



Wendy Stone

**Magic
Man**

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Magic Man

an erotic novel by

WENDY STONE

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Chapter One

A sly smile crossed his face as he watched her. She was beautiful and radiant, her laughter flowing through the crowded dining room like a melodic song. The man she was with seemed almost stunned to be in her presence, a sign to Brady that he didn't deserve the woman. She was wrapping him around her little finger.

Not that Brady wanted her for himself. He just couldn't deny the little imp that whispered in his ear and suggested his next action. His finger moved on the table, a gentle touch brushing the starched white cloth.

Across the way, the girl jumped, her hand reaching under the table cloth and over the front of her short skirt, reaching for the hem and pulling it down to where it had been before. Her big blue eyes seemed confused for an instant and then she glared at the man who sat with her. Brady watched as her pouting red lips formed words he could read from where he was sitting.

"Stop it."

The man just sat there, a slightly bemused expression on his lax features. "Stop what?" Brady saw him ask.

Laughter bubbled inside him as she tossed her blonde hair, an indignant look on her face. And the little imp whispered again. He stared at the thin white blouse that strained across impressive breasts. With a purse of his lips, he blew out a small breath, his finger flicking at the table.

She jumped again as the top button of her blouse popped open, the sides pulling away from each other and exposing smooth creamy skin. Staring down at the deep cleavage, she grabbed for her blouse as another button gave way. Her companion, his ears turning red, stared amazed at the lovely show being put on in front of him.

Brady managed to stop the chuckle that tried to erupt from his mouth, instead running his finger across the material he'd just been flicking with his finger, watching as the woman's blue eyes opened wide as she felt an unseen touch trail across the sleek pale skin of her breast. She stared around the room wildly. Brady dropped his eyes, even as he motioned so that the unseen finger circled her now taut nipple, causing her to gasp.

She grabbed her purse with one hand, her other holding her top closed. She ran from the room amid a mutter of whispers and some very catty giggles from women at other tables who'd seen the eyes of their companions upon his beautiful victim.

"Stop that, Brady."

Joseph Templeton, his friend and one of the few people aware of what he could do, sat down in the seat across from him. "You could have waited until I got back for the show," he said, his accusation voiced in a friendly tone.

"You never let me have any fun, Joseph, you know that." Brady Knight turned his head, cracking the bones in his neck before rotating his shoulders. "Besides, she was showing off so much in front of all the men in the restaurant, I thought she might want to give a much better show. And that cleavage was pretty spectacular."

"Very true," Joseph sighed, letting his chin fall into his hand, his elbow on the table. "I just worry that one of these days you're going to use these powers of yours in front of someone you shouldn't. Then I'll end up visiting you in a cage while you're waiting to be dissected. And they'll bring your parents in and do all these tests to see if maybe they'd been taken into some space ship and transported into the future..."

"Stop!" Brady laughed. "I know where you're going with this; we've been over it ten thousand times since you found out about me. I'll behave." He waited a second and then said beneath his breath, "Spoil sport."

"How far would you have taken it?" Joseph asked suddenly.

"What?"

"How far would you have stripped her of her clothes if she hadn't run?" Joseph picked up his coffee, taking a small sip of the lukewarm brew.

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“Not far. I was having more fun running my finger over her nipple.” He laughed as Joseph spit the coffee back in his cup. “Are you okay?” he asked, laughing as his friend coughed.

“You’re incorrigible. I don’t know how we stay friends.” He sat down the coffee and picked up his napkin to pat his lips dry, running his finger across the starched white collar that denoted his rank.

“And you were a lot more fun before you became a priest, Joseph.” Brady laughed. It wasn’t the first time they had this conversation and probably wouldn’t be the last. Their friendship had started when they were both boys, ten years of age. They’d met at school, Brady’s first day. The school bully had tried to make an example of Brady and Joseph had helped him kick the boy’s butt.

In the principal’s office afterwards while waiting for their parents to show up, Joseph and Brady had shown off their battle wounds to each other and had forged a bond that had withstood fights and girls, vacations and age. They’d even managed to stay friends when Joseph had quit college in the middle of his second year and joined a seminary.

Brady’s gifts, as his parents called them, had made themselves known when he was twelve. They started small, like being able to move objects and people with his mind and then grew and got stronger every day. Now there wasn’t much he couldn’t do with his mind, including conning any girl he wanted into bed.

But that wasn’t all. Joseph had never seen everything he could do. Brady had hidden quite a bit, not only from his friend but from his parents and his teachers. Even from his fiancée.

“I don’t know how Renee handles you,” Joseph said, lifting his spoon and taking a bite of the chocolate cake he’d ordered. It was decadent, a sin that Father Joseph enjoyed.

“I haven’t told her.”

“You haven’t told her what? You haven’t mentioned your penchant for molesting strange women in restaurants?”

“I haven’t told her any of it.” Brady ducked his head, sensing that Joseph’s infamous temper was going to blow. He’d delayed telling Joseph his deception, knowing he would be mad as hell.

“I don’t blame you.”

The words startled Brady. He looked up, narrowing his eyes. “You wanna run that by me again?”

“I said I don’t blame you. Damn, Brady, Renee is beautiful and sweet but she’s not the most understanding woman in the world.”

“I thought you liked her,” Brady said, still amazed.

“There’s nothing wrong with Renee that would make me dislike her,” Joseph said, shrugging. “I just don’t know what she’d do if you were to walk up to her and show or tell her you have magical powers. Think about it.” He took another bite of his cake, determined to enjoy every ounce.

“I know. I’ve thought of telling her I don’t know how many times. I even set about showing her once. Every time, I chickened out.”

“Have you ever used your powers on her?” Joseph licked the back of his spoon and took a sip of his now cold coffee.

“Oh come on, how can you think I’d do something like that?”

“So you have,” Joseph said with a sigh. “I thought as much.”

“Jesus Ch...” he stopped when he saw Joseph narrow his eyes at the blasphemous curse. “Sorry. What is this, confession?” He glared at his friend who sat across from him, calmly folding his hands on the table.

“Yeah, right,” Joseph scoffed, “like I’d ever get you to go to confession. I mean, I can’t even get you into one of my masses.” He shook his head. “No, Brady, we’ve been friends forever. You helped me get over my first crush. I know you.”

“What the hell does that mean? You know me?” Brady smacked his palm against the table with a dull smacking sound that made some of the china clink together. “Sometimes you confuse me more than you’re worth.”

“Yeah, but you love me anyway,” Joseph laughed. “What that means is that Renee isn’t going to satisfy you. She doesn’t have what you need if you can’t even tell her about your magic.”

“I love her, Joseph.”

“You think you love her, Brady. If you truly loved her, you’d be willing to share everything with her.”

MAGIC MAN

“I just haven’t found...”

“The right time,” they finished together.

Brady glared at him. “Nobody likes a smart aleck priest, Joseph.”

“Yeah, the Bishop tells me that every time I see him.” Joseph smiled, completely nonplussed. “You know I’m right, Brady. Getting pissed off about it won’t do you any good.”

“Yeah, but I can’t hit you any more so I have to do something.” He jumped when the phone hooked on his belt went off. Picking it up, he looked at the display. His expression turned to annoyance before he forced a smile and flipped open the phone.

“Hi, Renee.”

Joseph smiled, a knowing smile that made Brady want to reach out and punch him. He lifted his hand, wiggling his fingers at his friend and waiting for Brady to tell Renee hello from him.

“I’m having lunch with Joseph.”

“Okay, Father Joseph. Jeez, Renee, I’ve known the man since he was ten, we used to have camp outs in my back yard, I can call him by his first name. He says hi, by the way.”

Brady grimaced, glanced at Joseph and then down at the leftover sauce on his plate. “Yeah, I’ll ask him. I said I would.”

Unconsciously, Brady began stroking the table cloth with his fingers as he talked and Joseph stared in amazement as the silverware on the table next to theirs stood up, dancing as if dangling from the end of a wire. He reached over and pushed his hand down on Brady’s. The silverware dropped, half of it falling to the floor with a crash.

“I’ve got to go, Renee. Yeah, me too.” Brady flipped the phone closed and stared at the silverware. “You really drive me nuts sometimes, Joseph.”

“Only when I’m right and you don’t want to admit it,” Joseph said, waving to their waitress. She brought them their bill. “Now the only thing you have to figure out is what you want to do about it.”

* * * *

Brady said goodbye to Joseph and left the restaurant in a strange mood. He usually enjoyed their weekly lunches, an event he looked forward to since he'd come back home. After college, he'd become involved with a bad crowd while searching for people like himself, people who could do magic with their hands and mind.

He'd gotten into the occult, finding himself surrounded by wannabes whose skills with magic were contrived, done with smoke and mirrors. None of them had what he did, the power of telekinesis, the power to conjure, the power to teleport. Even the power to change the shape of his body, though he had never told anyone he could do that. That power freaked him out a little too much to use. He also had the power to control others.

