



City Wolf 2

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Chapter One

Lucas leaned back in his chair and took on an expression of boredom. He let his gaze sweep the room, categorizing every woman as he went, who would be good to fuck, who he already had—and of course, who to avoid at all costs.

Deliberately ignoring Gloria meant nothing to her. She slunk to his side and rested long manicured nails on his thigh with a pout planted on her red lips. Even before her hand slid higher to stroke his shaft, he had begun to harden. No matter how she had betrayed him, he still loved her. She was the only woman he ever would love, maybe even the only *person* he'd ever care about outside of his half brother Brant.

“What the fuck do you want, Gloria? Run out of lovers for the night?” he spat. He'd displayed too much vehemence when he should have been indifferent.

Her smirk told him she had noticed. “Aw, still pining for me, baby?” She stroked him harder, and damn if he wasn't ready to come. He shoved her hand away and stood. Gloria wrapped her arms around his waist and rested her forehead on the back of his shoulder. At one time he thought it sexy as hell her being that small.

“Get lost, Gloria,” he muttered with more control this time. “I'm meeting someone here. My newest bed partner, so don't get in my way.”

“What?” She lifted her head and searched much like he did. “Which one is it? No, matter. You can tell her you're taken for the night. Remember how we used to fuck all night long?”

“Not really.” He freed himself and walked out onto the dance floor, looking for a likely target, anyone he could use to put some distance between himself and Gloria. If she hung on him much longer, he'd give into her and wake up with a shattered heart the next morning. He may have liked to walk around like he was made of ice as the others had described him, but the truth was a whole other story.

A young woman with her back to him, swaying to the rhythm of the music, caught his attention. From his vantage point, she had an ass he'd like to ride and smooth brown skin that looked sweet like sugar. He scanned the area near her and found no man lingering close enough to claim her—not that it would have mattered—and he sidled up behind her.

Matching her movements, he swayed with her and leaned down to kiss her neck. She gasped and would have moved away, but he caught her around the waist. “No, don't move. Just turn your head and let me get a taste of that mouth.”

“What?” She elbowed him and spun around with her hands on her hips and eyebrows lowered in a scowl. “How dare you presume I want to kiss you?”

Lucas blinked and took a step back. The studious one. What was her name? This was one of Zandrea's friends. The name slipped into his mind. Nita. He stood there staring at her while she railed at him, probably going through the expansive vocabulary she had picked up in all the years she'd been in university. He wondered what fears kept her from actually living rather than hiding out as a student for so long.

Whatever the reason, he needed her right now, whether she knew it or not. He had seduced many women in his time, and this sexy little thing wouldn't be any different.

While she continued to complain, Lucas reached across the space between them and scooped her up close to his chest. He was aware that he was exuding the pheromones that would make her melt in his arms, and that was just fine with him. Without hesitation, he lowered his head and covered her protesting mouth with his own. The second he slid his tongue between her luscious lips, she melted.

Deepening the kiss, he tightened his hold and ran a hand up her back to cup her head. His shaft, which had begun to calm walking away from Gloria, hardened all over again with his body pressed to Nita's. She was not his type, if he truly had one. He liked petite blondes, aggressive little wolf shifter females that could give as much as they got. But the sweet thing in his arms was leggy and tall. Her handful sized breasts, pressed into his chest was nothing like what he usually went after, yet still, he was about ready to burst kissing her.

"Come to one of the back rooms with me," he demanded when he pulled back.

Her large brown eyes were unfocused, and her lips were swollen from his kiss. She nodded unsteadily. "Yes."

"Hell no!" someone snapped.

Lucas looked up over Nita's head to the angry woman behind her. This was the other friend, the toughest of the three who would probably attempt to kick his ass should he try to take Nita for his own pleasure.

"This has nothing to do with you," he told her. "Nita is a grown woman who can decide who she takes as a lover."

"Whatever." Stacy snatched his prize from his arms. "She's not going anywhere with you. I saw you before." She nodded to a point somewhere behind him. "Over there letting that woman rub all up on you. So when you got bored with her, you came over here to get Nita. I'm not having it."

Lucas felt his eyes darken in anger and was glad of the low lights to hide the change. He breathed in and out a few times to calm himself, but it wasn't working. Instead, dislike of this woman ran through him. He glanced down at Nita. With his anger up, his seduction

had eased. Nita blinked as if her mind was clearing from a fog. *Damn*. He still wanted her, and this woman wasn't going to keep her from him.

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Nita blinked and stood up straight. She watched a little dazed at Stacy arguing with the sexy man who had kissed her earlier. Wait, kissed her? She couldn't imagine that she had let a stranger rub all over her body and stick his tongue in her mouth. She was a little on the desperate side lately, and more than a little jealous at the fact that Zandrea had found a man and was hiding out somewhere in a bed with him, but to let this guy use her this way?

She focused on Stacy's words, and became more alarmed with each word.

"I saw you letting that woman over there rub you. So you think you're going to get my friend in the back to do the same thing? Not!"

Nita turned to him, realization dawning. "What did you do to me? Some kind of hypnosis? Who are you? And how did you know my name? I'm sure I didn't tell you."

His lips tightened, for some reason reminding her of how he had tasted. Whatever he had done to her wasn't present now, and yet, she ached to crawl back into his arms and offer her body and soul to him. Then again, the man was gorgeous, the epitome of dark and dangerous male. Almost black eyes, dark thick curls atop his head, hard muscles, and he dressed with casual grace in a collared black shirt and slacks. The shirt sat open at the neck, giving her a peek at matching black curls on his chest. A vision of running her fingers over that delicious expanse rose in her mind, and she turned away.

She needed a drink. Without another word or waiting for him to answer, she headed to the bar. Stacy could handle him. A man like him wouldn't look twice at someone like her. Maybe he was trying to make his girlfriend jealous. Whatever. Easy come, easy go.

Nita slid onto a stool at the bar and ordered her favorite drink, a Red-headed Slut. When the bartender placed her shot glass in front of her, she thanked him and scooped it up to down in one gulp. She squeezed her eyes shut and waited for the burning sensation in her throat to pass before she slammed the glass down on the counter.

"Yeah, I needed a stiff drink after the first kiss with Lucas, too."

Nita looked around to see a beautiful blonde standing beside her. The woman gave the man occupying the stool a look, and for some reason he cowed and fled. She sat down like the whole occurrence was typical for her.

"Excuse me?" Nita said.

The woman smiled, although truth be told, the coldness in her eyes could freeze a person. “Gloria Rampart. You?”

Nita hesitated. “Nita James. Nice to meet you.”

Gloria waved a hand. “What I was saying was the first time I kissed Lucas, I was lost. Until I realized he would never give me his heart.” She stuck a cigarette between her red lips but didn’t light it. Nita watched to see if she would, given that smoking here was prohibited. “You see, Lucas is the ultimate Alpha male. He barks commands, expects you to follow and he doesn’t give a shit about anyone, least of all women. He likes to have several women a week, sometimes several a night. So, if you had aspirations of getting with him—don’t.”

Finding no words right away to respond with, which was a rarity for her, Nita said nothing. Yet, even a blind woman could see Gloria was jealous and that maybe things weren’t like she wanted them to be between her and Lucas. She paused in thought. *Lucas? Sexy name.*

Glancing back over her shoulder, she spotted him just turning away from Stacy and smiled. No one could out argue her friend. That was for sure. Nita refocused on the woman at her side and took on what Zandrea had termed her school marm attitude to beat down the pretentious. “Don’t worry, sweetheart. Soon enough you’ll come to realize that a man like him isn’t conducive to a strong and healthy self-esteem. I would not direct my attentions on Lucas for all the money in the world.”

Chapter Two

Lucas stood in the trees outside Nita's dormitory. What the hell was she doing still in school? And why were they allowing it? It could be that her family had money. When he was trying to clean up behind Brant, and his debacle of taking a human mate, Lucas had done a thorough background check on each of the three friends. Zandrea had worked at the hospital, Stacy for a car rental place and Nita was a perpetual student living off a trust fund.

He should have let it go after the scene her friend made on the dance floor. After all, he did not do human women—ever. In no stretch of the imagination could she ever meet his sexual needs, and yet here he was lingering like a fucking pimply-faced teenage boy, hoping for a glimpse of her.

Laughter somewhere nearby caught his attention, and he shrank back farther in the trees. Two men, probably barely into their twenties strolled up and came to a stop in front of Nita's building.

"Where are you headed, man?" the shorter of the two asked.

The other man hooked a thumb over his shoulder. "Gonna get me a piece of this woman named Nita. She stays here. Older woman, by five years, but she's ripe. Boy is she ripe."

"I hear you, dog." The first man grinned. "Give me a call tomorrow, tell me all the details."

"You know me."

They touched fists and went in different directions. Lucas felt the beginnings of a growl rise inside him without conscious thought. If that fool thought he would get his hands on Nita, he had another thought coming. Lucas would have no qualms about ripping him to shreds. The vehemence of his feelings gave him pause, but he ignored it. He would be just as violent toward another male sniffing around any other woman he wanted.

He considered shifting but thought better of it and instead ran across the street and entered the building. The door should have been locked, but someone had wedged a wad of tape in the gap where it closed, probably waiting for a lover to come. Lucas took advantage of it and slipped inside.

Just as he passed the threshold, a low tapping caught his attention. The man was already on the third floor, knocking at Nita's door. Lucas tensed. How the hell had he gotten there that quickly? Lucas had been only a step behind. No human could. He sniffed the air, picking up the scent of cheap cologne that wafted behind the man, but nothing else. Maybe it was his imagination.

Lucas climbed the stairs without making a sound, his ears strained to pick up anything unusual. One flight down from Nita's room, he paused. The rattle of the lock being undone reached his ears, and the door opened.

"Deandre, what are you doing here? I'm just about to go to bed." Nita yawned. Lucas poised himself ready to spring up the last flight of stairs if the fool dared try anything.

"Hey, baby, is that any way to greet a friend? I thought we were getting closer the last few times we were talking." The guy chuckled. "And there was definitely some vibes passing back and forth earlier tonight after Chemistry."

"Were there?"

Lucas smirked at the vagueness in her voice.

"Uh..." All the bravado drained out of Deandre's mack. "Well, anyway, I knew you were going out with your girls to the club, and I didn't want to sweat you, you know. A woman has got to have time with her girlfriends. I understand that. It's the kind of guy I am."

Lucas peeked up over the stairwell to catch a glimpse of Nita resting her hip against the doorframe, her head tilted to the side and a slight smile on her lips. She could not be falling for this. He frowned and clenched his jaw.

"Is that right?" Nita chuckled. "You realize I'm older than you, right? Like what six or seven years?"

"Five," Deandre corrected. "And I love older women."

"Okay, well, I'll give you a chance." She ran a finger along the sleeve of his jacket. "Just because I think you're kinda cute."

Lucas released a low growl and had to duck down before they spotted him. Deandre made an exclamation, and Nita gasped. Lucas descended the steps to the first floor and waited in the shadows of the space beneath the stairs.

"Slow down, Mr. Eager," Nita said after a few minutes, when they had obviously assured themselves no dog was about to attack. Lucas imagined Deandre had thought she was about to let him into her room. "We can go out to eat or something, maybe catch a movie. That's the deal. Take it or leave it."

Deandre grumbled. "You're direct, aren't you?"

"That's the kind of girl *I* am," she affirmed.

"Okay, then. I take it." Deandre's step sounded on the stairs. His mack had returned. "Be prepared to fall hard for me, baby. That's a promise."

Lucas waited in his hiding spot while the man came down and passed him. When he was directly in front of Lucas, he inhaled and still there was no scent from this man other than the cheap cologne. From his experience, all humans had a scent, and his sense of smell was one hundred times that of a human's. He should have been able to pick something up.

Deandre turned his head to look directly at Lucas, and although his expression didn't give the impression that he could see Lucas, that Deandre knew he was there and didn't consider him a threat irked him to no end.

Deandre chuckled low in his throat and shoved the door open. While Lucas waited a beat before he followed the man, he watched as if in slow motion as the tape that had kept the door open fell to the ground. The lock clicked in place.

Lucas pressed the door handle and eased the door open a bit. After a moment, he peered around the edge of the door and scanned the street. No one was in sight. When he had stepped out on the sidewalk, he stiffened at the click of heels on the cement. A woman rounded the corner of the building. She pressed a hand to her chest at seeing him and then strolled up.

"Hey, sexy. You scared me."

Lucas barely acknowledged her, but passed by and crossed the street to his vehicle. He tapped the unlock button on his key chain and snatched the door open before hopping inside. As he pulled off, his tires screeching, he realized two facts. One, the woman also had no scent, and two, there had been that lingering cologne in the air around her. He put both observations down to being tired and sexually frustrated. He would have to find someone to take the edge off and fast.

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With the sun shining in his eyes and a sense of being watched, Lucas opened his eyes. A sexy blonde whose name he couldn't recall lay at his side, leaning on his elbow while she stared in his face. He took stock of his libido. While he could take her a few more rounds, he felt somewhat satisfied. She was a shifter, so they had fun the night before. And the activity had served to free him from the temporary obsession he had had with Nita. She was human. He had no need of them. Case closed. Let her friend Stacy protect her from whatever creature the guy from last night had been. She seemed like she was time enough for him anyway.

Lucas threw back the covers revealing his morning erection and swung his legs over the side of the bed. A growl sounded behind him before his lover wrapped her fingers around his shaft.

"Oh, looks like someone's all raring to go," she cooed.

“I just have to pee,” he grumbled. “Let go. What we did was a one time deal. I don’t do seconds.”

“Not what I heard.” She followed him when he stood and pressed her big breasts into his back. A flash of his fingers kneading them while he sucked her nipples went through his mind. His shaft pulsed, but he pushed the thoughts away.

“Okay, I do seconds, sometimes even thirds. However”—he shoved her hands off of him—“I have no desire to fuck you again.”

She gasped. “You cold bastard! I should have known not to sleep with you. I should have ignored your call. Fuck you, Lucas.”

He bowed in her direction, his face impassive. She snatched up all her clothes and stomped toward the bathroom knowing he had been headed in that direction. The door slammed in his face, and the shower came on a second later. He tried the knob but it was locked. With a grunt he turned back to search the motel room for his clothes. He’d have to wait until he got home to relieve himself. These were the hazards of the single life. For a second, he considered following in his half brother’s footsteps and getting himself a mate, but then he dismissed the idea. None of the shifter women he knew was the faithful type, and crazy as that seemed for a man like him, he knew if he did take a mate, he’d never want to share her with another wolf. Ever.

So life as usual. It wasn’t so bad.

