



# VICIOUS

THE ASSASSIN

AND THE  
WOLF

JEANIE JOHNSON

VICIOUS:  
*The Assassin and the Wolf*

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Published by  
Beautiful Trouble Publishing, LLC  
PO Box 61  
Colfax, NC 27235  
[www.beautifultroublepublishing.com](http://www.beautifultroublepublishing.com)

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Cover Art: Les Byerley.  
Cover Model: Ben  
Editor:  
ISBN: 978-0-557-03979-1 (print)

## **CAVEAT**

This work of erotica contains adult language and sexually-explicit scenes, which are smoking hot. This book is intended only for adults, as it is defined by the laws of the country in which the purchase is made. Keep this book out of the hands of under-aged readers.

## **Shout Outs**

For my man - I love you. For my Momma - I am so privileged to have you as my Momma. To my sisters Rolanda and Dréa - I love you and thank you for always supporting and also for teaching me the word '*WOOT!*' To Aunt Donna, Von, Shara, Thumper and the rest of the MFP Posse - fist in the air. And last but not least to Karlo. Thank you for loving Jamieson the way you do. This story is for YOU girl so enjoy your Mann brother in print.

Much love always. Jeanie J

This book I'm shouting out librarian Rhonda B. Scales and her homies.

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## PROLOGUE

### *The Assassin*

The only thing of colour in the room besides her, the table was intimidating (also like her). It could easily sit sixteen people, but she sat there alone (as always). Not a thing was out of place in this room (except for her). It rivalled a museum for its just so-ness; it rivalled an operating theatre for its cleanliness; it rivalled an Ice Age for its whiteness. She didn't belong here. *For that matter she didn't belong anywhere.* The angry red scars criss-crossing her shaved head the drab green smock she wore, and the electrodes at her temples was an insult to the room's pristine state (just as she was an insult to humanity). Still, she sat there with her hands folded primly on top of the table.

Silently, she watched the others in the room watch her. Dressed in toe-to-toe white, their coveralls, masks and caps hid their every identifying thing about them ... but it did not hide their soullessness. They said nothing as they made notes on their tablet PCs. Everything was high-tech these days (even diabolicalness. Though she glanced at them from the corners of her eyes, she didn't look at them ... besides, there was no need. For that matter, there was no need to look so she simply trained her eyes on the blinding white of her surroundings and tuned her ear to the sounds around her. Sound didn't deceive the way sight could. Putting all of her energy into listening, she could place everyone in the room; everything in the room.

She perked up when she heard one of them pull out a tape recorder and speak into it.

“Subject Delaney is calm. Subject’s temperature is normal; subject’s pulse is steady.”

She remained quiet – even as the scientists began to approach her ... even when they began to touch her. The first scientist tilted her head up and shined a light into her eyes. The light hurt, but she didn’t blink. Nor did she attempt to fight them – this time. The pain from the fresh bruises to her neck and face stood as a reminder of what her caretakers called her last moment of ‘defiance.’

She’d learned her lesson. She wasn’t going to do anything to upset anyone ...this time. Just as there would be more scientists there would be more chances for her to assert her defiance.

The scientist approaching next held a syringe. She hated needles but she didn’t blink or flinch as they injected her with who only knew. Though she gave a passing wonder at what would happen to her body as a result of the injection, she forced herself to remain calm. She may have appeared to be dispassionate, but her wide, brown eyes took in everything.

“Subject Delaney responding well to stimulant,” another remarked.

She remained still even as the next scientist approached and pulled her to her feet. Though she couldn’t see the individual under the gear, she knew it was a him by the way he touched her. Holding her jaw tightly, he pulled her bottom eyelids down and made a notation before peering into her mouth and making another.

Suddenly, she feels something that resembles an earthquake in her body. Despite the 4.5 magnitude quake that she was experiencing, she almost smiled seeing how fast they scurried away from her like

insects exposed to a sudden light source. Though they moved to safety, their eyes never left her.

They speak to her, but for some reason she cannot understand them. Shaking her head in an effort to clear it, she frowns when she realizes the futility of such action. Every tremor that ripples through her taxes her. Her breathing laboured, she squints as a bright light suddenly appears behind the group of scientists. Though she tries to keep her eyes open, the light pierces her eye sockets like shards of glass forcing her to close her eyes. There isn't blackness when she closes her eyes but a red haze. The red was annoying but it was more bearable than the piercing white light.

She keeps her eyes closed for what seems like a long time, but what is actually only a few seconds. Opening her eyes when the red haze behind her eyelids clears, she let out the breaths that she'd been holding. Wiping the back of her hand across her cheek to halt the path of the liquid sliding down her face, she looked down at her hand. At first, she simply stared at her hand blankly before bringing up her other hand. Looking at them both, she studied her hands as if she had never seen them before; as if she had no idea what they were for.

It wasn't that she'd forgotten what hands were or what they were for; it was that she didn't understand how they came to be in their present condition. Pulling her eyes away from her hands, she looked around the room for the scientists, but saw nothing but red. The scientists were gone as was the room's pristine condition. The entire room was red with blood.



The curtain fell over the two way mirror. A disfigured man slowly tapped the end of his cane on concrete floor. Nothing moved in the room save the disfigured man's cane.

"Sir-," one of the scientists called. Visibly shaken by the scene that had taken place on the other side of the mirror, he cautiously approached.

"It's over," the disfigured man said softly.

The eyes of the remaining scientists widened in shock.

"But sir-"

"We can't do anything with her-,"

"Sir, I advise against this. Delaney is the most dangerous of all the subjects-,"

"Get rid of her. She is useless to us now," the grotesque man commanded as he turned his icy glare on the scientist who was sweating like the proverbial pig.

With a sigh the scientist spoke into the microphone mounted to the two way mirror.

"Subject is to be terminated."

From the brief hesitation of the guards, it was evident that they were as shocked as the scientists. Still, after only the brief of pauses, they opened the door to the bloody room and retreated to safety as if the hounds of hell were at their heels. The blood-covered subject walked out of the room at a sedate pace. She looked neither to the left or to the right but after a few feet she broke into a sprint. No one knew exactly what she ran from as she had a multitude of dangers surrounding her, but they understood why she ran ... even as they ran from her.

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Dressed in black, the armed men followed the subject. The most badass mercenaries that money could buy, they easily kept pace with the subject. Equipped with night vision goggles, they easily navigated the dark forest. Silently, they formed a circle around the subject. When she stumbled over a branch and landed hard on the forest floor, they slowed their pace and closed in as she got slowly to her feet.

Having undergone a rigorous examination, she couldn't match their stamina as evidenced by the clouds of air she huffed out in the cold, night air. They could have rushed her, but they waited. It wasn't that they were being gentlemanly (was there a polite way to exterminate someone?); it was that they liked to toy with their victims and this one was going to be so fun to bring down.

Changing his hold on the powerful (and illegal) weapon in his hands, the leader stepped towards the subject. Though he never let go of his weapon, he let go of his caution and underestimated the subject. At the last moment, the subject turned and snatched the weapon out of his hands at the same time that she drove the heel of her hand up into the nose. He didn't even have time to be surprised as the bone that was driven into his brain instantly killed him.

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Lounging on his balcony, the grotesque man saw the light from the firing of weapons before he heard the sounds of the battle that was being waged in his forests. Though it was an inconvenience to start his little experiment from scratch, he couldn't help smiling to himself he walked back into the house. He always smiled when doing

evil and what was more evil than eliminating his mistakes. Had he been a little less arrogant, he would've done as Lot's wife did and looked back. Though he wouldn't have turned into a pillar of salt, he wouldn't have missed the bright light that flashed in the forest uninterrupted for an entire minute.

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Standing in the middle of the circle of dead men, the subject dropped the weapon in her hand and began running again. Seeing a ten foot fence topped with razor wire before her, didn't deter her. She simply ran harder. When she got a few feet away from, she leapt in the air and cleared the top of the fence with a good foot to spare. Not even stopping as she landed, she kept running. She didn't think of her pain, her fatigue, or even revenge. She only thought of freedom so she ran harder, never once looking back at her prison.

## ***The Wolf***

The Mann brothers stood on both sides of Jamieson Mann as their brother listened to Pack Elders as they handed down their decision. They braced themselves as they heard the Elders declare that they were not going to retaliate against the *rogue* pack that had killed Jamieson's mate, Carla. Everyone in the room felt the rage build inside of Jamieson so none were surprised when he quit the room as soon as they were finished with their decree. Bowing their heads in respect, the rest of the Mann brothers turned and followed Jamieson from the meeting.

"Jamie..." Jaron called as he reached out to Jamieson.

Jamieson shook off Jaron's hand and swept all of his brothers with blazing emerald eyes.

"I don't want to talk about it," said he rasped.

His brothers nodded in understanding and allowed Jamieson to stomp off without a fight.

Samson Mann and his mate Charity joined their sons. In human form Samson was legally blind; in his wolf form he was all seeing. In this moment, he was neither. He was simply a father concerned for his son.

"Give him this night but bring him to the homestead tomorrow evening," Samson ordered.

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Jamieson took the blow to his ribs and retaliated with an overhand right to the man's face. He kept punching until he felt the bones in the man's face give. He was about to kick the man when he was grabbed from behind and hauled out of the bar room brawl that

he'd started. Though he growled, snarled and struggled to get back into the fight, the determined hands that held him weren't letting him go in a hurry. It was only when he'd been dragged between two pickup trucks that whoever held him let go. Jamieson immediately spun around ready to attack but was stunned immovable when he saw exactly who it was that had held him.

Jeremiah - the eldest Mann brother stood before him. Though a Mann, Jeremiah was a recluse. Rarely did he have anything to do with anyone ... including their pack. Jeremiah was the only Mann male who'd ever received Lone Wolf Status, let alone request it.

Jeremiah was also the meanest motherfucking wolf he'd ever encountered. The pups told stories about Jeremiah. For that matter so did the Elders. Being that Jeremiah stood over seven and a half feet in height and carried over two hundred ninety pounds of muscle, he understood why Jeremiah was spoken about in hushed tones. As impressive as Jeremiah's physique was, his physique was nowhere near as menacing as Jeremiah's demeanour.

"Hey, little brother," Jeremiah said quietly.

There was no welcoming smile or hug from Jeremiah. There was just a three- word greeting casually thrown out as if he saw Jamieson every day. Still, those three words touched something inside of him and Jamieson treasured them for the gift that they were. He loved his brother even though they were polar opposites. Whereas Jeremiah was silent psychotic strength – Jamieson was loud and in your face strength.

"Hey," was all that Jamieson could think of to say before spitting out the blood that had filled his mouth.

“Heard about Carla.”

“I bet.”

“She was always a greedy bitch,” Jeremiah said in that emotionless monotone.

Jamieson launched himself at Jeremiah before the thought even cleared his brain. Jeremiah easily caught him and drove him back against the pick up truck. He held him there with a forearm across his neck.

“Don’t deny it, Jamie” Jeremiah spoke softly but his tone was as hard as the forearm across Jamieson’s neck.

“You dare to come and lecture me when my mate has just been killed? Why didn’t you stay holed up in the mountains, Asshole? I can do without your brand of brotherly concern!” Jamieson snarled.,

No expression flickered over Jeremiah’s face as he spoke,

“Jamie I’m not here to console you or even sympathise with you. I’m here to make sure that you don’t lose your head. Now if you want to behave like a rabid dog, be my guest but don’t think for a moment that I’m going to allow you to vent your anger on innocent people.”

“Since when do *you* care about humanity?”

“Since I lost mine.”

Those four words took the wind out of Jamieson’s sails. Swallowing his anger, he stared at Jeremiah. The stark blankness that he saw rendered him speechless. Never had he seen such *nothingness* before. The nothingness that stared back at him t was not simply foreboding; the nothingness was absolute. In that moment he realized that how his aloof, older brother lived every

single day of his life battling a nothingness that threatened to consume his soul.

“Jeremiah—” Jamieson began but ceased speaking when his brother shook his head.

“Just listen, little brother. Years ago I was given the heart and soul of the one woman that I vowed to love throughout time. She was my true soul mate but it didn’t work out the way we planned. Perhaps I should say that it didn’t work out the way that *I* planned being that I didn’t let her in on my plans.”

Raking his hands through his hair, Jeremiah pulled away from Jamieson before shoving his big hands into the pockets of his jeans. He looked off into the distance as if searching for the right words to finish the tale that he’d begun.

“When I returned home after having her for such a short amount of time I swore I would stay separated from everyone. It is my penance for fucking up my life and the life of the woman that I continue to love with everything in me.”

Jeremiah finally returned his eyes to him.

“Don’t repeat my mistakes, Jamie. Carla was a mean bitch but I know that she loved you in her own fucked up kind of way. In spite of her want of money and power, she wanted you. She would’ve wanted you to be happy. Take the time to mourn and be angry at the world but don’t run away from those that love you ... otherwise...”

Jeremiah’s sentence trailed off.

“Otherwise what?” Jamieson prompted his older brother.

Jeremiah’s eyes glinted fiery emerald in the moonless night.

“It will be too hard to find your way back.”

A light cuff on the shoulder accompanied that soul-rocking remark. Jamieson watched in stunned silence as Jeremiah turned and walked off – back to his self-imposed hell. After a few moments of contemplation, he turned and went after his brother. Though only a few moments had passed since Jeremiah walked off, Jamieson couldn't find the hint of a track, nor could he scent his brother at all. Jeremiah had literally vanished into thin air.

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Charity Mann wrapped her arms around Jeremiah. It was the first time that she'd seen him in almost four years and it had been almost two years before that since she'd been able to hold him like she was.

“Thank you, sweetheart,” she whispered to him.

“There is almost nothing that I wouldn't do for any of you so there is no need to thank me, mom, Jeremiah said as he kissed her cheek before walking into the moonless night.

Watching Jeremiah's shadow be swallowed by the darkness, Charity allowed the reserve of tears that she'd been holding for her eldest baby slide silently down her cheeks.



## CHAPTER ONE

Sunny Delaney stared sadly at the wolf family that had been killed in their den. With a heavy heart she made a mental note of the size of each wolf and their injuries. She'd just turned away when she caught sight of light brown eyes watching her from a clump of trees to the right of her current position. With careful movements she stepped away from the ruined den populated with dead wolves. Soundlessly, she picked her way back to the path that would lead her to her cabin that sat at Western edge of the Red Mountains. Though, she'd rushed to get back on the path, once there she settled into a steady, but comfortable, gait.

It was only once she was back at her cabin that she bothered to see if she was alone or still had company. The light brown eyes still watched her but from further away. Nodding an acknowledgement to the trees that the brown eyes were hidden amongst, she stepped into the cabin. Walking to the dry erase board covered with pictures and notes, she added to the already crowded board. After writing copious notes about the dead wolves she'd found she made a quick notation about the wolf that had followed her.

Looking at her watch, she was surprised to realize that almost two hours had passed since she'd stepped back into the cabin. If she'd bothered to look up from her notes she might've noticed that night was approaching. She loved it here. It was peaceful and the silence that surrounded the cabin was a welcome balm on her frantic thoughts. Grabbing an apple, she settled onto the couch and studied the wall she'd begun a year earlier when she'd first arrived at the Red

Mountains. Not having a family of her own, she couldn't help but notice and appreciate the pack animals that she'd glimpsed in this wilderness. Over time, her appreciation for their bonds only deepened. Her fascination with them had led her to buy the small house on the lake.

It was a beautiful area and virtually deserted, which is why she'd received such a good deal on the house. Where others saw the isolation as a drawback, she saw it as a bonus. At a premium, the peace and quiet that was native to the area soothed her chaotic mind. The wolves soothed her chaotic spirit. Beautiful creatures, the wolves had been more welcoming than the residents in the nearby town. She knew that her appearance had a lot to do with the way people treated her but it still hurt. Still, she'd never been ashamed of the scars on her body and she refused to let anyone make her change her stance on that. Luckily, she had enough money saved up that she didn't have to be overly-concerned about what people thought. She might not be the smartest chick in the world but she was smart enough to realize that money concealed a plethora of faults.

It wasn't that she was wealthy; it was simply that she'd not had a lot to spend her money on. Having worked since she was seventeen, she'd been saving the whole time. Now at age thirty-five, her hard work not only allowed her to move to the middle of nowhere; it allowed her to remain in the middle of nowhere for the next forty years or so. Instead of dreading the upcoming decades of solitude, she was looking forward to spending the remainder of her life surrounded by the beauty of the lake, trees and mountains.

Stepping out onto the porch with a coffee cup in her hands she watched the sun as it slowly set. She loved the moments when the setting sun turned the lake into burnished gold before finally settling for the night. Waiting for that moment, she continued sipping her coffee. When the moment came, she smiled and walked into her cabin without looking back. If she had bothered to look back, she would've noticed six pairs of brown eyes watching her from the clump of trees, but she didn't look back. The wolves waited until they heard the lock fall into place before leaving their hiding place and running deeper into the forest surrounding the lakeside house.

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The feel of the cold hardwood floor of the cabin caused her to suddenly wake. The polished wood cradled her convulsing body. Swallowing her moans, she slowly got to her feet. Shivering as the feel of the cold air registered, she looked at her image in the mirror above the dresser.

The myriad of emotions that coursed through her scarred body illuminated her eyes. She hated the confusion that came with her waking like this. Her favourite pyjamas were ripped to shreds, her hair was a mess, and she was breathing hard, her breath visible in the cool air. Shaking her head and taking a deep breath in an attempt to calm herself, she stripped off the remnants of her shredded night clothes and walked to the bathroom. Turning the shower to the hottest setting, she stepped under the powerful spray.

With her eyes closed she stood still under the shower head allowing the hot water to warm her chilled skin and comfort her ragged nerves. The hot water chased away the chill but it did nothing

to stop her shaking. The shaking came from somewhere deeper, somewhere Sunny didn't want to visit right now ... or perhaps ever. Balling her hands into fists as the shaking increased she attempted to tamp down the emotions that welled up. She was valiantly working at it when images of blood and mangled bodies assaulted her. Throwing back her head, she screamed in time to the images that her mind projected. She continued screaming until her voice gave out. Slumping against the wall of the shower, she sank to her knees. Pressing her forehead against the shower wall, she cried rivers for something she couldn't remember.

~\*~\*~

Jamieson Mann leaned against his truck and watched his Alpha approach. Greeting him with a hug, his Alpha accompanied his hug with a customary hearty thump on the back. Smiling, Jamieson grinned as he returned the gesture.

"Thanks for doing this, Jamieson," Jack Mann said

Jamieson nodded. His brother was not only the Alpha of the Black Ridge Pack; he was the Supreme Alpha of all of Northern Hemisphere.

"Hey, you're the one that's going to be stuck here looking at wedding dresses and all that bullshit. I get to be in the open air and doing a little recreational hunting. It's a fair trade," Jamieson answered with an easy shrug of his massive shoulders.

He smiled upon hearing his brother's chuckle.

"Why didn't I think of that? I should be able to pack real fast-" Jack began.

Before he could finish his sentence, his fiancée, the Destiny Smith, appeared out of nowhere and slid both arms around Jack before standing none to gently on his foot.

“Oh, fuck no you’re not getting outta this shit. If I’ve gotta put up with it, so do you Jackass!” his soon-to-be spitfire of a sister-in-law cursed at him.

He liked Destiny a lot and seeing Jack give her a smile that was full of patient love and promise, he knew that she was truly meant for Jack.

“So eloquent,” Jamieson teased Destiny.

He smiled when Destiny looked up – way up – at him and gave him what he dubbed her ‘what motherfucker?’ look. Being that she was a good foot and some change shorter than most of her soon-to-be brothers-in-law she should’ve felt overwhelmed, but she wasn’t. It’d only taken him a few moments to realize that *nothing* intimidated Destiny Smith. Size meant nothing to her, except perhaps when it came to the size of her man.

“Shut up, Jimmy. You are going to be back for the wedding rehearsals and the big dinner and everything, aren’t you?”

Destiny could always make a question sound like an order. What especially amazed all of the Mann brothers was the way that their Alpha would unashamedly do her bidding. He might be Alpha of all of The Black Ridge Pack, but Destiny made it clear that she wasn’t about to be bossed around by one ornery wolf regardless of his title. Destiny might have dibs on their Alpha’s heart but they knew exactly *who* was in charge in the bedroom. Their Alpha.

“Of course, dearest sister. Now look after our Alpha here. He looks like he needs a good meal or ten. You must’ve been working him too hard these past weeks.”

Jamieson didn’t hold back his teasing. Of course, he was the only one who could tease their Alpha and his mate thusly. As Beta of Black Ridge Pack, he was Jack’s right hand wolf and was allowed privileges that no other had; he was allowed places within his Alpha’s heart that no one else could breach.

Getting into his truck, Jamieson started it up and smiled upon hearing the motor purr like a deep throaty jungle cat. Growling in appreciation, he leaned out of the truck cab and kissed Destiny’s cheek. He heard his Alpha growl in warning but he ignored it. Being Beta of the Black Ridge Pack did have its privileges. He followed up his hug with a wink at Destiny who blushed prettily and grinned back at him.

“Thank you, little sister. My truck sounds amazing. Jack’s lucky he met you first. I would’ve given him a run for his money if I’d met you before him,” he said Jamieson said.

Thanking Destiny once more, he nodded at his, closed the door and drove off.

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“Don’t growl like that at your brothers,” Destiny admonished Jack as they stood watching Jamieson drive away.

Jack bent his head into the curve of Destiny’s neck and inhaled deeply before nipping her firmly. His love play made Destiny wet. Of course she was always wet in his presence. Trying to squirm away from him, she only succeeded in rubbing against his erection and

making herself want him more. Feeling his erection, she sighed and leaned further into her man's embrace.

"He's lucky he's my brother woman. If he wasn't he'd already have his throat ripped out for daring touch what is mine," Jack declared.

Though he spoke softly, Destiny could hear the danger that laced his voice. Shaking her head, she turned in his arms and. Standing on tip toe, she plastered herself against him and pulled him down to her.

"You're certifiable dude. Jamieson was just thanking me for working on his truck. You heard it. That baby t was mint," Destiny said against Jack's full lips.

She sighed feeling Jack's massive hands wrap around her hips. His touch always got to her. He was raw strength and power. When he lifted her so that they were eye level, she swallowed a sigh and wrapped her legs around him.

"So what you're saying is that you won't be working on any other man's car or truck because I'll have to kill all of them if they thank you like Jamieson did," he growled.

Rolling her eyes, she laughed.

"Like I said dude, certifiable."

Jack leaned his forehead against hers and sniffed. She knew that he could smell her arousal. Then again, she was always aroused when he was near. Destiny knew that his wolf was close to the surface and being the shit-starter that she was, she just had to egg him on. Grinding against him, she smiled feeling the growl that began in his gut.

“Only for *you*, woman. Now hold onto me and prepare to be fucked.”

Destiny grinned at her man as he fitted her atop his erection.

“One track mind you wolves,” she sighed.

Jack didn’t even look at her; he simply grunted as he carried her across Pack land oblivious to the smiles from their pack members.

Destiny couldn’t help but love this wolf and the laughter that spilled from her was a testament to her joy.

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Jamieson listened to the Alpha of the Red Mountain Pack as he explained his dilemma. It was not a pretty picture that the other *shifter* was painting.

“You say just pups and their fathers?” he asked for clarification.

Preston nodded in response.

“When was the last killing?” Jamieson asked, his deep rumbling voice laced with ferocity.

He didn’t worry about offending the Alpha, for as Beta to the Supreme Alpha, he outranked all other Alphas and when on missions such as this, he assumed his brother’s status.

“Yesterday,” Preston answered.

“How many?”

“Four.”

“And their mothers?” Jamieson inquired.

Preston sighed and dragged a hand down his haggard face. His light brown eyes filled with sadness and rage. “Inconsolable as you can imagine.”

Jamieson nodded, “of course.”



“And the bodies?” he asked.

“We left them as we found them so you could see them.”

Jamieson looked thoughtfully at the majestic mountains that surrounded them.

“No clues at all? *Rogues*? Hunters?”

Preston shook his head balefully.

Jamieson’s normally full lips formed a hard line as he pressed his lips together in an effort to tamp down the growls that threatened to spill forth.

“Ensure all surrounding Packs are made aware of this assault. I have called trusted wolves to assist. You will need to move out of the Territory while I search and find answers.”

Jamieson watched Preston’s face fall even further. He knew that he was asking a lot of the Alpha. It was a hard thing for one Alpha to have to entrust his pack’s protection to another Alpha. Not only was it a blow to the pride of any Alpha to admit that he or she was unable to ensure the safety of their family, it was ten fold when it was a male Alpha *Shifter* having to do so.

“There is no other way?” Preston asked Jamieson hopefully.

Jamieson turned his cold emerald eyes on the other man.

“Of course there are other ways, however the majority of them involve you and your entire pack being killed one-by-one. You are Alpha here so I will leave the final decision to you, Press,” Jamieson answered. His voice held no malice, but it held no kindness either. It was simply plain and informative.

Preston nodded as his gaze drifted to his beloved mountains.

“Thank you, Jamieson. We will contact you when we are safely away. Please do not hesitate to call if there’s anything that we can do for you,” he said as he extended his hand.

Jamieson gave a slight nod and shook the hand that Preston held forth. With a last look at the mountains Preston turned and walked towards his Pack.

Jamieson remained where he was and simply looked around. As a wolf shifter his eyesight was better than any human, still he had uncommonly good sight even in comparison to other wolves. He could see the smallest bird in the top of the tallest tree. He could see the cracks in the rocks scattered over the mountain ridges. That is why he was able to spot the faint plume of smoke several miles off along Red Mountain Lake’s western shore.

“Preston,” he called out to the other man without turning.

“Yes?”

“Who is living on the lakeshore?” Jamieson asked.

“A human named Sunny Delaney. We’ve met her several times. She does not bother any of us; none of us bother her,” Preston answered quietly.

“She knows of the killings?”

“She does but she is not involved.”

“Are you sure?”

“I give my oath that she is not involved. She is tortured. Her pain is a living, breathing thing. She would not hurt another being, *shifter* or otherwise.”

Jamieson stared long and hard at the plume of smoke. Finally, he turned towards the Alpha and nodded. A few seconds later, they’d

all shifted and began the difficult process of moving the Red Mountains Pack to a new territory.

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The emerald-eyed black wolf watched as the scarred woman laid the final little bundle into the grave that she'd obviously spent a great deal of time digging. The land was mostly clay and rock so digging anything, much less a grave, would be back-breaking work for a shifter male, much less a human female. They'd arrived just in time to witness her begin the unenviable task of retrieving the bodies of the dead wolves. Preston would've stopped her but Jamieson held him back. What held Jamieson back, he could not answer.

*See, Alpha. It is as I told you. This human respects life too much to have perpetrated such a heinous act.*

*I agree,* he telepathed back.

The wolf continued to watch her as she performed the most difficult of sacraments. Ms. Delaney gently wrapped each wolf body and placed them side-by-side into the hole. As she covered the bodies of the wolf family with dirt, tears tracked down her face. She didn't bother to wipe her face, she simply continued her task. When the hole was completely filled, she murmured a quiet prayer. As a final tribute, she covered the fresh mound with blanket of wildflowers.

Once she was done, she fell to her knees at the foot of the grave finally allowing the rest of the tears to fall. His eyes narrowed as he followed the cascade of tears. She literally could've watered the flowers with her tears had she so chosen. Her tears got to him. It wasn't the tears as much as it was the fact that she cried them. Her silent crying wounded him. Though she was silent he could literally

feel the grief spill from her soul. Her grief fought her tears for dominance, and though it was close, grief won.

Her silence was something that the wolf had never before encountered in a human ... as was her pain. Pain was literally the only emotion from the woman. As Beta, he'd encountered pain before, but he'd never encountered pain like hers. It was oppressive and its viscosity threatened to choke him. She wasn't *in* pain *per se*; she was pain.