He sighed, wondering if he was going to hell for the things that he had done in those days after college. He had been wild; sex, drugs, alcohol and more sex until his brain had seemed to float, permanently pickled. The day Joseph had come looking for him, in that strange house that he and three other guys had rented out, the walls covered with pentagrams and other magical symbols, the air perfumed with the smell of marijuana and sex, spilled beer and burnt macaroni and cheese, had changed his life. Hell, Joseph had probably saved his life.

He'd found Brady in bed with two women. He couldn't remember meeting them or coming home, let alone know their names. The last thing he'd remembered was finishing off his second pint of Jack Daniels while his friends tried talking him into going into the new strip joint that had just opened across town. He could vividly recall the embarrassment he'd felt when Joseph had walked in and he'd been lying in that bed, the room smelling strongly of sex that he didn't remember having.

"Get up, Brady, and get dressed. We're going for a walk."

A walk had been the last thing Brady had wanted and he'd almost used his mind control on Joseph, the one thing he'd always promised he wouldn't do. Instead, he stood up and threw on clothes that smelled of alcohol, tobacco and cheap perfume.

Joseph had walked until Brady, tired, hung over and out of shape, had collapsed at the foot of a fountain in a park he couldn't remember ever being in before. He'd dropped his head into his hands and wept.

MAGIC MAN

And Joseph had picked him up, gotten him out of that life and back in contact with his parents. He helped him get straight and get rid of the miscreant friends that had littered his life for the past two years. He'd helped him and Brady owed him for it.

But he was wrong about Renee. He did love Renee. She was perfect for him. Polished and sleek, a petite blonde who never left the house with a hair out of place. She was ordered and structured. She kept him grounded and in command when these "gifts" of his tried to push him out of control.

Had he used his powers on her? Yeah, though he wasn't proud of it. Ordered and structured got boring. Sometimes he wanted her to strip for him, or to become aggressive and knock him to the bed, tear at his clothes and take him. He always rearranged her memories afterward, letting her think that the lovemaking had been sweet and gentle, the way she liked it.

So what if he hadn't told her about his secret. She didn't need to know everything about him. And besides, they had their whole lives to get to know each other. He'd wait until..."Hey, watch it!"

Brady reached out and grabbed the small figure that had just barreled into him. His hands grasped slender arms; his body shook in shock from the small but perfectly curved body that had slammed into him. He stared down at the petite figure, catching a glimpse of bright green eyes.

She was wearing a bright red dress, the long skirt flowing around her slender ankles. Her hair was a shade darker than her dress, curled and long, silky against his hands as it covered both them and her arms. Impressive cleavage was artfully displayed by the scooped neck of the dress, baring a tiny gold pendant in the shape of a pentagram.

"I... I'm sorry," Brady stammered, lost in the startling green of her eyes. "You're not hurt, are you?"

"No," she said softly, her voice smoky and a little deeper than he'd expected from someone of her diminutive stature. "I'm fine, Brady."

He did a double take as he heard his name come from those soft, sensuously lush lips. "Do I know you?"

She smiled. “You probably don’t remember me. It was a while ago and I’ve changed a bit since then.” She stepped back, making him realize he was still holding her.

“Oh, sorry about that,” he said, his cheeks flushing. “Who are you?”

“I have to go,” she said, looking around suddenly, her eyes darkening. Without another word, she turned, her skirt flying up around her as she hurried away.

“Wait!” he called, his hand coming up to stop her.

She didn’t stop.

Brady squinted, intrigued by her, wanting more time with her. He sent out the thought, a tingle that would be irresistible to her, to turn back to him.

She didn’t even slow down. Instead, she waved a hand in front of her, four fingers spread out, her thumb crossed across her palm and kept running.

“Whoa,” he breathed, realizing she had deflected his power with an ease he’d never seen before. “That’s not possible.”

His phone rang again and he picked it up, not bothering to check the caller ID. “Yeah?”

“Is that how you answer your phone when it’s your fiancée calling?” Renee’s voice said.

“Oh, hi, honey.” He ran his hand over his face, his nerves tightening. “I didn’t look to see who it was. I’m sorry.”

“Apology accept, Brady bear,” she crooned.

Brady could feel his head begin to pound. “What did you need, sweetie?”

“I just wanted to know what Father Joseph had to say. Will he do it for us?”

“Honey,” he said, trying to stay patient with her. “Neither of us are Catholic. Why would you want a Catholic priest to perform the ceremony?”

“I just thought... him being your friend and all,” she said quietly. “I thought you’d like him to perform it.”

“He said he would, Renee, but we would both have to go for counseling sessions with him. And we’d have to push back the date of the wedding to make those sessions. I told him I’d get back to him.” He pulled the phone away from his ear, waiting for the explosion.

MAGIC MAN

It wasn't long in coming. "Father Joseph can't help out his best friend? After all we've done for him and his church," Renee said, her voice growing strident.

Brady's head pounded. He could feel anger beginning to rise inside of him. Looking across the street, he saw the glass window in the clothing store start to vibrate. Deep breaths couldn't control the power he felt pulsing inside of him and he did the only other thing that came to mind. "Renee, Father Joseph doesn't need to marry us," he said, his fingers going to his temple as he pushed the tingle out of him and into a car down the street, shattering the side windows and setting off the car alarm.

"Well, baby, it was just a thought," she said, her voice growing softer, less angry. "Are you coming home soon?"

"Not for a couple of hours," he said, relief singing through him. "I still have some work to do at the office. You might as well go home, sweetheart. I'll give you a call later."

"Okay," she sighed. "I love you, Brady bear."

"Yeah, me too," he said, hitting the button to turn the phone off with a sigh of relief. He didn't know how much more he could take. Was Joseph right? Could he only be with Renee because of the status she brought?

"No, I love her," he said out loud.

"Me, too," a homeless man agreed, holding out his hand to ask for change.

Brady dug out a ten dollar bill, leaving the man the thought that he should use it for a hot meal and not for the booze that he planned to buy with it. Then he waved his hand at a cab and headed back to his office.

The idea for his detective agency had originally come from Joseph, strangely enough. Joe had figured that using his powers for good was a way to make up for the bad he'd done. Brady didn't know if he agreed or not, but it was interesting work. And he actually had been able to make a difference, although he still wasn't certain it absolved him of earlier misdeeds.

His office was on the second floor of a building housing mostly lawyers. A stroke of genius on his part; half of them were divorce lawyers who needed to get the goods on their clients' spouses. At first, he'd barely paid the rent and made enough to

afford a secretary. Now he had a waiting list, took only the clients he wanted to take and could afford the newest in surveillance equipment. The cops even came to him when they had cases they couldn't get a lead on.

He'd gained fame by finding a ten year old girl who'd been kidnapped. Her parents had paid the ransom and the kidnappers had managed to get away, without giving up the girl. Brady had found her and the kidnappers. He'd gotten good at hiding the psychic part of his investigation, always covering up any vibes or pictures he'd gotten by using regular footwork and making connections.

No one was the wiser. He liked it that way.

"Hey, Hailey," he said, pushing in through the double doors into the reception area of his office. "Any calls this afternoon?"

Hailey Carlisle was in her late forties, plump and matronly with a shock of bright red hair that never managed to be in place and an eye for brightly colored Hawaiian shirts. She'd been with him since the beginning and he didn't see any reason not to keep her after he'd started to make money.

She held up a sheaf of pink telephone messages. "The usual," she said, cheerily enough. "Don Barlow has been down here four times looking for you. He has a client he needs to talk about. You aren't going to take that crook's work, are you Brady?"

"It pays the bills, Hailey," Brady teased, knowing that Hailey and Don were like oil and milk, cats and dogs, sugar in a gas tank. Explosive.

"If you're that short on money, I'll loan it to you," she groused, rising to pour him a cup of freshly brewed coffee. Picking up the pile of pink notes, she took them in to his office and set them on the middle of his ritzy leather blotter, a Christmas present from Renee. A picture of her in a sterling silver frame shared desk space with it. "I don't know how you can work for someone like him. The man's a shyster. He's every lawyer joke ever told."

"Okay, okay," he said, holding his hands out in defeat. "I won't take his case. I'll give you the pleasure of telling him," he called out to her as she smiled, looking like the cat who ate the canary.

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“Oh yes, my pleasure,” she breathed, closing Brady’s door quietly and heading towards her phone, rubbing her hands in glee at this unexpected fun.

“Be nice,” he shouted to her, hearing her chuckle even through the heavy door. “Women,” he sighed. He sat behind his desk, running through the phone messages and placing them in two neat piles. One pile he would phone today; the other, well they might never hear from him.

He got through two meetings with prospective clients and fielded a complaint from an irate Don Barlow, who was even angrier after hearing Hailey cackle at him. His phones calls were made. He’d just finished the last of them when Hailey knocked on his door.

“Your last appointment is here,” she said quietly. “Do you mind if I get out of here, boss?”

