first to admit that I panicked. I really believed that you were trying to, well,” she said as she looked down at her hands.

Sasha whipped the blanket back, climbed off Vadim’s lap, and walked over to kneel at Anya’s feet. He grabbed her hands in his, looking up into her face. He smiled as he reached up and wiped a lone tear from her cheek.

“We both love him and want only his happiness. There’s nothing wrong with that. And to be honest, you don’t know me that well. I’m sure that if I had been in the same situation, I would have reacted just as you did.”

Anya was silent for several moments as she stared down into Sasha’s earnest face. With a smile forming on her lips, she reached down and gently stroked her fingers through his honey-blond hair.

“You’re a good man, Sashenka Miroslav. I was worried when I first learned that Vadim had mated you, you being an omega and all,

but now...now I pray that you and Vadim have many years together. I think you will protect him as well as or even better than I can.”

Sasha tilted his head down and kissed Anya’s hand before looking up at her. “Thank you, Anya. I will try not to abuse your trust in me.”

Standing to his feet, he leaned over and whispered something in her ear, which sent Anya into peels of laughter before moving back to sit in Vadim’s lap. He settled himself down against Vadim’s chest, feeling his big strong arms wrap around him again.

Vadim had a curious frown on his face as he looked at the amusement on his mother’s face, then down at his little mate. “What did you say to my mother?”

Sasha giggled as he reached up and patted Vadim’s cheek. “Honey, if I wanted you to know that, I would have said it to the entire room so everyone could hear me.”

* * * *

Vadim’s sigh of exasperation sent everyone in to amused laughter. “Somehow, this isn’t fair. My mother and my mate ganging up on me. I think there’s a law somewhere that says you can’t do that. Father?”

“Son, after you have been with Sasha for as many years as I have been with your mother, you will learn to just give in. You can’t win, because truthfully, no matter what anyone else may think, they wear the pants in the family. Not you.”

“Oh, you’re no help,” Vadim growled. But the anger in his voice was in deep contrast to the wide grin he couldn’t keep from crossing his face. Being with Sasha for as many years as his parents had been together would be a dream come true.

He would also be the first to admit that Sasha had him wrapped around his finger. He would do anything to keep his little mate happy, to give him what he wanted or needed, and he didn’t care who knew.

If that meant that others saw him as weak because he adored his beloved mate, so be it. They’d soon find out that they were wrong.

Sasha was as strong as he was, if not more so. He took everyone's abuse and ridicule as an omega but he gave back so much more, and he kept on giving.

That's what a true leader was. The more he thought about it, the more Vadim began to think that Sasha needed to be recognized as such. Their pack needed to know what Sasha was capable of when it came to those he cared about, because he cared about all of them, each and every member of their pack.

"Viktor, I want you to call the pack together for a mandatory meeting tomorrow afternoon. I know the ballroom isn't big enough for everyone to fit in, so we'll have it out in front of the house. I think it's about time that I addressed our new pack."

"Of course, Vadim, anything you want," Viktor replied.

"Mother, maybe you and Mary could cook something up? After the meeting we can have a kind of meet and greet thing. I want to know the people in my pack. I also think that it's time for Sasha to reconnect with the members of his pack."

"Me?" Sasha asked in a strangled little voice.

"Yes, majiktoka, you!" Vadim chuckled. "These people are your pack members just as much as they are mine. They need to see you and get to know you again. I know that there are some that still associate with you, like Gregor and Pauline, but the rest of them have kept their distance because of Valeriya. It's time that they learned just how special you are."

"*What if...what if they don't like me?*" Sasha whispered through their mating bond.

"*I think that they will like you just fine once they get to know you. Besides, I like you just fine, so who cares what they think?*" Vadim said back to him.

"*How much to you like me?*" Sasha said, his eyes twinkling with mischief.

"*I swear, Sasha, your brains are in your pants.*"

“Actually, I think they’re in your pants.” Sasha giggled. *“I don’t have any left, remember?”*

* * * *

Sasha was so nervous he felt like he might pass out. He could see a lot of people gathering in the front of the house as he looked out the window. There had to be close to one hundred fifty people out there.

And Vadim expected him to go out there and mingle with them. Realistically, Sasha knew each and every one of them. He had lived with this pack for his entire life. That didn’t mean he actually knew them.

Before Alpha Valeriya had deemed him off limits, he still hadn’t gotten to know them real well. Not many people wanted to associate with the pack omega. It was like hanging out with the unpopular kid in high school. No one really wanted to be seen with him.

Sasha had grown used to it after a while. It was just how things were. When Alpha Valeriya had cut him off from everyone, it hadn’t been that different from how his life had been for many years, so it hadn’t fazed him much.

Now Vadim wanted him to go out and make nice with these people. Did he really expect them to treat him any differently than they had for years? Sasha knew that a few of them would be thrilled at his new status. He didn’t know about the rest.

“Majiktoka, you need to stop worrying. Everything will be fine, I promise. I won’t let anything happen to you,” Vadim said to Sasha as he walked up behind him and wrapped his arms around his mate.

“I just don’t know about this, Vadi. Maybe I should just stay in the house. You and Viktor and Nikolai can go out and mingle. I’ll just stay in here and wait for you, maybe take a bath or something.”

“Not going to happen, Sasha. You’re my mate, and I need you to be there by my side. It’s where you’re supposed to be, you know?”

“But what if I trip or drop something? What if I make a mistake? I don’t want to embarrass you,” Sasha whined as he held on to Vadim’s arms.

“You could never embarrass me, Sasha. I’m very proud of the fact that you’re my mate.”

“Really?” Sasha asked as he turned in Vadim’s arms to look up at him.

“Of course. I couldn’t imagine having anyone else as my mate. Sasha, you’re perfect for me. You do everything you can to make my life enjoyable. You’re gentle and caring. You make sure that I have everything I need to be a good leader, including telling me when I’m being an ass. Besides that, you’re pretty good in the sack. What more could I want?”

“Someone that wasn’t afraid of their own shadow?”

“I think that when it comes down to it, you can be just as fierce as the rest of us. You proved that when you saved me from Casimir. Not everyone could do that. In fact, I’ve never heard of an omega fighting one wolf, let alone three, and winning.”

I don’t think I really won anything. I just couldn’t let them hurt you,” Sasha replied, his face burning a little at Vadim’s compliment.

“Now see, that’s what makes you so special, majiktoka. You fought three wolves and defeated them, saving your mate’s and alpha’s life. Most people would be boasting from the highest rooftops about what they had done, but not you. You don’t even consider it a battle. You were just doing what you had to do to save a loved one. Do you see the difference?”

Sasha shrugged. “I guess. I’ll do this for you, but you have to promise me something.”

“Anything, majiktoka. You know that.”

“Don’t leave me out there. I want you to stay with me, no running off to visit with people without me. I don’t want you to leave my side, okay?”

“Like that’s going to be a problem.” Vadim chuckled. “I have no problem being glued to you, majiktoka, so don’t worry about that.”

“So, how does this whole-pack meeting thing work?” Sasha asked, trying to change the subject. He really didn’t want to dwell on his fear of their pack. It was embarrassing, to say the least.

Vadim grabbed Sasha’s hand and began pulling him from the room. In the hallway, he wrapped his arm around Sasha and escorted his reluctant mate toward the front steps and their waiting pack.

“Viktor and Nikolai will be with us, so don’t worry about anyone trying anything. They’re both there to protect us. As for the meeting itself, I will first be addressing the pack, then I’ll give them an opportunity to ask any questions they might have, and then we eat.”

“That’s it?” Sasha asked in astonishment. That seemed rather simple.

“Majiktoka, it’s basically nothing more than an informal board meeting with me as the CEO and the pack members as the stockholders. I have my say, they ask their questions, and then we pig out. Nothing more to it.”

Sasha started laughing. “Pig out? That’s a disgusting thought.”

“Well, yeah, but you get the idea,” Vadim said as he reached for the handle on the front door. He paused, looking down at Sasha. “You ready for this, majiktoka?”

“Do I have a choice?”

“Come on, it won’t be that bad. Just stay by my side. Everything will be okay.”

“Yeah, easy for you to say. You’re the alpha. Try being an omega for once and see how fast that notion changes,” Sasha replied as he followed Vadim out the front door.

He could immediately feel several eyes turn to look at him. It was creepy. He felt like they were assessing him for his worth as the alpha’s mate and as the pack omega. He wondered if they found him lacking.

“Thank you for coming. For those of you that I have not had the chance to meet, my name is Vidam Miroslav. Behind me are my betas, Viktor Stylianos and Nikolai Miroslav. I am sure you all know my mate and the pack omega, Sashenka,” he said as he pulled Sasha forward to stand by his side.

There was a small rumbling of voices at his words, which quieted down as soon as Vadim stared out over the crowd. He let the silence stretch until the people in the crowd began to fidget nervously.

“I called you here to discuss a few things that have come to my attention. First of all, there will be no more cub tax or pack initiation fees. Nor will I or any of my inner circle be taking part in any wedding nights. If you want to get married, get married. Beyond meeting any new members of the pack, we have nothing to do with that or whether you have a child. That should be your decision.”

Again, there was a flurry of voices. Sasha could tell that the people in the crowd were shocked by what Vadim was telling them. They probably had expected him to continue with several, if not all, of the practices that Alpha Valeriya had started.

“Now, Gregor and I have compiled a list of items that we discovered in the alpha compound that I believe belong to members of this pack. If something was taken from you by your former alpha, and you can prove that it is yours, talk to Gregor. He will be overseeing the return of any items that were stolen from their proper owners.”

Sasha winced as he considered all of the work that Gregor had ahead of him. He had seen the workers packing and moving the items out of the house to storage. There were a lot of them. He wondered how many pack members would actually come forward to claim their belongings.

In the beginning, not many, he'd bet. It would take time for them to realize that Vadim was a good leader and not trying to trick them into anything. Once they figured that out, he doubted Gregor would get any sleep.

“Now I want to discuss the financial side of things. It is my job as alpha to care for and protect my pack. However, it is not your job as pack members to provide everything for me or mine. I am fully capable of providing for my family. There will be no more providing for the alpha compound, the alpha, or the inner circle unless we pay for it. Is that understood?”

“What about gifts?” someone in the crowd called out.

“Gifts are fine. But don’t think to try to buy my favor with gifts. I will remain impartial in all dealings, as is my duty. However, I am partial to apple pie.”

“And Pauline’s croissants,” someone else yelled out, getting a good chuckle from the crowd and Vadim.

“Yes, Pauline’s croissants are priceless,” he agreed. “Now, there will be a yearly pack tax as there is in most packs. However, that tax will be ten percent, not twenty-five percent. It will also be based on the number of people in your immediate family.”

“Can you explain that, Alpha?” one young man asked.

“Certainly. A family of nine that makes ten thousand dollars a year will have a harder time paying a ten percent tax than a family of two. As such, each family will get an exemption for each member to be deducted from their ten percent that they have to contribute toward the pack. Does that make sense?”