She remained at the foot of the grave for a good little while and though he had things to see to, he stayed and kept her company. He could do no less for a woman who respected life so much that she grieved so hard for beings that she didn't even know. After what seemed like an eternity, she gathered her tools and walked away without looking back. Had she bothered to look back, she would've seen the entirety of the Red Mountain Pack and the Beta of Black Ridge Pack paying her tribute.

Turning to Preston, he spoke. "Go now. The wolves that I have called will follow you to insure that nothing harms your Pack as you relocate."

"Thank you, Alpha," Preston said as he and his Pack trotted off. While everyone else followed Preston, he followed her.

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Sunny felt a prickling sensation at the base of her skull. Feeling that someone or something was watching her, she turned and peered into the surrounding forest. Seeing nothing out of the ordinary, she dismissed the thought and pulled her sweat-soaked t-shirt off. The frigid breeze swept across her mocha-coloured skin. And though the

cold immediately caused her nipples to pucker, she didn't shiver. The night air invigorated her. Stripping off the rest of her clothes, she dove into the glacial waters of the Red Mountain Lake.

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Jamieson watched the woman as she walked buck ass naked into the freezing lake. Of its own accord, his long wolf tongue hung out of his mouth so that it could get a taste of the naked water nymph on the night air. He felt the need to shift to human form, but he remained where he was watching the woman as she swam in the dark, freezing waters.

As she'd stood on the shore, waiting to jump in, he took the time to appreciate the view of her curvy, chocolate skin. Though his perusal was hurried, he couldn't help but note the painful-looking scars that criss-crossed her naked flesh. There were places on her body where it looked like she'd been cut up and stitched back together. *Had that been what Preston meant when he said that Sunny Delaney's pain was living and breathing?*

Though he'd noted her scars, he also noted the tat on her left hip. He'd think that she'd shy away from sharp instruments of any kind considering that she had so many scars, but something told him the tat was her way of saying '*fuck you*' to the world. He couldn't help but smile at that even as the wolf in him demanded vengeance for whatever had put those scars on her body.

Jamieson's internal dialogue came to a sudden halt when she exited the lake. Damn.

Her full, lush body was as mouth-watering in front as it was in the back. Beads of water pearly all over her temple. Her breasts were

plump and heavy – her puckered nipples standing at attention begging to be pleased. There were more scars on her skin, and though plentiful, the scars in no way detracted from her beauty – *but make no mistake about it, someone would be paying for desecrating the temple of her flesh.* There was a particularly nasty scar that ran from her neck to just below her full breasts. Instead of detracting from her femininity, the scar stood as a beacon pointing to the most perfect breasts he'd ever had the pleasure to glimpse.

The chattering of her teeth drew his eyes to her face. Stretching, she slowly raised herself on her tiptoes and shook her luxurious curls back and forth. She was beautiful. Jamieson took a moment and thanked his Creator for sight and his Ancestors for his wolf heritage that allowed him to see everything as clear as day. . She suddenly stiffened and closed her eyes. His wolf hearing allowed him to hear the hitch in her breathing and he knew that she was consumed with pain.

Unable to stop himself, Jamieson moved forward. The woman's eyes snapped open as she was made aware of his presence. Normally, he could move without anyone – including most wolves – noticing him, but in his haste to get to her, he didn't take care. Sensing the fear that washed over her, he berated himself for his carelessness. Dammit, he wasn't simply a wolf in the woods; he was a Mann wolf meaning that he was bigger, more heavily-muscled, and more dangerous in look and temperament. He looked like a killing machine regardless of what form he took. Normally, he revelled in the fact that his looks scared people and wolves off, but this woman was the last person that he wanted to frighten. In an effort to ease her

fear, he slowed his approach, but then she smiled and he could do nothing but come to a complete halt being that he was blindsided by what that smile did to her face. Sensing her relief, he knew that the smile was for the wolf. She didn't fear wolves, but she feared humans.

Her milk chocolate-coloured eyes took in everything but at that particular moment they were trained upon him. Jamieson fought the urge to shift back to human form. Never had he felt this overwhelming need to touch a woman and that included his mate who'd been killed long ago. The woman held her hand out to him beckoning him closer to everything he wanted. He was not strong enough to resist such a tempting invitation.

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In the recesses of her mind, Sunny knew that she should be afraid of the hulking black wolf that came from the forest, but she felt herself holding her hand out to the animal in spite of everything. She watched as the wolf moved forward without caution. Tunnelling her fingers through the soft black fur, she gasped in surprise.

The wolf pressed his head into her hand wanting more petting. Sunny couldn't help but smile at him. Despite being a wolf, it was still male.

"Typical male, always wanting more of everything," she said as she gave into the silent demand. This time she used both hands as she caressed the wolf. Before she knew what he was about, the wolf lowered his head and buried his nose in her clothes. When he lifted his head her panties were caught on his muzzle. With a small laugh Sunny grabbed her underwear and stood. Despite the fact that her

skin was still damp, she threw her clothes on with the emerald eyes of the wolf watching her every move.

“You hungry?” she asked the wolf.

The animal gave her what had to be the biggest and toothiest grin in response. With a quick pat on his head, she began the walk back to her cabin.

Turning her head to insure that the wolf was following, she noted that his eyes seemed to be trained on her ass. Being that she was a human and her wolf was well, a wolf, she shook her head. If her wolf had been a man, that would’ve been a whole different story. Obviously, she needed to eat because her imagination was running wild. With a grin Sunny walked up the wooden steps of her cabin. She grabbed a large bowl for her guest and a smaller one for herself. After ladling half the stew she’d made earlier in the day into the bigger bowl she served herself. When she turned from the stove, she found the wolf sitting patiently in her doorway.

Grabbing a spoon for herself she set the large bowl down in front of her guest. Lowering herself to the floor, she sat beside him and they began eating together. The wolf ate as if he hadn’t eaten in days. Sunny was only halfway through her own meal when she noticed the wolf was already at the licking-his-bowl stage. Pushing the bowl away, he crawled closer to her and laid his head in her lap.

“Quite comfortable there?” Sunny asked the wolf.

Staring at her with those beautiful emerald eyes, he responded with another toothy grin.

“Don’t think that you’re gonna’ get fed like that all the time, my friend,” she cautioned the wolf.



She imagined that if the wolf was indeed human it would've shrugged carelessly at her comment. Smiling at his demeanour, she continued eating. Her eyes were continually drawn to the wolf in her lap.

She was sure that she'd never encountered this wolf before. She would've definitely have remembered him. The other wolves that populated the territory were smaller, sleeker, plainer somehow. And then there were his eyes. None of the other wolves had such vibrant eyes. Before spotting this wolf, it'd been a while since she'd been visited by wolves. She'd started to wonder if they'd moved on to greener pastures. Sunny was so lost in her thoughts that she didn't hear the chorus of wolf cries. It was only after the wolf in her lap got to his feet that she paid it attention.

"Sounds like someone needs you," Sunny said with a small smile playing around her mouth. The wolf looked out of her door then back at her, as if deciding if he should answer the call of another wolf or stay and be pampered by her.

"It's okay. You go. Come and see me when you get hungry again," Sunny said softly.

The wolf looked at her for a long moment then with a lick of her hand he turned and took off running.

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Jamieson wasn't gone all that long but it was longer than he'd liked. Having Charity and Samson as parents, he was a prime specimen. In human form he was big, powerful, and fast. In wolf form, he was even more so. He'd discovered that the noise had come from a pack of full wolves that had been crying over the decimation of

their burrow. Being that he'd been in wolf form the pack of wolves accepted his help without reservation. It was a tedious task but they'd got it done. Efficient and intelligent, they'd moved the small pack further into the forest. Once he had them settled he'd shifted and dressed himself before giving into the engulfing need to see Sunny Delaney again.

Sunny lay curled up in the armchair that sat on the porch. Her breathing was steady in her slumber. Her hair still damp, he'd shook his head at her careless human ways before finding a thick blanket and wrapping her into it. His body brushing against hers he'd willed her to continue sleeping before settling down on the steps of the cabin where he kept vigil. As Jamieson watched her his body began reacting to the picture that she made.

Her lips were parted slightly as she breathed in the crisp air. He knew he should take her inside to her bed but he knew that would wake her and something told him that she needed sleep more than she needed the comfort of her bed. He also didn't want to think about what he'd do if he got anywhere near a bed with the haunting woman. As he sat on the steps his cock kept reminding him how long it had been since he'd had sex. He'd been able to ignore it for most of the night, but now as the moon began to set his cock was yelling at him in every language he spoke.

Stripping, Jamieson walked the twenty feet to the sparkling lake. He sighed as soon as his overheated skin touched the frosty water. The cold water should've cooled his ardour and perhaps it would've if he could've managed to keep his eyes from seeking out Sunny. As soon as his eyes locked in on Sunny, the lake water seemed to

immediately heat up. It was as if the temperature of the water was in proportion to the need that burned within him. He literally felt on fire with need so much so that he looked down expecting to see fire dancing over his body. Feeling his need to continue to escalate, Jamieson waded further out into the lake and plunged head first into the icy water.

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Sunny rubbed her face against the soft blanket she was wrapped in. *Blanket? When had she gotten the blanket?* She wondered to herself as she opened her eyes and sleepily looked around her. Gathering the blanket around her she sat up. She could see the setting moon to the east. Getting to her feet she walked to the edge of the porch to look out at the beautiful sight before her. Before she made it all the way across the porch, her bare feet touched something foreign. Looking down, she noticed the pile of clothes littering her porch.

Bending down, she picked up the shirt that lay on top and raised it in front of her. From its size (slightly bigger than huge) she surmised that it belonged to a male. And if the size didn't alert her to the gender of its owner, the smell did. It smelt like raw male. Inhaling, she savoured the heavenly smell before panic kicked in. *A man had been there? Whilst she'd been asleep?!* Apart from Preston and his nephews no males had come to the cabin – not that she saw Preston all that much. Not only was Preston polite to a fault, he was respectful of her privacy, her personhood, and her gender. No, these clothes did not belong to anyone that Preston called friend.

Running through her memory Sunny tried to recall where all of her weapons were located in the cabin. She was about to head over to the armchair to dig out the weapons she'd stashed in the cushion when the sound of rippling water caused her to stop in her tracks.

A man had risen from the depths of the lake and oh, what a man. He was all ripped muscle. She bit her lip as he shook the water from his skin and flipped the curtain of waist-length hair off his forehead. He was like an exhibit at a museum and she was an ensnared tourist gawking at the riveting sight before her. It was only when she saw more and more of that copper-bronze skin that the waning moonlight revealed that she realized that he was walking towards her. Normally a cautious woman, Sunny couldn't bother being scared of the unknown male. She was too busy looking her fill. Of their own accord her eyes ate up his body. They focused in on his full, sensuous lips, moved down the strong column of his neck, and over to his massive shoulders and tree trunk arms. Swallowing mmm, mmm, mmm's, her gaze slid down his impressively-muscled abdomen before coming to rest on his cock. Even semi-erect, it was impressive. Sunny reminded herself to breathe even as she forced her eyes to move down. The man had thighs like small redwoods and she suddenly wondered what it would feel like to be between them. He was beautiful all over but her gaze kept returning to his cock. Damn.

Her lips were parted and her breaths were coming in short gasps. The closer the male got to her, the harder it was to get enough air. Her lungs may have struggled to function but there wasn't a damn thing wrong with her eyes. They locked in on the man and

stayed there. Unbeknownst to her, the blanket had fallen to the porch and she was clutching the shirt she held tightly to her body.

Finally, Sunny willed herself to look into the huge man's eyes. Fringed by what she was sure were thick black eyelashes, his eyes blazed back at her. Though she couldn't quite make out the colour, something told her that whatever the colour, it was intense ... just like the man himself. Sunny was sure that she blinked but she couldn't say how many times. She simply knew that every blink brought the muscle-bound god closer to her. Licking her dry lips she had to remind herself that it wasn't polite to walk up to a stranger and lick him dry. She wasn't sure if it was physically possible to lick someone dry but right now she was willing to try.

Her breathing came to a screeching halt when she realized that the man now stood at the bottom of her cabin steps watching her as she stared at him. Now that he was this close she easily saw that his eyes were emerald green. There was a hardness about him that went beyond his hard body. Before she could consider what that meant for her, he did something unexpected. He smiled. Sunny saw the flash of bright white strong teeth and her eyes widened as he held his hand out to her. His lips moved but Sunny didn't hear a word. Her confusion must've been evident because he finally stopped talking.

She began to shake her head. *No! Please no!* She screamed internally as she felt what was going to happen next. And then it did, just as it always did - he bright light appeared. *Noooooooooo!* She screamed silently. The light was scalding her eyes and they began to weep. She attempted to keep her eyes open but to no avail. Finally,

she couldn't fight it anymore. Closing her eyes she felt the hot tears on her cheeks. Sighing, she raggedly whispered an apology.

“I'm so sorry,” she said right before everything went black.

## CHAPTER TWO

Sunny tossed and turned in her bed. She stopped moving suddenly as she realised that she was in fact *in* her bed. Frowning, she struggled to sit up however her frown was interrupted when she felt a solid figure next to her. Her eyes flew open and she stared into the emerald eyes of the huge black wolf that lay beside her.

*What the hell?* She thought as she stared into the hypnotising eyes of the huge wolf. Groggily she pushed her hair out of her eyes and sat up leaning against the headboard of her large bed.

*How had she gotten into bed?* The last thing she remembered was seeing the black-haired man talking to her. Then she'd seen him in her dreams. Had he been a dream? Perhaps he was simply a figment of her imagination. She had drunk a lot of coffee the night before. All of the unanswered questions made her familiar worries return ten fold. Scared that something was going to take over her body and end up in her recurring nightmare, she rarely slept. She'd slept yesterday but something was different. For that matter, lots of somethings were different.

Her clothes were in one piece. She was in bed. And the huge wolf was beside her.

The dream of the man had felt so real. She'd felt she was truly awake. With a shake of her head Sunny let go of the remnants of sleep and turned back to the black wolf. With a grin she petted the soft fur on its large head. The wolf's emerald eyes seemed to warm in pleasure and though it pleased her, she didn't dwell on the wolf's

emotions. She was too busy, too distracted with the task of trying to piece together the memory of the night before.

Her attempts were in vain. All she got from them was the onset of a migraine. With groan of pain she pressed her free palm against her temple. Taking her hand away from the wolf she laid her head in her hands and held on as if her head would fall from her shoulders if she did not. Her self care was interrupted by the wolf. Using his body, he gently pushed her to the edge of the bed and poked at her with his cold nose until she eventually rose from the bed. She thought nothing of it as she got up and went in search of her medication. Finding it she downed the pills and headed right back to bed.

The pounding in her head became overwhelming, so much so that she pulled the coverlet over her head to block out the daylight. Breathing deeply she willed her body to relax and clutched at the slumber that the pills were designed to induce. It wasn't fast enough in coming so she used the last bit of her energy to seek it out. Spying it on the perimeter of her pain, she met slumber half way. Reaching it, she held out both of her arms and embraced it.

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Only when Jamieson felt Sunny slip into a deep sleep did he shift back to his human form. The room was freezing, but his body, which was still blazing with need, was scalding to the touch. Stretching out on the bed, he moved Sunny so that she was within his arms. Her face buried in his chest, he bathed in the scent of her. Her softness, her enticing smell, her goodness all combined to make him hard, but once again he ignored his desire. Holding Sunny was



torture, but not touching her was absolute pain. Taking a hot poker and stabbing it into his groin would be less painful in his opinion.

The mysterious woman in his arms barely moved in her slumber. It was only when he felt the sweat bead up on her skin and heard her heartbeat speed up that he realized that she was being plagued by a nightmare. Despite the fact that she was being tortured in her sleep, she bore it with dignity. Though he could not enter her dreams and fight whatever was hurting her, he held her more gently and attempted to soothe away her pain with his touch. He kept up his ministrations until he felt her heartbeat slow down.

Having calmed her, Jamieson allowed himself the privilege of looking at the woman he knew only as Sunny Delaney. She was a woman with secrets. Not only did she have no identification of any kind, she didn't even have fingerprints. Ignoring his cock the entire time, he'd checked her out thoroughly. Being as clinical as possible, he ran his rough hands over her body. Her body was riddled with scars. Up close they were even more startling than even his wolf eyes had let on. He wasn't mistaken when he'd noted that she'd looked like she'd been carved apart and stitched back together.

Even though the wounds had healed over, he knew that she was in excruciating pain for he felt it. Despite her pain, Sunny had apologised to him as she had blacked out. Jamieson didn't realize that his incisors had lengthened. It wasn't until he caught the reflection of his glowing eyes in the mid morning sun that he realized that his wolf was emerging. Closing his eyes, he focused on his breathing taking deep, measured breaths.

What he didn't know about this woman far outweighed what he did know about her yet he could barely get past her femaleness and what it did to him. He didn't know what it was about this woman but she called to his wolf and to the man. He didn't know how she did it, but he summoned feelings in him that he'd thought long dead and buried. *How could he feel this way about a mysterious woman whom he knew so little about outside of the act that her body was covered in scars, she had an affinity for wolves, and her voice belonged on a sex hotline? What if she was the wolf killer?*

Jamieson shook his head. Even if he hadn't heard Preston's impassioned speech, he sensed absolutely no malevolence in this woman. There was rage but no evil. There was nothing about her spirit that suggested anything *but* pain. No distrust, no hate, nothing just pain – so much pain. He needed to know everything available about Miss Sunny Delaney and the sooner the better.

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Lukas Montague sped through pages upon pages of a file for a dead woman. The more he read, the deeper and darker his scowl became.

"Anything interesting?" Jamieson Mann's '*can't be bothered*' voice came through the phone's speaker.

"More than interesting Jamie. Have you got web access up there in the Red Mountains?" Lukas asked.

"Sure do. Send it through to the pack site. I'll check through it later today. She's about to wake up-," Jamieson made to say good bye to Lukas.

“You know that I can’t let you ring off without warning you to be careful of this woman-,” Lukas started.

“I know, but trust me, Lukas. I have nothing to worry about. It’s her that should be worried. She’s a hot, little number,” Jamieson’s amused voice rumbled through the phone line.

“I mean it, Jamie. She’s dangerous. When you get halfway through the first paragraph of the dossier you’ll realise that I’m not joking.”

The immediate silence from Jamieson’s end of the line was deafening. Lukas was going to fill it when finally Jamie spoke.

“Thanks for everything you’ve done, Lukas. It’s much appreciated. Give your wife a big, sloppy kiss for me, eh?”

Lukas chuckled at the *Shifter*’s normal goading about Star and how she *could* have fallen for him if she’d met him first.

“I’ll think about it you horny, old dog,” Lukas teased back.

Jamieson’s throaty chuckle was all Lukas heard before the *Shifter* disconnected.

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Sunny stumbled out of her bed and landed on her knees. The pounding in her head had worsened. She couldn’t open her eyes even a fraction of a fraction of a millimetre because the light of the sun was too much for her sensitive eyes. Still, she tried it, and all she got for her attempts was more pain. Grimacing, she quickly closed her eyes and tried to centre herself.

Her breaths were heaving through her body. Gritting her teeth, she grappled with the pain that originated from the recesses of her skull and wound its way down her body. All she could think of was

making her way to the nearest dark hole and staying there for however long it took for the pounding in her head and the excruciating pain in her body to subside.

Her fantasies of hibernation from pain, from sound, from light ... from everything were interrupted by a deep, rumbling voice that sounded like a cross between Barry White and a non-asthmatic Darth Vader.

“C’mon woman,” the voice commanded.

Automatically, she winced, waiting for the sound to trigger a fresh wave of pain, but remarkably, the command, which was delivered directly into her ear, didn’t cause pain. If anything, it soothed some of the splintered nerves in her brain. Before she could chew on that morsel, she felt her body being lifted. That too should’ve hurt, as her skin felt like it was stretched too tight over her muscles and bones. She felt a warmth that had nothing to do with pain, spread through her body, which seemed to emanate from where the unknown was touching her. She was laid on the bed with the utmost gentleness. Before she could thank whoever it was, she felt the mattress give as he knelt beside her.

Sunny tried to open her eyes but the shards of glass that represented the light from the sun stopped her mid-open. Without considering anything except an escape from her pain, she sank back down on her pillow. Harder than she remembered, she went to fluff it up when she realised that what she had her head on was someone’s thigh - someone’s hard, heavily-muscled thigh. *Whose?* She wondered. Finally finding her voice she asked.

“Wh-who-?” she croaked through her dry lips.

She licked them hoping that the moisture would help her to speak properly. She was about to begin again when she heard something growling. *The wolf?* She wondered.

“Just sleep woman,” the rumbling voice commanded. The voice set off shivers within her.

Sunny paused to consider the source of her shivers. Was it fear? Turning that thought over in her head, she decided that it definitely wasn't fear, but rather ... anticipation. Yes, it was definitely anticipation and it was running through her veins like water over Niagara Falls. She couldn't control her body. The voice had her at a distinct disadvantage, but it mattered none as fingers began to massage her temples and the crown of her head. Without thought she leaned into the magical fingers that offered relief and comfort

“Ah...yesss,” she hissed breathlessly as the pain began to subside followed closely by something she didn't recognize. The fingers never stopped, they kept up their ministrations and when she thought that it couldn't get any better, they extended their reach journeying outwards to her head, her neck, and then to her shoulders. She actually felt herself getting aroused by the touching but she wasn't in a position to do anything about it. Unable to do more than moan in pleasure, Sunny let the fingers lead her deep into slumber. She didn't know it but for the first time in ever, she went to sleep with a sensual smile on her plump lips.

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While he worked Sunny into a deep sleep, Jamieson was steadily working himself up. He was going through the most painful of all tortures – need. Sunny Delaney's mouth was so close to his

cock - his aching, straining, hard-as-granite cock. Her little smile made him desperate to taste her, to have *her* taste *him*. Knowing that she was hurting, Jamieson drew upon every millilitre of his willpower and stamped those thoughts down. He needed it to quiet the snarling wolf inside of him that was egging him on to take what he wanted. Regardless of what his body wanted and demanded, he denied it. He was a powerful man *and* wolf, and wouldn't simply give into base urges, especially when the woman he needed to sink his thick, hard cock into was barely able to lift her own head without help.

Swallowing his need, Jamieson made do with massaging the pain out of Sunny. He watched her as she slept. Knowing that she slept soundly due to his ministrations, he couldn't tamp down the pride that illuminated his eyes and pulled his lips into a smile. He knew that she slept because her smile remained in place for the duration of her sleep.

He could've held her all day but she kept moving. When she moved in her sleep, she rolled her curvy, long body sideways. If her sensuous movements weren't enough of a turn-on, every movement brought her tempting mouth that much closer to his rigid cock. When her rolling about brought her mouth a hairs breath away from his cock, his wolf howled so loudly in his head Jamieson knew that it was time to get out.

Gently extracting himself from beneath Sunny's tempting body, he settled her in the middle of the bed. Tucking the covers around her, he took one last look to assure himself that she was comfortable before practically running from the cabin. Stepping out of his heavy boots, he wasted no time ripping the clothes from his body. Hitting

the ground running, he shifted mid-stride. The powerful, black wolf was magnificent even as it ran from the cabin as if being chased.

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Sunny's eyes snapped open. Looking around her she knew that she wasn't dreaming. Reaching out, she touched the sugar bowl that was in the centre of the café table. She could smell coffee and something sweet coming from the open doors of the café. Taking in the scenery and reading the name of the café she realised that she was in France.

"Excuse me," a male voice interrupted her mid-thought. Jerking her head around, she took stock of the man who'd spoken. He had an accent that she couldn't place, neatly styled blond hair, and a friendly smile.

"You can see me?" she began.

Startled at the voice she heard coming from within her, she stopped mid-sentence. That wasn't her voice! Frantically, she looked around for some kind of reflective surface. Looking at herself in the café window, she stared at the sight that it revealed to her. Waving her hand over the sugar bowl to be sure that she was truly seeing what she was seeing, her mind came up with only one suitable response: *What the fuck?!* Regardless of how much she didn't want the mature white woman to be her, the reflection did everything that she did. Screaming silently, she wondered what was going on.

"*Oui, mademoiselle,*" the friendly blond said in badly- accented French that made her wonder if he was American.

No, she decided when he again spoke. She may've been a freak of sorts but she'd been American long enough to know one when she

stumbled across one and in spite of whatever else he was, the blond was not American. He must've seen her wince because the next words out of his mouth were an apology.

"Sorry, I didn't get to all of the French language classes before coming to Paris. I know I should have..." he went on.

Somewhere in his next sentence she stopped listening. It wasn't that she didn't care what the blond had to say, it was simply that the convoy of Vespa scooters cruising past the café demanded her attention in a way that his badly-accented French could not. Before her next thought could come, the word *trigger* appeared in her mind. Sunny didn't know how it happened, but one minute she was in the body of an older, white Frenchwoman, looking through her eyes and feeling what she felt. The next moment, she was digging around in her handbag until her fingers curled around the grip of the powerful handgun.

"*Target located*" Sunny whispered as she pointed the gun. *Who the hell was she talking to?!* She wondered as the people sitting around her began screaming and running for cover once they noticed the gun. The blond was the exception. Instead of running, he brought his hands up in the universal pose of surrender.

"I wondered who you'd disguise yourself as this time. I didn't think it would be so soon though, Sunny," he said.

*The blonde knew who she was?!*

Her thoughts were interrupted by an electronic voice.

*Eliminate.*

The command bypassed her ears and went directly to her brain. *What the fuck?!* She wanted to scream, but instead she brought the



gun up and shot the man between the eyes. His half smile and *faux* gesture of surrender was obliterated by the bullet that ripped through him taking half of his skull with it.

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Sunny saw the bright light a moment before she was shook awake and hauled up into strong arms. Her eyes opened and she stared into the water god's face. Without further thought she linked her arms around his neck. She didn't care if he wasn't real, he felt real enough. She didn't even care that he was soaking wet; she could live with having wet sheets, but not without exorcising the demons that plagued her whenever she closed her eyes.

And then there was her most pressing demon – the demon that plagued her every moment. It was the demon that she knew absolutely nothing about. Herself.

“Fuck me, now,” she whispered into the hot skin at the base of the water god's throat. Though he held her a little ways away from him once she uttered her words, she could feel the heat from his body upon her naked skin. Despite the fact that her eyes were closed, she knew that he was naked – that was, after all how water gods travelled, was it not?

Gathering the strength to open her eyes, she saw that his skin was bronzed to perfection. Poking her tongue out, she licked at the slick skin marvelling at its taste. He was savoury and warm – a mixture of all of the best things that she'd ever tasted ... and some of the things she hadn't until this moment.

“As much as I want to dive into that delicious pussy of yours, woman, you have no idea what you're doing.”

*That voice! She knew that voice.*

“I may not know everything but I know enough. Make me forget, please. Give me something good to hold onto for the times that my existence is nothing but pain,” she whispered desperately as her lips opened and she sucked some of the hot, bronze skin into her mouth. Feeling the shudder that rippled through the water god when he growled, she redoubled her efforts. His hold on her tightened, but she didn’t care. All that she wanted was to feel his hands on her body, his thick, turgid cock thrusting into her, and his delicious voice in her ear as he took over the nightmare that was her existence and replaced it with pleasure.

“No, dammit. No,” the water god hissed as she ran her hands down his body and gripped his thick cock in her hands. She shuddered realising that her fingers didn’t even meet. *Oh lord this man was HUGE!* And he was comforting. He tried to pull her off of him, but she was not budging. Holding that hard velvet in her hands, Sunny held on for dear life.. The water god sucked in a noisy breath as she traced the pulsing vein on the underside of his cock with her thumb and firmly massaged it.

“*Woman,*” he growled into her ear as his hands gripped the rounded globes of her ass.