Chapter Three

Nita sat daydreaming about the night before while chewing on a thumbnail. Her professor's voice droned on, and while usually she was riveted to the lecture, having a great love of ancient history, today she couldn't concentrate. A pair of dark eyes filled her mind, eyes that were almost black and lips so firm and good, she could feast on them for months without taking a breath.

She had been flip with that woman. What was her name? Gloria. She'd been flip with her about not letting herself get into Lucas, but the truth was, she wanted more. Even if it was for one night of wild hot sex. That would be more than what she had come to expect in her life. Her lovers had been few and far between, and none of them were above average looking.

With effort, she shifted her thoughts to Deandre. He was cute, but young. She was not at an age yet where she wanted to date younger men, to see if she still had it kind of thing. Then again, two men after her in one night was a rarity indeed. A girl would be out of her mind not to play it up a little, just for the fun of it.

She grinned thinking of the train of her thoughts. Zandrea and Stacy would be rolling around on the floor laughing if they heard how she had picked up more of the relaxed way of speaking and thinking like they did. How could she not? Her life had been damn dull and filled with endless books before she met her two best girlfriends. She liked to think she was more down to earth now, and there wasn't a thing wrong with it.

"Ms. James?"

Nita coughed and sat up straight. Her professor repeated his question, and she was clueless as to what he was talking about. Her cell rang. She held up a finger and gave an apologetic smile before darting out of the room. From the corner of her eye on her way out, she spotted Deandre. He winked. She didn't acknowledge him beyond a nod but pressed her connect button to answer the phone.

"Hello?" she whispered, shutting the lecture room door behind her.

"Hey, girl. What are you doing?" Zandrea called through the phone.

Nita grinned. "Z, you're alive. I can't believe it."

"Haha. Funny. Want to have lunch with me today?"

Nita checked her watch. "It's like eleven thirty. You don't plan ahead, do you?"

"No, you do enough of that for us all. Besides, I just managed to crawl out of my man's bed for five minutes. I missed my girls, but that damn Stacy isn't answering her cell. Probably forgot to charge it and she's off in Timbuktu somewhere delivering a car."

Nita nodded. “Probably. Okay, where and what time? I had another half hour in this class, but I can just leave if I have to go any distance. This is my second time through it anyway.”

“Damn, girl,” Zandrea complained. “Let the schooling go. Get a real job like everybody else. Or just lay around spending your money like regular rich folk.”

Nita burst out laughing. “I’m not that rich. I have to live on a budget like everybody else. Plus I love learning. I was thinking about traveling next year, visit all the places I’ve only learned about in a classroom setting. The problem is, I don’t have anyone to go with me, and I’m a little nervous about going alone.” Inspiration hit her. “Maybe if I can secure a boyfriend he could go with me. That reminds me that I have to talk to you about something, and it’s a good thing Stacy won’t be there. She won’t think rationally if she knew.”

“Oh, do tell,” Zandrea gushed.

“In person. Where?”

Zandrea gave her the details, and they agreed on the time before she hung up the phone. She had just enough time to run over to her room, shower and change before jumping on the highway to get to the restaurant where Zandrea wanted to meet. She had said they had some amazing steak dishes, which she wanted since it seemed to be all that Brant ever craved to eat.

Nita couldn’t wait to hear about how things were going with Zandrea’s man and if she felt like he was the one. She doubted it because it seemed like all he wanted to do was have sex. That was good and all, but how did they learn more about each other and if they had common interests if their lips were locked together twenty-four seven?

As Nita stepped into her shower securing a cap around her shoulder length chestnut curls, she recognized the green-eyed beast for what it was. She wanted a steady man in the bed just like anyone else, and if they had a lot in common that would be great too. She wouldn’t begrudge Zandrea for fulfilling one of those desires in her own life.

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“Nita!” Zandrea screamed as she ran up to her. Her friend’s arms wrapped around her in a hug that threatened crack a few ribs and squeeze out the last bit of air in Nita’s lungs. “I’ve missed you so much, sweetie.”

Nita groaned. “I can tell. Easy. What did you do, go on steroids or what? You’re so strong and buff. I thought you’d have gained a little not leaving the bed all this time.”

Zandrea chuckled and ran her fingers through her hair. It was several inches longer than when Nita had last seen it. Her friend's hair never grew that fast before. It was a tad freaky.

"Oh sorry. No, I'm used to Brant's roughness. The man is insatiable, and I admit I love it. Plus, he has an exercise routine you wouldn't believe to keep in shape." She waved a hand in the air and rolled her eyes as she pulled Nita to a table. "But never mind that. Spill. I want to know what you have to say that you didn't think it would be a good idea for Stacy to know. She's like a mother hen to you, so what's the baby bird been up to behind mama's back?"

Nita squirmed in her chair, looking down at her hands. Of the three of them, Stacy was the bold one, Zandrea was the wildest, but still bold, and Nita was the studious one, the woman with the least amount of experience with men. She knew that was why Stacy watched over her. Especially after she had nearly tied the knot with a broke guy who had just been after her money a few years ago. She would do well to be cautious, but she wasn't looking for a husband or to hand over any money. She just wanted companionship. That wasn't such a bad thing.

"Well it's about men," she began. "Two of them."

"Two!" Zandrea whooped, drawing the attention of several other patrons, and Nita sank lower in her seat. Her friend laughed. "Sorry, girl. I just got excited. Okay, so who are they? You get busy with either of them yet? Are you sure you want to take on two at once?"

Nita held up her hands laughing. "Slow down. No and no. I haven't gotten busy yet, and no, I'm not sure about either one. One is named Deandre, and he's cute. Younger, but I don't know. Something mysterious about him that just draws me. Weird I know. And then there's Lucas. He kissed me last night at the club—"

"Lucas!" Zandrea's eyes grew wide. "*My* Lucas? I mean Brant's brother, Lucas? Which club?"

Nita chewed her lip. "The one we always go to of course."

"Oh goodness, no baby. No way. Not him." Zandrea shook her head back and forth so vigorously, her hair swung across her face. "Go with the other guy. Trust me. Lucas is the last man you want to take into your bed."

The same jealousy Nita had felt earlier came creeping back. Had Zandrea been intimate with Lucas and not liked it for some reason? But then again, when would she have? None of them had a man for a long while until Zandrea had gotten with Brant. And from what she'd heard about the man's appetite, there was no way Zandrea could handle two sex hungry men.

“What’s the big deal, Z? You...uh... you haven’t slept with him, have you?” Nita hated how she sounded like she was pleading for it not to be true.”

“Fuck, no!” Zandrea exclaimed. “Not on your life. That cold bastard? In fact, I find it hard to believe he kissed you. He’d have to chip away the ice to meet your lips.”

Nita smirked. “A lot of love for your brother-in-law.”

Zandrea rolled her eyes. “Girl, don’t even.” She leaned back to study her menu a few minutes before laying it down and reaching across the table for Nita’s hands. “I’m sorry to be like Stacy would be on this one, sweetie, but she’d be right on the money. Lucas is bad news. You’re sweet and sensitive, and I know for a fact that his kind...I mean, the men in his family are charmers. They’ll get you naked in five seconds, before you even know what happened to you.”

Nita considered that. It was true. One minute she had been telling Lucas off for thinking he could just rub up on her and kiss her neck, and the next she had thrown her head back and was letting him slide his tongue down her throat. A shiver ran over her body at the memory. She couldn’t help it. She wanted so much more. And she was pretty sure that woman who had warned her off of him just wanted more as well. Nita wasn’t looking for love with Lucas. Just sex. From the looks of things, she would have to keep her relationship with him a secret from her girlfriends. If it got serious, then would get their advice.

She squeezed Zandrea’s hands. “Okay, I will take your advice and concentrate on the other guy. He seems safer anyway.”

Zandrea beamed. “All right. Now, let me order because I’m famished, and you can tell me all about him.”

Chapter Four

Irritation rode Lucas' back like a growth, and he shifted his shoulders for the hundredth time trying to get a release. For the last week, he had been avoiding Gloria with the last crumbs of willpower he had, but today he knew he would go to her. Why? Why the hell couldn't he get her out of his damn system? Why her of all women?

He had been leaning against the outside wall of the club he frequented trying not to look like he was waiting for her to show up. She'd taken to bouncing around from place to place, and he had no idea where she was staying. Tonight a long sleek black limo rolled up to the door, and when the driver opened the back door, he wasn't surprised that Gloria stepped out. Her date, from the scent of him, was human. Lucas frowned. If a human female couldn't normally handle a male shifter, a human man damn well couldn't. And definitely not Gloria.

Squinting his eyes, Lucas noted the puffiness around the man's eyes and the way he shuffled slightly when he walked. He smirked. Gloria had worn the man to a frazzle, and he was only holding onto her for how she looked dangling from his arm.

As they passed, Gloria caught his eye. The invitation was clear. She hadn't gotten enough the night before and wanted him. Like the whipped puppy he was beginning to feel like around her, he started forward and then stopped at the fragrance that hit his nostrils. He turned his head toward the street to spot another car and another set of long sexy legs that were just unfolding from its interior.

Thoughts of Gloria floated away when he spotted Nita. She couldn't possibly satisfy him and yet, his mouth watered to have her, to hold her and look into those big warm eyes. *Idiot*, he chastised himself. She might not be of Gloria's caliber, but she wouldn't be any different. The proof was in the way she melded herself to the man whose arm she was on, those small soft breasts pressing against him, and the man practically drooling over the offering.

Suddenly feeling worse than he did knowing he would give into Gloria, Lucas pushed off the wall and rudely slid ahead of the advancing couple to enter the club. He ignored the curse the guy threw at his back and the sharp gasp from Nita's sweet lips. He needed a drink or several right now.

His drink in his hand and his eyes on Nita's hips, Lucas leaned an elbow on a table and tried not to be too obvious in his desires. It wasn't working.

"Whoa, dude, you want that? She's human you know?" Nash, one of the men in his pack strolled up with a wide grin on his face. "You've been staring her down all night. That idiot she's with isn't much, scrawny. Why don't you go over and take her?"

Lucas suppressed a growl. "What I do or don't do with her is none of your business." He played with his glass a few minutes before speaking again. "Have you noticed he doesn't smell human?"

Nash frowned. "Huh? I haven't noticed anything. I try to tone it down as much as possible in here. Sweat and other scents on people's bodies can get to be a bit much in this atmosphere. So if he doesn't smell human, what does he smell like?"

Lucas shrugged. "Not sure. I thought I'd leave it alone, but...well, I'm curious."

"Just curious, huh?"

Lucas gave him a look that said leave it alone. He would have no qualms about dragging the floor with his friend's sorry ass to make a point about not fucking with him, especially when he was in the mood he was in tonight. If his damn brother would drag his ass out from between his mate's legs for five minutes, he could talk to him about this guy, but Brant wouldn't surface for a while. Lucas knew he damn sure wouldn't if he had a mate.

Shaking his head to clear it of those dangerous thoughts, Lucas frowned and redirected his gaze to sweep the club, checking out who was in attendance tonight. Right away, he spotted Gloria in a corner booth on the lap of her lover. The man looked like he was passed out, and Gloria appeared to be ready to explode in anger at not having her needs met. She liked public sex. He considered going over there and must have moved as if to go because Nash caught his arm.

"Do you really want to do that, man?"

Lucas eyed the other man's hand on his sleeve. "Do you want to interfere with your pack leader?"

Nash didn't back down, one of the reasons Lucas kept him close. He didn't kiss anyone's ass, least of all Lucas', and he told it like it was. "We both know how it was the time you found her in bed with another wolf. You hunted until you were nearly dead and didn't shift out of your wolf form for two weeks. Brant and I went through a lot of shit to get your head screwed back on straight. You don't want to go that route again."

Lucas shook his arm off. "And I don't need to remind you that I am your Alpha. You don't tell me, I tell you. Now step aside."

Nash didn't move for a full thirty seconds, and then he seemed to think better of crossing Lucas. He bowed his head slightly and swept his arm out as an usher would. "Don't say I didn't warn you."

Ignoring the remark, Lucas threaded through the crowd, headed for Gloria. Sensing his approach, she glanced up, and the knowing look that came over her lovely face did not

slow Lucas' steps despite the resentment of her hold over him increasing inside of him. When he was within feet of her table, Lucas found his attention shifting again. Someone rushed through the crowd, jostling another person into his chest. Without a thought, his hands came up to steady the woman before she fell, and he found himself nose to nose with Nita. Or not quite nose to nose. For the second time he was struck by her tall lithe figure. Why did she appeal to him so much? And how could she be the only woman able to break the spell Gloria seemed to have over him?

"Oh, excuse me." She paused noting it was him, and her lips parted in a soft gasp.

Lucas stared down at those warm chocolate lips, remembering how they tasted. His fingers tightened on her hips. They stared at one another for a long time before they were interrupted by an angry voice.

"I suggest you get your get your hands off my woman, chief."

Nita was obviously irritated by the possessiveness in her date's words. "I am not your woman, Deandre. But"—she glared at Lucas—"you do have a habit of putting your hands and your body where they don't belong."

He grinned, his heart light for the first time that evening. "Oh, I don't know. My hands feel like they belong right where they are. Don't you agree?" He continued before she could answer. "In fact, my lips are thinking my hands have the right idea."

Deandre's brows crashed low over his eyebrows, his lips tightened, and he laid a heavy hand on Nita's arm. All the feelings of possessiveness that Lucas had felt that first night he'd kissed her came pouring down over him now. A growl started in his throat, and while he knew he must protect the secret of what he was above all else, he couldn't think of anything beyond tearing Deandre's arm off with his teeth.

Two men stumbled up, both seeming to be drunk and unsteady on their feet, but Lucas knew differently since they were both shifters, and one of them was Nash. With a loud hiccup in Deandre's face and an arm thrown around his shoulders, Nash and his buddy noisily invited the mystery man to a round of drinks at the bar. Lucas, knowing what a steel barrier it appeared to be to resist against the shifter's muscle, watched as Deandre was dragged away.

He turned his attention back to Nita. "Dance with me, beautiful."

She scoffed. "Sounds like a command. I don't obey orders. I'm a grown woman."

"Wouldn't know it by how much time you've spent in school without focus."

She gasped. "If that's your way of charming a woman, you have a lot to learn yourself."

He stepped closer to her and lifted her chin to bring her lips up to his. "Let's get this straight right from the start, sweetness. I want one thing and one thing only from you." He lightly touched her lips with his own and was gratified to find them trembling. Not with fear alone but with desire. He could sense that a mile off, from any woman. "I want to fuck you. If you prefer, I want to make love to you. Either way, I want into your bed. I have no doubt that I can please you. If it's really good, we can continue in that capacity for a few sessions. What do you say?"

