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WICKED

Kris Eton



ICE WHITE

ARCTIC HEAT 3

Arctic Heat 3:

Ice White

By

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Ice White

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Chapter One

Caleb Barstow trudged through the wind-whipped snow. The storm had blown in quickly, like they often did in this part of the world. It reminded him how harsh the climate in Antarctica could be. He was a long way from sunny Arizona. He shivered in his arctic gear. Even though he wore several layers of clothing, a thick parka, and a fur-trimmed hood, the dry gusting winds blew straight through him.

Thank God, one of the storage sheds was up ahead.

He'd been hoping to get back to the Beta Group Research Center before the whiteout. But since he'd been at the Antarctic Research Observatory, or ARO, for three months, he'd learned the value of always having a Plan B whenever he had to make a trek outdoors. Dr. Tate would just have to wait for the additional supplies he'd requested.

As Caleb trudged to the metal door of the storage shed, he noticed it had been left open a few inches. When he pushed, however, the door refused to open completely.

His gaze lit upon the reason why—a naked and shapely hip blocked the door.

Sweet Jesus.

The soft rounded hip was part of the soft rounded woman lying on the floor, unconscious. Or dead? Drifts of snow blew inside the shed and skipped across her prone form. She didn't move. His heart slowed. How long had she been lying there? In temperatures well below freezing, hypothermia took hold in minutes and death followed quickly thereafter.

Worry battered his thoughts. What if he'd found her too late?

With the storm screaming at his back, he hurriedly slipped inside, shut the door, and bent down to check the stranger's pulse. He breathed a sigh of relief when he felt a surprisingly strong thump under his fingertips.

In the dim lighting from a small, snow-encrusted window he could only see the woman's outline. What was she doing here? And why the devil didn't she have any clothes on?

He averted his gaze to keep his heart from pounding and his blood from boiling. He hadn't had a good fuck since he left Tucson in October, and his damn hormones wouldn't stop reminding him. He exorcised the inappropriate thoughts from his head. She needed his help.

He grabbed a flashlight stashed on the wall and switched it on. The harsh beam revealed a strikingly beautiful woman. Her eyelashes were like snowflakes against her pale skin. Her hair was long and almost as white as the snow gusting outside.

He unzipped his parka, and covered her with it. No jacket. No boots. What was she doing out here? He knelt down and brushed her hair off her face.

From the dust that stirred, he knew she was breathing, but her skin felt chilled to the touch. He needed to warm her up. Fast.

Leaving his flashlight on the floor, he scooped her up and tipped her back against his chest. The parka twisted around her lithe body, and his hands touched directly against soft, womanly flesh.

Fuck.

Gently, he set the woman on a pile of wool blankets stacked on a cot. Each shed contained the bare essentials should anyone get stuck in a squall. To get caught unawares in the changeable weather of the Antarctic wasn't unusual.

The storage shed held mostly emergency food and supplies for the shape-shifter enclave inside the block-shaped building on stilts about a quarter-mile from the research center. He'd never been inside the shifter facility, but he'd heard tales.

He looked down at the beautiful woman. Was she one of them?

Had she been part of the sex games and other wild things he'd heard about? She didn't look like any of the black-haired shifter females he'd seen coming and going from the ARO.

Dang, it was cold in here.

He scanned the dark recesses of the eighteen-by-eighteen foot shed. A propane heater sat near a set of shelves full of unmarked cardboard boxes. Hopefully, there'd be some useful things in them. He grabbed a battery-powered lantern and switched it on. It lit up the shed with an odd white light.

A quiet groan caught his attention.

When he turned around, his mystery woman was wide awake.

The parka had sagged off one shoulder, revealing the sweep of her collarbone and the top curve of one breast.

He sucked in his breath.

"Where am I?" Her voice was like sunlight, bright and warm.

He passed a hand across his mouth. "In one of the storage sheds on the outskirts of the compound. There was a storm. I came here to wait it out and found you passed out on the floor."

A furrow appeared between her brows. She sat up straighter, and the parka slipped lower. "A storm..." She seemed to notice her state of undress just then, pulling the parka closer around her. "You aren't from the facility." The warmth from her voice was gone.

"No, I'm not. I'm a researcher at the center. My name's Caleb Barstow." He took a step forward. "Is that where you came from, the shifter facility?"

The woman gazed at him with glass green eyes. A sprinkling of freckles dotted her cheeks and nose. "Yes, but I don't remember how...how I got here."

* * * * *

Anna had woken up feeling very, very cold. Her hands and feet tingled painfully, and her lips stung with windburn. The last thing she remembered was climaxing with Jared at her side. They'd shared a session

of mutual masturbation, and she'd only needed a few moments to feel the shift coming on. The electricity rolled from deep within her body and out toward her fingers and toes. To shift was highly erotic in nature.

She hadn't yet chosen a mate, but Jared had been her choice for most of her time at the facility. His wavy, white-blond hair and warm smile grabbed her immediately, and he had a lazy style of lovemaking that calmed her. Although she'd tried multiple sex a few times just for a taste of it, one-on-one was more her style.

The only strange thing had been her problems with staying in shifter form.

And somehow she'd ended up in a shed with Caleb. He was a tall figure in insulated bib snow pants and a green-and-black flannel shirt. Dark hair curled at the back of his neck. Definitely not a shifter—shifter males had white blond hair like she did—but she could scent him. Which was odd.

Humans had no sex scent like shifters did. Shifters found their mating partners by detecting it.

So why did she find his particular smell so...arousing?

"My name's Anna Gustafson." She took in his scent.

God, she wanted to jump him. Her attraction for this stranger was intense. Unlike anything she'd experienced with the male shifters. No one had mentioned to her this was possible. He was human for God's sake. Humans were so, so...normal. She made sure to keep herself as covered as possible. It must be a glitch. She was probably in some kind of shock.

