

Changeling Press

TARTAN MIND

Selena Ilyria

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Kameron Conroy doesn't like dealing with mortals so he's startled by the sudden urge to protect Lexi James when she comes into his pub. An attack from a werewolf leads to a passionate encounter before Lexi rushes off without a goodbye. Five years later they meet again at Conall's wedding and have another steamy hook-up.

Lexi was running away from her family when she met Kameron. Now she's back in Scotland and has taken the position of town librarian. When her ex breaks into her home, Kameron is there to save her but at a great cost to himself.

Kameron has lost control of his psychic abilities. Saving Lexi caused him to become trapped in his own mind. Can Lexi find help for him? Will they overcome his past wounds to be together?

Dedication

To Cyn, Ms. Priss and Dawn.

Chapter One

Five years ago...

"Fine, you don't want me here, I'm going." Kameron Conroy grabbed his leather jacket off of a nearby chair and walked to the door. No one stopped him. Not his father or any of his siblings. It hurt but he was used to it. He was the only evidence of his mother's affair, the only imperfect wolf of the pack, and his father hated imperfection. It was like a spot in the middle of a mirror that just wouldn't be wiped away. Pulling on the coat, he opened the door and walked out into the cool, crisp Scottish night. The stars were bright against the black velvet sky, the moon only half full in her orb.

His wolf whimpered within him, wanting to be let out. "Not yet, boy, not until we're far, far away from this place."

Kameron yanked open the door of his jeep, pausing to take one last look at the place he used to call home. As always, the imposing brick structure looked cold and uninviting, just like his father.

Kameron got into the vehicle, started it and took off, tires spraying tiny bits of gravel and stone into the air. At first he wasn't sure where he was going or what he would do when he got there. After forty minutes of driving, he pulled into his favorite pub's parking lot and shut off the engine.

Exhaling deeply, he didn't immediately unbuckle his seat belt. Instead he rested his head on the seat and closed his eyes, his father's words echoing in his head. *You're a disgrace. You've always been a spot on this family's pristine history, a mistake. Now do us all a favor, and just leave. Save us the trouble of kicking you out of the pack.*

Now he had no pack, no family. Despite the fact that he always felt that he could handle being alone, he needed a pack for protection. A lone werewolf was easier to pick off than one with backup. Out of frustration he hit the steering wheel of the car and let

out a growl. Anger surged up within him hot and strong. "Damn him. Damn them all, elitist bastards. Just because Mother got tired of being a trophy and wanted love, she slept with a telepath. So what? It's better than inbreeding."

He hit the steering wheel one last time before climbing out of the car. He didn't bother locking the door. "If they want to steal this piece of shite go ahead. I'll just track them down. Nice way to work off aggression."

His boots crunched on the gravel as he made his way to the entrance of the pub. Erecting his mental shields, he pushed open the door and stepped into the small meeting place. Head down, he made his way to the bar, hoping to get three sheets to the wind drunk. His red hair obscured the room around him. The scent of stale beer, cigarette smoke, sweat and perfume hung in the air.

All he saw was the wooden floor. He got to the bar, not bothering to look up. He could smell Brody's cologne, letting him know he was dealing with a friend who wouldn't ask too many questions. "The usual and keep it coming."

"Rough night I take it. All right, your usual table is open but a word of advice: be careful."

Brody's words made him look up. "Why?"

Brody gestured for him to look around. Kameron's head turned and he swore. Women were everywhere. Only three men were in the room, all huddled in a corner, nursing pints of their own. "Ladies' night, man. Will's idea to drum up business."

"Is he daft?"

Brody laughed, "You know Will. What do you think?"

Kameron's shoulders sank. He didn't want to have to deal with anyone. Ladies' night meant women either tipsy or all out drunk, looking for some action or someone to torment and tease. Kameron didn't want to be the target for anyone's fun, not with the mood he was in. "Just make sure they stay away from me."

Brody shrugged. "I can try, mate, but I can't guarantee it."

"Whatever." Kameron headed for his usual table and sat down. Head bowed he concentrated on studying the wooden planks that made up the tabletop. He heard

giggling and tried to ignore it. More giggles and then the scent of lilacs filled the air around him, nearly choking him with the strong odor.

"Hey, love, we were just wondering." The woman's husky tone chafed Kameron's nerves. "Does the carpet match the curtains?"

The woman's hoarse laugh made him snap. He looked up and growled. "Get the fuck away from me."

The woman's eyes went wide. She held up her hands and slowly backed away. "Fine, fine, you don't have to be an asshole about it." The woman turned around, her hair slapping him in the face. Kameron looked over at the bar, seeking out Brody. Brody was engaged with a woman who looked like she had just come in from the rain. Her clothes were dripping wet and stuck to her body like cellophane. Kameron rose and made his way to the bar. He needed another drink, now.

"Please, I need to use your phone. My car is stalled on the side of the road." The sound of the woman's soft voice made Kameron's heart squeeze and his breath catch. A feeling of light-headedness overcame him. His cock twitched as heat pooled in his stomach, scorching hot. His mental shields dropped quickly and everyone's thoughts invaded his head.

He's so gorgeous. I wonder what's wrong with him, a brunette sitting at the bar commented.

What an asshole, I was only having a bit of fun with him. This from the woman who had just approached him.

Where are all the men? I need to get laid. This pub is ridiculous, thought a blonde in the corner.

I need to get to my hotel. I'm so tired and cold, the woman talking to Brody thought wearily.

Kameron quickly brought his shields back up and composed himself as best he could. Placing his elbows on the bar, he concentrated on waiting patiently for Brody's attention. His cock pressed against his zipper in response to the woman before him. Out of the corner of his eye, Kameron took in the mocha skin slick from the rain. Her hair

was coming out of the topknot on her head in curling strands that framed her oval face. She reached up and pushed her glasses back on her nose with a delicate finger. Based on how short she was compared to Brody, Kameron guessed her to be about five foot three. Her face was free of makeup. The pleading look in her eyes tugged at his heartstrings.

"I'll call someone. Where is the car?"

"On the side of the road about a mile outside of town."

"You walked all the way here? In the dark?" Brody asked incredulously.

Kameron focused his full attention on the woman, his body turning toward her. She looked down and fidgeted with the umbrella in her hand. "I... I had to. I need to get to my hotel."

"Jesus, I'll call a cab to take you to your hotel and call the towing company for your car. You stay put," Brody ordered.

"I can't. All my things are in there." Before he could stop her, she turned and dashed out of the bar. As the bar door closed, Kameron caught the sound of thunder rolling overhead and heavy rain hitting the ground.

"Fuck, she shouldn't be out there alone. That's O'Connell territory. I pity her if any one of those bastards gets a hold of her."

Kameron's heart stopped. He took off toward the door. Brody called after him, demanding to know why he was going after her. Kameron didn't know, but his instincts were screaming for him to protect her. Outside, the rain was coming down so hard and fast it was like trying to look through opaque glass. The moon was hidden behind thick, dark clouds. He didn't see her anywhere. Kameron rushed to his car and tore out of the parking lot as though the devil were on his heels.

The car kept slipping on the muddy road, but he didn't care. All he could think about was the mystery woman all alone on the side of the road in the countryside. Visions of her getting kidnapped made him push the car too hard. When he caught sight of a figure rushing along the side of the road, he hit the brakes hard. The car kept going, sliding forward, turning sideways until it stopped.

Kameron's heart hammered against his rib cage as he jumped out of the car. He felt his cell phone vibrating against his hip and ignored it. His wolf was urging him on to protect this random woman. He ran, feet plunging into ice-cold puddles, freezing water soaking his jeans. His hands were frozen. He didn't care about any of it. He just had to get to her, protect her. He raced after the figure. The scent of wet earth, water and cherry blossoms crashed into his face. He could sense her fear and panic. Lowering his defenses just a bit, he let the woman's thoughts fill his mind.

Must get to the car. Need to make sure my stuff is there. Can't lose anything. Need it all. The soft voice of the woman from the pub pushed him into overdrive. Her voice wrapped around his body like a snake. Fire flashed in his veins, forming a path of heat that flooded his body. Kameron's cock throbbed against the fly of his jeans. His heartbeat increased and his stomach tightened. His lungs threatened to burst in his chest. A ripple of power flowed over his skin. The hairs on the back of his neck and on his arms stood up.

His wolf wanted out to protect her. Rage overwhelmed him as a male voice entered his head. One word echoed inside his brain: *Trespasser*.

"Shit." Kameron increased his speed, legs and arms pumping until he finally caught up with the woman, nearly colliding with her as he tried to slow down his stride. She whirled around, eyes wide, mouth open. Kameron wrapped his arms around her, hauling her against his body. He brought his mouth down to hers and gave her a passionate kiss. He lifted his head, breath coming out in harsh pants. "Stay close to me. We're in danger. Why do you need to stay with your car?"

"My... my things, I need my things. Who are you?" Her voice was shaky, and her body trembled against his. Her hands clutched his jacket. He could see her blinking behind the fogged lenses of her glasses.

"I'm here to keep you safe. I'll keep you safe." Kameron didn't know why his wolf had led him here to her or why he should keep her safe, but he knew he wouldn't be able to leave her without the wolf taking control and pulling them both back to her. For now he was stuck.

"Why are you doing this? Who are you?" She tried to move away from him.

"My name is Kameron, and I'll keep you safe." He reached out to grab her, only to have her stiffen.

"Why?" She took a large step back.

"Because I have to." Kameron looked around feeling anxious. He wanted to grab her and run.

She shook her head, wet curls flying this way and that. "I don't understand."

"You and me both. Now where's your car?" He continued to monitor the area watching for danger.

"Just a few more feet." She nodded her head toward a car a few feet away.

"Can you leave it? Can we transfer your things to my jeep?" He took a step toward her.

"Where is your jeep? Why should I trust you? You could be a murderer or rapist." She took a few more steps back. He was about to reach for her when a harsh voice entered his mind. *Trespassers.*

"Look, I don't care what you think of me but right now there's a crazy person out there looking for us. We have to get your things and go. The car can be towed to town in the morning. Go to your car, get inside and stay there. Do not get out of your car until I tell you it's safe. Do you understand me?"

She nodded.

"Good." It took great effort, his muscles protesting as he let go of her. He had the hardest time turning around and running back to his jeep at top speed. He got in and floored it. Luckily, the rain let up but the road was still slippery. The jeep slipped and slid at some points, but he made it to her vehicle in one piece. Keeping the engine running, he got out and banged on the window. "It's safe. Let's transfer your things."

She shook her head. "Something is out there."

"Fuck." Kameron looked around. A powerful wolf was out there, hunting. He could feel the malice in the air like a humid cloud. A faint growl came from behind him. Kameron turned around slowly, hands up, and ordered over his shoulder, "Shut the

window." He heard a soft thud and knew the window was shut. "We don't want trouble. Her car is stalled, and I'm helping her out."

"Why?"

"She's mortal, could bring trouble if she went missing."

"This is our territory. You are trespassing, mutt."

"Only to help out the mortal, that's it," Kameron said, trying to keep calm.

"You're Kameron Conroy, aren't you?" The wolf sounded intrigued.

"Yes." Kameron steeled himself for what was to come.

"Ha, I knew it. Got kicked out of your pack tonight. At least that's what I heard. Too bad, mutt, too bad. You know the rules. Trespass and you're ours to play with." The wolf laughed, a harsh, grating sound like metal scraping against concrete.

"I don't want a fight," Kameron said.

"Too bad, mutt, because I do." It happened so fast. One minute he was talking to darkness; the next he was slammed into the car by a large werewolf with wet fur. His back bowed as pain exploded within him. In the distance he heard a scream. "When I'm done with you, I'm going to take the woman and make her one of us."

Kameron's wolf growled, scratching to come out. Shards of pain lanced his stomach as the beast tried to claw his way out. Kameron gave up control and let the beast rise up to the surface. Goose bumps broke out over his skin. Pain wracked his body as bones reshaped, lengthening, and organs rearranged themselves. Fingernails turned into claws, and fur rippled over his skin. He could feel his face reshaping. His senses became sharper, his strength increasing.

Kameron let out a howl before pushing the attacker back. His claws sunk into the beast's shoulders, the scent of blood mingled with rain and earth. Despite making some headway, Kameron was pushed back and again slammed into the car. Another scream pierced the air. He heard a car door open and ordered, "Stay in the fucking car."

His voice was a deep baritone edged in a harsh growl.

"Looks like she's running. I love it when they run." The attacker pushed away from Kameron and took off on all fours. Kameron watched as a huge, dark brown wolf

chased the woman. He shook his head, got down on all fours and took off. He needed to get to her, protect her. When the wolf was in sight, Kameron sped up and leaped into the air. He landed on the animal's back, claws sinking into muscles. He sank his teeth into the neck of the werewolf. The creature howled in pain as blood filled Kameron's mouth. He didn't let go. Not even as the beast shook its huge body, trying to dislodge him from its back.

The wolf carried him into a copse of trees. It stopped, shook its body, and then stood up on its hind legs. Kameron could feel the thing straining, hear it panting, and knew it was running out of steam. The wolf rushed backward, slamming them both into a tree. Kameron's head slammed into the trunk; his vision blurred, stars burst before his eyes but he refused to dislodge the bite, instead biting down harder. The animal whimpered, "Get off me, she's yours. Get off of me, you mutt."

Kameron shook his head, flesh tearing in his mouth. The wolf cried out. The body beneath Kameron began to shift. Fur started to recede. Muscle shrank in size. He still didn't let go of the bite. Not even when the beast turned into a man and fell forward to the ground. Mud flew upward, hitting him in the face. He finally released his grip and spat out the blood. His own beast began to withdraw into him until Kameron was back to his human form. Breathing harshly, he leaned down slowly, back hurting, and checked for a pulse. The attacker was alive and would undoubtedly recover. Kameron, on the other hand, was in great pain.

Straightening up slowly, shivering from the freezing rain, he stumbled out of the forest into a meadow. He saw her running toward him. His legs shook, unable to sustain his weight. He had shifted too fast and was now paying the price. His muscles jumped and twitched as exhaustion took hold. He fell to the ground. Mud covered his naked body. He tried to fight sleep but was losing. Sudden warmth surrounded him. The scent of cherry blossoms mixed with rain and earth swirled around him.

"Oh God, oh God. Are you okay? How did you get naked? Is that your blood? Oh my God. I've got to get help."

Her fear was like metal on his tongue. Her body shook against him. Swallowing, he opened his mouth. "What's your name?"

"Lexi. You just hold on. I'm going to get help."

"Lexi. Nice name. The keys are in my jeep. Take it to town. Get to the bar. Get Brody. Bring him here. Do you understand?"

"Jeep, bar, Brody, got it."