Lucas knew he had released pheromones. In the shifters it was extremely powerful and potentially dangerous. He could lure a woman he did not mean to and cause all kinds of trouble. Younger shifters had that kind of trouble more often than the older ones, but sometimes he could forget if he was too focused on the object of his desire. Like he was now. With effort, he attempted to calm his raging desire in an effort to allow Nita to make her own decision regarding whether she accepted him as her lover. If he didn't, she would be drawn to him like a bee to honey and wake up tomorrow wondering when she had consented. In a human, that could be devastating. Shifters were used to wild nights and mornings after. It came with the territory which had been what led to his conflict with Gloria.

Nita blinked several times, and Lucas knew her mind was clearing of his sensual hold over her. He resisted the temptation of tasting her lips again or running a thumb over her taut nipples so close to his chest. Waiting was excruciating.

"Well?"

"I..." she began. "Uh, Stacy wouldn't like it."

He frowned. "How old are you?"

"Twenty-seven. Okay, forget Stacy. Yes. My answer is yes. We can be lovers. But first I have to talk to Deandre."

"Forget him." Lucas whipped her around to face the door. He wouldn't wait another second to her to himself. That loser she had come with could go sniff out some new woman. Nita was his for now, as long as he desired her.

Chapter Five

Nita bit her thumb nail, something that was becoming a habit lately, while she stared at herself in the mirror. She could not believe she was in Lucas' house. She would have thought a man like him who probably had a different woman every week—hell every day—would never bring one to his house. And what a house it was, too. The place was a mansion and so tastefully decorated.

She ran her hands over the thick terry towels on the rack beside the sink with its gauzy bows tied around each. The deep, rich burgundy looked too good to dry her hands on, so after she'd washed them and patted water over her face, she had shook them dry.

The fact that the man had money was not what was bothering her. It was her lack of experience or rather her limited experience. Lucas was certain he could please her, but what about her pleasing him? Would he get up and tell her to get out if she couldn't excite him the way he wanted? Her stomach knotted at the thought. What the hell had she been thinking coming here?

Spotting her bag on the back of the door where she had hung it, she dug inside and pulled out her cell phone. Maybe she should call Stacy and have her come pick her up. Then she could put this whole episode behind her and spend the next few hours studying for the test she had on next Wednesday. After all, that was what she knew, what she was used to doing when she was sexually frustrated.

Just as she flipped the phone open, a knock sounded at the door. "Nita, you've been in there a long time. Are you coming out any time soon?"

She cringed and backed away from the door. Lucas was hot, but he was rude and cold too. A man like him couldn't possibly satisfy her. Sex was more than just bumping and grinding. It was gentleness and caresses. It was sweet words whispered in a woman's ears. She couldn't even imagine that man saying something nice, let alone gentle.

"I...uh...I think maybe...."

The words died on her lips when she heard the lock click like he had stuck a key in it. When the door opened, she stared at him wide-eyed and dry-mouthed.

"You're scared," he announced unnecessarily. "I'm not going to hurt you. Come here." He held out his hand, but his words were a command.

Alarm made Nita chew on her bottom lip. She was going to cry! *No, no, no!* She could not cry in front of him. A tear rolled down her cheek and plopped onto her blouse. Another followed.

Lucas crossed the space between them, slipped her phone out of her nerveless fingers and deposited it into his pocket. With no show of strain, he picked her up in his arms and

carried her out to the living room. When he sank down on the couch, he rested her on his lap.

Nita struggled to quiet her sniffles and sighs to no avail. When she peeked up from her hands clenched in her lap, she found Lucas preparing what looked and smelled like hot chocolate in a mug on the table. A small saucer of cookies sat near it.

With precision, he snapped a cookie in half and guided it into her mouth. While she chewed, he lifted the mug, blew the steam away and held it before her lips. She took a small sip, and the rich warm chocolate went a long way to soothe her hurt feelings.

After she had eaten most of the cookies and drank down half the chocolate, Lucas wiped her mouth with a napkin as if she was a child and leaned back. "Better?"

Dumbly, she nodded.

"Good." He pushed away the dishes and turned to her to pull her closer into his arms. His mouth rested against the top of her head, and she felt his breath stir her hair. "Now, you're here because you want me as much as I want you. I think we can be good together. I'm confident you can please me."

He paused, and she swallowed, not so certain.

"I'm an excellent judge of a woman's skill," he boasted. She rolled her eyes but didn't respond. Fear was still gripping her so much so that she couldn't speak. The treat had calmed her, but she was no more confident now than she was earlier. Lucas seemed to read her mind. "If you like, I can make this easier on you."

She pulled back and looked at him. "What do you mean?"

He grinned. "Found your voice, huh?" He hesitated. "Call it a knack. I can...seduce...you until you forget your fears. You forget everything except having my hands on your body, my lips on yours, my dick—"

"I get it," she squeaked. "But trust me, there's no way my stomach will unknot at this point. I think you're out of my league, Lucas. And it's too bad that I have to admit it because you've already got a huge head. You don't need to get any fuller of yourself."

She expected him to go off on her or make some pompous speech, but instead he put a hand on either side of her face and forced her to look into his eyes. Nita didn't know what was happening, but just as Lucas promised, the fear began to dissipate. In its place was desire so strong, she knew she could not resist it.

Her fingers drifted to her blouse, and she began unbuttoning it with trembling fingers. The one thought that occupied her mind was getting naked for him, wrapping her legs around his waist and being so full of his hard-on that she would scream with delight.

“What are you doing to me, Lucas?” She groaned, arching herself to him. She ran a hand down over his chest to the solid erection in his pants. Someone whined, and it was shocking to find that it came from her throat. “What’s happening to me? I need it now. Please,” she begged.

Lucas stood her on her feet and without hesitation, stripped her of all of her clothes. Just as quickly, he stripped himself, and Nita feasted on the hard plains of his body, the thick erection extending up from a nest of dark curls and his wide chest, ripped abs and hard thighs. She panted.

And just that quick, the wildness inside of her left. He caught her beneath her chin and made her look at him again. “Now, beautiful, we are both raw before each other. I find you the most delectable woman I have ever seen. Every inch of you makes me want a taste. See the evidence here.”

She dared not look now that her nervousness had returned.

“I want you cognizant of what we’re about to do. You still want me don’t you?” There was no doubt in his words.

“Yes,” she breathed.

Without a word he dropped one hand on her shoulder and then drew his fingers up into his palm, all except one. His pointer finger skimmed down over her tender skin to stop at the tip of her nipple. All the while he watched her face for her reaction. Nita’s legs grew weak. Arrows of desire shot down between her legs, and it was all she could do not to grab onto his hand and force him stroke her entire breast. The man knew what he was doing. He was an expert. If she had doubted whether she was in his sexual league before, now she was certain. She was far below him.

“I-I...” she studded.

“Huh-uh.’ He wagged the same finger in front of her face. “No talking. Only feel.”

What could she do except obey? He stepped back a little and ran the other hand down over her belly. When the tips of his fingers brushed the hair at her apex, she gave one last hiccup, and her eyes widened in surprise and embarrassment. He merely smiled and dove in with no shame.

An expert at his task, he parted her folds without looking and pushed into her wetness. Nita chomped down on her tongue to keep from crying out. She might have wanted to maintain control, but her body was on a whole other wavelength from her brain. Her legs parted, and she swayed forward, driving Lucas’ fingers deeper.

Moaning, she reached up to grasp his shoulders for support, and he began a slow, agonizing stroke in and out of her. She fell into the rhythm, her hips arching forward and back, loving the feel of him fucking her with his fingers.

Before she knew what was happening, a climax shattered all remnants of constraint. She cried out and lifted one leg up to his hip where he held it until she had ridden out the pleasure cascading over her body. When the orgasm died down, she drew back, and Lucas removed his fingers.

“Excellent. Now, are you ready to please me?”

Nita swallowed, staring at his chest, suddenly too afraid to look him in the eyes again. “Yes, I’ll do my best.”

He snapped her chin up, his eyes narrowed and she thought, maybe darker than they were before. “You will please me, Nita. I have no doubts about that. Even if it takes us all night long.”

Chapter Six

All night long? Was he crazy? Nita thought maybe he was. He had led her into his bedroom, a haven of masculinity and yet the king size bed with its silky black sheets and softness that seemed to wrap around her, was made to comfort male or female.

While Nita lay in the middle, feeling like a lost lamb waiting for the wolf to attack, she watched as Lucas circled the room, lighting candles. The thought crossed her mind that he was about to cast a spell, not unlike the one he appeared to have cast over her in the living room when all fear had left her to be replaced by naked lust. That was absurd of course because spells and magic didn't exist. Lucas was nothing more than a man, a man with skills to woo a woman like her, dumb enough to fall into his trap. Yes, he would be pleased tonight. Something told her he would not stop pursuing her until he was good and satisfied.

The bed rocked and sank down where he placed his knee. Somehow the candlelight gave his handsome face an eerie glow, and Nita swallowed thinking he looked dangerous, like he wanted to eat her rather than make love to her. She opened her mouth to say something, she didn't know what, but no words formed either in her mind or on her tongue.

Lucas slid a small tray over closer to the bed, on which sat several small bottles and a bowl with water in it. "Relax," he told her. "You'll enjoy this." He unscrewed each bottle and sniffed the contents before replacing the cap. When he came to the last one, he sniffed, nodded and added a few drops to the water.

With a small sponge, he soaked up some of the liquid and squeezed out the excess. She trembled when he touched her hot skin to gently push her back to a full recline.

In a low, mesmerizing voice, he explained what he was going to do. "I have a keen sense of smell. Certain scents set me off. Some in a positive way, some not so positive. This scent, a special blend I made myself in my greenhouse, is a favorite. I think you'll like it." He ran the sponge over her breasts, and Nita caught her breath. He might as well have been teasing her nipples with his bare hands because the sensuality of his movements heightened her desire. She moaned, and Lucas smiled and nodded his approval.

Nita breathed deep. "It smells like vanilla and something else I can't put my finger on."

He grinned. "And you won't. A secret ingredient."

"Are you a witch doctor?" she wondered and then lost all train of thought when his gentle washing lowered to her belly and on down toward her apex.

"Mmm, your cream will be even sweeter when I lick this off you," he muttered. His concentration was wholly on spreading her legs and carefully saturating her wet folds.

Nita grasped the covers and closed her eyes. She thought she might have drawn blood when she bit down into her lip, but she didn't care. Lucas lowered his head between her legs, and the sponge tossed aside, he fed noisily at her center. Nita screamed in ecstasy when he lifted his ass to drive her closer to his hungry mouth. She came without warning the second he drove his tongue deep inside her.

"Lucas, oh, what are you doing?" Impossibly, she came a second and third time in rapid succession. This was not just some scented liquid he had used on her. She'd never come so fast and so hard. Tears filled her eyes, and she thrashed about, struggling to hold on to her sanity in the midst of the intense pleasure. "It was supposed to be your turn to come," she panted out.

He didn't lift his head more than an inch from her. His voice was rough and deep, sending a bolt of fear through her. "Do you think for a moment that I'm not enjoying this? I could eat you all night!"

She climaxed again and again, pleading with him to stop. Not because she wasn't enjoying it or that she was sore, but a woman could only take so much before she exploded. Right? Nita practically howled his name countless times, and then he rose up and sat on his haunches.

This time she knew his eyes had changed. They were coal black, and there was menace in his expression. Roughly, he dragged her toward him and positioned her so that his dick pressed against her opening. She thought about protesting, but it was too late. He plunged into her, deep and fast. His head went back, and he shouted "yes" over and over as he ground into her.

Her lover being so well-endowed, Nita expected his entry to hurt since it had been a while, but along with the stretch and her tight muscles gripping his shaft like it was a gift from the gods, she felt only bliss.

Lucas paired her ankles in one hand with her legs straight while he pushed in and out of her, his balls slapping against her ass. In a fluid movement where he didn't lose connection with her, he rolled her to her stomach, hiked her ass in the air again and pumped her from behind. She groaned into his pillow, muffling her cries as much as she could when all she wanted to do was scream her head off. She hoped—she prayed he was enjoying himself because she didn't ever want him to stop now. It was too good.

Another orgasm hit, and Lucas' growl matched her moan before he fell down on top of her. At the same instant she felt his warm release inside her, he sank his teeth down into her shoulder. She cried out in shock at the sting, which should have been more of a pain but wasn't.

"Shit!" he grumbled, this time in a voice she didn't recognize at all. She tried to turn to face him, but he moved his head to the other side of hers, panting and holding her in place. "Just a minute."

* * * *

Damn! What the hell had he been thinking? Not once, not one single time in all his long life on this earth had he slipped and bitten a lover. And yet when he was close to his climax, his teeth had sharpened, and he had found himself sinking them into Nita's shoulder. Whoever had created the wolf shifters had done him a huge favor in requiring two bites and not one for him to take his mate. He would just need to be careful and not bite Nita a second time.

Lucas rolled off of her and lay on his back now that he had calmed down some and forced his teeth to return to normal, his claws, which had grown out as well, to retract. There was nothing for it. His best bet was to treat her like she hadn't pleased him in the least. That would get her to call a cab and leave in a huff. He didn't know what he had been thinking in bringing her to his home in the first place. He never took his lovers anywhere but to their houses or to a motel. That had been the rule for years, and there had been no reason to change it now.

The sooner he got rid of Nita, the better. Of course, the problem was he was already growing hard again, and the smell of sex in the air, thinking of their come mixed together inside her was making his mouth water to eat her again. He hadn't tried out several of his favorite positions as yet.

Once more, Lucas thought. No twice more and that was it. He would push her to leave, and he would never see her again. No harm, no foul.

Chapter Seven

“So how did the date go last with what’s his name. Deandre?” Stacy grinned and winked at Nita. “You got in kind of late. I would have stayed up to wait for you and talk a little, but that last trip took it out of me, especially with Kevin acting like an idiot lately.”

Nita bit her lip. Late? She’d gotten in at a quarter to five that morning. When Lucas had said he could eat her all night, the man was not kidding. He could do that and more, and his weird potions or whatever they were only enhanced the experience. When she thought about the reaction his body had in response to them, way beyond the erotic boost she had experienced, she shivered with the delicious memory. And she was sore all over. Of course, she couldn’t tell Stacy any of that.

“Okay, I guess. Not sure about him.” She’d be lucky if the man called her again. She had abandoned him in the middle of the date to go sleep with Lucas. Who could forgive that? “It was great of you to let me stay here, Stacy, but I think I need some quiet time at the dorm for a while. I have a test on Wednesday, and men are not on the plan before then.”

Stacy shook her head. “I can’t believe you. You’re not going to give me details, are you?”

“Not really.”

“Witch!” She rolled her eyes. “I’ll get it out of you sooner or later. You don’t have that doe-eyed look, so I think you’re safe for now. If I see it, we’re definitely talking.”