"How long do you think the storm will last?" she asked. The wind howled outside.

"I'm not sure." He turned his back to her and crouched down in front of the propane heater. "I hope this works. Those blankets won't be much help once the sun goes down."

She took the opportunity to slip on the parka and cover herself. When she swung her legs over the side of the cot, it was so cold she thought the better of it and tucked them underneath her instead. If she was naked, she must have been in wolf form when the storm hit. She wished she could remember.

"This has never happened before. I don't usually get lost when I'm..." She wasn't sure what to say. How much did the researchers know about the activities in the ARO and their abilities?

But Caleb wasn't really paying attention; his focus was on the heater. He pressed a small button, turned a knob, and the heater burst to life. "There we go." He stood up and opened the vent on the far wall. "There seems to be enough propane to run this through the night. We should be okay."

"Oh." Through the night? She was going to be here all night long with this man? Without meaning to, she took another whiff of his scent. Her nipples puckered in response.

"Are you hungry?" He turned to the shelves filled with cardboard boxes. "All of these sheds should have emergency supplies." He opened a box. "What the hell?" He glanced at her, his face flushed.

"What is it?"

He shoved that box back on the shelf and chose another one. "You've got to be kidding me." His ears turned red.

Anna, curious, got up from the cot and padded to the shelves barefoot. "What is it?" The parka hung to mid-thigh. She grabbed another box.

"Don't..." He reached for the one she selected.

But it was too late. He caught the edge, she tugged harder, and the box dumped its contents onto the floor. Half-a-dozen cock rings lay at their feet.

"Oh." Standing this close, his scent overpowered her senses. She leaned toward him, wanting to get closer, wanting to feel the heat of his body against hers. Why didn't anyone tell her *this* is what the shifter attraction should be like? All consuming. Desire over reason. She flattened her hands against his chest.

He encircled her wrists, and his eyes widened. "What are you doing?"

Scent drove her. "I need you, Caleb."

"What?" His eyes betrayed his need for her. His pupils darkened and his Adam's apple bobbed up and down.

He sensed it, too. They were a perfect pair. Although he was human, she knew it to be true. She unbuttoned his shirt. "We are mates. I want to make love to you, Caleb. Here. Now."

Chapter Two

Beneath the plaid shirt, Caleb wore a thermal undershirt. Anna growled in frustration. She wanted to feel his naked skin under her fingertips.

He stilled. The hands that had secured her wrists moved to her shoulders. "I don't understand." His mouth descended toward hers. "How can this be? Who are you?"

"I am the woman you were meant to love, Caleb. Me and no one else." She unhooked the straps of his snow pants. "Take off these clothes. I need to see you naked."

Instead of obeying, he kissed her. His lips were gentle, soft, and nothing like what she needed. She bit his lip playfully.

He jerked back his head. "Hey."

Her gaze locked onto his. "I make the rules here." She wiped the tiny drop of blood from his mouth. "Not so fast."

A slight smile curved his lips.

He liked it. He liked it when she took control this way. Her blood throbbed in her veins. Getting lost in the snow had been the best mistake she'd ever made. "Take off your clothes. I want to watch you undress for me."

The parka grew decidedly too warm. Her breasts felt full beneath the thick material. But she would see him naked first.

He took off the plaid shirt and pulled the thermal one over his head to reveal a muscled chest with dark nipples and tight abs. *Delicious.*

She picked up one of the cock rings and took a seat on the cot. The parka rode up her thighs, and she crossed her legs slowly, knowing he got a short glimpse of her naked pussy. His gaze traveled from between her thighs to level with her face. He licked his lip where she'd wounded him and unzipped his pants. He kicked them aside and stood before her in long johns and wool socks. His dick tented the tight cotton fabric leaving little to her imagination.

"Is this just another game for you?" Caleb lowered the long johns a few inches revealing his hipbones and the flat expanse just north of his pubic hair. "I've heard what goes on in the ARO."

"You have no idea." Slowly, she unzipped the parka. Her clit throbbed. He was beautiful standing there in the lantern light. Odd shadows stretched across his lean body. His dark hair was tousled from the hood he'd been wearing. Sweat beaded at his temples.

Since this man was human, interaction of a sexual nature was taboo. The shifters didn't discuss it out in the open, but she'd gotten the impression sex with humans was beneath a shifter. They were supposed to find mates to keep the shifter line pure. Instead of the diluted markers in one's DNA that every now and then resulted in a shifter, they desired to mate the shifters to create one hundred percent pure shifters. Breed the humans out of the mix.

But all of that purebred talk mattered little to her now.

She moved the zipper farther down, exposing only a bit of cleavage. A wave of scent drifted over to her. Now that he was sexually aroused even further, his sex scent had increased. How did the human do it? Jared's scent had been pleasant, but nothing like Caleb's. Hot and feral. His scent called to her, told her subconscious that to mate with this man was essential and necessary to her well-being.

His gaze was focused on her cleavage. She let the parka fall off her shoulders some, until her nipples were barely concealed by the thick fabric. "Do you want me, Caleb?"

His hand rubbed across his aroused cock. "You know I do."

She shivered, imagining how incredible he would feel inside her. "Then strip and put this on before you're too big." She tossed him the

cock ring.

He caught it. "You want me to what?" He'd been on the verge of taking off the remainder of his clothes, but not now. "Hell no."

Anna unzipped the parka the rest of the way, spread her legs, and sat at the edge of the cot.

Good, he was looking right at her pussy.

"I want you, Caleb. I do." She stroked her inner thigh with two fingers, drawing even more attention to the prize she knew he wanted.

"Jesus." He swallowed.