"Go, Lexi. Now." The warmth around him left, and he began to shiver from the cold. Sleep overtook him.

Chapter Two

Lexi ran as though her life depended on it. Kameron, the mystery man, had saved her. Now she had to save him. She found the jeep and got in, thankful that she knew how to drive stick shift. Lexi turned it around and drove to town. She pulled into the pub's parking lot and burst into the bar. Looking around she saw most of the chairs and stools were put up and a lone man with long blond hair was sweeping up. Rushing toward him, she prayed the man was Brody. "Brody?"

"Yeah?"

"Kameron's been hurt, was attacked by some furry thing. He's outside of town. He needs help, he's bleeding."

"Shit. Stay here." Brody dropped the broom with a clatter and rushed past her. Lexi started shaking as the day's events crashed down on her. She sank down to the ground, her thoughts a whirlwind in her head. Nothing was clear. Time moved slowly as she stared off into space. It wasn't until there was a commotion at the door that she came out of the haze. Rising quickly, she fought back the light-headedness and rushed toward the door, watching as Brody and two men she didn't recognize carried in a bloody, shaking Kameron, wrapped in a blanket.

"Love, you still here?" Brody called over his shoulder.

Lexi wasn't sure who he was talking to but she answered. "Um, I'm here. Do you need help?"

"Go to the back of the pub and open the door. Run up the stairs, and open the last door on the left at the end of the hall. Understand?" Brody called out.

"Last door on the left, got it." Lexi took off. She ran upstairs and found the room and pulled the door open, searching for the light switch. She heard grunting and

moaning coming from down the hall. Lexi quickly backed out of the way and waited for the men to arrive. Her heart pounded and hands shook with nervousness.

As the men came into the room, she could see limbs flailing. Brody and the others seemed to be having a hard time controlling Kameron.

"We're gonna need silver. Where are the chains? Someone get Iain and the twins. Someone is going to have to watch him. I can't. I have to go clear out things from his father's house, and move them into mine for the time being. Love, where are you?" Brody called out.

Lexi stepped forward. "Um, still here. Is he going to be okay?" Worry for Kameron wore on her. He'd risked his life, taken on that beast, and was now hurt because of her.

A growl issued from Kameron's mouth, and he struggled against the men. "Hold him steady. We have to get him on the bed. Love, I need you to grab the silver chains and bring them to the bed."

"Uh, right, silver chains." Her eyes scanned the room until she spotted a pile of silver chains in the corner. She rushed over and grabbed them, bringing them to the bed. Fear rippled through her as she watched Kameron struggling, his face and neck bathed in sweat mingling with blood. His movements were too much for Brody and the strangers to control.

"Hold him, damn it. We don't want him to get free. He's going to shift any minute."

Shift? What the hell are they talking about? The chains rattled as she watched them maneuver themselves so they could lower Kameron's body to the bed. Brody took the foot of the bed while the other men crawled onto the mattress at the head. "On the count of three, one... two... three."

Brody held down his legs at the ankle. The other men pushed down his shoulders. "William, sit on him, lay down across his chest. Conall, call the twins and Iain and get them over here. Love, what's your name?"

"Lexi. What's going on here? What are you going to do to him?" she asked.

"Look, you don't understand. You won't understand. All you need to do is give me the silver chains when I ask for them. Kameron is very sick right now," Brody said.

"Then get him to a doctor," she insisted.

"A doctor can't help him."

"Why not? He's been injured. He needs help." Lexi clutched the chains to her chest. Fear took hold of her. *Something's wrong here.* She wasn't sure what was going on, didn't even know if she wanted to find out. She had her own problems. If she didn't leave soon, her father would find her and drag her back to the States. A glance at the clock told her she had already wasted enough time. She needed to move on.

"Just hand me the chains when I ask for them."

She was tempted to throw down the chains and run for it. Brody's next words to her stopped any action she may have had. "Don't think of running, love. We moved your stuff into my car. If you want your things back you have to stay."

"What the hell? You're blackmailing me?" She stared at him incredulously.

"We need you. Do you want to help him or not?" Brody jerked his head toward the bed where Kameron continued to struggle as William lay across his chest. The one called Conall came back into the room, running his hands through his short brown-black hair. "They're on their way. Dad's coming too. He should be able to tell us what to do. What about her?"

Everyone looked at her and Lexi took a step back.

"Don't worry about her. We need to worry about Kameron right now."

Much to Lexi's relief they all turned their focus back to Kameron, who was writhing on the bed under William. "Guys, we need help now. I can't keep this up. He needs to be chained down."

"Well, lads, help has arrived," a rough voice called out from the doorway. A man who looked like Conall but with long brown-black hair stepped into the room. The scent of whisky wafted in with him. His clothes were rumpled and there was lipstick on his collar.

"Och, Iain, can't you keep it in your pants for one night? You know one of these days you're going to meet your match, and I, for one, can't wait to see that." Conall shook his head.

"Just because you found someone, brother, doesn't mean I will. I don't have time to stop and find a mate. Too many lovelies to sample, like that one right there." Iain's sea green eyes turned toward her. Lexi shifted uncomfortably under the scrutiny she received from the newcomer.

"She's mine. Back off," Kameron growled. Lexi turned toward the bed. A shiver ran down her spine. He didn't sound human. Her eyes widened. A light coat of reddish-brown fur was now on his skin and his eyes were golden.

Lexi stumbled back. "What... what's happening to him? Why is he like that?"

"Easy, easy there, love. All is fine," a soft baritone voice called out. A tall older man with a mop of wild gray hair stepped into the room. He looked like an older version of Conall and Iain. "Calm down, my dear. All will be well. You'll be fine. No harm will come to you or Kameron. Rorick, Lochlan, hold down his shoulders. Iain, Conall, grab his feet, hold them down. Now, William, grab his hands. Hold them tightly together. My dear, please hand Brody the chains. Brody, make sure he can't break free."

Lexi held out the chains. Once her hands were empty she wrapped her arms around herself. She watched as they held Kameron down. He struggled and snarled. Spit flew from his mouth. It looked almost as if his teeth had grown in size. His red hair was longer, blending in with the fur on his shoulders. Lexi walked backward until she hit a wall. She slid down, watching as Brody struggled to wrap the chains around Kameron's wrist. Kameron snarled, his now lengthened jaw snapping and shaking back and forth, foam slipping down his chin.

A sizzling sound filled the air and the smell of burnt flesh reached Lexi's nose, causing her stomach to roll in response. "Be still, Kameron, be quiet," the older man said in a calm, hushed tone. He moved toward the bed, stopping at Brody's side. Reaching out, he touched Kameron's leg. The growls softened and the fur began to recede. She watched in amazement as the hard planes of his face softened as he relaxed.

The older man stumbled back, face ashen, hair a little whiter than before. "Conall, go to Kameron's father and demand an official declaration of exile. Once he's recovered Kameron will become one of us whether he likes it or not. Iain, William, go with Conall and gather Kameron's things. Take them to the cabin in the woods. The big one I don't use anymore, you know the one?"

"Yes, Father," Iain replied.

"Good." Iain's father cleared his throat. "Brody, you stay here and keep watch over him."

The men left, leaving Lexi with Brody and the older man. Lexi suddenly wished there were more space to back into. She yearned for a corner to hide in.

"Relax, my dear, no harm will come to you, I assure you. I am Altair, Iain and Conall's father. And you're Lexi. What a lovely name. I ask of you, please, stay the night here. He needs you."

"He, who?" Lexi asked wide-eyed and yet strangely calm. The more Altair spoke and looked at her, the calmer she felt.

"Kameron, Lexi. He needs you. I doubt once he's calmed down that he would want to find you gone out in that mess outside," Altair said.

"Why?" Lexi looked over at the bed at a still writhing Kameron. The fur had receded but his jaw was still lengthened and saliva slipped down his chin.

"He's claimed you as his. Therefore your safety is his highest concern."

Brody cleared his throat.

"Not now, Brody," Altair said. "You shall stay here tonight. Brody, get her suitcases and put them in the room across the hall. You will keep first watch. My dear, I think it's time you go to sleep."

Lexi felt a sense of exhaustion fall over her. Her eyelids were so heavy she couldn't keep them open. Her body relaxed as the world became blurry. Her eyes shut and Lexi fell asleep sitting against the wall.

* * *

“Kameron didn’t know what he was talking about. He was mad and in pain. You can’t hold his declaration about her. Besides, he hates mortals,” Brody said. He went over and picked Lexi up in his arms, causing Kameron to growl. Brody turned his head toward his friend. “Relax, mate, I have no designs on her.”

“You have your answer. Even delirious and in pain he still claims her. Whether he likes it or not, he’s mated to that girl and heaven help her. She’s got a lot of pain to wade through.”

Brody snorted. “More like an ocean’s worth of shit. What will we do once morning comes, and she wants to go?”

Altair smiled, his eyes sparkling. “Don’t worry about that. He’ll be fine come morning. He just needs to be forced to rest. Come, let’s put her in the guest room.”

The men left the room and placed Lexi into a bed. A few minutes later they returned to Kameron’s room and injected him with a tranquilizer.

Chapter Three

Lexi awoke with a start. Her body felt stiff and ached. Her skin itched and chafed from sleeping in soaking wet clothes. Sitting up slowly she threw her legs over the side of the bed and winced. Her clothing was stiff, having dried while she slept. She looked around for a lamp but couldn't find one, only a wall sconce giving off a dim golden glow.

Her bare feet hit the floor, and she hissed at how cold the wood felt. She swayed on her feet before getting her bearings. She moved across the room, holding her arms up and palms out as she felt her way through the dimness. She found the door and stumbled out into a hallway.

In the room across the hall she heard growling and chains rattling. Metal slid against metal. Her memory came back in a rush -- Kameron, the beast, chains, Altair, and feeling sleepy. She turned, ready to rush down the hall and out into the night, but a pained whimper stopped her.

Thunder rumbled overhead and lightning crashed, rattling the windows. The whimper sounded again. After arguing with herself and against her better judgment, Lexi headed for the room that Kameron was chained in. Turning the knob, she pushed the door open and walked slowly into the room, body taut, senses on high alert. The first thing that met her eyes was Kameron, still chained to a bed. But his hands were no longer over his head.

They were chained to the sides of the bed. Long silver loops hung down to the ground. His legs were also held down that way. His body was now covered in fur. His hands were larger and his fingers were now claws. Kameron's face looked like that of a large wolf with golden eyes.

He turned toward her and whimpered softly. Her heart clenched. There was pain in his eyes.

"Who's there?" Brody called out. Heavy footsteps made their way to the door before it was jerked out of her hands. Brody looked exhausted. His eyes were blurry and his hair was mussed. The beginning of dark circles had formed under his eyes. "Ah, Lexi, awake I see."

"What has happened to him? Is that Kameron?" She hated that she sounded awed.

"He's shifted and before you ask, he's a werewolf. I know how daft it sounds. I can't hide that from you. You've seen too much, and Altair refuses to wipe your mind. So there, I said it. Kameron is a werewolf." Brody's shoulder slumped. He looked as if he was about to drop any minute. Despite what he had just told her, Lexi felt horrible for him and just a little excited for herself.

She remembered talking to her friend Robin a few months ago. Robin had warned her that if she came to Scotland to stay with her that Lexi would witness some, as Robin put it, "freaky shit." This was one of those nights. Lexi had always known werewolves were real but had never seen one shifted before. And now she was in her own little sci-fi situation with a real life werewolf. The evidence was right there on the bed.

"The thing that attacked him, was he a werewolf?"

She watched Brody struggle with the answer. Finally he blew out a breath. "Yes, that was a werewolf."

"So are you guys at war or something?" Lexi asked.

"No. Not at the moment. Look, all I ask is that you keep quiet about all of this. Don't tell a soul about what you've seen tonight, understand?" Brody asked.

Lexi nodded. "Not a soul."

Inside she was squealing with delight. Despite having grown up around shifters, no one had ever let her participate in anything like this. She hadn't been allowed to watch or take part in any of the pack practices. And even though she was traveling

now, it wasn't a pleasure trip. She hadn't had time to see everything she wanted to see and experience. She was too busy looking over her shoulder and moving from place to place.

"Why aren't you afraid, lass? Why are you so calm? Most would run out of here if they saw and experienced what you just did." Brody ran a hand through his hair.

Lexi shrugged. "I don't know. Maybe I'm still numb from shock and haven't processed everything yet."

She was lying, but he didn't need to know that. Brody didn't need to hear that she was related to werewolves. Although she'd witnessed the shifting before, seen normal looking people transform into large wolves, never in her life had she seen what she had tonight. The thing that had attacked Kameron had been huge. She looked over at Kameron. He wasn't big per se but he was larger than her uncle when he'd shifted.

"How long will he be like that?" She nodded her head toward Kameron.

Brody shrugged. "It will take a while. In shifted form he heals faster. There is something hindering the process, so it's slow going. Could you watch him for a minute? I need coffee and some whisky."

Lexi nodded.

"Thanks, lass. If he starts to whimper again, just use that salve over on the nightstand to coat his wounds. If he starts to shake, growl and foam at the mouth, get me immediately, understand? We've lengthened the chains for him so he can turn over all the way or even lie on his stomach if he wants to. He's almost out of the woods. Remember, if you need me, just yell."

Lexi nodded again.

Brody brushed past her and left the room. Lexi stood in the doorway for a while, not sure if she should come any further into the room. A whimper drew her attention toward Kameron. The pain in his eyes tugged at her heart. From what her uncle had told her, a wounded werewolf would have to shift in order to speed up the recovery process. Unfortunately, there were side effects. The body couldn't handle such rapid

healing so there was a lot of pain involved. Also, just shifting alone, when the moon wasn't full, could be taxing.

She couldn't imagine what he was going through but felt horrible for him just the same. He'd saved her life. Looking at him, she tried to see past the fur, elongated face, sharp teeth, and claws. His ears were still normal in shape, which was weird to her, even though they were covered with fur. Lexi had the strongest urge to run her hands over his fur, feel the softness for herself. She had to resist the urge despite her curiosity pushing her toward the bed.

He whimpered and let out a soft whine and her heart melted. Without a thought she went to him and asked softly, "What do you need? Do you want water? Food?"

"Paaaiinnn," he murmured. Kameron's voice was so deep and rough, she almost didn't understand him. Reaching for the salve, she held up the small jar. "Do you want this?"

He shook his head. She frowned, her brow furrowing. "I don't know how I can help you."

Lexi put the jar back and sighed. *Touch!* She remembered being told by her uncle that touch could help soothe a werewolf who was in pain. It must be done lightly though. Too much pressure of any kind could hurt the werewolf. Reaching out, hand shaking, she ran her palm lightly over his chest. She prayed she was using the right amount of pressure. To her relief, Kameron's body relaxed. He let out a rough sigh and closed his eyes. His breathing soon became slow and deep. Releasing a pent up breath, she continued to pet him lightly. She watched as the fur began to recede and his face became normal. She marveled at his features.