Nita waved her hand on the way out the door. She had skipped the first class of the day, but she couldn’t miss the later afternoon one. “Sure. I’ll talk to you later.”

As she jogged down the stairs to the first floor of Stacy’s apartment building, headed out to her car, she thought about how she had woke up after a short half hour nap with Lucas to sneak out of his house. A few blocks down the road, and she had called a cab to pick her up. Contrary to what Stacy and Zandrea thought, she had learned her lesson with giving her heart to men. Lucas would have gone back to his old cold self when he woke up for sure and then kicked her out or dropped her off at her dorm without a backward glance. She had beaten him to the punch, and it felt good like for once she was the one in control. The feeling might be an illusion, but she was going to hold onto it for as long as it lasted.

Sliding into her car and then turning over the engine, she rubbed her shoulder where Lucas had bit her right when he came inside her. He was a weird one, and yet, if he asked, she just might give herself to him again. And that scared her more than anything. She might not be doe-eyed right now, but she could be—with him.

Right as Nita turned into the parking lot at her university, her cell phone rang. She kept her eyes on the road while she fished inside her purse to retrieve it. Punching her horn at

a driver backing out in front of her without looking, she flipped the phone open and pushed the connection button. “Hello?”

Only after she heard his voice did she realize she should have checked the caller ID. “Hey baby, what happened last night?”

Nita’s throat closed. What was she going to say? “Hi, Deandre. Um, I am so sorry about running out on you. I had a family emergency and was so distracted that I forgot to let you know I was leaving. A friend took me home.”

A long pause. “A friend. Hm. Because it looked to me like you were stepping out on me with some other guy.”

Nita’s eyebrows shot low. She didn’t like being caught in a lie, and she rarely did it. Irritation rose inside her at both being caught and at what she had done to Deandre. It was low, not the kind of thing she did. “He is a family friend. His brother is engaged to my best friend.” That was somewhat true.

A buzz sounded in her ear. She lowered the phone to glance at the caller ID this time. She didn’t recognize the number, but suspected it was Lucas. The phone seemed to yell at her to choose whether to swap over for the other call. She swallowed hard. “Could you hold on a sec, Deandre? I have another call, and it could be important.”

“Same as last night, huh?”

“Yeah,” she snapped and switched over. “Hello?”

“You ran out on me,” Lucas announced without preamble.

“Lucas.” Damn, how did she get herself into this bind? She cleared her throat and tried to take on the female player attitude that she so was not. “Come on, it was just sex. It was good, granted, but that’s all. We didn’t need to wake up holding each other. And I had an early class to get to. Rather than disturb you, I called a cab. No big deal.”

Holding her breath, she waited for his response.

“You’re right. I like a woman who understands it’s just physical. No emotions need get involved at all. So, I’ll call you maybe next week. If you’re available great, if not, well you did please me last night.”

Nita rolled her eyes. All about him. “Well I’m not sure. You pleased me as well, but I’m not into casual sex.” And she had just blown her whole player persona. “I think we can put it down to an experience.” Before he could say anything else, she blew him a kiss and shut her phone and then threw it into the passenger seat beside her.

As she pulled into a parking space, her phone rang again. Deandre! She had forgotten she had left him on the other line, and come to think of it, how did Lucas get her cell number? She didn't remember giving it to him. *Men!* Zandrea was right. She could not handle two men at once.

She answered the phone.

"Wow, you hung up on me. My feelings are hurt. I'm beginning to think you don't like me," Deandre whined, although he didn't sound hurt in the least.

"I'm sorry. I think I forgot to charge it. It might go out again." She thought fast while she stepped out of the car. "Listen, why don't I treat you to dinner tonight? We can go wherever you'd like. Just name the restaurant."

Deandre chuckled. "Okay, I'm going to hold you to it. You can't run out on me, and you've got to give me a kiss to make up for everything."

Nita yanked the door open to her classroom. "I won't run out," she told him firmly. "Got a class. Leave me a voicemail or text message with the name of the restaurant so I can call ahead if I need to. Talk to you later." She snapped the phone closed and then turned it off.

* * * *

Deandre slammed his fist into the wall of his room and then winced in pain. Nita was playing harder to get than he had anticipated, and it was all because of that other guy she had walked out with. He wasn't a fool. Anyone with half a brain could smell the lust rolling off of those two when they left. He had not been so distracted by the guy's friends that he didn't see what was going on. But if he had pushed he would have revealed what he was. And that was not an option right now.

Above all else, he needed to secure Nita. He had chosen her, and when he set his mind on something, nothing could change it. He would have her one way or another, even if it meant taking out the competition. He grinned. He knew just how to do that too. Of course with that cold son of a bitch, it wouldn't take much. Nita would no doubt already suspect he had no heart. Deandre would seal that belief in so that she wouldn't look twice at that fool. Then the door would be wide open for Deandre, the wronged lover. He laughed at the possibilities. This would be fun, and he needed some fun after laying low for so long at the university. Things were about to heat up big time.

Deandre punched in a speed dial code on his phone and waited for his friend to pick up. When the groggy voice came on the line, he said, "Hey, got that info I wanted?"

"Damn, D, you just asked for it like two hours ago." A yawn distorted his next words.

“That was last night, Kevin. I need to know where he hangs out. I need to know where he is right now. If you’d get your ass out of the bed for five minutes, you could get me what I need.”

Kevin yawned again, and Deandre picked up the sound of aluminum cans being kicked aside as his friend shuffled to wherever he had the information waiting. “I had a long day yesterday, and I’m trying to catch up on my sleep. Besides, I’ve got girl troubles of my own.”

Deandre sighed. “Tell it to someone who gives a shit.”

Kevin grumbled. “Would it kill you to be nicer to me? I know I owe you a lot, but still. Damn! A person can only take so much before they lash out.”

“Is that a threat?”

No response for a full minute. “No, it’s not. Just...lay off. Okay, he and his boys hang at this club—”

“I know about the club! There’s got to be somewhere else, maybe during the day. I want to touch him before tonight.”

“You’re disgusting,” Kevin spat. “How did I get mixed up with you?”

Deandre laughed. “Shall I go over it? Recite just how much I did for you that night?”

“No, that won’t be necessary. You saved my ass. I owe you. I get it. You have the nerve to call us friends sometimes, but we both know I’m now your lifetime lackey.”

“See, we understand each other, don’t we? What do you have, Kevin? I’m losing my patience. If you fuck it up with Nita and I, I swear I’ll—”

“A country club,” Kevin blurted. “For the rich and snooty. On the north side. Let me give you the address. There’s a good chance he’ll be there right now, drinking with his buddies and celebrating how lucky he got last night.”

Deandre slammed down the phone. When this was over, he was going to kick Kevin’s sorry ass and maybe get himself a piece of the woman he was obsessed with. He laughed. Maybe. That depended on how devoted Nita would be to him after he got what he wanted from her.

Chapter Eight

Nita knew something bad was coming the minute a cold breeze blew past her in the restaurant with her friends Zandrea and Stacy. The day was warm, and not a wind was stirring. Besides that, they were nowhere near the door when she felt it. She shivered and drew her jacket up around her, which she had discarded upon sliding into the booth.

“Whew, did you two feel that?” she asked her friends. “Felt like someone walked over my grave.”

Stacy snorted. “Since you’re not dead, that’s hardly likely. And what are you eighty-five talking like that?” Stacy bumped Zandrea’s arm. “Maybe we need to keep a sharper eye on Nita. I think she’s losing it.”

Nita rolled her eyes, and Zandrea shook her head. Their friend hadn’t spoken much since they had arrived. She seemed preoccupied with something on her mind. “I’m sure she’s fine,” Zandrea muttered.

“Come on, Z. Give me a break,” Stacy complained. “We finally get to duck out for lunch all together, and you can’t get your mind off your boyfriend. Have some pity on your manless friends.”

Nita didn’t want to correct Stacy. She did have a date with Deandre tonight, and Lucas hadn’t said he wouldn’t be looking her way anymore. Not that she was going to let herself get mixed up with him too much.

Zandrea sighed. “It’s not Brant I’m thinking about. Not exactly. There’s been some unrest among his...uh...people. Not sure, just something doesn’t feel right to them, like something bad’s coming.”

Stacy frowned. “What are they psychic?”

Zandrea glared. “Never mind.”

“I know what you mean, I think,” Nita put in. “That feeling I just got was like that, but it was like it was about me, not Brant’s people. Maybe I am losing it. I don’t know. I had a date after forever, and you’d think I’d never been out with a man. I feel so off in my head. I can’t explain it.”

Zandrea made a noise of understanding. “Like being with him and talking to him has disordered your emotions to the point that you don’t know if you’re coming or going. And you find yourself clumsy for no reason or absent-minded when you’re not even bogged down with a lot to do.”

“Yes!” Nita stared in surprise that Zandrea had hit it on the head. She had been just like that since that first kiss from Lucas. She was pretty positive it was not a result of meeting

Deandre, which was a shame. Her emotions had been roiling out of control, and had gone even further out of whack after she had slept with Lucas. That was the reason she had taken the initiative to wake up and leave his house before he could do anything. It was the reason she had led the conversation they had had on the phone. Yet, even with those measures, her insides churned with both nerves and longing to be with him again. If he didn't call again, or if she didn't see him, then what?

Zandrea's expression froze in place along with her fork halfway to her mouth. She was looking past Nita's shoulder. "What the hell is he—?" she whispered.

That same foreboding rippled over Nita's body, giving her goose bumps. She turned slowly in her chair and was shocked to see Lucas bearing down on them. *No, not now. Please, not now.*

His brows were low over his eyes, and his jaw was set. Her gaze dropped to his hands clenched at his sides, and she would have fallen if she wasn't sitting. This was more than irritation. This was all out anger. Could she really have set him off that much with how she had dismissed him?

Stacy surged to her feet, but not before Lucas took hold of Nita's arms and dragged her to her feet. He shook her a little so that her head rocked back and forth.

"Tell me I am wrong in thinking you're seeing another man!" he shouted.

She stared at him.

"Take your fucking hands off my friend," Stacy roared.

Lucas ignored her. "Answer me, Nita."

"Y-You're hurting me," she managed to utter. "Let me go, Lucas. Who I see is none of your business. Our night together was—" She broke off her next words before she could alert the others about them being intimate.

Lucas' eyes had gone wide as if her hinting at them having sex was a surprise to him. She glared up at him wondering what had come over him. His dazed look disappeared, and he shook her again, harder.

"You can spend tonight in my bed as well, but if you deny me and go out with someone else, you will be sorry." He released her and raised a hand above her head. Nita screamed and put her arms up.

Stacy charged him, knocking him off balance until he landed on his ass on the floor. He glanced up blinking, and before Zandrea could grab her, she kicked him between the legs. Lucas howled and rolled to the side holding his nuts.

Zandrea yanked money from her wallet, tossed it on the table, and herded both Nita and Stacy out the door. They were in Zandrea's SUV, speeding down the highway in seconds with Stacy in the back seat cussing up a storm and Nita shaking from head to toe in the passenger seat.

Nita couldn't get her mind to settle, to assess what had just happened, but one thing she knew without a doubt—there was something very off about that scene just now.

"Z, we left my car back there," Nita croaked with a dry throat.

"You're in no condition to drive," she snapped. Her attention turned back to the road and she fished her phone out of her pocket, pressed a button and held it to her ear. After a few minutes, she growled, "Your no good piece of shit brother just attacked my friend, and if you don't get his ass in check, I'm going back there and put him out of her misery!"

She explained briefly what happened and then fell silent, and so did Stacy, leaning forward to try to catch what Brant was saying in response.

Finally, Zandrea blew out a breath. "Okay. Yes, all right, Brant. I'll meet you there. But we're settling this, baby. I mean it." Zandrea disconnected and put her phone away. She reached across the seat and patted Nita's hand. "Don't worry, sweetie. Brant's just as pissed as I am. He wants me to meet him and go over what happened. Then we're going to go find Lucas. Brant has a way of tracking him down."

"What GPS or something?" Stacy asked.

"Something like that," Zandrea answered. "Okay, Nita, I'm going to drop you at Stacy's. You just get some rest. We won't discuss right now the fact that you went and slept with him after I warned you about him. But trust me, I never suspected he would act like this. I would have told you flat out if I thought he was abusive. Brant has some explaining to do as well behind this shit."

Nita took a shuddering sigh. It was all she could do not to burst out crying. She found herself wanting to defend Lucas, but that was ridiculous. She was not the type of woman, she thought, to get caught up in a domestic violence relationship. Cutting all ties with Lucas was the best course of action. She should have listened to the warnings in the first place.

Absently rubbing the spot on her arms where Lucas had gripped hurting her, she said, "I'd like to go back to my place, please. My dorm room. I just want to be alone and sleep."

Stacy made a soothing sound and hugged her, reaching between the seats. "Of course you do, sweetie. I'll talk to you a little later on. And I promise, I'm not going to judge you. You are grown, and you can make decisions for yourself. I just want you to know I'm here."

Tears filled Nita's eyes, and she scrubbed them. Uttering a quick thanks when Zandrea pulled up to her building, she jumped out of the car and ran up to the door. Her hand shook so much she couldn't get the key in the lock, but another student came to assist her. Nita took the stairs two at a time and barely made it into her room before she was sobbing uncontrollably.

Nita had been crying for a half hour when the tears lessened. She lay flat on her bed staring at the ceiling and replaying the whole scene at the restaurant in her head. Something was off about Lucas that was for sure. He had been surprised when she mentioned them sleeping together. Yet, he was out of his mind thinking she was with someone else. But he had already known that the night he dragged her away from Deandre, and she hadn't been on another date with the man.

The whole episode didn't make any sense. Still, whatever his issues were, she could not see him anymore. He could deal with his family and see a therapist if that's what he needed. Maybe his psychotic break was what his people had sensed coming.

She rolled to her side and sighed with her hands tucked beneath her chin. The bite he had placed on her shoulder ached. She rubbed it remembering his touch, how he filled her and made her come countless times. What a horrible waste.

Soon, her eyes drooped, and she fell asleep thinking it was a good thing she had Deandre.

Chapter Nine

Deandre's shaft hardened in his pants at the first sight of Nita stepping out of her door. Her long caramel brown legs were exposed beneath a short dress that was cut in a style that hugged her small breasts. *Yum!* He groaned knowing she couldn't hear him as he hadn't yet stepped out of his vehicle. Soon he would be lying between those luscious legs, and he would enjoy hearing her cry out his name while he pounded deep into her.

Before he could spill in his new faded jeans, he pushed thoughts of Nita's naked body from his mind and climbed out of the car. "Hey, sweet thing. You ready to go?"

He held out his arms, but when he touched hers, she flinched and lowered her head.