"I want you to touch me right here." She dipped two fingers into her hole. "God, I'm so wet, Caleb." She sighed in pleasure, her head lolling back. She slowly spread wetness between her pussy lips and around her clit. "Mmm, that feels good."

Caleb kicked off his long johns and eyed the cock ring in his palm.

* * * * *

He had to be crazy. What had come over him? How did he end up naked in a shed during a blizzard with this gorgeous woman? And why was he even considering putting this *thing* on his penis. He eyed the cock ring in his hand. He'd never been one for kinky sex before. Missionary position had always been fine with him. If she wanted to be on top, why not? But toys and biting and...

His gaze focused on the tempting female who sat just a few feet away.

God, he could smell her from here. Her scent was musky, but sweet. Different than other women he'd known. Anna had a slim body with small, yet perfectly shaped breasts. Each one was tipped with a pale pink nipple. Nipples he'd love to squeeze and kiss.

To watch her touch her pussy was almost unbearable. The moist pink flesh, so soft, so ripe.

His erection hardened further.

Anna laughed. "Now you're going to need the lube." She got up from the cot and rifled through the boxes on the shelves. The twin moons

of her smooth white buttocks tempted him more than he'd like to admit.

She turned and uncapped a brand new bottle of lubricant. "Allow me." After pouring some into her hand, she fisted his cock in her small hand.

God, did that feel fucking good.

Her grip was tight, but not too tight. He groaned when she slid her hand down his length to coat his penis with the lubricant. He knew if she touched him like that much longer, he wouldn't be able to hold himself back. He settled his hands on her hips, massaging the soft curves. In one hand he still held the cock ring.

She let go. "There, now let me put on the ring." She took the rubber cock ring out of his hand.

"I don't know...." He looked from the ring to his erect penis.

She smiled up at him. Her white-blond hair was like a halo around her head. His snow angel. So beautiful. Her scent so delicious. "Trust me. I won't hurt you—much." Her smile turned playful and her eyes sparkled with mischief, further softening the impact of her vow.

Before he could say anything more, she took the cock ring and rolled it from the tip of his penis to the base. He grunted. The pressure of the ring around his sensitive organ was painful and pleasurable at the same time. Quickly, she knelt down and slipped the loops over his balls to keep the ring in place. Her hands were cool on his heated sac. He clenched the muscles in his ass in response.

"There, was that so bad?" She smacked his ass, hard, before she stood up.

"Hey!" He jolted in his place.

"No complaints." She smacked him again. This time the sound echoed in the small storage shed. She rubbed her hand soothingly across the flesh she'd just punished, then smacked him again. "You like that, don't you, Caleb?"

"Is this what goes on there?" Curiosity filled him. He knew very little about the shifter facility, but rumor was rife. He stuck to his job, though, perfecting the techniques to identify shifters. The pay was out of this world, and he had to admit a strange fascination for shifters that went

beyond tales of sensual excess.

She rubbed her hand across his ass. He anticipated another smack, since he had ignored her question to ask one of his own. His dick throbbed in the ring. To his surprise, the spanking turned him on.

"No questions. You'll do as I say." *Smack!*

His cock throbbed and turned deep red. His need for her was intense. Almost too intense.

"Sit on the cot."

Obediently, he sat. If this was what it took to get inside that sweet pussy and find some relief, then he would play along with her game. He enjoyed having the woman take charge for once. In fact, it was more than enjoyable. He found giving her the control to be pretty damn hot.

From the cot, he had an ideal view of his naked snow angel. Her pussy was shaven with the exception of a narrow strip of white-blond pubic hair. Her waist was narrow, her hips slim. Her long hair hid most of her breasts from his gaze, but he knew they were pale like the rest of her and just the right size for his hands.

With a slow smile, she reached into one of the boxes on the shelf. She pulled out a riding crop and stalked toward him. As she closed in she thwacked it against her thigh.

"You will stay seated in this position, unless I tell you otherwise. Do you understand?"

His dick throbbed. "Yes."

"Good." She smiled wickedly and positioned herself so that one foot was on either side of his knees.

The scent of her pussy was overwhelming. God, she was so ready for him.

Slowly, slowly, oh so slowly, she sat down on his thighs, leaving some distance between them. His cock rose between them like a flag of surrender. She didn't need to tease him any longer. When he finally got to sink his dick into her cunt he knew it would be good. Too good. Amazingly good.

Chapter Three

Caleb's penis was hard and ready for her. And, if Anna's past experience with sex partners and cock rings was any indication, he'd have the most intense orgasm of his life. But until then, she was ready to tease him.

The use of the ring allowed him to keep his erection longer than normal, and Anna could hardly wait to see how long he'd last for her. A thrill ran down her spine at the thought.

He sculpted his hands around her hips and then worked them up the sides of her torso until they rested underneath her breasts. His touch was fire and ice. He leaned toward her, opening his mouth, intent on the rosebud of a nipple in front of him.

"Not so fast." She grabbed his wrists before he could caress her further. His movements stilled. He was learning very quickly to be obedient. "You are here for my pleasure first. Then, you can have release."

He licked his lips, his gaze intent on her naked tits.

And, God, did she want to feel his mouth on her breasts. But not yet. If she made him wait, it would be better for both of them.

She leaned forward, his erect penis between them, and gave him light kisses on both cheeks. When she passed from one cheek to the other, she hovered over his mouth. His breathing grew labored and erratic. "Do you want me to kiss you, Caleb?"

"Yes." His gaze was even with hers. Dark and needy.

She tickled a hand across his erection. He jerked. She kissed him

and pushed her tongue into his mouth. He kissed back, hard and desperate. She curled her fist around his engorged member and squeezed. He groaned, and his body bucked upward. He pulled his head away from her. "Jesus, you're going to kill me."