*Finally!*

“Don’t make me beg,” she whispered.

Her eyes closed as she began to use both of her hands to slowly slide up and down his thick shaft. Though caught up in the pleasurable act, she noted the way her skin felt wherever her water

god's skin touched hers. She felt like she was literally in heat as flames roared to life within her own flesh.

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Jamieson grabbed Sunny's wrists in one of his hands, stopping her fingers from their illicit movement. Gasping for breath, he looked down into Sunny's face and saw only beauty. Her eyes were screwed shut as if she didn't want him to be real. *Oh fuck no* he thought angrily. Regardless of what kind of son-of-a-bitch she might think him, she damn sure was going to know that he was real. Thrusting his free hand into her hair, he tilted her head back then slammed his mouth onto hers.

She'd gasped when he'd pulled her hair leaving her mouth just open enough for him to thrust his tongue in. She tried to turn her head away but he wouldn't let her. Only when he needed to breathe did he tear his lips from hers. If she wanted him she was going to get all of him – not pieces of him. Pulling her tighter against his chest, he rested his head upon the top of hers. His heart was thundering, his breathing ragged but he'd never felt so exhilarated in all of his life. He felt Sunny pull back and although he allowed it, he did not let her go. Tilting her head back, she opened her eyes. Her breathing was as choppy as his as she stared at him.

He didn't know how long she looked, but he relaxed when he realized that for whatever else she saw, she at long last she *saw* him. Tentatively, she reached her delicate fingers out towards his face. She touched two fingers to his cheek before slowly allowing her whole hand to come into play. Reaching into his mane, she slowly combed her fingers through his hair before sliding her hand to the back of his

neck. Her every movement was slow and sensual. Not once did she take her eyes off of him. Before Jamieson could fathom what she was thinking, she slammed her forehead into his, executed some kind of gymnastic move off of the bed and took off running from the room.

Snarling at the biting pain, it took a moment for Jamieson to realise that he was alone. It took him another moment to realise that he could hear every footfall and breath that Sunny took as she ran as fast as she could. Pulling his jeans on Jamieson took his time. He knew her scent and he merely followed her as she crashed blindly through the forest. The fading light from the sun cast long shadows over everything but still she ran.

Jamieson could sense and smell Sunny's fear. He slowed and waited. She was running ragged now. He heard her stumble just as he heard her laboured breathing and wheezing. When he didn't hear her get up from her fall he began to run. He came to an abrupt stop directly in front of Sunny's hunched body. Turning wild eyes up to look at him, she tried to scramble away from him but Jamieson merely moved so he stood in front of her halting any further progress. She was shaking her head and muttering to herself.

"You're not real. I dreamed you up."

He could hear her heart beating so loud that it was a wonder that it didn't explode out of her chest. Dammit, she was hurting and though she tried to draw calming breaths into her lungs, it wasn't working.

"Woman-," he growled as he knelt down on one knee. Though he wanted to simply scoop her up and take her home, he held a hand out to her giving her the option of taking it. Clearly in pain, Sunny's

wide eyes locked in on him. Pain glimmering in their depths, he felt he drawn more deeply to the scared woman. His attraction notwithstanding, his wolf reared its head and roared. *Protect her!* Protect her, his wolf snarled again as if he hadn't heard it the first time.

“You're not real,” she whispered again.

She accompanied her denial with a shake of her head as if it would make him disappear. He didn't push her; he simply waited until she came to terms with the fact that he was real. Though he watched as her he felt her shock receding and transform into something different. There was fear, but it wasn't *of* him; it was fear *for* him.

“C'mon, let's get back to your cabin,” he said as gently as he could.

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Sunny noticed that although he didn't raise his voice, his rumbling voice held a note of authority. It also held a hint of suspicion and it was the suspicion that got her attention.

Inhaling deeply, she took a few moments to look at him properly. He was a huge man, a beautiful specimen all muscle and arrogance. His emerald eyes shined like beacons from a rugged, but by no means at all, unattractive face. His unbound black hair curved around his body like a lover. Power emanated from him and not simply because of his breadth and stature but because it was an innate part of who he was. She may not know who she was, but she knew power when she saw it.

Though he could've forced her up, he waited patiently for her to take the hand that he held out to her. It was a huge hand (*like the man himself*), yet he held it towards her, palm up, in a non-threatening offer of help. Sunny's eyes slowly travelled from his hand up his heavily-muscled arm to his broad shoulder before finally coming to rest on his face. She'd seen his face, but right now she needed to see his eyes – specifically, what was in them.

Neither of them moved. His silent patience wasn't something that she was used to. He watched her intently, not once blinking. Sunny knew that he was waiting for her acquiescence to his offer of help just as he knew that he truly meant to help her, not harm her. Blinking a few times, she finally spoke.

"You should get away from me. It's not safe. I'm not safe," she admitted.

Her normally husky voice sounded hoarse due to the dryness of her throat. Subconsciously, he swallowed trying to wet her parched esophageus. Despite her words, he didn't withdraw his offer of assistance. Instead, he remained where he was – on one knee in front of her, patiently waiting for her to accept his help. Though she didn't know him, something told her that he would've waited all day for her to take his hand. Finally, she relented and took his hand.

His fingers closed loosely over hers and immediately she felt ... protected. Easily, he pulled her up and towards him. They stood mere inches apart. Being as tall as she was she'd never had to look up at a man, but that was because she'd never met *this* man. Not only did she have to look up, she actually had to lean her head back so that

she could continue looking him in the eyes. That was a new and unexpected surprise. .

“Come,” he said softly.

Though he said it softly, she knew that it was an order. Not being partial to orders regardless of who they came from, she found herself going along with him instead of handling him like she would anyone else. Then again, it was difficult to dismiss someone who had your hand wrapped in his and used his body as a shield for yours. He was as gentle with her but Sunny instinctively knew that any protest on her part would end with her being dragged the rest of the way to the cabin.

She didn't know what to expect once they got back to the cabin, but it wasn't him taking care of her. Settling her on the front porch, he fetched a blanket and tucked it around her – even before grabbing his discarded jeans and dragging them on. *Lucky jeans*. Whatever else she thought, it damn sure wasn't him making her a mug of hot chocolate and snuggling up next to her on the front porch as they drank it. Okay, so she was sitting on his lap rather than sitting next to him but that was semantics. *No, it's not something deep within her said as she leaned into the muscled hardness of him.*

“My name's Jamieson Mann,” he said.

There was nothing threatening about that statement nor in the pitch of his voice, still its cadence made Sunny squirm. Turning her head to look at the man beside her, she realised that he was as tortured as she was. She wasn't sure how she knew that, she just did,

“Sunny Delaney,” she said as she sipped at the frothy chocolate he'd made her.

Pausing mid-sip, she looked into his emerald eyes and asked.  
“Are you related to Preston?”

“Not directly, although our families are intertwined,” he answered.

Sunny nodded. Though she wanted to know more, she wasn't about to initiate a conversation that she couldn't contribute to equally. Such a thing simply wasn't fair, and not being one to take advantage of another, she simply sat in silence. Despite the lack of conversation, it wasn't a bad deal. She got to sit in Jamieson Mann's lap and be embraced and comforted by his strength. He didn't do a lot of talking but that was alright with her.

Jamieson Mann was a lot of things she'd have to figure out. One thing she didn't have to wait to figure out was the fact that regardless of how laid back he seemed, Jamieson Mann was battle ready. Peeking at him from the corner of her eye she caught him licking at a bit of marshmallow from his succulent top lip. Closing her eyes, she swallowed a moan and talked herself down from what she wanted to do. And what she wanted to do was to leap on the man and suck that full lip into her mouth. Shaking her head, she resettled herself in his lap and went back to contemplating the night.



### **CHAPTER THREE**

Four days had passed without any incident in the Red Mountains- four days that Jamieson spent with Sunny Delaney. He would find himself watching her and wondering what she was thinking about, which was a brand new experience for him. Even when he'd met his wolf-mate Carla he'd had no other thoughts other than: sex, sex and more sex. Then again, he'd been a lot younger, a lot more immature and had dreams of infallibility. Funny how time has a way of showing you how wrong you were when all the good sense and advice in the world couldn't.

Carla had been as most she-wolves were: tall, big boned and ready to fight at the drop of a paw, but she'd wanted more than simply being the mate of Jamieson Mann. She'd wanted power ... and she'd been vocal about it. Being quiet had not been something Carla had believed in. She'd pretty much voiced every thought in her head be it good, bad or ugly. Her bluntness combined with her lack of tact had caused more than a few muzzles to get out of joint, and although he said something about her lack of tact, he'd done nothing to curb it. Instead he'd countered her lack of tact, with tactlessness of his own, which had led to more than one fight.

They'd spent the majority of their relationship fighting not that fighting had bothered the twenty-year old version of himself. Hell, he'd picked half the fights just to get to the hot ass sex that followed. And even though apologies never followed their verbal battles, sex always did. His loved ones had tried to warn him. Hell, even those

who flat out hated him had tried to warn him, but he was too full of himself to listen to any of them.

Shaking his head Jamieson pulled himself from the past to look at the woman who was walking in front of him as they strolled through the Red Forest. He was certain that she had no idea that they'd been walking for over two hours but he was reluctant to say anything as Sunny looked so peaceful as she moved through the forest. They hadn't spoken more than a handful of words in the four days that he'd been at her cabin yet neither one of them were bothered by the silence. In fact, a calm had come over them both and had only grown in intensity the longer they were in each other's company.

It was that calmness that allowed him to get to know Sunny Delaney. Other than his brothers, he'd never gotten to know anyone on this level. Then again, he hadn't wanted to. Every day he learned a little more about Sunny. And everyday, she learned a little about him. More importantly, it seemed that she learned a little about herself.

He smiled considering her habits. Talking was not one of them, although reading was. She'd read everything that was in the cabin from novels, to maps to scraps of paper that held recipes. She had a state of the art laptop that she tapped away on in her pursuit to read more.

Although she didn't talk, she did hum. She hummed all the time, whether she was cooking or cleaning, or simply strolling about the forest. He had no idea what it was that she hummed, but it soothed the battered places in his psyche. Perhaps it soothed hers too.

When she wasn't reading or strolling about in the forest, she was looking. Few things escaped her notice. She zeroed in on things and looked until she'd catalogued all that there was to catalogue about whatever it was she was looking at. He wondered if she realised that she did that because right after she got her fill looking, she'd get up and do something physical or move onto another activity as if to forget whatever it was that she'd been observing.

Not even he escaped her notice. He wanted to think that she looked at him because she was attracted, but she most likely looked at him because she'd seen him shift to his wolf form several times. At first, he was concerned that she'd be frightened of him, but he'd only sensed her wonder and inquisitiveness. That was a good thing because he planned on keeping Ms. Sunny close.

It was also good because he had to shift frequently being that he was duty-bound to check on the full-blooded wolves that populated the area. Though still under threat from an unknown source, there hadn't been any additional killings. Despite the lack of killings, Jamieson didn't let his guard down. He couldn't see the evil that trespassed upon the Red Mountains, but he could feel it whenever he did his nightly checks on the full bloods. The fact that he'd yet to find the source of the malevolence was really starting to get at him ... *and when something got at a Mann that never turned out to be a good thing for whatever it was that caused the upset.*

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The grotesque man leaned heavily against his cane. Behind the blood red glasses his eyes appeared cold and inhuman as he took in

the sight of the execution committed by an unsuspecting French woman.

The victim stared at him with dead eyes; he returned the favour. He was unmoved by the fact that he had known the victim. In fact, until a week ago the man had worked very closely with him. He was the second of his former experimental team to be executed. Turning from the corpse, he focused his attention on the bewildered woman who was busy vehemently protesting her arrest by two uniformed policeman.

Leaning heavily against his cane, he limped over to the woman. Flashing his identification, he made his demands known in flawless French. The two uniforms flinched, hearing the severity of his words and upon glimpsing the severity of the scars that crisscrossed his face and neck. He, on the other hand, didn't even bat an eye at their reaction. It was the same where ever he went and he'd grown accustomed to the reactions his appearance elicited. In fact, he'd grown to enjoy it. Besides, he didn't need looks when he held such impressive identification. His identification rendered him respect; his appearance rendered him privacy.

The old woman gasped when she saw his face but she didn't pause in her pleas of innocence. Despite the fact that there were a handful of witnesses, she continued to defend her innocence. According to her, she'd never seen that man before. Even more interesting was her insistence that she'd heard someone else's thoughts in her head when the murder had occurred.

"What was the other person thinking?" he interrupted her blubbing.

She scowled at his interruption before slowly reciting the words that sent a chill of fear racing down his spine.

*“Target located. Eliminate.”*

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Silence that’s what bound the two of them as they sat in the cabin. He checked on the full blood wolves. She read a book. He watched her. She watched him.

Finally realising that she hadn’t had lunch, Sunny stood and began to prepare a meal. Her movements were sure, steady and calculated. Jamieson watched her for a few moments and found himself getting hot and hard over her all over again. Well, he was already hot, which is why he’d ditched his shirt and he’d been hard since he’d first spotted her. Currently, he was hotter and harder. *DAMMIT!* Silently, he cursed in all of the Native American languages that he knew. It didn’t help that Sunny bent over several times giving him glimpses of her perfect ass. And what was with the look she kept throwing over her shoulder. It wasn’t a *come hither* look, it was a *how come you’re still over there* look. Yeah, how come he was still over there? Oh yeah, because he was trying to be a gentleman.

Jamieson gave her a few more moments to get everything that she needed before he stood. Walking over to her he began to crowd her in the small kitchen. He knew what he was doing. She knew what he was doing and yet neither of them said a word.

There were very few women he liked to *just* be around. So far they numbered three: his mother; his brother’s mate, Destiny; and, her sister Astarla – mate of his good friend Lukas and soon-to-be Empress of Vampire Nation. He had numerous female cousins but

although he liked them well enough, they grated on his last nerve at the best of times. But *this* human woman? He couldn't identify or even understand what she did to him.

Her silence played the lead in an orchestra. The steady beat of her heart played lead in the percussion section. Her fearlessness conducted the ensemble.

But there was terror. How that was possible he did not know but it was the haunting melody that underlined the steady thrums that her heart beat out.

He watched Sunny's face as she chopped vegetables with the speed and accuracy that would impress even a samurai. Adding them to the pot, she stirred the contents of the large pot as she added seasoning. As always, when she was immersed in a task she gave it her full attention. That's why she didn't know that he was in her personal space. Had he been paying more attention as he pushed up on her, he would've noticed the knife before he picked it up by the business end. Flinching as he felt the stinging pain, he didn't even get the chance to move before Sunny was in action.

Without a word, she laid the wooden spoon to the side. Grabbing his wrist, she turned the tap on and held his injured fingers under the running water. Jamieson was about to tell her that he would heal in moments, but the way she touched him momentarily robbed him of thought. When Sunny brought his injured finger out from under the water and saw it actually healing she wasn't shocked, but fascinated. He knew this even though her facial expression did not change. He knew because he felt her fascination.

She gently held his hand between hers, watching as it finished healing. Even after the healing was complete she continued to look and caress his hand. Finally, she looked up into his eyes. Reaching up, she gently smoothed her fingers to the place where she'd head butted him earlier. He knew there wouldn't be a visible mark, yet she touched the area as if she could see the bruise that had been there a few days ago.

Just the mere touch of those fingers sent a path of searing heat from his head to his cock. Her eyes never left his, which is why he was able to clearly see the passion that burned in her eyes. He felt his cock elongating along with his canines. He knew that his eyes would be glowing. Seeing the tell-tale signs of his arousals, Sunny should've backed off but she didn't. Instead, she continued to brush her fingertips against his skin almost like she was soothing him. As much as he wanted her, he refrained from touching her knowing that if he did, he wouldn't be able to hold the wolf back. Though it was a struggle, he held himself still, but then she did something totally unexpected. Winding her other arm around his neck, she leaned her head against his chest and rubbed her cheek against his heart.

That gentle gesture did him in. Jamieson's hands curled into fists at the base of Sunny's spine. He didn't know what she was doing but it was getting to him; it was getting to him bad. For a few seconds he didn't do anything ... and neither did Sunny. She just kept her head against his heart and held onto him. And then it hit him. *She* was comforting *him*.

"What're you doing?" he asked, his dark voice wrapping itself around the two of them.

Pausing in her ministrations, she looked up into his glowing eyes and gave him the same small smile she'd given him when he'd been in wolf form. His body bent slightly to gather her closer (if possible). It was all because of *that* smile.

“Just hugging another human being,” she answered softly.

“I'm not completely human,” he admitted.

Her smile remained as she spoke. “But your heart is. I can hear it.”

Her admission stunned him silent and before he could come up with an answer, she returned her head to its previous position. Jamieson's heart may've beat like a human, but it was now thundering like a thunderstorm rumbling across the Great Plains.

“Who are you, woman?” he rasped against her temple knowing that he probably wouldn't get an answer, but needing to voice the question anyway.

He felt her stiffen in his arms, but he didn't let her go. Instead, he spread his fingers wide and dug his long fingers into her ass holding her against his hardness. Ever so slowly, she relaxed. After many moments, she finally answered.

“I have no idea.”

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They didn't speak again until after their meal. Jamieson watched Sunny in his human form, with his human eyes. He knew that she was thinking about what she'd revealed to him earlier. Hell, he hadn't *stopped* thinking of her answer since the words had left her delectable lips. Lips that were being licked after she took a sip of the hot chocolate he'd made for them.



The silence stretched between them. It wasn't comfortable. But it wasn't *uncomfortable* either. It was loaded, yet they didn't let that deter them from watching the three-quarter moon appear from the west side of the lake.

"Why are you here by yourself?" Jamieson asked the question that was burning within him.

Jamieson watched as Sunny considered her answer. He heard her heart beat increase from a thrum to a steady pounding. The small frown that tugged her bottom lip down didn't cause his wolf to growl; the terror that wafted off of her did. Instead of falling apart like he was on the verge of at her pain, she gave him a shaky smile. Something in his chest squeezed hard at the sight of her delectable mouth curving upwards.

Her eyes filled with uncertainty, but she still looked him in the eye when she answered.

"I don't know Jamieson," she whispered.

In the semi-darkness of the night, Jamieson knew that his eyes illuminated the porch. She would be able to see every expression on his face ... and he wanted that. Regardless of how unpleasant the question or the answer, he never wanted there to be anything but truth between them.

"You have no fingerprints," he said.

Jamieson heard her heart beat accelerate. Her terror was on the verge of overtaking her ... but he wouldn't let it. Reaching out, he took her cup before she crushed it between her hands and exposed herself to being cut. Standing, he pulled her into his arms. He was pleased when she immediately rested her head against his chest

rather than pulling away. Her breathing was shallow, her pulse thundering, but still she clung to him.

Jamieson buried his face in the curve between her neck and shoulder. When his cheek brushed against the scar under her chin, he tilted his head so that his mouth was right up against the puckered flesh. Tightening his hold on her, he kissed every inch of the scar. He felt Sunny shudder in his arms and that raw response was his undoing. Wrapping his hands around Sunny's hips, he lifted her so that she was eyelevel with him.

Sunny's eyes were wide open now. Unlike before, she knew *exactly* who he was. She gave him the small smile that turned him inside out and moved her mouth a mere breath away from his. Her mouth just hovered there waiting for his. Emitting a low growl, he took her lips in a possessive, yet gentle kiss.

"I won't hurt you, but I'm a big man, Sunny," he whispered against her lips. "And I want you so damn bad, baby."

He rasped every word between tantalising kisses that set his body on fire. Despite the warning, her smile remained welcoming. If anything, it turned wanton, her eyes lighting with an internal fire that she'd denied for so long.

"I know Jamieson. I know. Just don't stop," she pleaded.

She silenced any additional protest that he might've waged with her mouth. Threading her fingers through his long hair, she pulled his head down and took his mouth. Their kiss was hot and he let her control it for a full half a second before taking control of her mouth and their pleasure. With a rumbling growl that started from the recesses of his gut, Jamieson embraced her tighter and stalked into

the cabin. Slamming the door behind them, he crossed the main part of the cabin and practically threw Sunny onto the bed.

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Holding herself up on her elbows Sunny watched with appreciation as Jamieson ripped off his shirt. The material simply fell to pieces in his hands and the bits of leftover material floated off of his body. His bronze skin shone in the bare light from the lamp beside the bed. Her nipples hardened beneath the loose t-shirt she wore. Feeling the need to touch them she did so. She didn't mean to close her eyes on the male beauty that stood before her but when she rolled the hard beads between her fingers the pleasure forced her eyes closed. The sudden snarl that echoed throughout the room forced them back open.

The sight of a completely naked Jamieson Mann greeted her. Before she could fully appreciate all of that beautifully-packaged strength, he wrapped his hands around her ankles and dragged her down to him. Her legs on either side of his massive body he stripped her without any help on her part. Seeing that her clothes didn't fare any better than his had, she couldn't hold back the small chuckle. Her chuckle turned to a mew of protest when Jamieson pushed her hands away from her full breasts.

"Mine," he rasped as he shook his head.

His rough, deep voice washed over her and pooled in her pussy,

"But they're attached," she began.

Jamieson grinned, his fangs gleaming in the lamplight, his eyes lighting the room. The visual evidence of his arousal turned her on. Feeling her mouth go dry she tore her gaze from his eyes. If the

intense look on his face had caused her body to react, glimpsing his thick, hard cock only intensified her body's reaction.

“And they're for *me*,” Jamieson said throatily.

Laughing at his statement, she attempted to wriggle out of Jamieson's grasp. When he let her go without protest she knew something was up. Getting to her knees she caught her breath when he reached out and spanked her ass. Yelping in a mixture of surprise and pleasure, she moved in an attempt to avoid additional smacks. Feeling the mattress dip and Jamieson kneeling behind her, she knew more spanks were coming. The smacks on her ass were strangely arousing. She moaned; Jamieson growled.

“Kinky Jamieson,” she croaked.

Turning her head, she shot him a look full of challenge ... and Jamieson took it. His fangs gleamed as he grinned at her. Grabbing a handful of her curls he tugged her until she was right up against his chest. His cock pressed against her ass, he nipped her shoulder.

“Hold onto the headboard,” he instructed in a heat-filled voice.

Shuddering at the feel of his breath fanning over her collarbone, she threw him a saucy look.

“Make me.”

Jamieson chuckled again and she came. It was as if his voice were fingers. The sound danced along her skin inducing the most intense pleasure. Jamieson spanked her once more, none to gently – just the way she liked.

Again she yelped, her breath whooshing out as Jamieson let go of her hair and grabbed both of her hands. Positioning them on the headboard, he kept her hands covered with his much larger, much

stronger ones and began to rain kisses all over her sensitive flesh. He kissed a path from shoulder blade to shoulder blade, her tongue tickling the scars that covered her body. He was loving her so good that she couldn't help but to push back against those questing, sensual lips and hold onto the headboard for dear life. Jamieson peppered his kisses with nips. Though his teeth were sharp, he never once broke the skin. Still, she was sure that she'd be covered in love bites when he was finished.

"Spread those legs," he whispered directly into her ear. The sound of his voice was like molten lava pouring through her. Not questioning his command, Sunny did as she was instructed and felt Jamieson's toothy grin against her shoulder. Letting go of her hands, he settled them on her hips and worked his way up to her breasts. Her sensitive nipples thrust against his palms as he roughly worked her nipples. Heat shot to her pussy making her wetter if that was possible.

"Ahhh ... Jamieson," she gasped as he pinched her nipples.

Leaning her head back, she pushed her ass against his cock indulging in the feel of so much hard man surrounding her. Jamieson leaned down and nipped at her shoulder setting off a series of shudders throughout her body.

"What's wrong?" he asked sounding all fuckin' smug.

Before she could respond to his ludicrous question, one of his hands drifted down over her stomach and to her pussy. He began stroking the lips of her pussy – just right. He lapped at the scar under her chin and delved his long, thick fingers deep into her pussy.

“Ohhh,” she groaned as his fingers went further into her body. She felt her muscles trying to hold his fingers inside of her. Damn, she wanted him to move ... needed him to move ... needed him to extinguish the fires he set inside of her body. When he pinched her nipple and moved his fingers within her, she could smell the arousal that poured from him – sure that he too could smell her heat. Jamieson had to be able to smell her heat. Hell, from the way his body had responded, he’d smelled it back when they’d been on the porch.

When she felt Jamieson attempting to withdraw his fingers, she pushed back, taking Jamieson’s fingers deeper than before. Growling low in her throat, she used all of her strength to clamp down on his fingers. Holding his fingers hostage within her, she sighed in bliss. She was pressing so tight against him that it seemed as if Jamieson’s cock was tattooed into her lower back. Leaning her head back against his chest, she gave herself up to the pleasure brewing within her. Her breathing already ragged, it became downright erratic as Jamieson began to thrust his fingers into her with piston-like speed. His thumb pressed snugly against her clit, she hovered on the precipice of a hard orgasm when he circled the little bundle of nerve endings firmly. Oh, damn. She felt his fingers being pulled deeper into her as she orgasmed

This wasn’t a gentle, soft-music-playing, hushed tones orgasm. No, this was a hard orgasm that robbed her of breath, sense, and propriety. Her orgasm barrelled through her with the speed of a jet, with the strength of a locomotive, and the intensity of a waterfall. Her body caught up in the throes of the most amazing thing she’d

ever felt, she opened her mouth to cry out her pleasure but sound wasn't able to pierce the pleasure that held her within its grip.

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Her body taut, her head lolling against him he watched as Sunny abandoned her control ... and it was the sexiest thing that Jamieson had ever witnessed in his entire life. He held her tighter as she came down from her pleasure, revelling in the feel of his woman. Growling, he peppered kisses across her shoulders as the aftershocks of her pleasure became slower and less intense. When the last aftershock rocked her, she began to slip forward.

“Oh, no you don't, woman. We haven't even begun,” he rasped in her ear.

“I don't think I can stay on my knees much longer” she sighed.

Though she sounded forlorn, Jamieson couldn't help but grin. The forlornness at the prospect of not being able to take more let him know just how much she wanted him despite the fact that she'd just climaxed. She honoured him with her admission ... and with her need.

“I'll hold you, woman,” he promised.

†~†~†

Sunny heard Jamieson's words and instinctively knew that they were a promise. He may have said it whilst making love to her, but she knew that those words wouldn't expire when he gave into his own pleasure. No, Jamieson Mann meant always.

Moving his hands to her hips, she abandoned her inhibitions and gave herself over to his ministrations. Biting her lip was an ineffective means of containing the sounds of her pleasure and when he pulled her lush body more snugly into his hard one she sighed a

symphony of compliments to the maestro that directed her. With her hands still holding onto the headboard, Jamieson pushed her further into the mattress with his strength. Pulling her legs a little more apart, he fitted himself between her thighs and rubbed the tip of his hard, throbbing cock against her pussy lips.

He kissed her as he wrapped his thick arm around her middle. She couldn't help but consider how good he felt, how good he smelt, how good he touched her. Jamieson didn't simply just hold her; he embraced her with everything within him. She was never more thankful for his embrace when without further ado Jamieson speared his hard long cock into her.

Throwing back her head, she shouted her pleasure at the feel of him filling her so intimately, so completely. Sunny could hear her own gasps and moans urging Jamieson into her body. She became more vocal in her pleasure as he continued to thrust into her over and over and over again.

She felt his hips begin to shake as he intensified his thrusts. He hammered her so hard that her grip on the headboard became unnecessary as he was literally holding her up whilst his cock plundered her pussy. Her body became a conduit for Jamieson Mann. As his strength flowed through her, she lost track of everything but Jamieson and herself and the way that they fit together. In the maelstrom of pleasure, she felt Jamieson's breathing change as he pumped into her. Suddenly, he stiffened and she felt his cock grow bigger and harder before twitching and throwing her into a final orgasm. The force of her orgasm shook her so bad that it would've thrown her across the room had Jamieson not been holding onto her.