“Wouldn’t that encourage us to keep having children, even if we couldn’t afford it?”

“Yes, it may seem that way, but there is a limit on the number of deductions. If you have two adults, and five cubs, that’s it, no more deductions. Even if you have ten cubs, you can only claim deductions for five cubs. Does that make sense?”

There were several nods but a lot more blank looks.

“I can answer any questions that you may have about this. I also have a handout for each one of you to take with you today that explains this in more detail,” Gregor added.

“I want to be fair about this. It does take money to run a pack. But I have no plans on bankrupting you either. With the alpha compound no longer draining your purses, and ending the cub tax and the pack initiation fee, most of you should do better. If you’re still having problems, come see me, and I am sure we can work something out. I do not want any of you to suffer. You are my pack and I will take care of you.”

* * * *

This time, Vadim got a round of applause. He nodded, smiling, as he waited for them to quiet down. As he waited, he gestured to Viktor and Nikolai, who quickly left the front steps and hurried off around the side of the house.

“I have one last thing to discuss with you and then we can move on to answering any questions you may have.”

It still took a few minutes for the crowd to quiet down, but when they did, Vadim reached behind him and pulled Sasha up to stand by his side. He wrapped his arm around Sasha’s shoulder and pulled him closer. He wanted everyone aware of how much Sasha meant to him.

“As I am sure every one of you is aware, Sashenka is my mate. He is also the pack omega. As I said on the day I arrived, any transgression against him is a transgression against me. Apart from my sons, Sasha is the most important person in the world to me. He is my mate. Those of you who have mated know what I am saying.”

Vadim watched as several couples nodded. However, many of the single people either look confused or angry. He knew that they thought he should put them first, and they might be right. But that didn’t mean it would happen.

“I will let you know this now. If it comes down to choosing between this pack and my mate, I will choose my mate every time. I know that there are many of you that do not agree with this but frankly, I don’t care. He’s mine and I protect what is mine, always.”

“Do you really think that’s fair, Alpha Miroslav? What if he does something wrong, or breaks the law or something? Are you still going to take his side?” someone called out from deep within the crowd.

“First of all, if you knew Sasha at all, you would know that he would rather die than hurt any of you. But none of you have ever taken the time to get to know him, have you? For years you’ve let Alpha Valeriya dictate how he should be treated, looking the other way when he was abused. Did any of you ever once think about what he was going through? What Alpha Valeriya was making him do?”

Vadim rubbed his hand down Sasha’s arm. He could feel him trembling with shame beside him. He knew that showing affection in front of his pack could be seen as being weak but he didn’t care. His mate needed him.

He pulled Sasha around in front of him and wrapped both arms around him, letting Sasha bury his burning face in his chest. He leaned down and gently kissed Sasha on the head before lifting his head to glare out at the crowd. He let them all see the anger and disgust in his face as he stared at them.

“He has lost his family, his friends, his home, and nearly his life, all because of you, because he didn’t want anything to happen to you, his pack. He took punishment after punishment so that you wouldn’t have to. What have any of you ever done for him?”

Vadim could see many guilty faces trying to avoid his piercing gaze. Deep down inside they knew what they had done was wrong. Most of them hadn’t done it on purpose. They were just trying to get by without gaining Alpha Valeriya’s attention. But a few of them...

“For those of you that still think you can treat Sasha the way he has been treated for most of his life, think again. For one, I won’t allow it. If you have issue with this I suggest you apply to another pack and leave. As long as I am alpha here, Sasha will be protected and treated with respect.”

Vadim saw Viktor and Nikolai wheeling in a small tarp-covered cart, coming to a stop directly in front of him. He nodded at them as they each took up a stance on either side of the cart.

“Yesterday, Casimir, Kando, and Yahn decided that they didn’t want me as their alpha anymore, and they shot me with a silver bullet.”

He could hear the gasps of outrage coming from the crowd. They all knew that you only used silver for one reason, to kill a wolf. It hadn’t been a challenge. It had been a clear out attack meant to kill the alpha.

“Having been shot, I was incapacitated. Sasha, my little mate, took it upon himself to protect me at what could have been his very life. It probably should have been, except for one thing. He was protecting me, his mate. So, if you think you can pick on him behind my back, think again. This is what happened to the last three wolves that tried to take on my little omega.”

Vadim nodded to Viktor and Nikolai who yanked back the tarp to reveal the three dead wolves in the cart. Several people gasped, a few cried out, but most just stared in shock. Vadim was sure that they were as shocked as he had been when Sasha told him what had happened.

“Not only did Sasha take Casimir, Kando, and Khan out by himself, but afterward, as injured as he was, he still tried to get the silver bullet out of my back. When help arrived, they thought he was feral and shot him. And still he protected me. That’s what my mate and your omega did for your alpha.”

“Do we really have to go on about this? Couldn’t we just move on to the pigging out part?” Sasha whispered through the mental bond.

“Hush, majiktoka, I’m almost done. I want to be sure that they know not to challenge you when I’m not around.”

“I don’t want them to be afraid of me, Vadi,” Sasha complained.

“Not to worry, my love. Once they get to know you like I do, they’ll see what a special person you and none of this will matter.”

“Vadi? I’m not sure that I want any of them knowing me like you do.” Sasha chuckled as he turned around to face the crowd before him. *“Vadi, they’re just standing there staring at me.”*

“Want to really give them something to stare at?” Vadim asked as he looked down into Sasha’s face, wiggling his eyebrows.

“Does it involve me having to change into new pants?”

“Behave, majiktoka, or I’m going to have to strip you down and paddle your ass,” Vadim chuckled, reaching down and swatting Sasha on the ass.

“Mmm, maybe we can discuss paddling later? Your pack is waiting for you.”

Vadim looked up to see most of the crowd staring at him. He smirked when he saw that most of them looked stunned by what they had seen and what he had told them. Guess they didn’t think Sasha had it in him.

“I hope you all understand now that Sasha is not just some regular omega. He’s special, to me and to you. He will protect those he cares about with his life. He’s been doing it for you for years. I think its time that he was treated with the respect that he is due, don’t you?”

It started out with one loan clap coming from Gregor, then Mary, followed by Pauline, Viktor, and Nikolai. Soon more joined, until the entire pack was clapping for Sasha, who just stared at them in complete shock.

Vadim knew he had never had that kind of acceptance from his pack before. He knew it was a little frightening for Sasha because of the uncomfortable emotions he was feeling. Vadim could feel it. He wanted to quickly get past this so he could have a few minutes alone to reassure his little mate.

“Does anyone have any questions?” he finally asked when the crowd had quieted down.

No one said anything for several moments until one young woman stepped forward. *“I know you said that you and your inner circle*

would not be participating in the wedding night practice as Alpha Valeriya did.”

“That’s true,” Vadim said as he nodded his head.

“What about besides that?”

“Well, I can tell you that it is not mandatory. I will not order anyone to perform those kinds of favors for any one inside or outside of the inner circle or the pack. I don’t have that right.”

“And if we wanted to?” she asked, winking at Vadim.

“Vadim belongs to me!” Sasha growled.

“I think he can answer for himself,” the young woman sneered up at Sasha.

Vadim just shook his head. “What part of this whole conversation didn’t you get? I just told you that Sasha defeated three wolves defending my life. You don’t think he would wipe the floor with you if you threaten his position as my mate? Sasha belongs to me just as much as I belong to him.”

He looked the woman up and down, noting her long legs and bountiful breasts. She was a looker, however. “Besides the fact that I prefer someone with more hair than breasts on their chest, I would never dishonor my mate by being with someone else.”

Vadim raised his head to look out over the crowd. “I want to make this perfectly clear to you all. At no time will either Sasha or I be participating in anything sexual with anyone except each other. We are mated, married in the eyes of our pack. We do not have sexual relations outside of our relationship. Not because we can’t, but because we choose not to. Is that very clear to everyone?”

“*Thank you, Vadi,*” he whispered. Vadim sent him a small nod.

“Now, are there any other questions?” he asked of the crowd.

“Is it true that you have cubs, Alpha Miroslav?”

“Yes, it’s true. Sasha and I have two sons, Ivan and Marika.”

“If you’re... well, how did you... are you planning on having more cubs?”

“No one can tell what the future will hold, so I’m not going to say no. But I don’t see any in our near future. Although a little girl to join our two sons wouldn’t be bad.” Vadim chuckled.

“A little girl would be nice,” Sasha murmured for Vadim’s ears alone. “It would give the boys someone to look after.”

“Only if she has your beautiful eyes, majiktoka,” Vadim replied. In his mind, he pictured a little girl with Sasha’s honey blond hair and beautiful copper colored eyes. If she had his temperament, she would be sure to give him a run for his money.

“Now, are there any more questions? If not, I say we get to celebrating,” Vadim said to the crowd, gesturing to the side yard where his mother and Mary were waiting.

“What are we celebrating, Alpha Miroslav?”

“First off, it’s Vadim, not Alpha Miroslav. We’re pack here, not strangers. Second, we’re celebrating our pack. Sasha told me on the day we arrived that this was a wonderful place to live, full of wonderful people. I think that right there is a reason to celebrate, don’t you?”

There were many nods as well as several looks filled with a new respect aimed at Sasha. Vadim felt that many in the pack were really seeing Sasha as he did for the first time. He had no doubt that the rest would follow as they got to know Sasha.

“Sasha and I will join you in just a few moments. We just want to go check on the boys. You all go on and start with out us,” Vadim directed as he drew Sasha back toward the front door.

“*Now* you’re taking me to meet the boys? Don’t you think we should have done this earlier, like last night?” Sasha whispered under his breath as he followed Vadim into the house and down the hallway to the study.

“Actually, I just wanted a few minutes alone with you. I wanted to make sure that you were okay. The boys were just an excuse. They’re upstairs sleeping anyway. You can meet them after the party.”

“So you dragged me all the way into the house? You could have just asked me, you know? We do have that wonderful little mating bond thing going on.”

“Yeah, but then I couldn’t have done this,” Vadim chuckled as he pressed Sasha up against the wall and leaned down to kiss Sasha.

Sasha groaned as he leaned into the kiss and wrapped his arms around Vadim’s neck. Vadim reach down to grab Sasha’s ass, lifting him up until he could wrap Sasha’s legs around his waist.

“Not the pants, not the pants!” Sasha cried out against Vadim’s lips when he began gripping at Sasha’s ass cheeks.

“Okay, majiktoka, not the pants, this time. Later tonight when I get you alone, though, all bets are off.” Vadim said as he lowered Sasha’s feet back down to the floor.

“Fair enough,” Sasha laughed as he straightened his clothes before grabbing the hand that Vadim was holding out for him.

“Come on, majiktoka, time to go meet your adoring crowd.”