"What's up? You feeling okay?" he asked her.

She nodded. "I'm fine. Can we go? I don't like standing out here." She glanced around her like someone would jump out of the bushes. The night was warm and breezy, and no one was about. He expected that all the eggheads that lived over here had their heads buried in a book. Deandre shivered. His purpose had been focused for a long time now, and attending college was a means to an end. When he got what he wanted, he would leave this stuck up facility for good. Whether he would take Nita with him he hadn't decided.

"Shall we go?" Deandre opened the passenger side door, prepared to play the role of understanding and sensitive lover. In no time at all, his sweet, innocent Nita would fall into his arms and his bed.

* * * *

Nita squirmed in the passenger seat of Deandre's car. She wanted to ask him where they were going, but couldn't find the energy to speak up. Her nap earlier hadn't helped matters at all. She was still depressed as hell, and her choice of dress wasn't making her feel anymore comfortable. The moment she had sat down the material rose, showing off too much of her thighs. And while the inverted pleats looked great standing, sitting they had flared only enough to hug her hips. She must have gained a little since the last time she had worn the Maggy London Ikat print dress. That meant more shopping, which she didn't like to do, but only because her trust fund was limited. Whoever heard of a person coming into their inheritance only when they turned thirty?

Resigned to being too exposed for the moment, she splayed her hand over the side of her leg and stared out the window. Thoughts of Lucas came to mind, but she was distracted from tormenting herself over him by Deandre's overpowering cheap cologne.

"Mind if I roll the window down a bit?" she asked him.

He ran a gentle hand down the side of her face and caressed her lips with the pad of his thumb. She fought not to pull away.

“Go right ahead, baby. Anything for you.”

She lowered the window and closed her eyes. At last, Deandre returned his hand to the steering wheel, and the breeze rushed in to clear the air in the car and to clear her head. Only a hint of the scent remained. At this level, it seemed familiar, like she had smelled it before. Of course she would have. Deandre had been sniffing around her for a few weeks now. But the thought that she had smelled the cologne earlier in the restaurant at lunch time slid into her mind. *That's ridiculous. He wasn't there. Only my perfect lover, my insane ex-lover, Lucas.*

* * * *

Irritation rose inside Lucas making him feel like his head would explode at any second. Nita had made her position plain regarding him. There was no more need of torturing himself over the woman, and yet, when he had picked up her scent on his way out of town to put her, Gloria, and every other woman that tempted him out of his head, he couldn't help stopping to check on her.

Since that single bite on her shoulder, Lucas had been free of the crushing hurt in his chest that he had lived with ever since the night he caught Gloria in bed with another man. Now when he thought of Gloria, he felt nothing but disgust. In a single evening of making love to Nita, he had been freed. That had not been the case with any of his former lovers. Could it be because she was human? Was there something special about them after all?

No, he couldn't believe that, and yet here he was, obsessing over her. He wanted to get a glimpse of that sweet face, those wide brown eyes. Never had he once desired to bed a black woman. It just didn't enter his mind. And he'd seen several today alone who were beautiful, but the craving he had was for Nita.

He growled, slamming his fist against the center of his steering wheel. “Nita.”

His staff grew hard almost to the point of pain. Tugging his pants to give himself room that no longer existed did little good. “This is just lust,” he told himself. “Nothing more.” With a sigh, he slid out of the car and stood alongside it. “One look. A single look at her cannot hurt anything.”

Weaving through the oncoming traffic with horns blaring at him, Lucas crossed the street to stop in front of an Italian restaurant where he had caught Nita's scent. Rather than step into the lobby where he would be too conspicuous, he moved to the side of the building where there were more windows through which he could look in. The glare from the lights, though low, would allow him to see in but make it hard for the patrons to see out unless they pressed their faces close to the glass.

At a table in the back of the room, he spotted her, with the guy who had no scent other than that disgusting cologne he wore. Lucas picked up on the lust mirrored in the man's eyes as he seemed to stare down at Nita's cleavage. A growl started in Lucas' chest. He felt the shift in his eyes, knowing they had turned black, but he fought not to change any more. Nita wasn't exactly his. She had made that plain on the phone.

He watched her twisting her hands on the edge of the table and staring down at them. Was she still uncomfortable with men? After all that they had done together, her even taking the initiative to lick him and suck his shaft into her mouth, then later riding him to abandon, he thought the shyness would have passed somewhat.

Lucas sniffed. Along with her normal scent, he picked up something else, something he couldn't identify. She wasn't happy, maybe even sad. The tension around her mouth and eyes spoke volumes, and not only that the date wasn't going well. He had said he would leave town for a while, but remembering that he was the Alpha leader of his pack now, and that he couldn't just abandon everyone, he waited. Protecting his pack and watching Nita had nothing to do with one another, but he had no intension of admitting that to himself right now. She filled his senses, and was all he wanted to focus on.

At ten, the couple stood and moved toward the exit after Deandre had settled the bill and tip. Lucas hadn't missed how he stiffed the waitress on the amount he gave her for her services. The growl in his throat escalated to a snarl when Deandre rested a hand on Nita's waist, his fingers splayed too much in an obvious attempt to fondle her ass.

Lucas was gratified when she sidled out of his hold and walked ahead. Out on the street, he hid in the shadows not too far from them and picked up on the conversation.

"Why don't we go back to my place, Nita? We can talk, get to know each other better." Deandre smiled, a hopeful look in his eyes.

Nita shook her head. "I'm sorry. I'm just not good company today, Deandre. Something happened earlier that...well I don't want to talk about it." She laid a small hand on his chest. "Can I call you? We can do this again when I'm feeling better. I think I'm going to walk down to Stacy's work place. She's just a block over, and I know she told me she would be late leaving there tonight for some reason. I can catch a ride with her, probably stay at her place tonight."

Deandre chuckled. "Just what kind of relationship do the two of you have with you spending the night at her apartment all the time?"

Nita's eyes widened. "You're not serious, are you?"

Lucas suppressed a laugh of his own. Idiot should keep his mind on the sweet woman in front of him instead of fantasizing about two women together, which a fool could figure out was exactly what Deandre was imagining.

“Naw, baby,” Deandre joked. “I was just joshing you. Okay, I’ll see you tomorrow, I hope. Let’s do something then. I think you’re really special, Nita, and I want to build something good with you.”

She backed up a step, her hands raised. “Slow down. I’m not sure I’m ready for that, and we don’t know how compatible we are. I just...like I said, something bad happened, and I’m trying to deal with it. I’ll call you.”

With that, she turned and headed south along the street. Lucas had no intension of letting her walk at night alone, even if she was on a busy street where several stores lined the walk, and people were coming and going. He reminded himself that she was his priority and not the man staring at her ass with his mouth slack and the front of his pants tented. Lucas would deal with Deandre later.

When Deandre had jumped in his car and peeled out of his parking space in the opposite direction, Lucas fell into step behind Nita. He too wanted to watch her swaying hips he realized, but he pushed his desires aside. She was upset, and he wanted to know why. If someone had hurt her, they would pay.

Chapter Ten

Nita became aware that someone was following her, and her heart began to pound in her chest. When she reached inside her purse for the pepper spray she kept there, he spoke up.

“Easy, Nita. I’m not going to hurt you.”

She gasped and turned around. Lucas stood there bold as anything after what he had done to her earlier in the day. “W-What are you doing here? Did you follow me?”

He nodded with no shame. “Yes, I wanted to make sure you were okay.”

“No thanks to you!” she snapped. Her heart continued to pound, but now it was because he was close and all she wanted to do was run into his arms, to taste his mouth again, to feel the hard muscles of his body pressed against hers. This was ridiculous. The man had threatened her, had left bruises on her arms, and she did not bruise easily. “Get out of here, Lucas. I never want to see you or talk to you again.”

“Why are you so mad at me?” he grumbled. “You are the one who dismissed me.”

“Before you could do it to me.” She rested her hands on her hips. “Admit it. You would have. You’ve probably done it to countless women in the past, leaving broken hearts all over the city.”

“So your heart is involved?”

She squinted at him and rolled her eyes. Deciding he wasn’t about to attack, she turned and continued her walk. He fell into step beside her, and she sighed. The man would not be dismissed easily. That much was obvious. She should pull out her cell and call Zandrea and Brant, but she hesitated. Doubts had assailed her all day long, and she wanted to get to the bottom of one particular one before she turned him into his people, or whoever.

“What do you want with me?” she asked him.

“Isn’t it obvious?”

“Oh here we go, you back to your normal cold-heartedness. Do you think that acting that way will win me over? Or is it your way of protecting yourself?”

“What about you? You stay in school year after year, with no major, no direction.”

“That’s none of your business.”

“Tell me why,” he insisted.

At first she wasn't going to answer, but she hadn't even told Zandrea and Stacy the reasons behind her perpetual schooling. Her inheritance had stipulated that her school bills be paid for as long as she was in school. Back when she was eighteen just entering college, she had realized that the wording would allow her to delay life for as long as the money lasted. And if what her trustees said was true, it could conceivably last for several lifetimes.

She sucked in a deep breath and blew it out. Her fingers curled into her palms like they always did when she thought of her parents, even after all these years. "From a baby, my parents loved to party. It was their life. They couldn't get enough, and they were devoted to one another." She hesitated, not wanting to sound self-pitying but wanting to be truthful to how she thought of her mother and father. "Their love for one another produced me, but it did not extend to me."

His eyes widened. She thought they were very dark again tonight, but didn't put too much in it. When the normal coldness seemed to drain from his face, and he reached across to take her hand, she let him. Relief that he didn't offer empty assurances that her parents did love her in their own way made her go on.

"They dumped me in boarding school as quickly as they could and jetsetted around the world, from one upscale party to the next. The club you like to attend is partly owned by an old friend of theirs and another guy I don't know. Anyway, one time when I was twelve, they had picked me up from school and spent the weekend with me. It was not a good experience to say the least. Their drunken friends weren't the friendliest. Anyway, my parents blamed me for the incident and dumped me back at school early." The pain restricted her heart. She rushed on.

"That same weekend at a party they attended, a parcel bomb went off and killed almost everyone in the place, including my parents. In an instant I was left an orphan, raised mostly by my trustees who made every decision in my life, except one. School."

Lucas pulled her to a stop and turned her into his arms. At first Nita resisted, but she needed to feel his strength. She melted against him and breathed in his pure animal scent, something she couldn't exactly identify, but that seemed erotic and untamed. A lump grew in her throat, and her eyes moistened. Lucas murmured words she couldn't understand with his mouth buried in her hair, but their tone was soothing.

"I made the decision to stay in school where it was safe," she muttered. "Stupid, I know, but there's no accounting for how a psyche pushed to its limits will react."

Lucas drew back with his hands resting on her shoulders and a smile on his lips. "Learn that in school?"

She grinned and wiped away the tears. "Yes. Sometimes I get all school marmie, according to my friends."

“Feeling a little better?” he asked.

She did a mental check of herself and had to admit that she did feel better. Admitting to someone the real reason why she had hidden away from the world for so long was liberating in a way. It loosened the grip that fear had wrapped around her since her parents’ deaths.

While logically she knew that just participating in the world in a real way would not destroy her in some way, the fear had still bound her. Nita didn’t feel like calling up her school and telling them she was dropping out, but she was pretty sure, there would be some changes.

“Yes, I guess I am feeling better. Admitting how my parents’ deaths affected me was a huge step. I had been in denial for a long time. I won’t pretend I’m cured, but I can take steps in that direction.” She smiled up at him. “Thank you for that, Lucas.”

He lowered his head and pressed his lips against hers. She should have resisted him, but she didn’t. She wanted more. Opening her mouth, she let his tongue slide between her lips. A moan escaped her when he caressed the warm walls of her mouth with his tongue and teased the tip of hers with his.

After a few greedy kisses where they clung together and moaned out their pleasure, he drew back. “Come to my house.”

Her memories flood back, and she swallowed. “If I say no....”

He frowned. “I get the impression that you’re expecting me to react a certain way. What happened to you earlier that you referred to when you were talking to your date?”

She gasped. He had heard them? And didn’t he remember the way he had behaved when he grabbed her and threatened to beat her? She licked her lips. Lucas caught the action, and the desire that flared in his eyes was no less than what roared inside her, despite what it all seemed to be. She should be terrified of Lucas, running for her life from him, and yet she didn’t want to. Stacy would cuss her out if she knew.

“If I say no to you, Lucas, and mean it. What will you do? If I say I prefer Deandre, the guy I went out with tonight, to you, what will you say to that?”

Lucas let her go so fast she almost lost her balance. He turned away stuffing his hands in his pockets. Confusion clouded her mind. Was he trying to reign in his violent temper?

“Are you trying to play me for a fool, Nita?” he growled. “I’ve been there, done that. I don’t share my women.”

She placed her hands on her hips. “Oh, that’s rich because you damn sure don’t have a problem with women sharing you.”

“You don’t know anything about me!”

She spun on the ball of one foot. “Go fuck yourself.”

He caught her by the waist, whipped her around and lifted her up so that her eyes met his and her feet dangled above the ground. “I don’t want to fuck myself. I want to fuck you.”

Her breath caught in her throat. Not with fear, but with desire.

“I want to fuck you,” he said again. “No hearts. No promises. Just sex. Great, hot, sweaty, exhausting sex. Nita,” he groaned almost desperately.

“Yes.” She panted. “Let’s go.”

Chapter Eleven

There was much between them. Lucas suspected she didn't trust him not to hurt her, although he couldn't figure out why she would feel that way. She had maintained control of the relationship, such that it was, from the beginning. He was just going along for the incredible ride. And although he should stop long enough to demand why she was behaving the way she was with him, as if he had done something wrong, he didn't want to. Not now. First he had to have her. Just this once, maybe the last time.

He had taken her to his home again, another mistake but he couldn't see taking a woman like Nita to a motel, not when she had freed his heart, had healed him to a certain degree. He carried her across the threshold of his home, and with her legs wrapped around his waist and his lips molded to hers, he directed them both toward the bedroom.

Her dress was pretty with its black and white print and its low cut to show off her cleavage, but it needed to come off. He knew a bit of frustration when he fumbled for a zipper in the back and found none. "Where the hell is it?" he growled against her lips.

She laughed and pulled his hand to her side. The zipper was there with a button-and-eye closure at the top. He fought to keep from ripping it off as he lowered her to the bed. When he had gently stripped his lover and then himself, he leaned up to stare down at her sexy body. Her soft creamy brown skin made him hard as a rock, and he thought he could come just looking at her alone.

Her dark chocolate nipples were tight buds that beckoned for his mouth, and he licked his lips before lowering his head to have a taste. She cried out at first contact and arched her back while pulling his head closer.