“*Mine,*” Jamieson growled breathlessly as he gave himself over to his own pleasure and poured his seed into her.

Too weak to hold the headboard, Sunny let go of everything and just as he promised, Jamieson held her. Pulling her against him, he settled them both on the firm mattress. With his wildly beating heart against her back and his thick cock still inside of her, Sunny gave into sleep.

## CHAPTER FOUR

Jack frowned at his best friend as he finished telling him about the woman that his brother was possibly involved with.

“Are you positive?” Jack asked still frowning.

“There are evil humans looking for this particular young lady, Jack. Jamieson’s in the middle of a human siege and that woman is going to be the catalyst,” Lukas responded.

Jack rubbed his fist against his lips. He knew that his brother wouldn’t leave a woman alone to face any kind of danger, much less the kind of danger that sounded like it was on its way to her. By the sounds of things, no less than a full platoon of men was on a quest to destroy her. A born protector, his brother would fight any and everything that stood between him and the woman.

“Still, there’s a chance that he would’ve warned her and she’s long gone now

Even as Jack said the words he knew in his gut that there was no way in hell that his brother would’ve let the woman go.

“Do you believe that, Jack?” Lukas asked with raised eyebrows.

Jack shook his head.

“I can’t leave, Lukas,” he said with a growl of frustration.

“There’s no need. I’ve sent a team already.”

Jack’s eyes widened as he looked at his best friend.

“Oh really, since when do Vamps get involved in human *and Shifter* problems?” Jack teased the other man.

Lukas gave his best friend a look that had Jack’s frown returning.

“This woman is dangerous to *all* of us Jack. She can do things that most humans would never be able to comprehend, much less carry out. The information that I sent Jamieson should’ve been enough to convince him to get her away from those mountains, but since neither you nor I have heard from him, it’s safe to assume that he’s still with her. Jamieson’s obstinance is going to get him killed-”

“He can protect himself and the woman,” Jack cut in.

Lukas shook his head. “The woman would be the one to kill him, Jack and he wouldn’t even see it coming.”

Jack exhaled noisily.

“I’ll send my other brothers up there. I don’t want to be remembered as the Alpha that sent his Beta to his death,” Jack said softly.

“Let them know that Craven will come with them,” Lukas said.

Jack’s eyebrows rose at the mention of Craven. “Really? I gave him a bit of a hard time. I’m amazed he’d want to help at all.”

“Jack, Craven is in the *Locke Brotherhood*. His duties come before any vendetta. Second, his loyalty lies with me. He will do as is decided without fail.”

“Good to hear that. We better get out there. I can hear your wife trying to convince my woman of all sorts of things,” Jack stood and joined his best friend as they walked out of the study.

Though he didn’t voice his concern, it pressed on his mind. He knew he could count on his brothers’ help and support, still he just couldn’t help but worry. He truly *did* feel if anything happened to Jamieson, he would be the Alpha that sent his Beta to his death, but

most importantly, he would lose his brother. Jack refused to be prepared for that at all.

~\*~\*~

*Jamieson?*

Jamieson heard his Alpha's urgent voice break into his slumber. Keeping his arms wrapped around Sunny he answered.

*What's up?*

*Where are you?*

*Red Mountains.*

*Where's the woman?*

At the mention of his woman, Jamieson's eyes snapped open. Before he could respond to Jack, he felt Sunny moan in her sleep. He watched in fascination as she turned over and nuzzled his chest before settling back into a relaxed sleep. Jamieson couldn't help but smile as he answered his Alpha.

*With me.*

Jack was silent for a moment.

*Get away from her.*

Jamieson's smile disappeared. Fast.

*Why?*

*She's an assassin and she's being hunted-*

*No.*

Jamieson's eyes were glowing as he listened to his Alpha. He felt his brother's frustration, but he wasn't giving up Sunny for anyone, not even his brother.

*It's not a request.*

Jamieson smoothed his fingers through Sunny's curls. Feeling more scarring on her scalp, he followed the scar and realised it crisscrossed her skull. He contemplated his next words carefully. He knew nothing of Sunny Delaney and even with what he did know he wouldn't be letting her go.

His brother was Alpha and thus responsible for the wellbeing of not only their pack, but for all of the packs scattered around the Northern Hemisphere. Jamieson considered whether he'd be able to leave all that he knew behind for a woman who was a virtual stranger. Yes. Hell yes.

*Sorry kid, I'm not going anywhere without her.*

The tense silence that followed Jamieson's words was deafening but Jamieson was a patient man. He knew Jack would let him know his feelings on this matter and sure enough he did.

*Why?*

Jamieson inhaled deeply. He smelt himself on Sunny. He smelt Sunny on him. Without his permission his lips spread into a grin. He was actually happy. Not spitting in the wind happy but calm happy. More than that, he was comforted. With that admission he knew that not only defy his Alpha, but he'd willingly give up all that he knew for this happiness, for this woman in his arms.

*She's mine.*

*Bring her home then.*

Jamieson's smile returned in earnest.

*See you tonight.*

Sunny groaned as she felt pleasure tingling all over her body. Feeling warm and comfortable, she didn't question her actions as she dug her toes into the planes of muscle that she had her legs wrapped around. She felt a rasp of stubble against her pussy as Jamieson went down on her. He sucked on her clit like it was the most delicious piece of candy. Rolling it on his tongue, he delved into her pleasure centre. Shuddering and gasping, she called Jamieson every name she could think of in between breaths. When her orgasm finally slammed through, she pulled him closer to her, deeper into her. She'd barely taken a breath before Jamieson was reared. Slipping between her already spread legs, he leaned down and kissed the insides of her thighs before driving into her pussy full force.

"You are *mine*," he thundered as he thrust into her. Slipping her legs around his waist, she opened herself to him, beckoning him home. Thrusting up to meet him, she watched him as he fucked her with an intensity that defied reason.

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Having pretty much screamed herself hoarse, Jamieson had to rely on her gasps, sighs, and moans to alert him of her enjoyment. Well, that and her body's reactions. Right now she gripped his hair so hard, he briefly wondered if she'd ripped him bald in places. Her pussy felt so good he couldn't even bother being bothered about it for long. Pumping his cock into her, he rode her through numerous orgasms. He didn't give into his own climax until Sunny's eyes had all but rolled up into her head. Growling, he collapsed on top of Sunny whispering her name in a voice saturated with awe. He didn't want to crush her so he made to roll off of her but Sunny clung tightly to him.

Gently kissing her swollen lips, he spoke.

“I’m too big to lay on top of you, woman,” he said quietly.

Sunny opened her eyes and stared into his before giving him that smile that kick started every emotion inside of him.

“You’re just right for me, *man*, so just stay where you are,” she said with that little smile still in place.

~\*~\*~

Jamieson felt Sunny wake and move out of the bed. Opening one eye he watched her move almost like she was sleep walking. Alarmed, he sat up, his eyes following every movement she made. The watery moonlight shone into the bedroom, highlighting her. During a pause in their bedroom marathon Sunny had gotten hungry and they’d eaten, which is why she still wore the long t-shirt that skimmed her rounded thighs. His cock got hard thinking of how those thighs had felt around him.

A noise in the trees surrounding the cabin jerked Jamieson from his fantasy. Before he could caution Sunny away from the doorway, the bedroom door burst inwards sending splinters shattering across their bed. Rushing out of bed, Jamieson went to grab the motherfucker who dared to wreck his woman’s home. With his hand wrapped around the slim man’s throat he went to crush his windpipe only to discover that he held the man’s severed head in his hand.

Swinging his head to look at his woman, he discovered her holding a lethal-looking machete that was dripping with blood. His eyes moved slowly up his woman’s body. Her t-shirt was wet with the blood yet she stood calmly as she looked straight ahead. Despite her

calm, Jamieson felt a frisson of worry as he looked into his woman's eyes. Sunny's eyes were completely black. Even the whites of her eyes were black like pebbles in a river.

"They're mine," she said her sex hotline voice so husky it was no more than a whisper.

Jamieson felt the cabin becoming enclosed by people – all intent on one thing: hurting his woman. There were two women in the attack group, which worried him as he knew that he wouldn't be able to handle hurting them, even if they held him at gun point. He didn't get another second to think as every window, save the bedrooms, was smashed in and as canisters of gas were shot inside of the house. He knew he had mere seconds to get out before the gas poisoned his system. Before he could contemplate the best way to get his woman to safety, something was being pushed into his hand. Looking down, he found a gas mask in his hands. Sunny didn't have one on but she was breathing normally, completely unaffected by the vapours. Jamieson didn't know what to think as she helped him to put it on. Before she slipped it over his face, he bent and kissed her once. Though he felt the beauty that he always did whenever he touched her, he immediately knew that Sunny was lost inside of *this* particular phantom. Fastening the jeans he'd hastily pulled on, he stepped into his boots, grabbed Sunny's hand and waited with her.

Despite being immersed in a place where he could not join her, Jamieson was glad that his woman still knew him on some level. There could be no mistaking that wherever she was she was all soldier at the moment. He watched as she dressed herself in jeans and black t-shirt before outfitting herself with the most lethal throwing knives



he'd ever seen. He wasn't about to question this version of his woman knowing that she was capable of anything. Despite that, he vowed to protect with everything he had.

Hearing the loud noises of the intruders entering the cabin, they both tensed ... and waited. Being that only half the bedroom door remained, each of them stood on either side of the doorframe. The whole time Jamieson watched Sunny he realised that *this* was the woman that his brother had warned him about, the woman that Lukas had been concerned about, and yet this was the same woman that he'd die for.

Sunny hadn't hurt him. If anything, she was trying to keep him alive. Jamieson knew that *his* Sunny was somewhere inside of that body. The Sunny who was standing next to him was simply a Sunny that he hadn't met yet. The shouted demands of the intruders interrupted his musings.

"Use your brain, Sunny. There's no way you can take all of us so save yourself some pain and give yourself up."

While his wolf took great offence at their threats, he noticed that Sunny's expression didn't change. Though she remained in the same spot, she tilted her head slightly to the side slightly, like a puppy did when it didn't understand an instruction. The look on her face was ethereal and that look alone had Jamieson thanking all of the gods for the fact that there was a part of the calm assassin who knew *him*.

She looked through the tiny gap created by the splintered door. *Eight.* She knew there were more outside but something told her that they weren't all there to take her out. Strange.

*Run.* A voice inside of her head commanded. She frowned.

*Who are you?* She asked.

*YOU.* Looking up, she eyed the reflection in the mirror over the dresser. She was holding a machete and a scythe with a serrated edge.

*No really, who are you?* She asked again.

Staring into the mirror she watched as her image splitting in two. One side of her was wrapped in the arms of a man. When he caught her eyes in the mirror, he pulled her more snugly against him, bent his head and kissed the other half of her.

*I am you. We have to run there are people that can help us.*

*WHO? The motherfucker you've been fucking all day?*

*Don't do that...*

The half of her holding the weapons smiled evilly.

*What?*

*We can solve this...all we need to do is-*

*Kill them all. You bore me.*

She blinked and the image of the couple was gone. Leaning her head back against the doorframe she counted silently. When she got to fourteen she kicked the remaining part of the door outwards. It hit the three men trying to use the shadows to creep up on her. She inhaled as she began to twist out of the path of their bullets ... left, right, right, right, down, dip, jump, slice, kill. Kill. Kill.

Blood – so much blood ... but the important thing was that none of it was hers.

~\*~\*~

Noticing a man sliding down a rope trying to creep up on Sunny, Jamieson reached one hand out and snapped his neck. In the mere seconds that it'd taken him to dispose of the man, two more masked figures fell to their feet on either side of him. Training his eyes on his woman, he watched in awe and fear as she wielded her machete and scythe, literally swiping at anything that moved. As he disposed of the annoying toy soldiers within his reach, she took care of the shadows that launched themselves at them.

*Jamieson!* Jaron's urgent voice called to him.

*Ah, the cavalry has arrived.*

Jamieson couldn't help the grin that settled over his face as he heard the voice of his brother. One Mann brother was dangerous; a bunch of them was death just waiting to happen. Fighting his way through the soldiers, he kept an eye on his woman. He nodded as he watched her take out another two idiots with nothing more than an upper cut and a parry of her machete. Sunny was the epitome of concentration. Methodical, she attacked with a precision that left nothing standing in her path. Despite the carnage, she was not slowed down by the body parts flying at her or the blood surrounding and covering her. If someone would've told him that he would get worked up watching his woman fight, he would've scoffed at that, but sure as shit, here he was in the thick of battle wanting to hurry the end of this so he could back her up against the nearest flat surface and sink himself into her softness.

*The cabin is surrounded and by the smell of blood you're doing some damage,* Jaron relayed the information. He did not miss the hint of amusement in his voice.

*Not me this time, brother. It's all my woman's doing.* Jamieson said proudly.

He broke off communication as he grabbed the man that was trying to shoot his woman. His hands slippery with blood, the pistol kept slipping out of his grasp, which was part of his undoing. His first mistake was coming after his woman. Jamieson punched him so hard in the back of his head that his carcass went flying past Sunny. She turned and gave him a cold smile before returning to deal with the leftover intruders. Her eyes were still black but he knew that she saw him.

*Damn, I can just see your wedding, full of blood and gore.*

Jamieson grinned at his brother's remarks. Catching another scent that had nothing to do with the people attacking the cabin, he commanded Jaron's attention.

*Who else is in the cavalry?* He asked his brother as a group of Locke Brothers flashed into the cabin. Jamieson moved to greet the men as Sunny dropped the last attacker. Her weapons still dripping with the blood of the final attacker, she eyed the four vampires warily.

"Who are you?" Sunny asked.

Though her voice was low and controlled Jamieson felt the tension in his woman. Gently pulling her into his arms, he wrapped his arms around her. He took great care not to impale himself on her machete or the scythe.

"They're friends of mine," he rumbled in Sunny's ear.

Sunny remained stiff in his arms as if unable to comprehend someone touching her. Unfazed by her stiffness, Jamieson nuzzled the space between her shoulder and neck. Though he concentrated on his woman, he knew that the *Locke Brothers* warily watched the Beta of the Black Ridge Pack with his woman. No one moved ... which was a good thing because it meant that no one died. And if someone had made a wrong move towards his woman someone would've died.

Jamieson immediately felt the change in Sunny even before he saw physical evidence of it. Tilting her head towards him he noticed Sunny's eyes widen. The black receded and her normal eye colour came back into focus. He held her tighter as she stared at the blood surrounding what was formerly her haven, her place of peace. He didn't know what was going on in her head but he felt her confusion. Her thoughts were a cacophony of voices. Though he couldn't make out what they said, he knew their words were critiques rather than praise.

Opening himself up to her he felt her pain. Searing pain exploded in her head and began to flood her body. When she dropped the weapons in her hands and brought her hands up to cover her ears, he knew that she was fast becoming overwhelmed by the pain. Before the first moan of pain passed her lips, he was already spitting out directives.

Holding her tighter against him, he growled a single command.  
"Get out!"

Spinning Sunny around in his arms, he picked her up and made his way to the bedroom. Taking her into the bathroom Jamieson

turned the shower to the hottest that humans could take before stripping both himself and Sunny of their soiled clothing. Holding Sunny against him, he stepped under the heavy stream of water.

Sunny moaned and tried to wriggle out of his arms, but Jamieson was unyielding as he held her in front of him. Her face buried in his chest he aimed the shower nozzle onto her neck. Holding her head in one of his hands, he massaged the back of her head with his long, thick fingers.

“Hurts,” Sunny whispered brokenly into his chest.

His heart squeezed so hard he thought it would split into two at the pain Sunny’s words caused. He felt helpless at not being able to do immediately make his woman better. Now he knew how Lukas had felt when Star had gone missing and how his Alpha had felt when Destiny had been hurt. He knew and he didn’t like that feeling one fucking bit.

“Just relax, let me take care of you, baby,” he said.

Though he tried to sound normal, his voice strained with tension as he tried to massage the pain out of his woman. He had no idea how long they were in the shower. The temperature had eased off, no longer steaming hot, but still hot enough to suit. Jamieson continued to massage the back of Sunny’s head and neck. She was no longer tense but she wasn’t moving either. Her body limp against his, he realized that Sunny had slipped into slumber. Jamieson felt Sunny slip into sleep as her body became limp against him.

Shutting off the water, Jamieson eased her head back in order to look down into her face. Though her eyes were closed, the pain that had marred her beauty was gone. Hearing the even cadence of

her breathing and seeing the contentment on his woman's face brought him relief. Feeling the tension drain out of him, Jamieson inhaled deeply and wrapped her tighter in his arms. Jamieson didn't know how he did it; he just knew he *had* to.

Despite the fact that she was so beautiful, his wolf ignored the pliant sexiness that normally had him hard and aching. Right now, his wolf was in full protect mode ... and so was he. With Sunny in his arms he reached for a towel and stepped out of the shower. Stepping out of the shower, he gently dried her off starting with her body and ending with her soft curls.

Wrapping a dry towel around Sunny, he carried her to the bedroom. Laying her on the bed he found clothes for the two of them. He made sure to dress her for the cold weather being that she was human. Thankfully, Sunny remained asleep during his ministrations.

When he finished dressing them both, he packed her things. There wasn't a lot but he got it all. He didn't know if he'd have enough room in the duffel bags he found but he knew that he wasn't leaving anything behind – even if that meant he had to carry that cabin on his back. Too much had already been taken from his woman and he wasn't going to let anything else be taken from her on his watch.

Slinging the duffel bags over one shoulder, he picked up his woman and quit the room. He found the *Locke Brothers* and Jaron waiting for him on the porch. Several vehicles, including his truck were parked beside Sunny's cabin. Jaron approached him and took the duffel bags but made no attempt to even touch Sunny, which is

why he remained unscathed. Nodding to his brother, Jamieson turned to the Vampires and nodded to each of them as well.

“Thank you for your help.”

The Vampires nodded before making their way to their trucks. Though he didn’t know for sure, he presumed that they were there to insure their safe return to Black Ridge land. Ambling to his own truck, he was surprised when Jaron stopped him.

“Your pickup is nice and all, but she’ll be more comfortable in the Suburban. Everyone knows how you are about that truck but from the way you’re holding onto that woman, I’d bet you’re more partial to her than the truck. If you don’t have any objections, either Craven or I’ll drive your truck so you can sit in the back of the Suburban and hold your woman.”

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Never would Jaron have believed that Jamieson would ever allow anyone to drive his truck – much less someone whose last name wasn’t Mann, yet here he was watching Craven climb into Jamieson’s beloved truck. Sliding behind the wheel of the Suburban, Jaron couldn’t help but watch how his older brother gently handled the woman in his arms. Jaron was surprised by Jamieson’s tenderness with her though he wasn’t the least surprised by his protectiveness. Jamieson probably didn’t realize it, but his eyes were still glowing, his fangs were still out, and the wolf was so close they could barely understand him. They did however understand his growls.

Jamieson was fully under the spell of the woman in his arms. Whereas Jack had rarely fallen prey to a woman’s wiles before finding Destiny, Jaron could always count on Jamieson to go carousing with



him. Jamieson had been his staunchest ally when it came to womanising, although admittedly, Jamieson had been more discreet with his *escapades* than he had. Still, after the debacle with Carla, the last thing that Jamieson had ever wanted was to settle down. Watching Jamieson with Sunny Delaney, he knew that regardless of what he'd said or wanted Jamieson's days of womanising were over.

*Oh well*, Jaron thought with a grin. *All the more pussy for me.* Jamieson's voice broke into his musings.

"Let's go home," Jamieson said softly.

Nodding, Jaron cranked the engine and drove away from the Red Mountains.

## CHAPTER FIVE

Jaron Mann stared uninterestedly at the scene around him. The bar was packed to capacity with humans, shifters, vamps and various other beings and yet he was bored as shit despite all of the activity taking place around him. The next band was setting up on stage while the deejay was in his booth spinning tunes that the crowd got their groove onto. The crowd danced and talked - too loud in Jaron's opinion - but at least if they talked loud they'd get thirsty. And thirsty people bought more overpriced drinks. When Josiah, the youngest Mann brother, had first mentioned having a "Battle of the Bar Bands" competition and how it would bring in more business he had been unconvinced, but damned if his snot-nosed little brother hadn't literally been right on the money.

"Change for the cigarette machine, please," the female beside him yelled over the noise of the crowded bar. Jaron flicked a quick glance at the woman. She wasn't anything extraordinary, but something about her alerted him to the fact that the descriptor 'other' was right on the money. Though he mentally ran down his list of otherworldly beings, damned if he could figure out what she was. She wasn't a *shifter* or a *vamp*, but she definitely wasn't human either. Brushing the top of her shoulders, her hair framed a face dominated by eyes that were a strange gold colour. *Definitely not human*, he thought as he watched the barman hand over the change that she requested.

Having counted out her change, she turned and was shot him a friendly, open smile. The fact that she looked him right in the eyes

alerted him to the fact that she was tall – somewhere in the neighbourhood of 5’10” tall he’d guess. It might be a wolf thing but Jaron liked his women petite. Having a woman stare him right in the eye was an experience – even tall women rarely did it. Usually women acted coy or demure around him ... just the way he preferred them. Not this one. Her mouth was wide and full, a perfect mouth for blow jobs he thought as he openly appraised her. Despite being covered by a leather duster, he settled his customary smirk on his face and gave her body the once over. Heat entered her eyes at his insolence but that didn’t stop him from his slow perusal. Though her expression didn’t change, he felt rather than saw the smile leave her.

There was something about her. She didn’t smile nor did she give him a look of disdain. If anything, she remained where she was – jammed up against the bar – and hit him with a look that shouted the fact that she didn’t give a damn. Though she may not have cared about him looking, he couldn’t shake the feeling that there was a warning somewhere in that look. Another anomaly. Women loved him, wanted him and in return he let them pleasure him. He liked women, he liked to fuck them and be done with them, but this woman? Obviously, she didn’t know who he was or she wouldn’t treat him like he was John Q. Public.

John Q. Public had wet dreams of being him.

Even if she didn’t know who he was, his looks alone should’ve made her want him. Not a vain wolf, he knew that he exuded power, confidence, and raw sexuality. He drew women without even trying, which is why he rarely spent a night alone. Yet, here was this woman was, not really giving a damn. Indeed, it was a strange feeling to be

ignored and he didn't care for it at all. She gave him one last look then with a shake of her head she dove into the crowd and disappeared.

Perhaps he would've forgotten all about her if he hadn't seen the change in her expression. Without even bothering to check out how much wolf he was, she shot him a look that said, *'I've seen better; I've had better.'* He could've handled the fact that she may've seen better, but he definitely would've challenged the fact that she'd had better, if she'd given him a chance. And then there was that last look she gave him – an addendum to the *'don't give a damn'* look she wore so well. Hitting him dead centre in his ego, the look said that not only had she seen better and had better, she didn't want him ... at all. Oh fuck that.

Intrigued, he watched as she reappeared by the cigarette machine. Depositing the coins she'd received, she pressed a button and waited for the machine to dispense the pack of cigarettes. Absently, thumping one end against her palm, she looked at the stage and held up her free hand, her fingers spread wide. Jaron looked in the direction that she waved just in time to see his cousin Jesse give her the thumbs up sign. *What the hell was that?* He wondered.

Before he could swing his eyes back to her, she was already walking out the nearest exit, which led to the back parking lot ... which was dark and not at all safe for anyone, especially a female. Sighing, Jaron pushed away from the bar and made his way to the exit. All this trouble to ensure some stupid woman didn't get hurt in *his* parking lot. He could already hear the lecture he'd receive from Jack if *another incident* happened on Pack Land.

Jaron knew the kinds of beings that made a habit of hanging around dark areas because too many times he'd been receiving pleasure in areas like that. But the giving and receiving of pleasure wasn't the worry that propelled him to the exit. On busy nights he'd have two of the Pack at each exit, but he truly hadn't expected such a large turn out so he was running short on security until more Pack arrived.

As soon as he opened the door he was greeted with the red hot sounds of someone's anger.

“MOTHERFUCKER!!!!!!!!!!”

What the hell? Was that a fucking war cry in *his* car park? Breaking out into a run, he ran in the direction that offered the best view over the car park. Clearing the corner, he came to a skidding halt.

“That's bullshit, man! Gimme a look at those dice!”

*Was that Josiah?* He wondered as he stepped back in the shadows and took in his surroundings. Against the wall that separated the car park from the local park, roaring flames flickered from a lit drum. The flame was the only defence against the dark and coldness. The small group huddled around it probably more for the light than any warmth the flame generated.

Thanks to his wolf eyes he was able to see everything as clear as day. His wolf nose only backed up what his eyes had told him. The group wasn't dangerous – ah, but they were in danger from his temper. Comprised of the security team that he'd requested, he watched as his younger twin brothers and six of his cousins shot the breeze with the woman with the gold eyes that glowed. On their

haunches, they were engrossed in shit-talking as they played a game. Jaron shook his head. *What, were they like five years old?*

“Look *dawg*, admit it. Your huge paws just can’t handle the dice like a woman, now pay up,” the gold-eyed woman said around her cigarette.

Did she just refer to members of his Pack as ‘dawg’? And did they just let her get away with that shit? As his soon-to-be sister-in-law would say, *da hell?* Of course there’d be a whole lot more cussing involved in that sentence but it was the best he could do on the spur of the moment.

Mentally shaking his head, he watched as she held her hand out to Josiah. She grinned as she exhaled the acrid smoke in Josiah’s face. Jaron watched his brother’s face. Josiah was clearly exasperated but he wasn’t in danger ... yet.

“I don’t have the whole wad on me, but I’ve got a watch-” he began.

Having caught sight of him, Jared –Josiah’s twin - put a hand on his shoulder in warning. Ah, but it was too late for warnings. He’d seen all that he needed to.

“What the fuck are you doing?!” he barked at his family.

All eight of the Mann males turned around - guilt written all over their faces, of course Josiah was the first to start speaking,

“Jaron, we’re not doing anything-,” he began.

Holding up his hand to stop whatever bullshit was about to spew from Josiah’s mouth, he gave them a pointed look.

“Whenever you start a sentence with *we’re not doing anything* it **always** means that you’re not only doing something but usually

something that's perilously close to illegal. Now I needed you guys on the doors fifteen minutes ago, so why the fuck are you hanging around out here?" he asked.

Before his brothers could answer, *she* straightened. Standing with her legs slightly spread, she made an intriguing picture. One hand in the pocket of her leather duster, the other holding her cigarette, she was the picture of badass. Inhaling, he watched as the smoke caressed her face. She was a vision of shadows and light, but *those eyes!* Those eyes were glowing at him in amusement. Obviously, the woman wasn't human otherwise she wouldn't be so stupid as to goad one of the Mann brothers.

"Wow, where's your walking stick and slippers? Or do you prefer walking frame to stick?"

Her words impaled him like the sharpest knife. Inhaling sharply, he was about to rip her up when he was interrupted by someone's impatience.

"TAAAAAAGGGGGG!!!"

Turning, she took one more drag on her cigarette before tossing it to the ground and stomping on it. Having extinguished the flame, she picked it up off of the ground and flicked it into the barrel. Of course all of that had been unnecessary. She simply could've tossed it into the barrel to begin with, but that wouldn't have been as effective. That message was for him. In her mind he was the cigarette and given half a chance, she'd stomp him and flick him away.

"Nice meeting up with you guys," she grinned at his security team. Turning to him, she shot him a pointed look. "See *you* later."

Yes, she would see him later. And come hell or high water he'd make her smile at him. Normally he didn't care if a woman smiled as long as she was doing what he wanted. But other women didn't have such a fetching dimple in their left cheek – not that she'd directed that smile to him. Oh, no. While she easily gave his brothers the smile that he suddenly coveted, she reserved that fuckin' '*don't give a damn*' look for him. Something about a woman – especially that woman – smirking at him didn't sit well with him.