“No,” Brady said, standing and coming around his desk. “Are you okay?”

“Yeah, it’s just... there’s something about this one that’s kind of giving me the creeps. I’d just rather be gone before she leaves.” Hailey ducked her head, embarrassed.

“Damn, does she have a third eye or something? I’ve never seen you like this.”

“I’ll talk to you tomorrow,” she muttered before turning and waving in the client. She didn’t even stay to close the door behind her, snatching her purse off her desk and hurrying to the coat rack to grab her jacket.

The outer door was closing behind her as the girl sauntered into his office. She closed the door herself and then turned to face Brady.

“You!”

Chapter Two

“Who are you?” Brady Knight growled, getting up from his chair and stalking around the side of his desk. “What did you mean when you implied you knew me? I don’t know you. I’d remember.”

“No,” the girl said softly, shaking her head almost sadly. “Considering the state you were in when I found you, you wouldn’t remember me.” She flinched when he grabbed her arms but her gaze remained steady, those eerie green eyes boring into him.

“State? So you’re one of them, the ones that sucked off of my power.” He wanted to shake her but he refrained, feeling a startling sense of disappointment rip through him. “If you think you’re going to blackmail me into anything by threatening to tell what you know about me, think again. I’ve had better and smarter people than you try.”

“I don’t know how you make this agency work.”

“Huh?”

“You keep jumping to conclusions. I thought you detective types were supposed to want facts and proof, not intuitive conclusions.” She shrugged, pulling out of his grasp easily. “May I sit?”

Brady narrowed his eyes at the provocatively beautiful girl. She wore the same outfit she’d had on earlier, the vibrant red of the dress making her hair appear scarlet, the bodice cupping her breasts almost lovingly. Her eyes were piercing, strangely arousing and calming at the same time.

“How about we start with your name?” he asked, waving his hand at one of the chairs in front of his desk. He cocked his hip on the corner of his desk, noticing a fine trail of freckles that scattered across her nose.

“My name is Mollyne Wolfe. Most just call me Molly.”

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“What business do you have with me, Molly?” he asked, crossing his arms across his wide chest. She radiated an unidentified energy, one that had an undeniable sense of good. Not good as in pleasant. Good as in the opposite of evil. He hated that someone who looked like her and projected that aura would stoop to something as low as blackmail. “How do I know you?”

“Which do you wish me to answer first, Mr. Knight.?” She looked up at him, giving him a gamine sort of grin that surprised him. “You want to know how I know you so that you can figure out what to do with me.”

“Yes,” Brady nodded. “I do. Can you blame me?”

“Not at all,” she said agreeably. “You also wish to know how I blocked your thoughts earlier today, on the street. That will take a bit of an explanation. I don’t know if I have time for that. I do need your help, Mr. Knight, despite what you might think of me. We need your help desperately.”

“We?”

“I’m getting ahead of myself.” She paused, folded her hands carefully over her lap and took a deep breath. “Do you remember your sophomore year in college?”

Brady snorted. “I don’t remember much of the last half of my freshman year. Why do you ask?”

“That’s when we met. I had come to the school, your school, to visit a friend from outside my clan, something that is forbidden with my people. You were standing outside the freshman girl’s dorms. You were doing petty magic, spinning books and pens in the air.” She glanced up at him. “You don’t remember this?”

“Not a bit,” Brady said, feeling a familiar angst building in his gut. He always felt it when someone reminded him of that time.

“May I?” She stood and held out her hand.

“May you what?” he asked warily, leaning away from her touch.

“I’ve caused you distress. I just want to alleviate it.” Molly laughed, her husky voice sending a thrill through him. “You have nothing to fear, Mr. Knight. Your magicks are much stronger than mine ever could be.”

Brady stared into her eyes, growing lost in the emerald stare. He nodded, sitting forward so that she could reach him better. She took a deep breath, closing her eyes and muttering something before she clapped her hands together, rubbing her palms. Then she reached up to touch his face.

Heat! It was the first thing he felt as her fingertips stroked over his wide forehead, pushing aside the shock of hair that defied his brush. It soaked into his skin, warm and pleasurable, soothing his doubts and fears.

The scent of her filled his nose and he inhaled deeply, a spicy combination of cinnamon and vanilla with a hint of her own musk underneath. It was a heady mix; getting enough of it to satisfy seemed unlikely. He closed his eyes to enjoy it better, feeling the palm of her hand skim over his forehead and then down, her fingertips tracing his features.

“Hmm,” he moaned. “You’re good at this.”

“Shh,” she ordered softly. “Don’t speak, just feel. Feel and remember.”

He inhaled again, hearing the rustle of her skirts as she stepped closer. The heat of her body teased his; close but not touching, making him wonder what she would feel like in his arms, how she would taste under his lips. He knew her body was soft but with a lean strength that belayed that softness. Would she cry out or would she bite her lip when she came?

“I’d scream your name,” she whispered, her voice husky as if she could feel what he was thinking, feel it as if it were happening.

His eyes started to flutter open and she laid her fingertips over them, keeping them closed. “No, please don’t look, let me do this. Let me help you remember me. Open yourself.”

“How?” he whispered.

“Let down those walls that surround you, Brady. Just feel.”

He took a deep breath, her scent swirling around him, drawing him in. A picture formed in his mind, one that had his breath clogging in his throat. She twirled around him, her skirts lifting, showing off those trim ankles and shapely calves, rising higher to tease with glimpses of pretty thighs and the pelt of red fur that covered her sex.

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She moved against him, dancing for him, her body twining about until he reached for her in his mind, yanking her close, her breasts crushing against his chest. His lips found hers, devouring in a kiss meant to inflame.

Molly gasped, the sound lost in his mouth, his tongue plunging inside of hers to taste and explore. Her passion held the flavor of honeyed wine, dark and rich, a bewitching brew.

Her hands were on his shirt buttons, slowly unfastening them before sliding her palms up the taut, defined muscles of his stomach and chest. She didn't stop there, pushing his shirt over his shoulders, following the sleeves down his arms to rid him of the hampering cloth. She tore her mouth from his, her lips finding the skin of his throat, her tongue coming out to tease his already aroused flesh.

"Stand there," she ordered, going on tip toe to press a quick kiss to his lips. Then she fell to her knees before him, her skirts flaring out around his feet as her fingers made fast work of his belt and jeans, pushing them down his thighs. She reached out, tracing the tented bulge in his boxers, squeezing gently at the base.

Brady couldn't move even if he wanted. It was as if he'd been frozen to the floor, trapped in the spell of her touch, in the aura of the pleasure surrounding him. He could feel her hands, stroking upward over his chest, the tips of her fingers trembling across his flat male nipples, making them pucker. A moan left his lips, his hands clenching at his sides even though he wanted to draw her up against him again.

Her hands dragged down, catching in the band of his boxers, pulling them and tugging on his jeans until both fell to the floor. Her green eyes caressed him as they moved over his body, settling for a long minute upon his erection, filled with admiration at what she saw.

"Why are you doing this?" he hissed through clenched teeth as her small hand moved to his cock, wrapping around his girth.

"Because I want to," she said simply, smiling up at him before licking her full, red lips in obvious invitation. "Because I have to."

"You have to?" he groaned as her lips slid over the tip of his cock. "I don't understand."

She pulled her lips off him, her hand stroking his wet shaft. “You don’t need to, just let me do this.” Her eyes sparkled up at him, mischief apparent in the green depths.

His hips were jerking against his will, his heart racing in his chest. He felt her lips, the heat of her mouth as she sucked him in, the sweetness of the friction she created. His head fell back as need unlike any he’d felt before took him, causing him to tremble under her touch. Low moans were torn from his throat and he couldn’t help but move under her mouth.

His hands slid over her head, burying themselves in bright red curls that felt like satin in his fingers. She pushed against them, rubbing her head in his palms even as she sucked him, her tongue like a flame against the underside of his cock. He felt it tease the ridge surrounding his glans, flicking the sensitive skin, igniting nerve endings with slippery softness.

It was more than he could take and he felt the pressure grow and grow until he could hold out no longer. “I’m going to come,” he growled, trying to pull away from her sweet mouth.

She held on tighter, drawing him in until the tip of his cock touched the back of her throat. Her eyes met his, the look in them showing her own pleasure at what she was doing. With a small hum of enjoyment, she managed to swallow the last of him, her nose brushing in the short shock of crinkly hair that surrounded his cock.

It was all he could take. With a shout of bliss, he emptied himself into her, feeling her swallowing him, draining him. “Oh, God,” he groaned, hanging on to the desk as the feelings swamped him.

It ended even as her lips left one last kiss upon the head of his cock. He heard the rustle of her dress as she rose gracefully to her feet.

Guilt assailed him even as the last of the spasms she’d created with her lips echoed through his limbs. Renee; he’d cheated on her. Cheated with a woman he’d never met before today, or at least as far as he could remember.