"Lucas," she moaned. "Suck my nipples, please. Make me come. I can't get enough of you. All night and day is not enough!"

"For me as well, my love," he whispered and could have kicked himself for calling her his love, and yet, it sounded right on his lips. He sucked harder at her nipple before moving to the other and tracing the path down her belly to the curls at her apex. His shaft jumped knowing he was so close to the place it ached to merge with.

She was soaking wet, her cream dripping down on his fingers as he sought to bury them inside her tunnel. She raised her legs and pleaded for more. He didn't want to deny her anything. While the first time, he knew he had pleased her, his mind had been filled with thoughts of pleasing himself. Now, all he wanted was to make her come, to watch her face while she exploded at his touch. She liked it slow sometimes and then hard at others. He wanted to pick up on her wavelength and fulfill all of her fantasies.

Sinking his fingers into her, he watched her eyes moisten with tears. He would have pulled back, but she grabbed his hand and drove him deeper. "Don't," she begged. "Don't stop. I need it."

Had he thought she weakened him with need? She was just as vulnerable with him, he noted, and for once in all his sexual escapades it didn't make him swell with pride, but with gratitude, that such a perfect woman would find her pleasure with him. Damn, he was doing it again. Falling in love. What a fool, and he went willingly.

"Nita." He lifted her higher on the bed and followed with his body above hers. He positioned his knees beneath her lovely thighs and then pushed his erection into her. His wolf's roar was torn from his throat at the feel of her enclosing around him, welcoming every inch of his shaft with warm delight. "Damn, you feel incredible. Hold on. No. Don't move."

A shudder rocked his body, and he battled to keep from releasing too soon. Her tender inner walls seemed to stroke him, to encourage his erection to grow still more, to let go of the pressure building inside of him. He couldn't allow that. She needed to reach her peak first. He was determined that she did. Impatience to possess her sweetness had driven him, but he should have waited.

When he would have drawn out of her because he was losing control, she lifted her legs and wrapped them around his hips. Her arms locked him in place while she delved into his mouth with her tongue. She found his tongue and sucked gently on it, giving him visions of her beautiful mouth swallowing his shaft. His claws grew out on his hands and feet. His teeth sharpened, and he had to pull back and bury his face in the pillow beneath her head to keep her from seeing him change.

Blowing deep breaths in and out, he waited frozen inside her. She stroked his back and crooned to him. Lucas thought he heard her say she loved him, but when he focused on her words, she didn't repeat it. Wishful thinking.

No. This is sex alone. Sex! He shouted the word in his mind, hoping it would help. But the tender feelings that threatened to consume him continued. In an effort to convince himself—and her—this meant nothing, he reached beneath her and grasped her ass to thrust her upward. She shouted her pleasure as he pounded deep into her, fast and without reserve. In seconds she came, with him roaring behind her.

After a few more pumps, Lucas drew out of Nita, but he was still hard. His transformation under control, he glanced at her. The eager lust in her eyes told him she was still raring to go. She was unlike any human he had ever met. Or he had been wrong in his assumption that they could not keep up with the wolf shifter's libido.

Lucas extended his arms toward Nita, and she sat forward. He scooped her up into his arms and whipped the two of them around until he could scoot to the end of the bed with her on his lap. He reached in front of her to take hold of her tiny nub and massaged it between his thumb and forefinger. She caught her breath and squirmed on his lap, making him harder.

“Lucas, what are you doing?” she whimpered.

“Getting you ready for round two.” He set her on her feet and pulled her back so she had to lean against him with her hands on his thighs. He slid his hand lower to part her folds and drove himself inside his favorite place to be. Even after they had fucked like bunnies, she was snug around him, slick and warm, welcoming him in. Her muscles clamped down to milk him anew, and he began a slow pump in and out.

With her ass bumping on his lap and driving him to the edge of another explosive orgasm, Lucas ran a hand up across her belly to allow her nipples to tease his palms while they bounced. His reasoning, his very sanity was slipping with the sheer pleasure of being with her. No woman, absolutely no woman had been this good before, that made him want to...bite her.

His teeth sharpened. The low rumble in his throat increased. Before he knew what he was doing, he had curved his mouth over the old wound where he had bitten her the first time. He was so out of it that he would have sank his canines into her soft flesh for the second time, making her his mate if she didn't turn her head and catch sight of his face.

Her piercing scream both shattered his ear drums and snapped him out of his trance. Nita leaped from his lap and pressed herself against the wall facing him. One hand covered her mouth, and her eyes were huge in her face. Before Lucas could gain control of his transformation, Nita screamed again, shaking her head.

“W-What are you?”

When he stood, she held up her hands in defense.

“No! Don't come near me. You're...you're a...” Tears flooded her eyes, and the way she clutched her stomach, he thought she would wretch, but instead, her legs crumbled beneath her.

Lucas darted across the space to catch her before she hit the floor, but his touch seemed to wake her up. She struggled in his arms, smacked at his face and tore at the skin on his shoulders with her nails.

“Let me go, damn it! Let me go!”

“My sweet Nita,” Lucas whispered, pain threatening to cut off his air supply. “I'm so sorry.” With no other words necessary, he gathered her tight to his chest and dipped his fingers into a pressure point that would render her unconscious. Nita slumped in his hold, and he stood to lay her on the bed.

Standing over her, he watched the gentle rise and fall of her chest as she breathed. He memorized the long lashes that brushed her cheeks, the soft brown skin, the delicate curves. He took in the sight of her dark nipples and the thick black curls at her apex.

Gently, he ran a hand down the side of her face and bit hard into the side of his cheek. With a heavy sigh, he reached for the phone on the nightstand and punched in a speed dial code. After two rings, the phone was answered, just as he expected.

“Nash.” Lucas knew his voice had gone back to its normal coldness, something he had dropped the moment he was here in his home with Nita.

“What’s up, boss?” Nash asked good-naturedly.

“I need you for cleanup. Get over here to my house on the double.”

His friend chuckled. “A cleanup? Which fool fucked up this time? I thought we all learned our lesson for a few decades after Brant’s stupidity.”

Lucas growled, resisting the temptation to shred the phone in his hands, wishing it was Nash’s skull. “Just get your ass over here now!” With a burst of temper, he threw the phone across the room and watched it smash into pieces against the wall. He sighed and turned back to the beautiful woman on the bed, the woman he loved with everything inside him.

Chapter Twelve

Nita came to consciousness in degrees. Voices seemed to swirl about her head, and a bitter flavor was on her tongue. She suspected it was the cause of her feeling like she was off balance and about to black out again. Instead she fought to stay alert, to remember what had happened to her and to know what was going on now.

Lucas' voice broke through the fog in her brain. "I don't need your fucking comments about what happened. I called you here only as a precaution as my second in command. I am surprised you didn't sense trouble."

Second in command of what? An army? She wondered what they were up to and what it had to do with her.

"I thought Brant was the second in command," the other man commented.

Lucas grumbled. "Brant and I have not seen eye-to-eye lately. Now, watch her while I go to my storeroom. For some reason this mixture I have is not as potent with her." There was a pause, and then Lucas spoke again. "Don't touch her. If you do—"

"I got it. I got it." The man chuckled. "I will keep my hands to myself, but she is lovely. I'm sure you had a great time with her tonight. Although I am surprised you would slip up and reveal what we are."

Fear gripped Nita's chest. "...*what we are*," he had said. Memories flooded her mind, fuzzy as if it hadn't just happened tonight. She and Lucas had been making love, and it had been out of this world. In fact, she had begun to think...no, she had been *sure* that this man was the one she could give her heart to. But when she had looked back at him, the handsome face she expected was not the one she saw. Lucas had transformed into some kind of demon, a beast. No, it couldn't have happened. Could it? Should she just open her eyes and tell him she was okay, that maybe she had fainted but everything was fine now?

Some internal sense told her to keep still, to pretend that she was still unconscious. A few minutes later, the clink of glasses reached her ears. She remembered similar sounds when Lucas had brought in his various bottles containing herbs and scented oils that he had mixed to stimulate their love-making. Apparently, he had brought in more, but she'd be a fool to think these he had now were as harmless as the others. The man must be some kind of witch doctor or some such, an herbalist? Her heart slammed against her chest, and she fought to calm it before he noticed the pulse that threatened to jump out of her throat.

"This should work," Lucas said nearer to her. She nearly jumped when his fingers curled beneath her chin and he guided a spoonful of liquid between her lips. Like before, it was bitter. Nita pretended to unconsciously reject it, letting it run down the sides of her face into the pillow beneath her head.

Lucas would not be deterred. He climbed on the bed and gathered her up onto his lap. His massive chest pressed to the side of her shoulder should have sent her over the edge in terror, but she felt somewhat comforted for the moment, breathing in his familiar scent.

He filled her mouth with the liquid a second time, and this time, he held a hand over her mouth to keep it in while he stroked her throat. She couldn't help it. She fought him, scratching and crying.

"Wow, she's certainly different," the other man commented.

"Shut up!" Lucas shouted. "Get out until I'm done."

"But—"

"Now!"

A door opened and closed.

Lucas began to rock Nita, and then he stopped abruptly as if he didn't want to get caught up in comforting her. He traced an odd symbol on her forehead, and when he spoke, his voice was still hard, sending shivers over her skin. "Forget everything you know about me."

Forget?

"Forget it all," he repeated. His words were like physical commands, reaching inside her mind and drawing out the time he made her hot chocolate, sat her on his lap and fed her cookies. While the scene slipped along a wavy road in her head, she reached a hand out to grasp it, but it was too late.

"No," she whispered crying. "I won't forget."

More bitter liquid. She choked, and she thought she heard an anguished sound from Lucas, but it had to be her imagination. The man had no heart. He wanted to trick her, to cast some spell or something to make her forget using that symbol he drew and the herbs.

But Nita was different. Lucas had said so. His normal concoction hadn't worked on her for some reason, and if he made a habit of wiping women's memories when they learned what he and his other monster friends were, then surely it would work more smoothly than this. That meant she could fight it.

So she laid there in his arms, unmoving. Not sure if she should say something or not, she remained silent. Lucas spoke more commands, and Nita felt the same near irresistible pull as before with that other something that she couldn't remember, but she hung on with all her might. Being motionless and fighting seemed incongruent, but she gave it all she could, praying that she hadn't already forgotten things.

She recited their first meeting in her mind, when he had walked up behind her and kissed her, when Stacy had argued with him. She recalled the first night they made love but not before they were in bed. Sorrow washed over her to know that some part of that night was missing. How she had gotten here was also missing. The most important part, that he wasn't human, was the strongest memory of all, and she clutched it tight in her head. She wouldn't let go.

After some time, Lucas placed her in the bed and let out a long sigh. "It's done," he whispered. His weight was removed from the bed, and she heard the door open. A quiet conversation ensued, but she couldn't make out what they were saying until Lucas walked back into the room.

"Here are her things, her keys. Make sure she gets back to her place safely. I have to report to the elders." He paused and sniffed. "Nash, I'm trusting you to get her there."

"Don't worry, boss. I promise to take good care of her. Nothing will go wrong. Your concoction keeps them out until morning, and they never know what happened afterward."

Lucas grunted. "Good. Get going. Report back to me when you can."

* * * *

So the other man's name was Nash. Nita filed the info away in her mind while Lucas carried her to what she assumed was Nash's car. She was laid gently in the back with a blanket spread over her shivering body. Neither man commented on that, so she assumed it was natural. But the night air had managed to clear her mind somewhat. By the time they reached the curb outside her place, Nita's unsettled stomach had calmed, and she was sure no more memories were in danger of fading away.

When Nash threw the car in park, he let out a growl that only now Nita realized she had been hearing Lucas make much of the time they had been making love. Nervous, she opened her eyes a crack in time to see a sexy woman strolling over to the car. A vague memory of speaking with the woman before came to mind but she lost it that quick. Nash lowered the passenger side window.

"What are you doing over this way, Gloria?" Nash asked.

Through the gap between the seats, Nita caught sight of her pout. "I was looking for Lucas. I know the human he's into lives over this way, and I know damn well he didn't take the whore to his house."

Nash chuckled.

The woman ran sharp nails along the paint job. "He didn't!" she growled.

“You’re going to pay for that,” Nash told her calmly. “Anyway, I don’t have time for you, Gloria, as tasty as you look tonight. I don’t do my Alpha’s leftovers.”

“What?” Gloria screeched.

Nash laughed again. “You were about to offer me some, weren’t you?”

“Go to hell, Nash.”

The man slid from the car unperturbed by Gloria and came around to open the back door. Before long he had scooped Nita up with care in his arms and was headed inside the building. Nita had thought Gloria would ask questions, but she didn’t follow them. For that Nita was relieved because she thought she would go off if that woman had called her a whore again. She’d never been in a fight in her entire life, but there was a first time for everything.

Then she began to replay their words in her head. There was no doubt about it. Gloria was like Lucas and Nash. So there were female creatures. She shook, and Nash’s hold tightened.

“Hold on, lovely lady. We’ll get you tucked into bed in no time.”

Soon Nash had settled her into her bed and slipped her clothes off only when he had covered her with her blankets. To his credit, he didn’t even try to feel her up. When he clicked the lights off and tossed her keys on her nightstand, he moved to the window. Nita watched with curiosity, wondering what he would do.

He lifted the window, bent over the sill to check the area and then climbed up and leaped out. Nita stifled a scream. She was on the third floor, and a person could break a leg jumping like that. She threw back the covers and peered out into the night. There was no sign of Nash.

Her heart pounding, Nita sank down on the side of the bed, only just realizing that Nash had left her completely naked. In the morning if she didn’t remember a thing, she would have wondered why she would sleep that way. Feeling like her world was coming to an end, she slipped back into her clothes and picked up the phone.

Zandrea answered on the ninth ring. “Yeah?” she barked with a voice thick with sleep.

“Z.” To Nita’s shame, her throat closed, and tears welled up in her eyes. She coughed and tried again. “Z, I think I’m in trouble. I don’t know. I’m not sure. It’s Lucas, Zandrea. He’s not human.”

Nita thought the line had gone dead, but after a while her friend spoke. “Tell me everything.”

Nita went through the events of the night all the way up to the fact that Nash had jumped from the third story and apparently had been fine. Zandrea commanded her to stay put, and that she would be there as fast as she could. Nita nodded dumbly and hung up the phone.

“So, you know the wolf shifters’ secret, huh?”

Nita jumped at the voice. She twisted around to find a dark shadow in the corner of her room by the closet. Flicking on the bedside lamp, she was shocked to see Deandre. “W-What are you doing in my room, Deandre?” she demanded but with little force as her strength had left her body.

He crossed the room to stand in front of her, a look of naked lust in his eyes. She prayed he hadn’t seen her before she dressed, not in the darkness.