She picked up her crop and smacked his thigh.

When his eyes grew even darker with desire she laughed. "Oh, this is just the beginning of the game, Caleb." She kneeled on the cot, raising herself up over his cock. She positioned herself over him and allowed just the very tip of his dick to touch her moist center.

In obvious agony, he closed his eyes and bit his lip. But he didn't move.

In slow lazy circles, she moved her hips, gyrating to an internal rhythm. The head of his penis rubbed the moistened labia of her cunt. Whenever he tried to thrust upward, she smacked him with the crop. She lowered herself another inch, allowing his dick to enter her a mere fraction, then she withdrew, moving so that the head of his penis pressed against her clitoris.

His groans grew more strained. "I can't hold on much longer. I can't." He slipped his hands around her hips again. He resisted directing her movements, but she knew he was holding himself back.

"You will." She leaned her body forward slightly. "Lick my nipples. Do it."

He snarled and latched on to one of her tits. She'd kept him waiting for his chance, made him desperate to touch her. So it didn't surprise her when his licks and bites came hard and fast. They caused her to soar higher. The control she'd wanted over him ebbed away each second. But goddamn it, it didn't matter anymore. Caleb clutched her sides and pulled her toward him. He feasted on her breast, suckled at her nipple. The pull of her climax was too much to ignore.

With her hands on his shoulders, she moved once more to position his penis and plunged down hard. She rode him with rapid precision. Her cunt met the solid rubber of the ring over and over, while her inner muscles clenched at his firmness. Caleb lost his hold on her nipple as her breasts bounced from the intensity of her motions. But she didn't care. She

didn't need that stimulation anymore. The slide of his penis inside her was enough. She wanted more and more of him, pressing hard, wanting to feel the head of his cock against her womb, the space filling with nothing but him and his desire for her. With his scent in her nose, she rode on and on, not knowing if the climax she wanted was well beyond her or just within reach. She just knew he felt so good inside her, she didn't want to stop. He met her motions with thrusts of his own, apparently sensing when to speed up and when to slow down. Her cries grew louder and more distant to her own ears. She knew then that her orgasm was near. The feral part of her DNA told her so. Prepared her for that moment.

Mentally, she left the human part of her behind and allowed the animal in. One more hard slide in her cunt, and her orgasm exploded. As if a million ice crystals rained down on her. Tingling across her whole body. She was mildly aware of Caleb crying out, arching up into her, his seed filling her. But most of her mind was focused on her own release.

As soon as he was finished, she slid off of him and took a step back. "Don't be afraid of me, Caleb. Please don't be afraid." The words were a plea, urgent and breathless.

He was human; she was shifter. This mating was not supposed to be. But as the waves of passion subsided, the shifter part of her brain took over. No matter that Caleb might fear her, the shift would happen. There was no stopping it now.

Chapter Four

Caleb was instantly aware of when Anna pulled away. He'd only just climaxed, a hard, mind-numbing moment, and she had left him. He opened his eyes to see, not his snow angel before him, but something between human and animal. Fear gripped his gut.

Although he knew his work enabled the search for shifters, although he knew without a doubt shape-shifting men and women lived and existed less than a thousand feet away from the research center, to see one changing right before his eyes was astonishing.

Anna's limbs shortened into haunches, her smooth-as-silk skin sprouted soft white fur, and her beautiful face with her bright green eyes and smattering of freckles morphed into a wolf's snout.

The arctic wolf now in front of him paced the small storage facility and whined. Her nails clicked on the hard floor.

The fear quickly left him, as he realized she meant him no harm. He stood and took a few steps toward her, his hand outstretched.

Wolf Anna backed away.

"Don't be afraid of me," he soothed. She took a few cautious steps toward him. "I won't hurt you." She snuffled his fingers and licked them. She allowed him to sweep his hand down the soft fur on her head. After a moment of contact, she reeled back and headed for the door. She scratched at it.

Outside, the storm still screamed in fury. In wolf form Anna would probably be fine. But what if she changed back into a human and once

again was trapped naked in the storm? This time she might not be so lucky to find shelter.

"No, Anna, you must stay here with me tonight." The wolf focused her green gaze on him. He didn't know if she understood him, but she stopped the scratching.

He unfolded the blankets on the cot and climbed underneath the scratchy warmth. The propane heater should last several more hours before it needed to be refueled, and he knew dawn was not too many hours away. "Come, lay with me. We can keep each other warm." He lifted the blanket to invite the wolf next to him.

Anna paced back and forth. Her intelligent green eyes taking in everything.

After a few moments of waiting, he let the blanket fall. Unless he opened the door for her, there was no way for Wolf Anna to escape. Even if she didn't want to share the cot with him, she'd still be in the shed when he awoke. Sexually sated, he let sleep overtake him quickly. Just before he lost consciousness, he sensed a warm shape settling on the cot near his feet.

* * * * *

Hours later Anna awoke, trembling with cold. She lay naked, curled in a ball at the foot of the cot. Caleb, his body snug under several wool blankets snored lightly.

How did she end up here?

Shivering, she grabbed the parka off the floor and zipped it up.

The last thing she remembered was riding Caleb's cock. His hard member buried to the hilt in her cunt. And then, nothing...

Could she have shifted last night? With a human sex partner?

Her guide, Hannah, had told her that was not possible. Shifting could only be achieved with a true shifter mate.

Her insides chilled. Impossible or not, it must have happened.

What did Caleb think when he saw her turn into a wolf?

If anyone at the facility found out about this forbidden affair with a

human would she be sent back home? Would she lose Jared or any other shifter as a potential mate because of her interaction with Caleb?