“Stop,” she whispered, her voice close to him though he was sure he’d heard her footsteps walking away from him. “Open your eyes.”

MAGIC MAN

Brady did, blinking unsteadily as he saw her mere inches from him. "What..." he began.

"You didn't cheat. You stayed true to your woman, Brady. What happened was only a mixture of our auras. I took nothing from you and gave you ease." She turned, smiling over her shoulder at him before going back to the chair she'd been in before and sinking down into it.

"Who are you?" he asked as he glanced down, shocked to see he was fully dressed. "What are you?"

"I've told you my name, Brady. I'm Molly Wolfe. What I am will take a bit more of an explanation. I'm not sure you're ready to hear it yet." She flipped her long curls over her shoulder with a toss of her head. "Suffice it to say, I have powers of my own. Nothing compared to what you have, of course."

"I think you should try now," he said, staring at her warily. He watched as she crossed her legs, her skirt slipping up and exposing shapely calves.

"My father is Callan Wolfe. He is the head of the Clan of the Wolfe."

He could feel her watching him as if expecting some kind of reaction. "That means nothing to me," he said with a shrug.

"Then perhaps I should go back to that day on the campus when we first met," she said. "Perhaps you'd understand more."

Brady got up from the desk, his body still shaking from whatever she'd done to him. He went and sat in his chair, feeling better with the wide expanse of polished wood between them. "You said I was doing some magic tricks, probably trying to mystify some girl and get into her pants," he said crudely.

"Yes." She smiled serenely, the expression at total odds to the wildness of her hair. "You didn't seem to realize that you were exposing yourself to danger, showing off that way. Then, when I tried to stop you, you laughed at me."

The disgust in her voice made him smile. Back then, when he was drunk on alcohol, power and women, he probably would have laughed and then tried to get her into bed. Did he try? Is that what happened?

"No, we didn't sleep together," she said softly, a chuckle to her voice. "You did try, but my father had his guards around me. They wouldn't have let you get within two feet."

“Back then, I’m not sure that would have stopped me.”

“You don’t know my father’s guards. It’s the only way I could get him to let me go to college at all. He doesn’t believe in a woman leaving the clan until they are mated.”

“Mated? Do you mean married?”

“There’s a bit of difference in the ceremony, but yes.” She waved a hand in front of her face. “But this is not why I am here. And it doesn’t tell you what you want to know. I stopped you from exposing your magic in front of the wrong people. They would have hauled you away, dissected you after years of studying you in a cage; all in the name of science.”

It was Brady’s turn to laugh. “You sound like a friend of mine,” he said shaking his head. “He’s constantly telling me I’m going to end up in a cage.”

“I’ve been in one, Brady. It’s not something to laugh about.” She pushed up the sleeves of her dress, exposing her wrists and scars that surrounded her arms. “They took blood, chaining me when I refused to do as they wished. They performed experiments on me, poking and prodding until I escaped one night. Since then I’ve been in hiding. I can’t go home to my people. I can’t see my parents or sleep in my own bed. I’ve put them all in danger just by still being alive.”

“Why would they put you in a cage, Molly? That doesn’t make sense. I mean, yes, you have power, but...”

“Those powers come from my mother, Brady. She is a powerful white witch, powerful enough to become the alpha female in my clan even though she isn’t one of them. My... my father has his own kind of powers.” She took a deep breath, staring down at her hands before blowing it out audibly. “My father is a werewolf. He is the alpha male of our clan.” She lifted her head, meeting his eyes with her own.

“Your father is a... a werewolf? You mean claws, tail, a snout?”

“Pigs have snouts,” she said disgustedly.

“So if he’s... then you...”

“Yes, I’m part wolf.”

Brady sat back in his chair, eyeing her for a moment. The first burst of laughter hit him hard and he couldn’t control it, coughing into his hand to try to cover it up. “Oh come on. I don’t

know who you are or why you've come in here, but I think you're late for your latest dose of medication."

He missed seeing her rise, wiping his eyes as the bout of laughter had made them water. But he couldn't miss the sound of his name on her lips.

"Brady!" she growled, her voice huskier than normal.

"I-I'm sorry," he stuttered as he tried to get himself under control. He wiped his eyes once more, looking up. "What the..."

She was pulling her dress up and over her head before dropping it to the floor. Tearing off her rings, she dropped them on top of her dress and then pulled off her bracelets. Two quick jerks yanked her earrings out of her ears, to also be dumped on the dress.

Then she was naked, standing in front of him wearing nothing but a single necklace, a pendant in the shape of a pentagram. "My God," he whispered, staring at her. "You are beautiful."

"Shut up and watch," she growled. Tipping her head back, she closed her eyes. A crackle like the sound of creaking bones filled the air.

Brady watched in horror as her body changed in front of his eyes. She bent and twisted, her bones shifting, muscles changing and growing. Her face contorted, her ears moving to the top of her head, turning pointed, her lips thinning and turning black. A muzzle formed, fangs gleaming under curled lips. Red fur grew over her body; a long thick tail grew from the base of her spine.

She snarled once as the final stages of the change took effect, than stood, shaking her body, the long red fur thick and full. Sitting on her haunches, she turned her finely shaped head his way, glaring at him with piercing green eyes, eyes that seemed to ask if he believed her now.

He rose slowly to his feet, coming around from the other side of the desk to stand in front of her, reaching out slowly to touch her ear. She allowed it for a moment, than turned her head, snapping her jaws around his hand, though she didn't touch him with her teeth. "Holy shit!"

She stood, still holding his hand and took him back to his desk, placing him so he was standing with his back to her clothing. When she let go, she yipped at him.

“Okay, okay I won’t look, but jeez, I’ve seen it before just a minute ago.”

She growled, low in her throat, in warning, and then stepped away.

Brady heard the cracking and creaking and a whine, then the sound of her clothing rustling and the clink of her bracelets.

“You can turn,” she said, her voice a little hoarse.

“Okay, I believe you.” He sat down at his desk, feeling as if his knees were about to give out.

“It’s about time.” She sank down on her chair, fixing her rings and refusing to look at him for a moment. “Now will you agree to help me?”

“I don’t know, Molly. I’ve never dealt with anything like... this,” he said, waving his hand at the floor where she’d changed. “I didn’t even believe in it. I don’t know if I believe in it yet. It’s all pretty Bram Stoker.”

She sighed. “You just watched me change and you still don’t believe I am who I say I am? What do I have to do? Eat some chickens? Chase my tail? Howl at the damn moon?”

* * * *

Molly grabbed her jacket off the hat tree in the receptionist area of Brady’s office, pulling it on with angry hands. She was shaking, she was so upset. How could a man with the power that Brady Knight has not be a believer in the other paranormal species in this world?

She’d grown up believing in the things that go bump in the night. Hell, she was one of them. She gathered the huge mass of her hair into her hands, then pulled the hood of her jacket over it, tucking in the stray curls until the only thing that was visible was the tip of her nose. She couldn’t afford to be seen, not if she wanted to stay out of that cage.

A shiver of fear shook her slender body as she remembered the atrocities those men had committed, all in the name of science. How anyone could condone those kinds of things was beyond her. She reached for the door handle. She had enough money to stay one more night at the halfway house. After that...

MAGIC MAN

“Wait a minute,” Brady said from the door of his office. “I didn’t mean to offend you.”

Molly turned and glared at him from under the hood, giving him a look of disbelief. “You called me a liar and you don’t mean to offend me? What did you expect it to do, give me a happy?”

“Come on, Molly. You have to admit that it is a little strange to have a woman seduce me in my office and then strip and turn into a wolf. Don’t you think it would take a little time for the shock of that to wear off? Especially on something as simple and dim witted as a man?” he added, probably trying to make her laugh.

“If you were simple and dim witted, I wouldn’t be here talking to you. You’re my last hope, Brady. I don’t know what to do next. I have nowhere to turn.”

“Why can’t you go to your family?” he asked, slowly coming forward until he could reach and push her hood off.

She shook out her hair, letting it fall in fiery waves behind her. “No, that’s what they’re waiting for. If I go to my parents, they’ll round up as many of us as they can. It’ll be my fault. Mine!” A tear trickled from her eye and she angrily brushed it away.

“Who is looking for you?”

“I can’t tell you,” she said softly. “It’s not your problem. You’ve made your position quite clear.” Another tear fell but before she could brush it away, he wiped it away with his fingertips.

“Come back into my office, Molly. Let’s talk about this a bit more. Tell me what you can and I’ll see what I can do,” he insisted.

“You just hate to see a woman cry,” Molly joked, letting him take her arm and turn her back toward the office.

“Yeah, you got me. It brings out my knight in shining armor side. It also gets me into a hell of a lot of trouble.”

He sat her in the same seat, going back and closing the door. Then he picked up the phone. “I’m starving and since I’m working this is a tax deduction, so what would you say about Italian from the little restaurant down on the corner? They make the best manicotti in town.”