He watched as she stalked right past him without so much as a 'fuck you'. Instinctively, Jaron growled low in his throat. Though she didn't look back, he knew that she heard him because she flipped him the middle finger as she disappeared around the corner of the car park. The laughter of his Pack members brought him back to himself.

"You just got told," Jared said grinning as he left the car park.

Jaron wanted to smack him across the parking lot but he didn't for two reasons. First, he didn't feel up to a brawl at the moment. Jaron may be younger, but he was nobody's bitch. Second, he did get told. That's why he let Jared's remark go unpunished ... for now. Later, when he did feel like a good brawl, he'd bring up the matter of his insolence – with a right cross to the jaw. For now, he was content to let them go on their way unscathed. No doubt they were on their way to organise the security.

When they'd all left, he leaned against the wall, looking out into the woods that surrounded the area. Throwing back his head, he stared up at the stars littering the black sky and prayed. He prayed that he wouldn't have to rip anyone who was related to him a new one.



Tuesday Alexis Grace, better known as TAG since the ripe old age of four, contemplated the band she'd joined a month ago. The band was comprised of Wolf *shifters* or as humans would erroneously say, Werewolves but they weren't any worse or any better than any of the other beings that she'd run across in her lifetime. As for the band, she could take them or leave them although admittedly, Jesse was the one exception. She'd gone to college with the lead guitarist for a whole six weeks before she'd dropped out to FHD (Follow her dream) of being a musician. Well, she was already a musician, but she wanted to be a musician who actually got paid for doing her thing. Having been instrumental in her decision and encouraging every step of the way, she had a soft spot for Jesse. He'd been one of the few beings that she'd kept in touch with over the years.

After a particularly nasty period, which had seen her marry *and* divorce her manager - better known as Shitface to anyone and everyone who knew him - Tag had continued to pursue her dream on her own. After the divorce, she didn't simply follow it; she hunted it down with a vengeance. It didn't take her long to realise that she didn't really fit in with the *Party-All-Night-Get-Your-Picture-Taken-At-Hot-Nightclubs-with-the-latest-hot-thing-in-Hollywood* crowd. Packing her shit, she'd left the scene and gone back to song-writing.

Song-writing paid the bills and allowed her to be creative in ways that didn't put her in danger of ending up in somebody's dungeon or shallow grave. She'd done the song-writing thing for a minute but then she'd gotten bored, which was always the problem. Her boredom had spurred her into performing again. Mostly, she'd

kick it at all sorts of clubs and bars and do her thing. In fact, it was in a bar where she'd caught up with Jesse once again.

After they'd shot the breeze and gotten past the '*Remember whens*', Jesse had asked Tag to join *The Shifters*, his motley band. Even though the pun was intended, she'd howled her fuckin' ass off upon hearing the name of his band. Jesse was the kind of guy who named his truck, Truck; his boat, Boat, and called his woman, Woman.

His band pretty much consisted of a handful of his cousins, which was all good. They'd been needing the hottest drummer in the world but he'd been dead a good decade by the time they'd put the band together. After such an attractive offer Tag could do no less than say *hell yeah* to Jesse's request.

Twirling her drumsticks in her hands she listened as Jesse laid into the lyrics. The song that the band played was one that Tag had written the night after accepting his offer to join *The Shifters*. It was a great song and Jesse's awesome voice really ripped it up. Tag was so into the set she didn't feel Jaron's eyes on her.

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Jaron watched her from the shadows of his private office that sat above the bar. Seated in his swivel chair he couldn't deny that Jesse's band had that 'it' factor. Their energetic performance was bringing down the bar, still his eyes continually drifted to her, before settling there. *Tag*. What kind of name was that for a woman? Then again, there wasn't nothing average about the hellion on the drums.

Jaron's eyes ate her up. Though almost completely concealed by the drum kit, he saw her well. Her skin shone to perfection neither

fair nor dark but right smack dab in the middle. Dark gold was the closest he could come to naming it. *Was that even a colour?* She'd finally taken off her duster revealing a well-fitted baby doll t-shirt that showed off the tribal-looking tat that decorated her left arm and the banner tat that decorated her right arm. The t-shirt also showed off her amazing breasts. Groaning, he reluctantly peeled his eyes off of her breasts and focused on her eyes. Exotic, they'd held him captive as she grinned at the members of the band, as she played her drums, as she did every fucking thing.

She wore no rings, wedding or otherwise. The only jewellery Jaron could see was the thin platinum necklace she wore beneath her t-shirt advertising the band. And of course spotting the necklace took his eyes on a return journey to her breasts. She had breasts that made his mouth water, breasts that he'd like to play with for hours on end. He could bed her several times a day for the rest of his life and never run out of things to do with those breasts ... or her. Placing his hand on his cock, he adjusted it.

Before he could finish, he found himself pinned by a golden stare. The windows of his office were tinted so that he could see out but others couldn't see in, but he *knew* that she could see him. She stared at him but this time her visage wasn't set in the '*don't give a damn*' look, but rather a '*fuck you*' look. It was a small thing, but it was progress. That look may've scared off lesser males, but he wasn't one of them. Taking a moment to stroke his hard cock, he looked at her and showed fang. He smiled seeing her return the favour. Smiling, he wondered which of them would've won their little stare-

down if the band hadn't gone straight into the next song at the behest of the amped-up crowd.

Her gaze darted away as the second song started.

"Mmmrph! What did you just call me?"

The shrill voice snapped Jaron out of his erotic thoughts about the sexy, gambling drummer. Damn, the sexy little drummer had him so hypnotised that he'd forgotten all about the woman on her knees before him until she spoke. Normally, he wouldn't even bother looking down at her, but she looked up at him from between his legs. Obviously, she waited for something. *Had he come already?*

"Are you listening to me?" she asked.

Jaron blinked and looked once again at the woman kneeling in front of him.

"I'm sorry, darlin', I got lost in the moment. I didn't hear you," he said with his signature grin. That flirty grin had never failed him, and it didn't fail him now. In fact, from the blonde's smile, it worked a treat. He didn't even know the blonde's name, then she really hadn't given him a chance to ask. Or maybe she had but he'd been too distracted by her cleavage to remember anything as trivial as her name. Half a second after she'd introduced herself, she shoved her hand down his pants grinned up at him. That was an invitation that he wasn't about to refuse. It was a good thing shifters were impervious to disease because as soon as he'd gotten to his office, she unzipped his jeans and went to work on his cock ... just like she did now.

Jaron tried to close his eyes but his eyes had ideas of his own and thus remained glued to his sexy little drummer. When had she

become his? He didn't know. If she's yours then why is your cock in some other woman's mouth? Again, he didn't know. Hell, he didn't have answers to half the questions his conscience was asking him.

Turning off his conscience he watched Tag hammer out a bumping rhythm on her drums and enjoy every single one of them. Not only did he watch her, but tangling his hand in blonde's hair, he pulled her head up and down his cock in time to the beat that she banged out on her drums.

Besides having the honour of being the only woman that had dismissed him, Tag was undoubtedly the most intriguing woman he'd ever met. In spite of her obvious disinterest, she took over his fantasies. He imagined it was her mouth wrapped around his cock instead of the blonde's. He had a vision of Tag's face between his thighs, Tag's mouth on his cock, Tag's sassiness surrounding him. Imagining Tag pleasuring him triggered his release. He'd never come so fucking hard in his life. Fixing hard eyes on the golden woman playing drums, he vowed to forget her. Jaron Mann was a lot of things, but he was a slave to no woman.

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"Please tell me this is not what I think it is," Jack Mann groaned as he entered his home and was assaulted by four differing breed of dog all vying for his attention.

When he'd left two hours ago with Jamieson to confer with Lukas about the events of three nights ago, there had been one dog and even that one was getting on his nerves. He'd warned Destiny about handling any of the other strays or recovering animals on the compound, but obviously she chose to ignore his warning. Staring

down into his fiancée's eyes, he knew it *was* true. She'd tried to go for the innocent look but Destiny was just too sexy and too much of a shit-starter to pull off the innocent look.

"It's not what you think it is," Destiny started.

That was the moment that Jamieson stepped into the house. Standing next to him, he swallowed a grin and directed his comment to his favourite sister-in-law.

"New pets?" Jamieson asked.

Grinning from ear-to-ear, Destiny nodded and launched into an enthusiastic explanation.

"So me and Sunny thought that it would be the coolest thing to pair the puppies up-," she began.

Jack watched as Jamieson's eyes immediately sought out his woman at the mention of her name. Perhaps 'sought' wasn't the right term being that seeking out his woman was the first thing he did wherever he went. Despite the fact that Sunny was one dangerous female, there was no doubt in Jack's mind that she was Jamieson's *one*.

"I was an innocent bystander," Sunny said as she played with one of the four *puppies* from her perch on the oversized armchair.

"But you totally think that it's a good idea right, Sunny? I mean, the boys would be lonely without their girlfriends and then they'd get depressed and they'd mope around and then the other dogs would pick up on it and-," Destiny started.

Jamieson interrupted Destiny's plea with a hearty laugh. Watching Sunny smile obviously was all the convincing that his

brother needed that what Destiny had no doubt dragged her into was a good idea.

“Destiny,” Jack began, but Destiny ignored him and continued on with her explanation.

“–then they would want to you know,” Destiny lowered her voice. “*Go to the big kennel in the sky, wink wink.*”

*The big kennel in the sky?* Did his woman just say the big kennel in the sky? Of course she did being that she’d also referenced girlfriends and boyfriends whilst talking about dogs.

Jamieson was still grinning as he walked to his woman and held his hand out to her. Jack watched as she took it without hesitation. Jamieson kissed her hand before pulling her up.

“We’re gonna go. I’ll let you sort this out, lil’ bro,” Jamieson said when he stopped to hand him the puppy his woman had been holding before heading to his own house.

“C’mon Jackass, you can’t be that pissed can you? I mean, they’re canines and you can train them to sit and heel and everything–” Destiny began.

Without a word, Jack leaned down and dragged Destiny up so that her feet were off the ground. Taking a moment to once again thank the Creator, he lowered his head and covered his mate’s mouth with his, very effectively cutting off the flow of words.

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The night air was crisp as Jamieson and Sunny walked to his home, which was only a little ways from Jack’s. Normally, he’d camp out in one of the cabins nestled further off on Pack land, but now that he had Sunny, he’d once again taken to sleeping in his own home.

Wrapping his arms more securely around Sunny's shoulders they strolled together as if they'd been doing it for years rather than mere days. Once inside his home he turned Sunny in his arms and gently backed her against the door. Situating himself between her thighs he brought his mouth down and ravished her mouth. It was only when they both needed air that he reluctantly lifted his head. Staring down into her milk chocolate eyes, he smiled seeing the mixture of lust and mirth that filled them. He liked every look on her – except that of pain.

“I can't get enough of you, woman,” he admitted against her forehead.

When she gave him that stunning smile of hers in response, he lost himself in her heat.

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“Find her *now!*” the grotesque man yelled at everyone sitting in the laboratory.

“But sir-” the mild-mannered, bespectacled, lab assistant began.

Pointing his cane at the man, the grotesque man screamed his addendum, not caring what his assistants thought. “*NOW!!!*” he practically screamed.

His command caused an immediate de-cluttering of his immediate space. People scattered from the lab as if it was on fire. Only the man who'd originally spoken up remained. Eyeing him angrily, he barked at him. “What?”

“She is more powerful than we ever estimated, sir” he said quietly.



“I am aware of that, which is why I want her back here where we can control her.”

His assistant coughed discretely behind his hand before speaking.

“Well we know where she is...”

His eyes bulged ever so slightly as he stared at the assistant.

“Then why are you standing here? Go. Get. Her!”

“She is on *Shifter* land.”

“So?”

“It is land that is under the Supreme Alpha of this hemisphere.”

“Must I repeat myself?”

“Sir, you know the-”

He sighed, which was a cue that someone was about to die. Knowing that, the assistant didn’t even take a split second to quit the room.

## CHAPTER SIX

Opening one bleary eye Jaron came face-to-face with a tattooed shoulder. That jerked him awake faster than anything else. Both of his eyes opened fast. Rubbing his eyes with his forefinger and thumb he took a second look at the female beside him on his bed. What the hell? He never allowed a woman in his bed – ever. He allowed them on their knees, bent over his desk, spread-eagled on the bar, against the wall, but never, never in his bed.

What the hell had happened last night he wondered as he took in the tats and loosely-curved hair? You'd think that he'd know who she was being that he'd not only allowed her to stay longer than it took him to find his pleasure, but also allowed her into his bed. Nothing, he had nothing, but he blamed it on the fact that she was facing away from him. Running an agitated hand through the thick black hair that spilled loosely around his shoulders, he looked at the woman snuggled beneath his covers as if that'd bring back the events of last evening. Must've been a hella evening he thought as he searched his memory banks and came up blank.

A soft sigh from the woman occupying his bed drew his attention back to the bed. Her covers had come off sometime during his musings revealing the fact that she was ... fully clothed! *What the hell?*

Not only was she fully-clothed, she was snoring - loudly. All of a sudden she threw an arm out and started mumbling in her sleep. Her voice got louder as she began to hit the pillow where his head had been scant moments ago. Fascinated, Jaron watched her as she

thrashed the pillow a few more times before snuggling deeper into the pillow and going back to her snoring.

*Where is she?*

Jaron frowned upon hearing the pissed voice of his little brother cutting into his thoughts. What the hell did Jared have to be pissed about?

*Who?*

*You know who, you bastard!*

Jaron's eyes widened. *Whoa there, pup. What's wrong with you?*

*You said you would take her home. Jesse just rang me to ask where you were and if you had Tag with you. What did you do to her?*

*Jared, look, I don't know who you're talking-*

Jaron's words were cut off by his little brother's growl in his head. Though they'd had plenty of fights, he was taken aback by the aggressive sound. Silence followed.

*You finished?*

Jaron felt his brother's anger. *Jared angry?* Would wonders never cease?

*You better not have played her, Jaron.*

Jaron felt the beginnings of a tension headache coming on. How the hell could a *shifter* get a fucking headache?! He went back to breathing slowly, deeply and calmly. The thought of dealing with his brothers' shit on a full time basis was one of the other reasons that he rarely spent the night on Pack Land. He loved his family but the thought of facing his parent's disapproval at his fast and loose ways

and having to brawl with his brothers just because it was a day that ended in 'y' could seriously cramp his playa lifestyle. He had women to do, more women to do, and then after that more women to do.

*Who. The. Hell. Are. You. Talking. About?* Jaron asked Jared angrily.

*You know exactly who I'm talking about. You're probably looking at her right now, you bastard. I can't believe you actually took advantage of a woman like that. She's better than you would ever –*

Realising that the woman was rising from his bed, Jaron closed off the telepathic link he had with all of his brothers and stared at her staring at her surroundings.

Her eyes were a strange gold colour. *Gold*. Something triggered in his memory. *Gold*. Jaron tried to remember but holding off his insistent brothers who were trying to contact him via their link and trying to remember what the hell had happened last night wasn't easy.

Finally, she turned and their eyes met. She gave him a casual look as if accustomed to waking up in the bedrooms of stranger's. Jaron felt a rush of *something* he couldn't identify as he stared at the woman.

"Well at least I've got my clothes on," she said softly, her voice scratchy with sleep.

He didn't know what to say to that so he said nothing at all; he simply watched her.

"There's no reason you *wouldn't* have them on," Jaron spat.

He wanted to slap himself in the head as soon as the words were out of his mouth. The small smile that had been just beneath the

surface came bursting through before turning to an all out smirk as she watched him. Shaking her head she actually chuckled to herself.

Her gold eyes watched him without any expression at all. Seconds later, he noted the hint of a smile, as if she might laugh at him any second. Jaron was unsure as to how he felt about that look she gave him. She looked at him plainly, without lust, without appreciation, without any of the emotions that most other women would've looked at him with. Though there wasn't any love lost between them, she didn't run screaming from the room not that she acted like she wanted to be here either.

"Got any coffee?" she asked him when she'd finished mumbling and chuckling to herself.

"Yes," he answered indignant.

"Should I get it myself?" the smirking woman asked him.

Jaron fought the urge to pinch the bridge of his nose. How did this woman throw him off so bad? She wasn't even averagely attractive! Her mouth was too wide. Her lips too plump even if they managed to be an enticing deep ruby red *without* makeup! Her hair was a disarray of wild curls - wild curls that begged to be grabbed to see if they were as soft as they looked. Dammit!

"You all right in there, dude?" she asked as she clicked her fingers in front of him.

Yeah, he was alright if you didn't count the fact that his cock was so hard it was paining him. Forgetting his strength, he batted her hands away from him. Before he could catch her, she went sprawling. Contrite, Jaron immediately bent to help her up but she managed to avoid his touch.

“I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to...” he began.

“I know you didn’t; that’s why you’re not wearing my switchblade in your eye,” she said as she ignored his hand and sprang up from the floor.

Jaron scowled as she side-stepped him, deftly avoiding his touch.

“Don’t call me, dude” he muttered as he followed her out of his bedroom.

Entering the kitchen, she settled herself on a barstool. Resting her chin in her hand, she looked at him – again without the reverence he was accustomed to.

“Kinda hard to call you anything else when I don’t even know your name,” she said.

Starting the coffee machine, he pulled two mugs from the cupboard.

“My name’s Jaron” he said as he handed her a mug.

“Well Jaron, I’m Tag and you’re obviously *not* a morning person,” she said as she looked around his home with those all seeing golden eyes. Dammit, there was something familiar about those mesmerising eyes but he still couldn’t place her. Dammit!

He watched her as she took in her surroundings. She looked at his home without the lust that his wealth usually inspired in the eyes of women. Hell, she didn’t even look at it with anything but mild interest ... and of course she wore that damn smirk the whole time.

If he wasn’t mistaken, she was looking for the exits. That was a first, a woman wanting to get away from him rather than getting closer to him. Angered about her reaction – or rather lack thereof –

to him, Jaron searched around for something to take his mind off of her rebuff.

“What kind of name is Tag?” he asked.

“It’s mine,” she answered without emotion.

Her apathy to him was starting to eat him up. No female had *ever* been unaffected by him! He was Jaron Mann. Women had been throwing themselves at him from the time he’d hit puberty. Who the hell did *this* woman think she was?! He could click his fingers and have women running to him. For that matter, he could do nothing at all and still have them running to him. He didn’t need her! Hell, he didn’t even think that he *liked* her! The fact that he couldn’t get her out of his mind didn’t mean that he wanted her or anything. He only thought about her because she was invading his personal space. He only looked at her because she sat in front of him – not because she was the most intriguing being he’d ever met.

“That can’t possibly be your real name,” he scoffed.

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Tag turned her head to look at Jaron. The guy was impossibly good looking. Thick and glossy, his midnight hair fell just below his shoulders. *Who the hell let a man have hair like that?* There had to be some kind of law about shit like that. That was the kind of thing that tipped the balance of the universe. Asshole. He should be modelling hair products with that kind of hair. And then there were his eyes. Bright green in colour, they were filled with caution - like he expected her to suddenly pull out a pump action shotgun and pump him full of buckshot. They were also filled with a little bit of pissed-offness and if there was one thing she knew it was people being pissed

off with her. Good thing she was comfortable with people being pissed off with her or she might've been concerned and all. While Jaron might be an asshole, she knew that he wouldn't physically harm her.

"What's wrong with it? I like it. It's short and to the point" Tag said grinning on the inside as she savoured the perplexed look he wore.

She knew that he was frustrated with her answers and she so didn't care. It was fun making him simmer.

"It's a name you would give a child," Jaron said through his teeth.

"You calling me childish, Jaron?" Tag asked the gorgeous guy with the ass attitude.

She pressed her lips together seeing the frustration come over his face. Damn, he was hot when he was angry. Twirling her mug around her forefinger she waited for the next stupid thing out of his delicious-looking mouth.

"It's a stupid name. What's your real name?" He asked her angrily.

Tag couldn't help it. She started laughing. A control freak, Jaron was fast losing his temper. She'd bet her last nickel that he prided himself on being in control. Too bad he didn't know that pissing off control freaks was her area of expertise. She was always getting people pissed at her for no good reason at all. People didn't like it when she gave them the answers that she felt that they *needed*, rather than the ones that they *wanted*.



“Well the name Jaron isn’t all that fucking great either. Where did your mother get that from?” she asked.

Jaron’s mouth thinned into an angry line. Turning blazing green eyes on her, he looked like he was ready to pounce on her and wrestle her to the ground. The thought of him wrestling her to the ground got her a little hot but she remained all calm and shit. She watched as the fire in his eyes died down and his full lips relaxed into a smile. Those lips would probably feel real good on her pussy.

“You’re good,” he said with a slow grin spreading across his face.

Tag raised her eyebrows.

“Compliments this early in the morning? Wow, watch yourself. You might be possessed by something,” Tag said.

Pinning him with her gaze, she watched as softness entered his amazing emerald eyes. It was a look that Tag hadn’t expected this early on. Hell, it was a look that she didn’t expect from him – ever. Since she’d met him, she’d seen his desire, his temper, his authority, his confusion, but until that moment, she’d never seen his softness. This wasn’t a Jaron Mann that she was used to dealing with. Uh oh.

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“Tell me your real name,” Jaron practically purred at her.

He watched as Tag’s left eyebrow rose higher than her right before her smirk turned into a smile of monumental proportions. Jaron felt winded by the facial gesture, and he didn’t mean that metaphorically. He actually felt a loss of breath. Damn!

“Why?” she asked him coyly.

Her tone was so tempting that Jaron waited to see if she would also bat her eyelashes at him as well.

“You’ve slept with me,” he started.

Tag burst into laughter.

Jaron kept speaking as if he didn’t hear her.

“I think to save my virtue I should at least know the proper name of the woman who took advantage of me.”

Tag was laughing so hard she actually had tears running down her face. Again, Jaron was perplexed. He wasn’t known for being funny, that was his little brother Josiah’s role. He was the playa, the lover, the lady’s man, the one who loved em’ and left em’. Like Einstein’s theory of relativity, the fact that the lady’s loved Jaron Mann was well known. They loved him so much that his brother’s had taken to calling him LL when they’d discovered what the first two initials in the acclaimed rapper’s name stood for.

Josiah was the funny brother. Jared was the *can’t be bothered* brother. Jack was the calm one – the reasonable one, which is why he was Supreme Alpha. Jamieson was the *asswhipping waiting to be delivered* brother and the Beta of their Pack. Jeremiah was the enigma, the unsolved equation, the unproved hypothesis. Jaron was the player. Full stop. He’d never come close to being considered funny. Never. Not until now.

Finally Tag’s boisterous laughter dwindled to low chuckles. Every now and then a loud chuckle would erupt. Wiping her eyes, she held her right hand over her heart. Giving Jaron a sincere look of mirth, she bowed ever so slightly.

“Thanks dude. That’s gotta’ be the best laugh I’ve had in a long time, probably forever. Damn, didn’t see that one coming,” Tag said slightly breathless from her laughter.

Before he could comment, he noticed Tag's eyes glazing over. For a moment he thought he'd finally affected her but then he noticed that she was looking at the coffee pot, which had stopped. Holding out his hand for her mug, their fingers brushed against each others. He felt a frisson of something go through him from that brief touch. Not knowing what else to do, he snatched his hand away.

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Tag pretended not to notice when Jaron snatched his hand away from hers. She knew his actions weren't an insult. He simply didn't like the effect she had on him. In an effort to give him space, she moved from the kitchen to the living room. The painting that dominated the wall caught her attention. It was an oil painting of a cliff face during a raging storm. Dark with bold lines, she could practically feel the rage jumping off the canvas. It was the one thing in the house that wasn't veneer. He had a nice house but it was all bullshit, the stuff that a worldly man was expected to have in his place.

Though she attempted to move her eyes away, something about the painting drew her to it. It was like she was actually in the storm that the artist had depicted. Caressing the painting with her eyes, she noticed the initials J.M. in the corner. Hmmmm, interesting. Could her host possibly be the unknown artist? It seemed unfathomable that the one and only *Mr Lover* could be so intimate with his own emotions. Then again, wonders never did cease.

"What are you doing here?" Jaron asked.

Tag didn't pretend to misunderstand him. She knew that he meant in his home, in his life ... not in the living room. Blinking, she focused on him before answering.

"You don't remember ravishing me all the way from the club and then falling asleep when we rocked each other's world?"

Jaron was sipping his coffee before she started speaking. After she'd finished, he was no longer choking on his coffee – he was choking on it. Yay me! She said to herself.

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Spluttering, at Tag's words, he spit cover all over himself. Damn woman. Reaching for a tea towel, he swiped at his chest. It was only then that he realised the most embarrassing fact. He was completely naked.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

Tag was in the middle of the gentle art of drumming. Using brushes against her drums, she closed her eyes and listened to Jesse sing one of her favourite songs by Mr. Amos Lee. It was bluesy; it was soulful; it was heart-wrenching and it got to her ... every. Single. Time. Banging out a rhythm jumpstarted her passion but she relished the times when she could keep the beat of a song with gentleness. The brushes skimmed her drum kit like a lover's caresses skimmed her skin.

Before she was ready for it, the song was slowly coming to an end. The crowd was screaming and whistling its appreciation long before she gave her last flurry. The Shifters were the closing act for the third night in a row in the Battle of The Bar Bands. They'd kicked ass every night since the first night and had been brought back to defend their wins.

Having ripped up the stage with their playing, Tag blew out a breath and rolled her shoulders. Pushing her curls off of her forehead she picked up her sweatshirt and wiped the sweat from her brow. Though it was sub-freezing temperatures outside, the stage lights and crush of people pushed the temperature to sweltering inside of the bar.

The stage light switched low and the house DeeJay began to spin some tunes for the patrons to dance and drink to. Tag made to stand up but before she could get to her feet, she got a hand towel tossed in her face. Grabbing the towel out of midair, she came face-to-face with the "girlfriend" of one of her band mates. She couldn't recall the

highlighted blonde's name but she recalled her attitude and it fucking sucked.

"Don't get any funny ideas about my man," she snarled in her face before turning and stomping off.

Shaking off the hand of her boyfriend, she threw up her hand and kept walking. Getting up from his keyboard, her band mate mouthed an apology to her before hurrying after his woman. Tag shook her head at the drama that always seemed to be an intrinsic part of the band scene ... especially when she was the only female in a band comprised of good-looking males. It seemed that being accused of being a slut, whore or just generally a bitch by the significant other's of her band members was part and parcel of the scene, but truthfully it was getting old. She may've had her fun but she'd never "screwed the crew" after witnessing how fucked up that usually turned out.

Shrugging it off, she started packing away her gear. She left most of her kit assembled since they'd be back tomorrow night. Wiping her face, she mentally went over their song book. It wasn't so much a "book" as it was a giant folder with copies of every song they'd ever rehearsed or laid down a demo for. Their sets were getting longer every night and they were going to have to dig a little deeper into their material in order to keep it fresh. Though she was the drummer, she was the one who decided what songs they played; so far she'd been spot on.

Her musings were interrupted by Jesse's arrival.

"You okay?" he asked.

“Yeah, the usual” she said as she shoved her arms into her coat and shrugged into the rest of her winter gear. Pulling a toboggan over her loose curls she searched around for her gloves and slipped into them. She was about to walk out of the club when Jesse’s words stopped her in her tracks.

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“What happened with my cousin, Tag?” Jesse finally asked the question that had been burning in his gut from the moment he’d discovered that Tag – who was his friend first and his drummer second - had gone home with his playa cousin.

Tag turned her amazing gold eyes on him and answered.

“Absolutely nothing.”

There were few beings that Jesse trusted but Tag was one of them. Even though she gave him a flip answer, Jesse knew that it was an honest one being that it came from her. He didn’t simply believe her because of what she was; he believed her because of who she was. Though she was not the average woman – or the average anything for that matter – she was still female and he cared about her.