Kameron's face looked as if it had been carved from marble, with high, sharp cheekbones that looked like they could cut. He had hooded eyes with slashes of reddish-brown hair for eyebrows and a fan of reddish-brown eyelashes. His nose was crooked, as if it had been broken a few times and never set properly. A little bump sat at the bridge. His lips were neither full nor thin, shaped in a cupid's bow, with the bottom

lip slightly plumper than the top. He had a strong square jaw with a cleft at the chin. His jaw was shadowed by reddish brown stubble.

She ran her fingers over his cheek, watching as he turned toward her touch. *He is so beautiful.* Her eyes moved lower to his throat and nearly fainted at the wide slashes of red. Had the other werewolf done that? She nearly reached out to touch them but resisted. Looking back up at his face, she felt the weight of sadness settle on her shoulders. "What happened to you? Who did that to you?"

Reaching out she ran her fingers through his hair. His mane was silky soft and warm with layers of varying shades of red. She was thankful his eyes were closed otherwise he would have probably pushed her away. Werewolves by nature didn't exactly like mortals. Nor would he think she was trying to soothe him with her touch. He would probably read her actions as more pity than help.

Werewolves hated pity more than they loathed humans. As a rule they mostly avoided them, living either with the pack or leading solitary lives. Lone wolves that survived on their own were very rare. She recalled Altair asking Conall to get him a signed declaration of exile. If Kameron had been exiled, he'd either pissed off the wrong person or lost a challenge. Either way, she felt horrible for him. She had witnessed how close pack members could be. To lose that kind of link was like losing an arm.

But he has Altair, Brody and the others. Lexi hoped he didn't fight being adopted into Altair's pack. They seemed to know him pretty well and cared about him a great deal. She continued stroking his hair, letting her fingers trail over his shoulder. His skin felt warm under her touch. He shifted and the blanket slipped down. Her mouth went dry as her gaze was filled with the hard wall of his chest and the first ridges of his abdomen.

He shifted again, this time on his side toward her. The blanket slipped down further, revealing his six-pack abs marked with a thin strip of dark red hair. Lexi wanted to follow that trail underneath the blanket. She itched to pull down the comforter and reveal the rest of his body. *I bet he's just gorgeous all over.* She shook her

head. Lexi didn't have the guts to even lift the blanket and peek for fear she'd get caught.

If only Daun Rae could see her now. She would have grabbed Lexi's hand and pulled it toward the sleeping Kameron's groin. Sighing, Lexi pulled her hand back but couldn't look away. *I have to look somewhere else, anywhere else.*

She turned, about to head to a nearby chair, when she was caught off guard by the sound of chains moving. A strong hand wrapped around her wrist, pulling her back. Turning around she fell forward onto his chest.

"Omph," they said at the same time.

She placed a hand on the mattress and tried to push herself up. She heard the slide of chains across a hard surface and then she felt something circle around her waist, holding her down. Turning her face toward Kameron, she found his eyes had shifted to gold. "You're not going anywhere."

A chill raced down her spine as goose bumps broke out over her skin. "Kameron, relax. I'm just going to sit in that chair over there." Lexi kept her eyes on Kameron as she pointed across the room in the general direction of the chair. "I'll drag the chair over. I won't be too far."

"Not close enough," Kameron growled. The weight lifted as his hand moved and grabbed her free wrist. He pulled her against his body until she covered him. Lexi gasped when she felt his erection pressing against her stomach. He ran a hand up her back, over her neck, and buried his fingers in her hair. He urged her head down until their lips were just a breath apart. "I'm not going to let you leave just yet."

His lips pressed against hers in a surprisingly soft kiss. Warmth rushed over her body. He let go of her other wrist and buried both hands in her hair. Nothing mattered but the feeling of his lips against hers. She felt weightless, lightheaded, hot and cold at the same time. The world froze all around her. She heard nothing, felt nothing except for him. Lexi brought up her hands and took hold of his face. His hands came down, running over her back to stop and take hold of her hips.

Her brain overloaded. Her pussy became heavy. Lexi's stomach tightened as her nipples became sensitive beaded points. His head moved back. They both took a deep breath before he kissed her again, taking her bottom lip between his teeth and tugging the plump flesh into his mouth. She moaned, her panties becoming damp. He rolled them both over until she was beneath him. Her hands slipped into his hair, her fingernails scraping his scalp. He moaned and ground his erection against her. Lexi was melting, hot, and overwhelmed.

It felt so good. His body was a hard wall of muscle pressing her into the mattress. Releasing her bottom lip, he proceeded to give her a slow, seductive kiss that spoke of banked passion and need. Her mind was falling apart slowly. Reasons for why they shouldn't be doing this wouldn't surface. All she cared about was that this gorgeous man was kissing her. It was like rain on the desert. She hungrily absorbed every sensation he gave her. The heat of his body poured over her. The silk of his hair brushed against her palms. The kiss became more passionate, and his fingers dug into her hips.

He pulled his head back, and his breath came out in puffs of warm air on her face. "I need you now."

"What? What are you talking about?" She ran her tongue over her lips, wincing at the sting.

"I need to fuck you," he growled.

"I barely know you." Lexi struggled underneath him. Letting go of his face, she placed her hands on his chest. She tried to push him off her but to no avail. "Kameron, get off of me."

"You're mine, Lexi. I need you. Make the pain stop." She watched his eyes shift to a stormy gray. "Please, help me," he pleaded.

"With sex?"

"It's the only thing that can take my mind off of the pain. I need you. You're my mate. Only you can help me."

She blinked. *His mate*? She remembered her uncle explaining what it meant to be someone's mate: to protect them, help them, heal them, love them, all of it. Her heart beat faster. She shook her head. "No, I can't be your mate, I'm human, mortal. I can't..."

He cut off her words with a passionate, demanding, dominating kiss. She was overwhelmed. Lexi's thoughts scattered and her body melted into the mattress. She barely registered the ripping sound before she felt his body against her chest, her lace-covered breasts crushed against the hard wall of his chest. She arched her back, moaning at the pressure. She needed more of it. As if reading her mind, his body rose and she slipped her hands from his hair to between their bodies. Without breaking the kiss, she undid the front clasp of her bra and pulled the thin cups aside. Pulling away, she wrapped her arms around his body and urged him down to her.

They both moaned at the contact. All reasons for why she shouldn't be with him slipped away. No longer did she care that they had just met. All she knew was Kameron and what he was doing to her. Her hips rose and rocked against his. She ran her hands down his back. Shoving the sheet down, she took hold of the muscled globes of his ass. She squeezed hard, her fingernails digging into the firm flesh. He groaned and rocked his hips against hers, mimicking the act of sex.

Kameron pulled his face away, breathing hard. His lips parted and a low growl issued forth. Her pussy contracted and her panties become wetter as anticipation flooded her system. Arching her body toward his, she rubbed herself against him in invitation. "Take me, Kameron."

That was all that was needed. He rolled off of her to his side. "Take off your pants."

She scrambled off the bed, quickly took off her jeans, and climbed back on the bed. Her heart was racing, breathing rapid. Her skin felt so tight her breasts were heavy, nipples aching for his touch. Her sex was already slick and heavy and her clit throbbed with need. Lying down she waited for him to get back on top of her.

"Oh no, on top. I want to watch you fuck me." He remained on his side, eyes changing from gold to gray and back again. The wolf was fighting him to come out. She

shivered at the thought. She stood up and watched him lie down on his back. The sheets were down to his shins by now. His cock rose up from a thick nest of reddish brown curls. It was long, thick, and curved slightly upward. The cockhead was already red, and a single crystalline drop had formed at the slit. The shaft was flushed, the thick vein on the side noticeable. She struggled to keep from melting into a small puddle on the floor. Her knees felt weak, and her heart hammered against her chest. In all her life she had never had a lover that looked as gorgeous as he did.

Hell, she'd never had a lover that turned furry at the full moon. At that very moment she was scared, nervous, weak-kneed and horny. She stood there staring at his every exposed feature. He was like a buffet and she wasn't sure where to start first. She didn't have to decide. He made the decision for her. "Get your ass over here and fuck me."

Lexi watched as his back bowed and fur began to appear on his torso. Kameron's fingers dug into the mattress, ripping the sheets to shreds. His fingers had turned back into claws.

"I need you. The pain has returned," he gritted out. The muscles and veins of his neck stood out as he clenched his jaw. He was turning back into the wolf and fighting for control. Lexi quickly rushed onto the bed and climbed on top of him. She let out a soft gasp as her skin made contact with his fur. It was the softest and warmest thing she had ever felt.

Leaning forward, she placed her hands on his chest. She lowered her head and brushed his lips with hers. "It's okay. I'm here."

Reaching up with one hand and balancing on his chest with the other, she ran her hand through his hair and kissed him again, this time with a little more passion. She felt the fur brush across her thighs. She pulled her head back and looked at his body. The fur had receded. His warm skin pressed against hers now.

"Kiss me again," he ordered. She did as he asked. The contact was gentle at first when she brought her lips down to his. Their mouths moved slowly against each other, then Kameron growled. Lexi felt him bury his hand in her hair, pressing her head

down. His lips began to move over hers with more passion and need. His other hand clamped down on her hip. His fingers dug into her skin painfully.

Kameron took her bottom lip between his teeth and tugged softly before sucking the plump flesh into his mouth. He growled. Lexi felt the vibration within her. The sound increased her arousal. As the kiss continued with Kameron taking control, Lexi lowered her ass to his thighs and pressed her body against his. His erection pressed against her stomach. The shaft felt hot, practically burning her skin from the contact.

She raised her head and pulled her hand away from his hair, only to slide it between them and take hold of his cock. He let out a groan. His hips rolled upward, sliding his thick shaft against her palm. Tightening her grip, she pumped her fist around him as he sped his thrusts. Her lips felt hot and swollen. She increased the pace of her hand, watching emotions play across his face. His body rolled underneath her with each thrust. His chest brushed against her nipples, causing small sparks to be set off in her body.

Something was about to happen. Her heartbeat raced with anticipation. Lexi wanted him to come in her hand. She wanted to watch him break apart from her actions. She squeezed then loosened her grip on his cock, mimicking the action of what her vaginal walls would do when he was inside of her. His groan was edged with a whimper and his eyes flashed to gold before slipping back to gray.

“Come for me,” she urged. “Kameron, I want to watch you come.”

His back arched. His head tilted back, eyes shut as his body stilled. His cock twitched in her hand and seemed to expand. He came. He let out a wolf howl as hot come hit her stomach and slid down her hand. She continued to pump his cock. Her eyes never left his face. His hips moved faster. His skin became slick. She didn’t let go. Watching him come only made her hornier. Lexi wanted to feel that happen within her when he came.

Once his penis became flaccid she let go and pulled her hand out from between them. His body relaxed and sank down into the mattress. His eyes were still shut and he panted. She waited for him to do something to indicate things weren’t over. Time

passed by slowly as she watched him. Lexi knew things were over when he let out a soft snore. Sighing softly, she got off of him. She was still horny and needed to wash her hand. With one hand she pulled the sheet over him then headed for the door, not bothering to dress.

The adrenaline ebbing away in her system made her feel jittery and weak. Opening the door, she stuck her head out into the hallway praying that Brody wasn't out there. Much to her relief there wasn't a soul in the corridor. She slipped out of the room and searched for a bathroom. Her come-covered hand now felt cold and sticky. She finally found a bathroom and cleaned up, wrapping a towel around her nudity. Lexi was headed back for her room when she heard Kameron calling for her. Concerned that he was in pain again, she went to him.

She found him wide awake and looking annoyed. "Where the fuck did you go?"

Her eyes widened in shock. Annoyance rose up. "Excuse me? What did you just say?"

"Where the fuck did you go? I need you again."

Her eyes narrowed and she placed a hand on her hip. "I know you're in pain and all that, but I have my own needs to take care of. I'm sure you can use your hand."

She turned on her heel, ready to go to her room when his next words caused her to whirl around in anger. "Get your ass over here. I need you again. My hand won't do."

"First off, you need to learn some manners. I'm not a freaking dog. I don't come when called. And since I don't hear a please in there, I'm going to my room."

"Lexi, I need to fuck you."

"Tough shit." Her hand reached for the door.

"Lexi, please. I want to be with you," he said softly.

Her determination melted. Hand dropping back down to her side, she turned around. She undid the towel and let it drop to the floor. Need flared inside of her again as she took him in. He'd kicked the sheet off and was now stroking his cock. His gaze roamed over her body with heat that nearly burned her. "Damn, you're beautiful."

His hand moved faster on his hardened shaft.

"Get over here and fuck me." His voice had become a roughened growl. The sound traveled up her spine causing her to shiver.

"Where are the condoms?" She was surprised at how breathy she sounded.

"In the drawer of the nightstand. Now get over here." He nodded his head to the table next to the bed. She didn't have to be told twice. Scrambling onto the bed Lexi leaned over him to open the drawer and pull out a box of condoms. She placed the box on the tabletop and shut the drawer.

"Put one on me fast. I want to feel your pussy around me this time."

Grabbing a condom she quickly ripped it open and rolled it on him. Placing one hand on his chest she lowered herself until she felt his cockhead at her entrance. The thick crest slipped inside of her as her muscles clenched, trying to draw him further in. He groaned and pushed up. More of his cock slipped inside of her. She contracted her vaginal walls around him. He felt so good, stretching her. Moaning, she descended further until he was fully seated.

"Fuck," he groaned.

Lexi rose up and slammed down on him. She set a slow pace, but that wasn't good enough for Kameron. "Fuck me faster, baby. Ride me."

She did as he asked, riding him faster. The sounds of wet flesh slapping against one another and moans joined the scent of sex mingling in the air.

"That's it, baby. Ride me just like that." He removed one hand from her hip and slipped a hand between her thighs. His fingers delved between her pussy lips and located her clit. He stroked the tightened bud lightly with his finger. Her climax built, curling tighter within her. His fingers increased their hold on her hip as he withdrew then slammed into her. He began to fuck her back.

"You feel so damn good," he groaned. Kameron fucked her faster. His cockhead hit her cervix, causing sparks of pain to mingle with pleasure. He rubbed her clit faster. Her orgasm grew, coiling tighter. She rode him faster, sweat sliding down her body and breasts bouncing with each stroke.

"So close..." she moaned, her toes curling. Her body tensed. He pinched her clit and pushed her over the cliff. Her pussy fluttered around his cock and clamped down. Her muscles jumped and her body shook. Lexi cried out. He stopped stroking her clit and grabbed her wrist. Kameron pulled her down until she lay on top of him. His hips didn't stop moving as he fucked her through her orgasm. She came again.