The rules of human-shifter mating were unclear to her. No shifter female had ever mentioned any serious relationships with humans before they'd arrived at the ARO. Typically, shifters were rejected by humans as too aggressive.

But why was this one different?

When Caleb switched position she knew he'd be awake soon. Quickly, she shoved her feet into his boots, cinched the hood around her face, and opened the door. The storm had ended. The pale distant orb of the sun glowed weakly in the milky blue sky. The temperatures were certainly below freezing, but she only had a short distance to run before she was safely back in the ARO.

Although she was leaving Caleb with very little outside protection, he had his snow pants, shirt, and long johns, plus several wool blankets. He could manage.

By this evening, she would forget their coupling had happened. She must. It was a fluke, her meeting him. The shifters tended to stay close together during their time in the Antarctic. She needed to do the same. Only one shifter had ever moved permanently out of the ARO—a woman named Kerry whom no one spoke much about.

Caleb would return to the research center, she would explore other mates, and all would go back to normal.

As she ran back toward the ARO one strange thing kept running through her head. Her shift. She'd stayed in wolf form longer than she ever had before. Something she'd been trying to achieve since her first shift. Hannah had told her she needed to find the right mate. Sometimes some shifter females needed just the right scent, just the right male for the shift to take hold completely.

But Caleb wasn't a shifter. So he couldn't be her mate. Still, how could it be that sex with a human helped her achieve a complete shift?

She took the stairs to the ARO facility two at a time. She wanted to get inside quickly in case Caleb caught up to her. She didn't know how he'd react to her transformation, but she couldn't dwell on that now, not

when her own thoughts were a tangled mess. Only one thing was clear. He was human; she was shifter. She could never, never see him again.

She slammed the outer door behind her and entered the reception room.

Two male shifters were engaged in sex with a tall shifter female. All three were naked. One nibbled at the woman's generous breasts, the other penetrated her from behind.

This was the world she knew. The erotic world of shifter sex—out in the open, unafraid of experimentation, comfortable in their nakedness. As the woman climaxed, Anna remembered her own night of passion and wondered if she'd ever be able to forget how right it felt to fuck Caleb Barstow, a human.

Chapter Five

Caleb sat at his station, pouring over blood test results. Several days had passed since his encounter with Anna, and he couldn't get her out of his mind.

"Starting to get snow fever?" Kerry Campbell, one of the lab techs, asked.

Caleb blinked and gazed up at his redheaded co-worker. "Hmm?"

Kerry shook her head and smiled. "If I didn't know you better, I'd say you have a girl on your mind." In the time he'd been here at the research center, he'd had no interest in pursuing any romances. Very few women worked at the facility, and most were much older or married. Kerry was single, but she had an interesting relationship with Dr. Tate and his brother from the rumors that had been flying around.

"What gave you that idea?"

"Maybe the fact that you've checked the same blood sample three times in the last five minutes."

Caleb looked at the slide in his hand. She was right. "Can I trust you?"

Kerry's eyebrows shot up.

His gut told him he could. She'd appeared among them one day, and Dr. Tate had given very little explanation for her arrival. Some believed she was part shifter, but her red hair would belie that fact. Although, Anna wasn't black-haired like the rest of the female shifters... "I met someone the other night."

"Oh?" Kerry pushed away from her laptop.

"Promise me you won't tell anyone." He had to unburden himself, and Kerry seemed trustworthy enough.

She took her time answering, clearly weighing the options in her mind. "All right. I promise."

"I was late for work the other day because I got lost in the storm. I managed to get to one of the storage sheds...and so did someone else." He let that sink in before continuing. "It was a woman. A shifter. And we...she and I... Well, I don't know exactly how it happened. But now, I can't get her out of my head. I know it's wrong. I know there's supposed to be professional distance between us and the shifters. I just want to see her again. Is that so wrong of me?"

Kerry reached and patted his arm sympathetically. "That's not wrong at all. I've often felt the pressures placed on the shifters to stay with their own kind were unwarranted. We don't know if shifter-only relationships are what's best genetically, and I certainly don't believe you can force intimacy based on one factor alone." Kerry scooted her stool closer to Caleb's. "I have personal experience this is not the case. Not everything claimed in the ARO facility is truth. Trust me."

Before Caleb could question her further, their supervisor, George Tallin, entered the room. "Kerry, I need you this morning. They need a blood test over at the ARO. Dr. Tate wants to re-test someone."

Kerry hopped up from her stool, but then quickly sat back down. "I can't. I'm...I'm right in the middle of a very important test. Why don't you send Caleb?"

Caleb tried to keep his emotions in check. Kerry was helping him out. Getting him inside the facility where maybe he'd have a chance to see Anna again.

Tallin focused on him. "Do you know how to draw a sample?"

"I'm a little rusty, but I can do it."

"Don't screw this one up, Barstow. Dr. Tate is very eager for the test results."

Caleb gave Kerry a look of thanks and followed Tallin to suit up for his trek across the snow and ice. If he could get inside the ARO, he would

find a way to track down Anna. He'd make sure of it.

* * * * *

Anna sat in one of the smaller gathering rooms they used for medical purposes when needed. She'd been waiting for twenty minutes. Someone was supposed to take a new blood sample. She rubbed her arms. The light silk robe she wore had seemed warm enough when she'd first put it on, but now she was chilled.

When she'd showed up at the ARO weeks ago, there'd been some curiosity about her coloring. Female shifters were supposed to have black hair. Only the male shifters had white blond hair like Anna's. Hannah, her guide, had been welcoming and instructive, but did mention she was the first blonde female she'd ever seen at the ARO. Although shifters were contacted initially because of secretive blood tests conducted here in the Antarctic, the details of the shifter community weren't revealed until they arrived. Anna had suspected she was a shifter for a couple of years and wasn't surprised by the contact from the organization that conducted the tests, the Beta Group. But the physical differences between her and the other female shifters had made her wonder why she was so different.