“Yeah, my adoring crowd. Let’s hope that they don’t lynch me,” Sasha said as he followed Vadim out of the study and back down the hallway to the front door.

“I won’t let them hurt a hair on your head, majiktoka.”

“Well, if that woman makes another pass at you, she won’t have any hair left on her head!”

“Sasha! I never knew you were the jealous type,” Vadim exclaimed, trying to hide his satisfied smile. Sasha was jealous and he was thrilled. If wasn’t for the fact that Sasha would probably kill her, he’d kiss that woman to thank her.

“Apparently, there’s a lot about me that we don’t know.”

Chapter Twelve

Sasha couldn't believe how many people came up to shake his hand or say hello to him. He wasn't sure there were even that many people in the entire pack. So far, though, everyone was being very nice.

It actually made Sasha nervous. He wasn't used to it. Everyone was being nice and friendly, engaging him in conversation. Usually, they didn't even acknowledge that he was alive and breathing.

"So, Vadim, what do you think of our little town?" Sasha heard someone say. He turned his head to see Vadim talking with an older man. Sasha recognized him as a man named Frank who owned the local hardware store.

"Well, I haven't seen much of it yet. But I do like what I have seen. I think that this town has a lot to offer, and now that Alpha Valeriya is gone, I think that it will have a chance to grow into what it was meant to be."

"Do you really see us changing much?"

"Sure. Nothing can grow to its full potential when being mistreated, and this pack has been mistreated for a long time. Given a chance to grow unfettered, it will," Vadim replied.

"Does that mean we're allowed to leave the island if we want to?"

"Of course. I have nothing to do with that. I—"

"I think what your alpha is trying to say, Frank, is that he's not your owner, parent, or spouse. As long as you follow the laws set down by pack council and our own town council, you are basically free to do what you want," Sasha said as he walked up to join them.

“I couldn’t have said it better myself, majiktoka,” Vadim said as he wrapped an arm around him.

“What about people coming to the island?” Frank asked hesitantly.

“Frank, if you want your son and his wife to come back to the island to visit, invite them. If you want them to move here, I’m sure that the only thing your alpha will require of you is an introduction.”

Frank stared at Sasha with surprise in his eyes before looking at Vadim for affirmation. Vadim smiled at him. “I would love to meet your family, Frank.”

Frank looked back at Sasha with a new respect. “I didn’t even know you knew who I was, Sasha.”

“Of course, I know who you are, Frank. I could never forget. You made me that little wooden wagon when I was ten and left it outside my door for my birthday.”

“You remember that?”

“Sure. I loved that wagon. It was all I played with that summer,” Sasha replied, the memory bringing a small smile to his face.

“What happened to that wagon? I haven’t seen it in years.”

Sasha was silent for a moment before replying. “Alpha Valeriya took it away and burned it. He said I needed to keep myself focused on my duties as his omega and not play with frivolous things.”

“But you were just a child,” he exclaimed.

“Yes, I was.” There didn’t seem to be much else to say. He didn’t want to make Frank feel bad but that had been the reality of his life. From his earliest memory, Alpha Valeriya had been directing his life. Sasha was just grateful Alpha Valeriya had waited until he was older before the rougher stuff had started.

“I’m sorry, Sasha. I’m sure you’ll hear that a lot today, but I really am. Sometimes it was just easier to *not know* what we all knew was going on. It was safer that way. We had families to protect. I hope you understand that.”

“I do, Frank.”

“Well I don’t,” Vadim interjected. “While you were protecting your families, who do you think was protecting Sasha? He was just a small child when this started. How could you look the other way? What if it had been your child that Alpha Valeriya decided to pick on? Would you have stepped in then or just looked the other way?”

“Vadim, it’s okay.”

“No, it’s not, Sasha. You were—” Vadim began, his voice getting heated.

Sasha quickly turned to stand in front of him and gently cupped his face. “Vadi, you have to let this go or it will eat you up. Then where will I be? It’s over and done with. As long as I have you, nothing else matters.”

“Sasha, how can you expect me to just let this go? The things that he did to you, that he made you do.”

“Those are things that I have to live with, Vadim. If you keep obsessing about them, it’s going to cloud what we have together. Do you want that to happen? With you, I can give and receive love and not be ashamed of it. Don’t you want that for me?”

Vadim closed his eyes as he leaned his head down to rest against Sasha’s. “I want this to never have happened to you.”

“I don’t.” Sasha laughed.

“What?”

“Okay, sure, I wished these things had never happened, but they did. And because they did, they brought me to you. Do you actually think I would have run into your study that first night if I hadn’t been trying to hide from Alpha Valeriya and his goons?”

“No, but—”

“No buts, Vadim. We can wish all we want, but our reality is that these things happened to me. Now, we can sit here and bemoan our fate and wish things were different, or we can be thankful that they’re all over and that they ultimately brought us together. Your choice.”

“Sasha.”

“But I have to tell you, I’m getting tired of this ‘poor-me’ attitude of yours when you weren’t the one it happened to. I refuse to live my life ashamed of what happened to me. It sucked, yes, but I’m stronger than that. I’m stronger than Alpha Valeriya. I’m still alive, and I’m still here. He isn’t.”

“But how can you just forget that it all happened?”

“I can never forget. But I will no longer give him the power to control my life. By living in the memories of what happened, he still has control over me. Even hating him is still giving him control of my life. He can not longer have any part of me, not even my hate, because that’s giving him power. I won’t do that. If I live my life to the fullest and love with all my heart, my revenge on him is complete.”

* * * *

Vadim and Frank, as well as several other people standing close to them, all stared at Sasha, stunned by what he was saying. It took an amazing person to give up the hate for someone that had hurt them as much as Alpha Valeriya had hurt Sasha.

Vadim realized that Sasha truly was a stronger person than he was. He wanted to hate Alpha Valeriya and their pack because of what happened to Sasha. Sasha just wanted to let it go and move on with their life.

“Okay, majiktoka, I will try to let it go, but I can’t promise to do it overnight,” Vadim finally replied, his hand reaching down to caress the side of Sasha’s face.

“I don’t expect you to. I’m sure there will be times when the memories will resurface for me too. We’ll deal with them when they happen. In the meantime, I’m going to live my life the way I want to live it, not his way. And that means no more bad feelings. Understood?”

Vadim knew that Sasha was giving him an order, one that he couldn’t refuse even if he wanted to, which he didn’t. His little mate

was turning out to be a lot smarter than he had given him credit for. It must be the omega in him.

“So, can we eat now? I’m hungry.”

“You’re always hungry, majiktoka.” Vadim chuckled as he wrapped his arms around Sasha, leaning down for a small kiss.

“I’m a growing boy?” Sasha asked, an eyebrow raised.

“Not yet, but maybe later tonight.”

Sasha was still laughing as Vadim escorted him over to the food table. They each grabbed a plate and filled it up before finding a clear place in the yard to sit down and eat and taking turns feeding each other from their plates.

By the time their plates were cleared, Vadim couldn’t have told anyone exactly what he had eaten. He had been too busy watching Sasha lick his fingers clean between each bite. It had made his cock harder than hell after the first bite. And Sasha knew exactly what he was doing each time he did it.

It was all Vadim could do not to push Sasha over onto the ground, rip his jeans off, and take him right there and then. But it probably wouldn’t have made a very good impression on his new pack members.

The more and more he watched Sasha, though, he began to wonder if he really cared what they thought. It seemed like Sasha was doing everything he could to inflame Vadim’s lust, from slowly licking his fingers clean to accidentally rubbing up against Vadim’s groin. It was driving Vadim crazy.

“Sasha, unless you want the entire pack to see your naked ass while I fuck you, I suggest that you stop,” he finally groaned.

“Me?” Sasha asked innocently, batting his eyelashes at Vadim. “What am I doing?”

“Like you don’t know,” Vadim growled as he pushed Sasha over and pinned him to the ground. “You can try that innocent routine on Mary or my mother, but it won’t work on me. I know better.”

Vadim desperately wanted to kiss Sasha until his eyes rolled back in his head and he was begging for more. His mate could beg so nicely. However, this might not have been the time or place. That didn't mean that he couldn't get a little revenge.

He leaned in as if he was going to kiss Sasha. Just as Sasha began to close his eyes, his lips pursing to receive the kiss, Vadim attacked, finding every ticklish spot Sasha had in his sides.

Peels of laughter sprang forth from Sasha as he desperately tried to evade Vadim's fingers, but Vadim was merciless, attacking his side, his neck, even his thighs, until Sasha was one big giggling pile of goo.

"Do you give?" Vadim laughed down at him.

"Yes!" Sasha screamed.

"Do you promise not to try any of your tricks on me while we're at a pack meeting?"

"What are you going to do to me if I say no?" Sasha asked mischievously.

"I might drag your sexy ass back into the house and paddle it." Vadim replied.

"Then no."

"You want me to spank you?" Vadim asked, surprised by how turned on he was by the idea of paddling Sasha's tight little ass.

Sasha's face turned a little red as he lowered his head and peeked up at Vadim through his eyelashes. "Maybe."

Vadim grinned, rolling over and pulling on Sasha until he was straddling him, his body leaning forward over Vadim's, resting on his arms. Vadim pulled him down until their faces were nearly touching.

"You like the thought of me reddening this tight little ass?" Vadim asked as he moved his hands down to caress Sasha's ass through his jeans.

"The idea has possibilities. We won't know until we try it. Why? Does the idea of smacking my ass turn you on?" Sasha asked, a

devilish little grin beginning to cross his lips. “Oh, I do believe I feel a response from you even now.”

Vadim growled as Sasha wiggled the apex of his thighs against Vadim’s growing cock. Sasha scooted back a little as he sat up, his hands resting on Vadim’s chest.

Vadim gripped Sasha’s hip to hold him in place over his cock when he spotted a flash of fabric beyond Sasha’s shoulder. He felt his face heat up with embarrassment.

“There’s someone behind me, isn’t there?” Sasha asked softly.

Vadim nodded, his eyes never leaving the people standing behind Sasha’s back.

“Your mother?”

Vadim nodded again.

“Your father?”

Vadim nodded again.

“Damn!” Sasha said, crying out a moment later, his hand coming up to rub the back of his head.

“Stop swearing, Sasha,” Anya said.

“Yes, ma’am,” he replied.

“Now, does anyone want to tell me what’s going on here?”

Vadim and Sasha each pointed to the other, their voices synchronized, “He started it.”

* * * *

Vadim opened his eyes, already knowing that Sasha wasn’t in bed with him anymore. He turned his head to look over at the pillow next to his. There was an indent from Sasha’s head, but no Sasha. He really was going to have to teach him not to leave their bed before he woke up.

“Sasha, where are you? Don’t you know you’re not supposed to leave our bed before I wake up? I thought we had already had this conversation,” Vadim said through the mating bond. He was

momentarily perplexed when the only response he received was the softly hummed melody of a nursery rhyme. Then it dawned on him. Sasha must be in the nursery with the cubs.