“But that’s not for lack of my cousin trying,” Jesse commented as the two of them headed out to the waiting cab.

“You got that right. He really thinks he’s Gods gift to women doesn’t he?”

“Jaron’s never been without fans,” he said as he opened the cab door for Tag.

“Nothing happened, Jesse. He fell asleep a few seconds before I dragged his ass into the house. I was tired so I stayed. End of story,” Tag said with a grin.

“Tag ... ah ... I mean ... aw shit,” Jesse said noticing the cabbie pointedly eyeing the meter.

It was clear that they were going to have to have this conversation at a later date. Winking at him, Tag met the cab driver’s eyes in the rear view mirror. A moment later, the driver cut the engine and switched off the meter. Climbing out of the cab, Tag faced him.

“What’s wrong, Jesse?” she asked, concern etched onto her face.

“Jaron’s my cousin. He’s not like other *shifters* you’ve met,” he began.

“Oh Jesse, you would be surprised at the *shifters* I have met,” Tag said with a smile.

Shaking his hair out of his eyes, he watched as Tag fingered the platinum chain around her neck, which he knew remained warm to the touch regardless of the temperature.

“Jaron is renowned for breaking hearts, Tuesday.”

He knew that Tag was taken back at his use of her actual name. He never used it unless he was serious ... and she knew that.

“He’s hurt a lot of women and never looked back.”

“Jesse, I don’t feel anything for your cousin. In fact, I barely feel amusement. I mean he’s a good looking guy but then so are most of the *shifters* I’ve met. And so are the Vamps and Guardians, hell pretty much the whole *Otherworldly* community is populated with scandalously hot men and smokin’ women. What’s really going on Jesse?”

“Jaron wants you Tag. He wants you badly. He doesn’t know it but from what he’s been doing these past couple of days I know it



won't be long before he convinces you that he will give you anything and everything you want.”

His words came to a halt when Tag brought her gloved hands up and framed his face between her gloved hands. Making him look her in the eyes, he did so. Considering the cold, he imagined any lookers on would assume that they were lovers involved in a meaningful discussion.

“Jesse, my dear friend, not only am I *Fae*, I'm bound to a motherfucker that will never let me have peace or happiness because my very existence brings shame. The only reason that I'm in the human realm is because it was the most convenient place to banish me. Along with my banishment, I've been stripped of all but the most rudimentary of my powers and most of my emotions. Your cousin only feels this way about me because I present a challenge. When we move on to our next gig he'll forget all about me.”

A powerful being – even with her powers bound – Tag sounded convincing and if she'd been talking about anyone other than a Mann male, he would've agreed with her.

“That's what *you* think,” he said as he shook his head.

He watched her mimic his gesture. Shaking her own head, she spoke.

“No Jesse, that's what I *know*,” she said as she reached up and kissed his cheek. “With my powers bound I'm not able to harm your cousin; with my emotions stripped, your cousin is unable to hurt me. Even if I partook in some fleeting, carnal pleasure with Jaron, it'd only be sex. I'm immune to Jaron Mann and whatever it is that

makes women flock to his side. I'm the safest woman in the world with your cousin."

Releasing bent up emotion, Jesse took her hand. Tag was his unofficial baby sister and it didn't matter that she wasn't wolf, wasn't a Mann, and could probably whip his ass when she had her full powers.

"I just don't want you to get hurt, Tag. You're too good for that."

Tag grinned at him.

"You're the best friend that I've ever had, Jesse."

"Damn right, Tag."

"Stop worrying about me and get back in that bar and network your hot ass off. The place is crawling with producers who have more money than sense, big assumptions and even bigger egos, and access to some pimped-out studios we can use to lay down some mean tracks. Plus there's a shit load of spicy hot women all wanting them some Jesse Mann," she said as she gave him a quick hug.

Tucking an errant curl behind her ear he kissed her cheek. "Try not to incite any riots, but if you do, make sure that it's worth it," he said before making his way back to the bar.

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Jesse better be glad that she loved him and didn't have her powers or she might've zapped him a little bit for his cheek. Like any riot she'd incited hadn't been worth it. Tag watched Jesse walk back towards the bar. Knowing that he wouldn't go in until she was safely in the cab she turned to get in and came head to chin with Jaron Mann.

They both made disgruntled noises at the bone-jarring contact. She would've fallen had he not reached out and caught her by the hips. Seeing her safely settled back on her own two feet he could've let go, instead he pulled her into his breathing space. Though their breath mingled and clouded around them, she couldn't help but notice the flash of fang that Jaron's glowing eyes revealed.

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"Fancy meeting you here," Tag said with a raised eyebrow.

"Come home with me," Jaron fairly growled as he dragged Tag to him. Though he didn't hurt her, he handled her more roughly than he normally handled a female. His wolf was close to the surface and it was all her fault. Coming outside for a respite, he'd been assailed by the image of another male talking to her. She and Jesse had been talking so intimately that at first he'd mistaken them for a couple. His wolf had rebelled at the intimate picture they made and it didn't matter that Jesse was his own flesh and blood.

The way Tag had touched Jesse had made Jaron's wolf ripple beneath his skin. *You're jealous!* Something in him taunted. He shook his head in denial even as his wolf howled at the wild accusation. Still, the longer he watched the exchange between her and Jesse, the more agitated he'd grown. It was bad enough that he couldn't get her out of his head but the last straw had been when they'd kissed each other. Sure it had been on the cheek, but it didn't negate the fact that her lips had touched another man. For some reason that annoyed him but what really fucked him off was the fact that she didn't want *him* touching her at all? What the fuck? Who did she think she was?

“You asking or telling?” Tag asked him calmly.

Taking a moment to breathe in her scent, he realised that not only wasn't she aroused by his nearness; she wasn't even slightly heated! *How could this be?!*

“Asking of course,” he amended as he crowded her body with his bigger one.

Feeling his fangs burst through his gums he breathed in deeply in an effort to tamp down his fiery emotions. She got to him; still he didn't want to scare her off. Pulling her tight to him he felt a tremor run through her. Not letting the moment go to waste he thrust his pelvis into hers eliciting more tremors. *Finally!* He knew he'd get to her sooner or later. Pulling her back so that he could see her surrender he came up short. Stepping back a little he watched in amazement as she opened her mouth and let her laughter flow freely. She was laughing at him! What the hell?

“You need to learn how to *ask* properly. Now let me go. I've played hard and I need to rest,” she said as she pried his fingers from her arms one by one.

Before she could finish the task he thrust her away from him. Instead of being upset she simply smirked at him in that infuriating way that she seemed to reserve just for him.

“Cock tease,” he remarked as he watched her climb into the cab.

Though her expression didn't change at all, he knew that he'd pissed her off. Good. That made two of them.

She parried with a smart ass remark of her own.

“Watch your mouth, *dawg.*”

Before he could respond, she'd slammed the door in his face and the cab was speeding off into the night. As he watched the rear lights speed away from him, Jaron called himself several kinds of fool. Having lost her for the night, he had two choices ... and both of them sucked. Frustration clawing at him, he stalked back into his bar to find his cousin so that he could get the details on the most annoying, sexy, unaffected woman he'd ever met. Or wanted.

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Her eyes closed, Tag sat in the middle of her motel room bed and meditated. Her hands balanced on her knees, her skin glowed gold beneath the café au lait colouring and her loose curls waved around her. Breathing deeply, she mouthed the words that would enable her to see the lights of her home realm. Though she'd done it many, many times in the millennium since she'd been banished, tonight it took her longer than usual to bring up the image of the *Faerie* Kingdom.

*What are you doing here?* A cutting male voice questioned.

Opening her eyes, Tag discovered herself in the *Faerie* world! Turning she found the one who'd banished her at her side. Obviously, he was not pleased to see her.

*I asked you a question and I expect an answer!* Prince Lylelay snapped.

She blinked unable to believe she was really back!

*My liege, I had no idea I was able to actually enter the realm. I merely wanted to look upon the land of my birth as I have been away so long-*. She broke off as she suddenly found herself surrounded by *Faerie Warriors*.

*You dishonour my mother's leniency by coming here. Seize her,* he commanded before a hand snaked around his arm stopping him in mid-sentence. Turning he found himself looking into the eyes of his mother, the *Faerie* Queen.

Her eyes were sympathetic as they rested upon her. In a show of respect, Tag lowered her own eyes and sank to one knee in front of the Queen. Though she felt a gentle hand upon her head she didn't dare look up. She may have been gone for a millennia in human years, but that only amounted to a decade in the *Faerie* realm and *Fae* memories were long. Few knew how to hold a grudge like the *Fae*. Her banishment was a long way from being over and she'd broken yet another of the many rules by arriving unannounced. Hell, she'd probably broken all kinds of rules by simply arriving at all.

*Tuesday Grace, you are well, yes?* The Queen's voice was gentle and caring.

Closing her eyes, Tag nodded. It'd been a long time since she'd heard anyone acknowledge her title and it'd been even longer since she'd heard it spoken with such favour. Tuesday Grace might've been her name everywhere else but in the *Faerie* Kingdom it was her title. Tag felt her heart squeeze at the simple act.

*Answer properly!* The Prince yelled at Tag.

*I am well, your majesty. Thank you,* she said recalling her teachings.

*Lylelay, take your warriors and leave me with Tuesday Grace,* the Queen ordered.

Since she kept her eyes trained on the ground she could only imagine the look Prince Lylelay was giving his mother especially

considering the frown Tag had on her own visage. Though questions pinged through her min, she remained silent listening to the mutterings of the warriors as they took their leave. Silence reigned even in the absence of the Prince and his warriors. Waiting for a severe reprimanding, she was surprised when the Queen pulled her to her feet and into her warm embrace. Shocked into immobility, she could only stand there being hugged.

Still holding her, the Queen leaned back and searched Tag's face as if searching for something. When the Queen used her eloquent hand to brush her errant curls off of her forehead, it took all of Tag's willpower not to flinch. The *Faerie* Queen was by far the most feared Queen to ever sit upon the throne and here she was being kind - almost motherly - to Tag. *Fae* were renowned for being mischievous tricksters, but a *Fae* moved to anger was dangerous to all *Otherworldly* beings.

*Why have you returned, Tuesday Grace?* The Queen asked gently as she held a thigh length curl between her fingers.

Glimpsing her lengthy locks, Tag knew then that she was dreaming as her hair had been publicly shorn when she'd been banished by the *Faerie* court. She still remembered the sounds of the shears echoing in the hallowed court. The memory still bitter, Tag took a step away from the Queen knowing that this vision was about to turn into a nightmare. Sure enough the Queen's face began to crumble as the beautiful greens and blues of the realm disintegrated into something straight from *Dante's Inferno*.

Feeling the licking heat of the flames, her eyes were drawn to those of her sister who stood but a few feet away. Adena Grace

walked to her and held out her hand to her. Placing her hand inside of her sister's, she allowed herself to be pulled into her embrace.

"You little fool. Why do you insist on torturing yourself?"

Adena asked her. Adena's gentle tone conflicted with the severity of the actual words.

"I can't take another thousand human years, Addie" Tag whispered into her sister's shoulder.

Adena's fiery wings spread wide and cocooned her within their protection. With little more than a blink, she orbed them both into her private quarters. Once there Tag pulled away from her sister and went to the window that looked out over the *Fire* Kingdom that her sister ruled over with her husband Sage. Tag sighed, ignorant of the fact that the sound ripped at Adena's heart. The anger in her heart rushed to be spoken but Adena silenced the bitter words before they made it to her tongue.

"Your punishment is a mere decade away. What did you think to accomplish by trying to return and confront the Queen?" Adena asked.

"I've already spent a *Fae* decade in banishment. Have I not already paid enough? Why am I even being punished? Why haven't I been granted a real trial? I cannot help who I am related to and I refuse to be ashamed of being the daughter of Drakonius."

Drakonius was one of the few words that the *Fae* spat. Married to their mother - one of the most powerful females in existence - he was only half *Fae*. The *Fae* didn't have a problem with the fifty percent of him that was *Fae*; they shuddered at the fifty percent that wasn't.



“Tuesday,” Adena began.

Before Adena could finish her sentence the doors to the marriage chamber were thrown open by a hungry-looking Sage. Entering the room, he made a beeline for his woman. From the fiery look in his flint-coloured eyes, it was clear that Sage’s desire for his wife hadn’t waned in the least. Despite her heartache, Tuesday smiled noting that some things never changed.

“Hello, brother,” Tag said a moment before he threw her sister to the bed.

Snapping his head around and catching sight of her, he grinned. Crossing the room, the giant of a man gathered her into a fierce bear hug that had her squealing in mock agitation. Hugging her until he was good and ready to stop, he finally set her on her feet.

“You do not visit me anymore, Wednesday” Sage teased in a booming voice. She smiled at his habit of calling her various names of the week. Considering that her sisters were elemental rulers and thus named after their powers, her name did seem odd.

“I’m a busy woman, dude.”

She watched as Sage frowned at the colloquialism.

“Ah, a human word, yes?” he asked with a smile. “Well then, Thursday, dude, what brings you to the hottest place in the realm?”

“I needed a tan,” Tag began.

Sage burst into booming laughter that reminded her of thunder.

“Must you encourage him?” Adena asked.

“Ah wife, you know she entertains me so I may keep our warriors on their feet.”

“Toes dude, on their toes,” Tag corrected.

Even after all of this time, Sage still hadn't quite gotten the hang of human colloquialism. The grin on his face told her that he didn't care if he messed them up; he was simply having fun using them. Not able to help it, she too broke into a grin. Sage had a way of making people forget their troubles. An all around good guy, others couldn't help but like him, which was a good thing otherwise she would've hated to see what her other sister's would have done to him.

"Tuesday, someone is calling you," Adena said with a tilt of her head.

Frowning, she listened for whoever it was that was calling her. At first she couldn't hear a thing but then she heard her name being called faintly. Not able to place the voice, she listened a little deeper. Still not able to place the owner of that voice, she peeked to see who it was. Jaron Mann. *What the hell?*

"Sunday, though I've not been to the human realm for a while I could swear that's a *shifter* calling you," Sage said.

"I've got to go, dudes," she said.

Hurriedly hugging her brother-in-law and kissing her sister, she lifted her spirit out of their kingdom before she was inundated with questions. Despite her haste, she didn't get away as clean as she would've liked.

Her sister's amused voice drifted through her head. *A shifter, Tuesday Grace? Wonders really will never cease with you, will they?*

## CHAPTER EIGHT

Wrapped in a blanket and Jamieson, Sunny watched the dawn slowly creep into their bedroom. Jamieson was so beautiful. Well, perhaps that wasn't the most apt way to describe the incredibly strong man that held her so gently. The evening had been most enjoyable. As was his way, Jamieson had spent the majority of the number of orgasms he'd prodded from her, demanded from her, and finally gifted to her. Tracing Jamieson's mouth with gentle fingers, she sighed. She loved his mouth, even when he was growling instructions to her. Funnily enough she followed them, but only because she knew what pleasures her man could bring. Well there was that and the fact that she loved to hear his rumbling voice wash over her even as his eyes ate her up like chocolate. Goodness, those eyes. Emerald in colour, they made Jamieson that much more devastating.

She'd met the other Mann brothers all except for Jeremiah. Jamieson had mentioned that there was a good chance it could take a while for her to meet him due to the fact he wasn't a people person. That had made her laugh considering that before him she hadn't been much of a people person either. And though Jamieson was a lot friendlier than herself, he wasn't exactly the epitome of a people person either.

Jamieson had pouted at her observation ... and goodness the man was even more devastating with a pout than he was with a grin. He'd quickly lost the pout and joked that he was a people person; people were simply intimidated by his good looks. Actually, he'd growled it to her. When she'd thrown her head back and laughed in

his face, he'd playfully stalked her. Something inside of her had told her to run, not because she was afraid of Jamieson, just the opposite. IT told her to run knowing that she *wanted* him to chase her. And oh goodness he had and fucked her to sleep for her trouble.

"A dollar for your thoughts," Jamieson's sexy voice wrapped around her.

Looking up from the circle of his thick arms, Sunny glanced upwards and found those devastating eyes riveted on her. As always, she felt warmth around her cheeks. She'd never had any male look at her with anything other than contempt, curiosity, fear, or pity, yet Jamieson always looked at her with awe. Before she could respond, he leaned his head down and brushed sweet kisses everywhere he could.

"I thought it was a penny?" she asked.

"With inflation these past few years and no corresponding tax cuts the price skyrocketed," he answered with a wink.

Sunny simply rolled his eyes at his explanation.

"And for the record, I would pay a million dollars for a chance to be inside you, woman," he said, all but growling the last three words.

Sunny couldn't help the warmth that filled her heart anymore than she could the cream that filled her panties at his admission.

"Don't you mean to know my thoughts?" she teased even though she was turned on.

"Yea, those too," Jamieson growled as he nuzzled the scar behind her ear.

For some unknown reason, Jamieson liked that particular spot.

“Why aren’t you afraid of me?” she quietly asked.

Instead of the tenseness she expected to feel at her question, she felt him smile against her neck.

“Let’s see, number one, because you’re a girl.”

Sunny nipped at his shoulder at that remark. Jamieson laughed against her as he slid a hand between her thighs.

When she felt the tips of two fingers stroking the lips of her sex, she protested.

“Hey!” Sunny grabbed at his wrist but Jamieson was not to be deterred – not that she wanted him to be.

He continued speaking against her neck as he stroked her.

“Number two, because you’re a little girl and I’m a big bad wolf,” he purred.

Sunny felt herself cream just a little bit more at his words and his touch. Damn, this man knew how to give good voice. Jamieson stroked his fingers inside of her pussy and she gasped in pleasure. She almost lost her breath as his thick fingers stroked her so deep and so good. Reaching deep inside of her, his thumb circled her clit eliciting husky moans.

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Jamieson leaned back and watched Sunny reach her climax. He loved to watch how she would gasp then hold her breath as she fell over that pleasurable precipice. The way that she moaned his name was music to his ears. Her husky groans got him harder than he ever thought possible, but he continued his gentle stroking watching her slowly float back down to earth ... and to him. Flipping onto his back, he removed his fingers from her hot pussy and licked them clean

before easing her on top of him. He held her while she got her breath back and smiled when she stretched out on top of his big long body and sighed so sweetly into his throat.

“You never answered my question,” she said.

“What is it you want me to say, babe?” Jamieson asked her softly.

“I know nothing about me and yet you accept me. You bring me here, introduce me to your family,” she began.

Jamieson reached up and rubbed the back of her neck massaging firmly at the muscles that had suddenly gone tense.

“But I know *you*, babe,” he said easily.

Sunny sat up suddenly straddling his waist. She inhaled deeply before speaking. Though she injected a note of seriousness in her voice, Jamieson simply linked his fingers behind his head and watched his woman.

“The dreams I have are memories,” Sunny said quietly she lifted her eyes to meet his.

Jamieson continued to watch her silently. When Sunny didn’t say anything else he was prompted to speak.

“And?”

Sunny slowly shook her head from side to side.

“I’ve killed—”

“So have I,” Jamieson cut in.

Sunny’s head shook faster.

“I killed innocents,” she admitted.

Jamieson couldn't take the defeat in his woman's expression anymore. Unlacing his fingers, he sat up and cupped Sunny's face between his big hands.

"Babe, after all that you've been through, you're worried about things that *might* have happened? As far as my family and I are concerned you are *my* woman. End of story. I'm not letting you go. *Nothing* will ever make me let you go," he vowed.

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Sunny looked deep into Jamieson's emerald eyes. She saw truth, respect, honour and something else that she wasn't going to identify at that particular moment. Swallowing the lump forming in her throat she leaned forward and kissed Jamieson gently, slowly, honestly.

"And what if I hurt one of your family? What about your pack? I can't control what's inside of me, Jamieson," she said in an attempt to convince her big, bad wolf of the danger that she brought with her. As much as she was tempted to stay right where she was, it might be better for her to be anywhere but there with his family and Pack. Jamieson however was busy taking over their kiss. Her words fell by the wayside as he rolled her beneath his big, hot body and proceeded to kiss, like, and bite away her fears.

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Jack sat up straight in bed which was pleasurable as Destiny lay on top of him, her body deliciously curved onto his. Still asleep, she mumbled a protest before snuggling closer. Jack shook her gently in an effort to wake her. When she didn't waken immediately he used their telepathic link.

*Honey, I need you to wake up.*

Destiny moaned, but somewhat awakened.

*Jack, I can't open my eyes. Give me five more minutes and I'm all for it.*

Jack shook her again.

*There are intruders on our land honey.*

Regardless of how sleepy she was that comment rendered her wide awake. Pulling herself up so that she straddled his hips she did a quick recon of their bedroom before using their link to respond.

*Who?* She asked.

*I don't know. I can't get through to Jamieson or Jaron so that they can alert the Pack.*

Destiny nodded. Silently, they got out of bed and dressed. Jack gave her instructions the entire time they readied themselves.

*You do not leave my side. Understood woman?*

*But dude, I can totally fight these motherfuckers-* she began.

Destiny... he warned. He'd allow her to do anything save put herself in danger. He was still haunted about the last motherfuckers she'd fought. Destiny would be safe and that simply was not up for debate. She must've caught his seriousness for she blew out an exasperated breath before answering.

*Fine.*

Dropping a quick kiss on Destiny's mouth, he gave her a wink as he took her hand. He was about to walk out of their bedroom when the attack occurred. Feeling the air move around him, he knew that Destiny was transporting him some place. Within a blink of an eye he was standing in Jamieson's home - in his entertainment room to be



exact. Turning his head to thank Destiny, his heart stuttered at the cheeky grin that she shot him. Smiling, he dropped another kiss on her delectable mouth before hurrying to his brother's bedroom. Normally, he wouldn't go anywhere near Jamieson's bedroom being that he had his mate tucked up in there but this wasn't normally as he winced at the noise coming from the room. The ruckus wasn't due to lovemaking; rather the noises he heard were associated with a killing spree. Knowing Jamieson, he knew that he wouldn't be the one getting killed.

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Jamieson's eyes snapped open. In less time than it took for his eyes to fully open, he'd already grabbed the black clad intruder. Grabbing the syringe that the intruder had meant to stab into Sunny, he plunged it into the man before snapping his neck. Jamieson sensed the other intruders in their bedroom, the sacred place where his Sunny was safe from her nightmares. Apparently no one had bothered to inform the intruders about that fact. Still, no one should have to. Sunny was his mate and this was Black Ridge territory. Jamieson couldn't hold back the snarl of anger at the desecration being done to Mann territory, his space, Sunny's peace.

"Get her," another intruder instructed.

Moving with lightning speed, he snapped the neck of the man who'd given the order before beginning his attack on the deadmen who were attempting to take his woman. Leaping over Sunny's prone body, he went to work on the intruders smashing in anything he got his hands on whether it be ribs, faces, knees, or throats.

Gone was the laid back Wolf and in its place was a one man wrecking machine. Despite the violence, his limbs were relaxed as he delivered the killing blows however his eyes spoke were anything but. Flashing emerald, they delivered the only warning the intruders would get from him.

The rage at the intrusion these shifters had made upon his family was entirely too great to suppress. Justified in his actions, he didn't show mercy as he handed out vengeance. Snapping his arm back, he dislocated his shoulder before crushing his windpipe with his right hand whilst slashing the throat of another intruder with his left.

*Jamie, what's happening in there?* Jack's concerned voice filtered into his head.

*Vengeance*, he responded as he ended yet another intruder. *Where are you and where the fuck are all of these guys coming from?* He asked his Alpha. Every time he dealt with one intruder, it seemed as if ten more took his place. He could fight as long as he needed to, but he was concerned for his mate. She was still prone. He'd like to think that it was due to the thorough lovemaking he'd given her but he was worried. Standing sentry in front of Sunny, he fought like a wolf possessed.

*There's some kind of block on your door, Jamie. Destiny and I can't get in.*

Jamieson snarled as four intruders simultaneously launched themselves at him. Grunting as he was pushed back, his wolf leant him the extra rage and strength he needed to sustain his defence.

*Hold on Jamieson. I'll find a way in,* Destiny promised. Later, he'd question how it was that his brother's mate jumped on his

telepathic link, but for now he had more things to worry about, such as the wicked-looking sword coming at his head.

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Jack watched his mate as she stared in silent contemplation at the bedroom door. Physically, he'd tried everything to get it open but nothing had worked. Obviously, some kind of Magick kept them out and just as obvious, Destiny had no intentions of staying out.

He watched as Destiny raised her clenched fists. Jack couldn't help but be fascinated by his mate. Her small fists appeared to be illuminated with a white-blue light. Slowly unfurling her fingers and directing her palms toward the door, the light that emanated from them lit up the door like the high beams on his truck.

"Move behind me Jack. I don't know how this is going to work out," she commanded.

Normally, he would argue the point not because he was Alpha, but because he was her mate and had a driving need to protect her. He followed her command however because he felt the power wafting off of her. Though it irked his wolf, he stepped back and let his mate be the powerful woman she was.

The heavy, wooden door began to shudder within the doorframe before exploding. Taking a moment to assess the carnage that was going on, he threw Destiny behind him and rushed right into the fray. It was a good thing that Destiny had handled the door so quickly, because there wasn't a second to waste.

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Sunny could hear Jamieson fighting but her body wasn't working. Not only couldn't she move, but she couldn't open her eyes

or speak. No matter how hard she tried, she simply couldn't get her body to cooperate and no amount of coaxing could convince it to do otherwise. Though her body wouldn't do a damn thing she commanded, the part of her that could hurt was working just fine. And oh, how she hurt. For once, the pain wasn't physical but knowing that her Jamieson was fighting all alone put a hurting on her that surpassed all physical pain she'd ever known. Having endured more pain than she cared to remember, that was truly saying something.

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*Alpha, what's happening?* Jared's voice cut through the chaos.

Punching the attacker in the throat, Jack smiled upon hearing the sound of their windpipe collapsing beneath his fist.

*Intruders are attempting to steal Jamieson's mate* he answered as he swung his right fist into the face of the next intruder, breaking his jaw. Following that up with a round house punch that rendered the man dead, he went on to the next one.

*They infest us,* Josiah piped in.

*Deal with them, brothers. They must be dealt with for their transgressions,* Jack replied as he turned just in time for him to deal with the five intruders who simultaneously rushed him. Trading punches and kicks he caught sight of Destiny who was handing out asswhippings left, right and centre. Though it was difficult for him to stomach the reality of his mate in danger, he couldn't help but be proud of her skill.

*Concentrate, Jackass,* she warned.

Narrowly missing being impaled with a sword, he did as his mate commanded and fought harder.

†~†~†

Destiny was kicking ass and taking numbers – yes, numbers, not names because there were simply too many assholes in the fracas to get to know them before she handed them their ass. She could tell that the additional training she'd subjected herself to was paying off because she kicked ass with an ease that she'd never before been able to pull off. As amped as she was to gloat over that fact, her normal victory dance was going to have to wait because the motherfuckers kept coming. Already on her shit list for daring to fuck with Jamieson and her new friend Sunny, she put a little more *die motherfucker* into her blows as a penalty for delaying her victory dance. There was nothing like galloping in place and these assholes were fucking with that.

And then there was the fact that they were fucking with her man. Sure he was a big, bad wolf but if anybody was going to kick Jackass's fine ass, it was going to be her. That ass belonged to her and soon she'd have the papers to prove it – not that she needed that kind of thing; she merely wanted it so she could wave it in his face when he pissed her off.

As always, thinking of Jack got her all hot and bothered. Jack Mann was fine all on his own; Jack kicking ass was a fineness that deserved to be explored to the fullest. Glancing over at Jack, she couldn't help but notice that he was truly in his element as he fucked up anything that didn't have a Mann attached to it. Though she

wouldn't have minded watching him all night, they had vermin to get rid of ... and she had some galloping to do when it was over.