The night in the storage shed, her eyes had been opened. She was attracted to a human male more than any other male shifter she'd met. Obviously, her coloring wasn't the only thing that made her different from her shifter cousins. It didn't take much convincing to set up another blood test. The initial screening had been very rudimentary. Researchers discovered new aspects of the shifter gene all the time, and getting another blood test from the very people making those discoveries seemed like a smart thing to do.

Hannah had been surprised by her request, but Anna had the feeling she wasn't the only unusual shifter who'd made her way to the Antarctic.

So now she sat in this sterile, empty room to await the blood test that might tell her why she was so different.

A knock sounded.

Anna took a seat at the card table they'd set up for her.

"Come in."

The door swung open. Caleb Barstow entered.

For a moment, she couldn't breathe. What was he doing here?

Although she'd thought she'd glimpsed a moment of surprise on his face, now his features were impassive. "Please roll up your sleeves."

"Caleb, how did you...?"

He opened up a small black bag and pulled out a tourniquet, a needle, and three vials. "Let me see your arms."

She stretched out her forearms. With gentle fingers he brushed across the sensitive skin on the insides of her elbows. Her stomach fluttered at the touch. "I'm sorry I left you there. I didn't know what to do."

Was he angry? He wouldn't look at her. He took the rubber tourniquet and tied it on her upper arm. "Make a fist please."

Her breathing grew erratic. His sex scent wafted into her nose, stirring feelings deep down inside. Making her body limp. She wanted him. "Caleb, please..." She closed her hand in a fist. The veins in her arm became more pronounced.

He palpated one. "And hold." He met her gaze, questions and need vivid in his eyes. Maybe a little hurt, too, but no anger. "Why did you leave?"

She held her fist closed while he slipped the needle into her arm. Blood began to fill the first vial. He released the tourniquet. "We're not allowed to...mix with humans. I couldn't let them know."

His eyes held hers. The intensity in them made her body hum. His thumb brushed across the thin skin at her wrist. "I came here to find you." The first vial filled, so he replaced it with a second one. "I don't have much time before they escort me out. But I couldn't pretend the other night didn't mean something to me."

"Shifters are supposed to be attracted to other shifters. I don't know what's wrong with me...but I don't want any of them." A warmth grew in her belly. "I can't pretend either. I want you, Caleb. Only you."

A silence grew between them as the second vial filled. He pressed a

gauze pad against her skin and pulled the needle out. "Hold this, please, and raise your arm."

She did what he asked, waiting for his response. Hoping he wanted her just as much as she wanted him. He ripped open a bandage package. "Let me see if the bleeding's stopped." She lowered her arm and let go of the gauze. He placed the small bandage over the wound.

Then his fingers trailed down her arm. Goose bumps rose up all over her body at his touch. He leaned down and kissed the soft skin of her inner arm. "I don't care what anyone says," he said. "You were meant for me." He planted kisses up her arm, carefully over her wound, and to her shoulder. "I came here to find you, Anna."

She sighed, her whole body relaxing. The rush of endorphins made her skin feel flushed.

"You were meant for me," he repeated, his eyes dark as night. He took her mouth in a searing kiss. His fingers sifted through her hair. She opened her mouth to his and drank him in. His taste, his tongue, his very essence. His sex scent was everywhere, invading her nose, filling her with unchecked desire. Her hands grabbed at his shirt, and she pulled him close, until he was kneeling on the hard tile floor between her spread legs.

Beneath her silk robe she wore only a pair of thong panties. Nothing else.

Caleb nibbled at her lips, advancing and retreating, causing her blood to stir. His hands moved from her hair to her shoulders. Deftly, he pushed the loosely tied robe down off her shoulders, exposing the tops of her breasts. Her nipples hardened in anticipation of his touch. Hard points beneath soft silk. Caleb tentatively touched her breast through the fine fabric, his hand hot as fire. He molded her soft flesh under his fingers, teasing, manipulating, massaging. She groaned into his mouth, and he kissed her even more deeply. She arched forward, her body poised on the edge of the chair.

His other hand rested on her thigh. Just when she thought he'd touch her between her legs, he pulled away.

A breath of air left her lungs at the shock of it. She blinked, trying to focus. Why had he stopped? They needed to hurry. Someone would

come for him soon.

He whipped the silk tie from her robe and stood up. "Put your hands behind your back, Anna."

Her robe fell open. Although he was trying to be in control, his gaze flicked to her exposed breasts. She could turn this around on him so quickly. But she let him play the dominant one for now.

She placed her hands behind her, and the edges of her robe slipped open even farther. Her legs still spread wide, her pussy was barely covered by the scrap of the thong panties she wore. He wouldn't last much longer under these circumstances, and she smiled to herself at the thought.

Swiftly, he tied her hands behind her back. The silk tie was soft against her wrists. She could be free in moments, if she wished. But this was his game.

Anna let her head fall forward so that her hair covered her face with a white blonde curtain. She sensed him above her, his presence one of strength and hardness. Hardness she wanted to feel inside her.

Once again he knelt on the floor in front of her. He placed his hands on either side of her spread pussy, his thumbs tickling the outer edges of her cunt lips. "The first night we met, I wanted to touch you like this." Two fingers delved into her wet heat, sliding along her labia, finding her sensitive clitoris. He pressed there. Just so. "Stroke you gently." His touch became a whisper across her aching pussy. "Penetrate you." His fingers pushed into her opening. With his free hand he tilted her chin so that her gaze met his.

"Ahh," she sighed. Her lips parted. She wanted him to kiss her, taste him on her tongue while he fucked her with his fingers. She leaned toward him, but when she did so, he stopped the exquisite thrusting.