Vadim quickly got up from the bed and pulled on a pair of pajama bottoms and his bathrobe before padding out of the bedroom and down the hallway toward the nursery. He silently pushed the door open and peered in.

The sight before him took his breath away. Sasha was slowly dancing around the room, the moonlight shining through the window like a spotlight on his beautiful form. Held gently by loving arms against Sasha's chest was Vadim's youngest son, Ivan. His thumb was stuck in his mouth as he slept peacefully in Sasha's arms.

Vadim leaned against the doorframe, tears gathering in his eyes as he watched the love of his life holding his son. He couldn't remember ever seeing a more beautiful sight than the one before him.

He smiled to himself as he remembered how scared and apprehensive Sasha was after the pack celebration last week when he had introduced him to his cubs. He had been so nervous that he had almost made himself sick.

Vadim hadn't been worried, though. He knew that his cubs would take to Sasha. How could they not? Sasha was loving, caring, and the gentlest man he had ever met. He wasn't surprised at all when they crawled onto his lap within minutes of meeting him.

The astonishment on Sasha's face, however, had been comical. He had nearly scrambled away when little Ivan and crawled across the floor and fell into his lap, smiling up at Sasha with his toothless grin.

Marika had been right behind Ivan, squeezing beside him for his own spot on Sasha's lap and demanding Sasha's attention. It had been all Vadim could do to keep from laughing at the look of abject fear on Sasha's face.

With some careful maneuvering, and a great amount of control on his part, Vadim had arranged both the cubs in Sasha's lap without

laughing. It had taken time, but after a while, Sasha had begun to loosen up and share his natural affection to the boys.

By the time they had fed, bathed, and put the boys down to bed, they had refused to go to sleep unless Sasha rocked them first. Maybe that was why Vadim wasn't surprised that Sasha was in the nursery rocking Ivan to sleep now.

His little mate had taken to parenthood like a duck to water. He doted on the boys while being firm and determined with them. Vadim knew deep in his heart that both Ivan and Marika would benefit from having Sasha as their parent as well as himself.

Vadim crossed the room to stand behind Sasha, his hands coming down to rest on his shoulders as he leaned down to kiss the top of his head.

"Come to bed, majiktoka. I think Ivan's asleep already."

"He's actually been asleep for a little while, Vadi. I just hate to put him down," Sasha replied, gazing down at the little body in his arms.

"You're going to spoil him, majiktoka," Vadim chuckled.

"You can never spoil a cub, only love him."

"What about a cub's father? Can you spoil him?" Vadim asked, nuzzling his face into Sasha's soft honey blond curls.

"It's been known to happen," Sasha laughed as he moved out of Vadim's arms to the crib, carefully lying Ivan down and covering him up. He took a moment to gaze down at his soft baby features, running his fingers gently across his little rosy cheek.

"Have you ever seen anything so beautiful, Vadi?" he whispered, his voice filled with awe at the little cub before him.

"Just once, majiktoka, when this young man came running into my study. He was, without a doubt, the most beautiful thing I had ever laid eyes on," Vadim murmured as he gazed down at the face of his mate and the awed look he had while gazing at Ivan.

Sasha turned his head to look back at Vadim, surprise showing on his face. *"Do you really think that, Vadi?"*

“Yeah, majiktoka, I do. Our cubs are cute and sweet and I wouldn’t trade them for anything in the world. But you... you are the most beautiful thing I have ever seen. I’ve thought that from the moment you entered my life and I hope I always do,” Vadim said, holding out his arms to Sasha.

Sasha grinned as he walked over to wrap his arms around Vadim’s waist and looked up into his smiling face. *“You know I won’t always be this cute. Eventually, maybe forty or fifty years down the road, I’m going to start getting wrinkles and gray hair.”*

“It doesn’t matter how old we get, Sasha. You’ll still be beautiful to me.”

“Are you trying to get down my pants?” Sasha giggled.

“Yeah, is it working?” Vadim asked.

“I don’t know. Why don’t you take me back to our bedroom and we’ll discuss it.”

“You’re the boss,” Vadim replied as he swung Sasha up in his arms and carried the giggling man out of the nursery and back down the hallway to their room. He kicked the door closed, walked over to the bed, and tossed Sasha down before standing to strip his robe off.

Sitting up on his elbows, he watched Vadim strip his clothes off, his intense gaze never leaving Sasha’s. Sasha licked his lips as Vadim’s bare chest was presented to him as he whipped his shirt off over his head.

He dropped back against the pillows and reached down to softly stroke his cock through his pajama bottoms as he watched Vadim pull the tie on his pants. His breathing increased as they dropped to the floor to reveal Vadim’s hard cock.

“Now, that is a beautiful sight,” Sasha stated, his eyes zeroing in on his groin.

“Like that, do you?” Vadim asked as he reached down and stroked his cock a couple of times.

“Oh yeah.”

“Do you want this? Do you want to feel this hard cock pounding into your tight little ass?” Vadim asked, pulling back on the skin there and revealing the glistening head and the drops of pre-cum dripping from the slit in the top.

“Yeah,” Sasha murmured, his eyes closing until they were merely slits on his face as he stroked his cock faster.

“What will you do for it?”

“Anything you want.”

“Then get undressed,” Vadim demanded, stepping to the side of the bed. “Uh-huh. I want to see you take your clothes off slowly,” he said when Sasha began to quickly wiggle out of his pajama bottoms.

* * * *

Sasha stopped, grinning over at Vadim before he crawled to the edge of the bed and stood up. He pushed Vadim down to sit on the side of the bed and stepped between his legs. As slowly as he could, he pulled his shirt over his head, dropping it on the floor.

Before reaching for his pants, he ran his hands over his chest, stopping briefly to tug at his nipples. He could see Vadim’s eyes darken with desire as he watched him pulling at his nipple ring.

“Do you like that?” he whispered. He could see more drops of pre-cum leaking from the head of Vadim’s cock as he continued to stroke himself, his eyes never leaving the sight of Sasha playing with his nipples.

“Yeah, that’s nice,” Vadim groaned.

“Then you’re really going to love this.” Sasha laughed as he turned around and loosened the tie on his pajama bottoms. He stepped back until his ass was right in front of Vadim’s face, then slowly began to scoot his pants down, baring his ass to Vadim’s hungry gaze little by little.

Pushing his pajama bottoms down to his feet, he bent over to push them off his feet, knowing that was bent over right in front of Vadim,

allowing him to see every little inch of his ass and the tight puckered hole waiting for his cock.

As busy as he was trying to arouse Vadim, he was unprepared for the tongue that suddenly swiped across the crack of his ass, nearly loosing his balance at the exquisite feeling of the rough flesh caressing his hole.

“Vadi,” he cried out as he started to fall over. Strong hands suddenly held onto his hips to steady him.

“Grab that chair over there, Sasha, and pull it over here,” Vadim ordered, his voice sounding tight.

Sasha walked across the room and grabbed the chair Vadim had pointed to and pulled it over to the side of the bed, looking at Vadim in confusion. “Now put your hands on the chair, and don’t let go until I tell you to.”

Sasha raised an eyebrow curiously, but did as Vadim demanded anyway, bending over and putting his hands on the cushion of the chair. He knew, bent over as he was, his ass was still right in front of Vadim’s face.

What he hadn’t expected was that since he was straddling Vadim’s legs, his cock and sac were also on display. He soon realized Vadim’s intent when he felt a hand reach between his legs, encircle his aching cock, and stroke it several times.

“Does that feel good, majiktoka?” Vadim asked.

“Uh-huh,” was the only reply Sasha could give. All of the blood feeding his brain had pooled in his groin, making his cock hard as steel, turning his brain mush.

“You going to come for me, majiktoka?” Vadim asked as he stroked Sasha faster, while moving his other hand to rub against Sasha’s sac and the soft skin between.

“Uh-huh,” Sasha cried out his sac tightening. His legs started to shake from his impending orgasm. He knew he was only moments from coming. When Vadim pushed a finger into his ass, he knew it was over for him.

With a loud cry, Sasha gave in to the intense pleasure coursing through his body and shot white pearly liquid all over the floor and the chair holding him up. When Sasha's legs gave out, Vadim just reached around him, grabbed his leaking cock from the front, and continued caressing him.

"Vadi," Sasha cried out, his sensitive cock coming back to life at Vadim's ministrations. He leaned his head against the chair cushion as he felt Vadim lift his hips so that he stood again.

"I'm not done with you yet, majiktoka. We have something to try out, remember?" Vadim said as he stroked Sasha.

With his mind still fuzzy, Sasha tried to think about what Vadim was referring to and remembered only a split second before a large hand landed on his ass with a loud smack. He inhaled quickly, the muscles in his ass tightening up just as another swat landed.

"Do you like that, majiktoka?" Vadim asked, landing another swat to one cheek, then one to the other cheek. "It sure looks pretty from here."

"Vadi," Sasha wailed as his legs began to shake, "my legs, I can't..."

Before he could finish his statement, Vadim grabbed him and pulled him around to lie down over his lap. With the way he lay, his cock rested right between Vadim's legs. His eyes nearly rolled back in his head as Vadim pressed his legs together, squeezing Sasha's cock between them.

"Spread your legs, Sasha," Vadim demanded.

He instantly spread his legs and felt Vadim's fingers trail down the crack of his ass before lifting to swat at him again. Vadim was soon driving him out of his mind. Sasha began humping his hips against Vadim's legs, feeling his cock being squeezed between Vadim's thighs as he pressed them harder together. If he had had more leverage, he would have been thrusting between Vadim's legs for all he was worth.

“Vadi,” he cried out in despair, feeling the orgasm just out of his reach. He couldn’t quite move enough, pinned as he was over Vadim’s legs. He needed just a bit more. He knew he would climax again if he had just a bit more.

“I do believe you like this, Sasha. Am I correct? Do you like having your pretty little ass reddened by my hand?”

“Yes,” Sasha groaned.

His groan quickly became a scream of pleasure as Vadim pushed one long finger deep within his ass. After all of the times he had searched for it, Sasha was stunned when Vadim zeroed directly in on his sweet spot, softly stroking it with his finger.

He was even more dazed when Vadim inserted a second finger and began using both of them to stroke his prostate as his other hand came down on Sasha’s ass. Sasha couldn’t keep himself from frantically humping his hips against Vadim’s thighs, his cock pressed firmly between them.

Oh yeah, that’s what he needed. Two more quick swats of Vadim’s hands and Sasha was crying out, shooting his seed between Vadim’s legs. Before he was even done coming, Vadim had swung him around so that he was again straddling Vadim’s thighs, this time face-to-face with him.

* * * *

Vadim grabbed a large handful of hair at the base of Sasha’s neck tilted his head, and covered his lips with his mouth. With his other hand wrapped tightly around Sasha’s waist, he knelt down on the floor, laying Sasha down before him and covering him with his body.