He slipped his hand around the back of her neck and urged her head down until their lips met. He gave her a harsh possessive kiss, swallowing her cry as she climaxed again. He pulled his head away and his eyes met hers, gold and gray swirled together. "You're mine. All mine."

He punctuated the statement by withdrawing and slamming into her. Her inner muscles clamped down on his cock. His cock twitched and body tensed as he came. He let out a wolf-like howl and pounded her pussy. He urged her head down, taking another kiss from her lips before he stopped fucking her. His hold on her hip loosened and then fell away. He slipped his hand from her neck and buried it in her hair. Pulling his head away he gazed up at her. "Thank you. The pain is gone."

His voice was rough and breathless. She reached up and stroked his face. "You're welcome."

"Let's get some sleep."

She laid her head on his shoulder and sighed. She couldn't move from the spot if she tried. Her body was Jell-O. "Okay."

For the first time in a month Lexi felt safe and at peace. She hoped that it would last. She woke up a few hours later and left his bed, tiptoeing down the hall to clean up. When he woke up she didn't want to greet him with morning breath or bed head. Passing her room she heard her cell phone's ringtone. Groaning she rushed into the room, switched on the lights and dug her cell phone out of her bag.

"Hello?"

"Lex, where the hell are you? They're on to you. Your brother is on his way to Scotland. You better move and move fast."

"Shit! Thanks, D. I'll call you when I reach Robin's place. Bye."

"Be careful." The line went dead and Lexi's heart beat frantically in her chest. She dashed around the room getting dressed quickly and gathering her things. She decided to leave her clothes in Kameron's room. She didn't want to risk waking him up.

She hauled her luggage downstairs and found herself in the pub. Brody sat on a stool watching a small TV. She could see a soccer game being played out. Brody let out a disgusted snort. "Fucking useless bastards. Don't even know how to guard a goal." He slid off the stool and made his way around the bar. "Where are you going?" He didn't even look up. He poured himself a drink and made his way back to his seat.

"Look, I need to go. There are men after me. Well, one man but more could join. I need to leave here now," she said urgently.

"We can protect you."

"I'm sure you can but that's not the issue." Lexi stopped trying to debate on what to tell him. Taking a deep breath she started to talk. "Look, my family is after me. They want to drag me back to America to marry some asshole werewolf. They don't know what he is. They just want his money. Anyway, I need to leave. Otherwise you'll have a pack war on your hands, and I really don't want that for you."

"So, you knew what he was. Interesting. Makes me wonder what else you know."

"I don't have time. Please, I need a car and to get out of here."

"Kameron --" he started.

She interrupted him. "Is fine. He's sleeping peacefully upstairs. The pain is gone. I need to go. Please."

Brody looked like he was conflicted before his shoulders sagged. "Which pack is it?"

"MacDouglas," Lexi said, watching apprehension appear on Brody's face.

"Shite, we wouldn't win against them. Our numbers are too small. Fine. I'll call a friend of mine. He'll take you wherever you want to go."

"How long will it take?"

"Keep your knickers on. He won't be long."

Each minute that went by made her feel as if the walls were closing in on her. Every sound made her jump. Twenty minutes passed before her ride showed up. She loaded the last of her things in the man's pickup truck, feeling a sense of sadness at having to leave Kameron behind. Turning to Brody she gave him a small smile. "Thank you and please tell Kameron I'm sorry I had to leave. Just tell him it was an emergency."

Brody gave her a Gallic shrug that told her nothing. "Safe journey."

"Thank you." She climbed into the truck and soon they were off. Lexi couldn't help but feel that she had left something behind.

* * *

Kameron awoke the next morning alone, and panicked when he heard that Lexi had left. Still weak and hurting, he tried to convince Brody and Altair to let him go. They refused. When he tried to shift to give himself a strength boost they sedated him. One week later, they let him go and he immediately took off in search of Lexi. At first he went off with no plan. After a month of no leads, he returned home. When he took a step back to examine the situation, he remembered that on the night they'd met, her car had stalled on the north road leading out of town.

Heading for the mountains, Kameron found a scrap of information from an acquaintance of the O'Keefe pack. Unfortunately he arrived too late. Lexi had already left, and no one knew where she was headed. Unsure of what to do, he headed back home to be officially inducted into the pack. In the middle of the welcoming celebration Kameron felt lost. He wanted his mate with him to share in the happiness.

A few weeks later that brief joy turned into pain as his mental abilities began to turn against him. Headaches began to surface on a near daily basis. Despite his pack's concern he stubbornly refused their help, deciding it was best to search for help alone. It was his problem and he was determined to fix it. For the next five years he wandered Europe in hopes that someone could help him. When he returned home it was just in time for Conall O'Keefe's wedding.

Chapter Four

Five years later...

Lexi stood at the punch bowl, trying ineptly to get the lemon slice onto the ladle. Each time she got close it would either float away or slip off the large spoon. Finally she gave up. She turned and slammed into a hard wall. Looking up, she found herself gazing into storm gray eyes. His dark red hair was shorter but he still looked the same, only tired. "Well, look what we have here."

Kameron's whisky rough voice traveled through her body causing need to flare to life. Her stomach tightened. Her breasts became full and her nipples hardened into tight buds. Her pussy became heavy and her panties damp. Her heart beat frantically against her ribcage as if trying to escape. Licking her lips she tried to figure out what to say. She didn't get the chance. He grabbed her wrist and pulled her through the crowd. Lexi tried to keep up but kept falling behind, his stride was too long and he was moving too fast.

"Kameron, please slow down," she pleaded. He just kept going. She tried to yank her hand out of his grasp but his grip was too tight. "Kameron, let go. I'll go with you. Just stop for a second."

He continued walking until they were far from the wedding reception. Panting and looking around, she found that they were in a gazebo. Her heart was hammering in her chest and her legs hurt. She took a gulp of her punch before glaring up at him. "You could have just asked to talk to me. I would have said yes."

"Where did you go that night?" he demanded.

"I had to leave. There was danger."

"I would have protected you," Kameron insisted.

"You couldn't have. What was following me was far too dangerous."

"Are you saying I'm weak?" Anger edged his tone.

"No. I'm saying I didn't want anyone to get hurt. Besides, you were in no shape to fight."

"You didn't even say goodbye."

"I didn't have time. Things were... The situation came up suddenly." She didn't want to go into detail about what happened after she left him.

"I nearly went mad when I woke up and found you gone."

Straightening to her full height, she glared at him. "One, I'm a big girl and I can take care of myself. Two, you don't get to order me around. No one does. And three, I told you the situation came up suddenly."

He reached out and grabbed her wrist, pulling her to him. She stumbled and landed against his chest, her drink sloshing over the edge of the cup and onto her dress. With his free hand he took the cup and tossed it over his shoulder.

"Kameron!" She winced, waiting to hear the sound of glass shattering. Instead, she heard a thud. Peeking around him she was relieved to see the glass still intact. She glared up at him. "Okay, caveman, you're pissed. I get it. Now let go," Lexi demanded.

"You're my mate. I'm here to protect you. Any problems you have are mine." He moved his face closer to her. Their lips were just a hair's breadth apart.

"My problems are my own, you Neanderthal. Let go of me." Lexi tried to pull back. When he didn't let go, she lifted her foot and smashed it down on his. The only indication that he felt anything was a soft grunt.

His response was to smash his lips to hers. The kiss was possessive and dominating, bordering on violent. His teeth scraped her bottom lip. His tongue pushed its way into her mouth. She tried to fight him, banging her free hand against his chest. He just wrapped his arm around her waist and pulled her close until she felt the hardness of his body. He pulled his head back. "Mine."

His eyes flashed to gold. "I searched for you. They tried to stop me, but I did look for you once I recovered." He released her wrist and brought his fingers up to trail along her face. His expression softened.

The guilt of leaving him rose up and she felt horrible. "Kameron --"

"I'm not letting you leave me. Not again." He took her mouth again in another possessive kiss. His hips ground against hers, making her aware of his erection.

Her pussy clenched on nothing. She wanted to be with him again, to feel him inside of her. Her anger melted away as desire replaced it. Her fingers took hold of his shirt, clutching the silken material. She moved against him, grinding her hips against his. He groaned, kissing her harder. She responded to his kiss. Standing on tiptoe, she wrapped an arm around his neck.

Moving her head away she looked up at him. He reached up and ran a hand through her hair. "I need you."

That's all it took. She didn't bother taking off her dress. There were too many closures on the back. Instead she just lifted her skirt and pushed down her panties. She didn't care if anyone walked in on them. She needed him now. Placing his hands on her shoulders, he pushed her. She stumbled back and hit a wall.

"Stay there." He dropped to his knees and brushed aside her hands. He ripped the sides of her lacy panties and shoved them into his pocket. Placing his hands on her thighs, he pushed her legs wider apart, inhaling deeply. "So sweet. This scent has haunted me for so long."

He buried his head between her thighs. His tongue slipped over the seam of her pussy, delving between the lips to flick her clit, circling the bud slowly. Pleasure and anticipation flowed through her body. She waited for him to suck the turgid nub into his mouth. Groaning, she buried her hands in his hair, urging him closer. "Kameron." He pulled away, and she took handfuls of dark red locks and yanked hard. "Eat me."

His eyes slid from gold to gray and back again. "Later. Right now I want to fuck."

She let out a frustrated growl and released his hair. "Fine. Fuck me."

Kameron got up, undid his pants and shoved them down. He moved toward her until their bodies touched. Crouching down he picked her up. She slid up the wall and then stopped until she could look at him eye to eye. "Wrap your legs around my waist."

She did as commanded and waited. He reached between them, positioned his cock at her entrance, and pushed forward, sinking into her hot slick channel. She clenched her walls around him, pulling him further inside her pussy. Each thrust caused her to slide up the wall. Lexi reached behind her and used her hands as leverage to push back.

It was awkward at first and it hurt. Her head kept hitting the wall, but once they found their rhythm, pleasure took over. He fucked her slow and hard, allowing the pleasure to build. He bent his head forward and kissed her, taking her lips in a bruising kiss before pulling back and growling, "Mine."

"Yours," she responded as the pace increased. Their gazes met as the fire built. Her heart seemed to skip a beat before continuing its fast pace. His eyes switched back to gray and he fucked her harder. Kameron pounded her pussy faster. Trusting him to keep her up against the wall, she let go and reached up with her free hand to tweak her nipple through her dress.

She pinched the hardened peak, sending a shot of electricity straight to her clit. Her pussy clamped down on his cock, fluttered around the hardened flesh. She tensed, her muscles jumping as fire exploded in her belly and rushed outward. She cried out as she came. He soon followed her, his cock twitching and expanding before he came. His warm seed coated the walls of her vagina and slipped down her thighs. He took her mouth in a possessive kiss as he continued to pump his hips.

"Oh my God! Lexi, what the hell are you doing? Kameron, get away from her!"

Lexi was vaguely aware of Robin's voice in the distance. She was too relaxed to turn her head and see if her friend was really there. All she cared about was what Kameron had just done to her. He gave her a gentle parting kiss before lowering her to the floor. Her knees shook. She managed to keep from sliding down to the floor. Someone was shaking her shoulder. Glancing up, she saw Robin, hair pulled back into an elaborate updo. Her makeup was faded and she looked like she was going to blow a gasket.

"Get up, Lexi. I'm taking you home, and then I'm going home myself. Come on." Robin slipped an arm around her waist. Lexi grabbed her purse as Robin helped her up.

"Kameron, stay away from her. I'm warning you," Robin threatened.

Kameron let out an animalistic growl. "You're meddling in things you don't understand."

"I don't have time for your bullshit. Just stay away from her." Robin started dragging her out of the room.

Lexi gave a weak wave back and called out, "Sorry, gotta go."

"What the hell are you thinking? That man is a time bomb waiting to go off. Were you drunk? Wait, I don't want to know what possessed you to do the against the wall body shuffle with him. Come on. I have to leave before I kill the twins."

"Are they fucking someone or someones today?"

"So far, both," Robin sighed heavily.

"I'm sorry, hon. I wish they could see how spectacular you are and return your feelings. Hold on, I think I can walk."

They stopped and Lexi straightened up. She found she could in fact walk without feeling wobbly. "Okay, let's go."

She slipped an arm around her friend's waist and they left the wedding reception. Thankfully, on the ride home Robin didn't question her about Kameron. As they pulled up to Lexi's uncle's mansion, she turned and looked over at Robin. "Do you think you'll really leave this time? I mean, really do it?"

"Yeah," Robin sighed. "I have to. It hurts, you know. To see them, deal with them. It just hurts. I can only put up with so much. Having to deal with their women is difficult enough. Seeing them fucking other women is just crushing, but then hearing about it all is heartbreaking. Look, let's just not talk about them anymore. I'm too damn tired and my head hurts."

Lexi laughed. "Why'd you let Agatha talk you into an updo?"

"'Cause I had a lapse in judgment and just wanted to get her off the phone. Lord knows what Conall sees in her." Robin shook her head and Lexi smiled.

"He loves her to bits and pieces; that's what he sees in her. I wish I could find someone to love me like that," Lexi sighed and opened the car door. She hopped out onto the gravel drive and turned back to her friend.

"You and me both. I'll see you soon, Lex, sweet dreams."

Lexi smiled. "Thank you."

Slamming the door shut, Lexi stepped back and watched her friend drive off. She shook her head as she made her way to her home. A rustling in the bushes and a soft growl caused her to still. The hair on her arms and the back of her neck stood up, and a shiver ran down her spine. Whirling around she saw a shadow rush behind a tree. The shade was too big to be a simple animal. *Werewolf*.

Lexi rushed to unlock her door, shoved it open and ran in, bolting the door behind her. She didn't look outside to see if the thing was still there. She'd heard about rogue werewolves wandering her uncle's lands, but she hadn't seen anything until now.

Her phone rang and she nearly jumped out of her skin. "Hello?" She tried not to sound shaky.

"Lex? It's me, Kat. I'm in Scotland, landed a few hours ago. I just wanted to check in and see how you were settling in."

"Katherine? Hey, yeah, I'm good. I just finished unpacking the last of my things. Thank goodness Altair gave me the job over at the library. It was so sweet of him. Thank you for checking in on me."

"No problem. Your uncle is a good friend to myself and Altair. I would never have gotten the hang of working with werewolves if it wasn't for him." Katherine chuckled. "If you ever want to have lunch, let me know. My schedule is really busy for the next few months but I'd really like to get together."

"Yeah, I heard about the upcoming summit. If there's anything I can do, just let me know."

"Well, yeah, I need the pack records that are stored in the basement of the library once you get a chance. That would be fantastic."