Her stomach rumbled its answer, making him smile. She'd been on the run so long it was hard to remember what real food was like. But she still had one more thing to tell him before she could relax. "Brady," she began, hesitation in her tone. "I-I don't know quite how to tell you this."

"Tell me what?" he said, dialing the number to the restaurant. "Oh, hi," he said, holding his finger up at her.

She sighed in disgust, hearing him ordering dinner for the two that even included dessert. Calculating what money she had in her purse, she realized she'd never be able to pay for her dinner and stay in the motel tonight. "No, wait..." she began, just as he hung up the phone. "Call them back and cancel mine."

"Cancel? But I could hear your stomach grumble from here. You sound as hungry as I feel." He looked at her in confusion. Then it was as if a light went on in his head. "You're on the run. You don't have any money."

It was an accusation and all she could do was nod and try to maintain her dignity by not allowing the tears to fall again. She rose from the chair. "You don't need to say anything more, I can see your answer in your eyes." She turned, pride forcing her shoulders to square and her back to straighten. She was reaching for the door handle when he caught up with her.

"That wasn't an accusation, Molly. That was disgust with myself for not realizing that if you needed my help so badly you were willing to show me your secret, then you must be on the run. Come back. Dinner is my treat. I'll just get a receipt and add it to my deductions this year."

He drew her back in, taking her hand and pulling gently when she balked. When they were both seated, he couldn't help but tease her. "Any other deep dark secrets you need to tell me? Did you kill anyone?" he joked.

Her face went white. She could feel the color rushing out, leaving her light-headed and sick to her stomach. Her hands shook. "Yes," she said quietly, "I did."

Chapter Three

“No, Renee, I’m really exhausted. I had a late meeting with a client and I just want to go home, take a shower and go to sleep.” He paused, listening to the woman on his cell phone, glancing over at the beautiful girl who sat next to him in his car. “No, I’ve had dinner, sweetheart. I’m fine, really. You go ahead and have fun. Tell them hi for me.”

Molly flinched and he knew without asking that she was feeling guilty for taking him away from whatever plans he’d had with Renee. “Yes, me too,” he said into the phone, his eyes flitting from the traffic over to the pale redhead sitting next to him.

When he’d said good-bye, he flipped the phone closed, tucking it back into his pocket. “Don’t worry, Renee’s father is in government and they’re having one of the many dinners so the man can schmooze for money from people to run his campaign. He won’t even realize I’m not there.”

“You don’t need to stay with me,” Molly said quietly. “I don’t plan on running if you plan on calling the cops.”

“Molly, stop it. I’m not going to call the cops, I just think you need to tell me more of what’s going on. I can’t help you unless I know the details. All of them. So let’s start with how they knew what you are.”

“My father owns a huge estate in Colorado and another in Montana. He runs horses and cattle off the one in Montana. The other is a walled and guarded wildlife preserve. It’s where I grew up, well, actually traveling between the two.” She smiled at the memories, a quick gamine-type grin that was gone as fast as it came.

“Let me guess, someone got curious about the wall and decided to see what was on the other side?”

“No.” She shook her head, her fiery curls bouncing. “I was at the ranch. We’d been having trouble with rustlers and someone had killed the new bull my father had bought to give life to our herds. By killed, I mean mauled, half eaten and dumped by the side of the road. I went out to try and scent what kind of animal had done such a thing.”

“By yourself? Shouldn’t you have had someone with you?”

Molly rolled her eyes at him. “I’m a big girl, Brady.”

“Yes, but even big boys can get taken out by guns. Unless...” he paused before adding hesitantly, “Can you be killed by regular bullets?”

Her laughter rolled through the car, full-bodied and rich. Brady couldn’t help but smile.

“What, do you mean silver?” Another stream of laughter poured from her. “No,” she said when she’d caught her breath. “A regular bullet can hurt us, but unless our hearts or brains are completely destroyed, we’re pretty hard to kill.”

“Have you...?”

“Been shot? Yes, four... no wait, five times since I was born. The first time I was but a pup and deserved what I got.”

Brady stared over at the beautiful girl. Hearing her call herself a pup was disturbing in ways too deep to be considered after the day he’d had. Instead, he decided to press on. “So you were out looking for whoever killed the bull your father had bought... What happened next?”

“I’d driven to the site. I could have run there from the house, but it would have wasted precious time. I know I thoroughly checked the area before changing but I guess I must have missed something. Next thing I knew, I had government cars running me down and a tranquilizer dart in my... in my rear end. When I woke, they had me in a cage, a collar locked around my neck and chains holding me in place. I tried to change back so that I could talk to them but...” She stopped talking, turning her face toward the passenger window and staring at the buildings that they were passing.

“But? They hurt you, didn’t they, Molly?” he asked gently, reaching out and taking her hand in his. He felt that same thrill of pleasure, that same connection he’d had when she’d beguiled his mind in his office. “It’s okay, you’re safe. You can tell me.”

MAGIC MAN

“Cattle prods,” she ground out. “They carried cattle prods and the minute I stepped out of line, they zapped me.” She turned around to look at him. “But I got even. There was one man, he was in charge. He liked to use the prod no matter if I deserved it or not. He would smile when I screamed. When I got loose, I took it away from him and shoved it up his ass!” She spoke quickly, forcibly, as if she relished the memory.

Brady flinched at the thought of what a cattle prod up the ass would feel like. “He deserved it, Molly. I don’t blame you.”

“But I killed him, and now they’ll kill me if they find me. And probably anyone who’s helping me. While I was locked in that cage, I remembered seeing you at the college. I remembered the ease with which you did that petty little bit of magic. I had to come and see you, to see if you could help me. You have so much power, Brady. Power and goodness, I can feel it in you. You’re the Magic Man. Will you help me? Please.”

Brady’s jaw moved under his skin as he ground down on his teeth. “I don’t know,” he said slowly.

“Please, God, Brady. They still have my sister. They could be torturing her right now!” A huge tear slipped over her cheek, followed quickly by another and then another. She wiped them away angrily.

“Your sister? You didn’t tell me there was anyone else there.” He slowed to a stop at a red light, twisting in his seat to stare at her.

“In total, if I’m right, there are fifteen others there. I couldn’t see them all, but I could scent them. I would know Tallie’s scent anywhere.” She wiped more tears away, sniffing as she tried to control her emotions. “I don’t know how they got her. She was supposed to be in college.”

“Can you take me back to the place you were being held?” he asked, reaching out and taking her hand. He turned back to the road as the light changed, but kept her hand in his.

“Yes, I can,” she said, sitting up excitedly. “Does that mean you’ll help?”

“Yeah,” Brady said, shrugging. “We’ll go after you get a good night’s sleep and some real food in your system. Do you have things you need to get from someplace?”

“What you see is what you get,” she said.

Brady tried to dismiss the vision of her standing naked in front of him, naked skin gleaming in the light from his desk lamp. It wasn't easy. Especially when she looked at him this way, her lovely green eyes full of hope.

A horn blared behind him and he realized he was barely idling, the car creeping down the street. He tried to concentrate on traffic, for both their safety and his sanity.

"I'm going to call a friend when we get back to my place. He'll be able to help, Molly."

"No," she said quickly, shaking her head. "The more people who know where I am, the more people who can tell where I am. I can't go back to that place."

"Molly, you've got to trust me. If anyone can keep a secret, my friend can."

She pulled her hand away. "Please," she whispered. "I've never begged, not even when they..." she waved away the memory and the words. "But I'll beg if that's what you want. I'll do whatever you want."

Brady could almost taste her terror. It was sour, like a shock of lemon on his tongue. "Settle down, Molly. We'll keep it at just you and me... for now." She relaxed against the leather seat of his car. "I need to know more about the people who held you. Did you hear any names, maybe a phone call? See any kind of badges that might give me a clue if it was an agency that held you?"

"They were government people, Brady. It was a government-run facility. They had badges and white lab coats and came in with their trays and their needles. I swear, they got off on hurting us."

Brady pulled into an underground parking structure, using a small remote to open the large gate. He heard her voice quaver and stop as he pulled into his parking space.

"Did they..." he paused, taking a deep breath and putting his hand on her arm, "Did they rape you?"

"No," she whispered. "But I know they did some of the others. I could hear it. I know I should have tried to help. I'll never forget the screaming from the cage next to me, the women's voice growing ragged as the abuse went on and on. I

MAGIC MAN

curled up into a ball in the corner, buried my head in my arms and begged God to make it stop.”

Her body trembled as she described it. He didn't know if it was from anger, a memory of fear or the shame of having stayed silent. *Most likely a combination of all three*, he thought.

“I could hear it,” she repeated. “I did nothing to help, too terrified that they were going to come to me next. It could have been my sister and all I did was cower in the corner of my cage.”

“Molly, they might have killed you if you did try something. You were lucky to get out.” He squeezed her arm with his hand before getting out of the car, hurrying around to open her door. “Come on, you can get a shower and we can throw your clothes in my washing machine. I think I can come up with something that might not fall off you.”