Without lifting his mouth from Sasha’s, he used his other hand to guide his cock to the crease of Sasha’s ass and moved it up and down until he felt the head of his cock push against his hole.

With one mighty groan, he plunged deep into Sasha’s body. The muscles wrapped around him, still pulsing from Sasha’s orgasm,

gripped his cock better than any hand ever had. Keeping his lips still plastered to his mate's, Vadim moved his hands down to grip his thighs and pushed them so far up to his chest that his knees were parallel with his chin.

Scooting forward until he was flush up against Sasha and his hard cock buried deep with in his tight grasp, Vadim began thrusting, pounding into Sasha's little body like his very life depended on it.

As he felt Sasha grasp his legs just below his knees and hold them up, he released his own hold to momentarily grasp Sasha's face in his hands, tilting it up to his.

"I want you to come for me again, Sasha," he demanded. "I want to feel your pleasure while I'm deep inside of you. Can you come for me again, majiktoka?"

Sasha's dazed eyes moved up to his face, his mouth hanging halfway open as his breath harsh as it moved in and out of his chest. But he still nodded.

"I want you on your hands and knees. Can you do that for me, majiktoka? I'm not done playing with that pretty little ass of yours."

Vadim watched Sasha's eyes widen slightly, and then he nodded. Vadim released the tight hold he had on Sasha's legs and letting them drop to the floor. He quickly pulled out of Sasha and helped him roll over onto his hands and knees.

Once Sasha was in place, Vadim used his hands to spread his cheeks and then rubbed his finger slowly over the hole his cock would soon be back in. He could feel Sasha shudder beneath him as he pushed his finger in just a bit before rimming around the edge.

Grabbing his cock with his other hand, he began pressing it into Sasha, his finger still rimming him. He paused briefly when Sasha cried out and wondered if he had done too much, but when Sasha started pushing back against him, he knew that his mate had liked it.

Vadim lifted Sasha's upper body and placed him on the chair cushion. He chuckled lightly as Sasha turned his head to look at him and confusion.

“Rest your head and chest on the chair, majiktoka. I want you to reach down and touch yourself while I fuck you,” Vadim explained, seeing the sudden dawning of knowledge come over Sasha.

He waited while Sasha maneuvered his head and chest supported by the chair and then Sasha had grasped his cock. As Sasha began to gently stroke himself, Vadim, gripping Sasha’s hips, started thrusting into him.

“Fuck, majiktoka, you feel so good wrapped around my cock. Can you feel me loving you, Sasha?” Vadim groaned as he pounded himself in and out of Sasha’s tight opening. “Are you stroking yourself, Sasha? Are you going to come for me again?”

“Yes,” Sasha cried, one hand wrapped around his aching cock, the other digging into the hard muscles of Vadim’s thighs.

Vadim lifted his hand, brought it down on Sasha’s ass, and watched the golden skin turn red in the shape of his hand. He heard Sasha cry out, “Yes,” over and over again, as he continued to swat at his ass as he fucked him.

He couldn’t believe that Sasha was taking what he gave him and crying out for more. He never would have imagined that his little love would be into a bit of rough play in the bedroom. As he felt himself begin to crest, he wondered briefly what else Sasha might be willing to try.

“Come for me, Sasha, come now,” he demanded. Just as he felt his orgasm explode through his body, filling his mate with his release, he heard Sasha cry out and the muscles in his ass tightened around Vadim until he could barely move.

Heaving from the intensity of his release, Vadim caressed the soft flesh that he had been swatting just moments ago. He could hear small whimpers coming from Sasha as he lay beneath him, his head and chest still resting on the chair.

“Are you alive, majiktoka?”

“No.” Sasha giggled.

“Me either.” Vadim chuckled as he pulled himself from Sasha and lifted his exhausted mate onto his lap. He reached down and lifted his face up to his, pressing a small kiss to his swollen lips.

“Are you okay? I didn’t hurt you?” he asked gently.

“No, but I may never walk again,” Sasha replied just before a large yawn took him.

“That’s okay, majiktoka. I like to carry you anyway,” he said, relieved that he hadn’t hurt Sasha. He carefully got to his feet, lifting Sasha up with him. Taking the few steps to the bathroom, he set Sasha on the counter and quickly cleaned him up before seeing to himself.

Once they were both clean, he carried his mate back to the bedroom and laid him down on the bed. He crawled into bed beside Sasha, pulling him into his arms and settling him against his chest.

“*Love you, Vadi,*” Sasha whispered as sleep began to take him.

“*I love you too, majiktoka. I always will.*”

Chapter Thirteen

Sasha opened his eyes slowly, stretching his body to get out all of the kinks. As he felt all the little aches and pains in his body, he remembered the night before. A large grin began to cover his face as he remembered how Vadim had made love to him.

He had been especially enthusiastic and imaginative. Who would have thought that he would enjoy getting spanked so much that he would reach climax three times? And what wonderful climaxes they had been, too.

Sasha started to giggle as he thought that one of these times he was going to have to return the favor and spank Vadim. Wouldn't he be surprised and shocked if Sasha was the one doing the fucking and the spanking? He could hardly wait to find out.

"What are you giggling at, majiktoka?"

Sasha turned his head to see Vadim standing in the bathroom doorway, his hair wet and a towel wrapped around his hips. Sasha sent him a big smile as he rolled over onto his stomach and rested on his elbows.

"Didn't you say something about not getting out of bed before one of us woke up?" Sasha replied as his eyes roamed over Vadim's spectacular form. He was even more intrigued when Vadim dropped the towel to the floor and walked toward him. *Yum!*

"Stop looking at me like a leg of lamb for a starving man, Sasha. We have company coming soon, and you need to get in the shower and get dressed," Vadim admonished as he headed for his dresser.

"Who's coming over?" Sasha asked curiously as he rolled back over onto his back. He grabbed his cock and began stroking it as he

watched Vadim getting dressed. His man was so damn sexy that he could watch him all day long.

“My parents are coming by ferry to visit for a couple of days,” Vadim replied as he pulled his jeans up. He left them unbuttoned as he pulled on a white dress shirt. He began buttoning it as he turned to look back at Sasha, and his fingers froze at the sight that met his eyes.

“Sasha,” he said in a strangled voice as he slowly approached the bed.

“Again, my love, say my name again,” Sasha begged as he stroked himself faster, his movements becoming frenzied with his need for release.

Sasha watched Vadim kneel down on the bed, crawling up to lie down next to him. He could see the love in Vadim’s eyes as he reached up to softly caress the side of Sasha’s face.

“Sasha, my beautiful Sasha,” Vadim whispered close to his ear, his eyes never leaving Sasha’s.

Sasha came, watching Vadim even as he cried out, his cock erupting, covering his hand and stomach with his semen.

Vadim leaned down and brushed his lips with a kiss. “Love you, my Vadi,” Sasha whispered softly against his lips.

Sasha could see tears in Vadim’s eyes when he lifted his head and gazed back down at him. Vadim rubbed his hand down Sasha’s face again as he drank in his soft features.

“Don’t ever stop, Sasha. I don’t think I can live without you,” he murmured, his voice thick with emotion.

“Not going to happen, Vadi. You’re stuck with me,” Sasha replied, turning his head to place a kiss against the palm of Vadim’s hand. “Now, didn’t you say something about company coming?”

Vadim chuckled as he moved to the edge of the bed, reaching up to begin buttoning his shirt again. “Yes, as a matter of fact, I did. My parents are coming in on the ferry. You have just enough time to take a quick shower while I go get the boys ready.”

“Yeah, yeah, I’m going,” Sasha replied as he climbed out of bed and walked toward the bathroom. He gave Vadim one more quick glance before reluctantly turning and going into the bathroom for a quick shower.

* * * *

Sasha had to admit a half-hour later that a hot shower felt good. His muscles were a little less sore, and he certainly smelled better, or at least less like sex. He didn’t mind the smell of Vadim and him mixed together, but he was pretty sure he didn’t want to smell like he had been thoroughly ravished when he saw Vadim’s mother, even if he had.

As he walked down the hallway to the nursery, he could hear the childish laughter coming from the cubs as Vadim blew against their stomachs. He knew it was Vadim because he could hear him making noises and talking to them.

What surprised him when he arrived in the doorway was that Viktor was there, blowing against a baby stomach too. He looked up when he spotted Sasha in the doorway, a smile on his face.

“Uh, hey, Sasha,” he stammered, quickly sitting back on his legs.

Sasha chuckled as Viktor’s face turned red. “Morning, Viktor, having a good time?”

“We were, huh, just getting the cubs ready.”

“Yes, I can see that. What part of getting them ready involves blowing on their stomachs? Making sure they’re awake?” Sasha asked as he reached down to pick up Marika. He gave him a quick little hug. “How’s my little man today?”

Marika began talking, saying who knows what. While he could talk, a lot of what he said didn’t always make sense, but Sasha nodded his head and listened to him anyway. He could see Vadim lying on the floor, still blowing bubbles on Ivan’s stomach.

"I hate to break up this little party, but we should probably get going, Vadi. The ferry should be arriving soon."

"Spoilsport." Vadim smirked as he picked Ivan up, stood, and leaned over to give Sasha a quick kiss. "Can you say spoilsport, Ivan? Sasha's a spoilsport."

"Oh gee, thanks, now he's going to think my name is spoilsport."

"No, he knows who you are, don't you, Ivan?" Vadim replied and laughed when Ivan launched himself at Sasha. "See, told you."

"Uh, Vadi, you're going to have to take one them. I can't carry them both," Sasha said as he tried to balance both boys in his arms. He wasn't having much luck. Marika was trying to wiggle around in his arms to get to Ivan, while making faces at him.

Vadim chuckled as he pulled Marika into his arms and settled him against his wide chest. "You can ride with Daddy, Marika. How about that?" Vadim asked as he moved toward the door.

He looked back over his shoulder at Sasha, holding Ivan, and Viktor. "Coming?"

Sasha smiled as he settled Ivan more carefully into his arms and followed after Vadim. "If we ever decide to have a girl, we're going to have to hire someone just to carry her."

"We'll wait until Ivan is walking before we try for a girl."

"And you think that's going to help? I can see it now. I'll be holding her and the boys will take off at the same time, in two different directions. We'll never find them. Maybe we should wait until they graduate from high school."

"Oh yeah, and by then, they'll be wanting cars, having dates, and bugging us for money. You actually think we'll have time for a little girl then?" Vadim smirked as he walked out of the front door. Viktor and Sasha close on his heels.

"Maybe we shouldn't—" Sasha began, only to be interrupted by Vadim.

“Don’t even go there. Having a little girl with your eyes is definitely on my to-do list. At least one, anyway. We’ll just let it happen when it happens.”

“And exactly how do you plan on this happening? You keep saying you want a little girl with my eyes. That implies my being with some woman. It’s not like we can just invite some girl into our bedroom and hope for the best, Vadim.”