"Anything else?" Lexi asked.

"Nope. That's about it. I know it's getting late and I'm getting tired. I want to hit the pub for a nightcap before I go to bed. I'll let you go now. See you soon," Katherine said.

"I hope so. Bye, Kat," Lexi said.

"Bye, hon."

Lexi hit the off button, feeling a bit better. She looked around the huge house that was now hers. "It was just nerves, that's all. New house, new surroundings, just nerves."

She trudged upstairs and hit a light switch turning off the lights downstairs. Her feet hurt and she was exhausted. She just wanted to draw a nice hot bath, soak for a bit and not think about her reckless behavior with Kameron. "I can't believe I had sex with him again, and this time without a condom."

She made her way to her bedroom, undressed, and drew a bath. Once the whirlpool tub was full enough, she turned off the tap and stepped in, sinking down into the hot water. She rested her head against the lip of the tub, letting her mind mull over what had happened in the last five years. Her thoughts scattered when the phone rang again. Picking it up, she hit talk.

"Hello?"

"Hey, Lex, heard you got freaky at the wedding. Wow, for a shy girl you sure were taking a risk. Robin was not happy," Daun Ann said.

"Ugh, I know. I don't want to talk about it," Lexi responded.

"Okay, what are you doing right now?" Daun Ann asked.

"Having a nice soak in the fantastic whirlpool bathtub."

"Fully clothed, right? We may be cousins but we're not that close, okay? I don't need to hear you're nekkid or anything."

Lexi laughed. "Yes, I'm fully clothed and feeling terrible."

"There, there little Lexi, tell Daun Ann what's wrong."

"I got freaked out when I got home. Thought I saw a werewolf prowling around. I didn't bother looking to see if I was right. I refuse to be stupid horror movie girl. I am not tripping on thin air."

Daun Ann laughed. "Okay, other than the big bad furry, what else?"

"I was thinking about my family disowning me for not allowing them to serve me up as some sacrifice to further their social climbing. I'm happy that the engagement is off, but I just wish that things hadn't turned into such a mess. I mean, I ran away, for crap's sake. I still can't believe my mother said she wished I hadn't been born, and that my sister would have bowed down and married Michael. I also can't believe my father and brother went along with that." Lexi pushed away the sadness that had started rising.

"To be honest, your family is, well, a bunch of assholes, to put it lightly. Aunt Poppy was always a snob, which is why she only acknowledges the parts of the family that don't go furry under the full moon. Your dad, brother, and sister all bow down to her because she's the money in the family. You're the only normal one," Daun Ann pointed out.

"Thanks. Moving from place to place was hard. Being on the run was horrible. I hated putting everyone in the line of fire," Lexi said.

"We love you, honey, so we would gladly take a bullet for you."

"Thank you." Lexi sighed. "I'm so glad Altair gave me the job for the librarian post. I love books, so it's a dream job." Lexi felt excitement rushing through her veins at being able to spread knowledge and even read on the job when things were slow. "Altair is awesome and very understanding. When do you guys transplant yourselves over here?"

"We've already started. I don't come over there until the summit. Word has already spread about me from what I hear."

Lexi heard the smile in Daun Ann's voice. "Very cool. I heard from Kat today. I didn't say anything and won't unless you want me to."

"Please don't. I want my appearance to be a surprise. Robin doesn't even know about my post yet. Besides, this gives me the advantage. I get the goods on the other packs involved before they know about me. I'm sending Talia in a few months to scout for me."

"Will do. Wait, isn't Talia human?"

"Yup, which makes things sweeter for me. They won't see it coming. Hey, hon, I have to go. Gotta brief Talia before she goes," Daun Ann said.

"Talia is Kat's best friend. Why are you sending her to do your spying?" Lexi didn't like what she was hearing.

"Look, I have to go." Daun Ann hung up, leaving Lexi uncomfortable. Things had been fine when Daun Ann wanted to send in a spy to figure out the pack hierarchy, but dragging Katherine's best friend into it didn't sit right with her. As loyal as she was to her cousin, Lexi didn't want Katherine to get blindsided by the information. She hit speed dial but got Katherine's answering service. Sighing, she left a quick message asking Katherine to call her when she got a chance.

Putting the phone back in the charger, she sunk back into the tub and allowed her thoughts to drift. They ended up going back to Kameron. Over the five years she'd been on the run her thoughts were never far from Kameron. Sometimes she wished she'd stayed with him instead of running away, but she knew how the MacDouglas pack worked. Knew how cruel and vicious they were as well as just how many family members they had in Scotland. Lexi wasn't sure how she was going to handle dealing with Kameron and seeing Michael's kin. Blowing out a breath she closed her eyes and tried to relax.

After a half hour of soaking, she dried off, got dressed in her favorite baby doll pjs and climbed into bed. Sleep took her into the land of dreams.

Chapter Five

Kameron took a drag on his cigarette and blew out the smoke. "I really have to quit." He dropped the still lit stick onto the ground and smashed it with his shoe heel. Pain burst in his head. Grimacing, he doubled over, clenching his jaw. As the pain faded, his breath came out in soft pants. He groaned and slowly straightened up.

"You okay?" William asked, coming out of the darkness. He brought up an already lit cigarette to his mouth and took a drag.

"Headache," Kameron muttered.

"You've been getting those 'headaches' for the last couple of weeks. What's going on, Kam?" William demanded.

"Not your concern."

"It is my concern. You're my friend."

"I don't need a friend right now."

"Fine, then you're a pack member and we take care of our own," William pointed out.

"Yeah, yeah, you guys adopted me. Doesn't mean that my business is any of yours," Kameron said, turning away, taking in the diamond-studded sky. The moon was hidden by a group of large puffy clouds. Something was on the wind that didn't sit right with him. He felt uneasy and cagey. He felt William's eyes boring into the back of his head. Turning he looked at his pack mate. "What?"

"Regardless of whether you want one or need one, I am your friend even though you've been treating me like shite lately. You've been pushing me away, and don't think I'm not the only one noticing you putting distance between you and the pack. Altair is concerned."

"The old man is imagining things."

"Is Brody imagining things? He spoke for you when the rest of the boys were uneasy about taking you in. He's not here right now, but if he was, he would've beat the shite out of you for the way you've been acting."

"Where'd he go? He was at the wedding."

"Altair sent him on some business. He'll be back, but before he left Brody asked me to keep an eye on you. So tell me about these headaches." William crossed his arms over his chest. It was clear he wasn't going to let up on the subject.

"Gotta fag? I need a smoke if I'm going to tell you this."

William took out his pack of cigarettes and pulled out one of the thin sticks, handing it to Kameron. Kameron took it and let William light the end by producing a small flame on the end of his fingertip. Taking in a drag, he blew out the smoke, feeling his body relaxing. "My head feels like it's about to explode sometimes. I get these bursts of pain, and sometimes my mental walls just come down. Suddenly I'm in other people's heads, hearing their thoughts. It just happens. I can't control things anymore."

William ran a hand through his ink black hair. He tilted his head to the side, and Kameron could see he was thinking about what he just heard. "Does Altair know? About you?"

"Yeah, after I was inducted into the pack. I get my psychic ability from my father's side of the family. I don't know who my blood father is, never met him. I do know my mother did a family tree, including his family. The books are in the library, and so far I can't get access to it. The head librarian hates me."

"You do know that there's a new head librarian now? The old one retired. The new one starts tomorrow."

Kameron ran the new info over in his mind, flinching slightly as a spark of pain went off in his head. "I'll use the library as my last resort. I'm going to keep searching some leads I found with people who do have this ability. Maybe they can help me manage things." Kameron shrugged.

William shook his head. "Just know we're here for you."

"Thanks, mate." Kameron offered a rare small smile. He turned away from William and gazed out into the night. As his thoughts turned to Lexi and their encounter at the reception, heat flushed his body. His stomach tightened, cock hardening and pressing against the fly of his pants. He could still taste her, smell her. He wanted to be with her again and wake up beside her. For the first time in years he wanted to open himself up to someone else. Lexi made him feel whole and safe. His heart contracted. She didn't run away screaming when the wolf reared its head. She didn't back down from him, which turned him on immensely. *She's my mate but until I get myself under control, I can't be near her.*

Kameron looked back at William, who seemed to be looking off into the distance deep in thought. "Look, mate, I'm going to go home. See you later."

William only nodded in response. Kameron made his way to the parking lot, got into his jeep and headed home.

* * *

Six months later...

Kameron gritted his teeth as pain lanced his brain. Hunched over, he paused on the steps of the library to rest. He felt tired and winded. His mental shields gave way and several voices rushed into his head, voices mingling, laughing, arguing and teasing. It took a few seconds before Kameron regained control. Taking in a deep breath, he straightened up his body and continued making his way up the steps, praying the new librarian would give him the permission needed to gain access to his mother's records. He wasn't sure what he would do if he got another no.

He had been away for six months, only returning a few weeks ago to find that the roof of his cabin needed repairing. He was thankful the Montgomery twins had taken him in. He could have done without walking in on them and their mate Robin having sex everywhere in the house. Heaving a sigh, he pushed open the glass doors, practicing what he would say to the woman at the front desk. *I need to remain calm. Don't fly off the handle and insult the woman. Give her the doctor's note authenticating my connection*

to Bethany Fitzpatrick. Do not threaten to rip her throat out if she gives me sass. Also, do not call her an old bat. That didn't go over well with the last librarian.

He made his way to the front desk and waited. Kameron did not make himself comfortable by leaning forward and putting his elbows on the desk. Instead he stood still and remained quiet. The librarian had her back to him. There was something familiar about her figure. The scent of cherry blossoms reached his nose and his cock hardened. *Lexi*. His mind stalled and he didn't know what to say or do. He had been away when the new librarian had taken up the post. No one had told him what her name was. Now he was confronted with the woman who had haunted his dreams.

When she turned around, his mouth went dry. Her face was framed by dark brown curls, lips painted with a pale pink gloss. Her eyes were framed by long black lashes. His gaze roamed over her gray sweater and filmy pink skirt. She looked soft and feminine, and sexy as hell. He wanted to drag her behind one of the shelves and fuck her until she screamed.

Lexi looked up and his brain stalled. Her eyes widened and her lips parted in surprise. "Kameron?"

He blinked, not able to process what she'd just said. All he knew was she was speaking to him.

"Kameron, are you okay? What are you doing here?" She walked over to the table and stood before him.

Her perfume swirled around him mingling with the soft musky scent of arousal. A soft growl passed his lips. He wanted to be with his mate. "I need you. Now."

She blinked. "You can't just go away for six months and then come back and expect me to fuck you just like that."

He blinked. His cock was pressing against the fly of his jeans demanding to be released. His reason for being at the library floated away as memories of them being together filled his head. "Lexi, please."

"No." She crossed her arms, pushing her breasts up.

He focused on the mounds, wanting to uncover them, lick them, nip the sensitive peaks and hear her cry out. He became so lost in the fantasy that when she dropped a book on the tabletop he jumped. He blinked a few times to clear away the daydream. "What?"

"Kameron, why are you here?" she asked, putting her hands on her hips.

"I want to fuck you."

"No. What else do you want?"

He struggled to remember what he'd come to the library for. "I need a rare book for the Fitzpatrick clan. It's important."

"Do you have written consent to see the book?"

"I have a doctor's note authenticating my relationship to Bethany Fitzpatrick."

"I'm sorry, Kameron, the rules for those books clearly state you need written consent to see those books. The permission must be given by a living relative."

"I'm her son," Kameron insisted.

"And I understand that, but the rule is still there. It was part of her will."

Kameron's eyes narrowed as his mind worked. He didn't remember that as part of her will. Understanding dawned on him. His father had changed his mother's will. After all, it was Arthur Conroy's lawyer his mother had used when she drew up her will. "Fucking asshole," Kameron raged.

"Kameron, please keep your voice down," Lexi urged.

"This is unacceptable. That bastard changed her will to punish me. He and I need to have a little talk," Kameron growled.

"Kameron --" she started.

He turned away from her. "I have to go. I'll see you later." He left the library and got in his car. On the drive over he began to piece together his father's treachery. She had been too ill to leave the house. When she knew she was dying, she'd finalized her will and that's when he must have changed it. His mother had told him what was in the document, and to make sure his siblings didn't fight over their legacy. A few days after that she died, the will was read and nothing about the family tree books had been

mentioned. His father must have bribed the lawyer to leave that part out. "Those books must contain the identity of my biological father. And I'm sure there are other things Father didn't want us to know."

Pulling into his now ex-family's driveway he turned off the car and slammed the door shut. "Be calm. Don't overreact. He'll goad you into a fight. He'll insult you and Mom. Don't let him do that to you."

Banging on the door he waited for a response. The seconds ticked by, stretching into minutes. Feeling uneasy he turned the knob to find the door unlocked. Kameron walked down the long corridor. Old memories of an unhappy childhood surfaced as he strode past suits of armor, paintings, and furniture you weren't allowed to sit in, let alone touch.

He dropped his shields and stretched out his senses, searching for that burst of mental familiarity to indicate where his father and siblings were. The metallic scent of blood reached his nose and his nostrils flared. He heard a pained whimper ahead of him and the crack of a whip. Kameron flinched as phantom pains of the past rose up. His father's favorite punishing device was using the whip on his children. Arthur Conroy's kin weren't the only ones subjected to the weapon. His wife and servants were also victims.

Kameron still couldn't wrap his head around how his half-brothers and sisters remained loyal to the old man. He followed the noise until he was at his father's study. Not bothering to knock, he pushed his way into the room and nearly hurled. The sight that met his eyes was that of his brother, naked, bloody, and covered in large slashes. Kameron lost control. Anger swiftly rushed up inside of him, causing him to half shift. His head became wolf-like and his hands turned into claws. He rushed at the older werewolf, knocking him against the wall. Using his strength he pinned the older man to the wall. Opening his jaws wide, Kameron bit down on the man's throat. Hot blood flooded his mouth, nearly making him gag, but he kept the pressure on. His claws breached the skin, sinking into the muscles. He felt his father flinch but refused to let

go. Dropping his mental shields, Kameron shoved his way into the older werewolf's mind.

Beating your kin again, I see. Too stupid and weak to control them so you use fear and the whip to keep them in line. Pathetic.

Son, let go.

Now I'm "son?" Bullshit. You never wanted me and I'm exiled from this family.

You'll always be my son even if you are not my blood.

You don't care about me. All you care about is your life right now. You're trying to make a connection with me. Get me to leave you alone to beat the shite out of Sinclair. I'm not going anywhere.

Now you care? You left us long ago. What I do to my children is of no consequence to you.