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Despite the odds, despite the supposed futility, Jack fought harder than he ever had. He wasn't simply fighting for the Beta of Black Ridge Pack; he was fighting for his brother. Having found his own mate, and having already gone through the hell of seeing her hurt, there was just no way in hell that he was going to simply allow someone to come and take Jamieson's mate without handing out some death. Sunny Delaney might be a dangerous woman but she wasn't simply any woman. She was Jamieson's one true mate.

Sunny had chased away the apathy that had clouded Jamieson's eyes for too long. He'd fight ten thousand intruders if he had to for that favour alone. And he'd fight ten thousand more just for Sunny. For whatever else Sunny was, she was a female and instead of being treated with the gentleness due her, she'd been fuckin' used like a science experiment. Sunny Delaney was living pain and Jamieson was her balm. His brother Jamieson was living anger and Sunny was the love that made him want to do more than fight everything in his path. They needed each other and he was going to do all within his power to keep them together.

Though he fought for Jamieson and Sunny, he also fought for Destiny. Destiny knew what it was to be haunted by past demons, to spend the days running from them, and spend the nights fighting them. Destiny's demons had plagued her every waking moment and even dogged her into her sleep denying her the peace that she'd so

desperately needed. He'd known what it felt to not be able to slay the thing that caused your mate pain.

Jamieson had witnessed Destiny's pain, had known she was fighting demons. He'd said that Destiny needed to be cleansed, and he was right. Jack had cleansed her ... with all of the love that he had in his soul. Now it was his turn to return the favour. Sunny needed to be cleansed but Jamieson wouldn't be able to do it if someone took her from him. And if they succeeded in taking Sunny from Jamieson, there wouldn't be enough love or time to cleanse Jamieson ... or enough of much left standing when he exacted his vengeance.

Redoubling his efforts, he took on more, gave more. They all did. Realising that they weren't making much headway, the intruders broke off and rushed Jamieson. Though he cut a swath over to him, it wasn't quick enough. Jamieson went down trying to protect Sunny ... just as he knew he would. He killed his way over to his brother but before he could get there, the intruders snatched Sunny from Jamieson's grasp and disappeared into the night.

He stumbled as Destiny bumped him out of the way in her haste to get to his brother. Before he could speak, she was already pressing her hands onto Jamieson's wounds. There was nothing for him to do but wait. Wait for Destiny to finish healing Jamieson ... and then waiting for Jamieson to awake and demand vengeance.

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Opening his eyes, Jamieson immediately knew that something wasn't right. Feeling an absence, he realised what it was straight away. Sunny was gone. Sitting up he found Jack and Destiny at the foot of his bed.

“Where is she?” his rumbling voice vibrated with suppressed rage.

“We don’t know. There are intruders crawling all over Black Ridge territory. They’ve breached our compound. Jaron isn’t answering but Father and the twins have the rest of the pack. We need to get out of here,” Jack told his eldest brother.

Jamieson was dressing as Jack spoke but he paused at Jack’s last words. There was no way in hell he was going anywhere without his mate. Turning to look at Jack, he voiced those words. He turned his head to look at his brother.

“Not without Sunny.”

Though he spoke softly, he stood ready to challenge his Alpha for the right to find his woman if that’s what it came down to. He noticed that Jack didn’t even flinch at his pronouncement. It was as if he already knew what he was going to say and had planned for it. He watched as his brother turned to his mate.

“Destiny, I need you to flash to my father-” Jack began.

Destiny was already shaking her head before Jack had even finished his sentence.

“No fucking way, Jackass” she countered, determination written all over her face.

“Honey-”

“I am not going to waste precious time arguing with you about this Jack. We need to find Sunny. She’s one of us and these motherfuckers are trying to take her away and you know what, no. And not just no, but hell to the no!” she exclaimed as she stared both of them down.



“How do you know that?” Jamieson asked Destiny.

She turned panicked eyes to him.

“I can hear their thoughts. They’re going to take her somewhere and torture her. We’ve got to find her and y’all can either include me or I’ll go off on my own to get her,” Destiny promised even as she turned pleading eyes on his brother.

As much as he loved her determination to help him get his mate back, a part of him bristled at the thought of a Mann female putting herself in danger – even if that female was a powerful vampire and not yet technically a Mann.

“Destiny, I appreciate your offer, but-,” he began.

“Not listening, motherfucker, I’m going with,” she said.

He turned to Jack hoping that he could stop her, but Jack was already giving in to his mate and giving her the conditions that came along with it.

“Lets go, and woman, so help me, if you so much as move one inch from my side I will paddle your ass like nobody’s business,” Jack warned.

Seeing Destiny nod her acceptance of Jack’s terms, he stepped forward to shield the side that Jack wasn’t. Before he could give the little Vamp a warning of his own, he was interrupted by the sound of several someone’s running. A split second later, an explosion rocked the house sending splintering wood in all directions.

“Ding ding, round two,” Jamieson muttered as he strode out of his bedroom and directly into the fray.

“We have her,” the scratchy walkie talkie sound was heard by all on Pack Land. Less than a minute later the intruders cleared out without so much as a bye your leave. Well, if one didn’t count the explosives that they’d set off. The smashing of wood and glass was followed by an ominous silence that was broken by the howl of despair coming from the house of the Beta. Sunny was gone ... and there was going to be hell to pay.

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Sunny’s eyes refused to open even though piercing bright light was desperately trying to stab into her.

“I know you can hear me,” a voice that wasn’t Jamieson’s mocked.

Despite hearing the voice, Sunny kept her eyes closed.

“Your brainwaves are going off the chart so I also know that you’re conscious.”

The light slowly dimmed, still Sunny kept her eyes closed not wanting to face anything without Jamieson. She was determined but the voice kept going. “I will kill Jamieson Mann if you don’t answer me.”

Sunny’s eyes flew open at that. She was in what looked like an operating theatre. Moving just her eyes she saw the tubes coming out of her body. Her eyelids were heavy but she kept them open needing to see who it was that threatened her man. *Her* man? Wow, when had that happened?

Despite her pain, Sunny smiled internally just as she always did when she thought of Jamieson. When had Jamieson become her man? She was pretty sure that it had happened the moment that she’d laid

eyes on her water god walking towards her all naked and beautifully male. Yep, for sure that's when it'd happened.

“You're looking well,” someone said.

Sunny moved her eyes but she could see only blurred images. Try as she might, she couldn't focus.

“You gave us quite a scare running off like that, but as you can see, we kept your important things here.”

Sunny still couldn't see who it was that was speaking. Fuck! She did however see the hand above her holding something up to her eyes. Squinting, she realised that the something was a picture. It looked like it could be a picture of her as a child, but the squinting wouldn't make the image any clearer and her eyelids kept wanting to close. Fuck!

“What's wrong with her?” the voice snapped at someone.

She heard a mumbled response. Right after that she felt the roaring in her head open up and swallow her whole. Without her consent, down into the depths of unconsciousness she went.

†~†~†

The Mann brothers stood sentry beside their eldest brother. Jack sat beside Jamieson and gave him all of the silent strength he could. Jamieson's eyes hadn't stopped glowing and his fangs had yet to retract. No one knew what to do.

Lukas and Star, along with most of the *Locke Brotherhood* suddenly appeared from nowhere. Star went to Jamieson and gave him a quick hug.

“We'll find her, Jamieson,” she said softly.

Jamieson nodded but didn't say anything. A rude motherfucker on his best day Jack doubted that Jamieson's silence stemmed from rudeness. Jamieson's silence stemmed from despair.

Star gave him another reassuring smile before walking over to Destiny. He watched as Destiny took Star's hand and dragged her away from the males. Though he didn't want his mate to be anywhere but at his side he let her go but he kept his eyes trained on Destiny in spite of the bodyguards that trailed them.

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"What happened?" Star asked her sister after the preliminary hug.

"They attacked when we were asleep. Whoever it was attacked every single Pack house at once. I flashed Jack and myself into Jamieson's house a few seconds after they infiltrated. Star, we were outnumbered big time. There were so many of them and they never stopped coming. What's left of the cabins is filled to overflowing with carcasses and that wasn't even half of them. We weren't prepared for an attack of this magnitude ... and they knew it," Destiny said sadly.

"Did you get a lock on any of them?" Star mouthed as she stopped at the clump of trees that sat between the Alpha and Beta's houses.

Star mouthed the words because *shifters* had uncanny hearing. Both women turned so they could watch the males gathered around the remains of Jamieson's house. Destiny had momentarily forgotten about Star's bodyguards. Though they'd been silent, they were there.

"Yeah. They're undiluted evil, Star. Their one goal was to get Sunny and kill everything if necessary in the process."

Star looked thoughtful as she looked out over the Black Ridge compound. Rubbing her temple, she gave Destiny a look. Immediately, Destiny smiled ... and went into telepathy mode. Star surely had something up her sleeve.

*Do you think you could find them again?* Star asked.

Despite the heaviness of the situation Destiny gave her a *hell yeah* look.

Star gave her a similar look in return. *You need to do it.*

*I was just waiting for you to get here, babe.*

*Sunny is important to us though I don't know why.*

*I'd do it even if she wasn't, Star.*

"Lord de Vires advised me that he will do everything within his power to help us bring her back," Star said aloud.

"You ever gonna' to call him Daddy?" Destiny asked Star with an expectant look on her face.

Star shook her head. "One day dude, but not today."

Switching back to telepathy she continued. *Right now we need to find Jamieson's woman. What's she like?*

Destiny considered her answer. *Like us ... all those centuries ago before we were summoned to Lord de Vires study. Angry. Hurt. Dangerous. Vulnerable.*

Sighing, she continued. *Sunny's one of us, except she's quiet. She has some powers that I don't think anyone predicted, powers that she doesn't even know that she possesses. I know they've got people watching somewhere and they're probably threatening to kill Jamieson to keep her pliant but there's something inside of her*

*Star ... something scarier than you gone silent, Jaylee on a bender, and me on a sugar high.*

Though she spoke the truth, Destiny added that last bit to make Star smile.

“Dessie, the world might be filled with things most humans consider fantasy but even I know that there’s nothing scarier than you on a sugar high,” Star said good-naturedly as they headed back over to the boys.

Her tension eased a little.

*I already got Jack to “let” me come along but I’m sure that he and Jamieson will find some way to leave me somewhere safe. And that’s where you come in. I’m sure you’ve got some dastardly plan going on in your crazy brain otherwise you wouldn’t have left the comfort of your man’s arms or dragged me from the comfort of Jack’s lap. Wanna share with Dessie?*

*Let’s see what the boys have to say first, eh?* Star said with a smile.

Destiny frowned. *You’re kidding, right?*

Destiny had never known Star to ask permission - especially male permission – before implementing one of her schemes. This was an interesting development indeed.

*Dessie, when have I ever been anything less than serious where violence is concerned? You and I both know that the guys are going to disagree completely. I need them to think they **know** what we’re going to do, while we go undercover and get Sunny back ourselves.*

Destiny hid a grin.

*Should've known you'd have a trick or two up those sleeves although for a second there I was worried that you'd gotten all soft and mushy being married and all.*

Star coughed behind one hand and pushed Destiny with the other. Despite being over four centuries old, they used any old excuse to act like they were five years old. Thus, they pushed each other around all the way back to Jamieson's porch. They didn't stop until they realised that the men all watched them. Despite the seriousness of the situation, most of them wore amused expressions on their faces.

Though they only had eyes for their men, they couldn't help but be drawn to Jamieson. His pain was so deep. As soon as she settled herself on her man's lap, she reached out to comfort Jamieson. Taking one of his hands in both of hers, she did all that she could to soothe him. Jamieson was hurting so badly that it hurt her.

~\*~\*~

"So what's the plan?" Lukas asked as he kissed her ear, his warm breath a reminder of what they'd been in the middle of when Destiny had alerted them to the siege that was taking place.

Star leaned against her husband's hard body. Resting her hands atop his she tilted her head to the left so that Lukas could rest his chin on her shoulder.

"We go in, take as many of them out as we can and we bring Sunny home," Star said simply.

She watched Destiny as she sat on Jack's lap. As soon as she'd plopped down, Destiny had nearly yanked Jack's shoulder out of joint grabbing his hand and placing it around her. Jack didn't seem to mind; he simply kissed the top of her head and rubbed circles on

Destiny's back. Though they were clearly into each other she bet neither of them realised that they were so touchy-feely.

Sitting in the circle of her own man's arms she grew angry. Just as they were enjoying the presence of their mates, Jamieson should be enjoying his. Feeling her own ire rising, she turned to watch Jamieson. His fangs slowly receded and the wolf glow in his eyes dimmed. Her little sister could do some amazing things.

"And?" Lukas' voice brought Star back to the present.

"And we live happily ever after?" Star said with a hopeful note in her voice.

Lukas chuckled against her neck before speaking telepathically, *If you think I believe **that** you are sorely mistaken, Empress. I know for sure that you have something else planned, which will involve Destiny and yourself acting as superheroes. Guess what, Empress? That's not going to happen. If I have to lock you both up, I will.*

*Why so suspicious, Lukas? Don't you think I play well with the other kids?*

*Do not defy me in this, Star. You and Destiny are too important to too many people for any of us to allow you to risk yourselves. There would be too much hell to pay if such a thing came to fruition. For some reason you don't take this seriously but you need to. Yet, I can feel you planning something other than what you have said out loud.*

*Lukas, really, it's truly a shame how you will not believe me when I tell you that there's nothing else "planned." We need to work*



*hard and fast to get Sunny back to Jamieson. You were there when Lord de Vires remarked on her importance.*

Lukas didn't immediately reply though his eyes took on an eerie glow at the mention of her father.

Cupping his cheek, Star attempted to soothe him. *Focus, babe. We need to get Sunny back and you throwing a hissy fit about Lord de Vires isn't going to get that accomplished.*

*I do not have hissy fits. Only southern women have those things and I am many things but a woman isn't one of those.* Lukas said sounding all kinds of offended. Star simply shot him a grin and went back to listening to Jack outline the plans to get Jamieson's mate back.

*Starbright?* Destiny's voice came into Star's head.

Keeping her focus on Jack, Star didn't look at her sister as she answered.

*Yes?*

*I've found them.*

*Good, give Jack enough hints that he can figure it out. I have the feeling that they're going to leave out tonight and when they do, we let them have their fifteen minute head start and then run like hell to fetch Sunny.*

*You know that if we act all agreeable and shit Jack and Lukas will see right through that.*

*Don't be agreeable then.*

*And if I don't win him over with my stellar personality?*

*Well, if that doesn't work, you'll have to do something that might be a little hard for you to swallow – and from the way Jack*

*has you screaming down the state, I do mean that literally. So yeah, distract him.*

Destiny didn't look at Star either, although she did flip her the bird telepathically.

## CHAPTER NINE

Destiny rested her head against Jack's chest and listened as his thundering heart slowly began to slow to its normal cadence. Her body wrapped around his, she sighed as he absently caressed her. Though he showed no outward signs of worry, she could feel her man's worry. Jamieson wasn't his only concern; he was worried over her. She knew Jack was wondering what he'd do if someone took her from him. Though she rarely ran out of things to say, she knew that no amount of words would soothe him so she soothed him with her body. She'd made slow sweet love to her man right before making hot, passionate love to him.

"I know what you and Star are planning," Jack's sexy voice slid down her spine.

Centuries of practice allowed Destiny to project the equivalent of white noise. It was a good skill to have considering the fact that she and Jack shared a connection. Though she normally wouldn't dream of hiding anything from her man, she had to hide this.

"We're following you and Lukas," she said.

Jack pulled her up so that she was straddling him. Tilting her head so that she looked him in the eyes, she noted his determined expression. She'd expected anger and when she didn't find it she had to shake her head. Jack was more complicated, more loving, more everything than she'd ever thought. Every day she learned something about him that amazed her and every day she learned to love him more.

“Never lie to me, Destiny. I can hear it in your voice when you do. As my Bond Mate I know when things are not right in your body and soul. It doesn’t matter what powers you use to try and mask your private thoughts, I will always know when something is amiss, especially when danger is close to you.”

Knowing that she was backed into a corner, she reverted to silence. Shit! What the fuck was she going to do now that she’d been called out by her husband-to-be of all people?

*Dessie, distract him properly!* Star’s voice popped into her head.

Sighing, she draped her body over Jack’s, absently tracing circles over his chiselled chest. Not sure that she’d be able to fuck Jack to distraction, she searched her mind for another way. Knowing that time was running out for Sunny, she flipped through centuries of experience at lightning speed.

“Jack, there’s something you don’t know about Sunny,” she began.

Jack didn’t say anything; he merely laced his fingers together behind her back and rested his joined hands on her butt. It was clear that he was waiting for her to elaborate.

Trying to think of words that would convince him that the best way to get Sunny to safety was for herself and Star to go in alone, she was startled when his voice crept through the silence.

“What is it?”

Flicking her eyes up to meet his, she frowned. “Huh?”

She watched as Jack gave her the indulgent smile that she hated.

“Honey, you said there’s something about Sunny that I don’t know. What is it?”

Destiny picked her brain trying to think of what 'it' could be.

*Tell him that she's one of us,* Star said urgently.

Destiny mentally gritted her teeth.

*Quit it Star! That shit won't cut it. He knows she's not a Vamp.*

"Honey?" Jack questioned.

Destiny scowled down at her hands that were on his chest.

When Jack unlaced his fingers and gripped her hips she knew that Jack could feel her turmoil.

"I'm sorry, Jack," Destiny whispered as she summoned her powers.

Pressing her palms to his chest, she closed her eyes as she pressed power into him. Knowing that she was causing him pain, tears tracked down her face as she amped up her power and floated him to unconsciousness before the pain could overtake him.

*It's done.* Destiny whispered to her sister as she got off her man and began to dress. She couldn't help but kiss his lips even and lament threatened to overwhelm her. Even as the guilt began to claw at her insides she felt the atmosphere shift as Star flashed into her bedroom.

"Is he going to be all right?" Star asked Destiny.

Destiny didn't answer verbally or telepathically. Instead, she simply nodded as she pulled her hooded black sweater over her head. Star's gentle hand on her arm, stopped her movements.

"We can't go with them Dessie. You know what Lukas and Jack will do if they see us get hurt," Star said softly.

“I know. I just don’t like lying to him, Star. Let’s go and get Sunny. Once she’s safe, I’ll worry about his wrath,” Destiny said quietly.

“And I’ll worry about Lukas’ even though I don’t feel as guilty as I should about leaving him tied to the marital bed with magical bonds.”

Moving silently through the house, Destiny watched as Star paused beside a photo of her and Jack. She saw the indecision on her sister’s face a moment before Star opened her mouth to speak.

“Don’t even think about it. I didn’t just give Jack the equivalent of a heart attack so you can keep me safely locked up as well,” she said.

Shaking her head, Star sighed.

“I wasn’t. Now come on. Show me where we need to go.”

Destiny implanted the location in Star’s brain a moment before they both flashed out of the house.

~\*~\*~

The grotesque man watched as the two women dressed in head-to-toe black materialised in front of the monitors that kept watch over the subject. He brought up one of the camera’s and focused on the women in Sunny’s room. Watching the women walk around Sunny as they discussed which of the numerous IVs they should pull first, he settled back in his chair and waited patiently. His dream of experimenting on true Vampires was on the verge of being a reality and he was almost giddy at the prospect.

~\*~\*~

His nose buried in a mess of loose curls, Jaron Mann was one contented wolf. His hand resting on a curvy hip, he wore a smile and

the golden-tinged skin of the most intriguing, annoying, sexy woman he'd ever stumbled across. After a passion-filled night, he'd finally given in to sleep with every intention of recreating the passion that had rocked him to sleep. That was his plan; right up until the telepathic call of his Alpha pulled him from his slumber.

*Jaron?*

*What?! He yelled back. Dammit, he didn't need Jack in his fucking head right now regardless of the fact that he was Alpha.*

*You are needed.*

Unlike the last time when he woke up with this woman in his bed, he could recall the events of the previous evening ... and his already hard cock got harder. Before he could move, she snuggled her tempting ass into him and moaned. Fuckin' hell.

*Jaron?*

*I'm coming, Jaron answered curtly - apparently a little too curtly for his Alpha's liking.*

*Is there a problem? Because if there is we can engage in a knock-down drag out about it later but right now I need you to get your ass out here like yesterday.*

Clearly Jack was pissed. Though he was Alpha he rarely used *that* tone with him unless it was an all out emergency.

Breathing deeply he calmed down and answered his Alpha. *Not at all, I'll be there in fifteen.*

*No need. We're outside waiting for you.*

*Who is we?* He asked already throwing on clothes. If his Alpha was here the shit had already hit the fan.

*All of us - save Jeremiah - the entire Locke Brotherhood, and others.*

*Damn.* Jaron kept breathing deeply as he awaited the comment that he knew was going to follow his Alpha's announcement.

*Make sure that she gets safely. We'll wait a respectable distance away-* Jack began.

Jaron ground his teeth at that comment. *There's no need for that; she'll be staying here,* he said.

*Ah.*

It was the only thing that Jack said but dammit it was enough, he thought as he imagined the knowing look on his Alpha's face when he'd sent that telepathic message.

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Lukas was trying his damndest to remain calm as he and Jack waited for Jaron. Standing side-by-side, none of the Vampires, *Shifters*, or hodge podge of other Otherworldlies moved. Standing stock still, they waited for the Alpha's elder brother to answer his summons.

Jaron Mann stumbled out of the house looking dishevelled and cranky - a bit like Jack and himself. No words were spoken as the assembly of men moved climbed into the four-wheeled drive vehicles and waited for his signal. He, Jack and Jamieson had waited for Jaron so they could make their way to their destination. Though focused on bedding women, Jaron Mann, like all Manns was danger to anyone fucking with his Pack. That's why they waited for him.

They were about to pull away from the house when a woman emerged from the house and stood in front of the lead truck. The



golden tint to her brown skin set off alarm bells in his head. Whatever else she was, she was also *Fae*. Jaron immediately exited the vehicle with Jack, Jamieson, and himself close on his heels.

Before they got to her, Jaron was already there. He went to take her arm but she shook him off easily. Her defiance surprised him as *Fae* were known for many things but outright defiance wasn't one of those things.

"Don't touch me, tough guy," the female *Fae* calmly informed the second eldest Mann brother before turning to face the rest of their party.

She lifted her chin as met their angry gazes head on.

"You need me," she told them softly.

No words were spoken, but the three of them nodded at the vehicle and stepped aside. Jaron stepped forward blocking her path.

"No, *you* stay out of this," Jaron snarled.

Again, she successfully avoided his touch. Turning her golden eyes on him, she showed him the rage that bubbled beneath her cucumber calm exterior. Flames actually danced in her gold eyes. Mesmerised at that display, Jaron shook his head as if to clear it and slid in beside her. Things were about to get real interesting.

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Methodically removing IV tubing from Sunny's prone body, Star telepathed Destiny. *Something's not right.*

*It is quiet.* Destiny conceded.

The two Vamps stood still and absorbed the silence surrounding them. Nothing moved. The uneasiness that crept down her spine

increased. Focusing, she realised that a camera documented their every move.

*There's a camera rolling.*

*I know but being that we can't locate it it's not like we can trash it.*

*There's something wrong about this set up,* Star said.

Moving just her eyes, Destiny looked around, dread crawling up her spine. She attempted to “see” outside of the walls of the laboratory but she wasn't able to sense anything ... at all. Having finally completed their task of unhooking Sunny from the machinery, they only had a moment to react to the figure rising up and locking in on them with eyes gone completely black.

†~†~†

Sunny struggled to fight the molten lava that was blazing through her body. She could sense Destiny and another woman in the room, yet her inability to control her body prevented her from screaming out the warning pounding through her head. *Run!*

*Run!* She screamed again and again neither woman heard her. She tried again. *Run, Destiny, Run!* Still they still didn't move.

Turning her head, Sunny found herself staring into the face of a woman who was the picture of danger. Who was that? She wondered. Before she received a response, the woman lifted a hand revealing a scythe dripping with blood. Eyes that were missing their whites challenged her even as the woman formed her lips into a smile. Something about that smile freaked her out more than even the weapon in her hand and the evil intent in her eyes. Narrowing her

own eyes, Sunny reached out a hand and grabbed the other woman by the neck before slamming her into the mirrored window.

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Jack directed Jamieson to their destination. He'd seen the images in Destiny's mind before she'd knocked him out. Forming a tight line, the convoy of SUVs kept up a good clip driving all out.

In spite of their very real predicament, Jack observed Jaron with the *Fae* woman. Of average looks, her skin was tinged with golden dust. Even if he hadn't witnessed Jaron's wolf chomping at the bit, the fact that Jaron had allowed a woman in his home spoke volumes about how he felt about that female. He wondered if his brother was falling or had already fallen for the *Fae* female. To his knowledge a *Fae* and *shifter* had never been successfully bonded, which wasn't hard to believe considering how unstable *Fae* were rumoured to be.

Feeling the vehicle slow, he directed the warriors to the well-lit warehouse a few hundred yards from the vehicles. Without waiting further instruction, Jamieson began to walk towards the warehouse before the rest of the team followed him. They'd taken no more than a few steps when the woman's voice reached out to the group.

"You're going the wrong way."

En masse they turned and glared at her but all they saw was her back as she went off in the opposite direction. From her lack of concern for their reaction, it was clear that she didn't give a damn if they followed or not. At a loss, he threw a look at Jaron who shrugged but turned and caught up with the *Fae*. Turning to the others, he signalled for them to follow. It didn't make a damn bit of sense to

follow her but his gut didn't object ... and being that it'd rarely led him wrong, he listened to it once again.

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Without looking behind her she knew that the motley group of Otherworldlies were following her. Leading the way through a dark and damp tunnel Tag easily found the rooms hidden below the earth. It smelt like a medical facility; it also smelt like death. The group spread out but Jaron stubbornly remained with her.

"How did you know about this place?" he asked as they walked down a darkened corridor.

Peering at the white-washed walls, she didn't answer immediately. This time her lack of response wasn't due to rudeness; it was due to sensory overload. The cries of the dead were calling to her, pulling at her mind. Stopping at a door where the misery was particularly strong, she made to step in when Jaron grabbed hold of her arm and spun her around to face him.

His fangs were out and his eyes glowed emerald but she was not afraid of him. She was however concerned that Jaron might be afraid of her. Even without looking into a mirror she knew what she looked like and further, she knew that Jaron would be able to see it without even having to resort to his wolf eyes. Her eyes swirled silver *and* gold and her skin glowed in the dark. He could see it without the help of his wolf eyes.

Despite her bravado, she did not like it here. The 'here' freaked her out on every level. Blinking rapidly, breathing too hard, she mentally went through every meditation trick in the book in an effort to calm herself. Somewhere along the way Jaron let go of her arm

and pulled him against his chest. For once he didn't say anything that made her want to slap him. Exhaling, she let him hold her.

Silent moments ticked by before the dreary hall was suddenly flooded with light and the ruckus of an ear splitting alarm. Realising that the high-pitched whistle probably affected the sensitive hearing of the shifters, Tag reluctantly left the comfort of Jaron's arms and pushed him against the wall beside the door.

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The damn noise of the alarm made Jaron's ears bleed and caused his balls to shrivel up. Tag was trying to help him and had got him as far as the wall before the door opened and Astarla Hart-Montague came flying through it. Hitting the opposite wall, she slumped to the floor. Jaron could hear Destiny and Sunny. Moving Tag out of the way he peered through the open doorway. Pinned to the mirrored glass Sunny appeared to be held by a force that he wasn't able to make out even with the use of his shifter powers. Turning, he looked for Destiny and spotted her tucked into a corner, bloodied but safe. He was about to enter when she shook her head.

"Keep her out!" she yelled brokenly.