“First off, no one is allowed in our bedroom but us. That’s our special place, and no one else is welcome. Second, luckily for you, there are other ways to make a baby. The only hitch is that we have to find a woman who is pack. I don’t think a woman outside of the pack would understand all of the things that happen during a wolf pregnancy.”

Sasha furrowed his brows together in confusion. “What happens during a wolf pregnancy?”

“Well, for one, the pregnancy is a lot shorter than a normal human’s, like five months instead of nine. Two, there’s all those weird food cravings. A pack woman craves red meat, really bloody red meat. Human woman don’t usually crave bloody meat.”

“Yeah, I can see where that would be an issue. But do you really think we can find a pack woman to have a baby for us? Aren’t they all usually possessive of their cubs?”

“You’d think that would be true, but not all women want to have children. If we find a woman who is not interested in raising a cub but wants to carry on her name, so to speak, well, then...”

Sasha nodded, not that he was convinced. He just didn’t understand how anyone wouldn’t want to raise their own child. Even if Ivan and Marika weren’t biologically his, he couldn’t imagine not raising them. In the few short days since they had been his cubs, they had taken a firm hold of his heart. They were his as far as he was concerned.

As they passed by Pauline’s Pleasures, Pauline ran out and handed a cookie to each of the cubs. Sasha could only shake his head as she

handed one to Vadim and Viktor too. *Looks like the cubs weren't the only ones being spoiled.*

"Come along, boys, you're grandparents are waiting," he said as he walked passed Vadim and Viktor. He rolled his eyes, laughing, as Vadim quickly reached up and wiped blue frosting from his lips. Boys will be boys no matter how old they were.

By the time they got down to the dock, the ferry was pulling in. Sasha could see Ivan and Anya waving from the deck of the ferry. Of course, Ivan's two betas were standing just behind him, guarding their alpha and his mate.

It was only when they began to disembark that Sasha noticed the older man and woman accompanying them. The man looked to be several years older than Ivan, the woman a few years younger than the man. There was something about them that nagged at Sasha, but he couldn't quite figure out what it was.

"Vadim, Sasha," Anya said, waving her hand at them. "Over here."

Vadim shook his head. "I don't know why she does that. Maybe she thinks we can't see her."

Sasha laughed. "Like we couldn't spot your mother in a crowd."

Anya was not the stereotypical grandmother. For one, she looked like a woman twenty years her junior. Second, she wore the most outrageously colored clothing she could find. There was never a dull color on her. The floppy hat on her head with the ring of big flowers and waving strips of cloth around the brim just topped off her outfit.

As they walked toward Vadim and Sasha, Marika let out a squeal and began squirming. Apparently, he too had spotted his colorful grandmother. Baby Ivan and Marika doted on their grandmother almost as much as she doted on them.

As soon as they were close enough for safety sake, Vadim set Marika down, and the little boy ran across the pier and into his grandparents' arms. Ivan started waving his hands frantically and gurgling, wanting to get in on the grandparent loving.

Anya handed Marika to her husband and went to get baby Ivan, stopping a few steps away when Sasha held up his hand. He leaned over, set Ivan on his little baby feet, held onto his waist to steady him, and then let go.

Both he and Vadim watched with pride as Ivan took several small, shaky steps toward his grandmother, who caught him with open arms and swung him up into the air before hugging him close and murmuring her praise at his wonderful feat.

She turned tear-stained eyes to Sasha and Vadim. "And when did this little miracle happen, and why wasn't I informed immediately?" she demanded to know.

Sasha could tell from the sweet smile on her face that she wasn't really angry. As she stepped closer, he leaned over and kissed her on the cheek.

"I wanted to call you immediately, but Vadi said you had to wait just like everyone else." He smirked.

"Oh really?" Anya said, with her eyebrow raised as she turned her eyes to her first born son.

"Now, Mother," Vadim began, squirming under Anya's stern look. He looked briefly past her to Sasha, glaring at him as if to say, "Now look what you've done!"

"Why, he practically ripped the phone right out of my hand, Anya. It was terrible," Sasha continued, laughing as Vadim's eyes promised retribution.

"Well, you always were a good boy, Sasha," Anya said as she gently patted his cheek. As she turned away, Sasha stuck his tongue out at Vadim and made a face at him.

"Now, if I could just get you to stop sticking out your tongue and making faces behind my back," Anya continued, trading glances with her husband.

Sasha's eyes grew saucer wide at Anya's words, Vadim and Viktor breaking into laughter. *Crap!* He'd been caught! Anya had to have eyes in the back of her head.

“Doubt it will ever happen, Mother,” Vadim said as he pulled his little mate to his side. “But that’s okay, I love him just the way he is, tongue and all.”

“Hmmm, I’ll just bet you do, dear,” Anya laughed as she turned back to them, a wide smile on her face. Sasha couldn’t have been more embarrassed when Anya wiggled her eyebrows at him and Vadim.

“Vadim, Sasha,” Ivan said, thankfully drawing their attention. “I would like you to meet Stefan and Tasha Dumitra. Stefan is the scholar I told you about.”

Sasha turned his head to see the older couple whom he had spotted on the ferry. Who were they and why did they seem so familiar to him? It wasn’t that he knew them. Rather, he felt that he should know them.

“Hello” was all Sasha could seem to say, as he pressed himself against Vadim a little more, needing his strength right then.

The older gentleman stepped forward and shook Vadim’s hand before his gaze fell to Sasha. There was something in his eyes, some emotion that Sasha couldn’t quite figure out as he held out his hand.

“Hello, Sasha,” the old man said, shaking Sasha’s hand.

Sasha nodded, his gaze lifting to Ivan’s briefly. He could see Ivan watching the exchange between him and the old man with interest. Anya was standing beside him, her inquisitive look on her face.

Something was going on here, and it was making Sasha very nervous. He took another step closer to Vadim and, needing reassurance, reached for his hand.

“It’s nice to finally meet you. Ivan and Anya have told us a lot about you. I understand there is a bit of a mystery surrounding your birth parents?” Stefan asked.

Sasha nodded, looking to Ivan and Anya in confusion. He was under the understanding that they were going to talk to the old scholar, not bring him to the island for a visit. Was there more to his little mystery than met the eye?

“I believe I can shed some light on your dilemma,” he said, a small smile starting across his old aged face.

“Why don’t we take this back to the compound? I’m sure Anya would like to visit with Mary while we talk, hmmm?” Ivan said as he started ushering their small group toward the house.

Vadim looked skeptical but nodded anyway. He wrapped an arm around Sasha, and pulled him close as he led the way back toward their house.

By the time they got back to the house, Sasha was so nervous his hands trembled. He had felt the eyes of Stefan and Tasha boring into him the entire walk back. And no one spoke. If it hadn’t been for Marika’s constant chatter, he doubted anyone would have made a sound.

Sasha quickly led the way into the house, taking baby Ivan from his grandfather and carrying him upstairs to the nursery. He walked over to the rocking chair, sat down, and, settling Ivan against his chest, and began rocking him while making little circles in his back.

There was just something about the soft sounds the little baby made when he was going to sleep that soothed Sasha. And right now, he needed to be soothed. He didn’t know what it was or what was causing it, but his nerves were raw. He felt like he had been put through a ringer, and he had yet to even talk with anyone.

“You okay, majiktoka?” Vadim asked from the doorway.

Sasha looked up and spotted Vadim leaning against the doorframe with his arms crossed. He had a worried little frown on his face as he gazed back at Sasha.

“Yeah, I just needed a few minutes,” Sasha assured him.

“Want to tell me what’s going on?” Vadim questioned hesitantly.

“I can’t really say. I’m not sure myself. I just feel like I’ve been put through the ringer or something. It’s kind of hard to explain, Vadi.”

“Is there anything I can do to help?”

Sasha smiled up at his lover. “You’re doing it.”

Standing, he carefully walked over to the crib, laid Ivan down, and covered him with a light blanket before turning back to Vadim. He quickly crossed the room and walked into Vadim's waiting arms.

"Promise me something, Vadi."

"Anything, my love, you know that."

"Don't leave me alone today, not for anything. Something is going to happen. I can feel it, and it's scaring the crap out of me." Sasha knew he sounded hysterical but he couldn't seem to help it. His nerves were screaming at him.

Vadim lifted his hand to caress the side of Sasha's face as he looked up. "I promise, majiktoka. Consider us attached at the hip."

Sasha closed his eyes briefly in relief. He knew he was sounding like a frightened child, but Vadim didn't question it. He just accepted it and made adjustments for Sasha, accepting him the way he was.

"Love you, Vadi," Sasha whispered, standing up on his tiptoes to give Vadim a kiss.

"Love you, majiktoka."

"I guess we should go see what your father wants, huh?" Sasha could think of a million other things that he wanted to do rather than go talk to Ivan and his guests.

Vadim nodded anyway. "Yes, the sooner we do, the sooner I can take you back to our bedroom and ravish you."

"Hmmm, just how long will this conversation take?" Sasha asked, pressing against Vadim's. He leaned forward to press a little kiss on the tanned skin exposed by the opening at the top of Vadim's shirt.

"Not long, I promise," Vadim hissed, spreading his legs a little to pull Sasha against his hard cock. "On the other hand, ten minutes alone with you in a supply closet..."

"Where's the nearest closet?" Sasha groaned as he felt Vadim's cock press against his abdomen.

"You want me to think right now?"

"Well, we're not having sex in the nursery, so pick a room. It's not like this place isn't big enough."

“Do you think we could make it to our room without anyone seeing us?” Vadim asked.

Sasha stuck his head out into the hallway, looking both ways for a sign of anyone walking by. The hallway looked clear. “Looks all clear.”

Vadim grabbed Sasha around his waist, picked him up, and walked quickly into the hallway heading for their bedroom. He stopped suddenly, hearing footsteps coming up the stairs. He looked left and right.

Running to the nearest door, he opened it. The bathroom. That would work. Quickly closing the door, he threw the lock, before setting Sasha down on his feet. His hands were all over Sasha as he turned him around to bend him over the bathroom counter.

“Vadi,” Sasha squeaked as Vadim ripped his pants.

“I’ll buy you more,” Vadim growled as he suddenly pushed two fingers deep into Sasha. There was a tight bite of pain as Sasha hadn’t been expecting two fingers so fast, but it soon went away as Vadim reached for his sweet spot and stroked him into delirium.

Adding a third finger, Vadim pulled Sasha around, knelt between his legs, and engulfed his cock in one swallow, while pumping his fingers into Sasha from behind. Before he could take another breath, Sasha was shooting down Vadim’s throat, his cry of fulfillment echoing off the walls of the small room.

Vadim stood up, swung Sasha back around, and pressed him down against the counter, his hands going to his ass. Before Sasha had even settled himself, Vadim was pushing into him. The ride was hard and fast, with Vadim thrusting into Sasha with so much force that he had to put his hands on the wall in front of him to keep from scooting forward.

“Sasha,” Vadim groaned.