I'm not your son, you sick and twisted son of a bitch. I'm a bastard, remember? A spot on this family's pristine appearance, but we know we're not as pureblooded as we let on, right, Father? You're just a common werewolf, nothing special, a bastard just like me, right, Father? I may have walked away but that's no excuse for what you've done to them, all of them.

I will keep them in line however I see fit. This is my pack, my kin.

Yeah, that's right. Your pack. But tell me something, Father, why is it that your sons and daughters look nothing like you? Take Sinclair, for instance. He's got blue eyes, not brown like you or green like Mom. Why is that?

Kameron began to laugh in his mind. He's not yours is he? None of us are. Which makes me wonder. Do you beat them out of hatred? Or perhaps fear that one of them will grow strong and challenge you for leadership? I'm guessing both. You're pathetic and so am I for not realizing this sooner. I was always afraid of you but now I see you for who you really are. You are a frail, scared little man who would jump at his own shadow. Let them go, Father. Let your children go and let them live. If you do nothing else in this life do that. They deserve that much. Now, I'm here about my mother's family books. Give me permission to access them.

Your grandmother needs to do that. She's the one who can give you access. I can't.

Liar.

I'm not lying. Julia requested that of me before she left. I only followed her wishes.

You don't bow down to anyone. Why her?

None of your concern. Now, let me go. Go find your grandmother.

Where is she then?

I don't know where she is. She left Scotland long ago. Please, Kameron, I'm begging you, let me go.

Kameron paused. He poked around his father's mind for the truth. Disappointment flooded him. Arthur really didn't know where Julia Fitzpatrick was. He let go and watched the older man slide down the wall. The man looked frail and weak, a shell of his once dominant and fearsome self. Arthur Conroy was no longer the big bad wolf of Kameron's past. "You're pathetic. You disgust me. It's really sad, you know. I used to try so hard to please you. Now I know the truth. You're a common werewolf, not a drop of pureblood in you. It's too bad that you've led the rest of the family to believe that they're so superior to others when you're actually at the bottom of the totem pole. I'll leave you in peace. That would be the right thing to do."

Turning around he was confronted with the huddling, bloody mass of his brother, who looked up at him. Fear and pleading could be clearly read in his sky blue eyes. Kameron crouched down. "Leave now, Sinclair. If you want to survive and be free, leave now. Altair takes in all the mutts like us. He'll welcome you with open arms if you want it."

He stood up and grabbed a blanket off of a nearby couch and covered his half-brother with it. Walking out of the room, he paused and looked back. For the first time in years he wasn't angry with his family. Conroy was slumped in an unconscious heap against the wall. His half-brother was a bloody mess, but could be strong one day, given the right guidance. The old wounds inflicted by his father and siblings didn't hurt as much.

Being a part of the O'Keefe pack had showed him what acceptance and friendship could be. Shaking his head, he sighed, "I'm a bastard but they still want me."

He turned and left, hoping his brother Sinclair would take him up on the offer to join the O'Keefe pack. Instead of pursuing information on his grandmother, he decided to see Lexi. He needed to be with her and absorb the calming effect she had on him.

He dug his cell phone out of his pocket and hit speed dial. "Katherine, it's Kameron."

"Kameron?" She sounded shocked and he didn't blame her.

"Yes. I need Lexi's address," he continued.

"Lexi who?"

"Lexi James, the new head librarian. I know it was Altair who put her there. I do pay attention in those weekly meetings. I need her address."

"You do? Really. Iain, he does listen. Iain, stop. Iain." She giggled and then moaned. There was a thudding sound and in the background he heard Iain curse. "Bloody hell, woman, you pushed me on the floor."

"Stay there. Kameron needs to talk to me. This is no time for nookie. I told you, my pussy is out of order. Oh shit. Sorry, Kameron."

He shook his head. Kameron knew Iain was a randy, horny werewolf, especially around his mate. Katherine and Iain seemed to forget other people were around when they were in the same room. *Just like when I'm with Lexi.* He pushed away that thought and focused on getting the info about Lexi's residence.

"It's okay. Look, I need her address."

"Why?"

"I just want to talk to her." He prayed she wouldn't pry. Much to his relief she gave him the information and he hung up. He turned off the road he was on and headed toward the woods just outside of town. It didn't take him long to find her house.

He pulled up in front of a mansion and let out a low whistle. His father's manor was big but Lexi's home seemed to dwarf it in height. It looked thoroughly modern about three stories high with tall windows. The style was American Contemporary made entirely of white brick. Smoke puffed upward from a tall chimney. The light over

the front step was on, and there was movement in front of the brightly lit window. The form was definitely feminine. Getting out of the car, he strode up to the front door and rang the bell, hoping Lexi would see him. His heart hammered against his chest, anticipation and need mingled in his blood.

The door opened and a distressed-looking Lexi stood before him wrapped in a pale pink silk robe. A burst of pain went off in his head and he winced. Concern for his mate flew out the window. "Lexi, I want to see you. Can I come in?"

Chapter Six

Lexi didn't notice Kameron's grimace. Her thoughts were on the most recent gift she'd received from her secret admirer. This time it was a bloody heart left on her back porch. The sight had made her vomit and she'd almost fainted. She had called Robin for help but her friend's cell phone was turned off and Katherine was busy fending off Iain. She didn't want him here. If Kameron stayed then he would get hurt and she didn't want that. The memory of the last time he'd taken on a werewolf surfaced in her mind. The blood, the sweat, the pain. Not again, she vowed.

Her stomach cramped and she prayed that she wouldn't hurl again. She was exhausted and her head was pounding. "Kameron, I'm sorry but right now isn't a good time."

"What's wrong?" Kameron asked through gritted teeth.

"Not now, Kameron, this is not the time." She would have slammed the door on his face but his hand came up, holding the door open.

"Don't do this, Lexi. Let me help you." His face was contorted in pain. She narrowed her eyes, taking in his face. He looked like he was having a migraine attack. Lexi was hesitant in asking for his help if he was dealing with problems of his own.

"What's wrong?" he repeated.

She was about to respond when they were interrupted by the sound of glass breaking and a growling sound. Lexi screamed. The stench of wet fur and blood filling the air almost making her retch.

"Move!" Kameron shouted.

She scrambled out of the way as Kameron rushed into the room. He immediately shifted and Lexi took cover. The snapping of jaws and growling could be heard in the distance. She heard crashes and thuds but refused to move from her hiding place.

Hitting speed dial, she prayed that Robin would pick up. A howl sounded nearby, causing goose bumps to rise on her skin. She needed help now. With a shaking hand, she put the receiver up to her ear and waited for Robin to pick up.

"Hello?"

"Robin, help me. Kameron, he may be in trouble. Bring the twins and the pack. Please. A werewolf has broken into my house and Kameron is fighting it off."

Robin's reply was drowned out by something hitting a wall nearby. Out of the corner of her eye she saw a large reddish-brown wolf slide down to the floor. *Kameron.*

Putting down the phone, she crawled out of her hiding place, determined to help him. Standing up she looked around the first floor of her home. Almost every bit of furniture was destroyed. A large black wolf paced before Kameron's body. Dread washed over her. A quick glance over at Kameron gave her some steel. She looked for something to hit the thing with. Spotting a still intact empty flowerpot she rushed toward it and picked it up. The weight almost made her put it back down. Clenching her jaw she continued to hold it as she straightened up her body.

She then turned and tried to throw it at the large wolf. The heavy pot caught the animal in the side, causing it to whimper. The pot crashed to the ground. Standing her ground and shaking like a leaf, Lexi faced the intruder. "I'm not afraid of you. So come on. Leave him alone. It's me you want."

The wolf shifted before her eyes into the form of her ex-fiancé, Michael MacDouglas. His pale, naked body was covered in blood and cuts. His long black hair was a mangled mess. There was a crazed light in his brown eyes. Her mouth dropped open in shock. "Michael?"

"It's time for you to come home. I might have told them I'd let you go but I lied. You're coming back to America with me." He walked forward, his bare feet walking over broken clay shards, glass and wood.

She stumbled back, shaking her head. "No, I'm not going anywhere with you. I'm not yours. I don't belong to you."

"You're mine, Lexi. You always will be no matter what anyone says. Come with me now. We'll leave this poor wretch here and I'll take you where you belong." He held out a scarred hand and she shook her head.

"No. I'm not going anywhere with you. Stay away from me."

He moved with unnatural speed. In the blink of an eye he was before her. She stumbled back and he reached out, grabbing her hand. He yanked her to him. She pulled back her free hand and punched him. His head snapped to the side and he let out a growl. He pushed her away from him and she hit a wall, her head slamming against the brick. Stars burst in front of her eyes and she felt dizzy. Thankfully, her vision cleared.

Michael kept coming toward her. "You're coming home with me."

"Think again, asshole," Kameron growled, tackling Michael from behind and crashing him into the wall.

Michael's forehead hit the wall and he cried out. Kameron grabbed Michael by the hair, yanked him around, and then pushed him, sending the other man across the room. Kameron was on him in a flash, straddling Michael's midsection. Kameron landed blows on either side of Michael's face. Michael managed to push Kameron off of him. Kameron hit his head on the wood floor. Taking advantage of his opponent's momentary defenselessness, Michael pounced, kicking Kameron in the stomach and then the head.

"No!" Lexi rushed toward the fighting men. She picked up a bowl that was filled with rocks. Dumping out the contents as she ran, she rushed up behind Michael and bashed him on the back. He howled in pain and whirled around unfazed. He shifted before her eyes, becoming the large black wolf from before. He reached out and swiped at her with large claws, catching her in the face and causing a burst of stinging pain. Hot blood slipped over her features.

Stumbling, she tripped over a fallen table and landed hard on her ass. Before she could get upright, Michael fell forward, his face contorted in pain. She looked over at Kameron. Blood slipped down from his nose, and his face was scrunched up in

concentration. Lexi wasn't sure what was going on, but whatever Kameron was doing was working.

A large statue flew in the air, hitting Michael in the head. "Stay the fuck away from my mate," Kameron growled.

Michael collapsed, shifting back into human form. Lexi straightened, wiping away the blood, and rushed toward Kameron, who was now lying on the floor unmoving. She dropped down to her knees and took his head in her lap. She ran a hand through his hair. "Kameron?" Her heart threatened to beat out of her chest as fear took over. He looked so pale and his breathing was shallow. "Kameron?"

"Lexi?" Robin's voice called out. She heard feet trampling into her house. "Lexi?"

"Over here. Kameron's hurt." The feet rushed toward her and surrounded them. "Kameron fought off my intruder, Michael MacDouglas."

"Let's get MacDouglas to Altair. William and Brody, take care of Kam. Lochlan and Rorick, you guys come with me. We're taking care of the MacDouglas moron. They can't attack one of our own and get away with it." Lexi didn't look to see who was speaking. She just kept stroking Kameron's hair. Sniffling, she tried to hold back the tears that were threatening to fall. Someone laid a hand on her shoulder.

"Lex, we're going to take you with us back to the O'Keefe castle. Come on," Robin said gently. Reluctantly she allowed Robin to help her up while William and Brody lifted Kameron's limp body. He looked so broken Lexi couldn't take it. She broke down and began to sob. Two sets of arms wrapped around her. She laid her head on Robin's shoulder and cried.

"Don't worry, sweetie. Iain's going to tear a strip off of someone, and I'm going to help him," Katherine growled.

"No you're not --" Iain was cut off by his mate.

"Just try and stop me," Katherine challenged.

Lexi felt arms retreating from around her. She couldn't bring herself to thank Katherine. Her voice was gone. She felt exhausted and wired at the same time. Robin pulled back. "Let's go, Lex. We've got to go heal your man."

Lexi looked up at Robin, shocked. Ever since the day at the wedding, Robin had been trying to warn her away from Kameron.

"Hey, I'm not blind. Kameron doesn't kick ass for just anyone. Besides, I know you have a thing for redheads." Robin chuckled and Lexi gave her a crooked smile. It was all she could muster. They made their way out of her house and got into a waiting SUV. The ride over seemed to go so slowly.

She kept fidgeting in her seat while Robin made small talk. When they pulled up outside of the O'Keefe castle, Lexi undid her seat belt and rushed out of the car. When William and Brody pulled Kameron from the backseat, she felt weak. He looked paler than at her house and his eyes were closed. His face was contorted into what seemed like a mask of pain.

"Kameron?"

He didn't respond.

"Lexi, we have to get him inside so that Altair can look at him. Don't worry, things will be fine."

"He doesn't look fine." Panic began to rise up, nearly choking her.

"Lex, let them take him inside. Altair will know what to do," Robin assured her. The doors were flung open and Altair strode out. He went directly to Kameron and looked him over.

"Lexi, please go to the library and get the Fitzpatrick family tree books. Don't ask questions, just do it. Robin, take her to the library immediately. Where are my son and his mate? Where are the twins?"

William answered that question while Robin led her back to the car. "Trust Altair. He's never steered us wrong."

Lexi nodded reluctantly. She glanced back before getting into the truck. She knew Altair would take care of Kameron. He had before and he would do it again. She couldn't stop the fear, couldn't hold back the thought that after all this time they had finally found each other again only to be lost. All the way to the library her mind refused to stop running over all the horror scenarios.

"I barely know him and yet he's haunted me all these years," she whispered.

"I thought you just met him at the wedding?"

Lexi shook her head. "I met him five years ago. Remember when I got stuck on the way to your place and there was an attack? He was the one that saved me. He defended me. He got injured and was in so much pain. I slept with him to ease the pain and because I wanted to. He made me feel safe. He was still rough around the edges, but I could see he was a good person underneath all that gruffness."

She fell silent remembering that night. *Had that been Michael too?*

"Robin, the O'Connell lands, do they belong to the O'Connell pack or the MacDouglas pack

"Let me think. Oh yeah, the O'Connell pack is an offshoot of the MacDouglas pack. One of the men married an O'Connell woman. Now the packs are joined but are individual unless something comes up. The packs up here are really complicated with so many offshoots. Thank goodness they don't inbreed anymore. That's just too much *Deliverance* for me."

"Shit, give me your phone," Lexi demanded.

"What?"

"I need to call Kat."

"It's in front of you in the holder. She's in the speed dial directory."

"Okay." Lexi reached out and grabbed the small phone. Scrolling through the numbers, she found Kat's and hit "talk." Katherine answered on the first ring. "What?"

"Michael may have attacked Kameron before." Lexi quickly explained about the night five years ago.

"Son of a bitch. I'm going to stick my foot up their asses and wear them as shoes. Call you back."

"Why would you think it was Michael?"

"It's just a hunch. He was not happy with me breaking things off, and he definitely not happy with how things turned out."

"You never did tell me how you got them to break it off."

"I had a PI follow him. The man exposed Michael having an affair with another man. If there's one thing Mom can't stand more than the thought of not having something to lord over another person, it's man love. Sometimes I wonder how I turned out to be normal when most of my family is so phobic."