“I’m here for what’s mine,” he told her, stroking her face.

She pulled away. “What are you talking about?”

“I’ve always intended for you to be the one. For four months I watched you, and no disgusting wolf shifter will take my prize. Tonight, baby, you will give me what I have been waiting on for eighty-five years.”

And right before her eyes, Deandre changed too.

Chapter Thirteen

“Fuck!” Brant roared. “I can’t pick up a scent.”

Zandrea rang her hands, worry tightening her chest. “Try harder, baby, please. She can’t just have disappeared.”

Brant sighed and began to remove his clothes. Zandrea, like she usually did, watched appreciatively as her man’s solid naked body came into view. He handed her his clothes, and she took them. In seconds, he shifted to his wolf form and began to pad around the room sniffing in every direction. He scratched at the front door, and Zandrea crossed over to it to let him out. They were extremely careful about letting anyone see him in this form, but since it was night time, it was likely that anyone wandering about at this time would just think he was a regular dog.

Zandrea locked the door to Nita’s room and descended the stairs behind her lover. He was moving fast, but she was confident he wouldn’t get too far ahead of her. They were like two halves of one person. Since they had embraced the fact that they were mates, they hadn’t once been out of each other’s sight. Zandrea had even had to let her job go, but that low-paying dead end was no loss whatsoever. Right now, she was in the process of setting up her own Internet business. Brant was generous with his money, but she wanted her own.

On the front walk, Brant had stopped. From the sadness in his eyes, she knew he hadn’t been able to pick up a fresh scent for Nita. She had disappeared, and no other strange smells had been in her place except for Nash’s. So where the hell was she?

“Do you think maybe she went back to Lucas’ since his voodoo didn’t work on her?” she asked Brant.

He growled, no doubt annoyed that she had called it voodoo. What Lucas could do was impressive. She could admit that now that she didn’t hate his guts for almost ruining her chances with Brant. But she still didn’t like his ass, especially after this shit.

She and Brant climbed into his SUV, and he transformed and dressed. His mouth was set in a hard line, and he gripped the steering wheel between clawed fingers. Zandrea suspected he would rip into his half brother the second he laid eyes on him. She would be right behind him.

Brant kicked the front door in so hard, it hung from its hinges. Lucas did not seem surprised that they were there. He stood in the hallway with bared sharp teeth and a drink in his hand. From the scent, Zandrea figured he’d been at it a while.

“You’ve been avoiding me, brother,” Brant spat.

“Fuck you,” was Lucas’ reply.

“You’ve got a lot of explaining to do. I don’t give a flying fuck if you are my Alpha. I’ve been looking for you ever since that bull you pulled on Nita at the restaurant, threatening her, hurting her.”

Lucas’ eyes were glazed. “You knew where I lived. And what are you talking about? I never hurt her or threatened her.” He sighed and waved his hand, sloshing the liquid in his glass over the side. “Whatever. It doesn’t matter. All that is over for good. I didn’t fuck up and make her my mate before I got rid of her.”

“Got rid of her!” Zandrea screamed. She launched herself at him, but Brant caught her in the air and whipped her back behind him. “You son of a bitch!” Zandrea curled her fingers, trying to get around Brant. She might not have claws, but her tips could do some damage.

Brant growled. “You cold bastard. You’re slipping. Whatever you used on Nita didn’t work. She remembers everything. She knows what we are, what you did to her.”

Lucas slumped down on the stairs leading to the second floor. “Impossible.”

“Not impossible. Brother, she’s missing,” Brant told him. “And you’re going to sober up and help us find her.”

* * * *

Lucas’ stomach stirred, and he felt like he was about to throw up all the alcohol he had consumed in the last hour and a half. He had thought to make himself forget, but wiping that sweet face from his mind was impossible.

He shook his head to clear it. “No, that’s not possible. I know it took. I did have trouble. My usual batch didn’t work on her. She resisted, but then the second one—”

Brant squinted at him. “You said you didn’t make her your mate. Did you bite her once?”

Lucas grumbled. “What does that have to do with anything?” He knew, but he couldn’t face it. If anyone knew about the affects of blood mixing, it was him. He’d studied it along with herbs for years. It was his life’s passion until Nita.

“You know damn well what I’m getting at, Lucas,” Brant insisted. “Biting her once means you tainted her blood. She will have heightened ability even if she is human. Zandrea’s five senses have improved dramatically. She used to wear reading glasses, but now her vision is twenty fifteen. Your memory potion is formulated for humans with no trace of wolf DNA in their blood. You lectured me on it enough times. So now you’re surprised that Nita resisted it? Tell me the truth. You bit her, didn’t you?”

Lucas ran a hand through his already disheveled hair. He had caught sight of it sticking up all over his head when he passed the hall mirror but didn't give a damn at the time. He still didn't. "Yes," he admitted. "I bit her once. I lost control. I was about to bite her again tonight, but—"

Zandrea gasped. "You were going to make her your mate?"

"No, damn it! I lost control I said. I couldn't help it. She's so...Never mind. What do you mean she's missing? If you're lying and you're hiding her from me, so help me I'll slit your throat, Brant." Another thought occurred to him. "And what do you mean about threatening her? I never did. I would never."

Zandrea's hands slipped to her hips, and Brant eyed her, apparently assessing whether she was about to attack Lucas again. He let her move out from behind him. "Don't give me that. I was there. I was having lunch with my girls, Nita and Stacy, and you barged in and started accusing Nita of seeing another man. You put your hands on her like you were going to shake her head off, and you threatened her. You telling me somebody put some voodoo on you to make you forget that?"

Lucas stood up and stalked back and forth from the dining room to the living room while racking his brain. No one had slipped him anything. No one he knew had the skill, except a couple of the elders, and they wouldn't act against the Alpha of the pack. None of the other wolves had challenged him to be the leader. The only one who had seemed close to doing that was Brant, and he had backed off since he had taken Zandrea as his mate.

The bottom line was, someone had been impersonating him, and that someone might very well have Nita. When he found him, Lucas would rip him apart. He spun to face Zandrea. "You said you were there. The man who walked in looking like me was an exact duplicate? Nothing stood out to give a warning that it might not be who you thought?"

She rolled her eyes.

He snapped his fingers. Some senses never lie. "Brant said you have heightened senses. What did he smell like?"

She frowned. "What you always smell like, I guess. Look, I'm not a freaking bloodhound."

"Concentrate, damn it. Nita may be in deep trouble, and I'm depending on you to give me a clue."

Zandrea's eyes went wide, and she shook. Brant tucked her to his side with a nasty look in Lucas' direction. "It's okay, baby. We'll find her. If you don't remember anything..."

“Wait, I do,” she squealed. “The cologne. I remember thinking if you were going to go all macho on my girl, the least you could have done was wear some decent cologne and not that cheap shit you had on.”

Brant stiffened. “Lucas doesn’t wear cologne. None of us do. The scent can be too much.”

The strength left Lucas’ body. He almost sank to the floor before he took a strong hold on himself. “Deandre. That’s the guy who’s been trying to date Nita. I interfered with his plans, so I’m guessing it was him who came in there looking like me.”

“Hm, so you think he’s a shape-shifter?” Brant asked. “Shifted to look like you in an attempt to fool Nita into hating you and breaking it off?”

Lucas sighed. “If only it was that simple. All the shape shifters I’ve known have had scents. Deandre has none. It’s almost like he’s not real, not really there.”

“A skin walker,” Zandrea piped up. At Lucas’ and his brother’s odd looks, she explained. “I saw it in a movie once, and Nita, crazy girl, thought it was interesting enough to look up and recite some of the facts to Stacy and me when we had already been freaked out by the movie. Apparently, they can take on the form of whatever they touch. Lucas, did he ever touch you?”

The blood drained from his head leaving him woozy. “At the country club I frequent. He used my name to get in and pretended we were old buddies. I had him thrown out, but not before he had slapped me on the back a few times and shook my hand with this big stupid grin on his face. Now I know what he was up to. He was going to take on my form.”

Brant turned to his mate. “Any other facts, sweetie?”

She shook her head. “No, but I know where we can find out.”

Chapter Fourteen

Deandre yanked Nita close to him and ran his hands down over her ass. She pulled at the bonds around her wrists and strained to get away from him. He chuckled as if her resisting turned him on all the more.

“I see the hope still burning in your eyes, baby,” he said between small kisses he planted along her neck. “But give that up. Your ex-lover can’t track me. I don’t care how good his dog’s nose is.” He laughed again. “You see how I can change?”

He demonstrated, and she turned her head. He snatched it back to face him. Instead of a young black man, younger than she was, this time he was white, taller and older. It was unnatural.

“Not only can I change, I have no scent. That asshole could sniff for years and never pick up my smell.”

“What do you want me for, Deandre? A lay? Since you can look anyway you want, you can get any woman you want. You can just become whatever her fantasies are.”

He nodded. “You’re right.” In that instant, he became Lucas, and Nita’s heart shattered.

“No,” she moaned.

“No?” he teased. “I thought you would like that. Me fucking you with your ex-lover’s face. Thought it would get you off. Well never mind. I don’t want you thinking of him anyway while I have you.” He stroked her cheek. “And to answer your question, I want you for reproduction.”

“Say what?” she screamed.

“Yup, brilliant isn’t it? See I’m a skin walker, and my kind cannot reproduce with each other. We can only reproduce with those who can do it by ‘natural’ means. I want my legacy to go on so to speak, and I’ve chosen you to be the mother of my children. Now, don’t you feel special?”

She spit in his face. “I’m not having your children!”

Deandre smacked her and shoved her down on the bed. He had stopped at this hotel because they had been driving for hours, and he was tired. And now from what he said, he wasn’t afraid that Lucas would find them.

Nita closed her eyes when Deandre landed on top of her and pushed a knee between her legs to force her to spread them. He was rock solid against her pelvis, and she swallowed to keep from throwing up. Why had she ever found him attractive?

“I had intended to play it slower, get you to care about me so you would happily raise my child the way I want him raised, but you had to ruin it all by being a whore with that wolf. Bestiality doesn’t gross you out, huh?”

“It’s not bestiality,” she snapped. Her words were true. The love burning in her heart for Lucas wasn’t going away just because she had found out he wasn’t human, that he could shift into a wolf. She had been terrified at first, sure, and she was angry about what he did. Yet, as she considered what had happened, the thought occurred to her that Lucas was suffering as well. He had apparently thought she was better off forgetting what he was rather than living with his secret. But she would bet her entire trust fund and the money coming to her in a few years that Lucas loved her just as much as she loved him. More than anything, she ached to see him again and verify it.

When Deandre’s head lowered toward hers to kiss her again, she blurted out, “He can track my scent.”

Deandre drew back. “What?”

She swallowed. “You said you have no scent to pick up, but Lucas can track my scent can’t he? I mean he knows me pretty well.”

That last part seemed to tick him off. “Yeah, too well!” He held up a small vial. “See this? Got it off a guy I know. Guaranteed to screw with the wolf’s nose. Not just the wolf, any tracker who uses his sense of smell to find people. I don’t normally need it, but as you can see I’ve thought of everything. You and I, my sweet thing, will disappear forever. You’ll raise my brood. Yeah,”—he seemed to be picturing it in his mind—“more than one, I think. A few. Oh how sweet it will be making them.”

The hope that Nita had been harboring, that Deandre had recognized in her eyes, died a quick death. Lucas would not be able to find her. That meant she would have to take matters into her own hands. One way or another, she would have to trick Deandre and get away. She would have to do it all on her own, with no money or resources because the very person she depended on could be Deandre in disguise, and she would be right back here facing a life of misery.

She blew out a breath she hoped sounded resigned. “Well, in that case, let me go to the bathroom and take a shower.” He gave her a suspicious look, and she frowned. “You’re between me and the door, damn it. There’s no window in the bathroom.”

After a few minutes, he nodded, leaned back to untie her hands, and rose off the bed. He bent over to unzip the bag he had brought into the room and reached in before pulling out something black and silky. He tossed it to her. “Put this on after.”

Nita held it up. It was a charmeuse babydoll. The thing looked like it would barely extend past her ass. Anger rose inside her at him using her for his pleasure whether she liked it or not, but she tamped it down. In order to get out of this predicament, she would have to

stay calm and use her head. She grabbed for her purse to take with her to the bathroom, but Deandre caught her wrist and searched the interior. He brought out her cell phone and her PDA and pocketed both before handing the purse back. Nita snatched it and stomped into the bathroom before slamming the door in his face. The chuckle she heard beyond the door made her grit her teeth.

“I have to get out of this,” she whispered, sitting down on the toilet and staring at the wall. Deandre was a small built man but he was also strong. She could not overpower him. Longing for Lucas overwhelmed her, and she blinked her eyes in rapid succession to ward off tears.

There was no hope of anything permanent between them. He was a wolf shape shifter, and it was certain that as soon as he had the chance, he would try his charm on her again to make her forget him. Nita dropped her head into her hands. She didn’t want to forget Lucas, not now and not ever.

“Hey, what are you doing in there?” Deandre called.

Nita jumped to her feet and turned the shower on, but she ignored Deandre, not answering his call. Thinking of Lucas being a shape shifter reminded her that Brant was his half brother, and now she recalled how she had heard Zandrea mention that she was Brant’s mate. Nita had thought that terminology was an odd way to put it. Now she realized that Zandrea knew their secret. How could she not, sleeping with the guy? Did Brant grow claws, sharp teeth and extra hair when he got too turned on? He probably did which would have been a call for much explanation if Zandrea didn’t know the truth. Something told Nita she would not be allowed to keep knowing the truth unless Lucas was willing to make her his mate.

“Fat chance,” she muttered in misery. “He’s too much of a ladies’ man.” She sighed. That was neither here nor there if she didn’t get out of this predicament.

She stood and undressed then slipped into the babydoll. After a few minutes, she turned off the shower. No sense washing right now, although she really wanted to. She stuffed her clothes inside her purse and forced the zipper closed, hoping Deandre wouldn’t notice how overfull it was. If for some reason she had to make her escape without pausing to get dressed, she didn’t want to spend too much time out on the street dressed as scantily as she was now.

With a deep breath, she tugged the door open and pasted a slight smile on her face, hoping it appeared to be genuine. “Well, here I am. I’m not one to cry long over anything. We can make the best of it. After all, you’re not bad to look at, and you can look anyway I want, right?” She raised an eyebrow in Deandre’s direction.

His own grin spread across his face. “Damn, you look good! I knew you would. Turn around and let me get a glimpse of that ass.”

Nita suppressed a flinch at his crass words and spun around while dropping her bag on the floor. She put a hand on her hip and spread her legs a little in an attempt to keep his attention on her and not the purse. It worked. Deandre let out a long whistle.

“Yeah!” he crooned in excitement.