Molly stared up at his broad-shouldered, tall form, comparing it to her own petite height. “If you have a tee shirt and maybe some socks”

“We'll figure it out, Molly.” He gently took her arm and guided her toward the elevator that would take them to his apartment.

* * * *

Hot water flowed over her body, easing the tremors that had been shuddering through her since Brady asked her if she'd been raped. She hadn't but she might as well have been. She'd been poked and prodded, forced to change from human to wolf until her bones ached, and given drugs to keep her pliable. She still felt withdrawals, the cravings for more of whatever they'd given her. It blurred the edges of her world.

She'd screamed from the pain they'd caused, snarled her fury at her capture as a wolf and prayed in the words of her mother, trying to cleanse her aura, to cast the spells that would release her. But witch or wolf, nothing had worked until they'd gotten sloppy. They thought they had her beaten, thought she would cower with her tail tucked between her legs.

She'd shown him. Even now, the memory of his flesh in her mouth was almost as sweet as sex. The bastard had deserved everything he'd gotten, including the cattle prod. She'd heard the

damage he'd done, the screams of the women; the begging and pleading that had been forced from their proud throats. The clans were nothing if not proud, from the panthers to the rabbits and everything in between.

There had been something else there as well, a tingling of magic that Molly had never felt before. It felt like burnished gold; it spoke of strength and age, of power. Even as she wondered at the source of that power, a single word had erupted in her mind.

“Run!”

She had, hiding when anyone came close. She'd dug under the fences that surrounded the nightmarish compound, ran naked through the night. She'd still been drugged; and collared, a strap of leather around her throat held on with a sturdy lock, too thick for her to break. If it hadn't been for the bus load of old hippies passing through, they'd have caught her again. Caught her and probably killed her.

The collar had held a GPS unit. One of the hippies had picked the lock, releasing her from the hated thing. They'd given her food and clothing, including the dress and jewelry. They'd given her money, despite her protests, and had sent her on her way, taking the GPS unit with them to give her a chance to escape.

She'd come here. Finding Brady had been relatively simple. She'd zeroed in on his powers, for he gave off a white-hot aura easily discernable to a witch of her status. She'd made the appointment, banishing her fear and nervousness and brazenly confronting him. Now if he could help her...

“Molly?” he called from the other side of the door. “Are you okay?”

“Yes,” she called back, picking up the soap. “I'll be out in a moment.”

It was more like ten minutes. She stood before him wearing a tee shirt and sweatpants that engulfed her tiny frame. Her hair hung in russet curls, pulled back and held away from her face by a rubber band.

“I've given you my room, Molly. There's a lock on the door that you can use if it will make you feel safer.” He patted the couch. “I'll be right here.”

MAGIC MAN

“I can’t take your bed.” She started to protest but he shook his head.

“You will. I’ve spent many Sunday afternoons crashed on this couch pretending to watch football. Don’t worry, it’s comfortable.” He smiled as he rose. “I’m going to grab a quick shower and get ready for bed. If you’re hungry, the kitchen is through there.” Then he turned and was gone.

Molly heard the water turn on in the bathroom. Curiosity got to her and she began to look around. A picture on the wall caught her attention. She was blonde, that white-blond hair only a few can pull off without it looking false. She did. Her wide blue eyes were fixed upon Brady’s face, looking hungry and proprietary at the same time.

She was beautiful, there was no denying that. Brady looked down at her, an amused placating look upon his face. They made a handsome couple, one that would have the world at their feet.

Molly wanted to pull her hair out. All of it. One at a time. Slowly.

She moved away from the picture, disturbed by the evidence of Renee in Brady’s life, though she knew she shouldn’t be. Heading toward his bedroom, she opened the door as she heard the water in the bathroom turn off. She slipped inside and headed for the bed. She was climbing under the covers when there was a soft knock.

“Y-yes?”

“Can I come in?” Brady asked from behind the door.

“Of course, it’s your room,” she answered, huddling under the covers.

He was wet from his shower, a simple white towel hugging his lean hips. While not as heavily-muscled as the men of her clan, he had a lean build and wide shoulders. Drops of water clung to his skin, and Molly couldn’t help but wonder if they would taste like him, salty but with a hint of the power that made his aura shine. Even the thick shagginess of his hair made her fingers itch to touch him.

She closed her eyes, pushing a stray curl off her cheek. The urge to change was strong; to turn wolf and celebrate the fact that she was still alive to feel this kind of want, even if wanting him was wrong. She could almost feel the silky sensation of

grass under her paws, the scent of him in her nose, the desire for him making her loins heavy and wet. She wanted to expose her back to him, to submit to him in the ways of her clan.

“Molly?”

Her eyes opened, piercing and glowing in the dim light of the room. She could make out every tiny hair upon his body, the little opalescent dots of water sparkling to her wolfen sight. Unconsciously, she licked her lips, wanting badly to taste him.

* * * *

“Molly?” Brady asked, concerned by the look on her face. She was pale, whether by the fairness of her complexion or because of all she had suffered, he didn’t know. She looked stressed.

When she opened her eyes, they were wild, larger in her wan face. The color of her irises was unreal, a vibrant green glowing eerily in the half light of his room.

“Are you okay?” he asked, taking a small step back.

Her eyes closed and opened again. She was back to normal. “I’m sorry,” she said softly, rising from the bed and taking a step toward him. “It’s hard for me to control since they... well, since they did what they did to me. I hope I didn’t frighten you.”

“Startled,” Brady said, “not frightened. I don’t think you’d hurt me as a wolf. I don’t think you have it in you.”

She came within touching range before she stopped walking, her eyes roaming over him in a way that sent a charge of awareness through his limbs. He felt his cock stir, the memory of what she’d done earlier playing in his mind.

“No, I wouldn’t want to hurt you,” she whispered, reaching out and running her fingers over the drops of water that covered his chest. She brought them to her lips, her tongue lapping as she tasted them. “Mmm,” she hummed.

“Molly,” he breathed. “I can’t do this. I’m engaged to... to...”

“Renee,” she supplied, stepping closer until the tips of her breasts, thinly covered by the plain white tee shirt, brushed against his chest. “Her name is Renee.”

MAGIC MAN

“I know her name,” he snapped, his hands coming up to grasp her arms. Whether he meant to thrust her away from him or not, he didn’t know. The instant he touched her, she plastered her body against him.

“Kiss me,” she begged. “Help me forget.”

She stared up at him, heat and passion in her gaze. He couldn’t look away, bewitched by the pain he saw in the back of her eyes. Reaching down, he lifted her in his arms, laying her gently on his bed. Then he reached for the covers, tucking her in and sitting beside her. “You’d hate yourself in the morning,” he said.

She blinked at his words, stunned.

“Right now, there is nothing I want more than to climb into bed with you and help you forget, Molly,” he sighed, rubbing his hand through wet strands of his hair. “You don’t know how much I’d like to help you, but I can’t. I can sit here with you until you fall to sleep if you want.”

The blush started just above her breasts and flowed up and over her cheeks. She closed her eyes again. “I’ll be fine.”

“Molly, don’t be embarrassed. Trust me, you have nothing to be embarrassed about.” He chuckled, staring down at the bulge that tented out the towel. “I’m the one that should be embarrassed.”

“I was never like this before,” she breathed, her eyes on that bulge. She licked her lips. His eyes devoured the sight of her pink tongue against her even pinker lips.

A moan sat in his chest, heavy and heartfelt, but he refused to give it reign. She was too desirable by half and he needed his wits to keep from hopping in bed with her. But it was hard to forget how those lips had looked wrapped around his hard cock, even if that had only been some kind of mind magic.

“It’s the drugs they gave me,” she said suddenly, sitting up. “They used them to keep me pliant, to keep me from attacking them as soon as they entered my cage. They must have put something else in them, too.”

“Like what?” he asked dumbly, his eyes dropping to where the white tee shirt had absorbed the water from his chest. The wet fabric clung to her, exposing the dark tips of her breasts to his eyes. That moan crept further into his throat, almost begging

to be let loose, and the naughty little imp that had whispered in his ear at lunch was whispering once more, urging him to use his magic.

“I don’t know, you’re the detective. Detect.” She held her arm out to him. “Can’t you do some kind of spell that would show you if some strange compound or drug was in my system?”

“Yeah, it’s called a drug test. We’ll have one done in the morning. I know I can con my connection at the crime lab to help us out.” His eyes dropped once more to her chest and without thought, his finger moved against the towel on his thigh, circling once.

She shivered, her nipple growing taut. But she was distracted by the thought of the drugs. “Cops? They could be looking for me,” she said in a panic.

“It’s okay, these are scientists, not actual cops. Wendy won’t hurt you.” He used two fingers, twisting them on the towel. He was almost able to feel that hard nipple against his fingers. She took a sudden deep breath, staring down at her chest before grabbing for the sheet quickly.

“God, I’m sorry,” she said.