"And we're so glad you're normal," Robin replied.

"I feel horrible. I'm the reason Kameron is so --"

"Stop it. Stop beating yourself up. What happened is not your fault. Michael is the one to blame for all of this. Let Kat have some fun making his balls into her garters. Besides it's not much fun for her lately. She's only got Iain's balls to bust. Don't worry about Kameron. He's tough, he'll get through this," Robin reassured her.

Lexi didn't say anything. *I just have to believe that he'll make it through this.*

"Okay, so why do we need to look through the Fitzpatrick family tree?"

"Because Kameron's mother was a Fitzpatrick. I'm assuming there's something in there that can help him with what Kameron is going through."

"What is he? He's not a normal werewolf."

"None of those guys are normal werewolves. But it's not my place to say. Even though Altair trusts you enough to man the library, which contains all of our records, you're not part of the pack. Until he declares you family you have to be kept in the dark. Sorry."

"It's okay. I understand. Werewolf packs are a secretive bunch."

They pulled up to the library and got out of the car. Lexi unlocked the door and they went into the basement to retrieve the books Altair requested. As they carried them out to the car, Lexi stopped as a thought occurred to her. "Wait, only Kameron's grandmother can give permission for these books to be taken out."

"Crap, let me call Altair." Robin went into the car and made the call while Lexi sat down on the steps of the library. She looked up at the overcast night sky. "I would hate to have us come all the way over here for nothing."

Robin returned a minute later grinning, "It's all taken care of. We bring the books and Kameron's grandmother will be at the house when we get there."

"Uh, okay, let's go." Lexi and Robin gathered up the books and rode back to the castle. When they got there, they were greeted by a tall, willowy redhead.

"Hello, I'm Julia Fitzpatrick, Kameron's grandmother." She extended her right hand. "Good to meet you."

Both women just stood there staring at her. She looked to be about thirty years old. Lexi shook her head. *No way can that woman be Kameron's grandmother.*

Julia laughed softly. "I see you don't believe me. That's fine. Many people don't believe I have full grown children and grandchildren." She shrugged.

"Come, let's go help my grandson." She turned and walked back into the castle with Robin and Lexi trailing behind her arms laden with books. They followed her to a small study. "Just spread the books out here. What we are looking for is an incident similar to the one Kameron is currently experiencing where one is trapped within one's mind. I've tried connecting with him but there is a wall blocking me. So I need to find a way around that."

"I take it that he's a telepath? How is looking through family trees going to help us?"

"Yes, dear, he's psychic, as am I. These books are more than just family trees. It's our family's history. Everything that we ever accomplished or went through, are in these books. These books will tell us the paths our abilities took and what happened along the way. Some of my ancestors were telepaths. Something in here could be similar to Kameron's situation."

"Okay. I was just wondering. He used his mind to attack Michael. He moved items with his mind."

Julia tapped her chin. "He's never done that before as far as I've heard. Perhaps he's reached a new plateau with his abilities, and he's overloaded his mind. This could be a reboot. We'll look through the books and find confirmation." She walked over to Lexi and grabbed a few books off the top of her stack. "Come on, let's buckle down and do some research."

The girls followed her to a large table and sat down spreading the books around. They got to work looking for anything that was even similar to what Kameron was going through. Coffee was brought in periodically to keep them awake. By the time they found something, it was four in the morning, and all the women were exhausted.

“Ah ha! I found something here in the passage about your great uncle Donal.” Robin passed the book over to Julia who took it and read it over. “Very good, this is a start.” Without looking up she called out to Lexi. “Lexi, come with me. I need your help.”

Julia stood up, nose still buried in the book. She left the room, not looking to see if Lexi was following her. Lexi rushed after her while Robin continued to research. Julia wound her way through the castle not once looking up. They arrived at a sparse guest room with just a bed and a chair in it.

“Altair, we think we’ve found something. Lexi has to hold his hand while I try and make mental contact. Altair, I’m going to need some of your power to boost my own. Also, after this is done, I’m going to need to stay here and work with Kameron as he recovers and after.” Julia didn’t look up.

“Done. Let’s get started,” Altair replied.

Chapter Seven

Kameron stumbled around in darkness. Cold air swirled around his body. He put his hands out before him trying to feel for something solid in front of him and got nothing. Pain shot through his body like a shower of electrical sparks. He bit down on his bottom lip to keep from crying out. Once the pain had faded away, he felt power slide along his skin like warm oil. Closing his eyes he let his body relax and extended his senses, trying to determine the source of the energy.

"Who are you?" he called out, feeling stupid.

"I am you," came the growled response.

Confused he opened his eyes and came face to face with the golden gaze of his wolf counterpart. With a shaking hand he reached out, sliding his palm along the muzzle. The fur felt soft and warm. A sense of safety and security descended upon him. He dropped his guard completely, knowing his wolf would defend him should anything happen.

"Where are we?" Kameron asked.

"Trapped in your mind. We fought to defend our mate. You used some of your psychic ability, and after that we found ourselves here." The wolf looked away. It shook its head and loped back into the darkness. He called out to Kameron. "Come, I think I have found a comfortable place to wait for help."

Kameron followed his wolf into the darkness until the dimness began to fade, turning into golden light. He stopped walking, staring at the scene before him. Perplexed, he took in the overstuffed chair sitting before a large fireplace.

"What is this place?" he asked aloud. Walking forward, he found his wolf lying on the other side of the chair, legs stretched out before him, tail slowly tapping the floor.

"This is the safe place in your mind," his wolf responded. "Don't you remember it?"

Sitting down, Kameron tried to think. No memories surfaced in his mind. He shook his head. "No."

"This was the place you went to when your father beat you for being different. This was your grandmother's study. Do you remember her?"

A tall, lithe redheaded woman with laughing eyes and a perpetual smile surfaced before him. She wore an oversized green sweater, a long skirt and tan boots. Julia Fitzpatrick, the kindly woman who protected her grandson from his overbearing father. His heart warmed and heat spread out to the rest of his body. A sense of safety descended on him. "How could I forget her? She protected me from my father when I was too young to understand why he hated me. He drove her away."

Kameron felt small and helpless. He scooted back into the chair and brought his legs up, hugging his knees to his chest. "I couldn't even bring you out to protect myself. I didn't know what I was then. I remember one incident where I moved something with my mind by accident. I didn't even know I had done it until the candy dish slid off the table and broke. He beat me so badly and afterward asked me if I understood why I was being beaten. I said yes even though I still wasn't sure."

Kameron shivered, trying to pull his knees closer to his body. He rested his forehead against his knees and felt the slide of hot tears on his face. "I didn't know. I just didn't know."

"You blocked out those memories to survive. It's understandable. Nothing was explained to you. Your mother couldn't tell you. She was too afraid to say anything," his wolf responded.

"Why? Why did she marry him?" Kameron looked to his wolf for answers, knowing his animal only knew what he did.

"It was not a love match, Kam, you know that. That's what Grandmother told us. Your mother married him to strengthen the pack, nothing more. They didn't love each

other, at least not on her end. Her affairs were done to hurt him but she loved every child that came from those encounters.”

“So I was right. My siblings aren’t his.”

“Yes. You always knew what was going on. You just never acknowledged it.” His wolf yawned and closed his eyes.

“What else did I block out?” Kameron wondered out loud. His mind began working overtime trying to piece together the parts of his past that he had sealed away. Time no longer mattered as he remembered all the pain and misery of his childhood. The fear, self-loathing, confusion and anger bubbled to the surface. Not being able to just sit there anymore, he began to pace. “I was stupid.” Sinking down in the chair he placed his elbows on his knees and rested his head in his hands. “I was just so blind.”

“You didn’t want to see it but you felt it. Knew something was wrong. You were trying to survive. There is nothing wrong with that.”

“Yes, but now I see. I should have been protecting my siblings. The ones that couldn’t fight back, they didn’t understand why things were happening to them. It wasn’t their fault.”

“No, it wasn’t their fault. They also had a choice to make, and they chose not to protect each other. Your father’s wrath was all consuming. He punished each of you in different ways. It is not up to you to save your siblings, especially if they don’t want to be saved. It is up to you to give them a choice and then walk away. If they follow us to the O’Keefe pack then so be it. You can’t save them all.”

Kameron sighed and his shoulders slumped. He felt disappointment. He knew his siblings would turn him down. “Once I grew and began to understand, I became angry. Angry that I couldn’t protect myself, angry that I couldn’t protect others, and angry that I didn’t know what was happening to me. How was I supposed to know that I was psychic? No one told me, trained me, gave me any hint of what I was. Now that I know I’m still lost.”

“You’re not alone. We’ll find your grandmother,” his wolf promised.

"How? We don't even know how long it will take before I'm no longer trapped in my mind."

"Kameron?" A soft female voice called out.

Lexi?

Kameron sat up and looked around. "I could have sworn I just heard Lexi."

"Kameron, where are you?"

He looked down at his wolf, whose head was up off the floor, his ears pointed forward. The wolf stood up and loped out into the darkness. Kameron stood up, ready to rush after him, but he didn't need to. His wolf returned with Lexi trailing him. She looked worried and confused. When she saw him she rushed forward and threw her arms around him. "Kameron, thank goodness this worked. We were so worried we wouldn't be able to get through to you."

He wrapped his arms around her, savoring the warmth of her body. She pulled back her head, her dark brown eyes sparkling with unshed tears. Reaching up, she brushed her fingertips gently over the side of his face. "Your grandmother is here. She sent me in here to get you."

"How did you find her?" He slid a hand over her back, taking in that she was solid and familiar.

"Altair found her. There is no time. You must think really hard about your grandmother. Picture her, focus on her image."

Kameron wasn't sure what that would accomplish but did it anyway. The image was not as before. The woman that appeared looked serious and worried. She wore all black, her fiery red hair pulled up into a messy topknot. Her features softened and she rushed forward. "Oh, Kameron, thank goodness we can get through to you. Take my hand, we must go back."

"Will someone explain what is going on?" Kameron demanded.

"Later, once you're awake. Come now, take my hand," Julia said.

Kameron did as she asked, not letting go of Lexi. "What about my wolf?"

"He's not trapped with you. He's just here to keep you company," his grandmother explained.

"Oh." The room around him faded. Within seconds he was blinded by a bright light. Groaning, Kameron brought up his arm to shield his eyes against the glare.

"It worked!" a familiar voice declared. Something heavy landed on his chest. "Kam, it's so good to have you back."

Opening his eyes slowly he found that his grandmother was the one lying on his chest. Her arms were around his neck, and she was hugging him tightly. He felt tears against his neck and realized she was crying. "Gram, don't cry. It's okay, I'm fine."

Julia got off of him and hit him on the shoulder. "Never do that to me again. Your mother may not be alive to beat your arse, but don't think I won't. I will pull down your pants right this minute and spank that bottom of yours. Giving an old woman a scare like that. The nerve! I thought I helped raise you right. Come along, Lexi, Altair needs to speak with the idiot."

Before Kameron could protest Julia was dragging Lexi out of the room and closing the door behind them. He grimaced as his head began to pound.

"It will pass, don't worry." Altair sank down into a wooden chair that was placed next to the bed. "Now, I know you have questions but I must have my say first."

Kameron eyed the old man, whose aquamarine eyes seemed to glow slightly. "You can't help the family you're born into but you can create a family of your choosing. That is what this pack is, family. We may have differences, been born of different packs, not always gotten along, but we are family. If you have a problem you come to me or one of the boys. I could have helped you months ago with your psychic problems if you had only asked. We could have found your grandmother together instead of waiting until you were in danger to call her home."

He felt a flash of anger at the knowledge that Altair had known where his grandmother was, knew that he had been in danger did nothing. He opened his mouth to say something but was interrupted.

“Don’t you dare get angry at me. It is I who should be angry with you. You endanger yourself and others, smack our hands away when we try and help, and then think you deserve to be angry because I kept something from you? Hurumph,” Altair snorted. “You’ve been keeping your problems from us, trying to handle things on your own. How are we supposed to help you when you won’t even open up and share with us, hmm? Are we supposed to read your mind? Anticipate your needs? I understand what your father did to you but do we deserve to be punished? Do we deserve to be treated as unwanted and stupid? You act like we wouldn’t understand.”

He paused to catch his breath and then continued, his voice growing louder, eyes glowing brighter. “What about the twins? Shunned and insulted by other packs because of their incubi blood? Do they deserve that? No. How about Brody with his wizard ancestry, does he deserve to be made fun of? Or Roarke with his half tiger side? How the bloody hell do you think he feels constantly being insulted, put down, abused and cast out by both his clans. Do you think he lives like a monk because he wants to?” Altair roared.

The old man stood up and leaned over him. Kameron felt as if he was being burned. “And what about William, so much guilt in that young man. Not only does he feel he drove his fiancée away because of his werewolf side, but he’s an elemental too. Do you think he feels wonderful with the guilt he carries that he started the fire that killed his family, hmm? Do you think he feels just dandy knowing he was responsible for the deaths of his loved ones? You aren’t the only beaten puppy in the world, Kameron. Grow the hell up. We are a pack. We may be outcasts, exiles, abused, and beaten but we damn well will not take anything lying down. We give it back as good as we get it and then some. We are a family and you will damn well act like we give a fuck.”

Kameron pressed his body against the mattress. Never in all his years of knowing Altair had he seem him so angry before.

“Grow up, Kameron, or leave. I have never made an offer like this to anyone before. I do hope you will stay, but I can’t sit around worrying about all of you all the

time. I'm old. I'm tired." Altair pulled back, looking worn and frail. "I want us to be a family, damn it. I want this pack to come together to help each other before I retire. That is my only wish for this pack. That's all I ask. Take it or leave it, Kameron, but know that whatever you decide, we will be here for you. We're all damaged here. All of us. You will never be alone. I'll go get Lexi. I'm sure she's still shaken. I'll make sure to put her in a room close to but not right next to you. You need rest for what is to come."

Altair turned and left the room leaving Kameron on the verge of tears, and angry at himself for not seeing what was right in front of him. Brody and William had both approached him, trying to get him to open up and he pushed them away. Regret weighed heavily on him. "I've been so stupid."

* * *

Lexi wrung her hands, worried about what was happening in the room. Altair was yelling. His words were muffled by the door but the tone was clearly angry.

"Don't worry, dear, it will be fine. Altair is just giving Kameron a good swift verbal kick in the arse. Nothing to worry about," Julia said, leaning against a wall, a lit cigarette situated between her index and middle finger.

"How did you know that what we did would work? I could have been trapped in there with him."

Julia shook her head. "I didn't know what would happen. I've never done or witnessed something like that before. But I do know one thing. He cares about you. Altair told me all about the two of you."