Sasha raised his eyes to look at Vadim in the bathroom mirror, watching him. Fuck, he was sexy. His eyes were half closed and

glazed over as he watched himself thrusting in and out of Sasha with his lower lip caught in his canines and his face flushed with exertion.

“Does that feel good, Vadi? Do you like fucking my tight little ass?”

Vadim’s eyes flew to his in shock. Sasha knew he had surprised his lover. He had never talked dirty to him before. He couldn’t figure out why. It was obvious from the increased fury of Vadim’s movements that he liked it.

“Sasha,” Vadim whispered, begging him with his eyes for more.

Sasha could barely contain his smirk as he reached down and palmed his cock. While he wasn’t flaccid, he wasn’t totally hard either. He began eagerly stroking himself to Vadim’s rapid thrusts, his eyes never leaving Vadim’s.

“Do you know what I think about when I touch myself, Vadi?”

Shaking his head, Vadim licked his lips as he waited for Sasha to continue.

“I think about your big hard cock pounding into my ass. It feels so good. I’ll bet it looks just as good, doesn’t it, Vadi?” he crooned, his voice starting to hitch as his cock filled again. He could feel himself building again and knew he would be joining Vadim this time.

“Do you like watching your long, hard cock in my ass, Vadi?” he whispered, the image coming to life in his own mind and increasing his arousal. He just had to talk with Vadim about getting some mirrors installed in the bedroom.

Sasha watched Vadim swallow hard as his eyes flickered down to where he was pounding into Sasha. His canines bit into his lower lip so hard that a droplet of blood dotted his lip.

His eyes were riveted on that droplet of blood. He wanted to mark Vadim again like he had in the beginning of their relationship. He wanted it so bad he could taste it.

“Vadi, stop!” he cried out. He wasn’t surprised in the least when Vadim stopped moving instantly, looking up to him in concern. “I need to turn over.”

Vadim raised his eyebrow in query but pulled out of Sasha long enough for him to roll over, and then he was pushing back into him so fast that Sasha almost couldn't move from the sheer pleasure it induced.

Holding his arms out he gestured to Vadim to pick him up. Vadim reached down, wrapped his arms around Sasha, and picked him up in his arms. Turning swiftly around, Vadim pushed Sasha against the wall before starting to pound into him again.

With his legs over Vadim's strong arms, Sasha wrapped one hand around his cock and clenched the other in the hair at the back of Vadim's head. He pulled his head back until Vadim was looking him right in the eyes.

"Fuck me harder, Vadi. I want to feel you. Take me like you really want to. I won't break," he said, assuring Vadim.

He watched Vadim swallow again. "I want...I want..." Vadim tried to say.

"I know what you want, Vadi, what you need," Sasha whispered, tilting his head to one side and baring his neck to Vadim.

He heard a low growl come from his mate. Seconds later, Vadim was sinking his long canines into the soft flesh between Sasha's neck and shoulder to claim him, yet again. Vadim's hips thrusting at lightning speed into Sasha.

Sasha cried out at the intensity of the feelings flowing through him. Yes, this is what Vadim wanted, what he needed. What they both needed. The moment Vadim lifted his head, Sasha leaned forward and sank his own canines into him and claimed him as his mate, again.

As the sweet taste of his mate filled his mouth, he felt himself go, filling the space between them with his white seed. His muscles tightened around Vadim as he came, which sent Vadim over the edge with a loud roar.

As Sasha felt Vadim empty into him, he licked the small bite closed, turning his head to capture Vadim's waiting lips.

"Love you, Vadi, always."

“My majiktoka.”

“Well, that took all of two minutes. What should we do with the eight minutes we have left?” Sasha asked with a little giggle as he looked up at his mate and gave him a wink.

Chapter Fourteen

Sasha followed Vadim into the study, noting that it was already filled with people. Ivan and Anya sat on the loveseat, Ivan's two betas behind them. Stefan and Tasha sat on the other couch, facing them. Viktor and Nikolai stood by the fireplace.

As they walked in, everyone turned to look at them. Guess they were the only ones missing. Sasha followed Vadim over to a large chair. He started to move toward the empty chair next to him when an arm came out and caught him, pulling him down to sit on Vadim's lap. Worked for him.

"Nice pants, Sasha. Are they new?" Anya asked as Sasha settled against Vadim's chest.

"Uh, yeah. Vadim bought them for me," Sasha replied. He could feel his face turn several shades of red. He hoped that Ivan hadn't filled his wife in on his need of new pants. That would just be too embarrassing for words.

"Sasha, do you remember when we were talking a while back and you told me that your parents had died when you were very young?" Ivan asked, leaning forward, his arms resting on his knees.

Sasha nodded. Of course he remembered. That had been right before Vadim had told him that he loved him and right before Casimir had tried to kill them.

"Do you remember telling me that your father was some type of scholar? And that your mother had long, blonde hair that she always kept in a braid?"

Sasha nodded again, wondering where Ivan was going with all of this. He turned his head quickly when he heard a small snuffle come

from Tasha. She had tears in her eyes, and Stefan seemed to be comforting her.

“Sasha? I want to show you some pictures. I want to know if anyone in these pictures looks familiar to you. I don’t want you to ask any questions yet, okay? Just do as I ask.”

Sasha turned back to look at Ivan and slowly nodded. He watched Ivan open a small packet that had been lying on the table in front of them and pulled out a small stack of pictures. Ivan arranged them all together, and then looked up at Sasha.

“Now, tell me if anyone in them looks familiar to you.”

Sasha leaned forward, looking at each picture. There were six in all. Each picture seemed to be of a couple, a man and a woman. He carefully looked at their features, their hair, the way they were dressed.

Picking up the third from the last he studied it a bit more. There the woman in the picture looked familiar, as did the man. Sasha couldn’t quite figure out why they looked familiar though.

Maybe it was the tilt of the woman’s head or the glasses perched on the man’s face. There was just something about them that called out to him. Looking up, Sasha handed the picture to Ivan.

“These people look familiar to you?”

Sasha shrugged. “I’m not sure I’d say familiar exactly. There’s something about them that I can’t quite place, something familiar. It’s like I should know them but I can’t see their faces in movement. I know it doesn’t make much sense.”

Ivan smiled. “That’s okay, Sasha. You did great,” he said as he handed the picture across to Stefan. Stefan looked at the picture for several moments, finally nodding his head.

Ivan smiled again as he looked over at Sasha. “Sasha, I want to tell you a story. I don’t want you to say anything until I’m done, okay?”

Sasha nodded, reaching for Vadim’s hand. *Here it comes*, he thought. He took a deep breath, letting it out slowly as he prepared

himself for what Ivan was about to tell him. He knew it had something to do with Stefan and Tash, but he didn't know what.

"Ivan, let me." Stefan said as he leaned forward in his seat.

Sasha turned his head to look at Stefan, a confused look crossing his face as Stefan clasped his hands together, looking over at him. Sasha could see Tasha just to the left of him, her eyes filled with tears.

"My son's name was Reynard. From a very early age, we could tell that Reynard was special. He could read a book and repeat the information in it verbatim. And he loved knowledge. He read everything he could get his hands on."

Sasha watched a little smile cross his lips before he continued.

"He was on one of his fact-finding tours of all the packs when he met his mate, Lilliana. She wasn't into books like Reynard was, but she understood him. She cared for him when he was deep in his studies, making sure he ate and bathed, and did all of the things he was always forgetting to do. She was a great mate for him."

Sasha felt Vadim squeeze his hand as Stefan paused again. He was really afraid of what Stefan was going to say next, and he still didn't understand what this had to do with him.

"A few years after they mated, they told us that they were expecting a cub. Tasha and I were so thrilled. When little Ilian was born, he was the perfect grandchild. He was smart, beautiful, and loving. For a couple of years, everything was perfect. Then Reynard decided to go on another one of his fact-finding tours. This time, he took Lilliana and Ilian."

"We offered to keep Ilian with us so that Lilliana and Reynard could have some time alone together, but they wouldn't hear of it. They didn't want to be separated from him," Tasha added.

"We heard from them here and there, but then suddenly, we didn't, not for several months. Then one day someone came to our house. He told us that everyone had been killed in an accident, our son, his mate, and our grandson. They were all gone."

Sasha turned his head when Tasha began to cry in earnest. He wanted to go over and comfort her, but he was afraid. He just knew that if he left Vadim's side, he would never make it back.

"When Vladimir Valeriya told us that—"

"Vladimir Valeriya? That was my old alpha's name. He's the one that told you that your family was dead?"

Stefan nodded. "Yes, he brought the bodies home. He said that they had all died in a boating accident near his island, Vourdala Island. No one survived. He said that the bodies of Reynard and Lilliana had washed up on shore, but he hadn't been able to find our grandson. He assured us that no one could have survived the accident."

"He lied. If he was speaking, he was lying. That man was evil," Sasha said. He instantly noted the dead silence in the room. Looking around, he realized that everyone was staring at him. "What?"

"I believe that is why Ivan invited us here today, because Vladimir Valeriya lied to us." Stefan reached over and handed the picture in his hand to Sasha. "This is my son Reynard and his mate Lilliana."

Sasha took the photo and looked down at it, surprised when Stefan handed him another photo. It was of the same couple, only this time, they had a small child of around three in their arms.

"This is them with our grandson, Ilian."

Sasha stared at both pictures for a long time. He knew what they were telling him now. The evidence was right in front of his face. He couldn't refute it. He didn't necessarily want to either. However...

"I won't go home with you. My life is here now. I'm mated to Vadim, and I won't leave him or our cubs. And my name isn't Ilian anymore. It's Sashenka. I won't answer to Ilian," Sasha said quietly.

Stefan and Tasha nodded, their eyes intent on Sasha. He didn't want to hurt their feelings, but he wouldn't leave Vadim. He had enough room in his heart for a lot of people, but Vadim and his cubs came first.

“Do you know why Valeriya did it? I mean, did he actually kill my parents or was it an accident like he said?” Sasha asked.

Stefan shook his head. “I don’t know. I don’t know if we will ever know. By the time he brought their bodies to us, they were too far gone for any real idea. But I believe he did kill them. What reason he had for doing it, I don’t know.”

“He never needed a reason for anything he did. I just don’t understand why he would keep me alive if he killed my parents. Even if it was an accident, why not send me home? Why keep me here?”

“Can I ask a question?” Vadim said. “What exactly was Reynard doing on his fact-finding tour? What information was he after?”

“He was taking a census of all of the packs in the council. He seemed to think that it was very important for the council senate to have an accounting of every man, woman, and child in every pack. It kept inbreeding down that way.”

“Well, that might explain it then. He hated anyone to tell him how to run his pack. He also never let any of us off the island. The number of members here surprised even Vadim. He thought there was only around fifty or so, but we have a lot more than that.”

“That still doesn’t explain why he kept you alive, Sasha,” Ivan said.