Her cunt was full and wet. With her inner muscles she squeezed his fingers to encourage him to continue. He gave her a devilish smile. "Not yet. It's my turn to torture you with pleasure."

So that was the kind of game he wanted, was it? Shifter females were typically the ones in charge during the sex games, but she could play along for a little while. She pressed her lips together and tipped away

from him.

"That's right, Anna." His fingers moved inside her once again. "So, so soft." His free hand roamed from her chin to her bare breasts. He brushed his hand lightly across her sensitized nipples. She arched her back automatically. He cupped one tit and lowered his mouth to her nipple.

Ah, God.

His mouth was hot. With a rough tongue he licked at her, raking it across the sensitive areola. He added a third finger to her vagina, drawing them across the inner walls. Her muscles clamped down in a rhythmic fashion, which echoed the teasing pull of his mouth on her nipple.

She sat poised at the edge of the chair, immobilized with pleasure. She didn't dare move for fear he would stop. Her wrists strained at her bonds. The knot came undone. Although she wanted to take back control of the situation, she found herself clutching the edge of the chair with her freed hands. For the first time it felt right to give in to a male's control. Let her body be at his mercy.

His finger strokes grew more frantic. He sped up as her body shifted into a different gear. Moisture made his fingers slippery, friction almost non-existent. She could smell her own arousal mixed with his sex scent. Deep inside, the shifter part of her came alive. Little by little it made itself known to her.

The orgasm was coming. Soon.

Her gasps grew loud to her own ears. She no longer had the capability of forming words, so lost was she in her own mind. He switched his attentions to her other breast. A rush of heat and electricity ran through her. She held her breath. She was so close.

He thrust his fingers inside her to the hilt, then curved and dragged them across her inner walls, looking for that perfect spot. "Not quite yet." He removed his fingers from her cunt.

Anna let out her breath in a grunt. Her pussy was calling out for him to finish. To bring her all the way over the edge. "Don't stop now." She let go of the chair, grabbed his hand, and tried to force it back.

He twisted out of her grip and caught her wrists in one hand. He

tilted his chin down and looked her in the eyes. "This is my game, remember?" He picked up the rubber tourniquet and slapped her on the thigh.

The shock of it stilled her.

"Get up."

She obeyed. Her robe barely covered her. It hung loose, sagging off of her shoulders.

He spun her around, so her back was to him.

"Put one foot on the chair."

Her body tingled at the thought of what he was going to do to her.

She rested her left foot on the chair.

Caleb ran his hand up under her silk robe, rubbing across her bare buttocks. He let go of her wrists, and both hands massaged her backside, running between her cheeks, tickling the very edges of her pussy. "This is how I'm going to fuck you, Anna. Take off your robe."

She lowered her arms, and the silken fabric slid into a pile at her feet. Now she was completely naked with the exception of her thong panties.

"I love your body. Everything's just the right size." He gripped her hips, then slid his hands up her sides, and massaged the sides of her breasts. "So beautiful."

She wanted to turn around, grab him, toss him on the floor and fuck him blind, but she could tell he was enjoying this too much. This exploration. This worship of her body.

He took off his shirt and pants, tossing them to the tile floor in a messy heap. A few seconds later, she felt his erection hard against her ass. A solid heavy length. Her pussy ached for him to be inside her. He tore her panties off in one quick move.

She braced her hands on the back of the chair, waiting, wanting, needing.

He spread her lower lips and guided the head of his penis to her opening. With one hard push, he was inside her. Anna rose up on her tiptoes, clutched the chair, and thrust back to pull him in deeper. "Oh, God, Caleb."

He planted his hands on her hips to steady her and pounded into her with hot, hard strokes.

Her cunt was stuffed full of him. Each thrust brought her closer to the orgasm she needed. One more thing would send her over the edge. She touched between her legs, finding her clit, the hard nub wet with her moisture. She teased it with her finger, feeling a fullness inside—a building to something she knew she needed.

“I’m going to come. Oh, God, I’m going to come.” She slicked her finger around and around. Caleb continued his relentless fucking. An explosion hit. She cried out at the force of it. Hard. Electric. Incredible. Her hand stilled as she rode the wave of her orgasm.

Caleb’s dick slid through the added wetness. “Jesus, Anna.” One last thrust. “Oh my God.” He held his cock inside her, ejaculate filling her cunt. Anna pushed back against him and gripped him with her inner muscles. “Fuck!”

“What in the hell...?” A woman’s voice cut through the haze of Anna’s orgasm, but it was too late to see who had interrupted their forbidden affair. The shifter inside was ready to come out. Caleb’s dick slid out of her. She straightened up, just in time to feel her body slip into arctic wolf form.

Chapter Six

Caleb came down off the high of his orgasm almost immediately. The minute he heard the door open, he knew they'd screwed up. Big time.

"What's going on here?"

Anna shifted before his eyes, and he knew he'd have to be the one to stand up for her. Find a way to stake his claim on her no matter what the *rules* said.

He picked up his pants and slipped them on before turning to confront the female shifter who'd discovered them. "Anna's mine now." Wolf Anna paced the floor, whining.

It was Hannah, the female shifter who'd escorted him to the room earlier. She was tall with the black hair so typical of other female shifters. Not like his Anna. *His Anna*. The words came so naturally to him.

"Did she consent to this...this coupling?" Hannah spat the question out in disgust. "Or did you force this on her? They told me there were humans who were curious, almost obsessed, with shifters. But I had no idea—"

"Of course she consented." It made him sick to think she'd believe anything different. "We met a few nights ago during the storm. I never thought it could be like this, but I didn't force her."

"You can't do this." Hannah watched Anna pace the floor. "Don't you see? She's nothing like you. You don't deserve her. We don't need humans mucking up what we worked so hard for."