Lexi's face flushed with heat. "How... how does he know about me and Kameron?"

"He knew from the very beginning, the old devil. He called me up after that night five years ago saying my grandson had found a mate. I wanted to come back then, but the situation wouldn't allow it. I missed my own daughter's funeral, fucking bastard," Julia muttered.

"Huh?"

"Five years ago, my daughter died. She was in a car accident. They couldn't revive her. Kameron's father, well, his non-biological father, sent his hounds to keep me away for fear that I would expose his little impotence problem. You see, the asshole couldn't have children, and my daughter, his wife, was fertile. Anyway, all of his children aren't his. A childless head of pack can be replaced according to wolf law. I am still quite powerful among the packs. One word from me and that worm would have been out." She paused to take a drag of the cigarette then continued.

"He ran me off by threatening to hurt my daughter and her children. I went, knowing he was lying, but I didn't want to make things worse. I've always regretted that. I roamed Europe, trying to stay away. I always regretted consenting to the marriage, but it had to be done according to the old ways. Back then things were still very medieval, with unmarried female wolves married off like cattle to eligible, rich bastards. Things changed, but by then it was too late. The damage had been done. But we that still remain bear the scars of what was done to us." Julia looked sadly at Lexi.

"That sounds horrible, but again, how did you know I wouldn't get trapped?"

Julia gave her a rough laugh. "Because you're his mate. You could get him to calm down enough to drop his shields and let me pull you both out. Kameron needed to feel safe. You do that to him. What happened was quite simple. To protect you, he'd lashed out with his mind, pouring all of his power into one attack and focusing it on your attacker. It was quite effective but backlashed on him. The attack came back and trapped him in his own mind. In his weakened state he couldn't fight his way out. I couldn't very well go into his mind. I couldn't make him feel safe and secure after I left him. You were the only one he would open up to." She took a drag off her cigarette and blew out the smoke.

"And now what?"

"Now we train him. He must learn to use his mental abilities to their full potential. Something I didn't have time to do before. Now we find out just how powerful he is. He's going to need you. Well, not just you. He's going to need the pack, too. It's going to be hard but he's strong. He'll get through it. Ah, Altair is done. Your

turn. Altair and I have to discuss my living arrangements and such. Besides he owes me six hundred quid for a first class ticket here plus cab fare."

"You could have flown coach." Altair grumbled as he shut the door behind him. "Don't go in just yet, Lexi. Let him think first. Wait half an hour and then go in. Besides, I assume you'd want to gather some things together from your house to bring back here with you."

"I'm staying here?" Lexi looked up and down the hallway. She'd only been to the castle once and it had amazed her then. To stay in such a place boggled her.

"Why, of course. I wouldn't want to put you in a hotel. It's too impersonal. Besides, you'll be close to Kameron and he needs you."

"No, just say it, old man, you're cheap and refuse to put her up in a good inn," Julia said as she snuffed the cigarette out in her hand. Lexi watched as the skin mended itself immediately and all that remained were ashes.

"That is a disgusting habit we must break you of. And you're damn right, inns and hotels around here have ridiculous rates and they are so impersonal."

"See, cheap. Go on, Lexi, shower, change and gather some things. I have to go talk to my grandson about the things to come." Julia placed her hands on Lexi's shoulders, turned her around, and slapped her on the butt. "Off with you now."

Lexi let out a small shriek and started moving down the hall, her face hot with embarrassment.

"Did you have to do that? Such a tomboy. How you got married to a husband who loves you, I will never know," Altair said.

"Ha, look who's talking. Your wife was so full of life and vigor, and you with your books. How she never got bored I will never understand," Julia shot back.

Altair snorted. "Come on. I'll give you your damn money and then you can see your grandson."

Lexi waited until they were far enough down the hall before she turned and made her way back to Kameron's room. Opening the door quietly, she rushed over to the bed and laid a quick kiss on his forehead. "I'll be back. We need to talk."

She didn't give him a chance to respond. Instead she rushed out of the room and down the stairs to find Robin on the phone in the foyer. She waited for her friend to finish her call before telling her she had to go home. After a quick shower and some packing she returned to the castle and went directly to Kameron's room.

Thankfully no one was around to stop her. Kameron sat in bed, looking deep in thought. Not wanting to distract him, she was about to turn and leave when he called out to her. "No, stay, sit by me, please. You said we needed to talk before."

Lexi came into the room and shut the door behind her. She sat down and pulled the chair closer to him. "I want to take things slow. I like you but I don't know you. I want to get to know you and to do that we have to take things slow, okay?"

His silence stretched out between them, making her nervous. Finally he spoke, "I understand. I actually want to take things slow too. I spoke with my grandmother, and my training is going to eat up a lot of my time. I want to be able to give you all my attention, and over the next few months I won't be able to do that. I know Altair will be giving you a job besides the one at the library so you'll be busy too. But we will be together, right?"

Lexi gave him a smile. "You better believe your furry ass."

Kameron started to laugh. "I never asked you. How do you know about werewolves?"

"I'm related to a few. Maybe one day I'll tell you more but they like their privacy."

Kameron nodded. "I understand. Come here. I want to hold you before I fall asleep. I need to know you're safe."

She did as he asked and climbed on the bed. He wrapped his arms around her and soon fell asleep. Lexi felt a sense of guilt come over her. Despite her loyalty to her family, she felt a loyalty to Altair and all that he'd done for her. Gently pushing away Kameron's arms, she slipped out of bed and left the room. Once out in the hall she feared it would take forever to find him.

"Looking for me?"

Lexi jumped and placed a hand on her chest. She felt her heart thudding rapidly against her ribcage. "Altair, I was just going to try and find you."

"You have something on your mind, yes?"

Lexi nodded. "Yes, I need to speak with you about my cousin."

"Come, come, child. Let's go into my private study. Much more privacy, the walls have ears."

"I am not eavesdropping. That's for children," Julia called out.

"See what I mean?" Altair turned and began walking down the corridor. Lexi rushed to catch up. They walked until they were at the end of the hallway. He unlocked a door and pushed it open, gesturing for her to precede him. She expected a small cramped room, not a large two-floor library. Her mouth dropped open in wonder. A small table sat before a large roaring fire. A well-padded chair sat before the desk.

"Please, sit down." He gestured to the seat and made his way around the table to sink down into a large leather bound executive chair. He rested his elbows on the tabletop and pressed his fingertips together. Lexi sat down, heart thudding against her rib cage. She licked her lips and began her story. Altair barely responded to her confession. There was an occasional raise of an eyebrow or an "Aha," uttered but that was about it. When the confession was done, Lexi sat there waiting for Altair to say or do anything. It didn't take long.

"I know all about your cousin and Talia. I've known for quite some time. Do you think I don't vet my employees thoroughly? I make it a point to know as much as possible beforehand to plan appropriately. Don't worry, my dear, all is well. Brody will deal with Talia and I have a feeling that William will be dealing with Daun Ann."

Lexi was stunned. There were no words that she could say to express her shock. Altair knew it all. "Did you know that things with Kameron would come to this?" She crossed her arms over her chest and waited for an answer.

"No, I didn't. I had hoped that he wouldn't be so stubborn and would let us in. He's had a hard life but his tale is not mine to tell. I will say this, had I known that

things would have resulted in him being trapped in his mind for a time I would have called in Julia sooner.”

“Did you always know where Julia was?”

“Yes, she and I wrote to each other once a month. I kept her updated on Kameron and the state of the packs.”

“You could have called her in earlier,” Lexi pointed out.

“Yes, that is true. I could have but chose not to. Kameron needed to ask for my help. That may sound horrible or silly but it is the way I wanted things to be. Kameron is so used to doing things on his own. He must be pushed into asking for help. It was like puling teeth to get him to admit that he can’t do everything on his own. He had to be shown that the pack will always be there for him.”

“He could have been killed,” Lexi said, trying to tamp down her anger.

“Like you could have been killed had Kameron not gone to you that night five years ago? Tell me, Ms. James, how many times did you ask for help while you ran away from your family? How many people did you withhold information from while jumping from house to house? Wouldn’t it have been to your advantage to tell them what they were helping you hide from? What would it have cost you, Ms. James? Didn’t your friends deserve to know the full details of the danger that followed you instead of the basics? The only information you would tell them was that you were running away from your family.”

She sat uncomfortably in her seat. Her face felt hot and a sense of guilt fell over her. Lexi wanted to defend herself. “I was trying to protect them!”

“Look how well that did for you tonight. At the summit, Michael MacDouglas will be punished for his actions. All of these incidents could have been avoided had you taken the time to explain your predicament to Brody. We may be a small pack but we are not incompetent.”

“You’re being a hypocrite. You’re keeping things from your pack,” Lexi said, feeling good to have found something she could use against Altair.

"No, Ms. James. Katherine, Iain, Conall, the twins and Brody all know what is going on. Roarke is in self-exile with his assistant Melody. Kameron was kept in the dark in order to force him to come to us. William, on the other hand, has issues he is trying to deal with. He is only told the basics. But if there is danger, I do tell my pack everything I can. I am their leader until I step down. It is my job to protect my pack, every member. Now you are a member of this pack as you are Kameron's mate. I will do everything in my power to protect you and keep you informed."

Lexi was at a loss for words.

"Go, Lexi. Get some rest. The next few weeks will be very hard on Kameron, and he will need you. We also need your help. I will not ask you to betray your family. I just need your researching skills." Altair laid his hands on the table, his blue-green eyes boring into her.

"Will I have to leave the library?" She didn't want to leave her new job. She loved it there.

"No, we will just need your time on the weekends, if you don't mind," Altair said in a gentle voice.

"That I can deal with." She gave him a small smile.

"Good, now off with you. I must go rest myself. This day has been very trying." Altair looked just as tired as she felt.

"Night."

"Good night, lass."

Lexi stood up and left the study. Instead of going to her room, she went to Kameron's. She took off her shoes and jeans. She crawled into his bed, wanting to reassure herself that he was okay. As she snuggled down, he turned over and wrapped his arms around her, placing a kiss on the top of her head. They fell asleep in each other's arms.

Chapter Eight

Kameron awoke feeling at peace. He breathed in deeply and sighed. Opening his eyes, he took in the sight of Lexi sleeping next to him. Her dark brown hair was spread out over the pillow, shining in the morning light. Reaching out, he ran his fingertips over the satin smooth skin of her cheek. Leaning over he pressed a soft kiss on her lips. She moaned, "No, no, I have morning breath. Don't kiss me."

She turned her head away from him. Rolling over, Lexi buried her head in the pillow. He laughed and wrapped his arms around her, pulling her closer to him. As soon as her body made contact with his, he groaned. His body flushed with heat, skin tightening, and cock hardening. He rolled his hips against her ass, letting her feel his erection. "I don't care. I need to be with you. Connect with you. Be with me, Lexi. Please?"

She finally rolled over to face him. "You're not one hundred percent yet."

Reaching up she caressed his face. He closed his eyes, savoring the touch. "I've never felt better. I don't know if the headaches are gone, but I do know that I want to be with you."

"But --"

He interrupted her. "No buts. I know you want to be with me too."

Kameron opened his eyes and watched emotions flit across her face as she debated the pros and cons. He ground his hips against hers and reached up to caress her face. He trailed his fingertips down her neck and over one of her cloth-covered breasts. She moaned, arching her back toward him.

"I need to hear you say it, sweetheart. I want you to tell me that you want me." His voice was a husky whisper.

"I want you." Brown eyes met gray. He could see the desire burning in dark chocolate depths. Hungry for contact, he brought his head down and kissed her with passion. Reaching between them he impatiently ripped her shirt and panties. Lexi shrugged out of the tattered remains of her shirt while keeping contact with Kameron's lips. She wrapped her arms around him, and he groaned when she pressed her body against his. Pulling her face away from his she looked up into his eyes. "Make me yours, Kameron."

She rolled onto her back and gazed over at him. He didn't have to be told twice. Kameron covered her body with his. She tilted her hips up and wrapped her legs around his waist as her arms went around his neck. Reaching between them he positioned himself at her entrance and pushed his hips forward. Grunting, he slowly sunk into her tight, wet channel. Her walls contracted around him, squeezing his cock. Withdrawing, he entered her again slowly. He didn't rush things. He kept the pace leisurely, letting the fire build between them.

He lowered his head and he flicked one of her nipples. Taking the nubbin between his teeth, he sucked it into his mouth. She cried out. Transferring his attention to her other nipple, he increased the rhythm. Releasing the tight bud, he kissed his way across her collarbone and up her neck. He traced kisses along her jaw before pressing his mouth to hers. Withdrawing he slammed into her, fucking her harder and faster now. He reached between them to slip a finger between her pussy lips. Finding her clit he began to rub the pearl hard before pressing down on the nub.

She cried out. Her pussy spasmed around his cock. Her vaginal walls clamped down on his shaft as her limbs began to shake. Lexi dug her nails into his shoulders. The pain triggered his wolf to rise to the surface. He pounded her pussy, hitting her cervix with each stroke. She came again, crying his name out as she shattered. Fire trailed up and down his spine, and his fingers formed into claws, ripping into sheets and the mattress. His balls drew closer to his body as the tingling at the base began signaling his own orgasm. His cock twitched. He threw back his head and howled as he

came, spurting seed deep inside of her. He didn't stop thrusting his hips until his balls were empty.

He felt drained, arms shaking as he tried to hold himself up. Not able to keep his strength he slowly lowered his body down and wrapped his arms around her. Kameron rolled their bodies until she was on top. Brushing back strands of her hair that were sticking to her face he smiled at her softly. "I'm so thankful you're my mate."

"And I'm thankful I found you."

"Let's get some sleep. I think we gave them a good enough show for today," Kameron said laughing. He watched her face turn from sleepy contentment to horror.

"They were listening... at the door?" She buried her head in the crook of his neck.

Kameron shrugged. "This is a pack of perverts, exhibitionists and voyeurs. You get used to it."

"Oh, my God," she groaned.

Kameron chuckled again, feeling more at peace with his life than ever before. He had his pack, his grandmother and his mate. Life for him had just gotten much better.

Selena Illyria

I/R author Selena Illyria was born with an overactive imagination. She loves to write stories featuring futuristic cities that can only be imagined, visit island kingdoms of vampires/dragons, giggle with mischievous pixies, peek in on faeries looking for their mates, check up on the naughty staff of an exclusive academy, and sigh over how in love a powerful business exec is with his wife. She can't wait to write stories with her talented, creative and wonderful CPs, Celia Kyle and Shara Cooper.

When she's not writing, she loves to read books of many different genres. She also loves to watch some of her favorite movies (too many to be named) and television shows. She also loves to listen to some of her favorite musical artists. All of these things help inspire her to write.

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