“Yes, but I think I know anyway,” Vadim added, wrapping his arms around Sasha and pulling his head down to his chest. “He knew that Sasha was an omega. You can’t be an alpha without having an omega.”

“So he kept me a virtual prisoner?” Sasha asked, raising his head to stare at Vadim in shock.

“Think about it, majiktoka. It makes perfect sense. If he kept the number of pack members hidden, he couldn’t let anyone off the island. That also meant no omegas coming in. He knew you were an omega. If he kept you around, he had the omega he needed to run the pack.”

“Well, that sucks!” Sasha quipped.

“Remember what you said, majiktoka. We never would have met if he hadn’t been the asshole that he was.”

“It still sucks, Vadi. This man, in his bid for power, destroyed my family and made my life hell for the last twenty years. I wish we could...could...”

“Perform a voodoo ritual, bring his ass back, and kill him again?” Viktor added from over by the fireplace.

Sasha turned and stared at him for a moment before he burst out laughing. “Yes!”

“Yeah, we already thought of that. Can’t find a voodoo priest,” Viktor said. “But I’ll keep looking for you, Sasha.”

Sasha got up and walked over to Viktor, giving him a small hug. “Thanks, Viktor.”

He took a moment to gather his thoughts before he turned to look back at Stefan and Tasha. “Look, I don’t want to sound callous or anything, but I remember almost nothing about my parents. I would certainly like to learn about them, and you. But I won’t leave Vadim. As long as you understand that, you’re welcome to visit as often as you want.”

Stefan and Tasha nodded. Stefan stood and walked over to Sasha, reaching out to grab at his hand. “I know this is hard for you, and we would never ask you to leave your mate or your cubs. We just want to be a part of your life.”

“I don’t have a problem with that. I’d like you both to be a part of my life. We’re family, I guess. But we also need to take this slow. I’m not used to having family. I’m still getting used to having Vadim and our cubs.”

“That’s right,” Ivan said as he got to his feet and walked over to pat Stefan on the shoulder. “You have two great-grandchildren, Stefan. You saw the cubs when Vadim and Sasha came down to the pier. Would you and Tasha like to meet them?”

“Cubs?” Tasha said in a quiet voice from the couch.

Sasha watched her for a moment before stepping over to sit down next to her. He grabbed her hand and, holding it in his, smiled over at her as he began to talk about his cubs.

“Ivan is just over a year old and has just started walking these last few days. Marika is three. I’m pretty sure he talks in his sleep. The only time he’s not talking is when there’s food in his mouth.” he laughed.

“Sasha and I have been talking about trying for a little girl. He thinks we should wait until the boys are in high school, but I think we should have one sooner than that, a little girl with his eyes. What do you think, Mother?” Vadim asked, looking over at his mother.

“You should definitely have her sooner than that. If you wait until the boys are in high school, there will be a really huge gap in their ages. A few years are okay, but anything longer than that and it’s hard for them to connect. But a little girl with Sasha’s eyes would be nice.”

“Anya, why don’t you and Mary take Tasha upstairs to meet the boys?” Vadim asked as he stood to his feet. “I want to have a small word with Ivan and Stefan, and then we will all join you.”

Anya quickly stood, walking over to help Tasha to her feet. She seemed a little unsteady. “Come along, dear. I’ll take you to meet Mary. She takes care of our boys while we’re not here. You’ll like her. I certainly do.”

Sasha watched Anya lead Tasha out of the room, one of Ivan’s betas following protectively behind them. Once the door was closed, he turned back to face Vadim and wondered what he wanted to discuss with Ivan.

“Come, majiktoka,” Vadim whispered to Sasha.

Sasha hopped up from the couch and walked back over to settle himself on Vadim’s lap again as he waited for him to talk.

“Stefan, I am glad that you’ve been able to find Sasha. While it hasn’t been a pressing matter, because we assumed that Sasha was born of this pack and that his parents were dead, it does solve a few mysteries for us.”

“But I always knew I wasn’t born of this pack, Vadim,” Sasha said as looked at Vadim.

“You knew this wasn’t your birth pack? Why didn’t you say something? That might have helped us solve this mystery.”

“You didn’t ask,” Sasha said as he shrugged.

“I didn’t ask.” Vadim chuckled. He shook his head and bent to place a kiss on Sasha’s head. “No, of course I didn’t.”

“Okay, that aside, I am glad that you have been able to reconnect with Sasha. I think that family is very important. However, for me, nothing is more important than Sasha and our cubs. We’ve been through a lot in our short time together, and I will not give him up for any reason.”

“That’s understandable, Vadim. I wouldn’t expect you to,” Stefan replied.

“I want you to understand that while we can’t choose our mates, if given the choice, I would have chosen Sasha anyway. I will do anything to insure his happiness and well-being, even from you if you cause him harm. He will always come first.”

“That’s as it should be, Vadim. I feel the same for my wife. I loved my son and was never prouder than the day he was born, but Tasha is my reason for breathing. Without her, well, I don’t want to think about it.”

“I’m glad you understand. That all being said, I do have one requirement, and this is not negotiable. You will not ask Sasha about his past. If he wants to tell you about his life here, he will tell you, in his own time and in his own way. You will not question him, make him feel guilty or cajole it out of him. Is that clear?”

Sasha could see the confusion on Stefan’s face fade as realization of the abuse Sasha might have endured filled his mind. He could feel his face heat with embarrassment, but he refused to be shamed by what had happened.

Stefan’s gaze was filled with pain and anguish as he gazed at Sasha, nodding his head.

“Don’t feel bad for me, Stefan. I gained a lot more than I had to give up. My life now is near perfect. If I hadn’t gone through what I did, I might not have what I have now. And I would gladly go through it all over again to have the life I have.”

“Near perfect?” Vadim asked, with his elegant eyebrow raised.

“Yeah, I still need more pants.”

Epilogue

Sasha opened the study door, walked in, and noted the people sitting around Vadim's "war table," as he called it, a big round table that fit everyone in the inner circle, and him. Vadim held all of his important meetings at the war table.

He walked right over and plopped himself down in Vadim's lap, not caring a wit that Vadim was in the middle of a meeting with Ivan, Stefan, Viktor, and Nikolai. He did, however, wait until he was acknowledged before speaking.

"You wanted something, majiktoka?" Vadim chuckled after placing a small kiss on Sasha's head.

"Yeah, sorry to interrupt your meeting, but..."

"No, you're not." Viktor laughed.

"Yeah, you're right. I'm not, but I figured I needed to talk to Vadi about this before I forgot."

"About what, majiktoka?"

"What are the two things that Vourdala Island has that no other town with a wolf pack in it has?"

Vadim looked confused, as did everyone else at the table. "I don't know. What?"

"One, everyone on our island knows we are pack, including the human population. Two, nearly sixty percent of our island is set aside for running and hunting. We also have beaches, a marina, and a quaint little village. You see where I'm going with this?"

Vadim grinned at Sasha. "Yes, I do, and that's a very good idea, majiktoka."

“Okay, you get it, Vadim. Mind explaining it to the rest of us so we can get it too?” Viktor quipped.

“We need a way to generate income for the pack as well as for our members. We can’t survive on the sale of fish alone. Sasha has just come up with the perfect solution.”

“And?”

“Tourism,” Sasha replied.

“Tourism? How could tourism help?” Vik asked, surprised.

“More specifically, pack tourism,” Sasha said. “In almost every pack in the council, they have to hide who they are from the human population. On Vourdala, everyone knows already. It’s not like you’re going to surprise anyone by turning into a wolf and walking down Main Street.”

“Besides, we have all that land for running and hunting. As long as it is regulated, why not open it up for tourists? Besides the fact that it would generate income for the town, it will bring people here and maybe potential mates for our pack members,” Vadim said.

“It will create jobs for the pack, bring money in, and get them more acclimated to outsiders. You have to admit our people are a little leery of newcomers. I think it would be good to introduce some new blood,” Sasha added.

“So, you want to set Vourdala Island up as a wolf pack tourist hot spot?” Viktor asked, his voice nearly a squeak.

“Why not? It will take a little planning, and we need to talk with the pack, but I think it’s a great idea,” Vadim said.

“I agree,” Ivan added. “I find it is often hard to go away, even for a weekend because of the whole don’t-show-yourself-to-humans thing. Having someplace to get away where the people already know would relieve a lot of pressure. I can’t think of another place that has these advantages. Can you, Stefan?”

Stefan shook his head, softly chuckling.

“What?” Sasha asked, curious at the soft laugh coming from Stefan.

"I always knew you had your father's brains. I'm just thankful you got your mother's good looks."

"Are you saying my father was ugly?"

"No, not at all, but truly? He could have cared less if he had socks on, let alone that they matched. Don't get me wrong, he was as smart as he could be, but he was lost without your mother. You wouldn't believe how happy Tasha and I were the day he brought her home. Not only was she beautiful, but she also kept Reynard in line."

Stefan was laughing by the time he looked over at Vadim. "Vadim, my boy, don't ever think that you're in charge of things. You may run the pack and be the alpha, but I'd bet my bottom dollar that your little omega runs things from behind the scenes."

"Sasha and I have already figured this part out, Stefan. As long as I understand that any order I give doesn't necessarily apply to him, we're fine. I give the orders, and he generally ignores them."

Sasha slapped Vadim on the chest before crossing his arms over his chest and sticking his lower lip out. "I'm not that bad. I listen to you."

"Like you did last week when I ordered you to stay in the house?" Vadim asked, a raised eyebrow daring him to lie.

"Well, give me an order that makes sense, and I'll follow it. You can't ground me to my room because you don't like something I've said or done."

"Sasha, you threw all my pants out the second-floor window," Vadim said in an astonished tone.

"What? How is it that I didn't hear of this?" Viktor asked, suddenly sitting forward in his chair.

"He deserved it. He ripped up my last pair of pants and I had nothing to wear," Sasha complained.

Viktor looked even more confused at this point. Ivan and Stefan both burst out laughing at the sudden red faces looking at them from across the table. They were nearly falling from their chairs as Sasha beat a hasty retreat, practically running for the door.

“*Sasha,*” Vadim chuckled as he watched his little mate race across the study.

“*Yeah, Vadi?*” Sasha replied, as he reached the door, turning to look back over his shoulder at his mate.

“*Love you, majiktoka,*” he whispered through their mating bond.

“*Love you, Vadi,*” Sasha whispered back, blowing him a small kiss. He turned and walked from the room,

“Vad, why would you rip up Sasha’s pants?” Vik’s last words sent Sasha into peels of laughter.

THE END

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Stormy Glenn believes the only thing sexier than a man in cowboy boots is two, or three, men in cowboy boots. She also believes in love at first sight, soul mates, true love, and happy endings.

When she's not being a mother to her six teenagers or cleaning up after her two 70-pound lap puppies, you can usually find her cuddled in bed with a book in her hand or her laptop, creating the next sexy character for her stories.

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