When Nita spun around again, he was already shuffling out his clothes. She directed her gaze around the room in search of something heavy to bring down on his disgusting head when the time was right. The heavy motel phone on the nightstand would be perfect. It was a cliché from too many movies, but if it worked that’s all that mattered.

She positioned herself on the edge of the bed and extended her arm to him. Deandre couldn’t get across the room fast enough as he stumbled over his pants still around his ankles. He kicked them away and almost fell on top of her, bumping her shoulder with his chin where Lucas had left his mark. She closed her eyes, her heart aching for the man she knew without a doubt that she loved.

Bile rose in Nita’s throat at the contact of Deandre’s hard-on. He grumbled at finding her panties still on.

“Take them off!” While he fumbled, first trying to rip her panties off and then yanking them downward, Nita felt for the phone. Damn, why was his head on the wrong side? She couldn’t see where she was reaching, and Deandre was raining little kisses along her shoulder. At any second he could figure out what she was up to.

She squeezed her eyes shut and then reached down between them, her hand just above his erection. Her voice shaking, giving the impression of arousal, she hoped, she said, “Let me suck you, lover.”

Deandre whopped. “Oh, Nita, girl, I knew you were the one. But not too much. I can’t waste my seed.”

She pushed him to his back on the bed and kissed along his stomach. To give the man credit, he did have smooth brown skin that stretched over taut and defined muscles. Then again, that could be another illusion of the skin walker. She took her time going down his body. The pleasure of her touch got the better of Deandre. He groaned and closed his eyes.

Nita took her opportunity, snatched up the phone and brought it down with all the force she could on Deandre’s skull.

Chapter Fifteen

Tears streaming down her face, Nita didn't wait a second before she tore out of the room with her purse clutched under her arm. She sobbed as she ran, not even knowing if she was headed toward the motel office or not. When she had rounded the building out of sight of the room, she stopped to yank her clothes from her bag and only then realized she should have paused long enough to retrieve her cell phone from Deandre.

Fear drove her on when she had shoved her feet half way into her shoes. She sprinted across the parking lot toward a Laundromat she spotted in the lot next door to the motel. Inside, a woman leaned a hip lazily against a table while thumbing through information on her cell phone. Nita rushed over to her.

"Please, I beg you. Let me make an emergency call. I will give you twenty dollars if you do." The woman's face brightened, and she held out the phone. Nita grasped it and pounded in the numbers to Lucas' cell in lieu of the police. They would never know how to handle a skin walker, and she wasn't sure if Lucas knew, but he was the best option.

On the first ring, Lucas barked into the phone. "Yeah?"

"Lucas," she rasped out. "P-Please help me."

"Baby, where are you?" It could be her imagination, but he sounded worried, angry and desperate all once. "I will come for you. I promise. Tell me where."

Nita focused on the woman whose phone she was using. Her curious stare didn't waver, and she made no pretense of not listening.

"He needs to know where I am," Nita told her.

"I-45," the woman supplied. "Exit 14 toward Halibird."

Nita relayed the instructions and told him about the Laundromat. Lucas instructed her to stay around lots of people. The information that he was able to pick up was that Deandre could take on any form of anyone he touched, but Nita already knew that. She assured him she would do what she could until he arrived, which would unfortunately take a while.

"Nita, I know you won't understand why I'm saying this, but don't call the police," Lucas told her. He was quiet a moment. "I'm going to contact some people I know in the area where you are. I will give them a password so you know it's them."

She was about to question that but realized what he meant. Deandre again. If she was fooled...no, she wouldn't. If he was still alive, and he came after her, she would kill his ass before she ever let him touch her again. Lucas told her the word, and with reluctance she hung up. After passing over the twenty to the woman, she drifted to the back of the

Laundromat and sat down on a bench occupied by an old man who looked like he didn't know if he was there washing clothes or back home watching TV. She heaved a sigh, praying she wouldn't burst out crying again.

"Lucas, please hurry up," she whispered.

* * * *

Lucas hit the ground on all fours, not giving a shit who might notice a wolf sprinting along the road. When he could, he kept to back roads and even farther off paved streets running through treed areas and through fields. This way he could open up and give all his speed while taking short cuts that the manmade paths didn't allow for. He prayed all the way that Nita would be safe until the shifters he had contacted could reach her. And when he knew she was safe, he would rip Deandre's throat out so he could never threaten her again.

With his paws eating up the miles, his mind was free to mull over what he would do when he found Nita. Should he try to erase her memory again to make her forget all about him? He thought of Brant and Zandrea. They were making things work out between them, and they had committed to no offspring so that the wolf line would not be diluted and produce more problems. But what about him? Should he or could he take Nita as his mate?

He was the Alpha. He and the elders had conferred and decided to pass a law within their community that no shifter was allowed to take a human mate from here on out. It was too dangerous and truly since they would outlive their human mate by many decades, it would only produce heartache in the end. For him to take Nita would be a violation of the standard he had set and just plain foolhardy.

Still his heart didn't give a shit. He had tried to drink himself into a stupor when he had sent her away. This was worse, exponentially worse than it had been with Gloria. The emotions that tumbled over his consciousness felt like Nita was his whole life, his whole world.

Fuck! He ran faster, his lungs burning, his throat dry. The only thing that mattered at this point was getting to her and making sure she was all right. Other decisions could wait.

At midnight, Lucas picked up Nita's scent. Now he knew that Deandre must have done something to block their being able to track her. Whatever it was hadn't been used this far out. Exhausted beyond belief, he padded on sore feet into the woods. His people out this way liked a rural setting, away from the hustle and bustle of the city. With his nose to the ground, he picked up three others along with Nita. They were without question wolf shifters.

Through a clearing a small cabin came into view. He sniffed the air. Nita was inside. Two men sat on the porch outside the place. They stood when he came into view, although he knew they had scented him long before that.

He changed, ignoring his nakedness. "Thank you for saving her."

The taller of the men nodded. "You Lucas, I guess."

"Yes." He shook the hand of the man he sensed was the Alpha of his pack. All shifters knew the locations of the various packs although most stayed within their own and didn't know each member personally. "May I go in?" he asked out of courtesy.

The man nodded, and Lucas tried not to tear the door off its hinges when he rushed forward. There she was lying curled up in the fetal position, her hand beneath her chin, track marks from tears on her face. His chest constricted. Like hell he would ever give her up. Even if he had to walk away from being Alpha. Nita was his, at the risk of heartbreak later or being tossed out of his pack for violating their laws.

Lucas crossed the room and scooped Nita up onto his lap before he remembered that she had been terrified of him when he was half changed. His heart ached. What if she rejected him?

"Nita? Baby?" he whispered. "Wake up. I'm here."

Her eyelashes fluttered, and after a moment she focused on him. The strength left his body, and he tucked her tight against his chest.

"Lucas, you came."

"Always," he muttered in a thick voice.

"I'm sorry. I—"

"Shh, this isn't your fault by any means," he told her. "I'll take care of everything. Don't worry."

She struggled to sit up, and he let her although she remained on his lap. "By that you mean you'll try again to erase my memory."

"No."

With a tiny gasp she looked up at him, her luscious lips parted, making him want to sip her sweetness from them. He gave in and took a chance, lowering his mouth to hers. If he thought she would pull away in disgust, he was pleasantly surprised when she wrapped her arms around his neck and arched into his chest. His groin grew tight.

“I’m...uh...not sure how you feel about me, Nita, but—”

“I love you,” she said in a matter of fact tone. “Can’t change that whether I want to or not. So, you’re a dog. What’s a girl to do?”

He chuckled. She was making light of the situation, but the slight tremor beneath her words told him the situation had taken its toll. He needed to get her back home, but before that he would put Deandre in his grave.

“A girl,” he instructed, “is to become my mate.” He stared down at her with a serious expression. “Do you want that, Nita? This is a big decision, and I’m not all that sure either of us should make that decision now and not some other time when you’ve had more time to think things through. But I confess that I can’t wait. I want you for my mate more than anything. I love you, Nita, and I always will.”

Nita heaved a sigh. “One of the shifters who picked me up was a woman. I don’t know where she disappeared to, but she was telling me all about what it means to be your mate. She said from what her brother told her when he talked to you on the phone that it was likely that I was already meant to be your mate. And she explained how I would be tied to you.”

“We’d be tied to each other,” he corrected. “It’s a whole different experience from human marriage.”

“Even so, I love you with all my heart, and whatever I have to experience for us to be one, I’ll go through it.”

Lucas nodded and gently began removing her clothing. She squeaked.

“What are you doing, Lucas. Those guys are just outside, and they could come in here.”

He grinned, stroking her cheek. “They know I am about to claim you as my mate and what that means. They won’t come in.”

She stared at him as it dawned on her what he meant. The shifters outside on the porch could hear what they said and smell their arousal. They would also sense that Lucas had put his mark on her but not yet sealed the deal. For a male shifter to take his mate, he needed to bite her twice while making love to her.

Nita’s teeth chattered she was so nervous. She dug her nails into his bare arms, and he winced but waited in silence for her to make her decision. He knew she wanted him from the tight points of her nipples making an impression through her blouse. After some time, she nodded, and Lucas continued to undress her.

Chapter Sixteen

The thought of perfect strangers standing right outside the door able to hear every sound she uttered made Nita bite her lip and suppress the moan she wanted to loose when Lucas parted the two sides of her blouse. Her breasts rose and fell in rapid succession when he yanked her bra down to reveal her swollen nipples.

As if they called to him, he dipped his head to take first one into his mouth and then move to the other. She caught her breath as his tongue laved her aching buds. This time when his growl began, it didn't alarm her. He was what he was, and she embraced him as such.

"Ah, Lucas," she moaned and tried to hold it in.

"Don't hold back, my love," he told her and lifted her off his lap to lay her flat on the bed. He moved above her, parting her legs with his. "I long to take my time and show you how much I want to please you, but I feel like we've been apart for ages, a feeling that shouldn't be considering we're not one yet."

"We are one." She pulled him closer to her so she could nuzzle his stubbled jawline. "In heart, we are already one. Fill me, Lucas. Please. I need all of you right now."

He kneed her legs higher, and since she was soaking wet, his shaft glided in between her folds with no hindrance. Nita shouted her pleasure, and Lucas' growl burst forth. He changed, his teeth like daggers and his claws matching. Where he had only small stubble from not shaving, longer hair sprouted.

"Don't be afraid, baby. Please," he begged in a rough voice.

"I'm not. I love you. Pump me hard," she demanded. "Fuck me, Lucas."

His eyes went wide at her boldness, and he lifted her heels in the air and drove forward until he pumped in and out at a lightning speed. Nita screamed and writhed against him. Lucas howled like the wolf he was but didn't stop. Somewhere in the back of her mind, Nita registered the answering howls outside the cabin, but she was too engrossed in the intense pleasure her lover was giving her.

Lucas yanked back, flipped her over and drove in again. He held onto her hips and pounded his thick shaft deep inside of her. Nita wished she had claws to rip at the sheets beneath them. Oh fuck, she couldn't get enough. She didn't ever want him to stop. All fear of having an audience listening in drained away, and she freely cried out encouragement for Lucas to fuck her harder, faster, to make her come right now.

Lucas smacked her ass, and Nita came screaming. He pulled out of her, bent down and kissed away the sting on her skin before he began to lap at her flowing juices. A second

orgasm gripped her core, and she whined while he pushed his tongue up inside her and then sucked at her tender nub.

When she was through a third orgasm, Lucas pushed her flat on the bed and followed her down. He eased his way inside her with a tighter fit since her legs were straight, and Nita thought she would lose consciousness from the pure ecstasy. The man was incredible even without the enhancing oils he had used last time. As soon as he was buried to the hilt, he ran his tongue over the spot on her shoulder, and she knew he was about to make his final claim.

Nita stiffened, but Lucas shoved a hand beneath her and stroked her belly. “Shh, relax, my love. I won’t hurt you.”

She tried her best to loosen up and release the nervousness, but it was impossible. The bite when it came stung a little, but not like she expected. And all of a sudden, a warm security washed over her, like she was in the safest place she could be—in Lucas’ arms.

A shudder went through his body, and then his warm seed permeated her insides. Lucas held her so tight, it almost hurt, and he muttered her name over and over. Now they were as one person. They were mates.

* * * *

Fear clawed at Nita’s stomach. She had chewed off each one of her fingernails and wished for something more to chew on. After Lucas had left her in the care of the other shifters and Zandrea, who had arrived a short while later with Brant, he and his brother took off to find Deandre. When they returned the next morning, neither admitted to what they had done, but Nita had a new sense now that she was mated to Lucas. She could pick up on his feelings, and he was definitely feeling vindicated. There was no doubt in her mind that he and Brant had killed Deandre and covered it up somehow. She had accepted it as what he felt he had to do.

Now, a month and a half later the horror of it all had passed, and she thought she could settle down in safety and calm. The pack had indeed taken away Lucas’ position as Alpha and passed it on to another shifter. At least they hadn’t tossed him completely out of the pack. But now, Nita had something new to worry about.

She sat curled on his bed running her fingers through her hair and wondering what she was going to do. When the door opened, she jumped. Lucas narrowed beautiful dark eyes on her with a look of curiosity.

“What’s up, baby? You’ve been jumpy lately.”

“Nothing,” she squeaked.

He shook his head, making a *tsk* sound. “Out with it.”

How could she tell him? “I don’t—”

“Nita!” he grumbled.

“I’m pregnant,” she blurted out. “I’m so sorry. I know we made a commitment to the pack that we wouldn’t and I had protection, but I don’t know. Oh goodness. I’m sorry, Lucas...”

He covered her mouth with a gentle kiss and then drew back. “Silly woman. I already knew that a couple weeks ago.”

She stared. “What?”

He shrugged. “I sense every change in your lovely body.”

Annoyance that he didn’t say anything hit her. She resisted slapping his smug face. “You could have said something.”

“I had to make arrangements.”

“What arrangements?” She allowed him to scoop her to his lap and rested her head on his shoulder.

He sighed. “Arrangements to join another pack. It hurts to leave, but it must be done. We will be following Brant and Zandrea this time around, to a pack that lost their Alpha. They’re young, and no one was in a position to lead. Besides that, they are more lenient than our pack now. They are open to half human half shifter children. And since Zandrea’s expecting, it works out.”

“What!” She sat up, but Lucas forced her back to his chest.

“These things happen.” He chuckled in her ear. “Almost accidentally.”

Nita narrowed her eyes on him, and he offered an innocent grin. Her heart swelled with love for him. She knew it was a big step for him and Brant to leave their pack, but it was also time. Things changed in life, and they had to change with them or be left behind. All Nita knew was that she wanted to spend all her life with Lucas. At his side, she could face any challenge with confidence.

The End