Before he could take a step one way or the other, Star stalked up. Catching her arm and thus preventing her from entering the room, he held her firmly by his side. Jaron didn't know what was going on, but somehow Tag somehow was in the room standing beside Destiny. Lukas, Jack and Jamieson arrived and pulled Star from his grip. In an effort to get to his mate Jack made to enter the room only to be stopped by Tag.

"Stay here," she said softly.

Jack's eyes were glowing, but instead of being afraid of him, Tag tried to soothe him.

"You will only harm her if you enter."

Seeing the state that Sunny was in, Jamieson growled low in his throat.

Sunny thrashed around and scratched at bonds that were invisible to the naked eye. In spite of Tag's warning, both Jack and Jamieson attempted to push past her. Even then, Tag spoke to both men calmly and evenly.

"This room is designed to amplify all emotions and being that you're both so close to rage entering this room will only serve to elevate the pain of your mates. If you enter this room in your current state, your mates will die. Do as you will but heed my warning," Tag explained.

Her melodic voice was a stark contrast to the sounds that permeated the room. Witnessing their mate's in pain, Jack and Jamieson looked set to defy Tag's words. Being a wolf he knew that his brother's were having difficulty accepting Tag's words. He also knew that they might test them and in the process cause greater harm to their mates. Turning, he went to stand beside Tag.

Looking them in the eye he spoke.

"I know that you want to fix it but do not disregard Tag's words. She has already helped us this far; she will not lead us astray."

Though he spoke softly, he believed his words. Nodding jerkily, both Jack and Jamieson gritted their teeth. For the first time, Tag reached out and voluntarily touched him. Turning, he looked at her. Her golden eyes were bright and although her skin shone with a

golden hue, it appeared brighter with every passing moment. Before he got a chance to be worried for her, she winked at him before disappearing and reappearing by Sunny's feet.

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Tag was pretty sure that no one else could see the two versions of the same woman locked in battle. Though her *Fae* powers were bound she was still able to “see” far beyond what most Otherworldlies could see ... thanks to her father. Tag knew that the *shifters* and Vampires felt impotent but they also knew that their love for these women was such that they'd do anything to save them. The fact that they couldn't do anything ate at them and she didn't need her emotions to come to that conclusion. She had eyes which made it easy to see the depths of love that these males held for these females.

Despite the fact that she didn't love these women like the males who crowded the corridor, she was the best choice for the job. Not only did she have a bloodline that included the *Whose Who* of the Otherworldlies; she had no emotions for the room to use against the woman being tortured or the two Vamps hell bent on their rescue mission. *Sans* emotions, she might not feel anything for them; but she sure as shit respected them.

Stepping into the room she headed straight for the woman who was busy warring against an evil version of herself. The enhanced version of the woman may've had the edge in skill but the original version didn't have no quit in her. What she lacked in skill she more than made up for in will.

Attempting to separate the two halves from each other she placed a hand on each version and pulled with all of her strength.

The two versions weren't letting go of each other in a hurry. Pouring every ounce of strength into her actions, she pulled harder. If she'd had her powers this wouldn't have even been a challenge but she didn't have her powers ... and both versions of the woman knew it.

Neither version spoke aloud but their eyes said plenty. The original version looked at her with eyes full of pleading. She wasn't pleading for her own life; she was pleading for everyone else's life – including hers. *Save yourself then save Jamieson*, she pleaded. Tag felt her respect for the woman grow stronger. The original version was definitely the kind of chick that she could see herself shooting the breeze with over glasses of iced cold Coke and the sounds of some Angie Stone.

Conversely, she could also see herself bitch-slapping the enhanced version through a brick wall. While the original version looked at Tag with gratitude; the enhanced version looked at her with mocking. Flashing her a smile that lacked mirth Tag swallowed her distaste for the woman. This was the kind of woman who pushed kids in their locker and took their lunch money ... and got away with it.

Despite the fact that she wasn't a wolf; despite the fact that she didn't have her powers, she wasn't up for being anybody's omega. If she was going to go down, she was going to go down fighting on the side of the chick that inspired this kind of posse to come and rescue her. Feeling both women slipping from her grasp, she dug down deep. Sweat beaded up on her skin making the gold appear bronze; blood trickled from her nose; her joints popped under the weight of the exertion but she wasn't letting go that easily.



She didn't know how long she battled; she only knew that she wasn't quitting despite the pain that came crashing down upon her. She didn't know whose voice sung at her to surrender; she only knew that her answer was hell no. She didn't know where she was going to get the strength; she only knew that she'd hang on until she got it.

*Tuesday Grace, your pain is calling to us all. Where are you?*  
Adena's voice came clearly into Tag's mind.

Her sisters. Oh, it was on now, motherfuckers.

*I need all of you to help me. Please sisters!* Tag silently screamed.

The plea wasn't even all the way out of her mouth when all four of her sisters materialized beside her ... all looking like their momma – beautiful and dangerous.

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Jaron's wolf snapped at him, but he held it back just as he held himself back from entering that room where his woman battled to the point of bloodshed. He didn't know what the hell she was doing but it sure as hell looked like she was attempting to tear Sunny in half. Jamieson didn't appreciate it but he didn't stop it. Like all of them, he was impotent to do a damn thing to help.

He couldn't be bothered comforting either of his brothers whose women shared the death trap with his Tag. Nor could he comfort his good friend Lukas who held his injured mate in his arms. All of his energy was focused on his little golden-hued drummer. His eyes continuously scanned the room waiting for the moment that he could rush to her side and destroy whatever it was that she was fighting.

The room was thick with tension. Time had crawled earlier but now it had skidded to a complete standstill, and he measured it in the drops of blood that Tag shed. No one moved. All of their women were injured and the one who could heal them was locked inside trying desperately to tamp down her own pain in an effort to ease the suffering of her friends and sister.

Tension already high, it went off the charts at the sudden appearance of four *Faerie* women that materialized on either side of Tag. They all had wings although of differing materials. One had wings composed of fire; another had wings like a botanical garden come to life; the next had wings made from water; and, the last had wings made of weather. Thunderstorms and tornadoes raced across her wings and danger illuminated her eyes. It was the same look that each of the women wore and it made him want to back the fuck up. And he might've had they not been in there with his Tag. His eyes widened as the four women each lay a hand on top of Tag's.

Though the *Fae* women set his wolf off, their presence also managed to soothe him. He didn't know them but his gut told him that they weren't there to hurt Tag. Apparently his brothers didn't get that vibe because Jamieson and Jack almost trampled him in their rush to get into the room. He made a move to stop them even as his wolf chomped at the bit to help them. Destiny lay near unconsciousness; though he knew that he knew that some of the picture was concealed, it appeared that Sunny was in more than one piece.

He knew that he wouldn't be able to hold off two brothers who were intent to get into the room but he'd try. He'd try because of the

words of a woman who infuriated him ... even as she amazed him. His worries were for nought because as soon as his concern crossed his mind, the flame-winged Faerie came to stand before them, her flaming wings forming a blockade. Taking a moment to eyeball him, he eyeballed her right back ... and received a smile for his trouble. What the hell? He wondered.

Raising a single brow she pinned his brothers with a glare that warned them not to test her.

“Now I know our sister gave you instructions to stay outside of this room, dear *Wolves*, and I’m sure that you wouldn’t think to piss off the daughters of Goddess of The Earth, would you?”

His two brothers immediately turned a frown on him.

“You didn’t tell us your woman was Gaia’s daughter,” they accused.

“And if she’s Gaia’s daughter you know who that makes her father?” Jack spat. “Only one of the most unpredictable and short-tempered Otherworldies and the only *Fae* Dragon in existence.”

“I wasn’t aware of either of those facts and further, I’d like to point out that she most definitely isn’t *my* anything.”

Apparently, he was a comedian because the fire *Faerie* laughed in his face.

“A- don’t talk about our Daddy. B, trust me; she is Earth Mother’s daughter. And she’s most definitely your woman although I’m unsure of whether or not you’re worthy of being her man, *shifter*.”

*Did she just intimate that he wasn’t worthy of Tag? These women were the most arrogant beings he’d ever encountered.*

No, shifter. I never intimidate; I inform, I command, but I never intimate. And we might be arrogant but then you have to admit we have so many reasons to be so,” she smirked before turning to the others.

“You must remain here. We’re almost done and trust me when we’re finished your women will be safe in your arms.”

Levelling them with that statement, she used that insane speed they were known for and rejoined her sisters.

He didn’t say anything ... then he wasn’t meant to.

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*Breathe, baby girl.*

Tag smiled upon hearing Isaura, whisper her demand. And despite how gently it was uttered, it was indeed a demand.

She was trying to breathe but she couldn’t get enough air into her lungs.

“If you want her to breathe, give her some air then, bitch,” Naida spat. “You are after all air fairy and all that.”

“Shut up,” Isaura retorted as she did indeed blow a gentle gust of air throughout her.

Immediately she felt relief ... and a little dizzy, but dizzy was way better than feeling a little like shit. Her breathing settled into a steady rhythm, which allowed her to feel her sister’s zapping her with a little bit of their power. It also allowed her to smile at their full-fledged argument. The baby girl they were all real particular about her. Yes, she was spoiled and dammit so what.

*Take our strength*, Naida commanded as she touched her with the tip of her wings and let the gentle lapping of warm water soothe her aching everything.

*Take our strength, Tag so that you may help your friend*, Dianthe echoed as she trailed a finger down her arm.

Petal soft, the smell of a pine forest invaded her nostrils even as mountains formed in her biceps.

“Adena, finish with those boys and get your hot ass over here,” Isaura demanded.

No sooner had Isaura voiced her demand then Adena was there.

“And try not to give her third degree burns,” Naida snapped.

“Ignoring you, wench,” Adena said before enfolding her hand in her own.

*Take our strength, Tuesday*, she said as she held her hand over her heart igniting the passion that was buried within her.

Tag took their strength – as if she had a choice. Readjusting her hold on the woman that Jaron’s brother ached for, she felt for the rhythm of both versions noting the enhanced version’s rhythm felt heavy – like a dirge – while the original version’s rhythm felt light like an aria being set free.

*Take our strength*, her sister’s demanded simultaneously before amping up the power and transferring into her body.

*NOW!* Adena commanded.

Momentarily seizing control of the combined strength of her sisters, Tag reached out with a wide, ripping motion. Smiling, she snatched the enhanced woman from the original. Holding the darkness in one hand, she cradled the lightness in the other. Laying

the original version down, she gave the enhanced version her full attention ... and an undiluted blast of power amped up to the nth degree. Silence followed; stillness prevailed. Sliding to the floor, she wondered what album she and the woman would listen to over their Cokes.

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“NO!!!” The grotesque man yelled.

Bristling at the sight of the subject being liberated, he didn't realise that he was no longer alone until he heard the door to his getaway close. Miles from the laboratory, it was his safe place. Or it had been until now.

Peering out of the corner of his eye, he slowly perused the figure that stood in the doorway. Black hair and black eyes matched the all black outfit. The only colour came from the sudden flush that appeared on his face when he finished his turn fully revealing himself to the intruder.

With a twist of his lips that was meant to be a smile he greeted him.

“Hello, son.”

## CHAPTER TEN

Sunny remained still as Jamieson gently caressed her body. Jamieson's big hands made quick work of the task. Reverently, he touched every bit of skin on her body. Every freckle, every scar, every indentation was catalogued by his sharp eyes and committed to memory. Honoured by his gentleness, she watched him unashamedly and when his eyes moved back up to hers she smiled her pleasure and shivered from the scorching heat blazing in his emerald eyes.

His eyes spoke of his love for her ... his need of her ... his fear *for* her. It was a simple message but it was all any woman needed to see in her man's eyes. Already in love with him, the look in his eyes made her fall in love with him all over again. Jamieson not only knew how to touch a woman and let her know that she was loved; he knew how to look at a woman and convey the same thing – and she better be the only woman he was looking at like that from now on. As battered as they were, Jamieson had her heart and soul.

In that moment the full moon revealed itself. It also revealed the hard planes of her man's body. Reaching up and cupping his face between her hands she kissed him.

"Don't you have to hunt?" she asked him softly.

"Hmm," was all Jamieson said as he buried his face in her breasts.

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Breathing deeply, he took in Sunny's scent and held it on his tongue. He tasted her like she was his wine and he was a connoisseur. Feeling Sunny's hands in his hair, he allowed her to pull his head

from its current position. Kissing his way up to where she wanted him, he lingered at her mouth before meeting her eyes.

“So are you going to?” she asked looking concerned.

He grinned in response, being sure to display his fangs.

Emitting a low growl to go with his glowing eyes and display of fangs ensured that he had his woman’s full attention.

“Hunt?” Sunny finished.

“Yes, I am. How about you get your fine ass up and take a stroll, woman,” he said softly, lowering his voice so that it smoothed over her nerve endings like *hot*, liquid honey.

“Why would I want to go on a stroll ... oh, ohhh,” she said as she realised what he was saying.

With a laugh she scrambled out of their bed. When she bent to pull on her jeans, he stopped her with a hand on her waist. She turned her head, inadvertently baring her neck to him. Though tempted, he didn’t take her up on her lovely offer. Instead, he whispered hotly into her ear.

“Just wear this,” he instructed as he handed her one of his t-shirts and her running shoes.

Sunny raised her eyebrows but let him slip it over her head. Holding back a growl, he watched as she snuggled into it.

“Won’t I get cold?” she asked.

“Not if you run,” he said tossing her a look full of challenge.

Smiling, Sunny took all of half a second to run laughing from the room. Jamieson took his time. Stopping in the front door he looked out in the direction of where his house used to be. Right now, it was nothing more than a cleared space. The rubble that had been



all that was left of his house had been cleared away by Mackenzie Roberts and Company.

Having built that house with his own two hands, he'd been pissed about its destruction, but not devastated. Believing that he'd live out his days there as a bachelor, it'd been filled with a whole lot of anger and even more emptiness. He was going to have to start from scratch but this time he wouldn't just build a house; he'd build a home and he'd fill it with his and Sunny's things instead of just stuff. Of course he was going to have to build on the bits of Pack land that was tougher to get to, impossible to infiltrate. Now that he had a woman to see to, he was going to make damn sure that they were never again caught with their pants down. That is why they'd called Invictus Vadoma. Vadoma had not only designed and oversaw the building of the Locke Mansion; he'd done the same for the personal residence of Serafeim de Vires.

His woman was going to be safe and that was all there was to it, he thought as he slowly ambled in the direction that she'd sprinted of in. Though she was 'hiding' in a clump of trees, he could see her clearly. He could also hear her muffled giggles, but his little temptress wasn't aware of that fact. It wasn't the white t-shirt, or even the moon that was helping to reveal her. It was *her*. He'd be able to see her anywhere. His wolf eyes could never lose his woman.

"Ready or not, here I come!" he called out to Sunny.

Hearing her heartbeat increase, he smiled when she decided that her hiding space wasn't good enough and crept away from it before breaking into an all-out sprint. Jamieson walked softly, following his woman's scent with a grin plastered onto his face.

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Though she couldn't see him or hear him, Sunny could feel Jamieson coming. She couldn't spot him but she knew that he was close. Running faster she found that she was trapped ... and lost. Fuck. Thinking that she could perhaps hide, she searched around for a hiding space and found nary a one. Turning to double back and find a better place to hide, she caught her breath. Jamieson casually leaned against a tree trunk a few feet away from her. Worrying her bottom lip between her teeth, she willed herself not to remain still as he stalked her instead of beating him to the ground like she wanted to. The moonlight bathed him in silver-white light, highlighting the muscles that covered his frame. His emerald eyes simmered and his hair ... oh damn, his hair.

Sunny bit into her lip. She tasted blood but she couldn't stop herself. Squeezing her thighs together in an effort to stop her cum from sliding down her thighs, she realised it was a wasted effort once she saw Jamieson's reaction. Inhaling, he closed his eyes and growled low in his throat. His nostrils flared and his cock thumped in reaction.

Sunny knew that she should at least pretend that she was trying to hold out but then Jamieson was there. Standing directly in front of her he was the picture of want. Though he was the one doing the chasing it was clear that he wanted her as much as, if not more, than she wanted him. She knew that she wasn't going to hold out much longer, but neither was she going to just let Jamieson have his wicked way with her ... *yet*.

Ducking under the arms he braced on either side of her head, she took off running. She heard Jamieson's growl and it only served to turn her on. Knowing just how turned on he was she pumped her legs harder, running as fast as she could. Hearing Jamieson gaining on her she thought it might be a good idea to start exercising more than her pussy and thighs when Jamieson caught her from behind and dragged her to the ground beneath him. Of course he made sure not to hurt her as he took her down to the forest floor.

Laughing at the freedom, her laughs soon turned to moans as Jamieson rolled her onto her back and wedged himself between her thighs. Holding his upper body off of hers, he licked his lips and slowly perused her. The t-shirt he'd given her to wear had ridden up above her waist allowing her to smell the scent of her own arousal. Somehow that made her hotter. And then Jamieson inadvertently rubbed his jean-covered cock against her exposed pussy causing her to cry out her pleasure. Looking down at her he gave her that superior man grin. Not only did he have her where he wanted her; he knew that she was right where she wanted to be.

"Gotcha," he whispered, his orgasm-inducing voice rumbling against her throat.

Sunny closed her eyes when Jamieson's hot mouth travelled down her breasts and over her rounded stomach. He rubbed his face against her sex, his sensuous lips coaxing her to open wider. Opening her eyes she met his emerald gaze just in time to see him smile and dip his head to her sex. Using his fingers to separate her plump lips he used his talented tongue to tease her. His breath contrasted with the coolness of the air surrounding them yet set her on fire at the

same time. When Jamieson's long tongue dipped between her pussy lips, she shook from the pleasure. When he growled against her clit, she gasped and grasped his hair. When he growled a second time she thrust her hips up and demanding that he put the fires out that he'd set all over her sensitive body.

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Needing no more encouragement Jamieson shucked out of his restricting jeans before ripping his t-shirt from Sunny's body baring her abundant breasts to his gaze. Gripping his thick cock in one hand he looked down at his handy work. Spread out like a treat before him he licked his lips and tasted his woman. He grinned knowing his fangs were on display, and knowing how hot seeing them made her.

Seeing her lust made his cock thump in anticipation. He liked that she wanted him as much as he wanted her. Breathless moments passed as they simply stared at each other. Neither filled the silence with words. They simply let their anticipation build.

"I'm going to mark you tonight, woman. When I mark you our bond will be complete. I will be inside you and you will be inside of me, and we'll remain that way always," Jamieson vowed.

"Does the marking hurt much?" Sunny asked bravely.

Jamieson shook his head, his hair brushed against her nipples causing them to pucker.

"I will never hurt you Sunny, never," he whispered as he slowly guided his throbbing cock into her.

When he was buried to the hilt inside of his woman, he lowered his head and rested his mouth against her collarbone. Keeping his

hips still, he kissed the outline of her shoulder. Palming her breast, he continued to nip at her skin.

“*Move,*” Sunny demanded.

Instead of moving his hips like she wanted, he grazed her nipples with his teeth, alternating between them. Her breasts were tempting but then so was her mouth, the shell of her ear, and the column of her neck. Everything about her was tempting, every inch of skin called to him and he did his best to cover every bit of it with his kisses.

He knew she felt full because she fit him more snugly than ever before. Clenching around him, she damn near strangled his cock with her hot, tight pussy. She fit him so good, so good, so good. All he wanted to do was power into her but he continued to keep still. Instead of thrusting into her he continued to stoke her fires with his lips kissing her, nipping her, licking her.

He could feel her getting worked up and he smiled knowing that she was getting close. Frenziedly, she bucked her hips at him. Shaking her head, she dug her nails into him drawing blood. Wrapping her legs around him she pushed her curves into his hardness sensitising their skin so much that every touch sent frissons of pleasure zinging through them.

“Oh, *please move!*” she begged her voice breaking on the last syllable.

Raising his mouth from her nipples, he looked into her eyes. Bright with passion, they dominated her face. Already beautiful, with her passion blooming over her face, she was glorious ... so much so that he was momentarily robbed of breath.

Pulling almost all of the way out, he slammed back home. Instead of riding her to the climax that she wanted, he stroked her with the gentlest of strokes. Seeing Sunny glare up into his face, he grinned at her.

“I didn’t quite catch that,” he said jokingly.

When she pushed his chest, he realised how desperate she was for him. Not wanting her to hurt herself, he simply absorbed the blow and rolled onto his back. His cock still buried deep inside of her, he held her hips enjoying the feel of her grinding against him.

“It’s not nice to tease,” she growled as she began to rock her hips back and forth, rotating her wet sex around his thick cock.

Her internal muscles gripped down hard. Gritting his teeth, he allowed her to take her pleasure. He enjoyed watching her ride him, enjoyed the fact that he’d worked her up to a feverish pitch. Emitting a low moan, his body braced itself for the hard ride it knew it was going to get. Reaching up, he pinched her nipples and smiled at her gasp. Feeling her sweet cum beginning to run down his cock, he groaned knowing that her climax was close. Her desire was riding her hard and she barked out an order.

“Pinch them harder,” she demanded throatily as she held his hands over her breasts.

He could no less than comply and when he did, she threw back her head and shouted out her pleasure. Her orgasm washed over him inciting his wolf. Stroking her back as she came down from her climax, he caught her as she collapsed against him and held her close when she rested her head in the hollow of his throat. Her breathing

was choppy; she hummed to herself; and, her heart beat thundered beneath her breasts.

Enjoying the residual sounds of her pleasure he gave her a few moments to catch her breath. Stroking her into a false sense of security he waited until her hums turned into purrs. Hearing the gentle sound, he drew back his hand and landed three hard spanks on her tempting ass. His spanking roused her real fast.

Sitting up, she glared at him. “What was that for?” she asked.

Grinning, he thrust up, loving the feel of sliding so deep inside of her. Not even bothering to answer her question, he rolled her over and pounded into her with an intensity that had Sunny holding gasping in time to his thrusts. Feeling her orgasm building, he continued to pump into her, purposefully pushing her closer and closer to the edge, waiting, wanting, and needing her to fall over the cliff of her orgasm so that she’d be lost in pleasure when he marked her.

Her gasps came so quickly that she didn’t get time to finish them. Clawing at him she arched into his body demanding more. He complied. Rising up on his elbows, he braced all of his weight on his forearms and thrust so hard he dug divots into the ground with his palms. Finally, Sunny let go and her orgasm exploded around them. Her come soaked his hard cock, her pussy gripped him so good that he could barely move. Lowering his head, he took her mouth in a kiss that caused her orgasm to supernova. Lowering his head to the area where her neck met her shoulder he marked her. His mouth full of her taste, his cock full of cum, his mind full of Sunny, he exploded and poured his release into her bathing her womb with his seed.

“*Mine,*” he roared as he shuddered with his release.

“*Yours,*” Sunny whispered back with a smile on her lips.

“Damn right,” he said as he gathered her to him and blanketed his mate with his body.



## EPILOGUE

Tag packed the last of the band's gear into the Suburban and slammed the barn style doors. Taking a deep breath she looked around at the place she'd called home for a whole two weeks. So much had happened in that time. First, they'd kicked ass in the Battle of the Bar Bands. She met an asshole who for the life of him couldn't believe that she didn't find him irresistible.

*You don't believe it either,* Adena chuckled in her head.

Ignoring Adena, she went right back to tallying everything that'd taken place over the past two weeks. Where was she? Oh yeah, she'd met the famed *Locke Brotherhood* and their Commander. She'd met the Supreme Alpha of North America and most of his brothers. But better than that, she'd met their women and realised that while the human realm might not be her home, it was full of women who got her. Not everyone could be *Fae*

Hey, our mother's not *Fae*, and our daddy's only half *Fae*, Adena's voice filtered in.

*Shut. Up. Why are you all up in my business?*

*The only business you had involved that shifter. And if you don't want me saying anything, stop broadcasting so damn loud. Right now you're like satellite radio, babe.*

*Why isn't Sage all up on you?*

*Who says he's not.*

*First, ewww, nasty. Second ewww, disgusting. Third, if he was you wouldn't be able to form words much less whole sentences.*

*Not tr-*, her sister suddenly broke off.

*Tag smiled, and waited for the next comment.*

*Hello, Friday.*

*Hello, Sage. You gonna' keep Adena out of my business?*

*At least for the next few hours. Then she'll be unconscious after that.*

*You are so bad.*

*No, Saturday, I am so good, which is why Adena loves me.*

*Later, Sage, she said as she returned to her thoughts.* Damn busybody family. Just because they swooped in and saved the day and let her borrow their powers they thought that they could tell her what to do. That was so out and if they tried it she was going to tell their momma.

Like she was saying, not everyone could be *Fae*, but Star, Destiny and Sunny were the most kickass women not related to her that she'd ever stumbled across. She smiled thinking of the trio of women. While Sunny and Jamieson had come to see her, as had Lukas and Jack, she hadn't seen hide or hair of Destiny or Star after the big rescue. She wasn't worried about them although she suspected they'd be craving pickles and ice cream - *or whatever it was that pregnant Vampires craved* - in a few months. She couldn't wait.

And to top everything off, she'd somehow managed to get a chance of a second trial in front of the *Faerie* council. It'd rock if she could get her Banishment revoked. If she didn't, she'd simply tough out one more millennia. With an invite to crash in the Locke Mansion and on Black Ridge Territory, and peeps like Star, Destiny, and Sunny to pal around with, she was sure that the next millennia would go by a

lot faster than the last ... especially if she spent it fucking with that arrogant bastard of a shifter, Jaron Mann.

Shoving her hands into her parka pockets, she lowered her head as she felt the snow storm beginning to pick up in strength. That was her cue to leave. Making her way towards the forest that lay to the west of the bar she could see her portal home. Grinning, she picked her way over to the swirling portal wondering why the hell Isaura didn't do something about this shit. She might be *Fae*, but dammit she did not appreciate snow up to her ass and subzero temperatures. Wouldn't you know it? The more she bitched about the snow the faster it came down and the thicker it got.

Tugging her toboggan tighter around her head she hunched into her coat and peered at the portal, which was getting harder to see with every passing second. It took a minute for her to realise that it wasn't the snow that was making it hard for her to see it; it was the fact that it was closing. *Oh hell no!* She screamed as she ran for the portal. She was almost upon it when she felt something solid hit her in the back of the head. Falling to the ground, she turned to cuss whoever it was or whatever it was that hit her. What kind of asshole would be out here fucking around? Turning to see, she spotted none other than Jaron Mann. Before she could tell him off, she fell back into the snow. Her last thought was, *why was Jaron Mann out behind the bar and who the hell was he beating the shit out of?*

~\*~\*~ JJ ~\*~\*~

*This concludes the third story in the Otherworldly series.  
Thank you for reading. I hope that you enjoyed the tale as much as I  
did. -Jeanie*

Praises, compliments, adulation and the like for Jeanie can be left at:

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## **Jeanie Johnson**

Okay, what can I say about me? Hmm. My little sister describes me as the hot, sexy brick sh\*thouse badazz filmmaker, and you know why? Because she has great freaking taste.

I'm crazy, I smoke too much (and yes, My Momma knows that, don't worry she's trying to get me to quit!). My favourite beverage is cold coke, coke with ice, coke in a glass, coke in a bottle...I think y'all get the picture! I'm of the grandiose notion that world peace will only happen when women take over all the TOP jobs.

My older sister describes me thusly:

Jeanie is a shagalicious word slinger who will be world ruling side-by-side with her momma. As long as her Polar Bear (*shhh it's a secret*) does not drink all of her Cokes, all will be well. After gifting her clan with a knee buckling narrative or two, Jeanie intends to relax by throwing on her favourite hoodie and jumping in her chromed-out truck in search of the alpha that is the basis of the heroes in all of her stories.

*See people, this is the kind of praise you get when you have Yvonne as your MMFIC and Rolanda as the MNWIC. Thanks for the props you guys.*