Anger sparked inside him. "Mucking up? Shifters were born to

human parents. You are ninety-eight percent human."

She brushed off his arguments. "We're here for a reason."

"Yes, to find out about your shifter side away from humans who don't understand." He picked up his shirt and put it on. "I *do* understand. Why do you think I came to work here? I probably understand more than you know."

"I doubt that." Hannah settled a hand on her hip.

"I love her." He knelt on the floor and coaxed Wolf Anna over to him. She dipped her head, allowing him to stroke her between the ears. "That's what matters. She trusts me, or she never would have allowed me to get close to her again. She never would have allowed this to happen between us. She knows this is right. Just because you say it's not meant to be doesn't mean shit to either of us."

Hannah's brow crinkled. "She hasn't switched back."

"What?"

"Anna. She's been here for weeks and hasn't been able to stay in shifter form for more than a few minutes at a time." The female shifter bit her lip. "Could it be...?"

A jolt of recognition hit him low in his gut. Is that why Anna had run from him last night? Had she been scared to find out a human helped her shift better than one of her own kind? "I didn't get a chance to tell her."

"Tell her what?"

"I carry some of the shifter markers. Just a few. Not enough to make me one of you."

"What?" Hannah's eyes widened. "That's not possible."

"How do you think I ended up here? Dr. Tate recruited me. They'd tested my blood, found out I was missing some of the markers, and wanted me here. To help them understand."

"I've never heard of such a thing." Hannah shook her head, but he could sense her letting go of her anger, trying to wrap her head around this new knowledge he'd given her.

"Maybe that's why she could shift with me as her mate. She's not like the rest of you." Now her white blonde hair made sense to him.

Unlike the other black-haired shifter females who needed pure blooded males to shift, Anna was different. Just like he was different. Both of them were unique.

“I know she doesn’t look like us, but she has all the markers.”

“You know this is right. You know she was meant for me.” And even as he said the words aloud, he accepted that fact as well. The connection he had with Anna was strange and beautiful. Something he’d never had with another woman. The feel of her body in his hands had been so right. So perfect. “I’m taking her back to the research center with me.”

“I don’t know.... We’d have to talk to Dr. Tate.”

He was winning her over. Not a few minutes ago, she wouldn’t have even been considering the option. “Dr. Tate will agree. Once we tell him that Anna’s shift is complete, he will let her come with me.”

“We’ll wait for Anna to tell us what she wants.” Hannah kept her eyes on the arctic wolf that was still allowing herself to be stroked by Caleb. “It should be her choice. Not ours.”

Caleb nodded.

Chapter Eight

Anna curled up against Caleb's warm body. The accommodations over in the research center weren't as luxurious as they were in the ARO, but she'd adjusted quickly. King-sized beds and garden tubs didn't matter to her. Caleb was what she wanted, and now she had him. She ran a hand down his naked side and reached for his penis.

Caleb startled awake. "Mmm...hey."

She stroked up and down, his cock hardening in her hand. "Good morning." She rubbed her breasts against his back.

"Ah, ah." His buttocks tensed. "I have to be at work, you know."

"Not before you do some work for me." She rubbed a thumb across the head of his penis, and he groaned. Between her legs, she grew wet.

"This isn't the ARO, remember? I told you that when you moved in. I'm on shift from seven to seven. And then I'm all yours." He reached a hand behind him to caress her ass.

"But Dr. Tate told us we needed to experiment. This is purely work related." She kissed his shoulder.

He sighed and rolled over to face her. "We aren't his test subjects." His erection poked her in the stomach.

"I don't mind being a test subject if I get to have more of this." She scooted down in the bed and took his cock into her mouth.

"Jesus, Anna. I can't.... I mean, I don't have time to...ah..."

She sucked on him hard, working her tongue around the length of him. He tasted so good to her. She could never seem to get enough of him.

His hands settled on her head. His body tensed. "When you're finished I'm going to...ah...God..." He gripped her hair. "Dammit, Anna."

She sucked hard on the head and drew him inside her mouth once more. She loved to control him like this. Make him beg for her. His cock grew harder. She caressed his balls gently with her fingers. He went rigid.

"Ah, fuck." He grunted. "Anna, Anna, Anna..."

A burst of hot creaminess shot into her mouth. She pulled on him, milking out every last drop of cum. He tasted like he smelled, absolutely delicious. When she swallowed the last of him, she licked off the tip.

He grabbed her arms and dragged her up to him. "You are so going to pay for that one."

His eyes were twin dark stars, brilliant and unfathomable.

"That's what I was hoping for." She smiled slowly, knowing how much he loved her when she was wicked.

She kissed him then, his lips soft and sensual.

And she knew she could do this forever. If she had to stay the rest of her life right here in this barren room with just Caleb and the bed, she could do it. The outside world didn't matter anymore. It didn't matter if she was shifter, and he was something else. Whatever his blood markers meant, she just knew he was her mate and always would be. No matter what anyone else thought.

When the alarm went off next to the bed, Caleb reached blindly behind him and knocked it to the floor. She grinned. Today Dr. Tate would just have to understand that some mornings, he might be late. Some mornings there were more important things than work.

She opened her mouth to him and got lost in the kiss. The best was still to come, and her body lit up at the thought of it. The shifter inside roared to life. *This is my mate*, it said. *This is the one I choose*.

The End

Author's Bio

For six years, Kris worked as a technical writer. Then, she and her husband chunked it all to run a bed and breakfast. For the last two years, between cleaning rooms and making gourmet breakfasts, she has been writing fiction.

Kris loves to hear from readers! Please visit her Web site at <http://www.kriseton.com> for contact information, to read her blog, and to keep up on her newest books.