“I’m not,” he said under his breath. “Joseph is right, I’m going to hell.”

“What?” she asked, her eyes narrowing.

“Nothing. Go to sleep, Molly. You have nothing to fear here.” He got up, turning quickly to hide his reaction to her and hurriedly found shorts to wear for sleeping. “I’ll see you in the morning.” He went back into the bathroom and got rid of the towel, pulling on the shorts. Grabbing hold of the edge of the sink, he leaned forward and stared at himself in the mirror.

“She needs your help. Get a grip.”

He turned the lights out as he walked back through the apartment, checked the locks on the door once more and then grabbed the blanket off the back of the couch. Punching the pillow, he laid back, telling himself to relax.

The normally comfortable couch seemed to have grown bumps and bulges. He tossed and turned, trying to find a position that would let him sleep. Finally, after an hour of restlessness, his eyes closed and he slept.

MAGIC MAN

* * * *

He wasn't sure what woke him. Whatever it was had him sitting upright on the couch, instantly aware and alert. His eyes scanned the familiar furnishings of his apartment, searching for the cause of his sudden awakening. Then he heard it.

"Molly," he growled. She screamed again and he rushed for the bedroom, stumbling as the blanket wrapped around his feet. He kicked free. She was sitting up straight on the bed, her eyes wide open, her mouth locked around a scream of fear that was slowly dwindling into the inaudible.

She ignored it when he grabbed her shoulders, seemingly unaware of his touch. He shook her softly, trying to break whatever spell had her so terrified. "Molly! Wake up!" he shouted.

She dissolved into his arms, her shoulders shaking as sobs took her. "They're coming," she managed to get out. "They're using Tallie to track me."

"Tallie? Your sister? How can you know?" He gently pushed her back to look into her eyes.

"She warned me. She's trying to throw them off but if she doesn't find me, they'll kill her. They'll kill her or they'll kill me," she grimaced. "I've got to go." She pushed him away with a strength born of her desperation. "I'm sorry to have involved you."

Brady watched her gather her things, putting her jewelry and everything else she had into one big bag. "You can't just go," he said. "Where will you head?"

"It's better you don't know. That way you can't lie to them." She grabbed his brush off the dresser and pulled it through her hair. She began bundling her tresses on top of her head and grabbed an old hat of his. "Can I borrow this?"

"Molly, stop. You've got to think this through. You aren't making any sense."

She turned, stuffing stray curls under the brim of the baseball cap. Walking over, she bent and kissed his cheek. "Thank you for believing me. I've got to go. I can't put you in danger with them."

WENDY STONE

“Wait a minute. Have you forgotten who I am?” He stood and put his hands on her shoulders. “What was it you called me? Oh yeah, I’m the Magic Man, remember?” He smiled down at her. “I even know where we can go. They won’t dare try to take you from there. Let me get dressed.”

Chapter Four

Molly gasped as Brady pulled into a parking lot. Her eyes moved over the high steepled roofs and the huge cross towering above the beautiful building. Gorgeous stained-glass windows and tall wooden doors decorated the front above six concrete steps.

“We’re going to a church?!”

“Yeah,” Brady said, grinning over at her. “You got a problem with churches?”

“You ever read the part in the bible where it says, Thou shall not suffer a witch to live?” Molly glared at him, crossing her arms over her breasts. “We won’t even get into the church’s views on werewolves.”

“Joe’s going to love you,” Brady laughed, pulling his car into the church rectory’s driveway and putting it into park. “I’ve known Joseph since we were ten. He’s my best friend and knows all about me. *All* about me.”

“I don’t know,” she said slowly, staring at the darkened house behind them. “What’s he going to say when you come knocking on his door at two a.m. with a strange woman looking for shelter?”

“Come in,” Brady said, shrugging his shoulders. “He’s my friend, Molly. He won’t turn us away.” He pulled the keys out of the ignition, nudging her with his hand. “Come on. I promise, he won’t get out his crucifix and try to do an exorcism on you.”

“I just hope he doesn’t decide to melt down some silver candlesticks,” she muttered. Molly opened the car door, scenting the wind with her wolf nose and the surrounding aura with her witchy powers searching for any sign of Tallie or any other kind of danger. She could smell fresh dirt. She turned her head and spotted the cemetery behind the church. A sudden urge to change

took her, a smile coming to her lips as she wondered what Brady would do if she took off, howling through the moonlit cemetery.

“What’s so funny?” he said, grabbing her hand and pulling her along with him.

“Nothing,” she said quietly, a strange sensation emanating from where he held her hand. It was silvery, tingling like wind blowing gently through wind chimes. Her eyes grew wide, her breath caught in her chest and she turned her head, staring up at him.

“Yeah, well, let’s hope Joe has learned how to wake up in a better mood than he did when he was a kid. Otherwise, we both might be getting scolded.” He chuckled at the thought of one of Father Joseph’s lectures, and then pulled her onto the long porch that ran around the side of the building. Reaching out, he pushed the small doorbell button.

It pealed through the building, echoing in the dark.

Brady waited a moment before hitting the button again, this time holding it in longer. A sound came from deep inside the house, like someone stumbling over something. Then the outside light came on above them and the locks on the door turned.

“Dammit Brady, do you have any idea what time it is?” Father Joseph bent over, leaning against the door jam and rubbing his shin. “You could have called first.”

“Oh, and ruin the surprise. Where’s the fun in that? Now behave Joe, I have someone I want to introduce you to.”

Joseph looked up, his eyes lighting on Molly. He smiled at first, but it faded, turning into a tentative frown. “What are you?” he asked, standing up straight to look down at her.

Molly shook her head, her eyes going from the handsome priest to Brady. “I told you. I’m not welcome here.”

“I didn’t say that,” Joseph said.

“Joe, she’s a client of mine and she’s in trouble. We need your help.” Brady dropped his hand onto Joseph’s shoulder. “You wouldn’t turn us away, would you?”

“Good Lord have mercy,” Joseph breathed. “She’s like you, isn’t she?”

“Something like that.” He looked around the dark neighborhood. “Can we come in? I’m feeling a bit exposed out here.”

MAGIC MAN

“Yes,” Joseph said, standing back from the door. His eyes followed Molly as she walked into the house. His hand came up, pushing against Brady’s chest to stop him from following. “There’s something else there too, isn’t there?”

“Do you really want to know?” Brady asked, peering into the dark brown eyes of his best friend. “She needs my help. Mine, and yours too. You can’t possibly think that she can hurt us?”

“You’re doing it again, Brady,” Joe growled, finally letting him into the house.

“Doing what?”

“Drawing me into your espionage.” Joe headed into the living room, turning on lights as he went and leaving them to follow him. “What are you running from?”

“Government types,” Brady said. “Remember what you always warned me of? Well, it’s happening to Molly. They took her and they did tests, locking her away in a cage. Just like you said they would do if they ever caught me.”

“You’re not serious,” Joseph breathed. “I never really thought that it would happen. I just... just used the scenario to try to keep you in line.”

“I knew it!” Brady growled.

Joseph rolled his eyes, pulling his robe closed and tying it. “I need coffee,” he said. “Can I get anyone else some?”

He turned before either of them answered, heading to the kitchen and leaving them alone in the living room of the house.

“I told you he wouldn’t be happy,” Molly said, not bothering to keep her voice down and not caring if Father Joseph heard her or not. “How did he know who I am?”

“You mean what you are,” Brady said. “Maybe because he’s had enough experience dealing with me that he’s used to the way we look or smell or something. I don’t know. You’ll have to ask him.”

“I think we should just get out of here,” she muttered, turning to glance out the window. All she could see was the reflection of herself in the glass.

“Who’s going to expect a werewolf to seek shelter with a priest?” Brady asked her.

“Anyone who knows you and how close you two are,” she threw back.

“Then they know that I would cut off my own arm before hurting anyone I love. I would never put Joe in danger.”

“That’s good to hear,” Joseph said, walking back into the living room with a tray balanced in his hands. “It’s probably too strong,” he said, nodding at the coffee, “but it’s hot as hell and will warm you up from the inside out.” He offered a cup to Molly, who took it and warmed her cold hands against the sides.

“Strong is good,” Brady said, earning a glance from Joseph. “Oh come on, Joe. I really didn’t have much of a choice. They’re hunting her, using her sister to find her. You can’t expect me to just turn her away.”

“We’ll discuss that later. Now we need to come up with a plan. I can let you stay here until morning. Then the church ladies will be here. I don’t know how I’d explain the two of you to them.” He spoke to both but his eyes lingered on Molly, as if he were trying to figure her out.

“I’m part witch, part wolf. Does that help, Father?” she said belligerently. “I know how your kind feels about us. I don’t expect you to go out of your way to help me. Thank you for the coffee,” she said, rising to her feet and setting the cup back on the tray.

“Whoa, wait a second,” Brady grabbed her arm, holding her still even when she turned and growled at him. “Give Joseph a chance, Molly. Don’t just leave.” He stared down into her warm green eyes, feeling that same attraction draw him in, the sense of belonging that startled as well as intrigued him.

He grew lost in that gaze, felt her pull at him until he wanted to draw her into his arms, dip his head and find her lips, so close to his own. He wanted to taste her passion again, feel her burn in his arms as he did in hers.

“Excuse me,” Joseph said, clearing his throat loudly. “Do I get a say in this?”

Brady lifted his head, dazed. He closed his eyes, giving himself a mental shake. “Of course you do, Joe, this is your home.”

“There is a room,” Joe began, sipping from his cup before putting it down on the table. He stood, going to Molly. “It’s safe

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because no one knows of its existence but me.” He stared into her eyes. “Have you ever hurt another human being?”

“Yes,” she said. There was remorse and regret in her tone, mixed with the defiance and terror she’d felt that day. “But never one that didn’t deserve it.”

“Did you kill him?”

“Yes.”

“Do you offer up your remorse to God for what you have done?”

“I don’t believe in your God, Father. I don’t believe in anyone who would allow such terrible things to happen just because someone is different than others. I can’t.” She didn’t drop her eyes, instead letting him see the pain and suffering she’d been through pooled in them.

“Joe, we don’t really have time for all of this. I still have to drop my car off somewhere, throw them off the trail.” He grabbed Joe’s shoulder. “Please, Joe.”

“Come with me,” Joseph said, glancing once more into Molly’s beautiful features. “I don’t know what kind of condition it’s in. I haven’t been down there in quite a while.” He took them through a door and down some stairs into a basement. It smelled moldy and wet, boxes strewn around here and there. Tubs full of church records were scattered, permanent ink on the plastic containers describing the contents. Pushing aside one stack of them, he prodded at the wall, finally finding the small brick that moved when he pushed it. A door swung inwards, a black hole behind it.

Joseph grabbed for an oil lamp and some matches, as well as a couple of flashlights, which were on a shelf in a corner. He handed the lamp and matches to Molly and gave a flashlight to Brady. “Come on, stay close.”

The light from the beams of the two flashlights barely penetrated the darkness. They stepped warily, the floor uneven and rocky. Joseph went first, ducking his head to keep from hitting the low ceiling. He moved with the assurance of one who knew where he was going and wanted to get there, leaving Molly to hurry after him. When she turned to glance back at Brady, her eyes glowed in the dim light, like a cat’s.

“I’m coming,” he said, cursing silently.

The singular room at the end of the tunnel was dark and cold but not damp. It held a wide bed and a small table with one chair. There were no other furnishings to be seen. Molly stood and shivered, uncertainty in her stance.

“Home sweet home,” Joe announced. “I know it’s not much but no one knows of its existence but me. Not even the church ladies will come down here. The bed is made, and I’ll bring you extra blankets. You should be safe here.”

“Thanks Joe,” Brady reached out, hugging his friend. “I knew you’d come through. We’ll only be here for a bit. We’ll try not to make things difficult for you.”

“Yeah, sure you will.” His tone didn’t match his words. His hug was warm and he patted Brady on the back. “There’s a bathroom just on the other side of the stairs. No shower, but it’ll do for now. I’ll bring down some food and coffee and some more blankets as soon as I take care of your car.” He held his hand out for Brady’s keys.

“Just be nice to it,” he said, regretfully handing over the key.

Joseph gave him a wink that made Brady moan and then disappeared through the tunnel and out the other end. They heard the wall scrape back into place and then heard the boxes stacked back in front.

“I’m sorry,” Molly said softly, setting the lamp down on the small table and lighting one of the matches. It flared brightly in the near dark of the room, which was lit only by the flashlight that Brady still held.

“There’s nothing for you to be sorry about,” Brady said. He pulled his cellphone out of his pocket, rolling his eyes at the lack of signal.

“Because of me, you’ve had to give up your life. You’re on the run now as much as I am. If they find you, they’ll torture you to find out where I am. I should never have come to you.” Molly finished lighting the lamp, shaking out the match and dropping it to the table. She sank down into the chair, putting her head in her hands.

“Molly, you needed help. You did the right thing. Tomorrow we’ll figure out where the encampment is and see what we can do about freeing the rest of your people...as well as

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shutting that place down for good.” He stood behind her, his hands on her arms, rubbing gently at her skin.

“You’re cold.”

“I can’t seem to get warm,” she said, shivering. Her teeth chattered and she held her hands around the glass chimney of the small lamp, absorbing as much heat as she could.

“Come with me,” he said, lifting her out of the chair and standing her in the center of the room. “Now don’t move.” He bowed his head, breathing out then taking as much air as he could into his lungs. Blowing it out slowly, he raised his head. His eyes glowed a fiery red and his aura shifted to match, pulsing as it moved from him to her, wrapping her in a cocoon of warmth.

“Oh,” she cried as an almost sexual shiver of heat and pleasure throbbed through and around her. “How are you doing this?” Her nipples grew taut, puckering under the thin material of his tee shirt. She’d grabbed her clothing but hadn’t put it on, coming with him dressed as she’d gone to bed. There was nothing between her skin and the tee shirt and it clung to her body.

Goose flesh covered her and another shudder of pleasure pulsed inside. She was warm, as warm as if she were lying out upon some tropical beach, the sun beating down on her oil-covered skin. “That’s wonderful,” she sighed.

“Glad I could help,” he said, pulling aside the blankets and sinking down on one side of the wide bed. “We should try to get some sleep. Daylight will be here soon.” He kicked off his shoes, leaving his jeans and shirt on. Lying back on the bed, he motioned her towards him. “You have to be exhausted, Molly.”

“I am,” she said hesitantly, standing slowly and moving toward the bed. “We’re adults, right?”

Her question brought a smile to his lips. “Yes, Molly, we’re adults. Nothing is going to happen except sleep.” He yawned.

She kicked off her shoes, sitting gingerly on the bed. With a sigh, she laid back, curling onto her side with her back to him. “Good night,” she whispered.

“Night Molly,” he said, closing his eyes.

* * * *

Brady hadn't been asleep very long before a noise woke him. *Footsteps*. Someone was in the basement outside of the tunnel.

"What's... mmmph."

He slapped his hand over Molly's mouth. "Quiet," he whispered.

They lay in bed, listening to the heavy footfalls, neither speaking. Molly didn't realize she was holding her breath until she got dizzy. She pulled Brady's hand from her mouth. "Is it them?" she hissed.

"I don't know." He turned his head, looking down at her. It was pitch black in the small room and he couldn't see two inches in front of his face. Every noise seemed amplified and he could hear the scraping on the floor as boxes were moved. Dipping his head, he tried to find Molly's ear, wanting to whisper a warning.

Instead, her warm lips touched his. The surprise kept him still, lips pressed to hers. Heat surged through him, the taste of her seeping into his mouth. He moaned, the low sound coming from deep inside. He'd never felt this way, not with any woman; not even with Renee.

The thought of his fiancée should have sent him flying out of the bed, but he stayed. For some reason, the connection of this moment with Molly seemed more vital, more alive than anything he'd ever felt with Renee.

His hand slid over her skin, cupping her cheek in his palm. He twisted his head, parting her lips with his, felt the tip of her tongue licking at his mouth. Sensation exploded through him; heat, want, desire, all wrapped up in a huge ball of need that lodged in his belly. He felt his cock, rigid against the zipper of his jeans, pulsing with each rapid beat of his heart.

Brady shifted, pulling her under him. His hand went to the hem of the tee shirt she wore. He pulled on it, feeling her lift so that he could take it over her head, leaving her naked from the waist up. "I wish I could see you," he whispered.

Molly lifted her hands, cupping his face. "Close your eyes," she whispered back.

A tiny tingle, like leftover static electricity, flooded him from her hands. Then, almost like a movie inside his head, he

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could see her. Fair skin seemed to gleam over the rounded mounds of her perfectly formed breasts, large enough to fill his hands, tips reddened and eager for his mouth and his caress. His sweats were tied tightly around her tiny waist, clinging precariously above her lush hips.

When he looked into her face, her eyes were on his. There was a curious expression in them, one he wasn't sure he wanted to decipher. She almost seemed afraid of him, though the touch of her hands on his skin betrayed that impression. It was only in her eyes, in the lovely green irises that glowed with a fire he wanted to taste. "I don't want to scare you."

"You won't," she whispered, lifting her head from the pillow to find his mouth. It was a tentative kiss at first. He truly didn't want to scare her. But her passions pulled at him and his hands found her breasts, filling his palms with her seductive curves. He traced his fingers over her nipples, feeling them harden more as the skin around them grew taut.

He tore his mouth from hers, taking her hands and placing them on his chest. "Take off my shirt," he ordered. He felt her fingers fumble with the buttons, their uncertainty arousing him even more. His mouth moved over her throat. She arched her head back, giving him better access to the sweetness of her skin. He breathed in her scent, vanilla and the warm scent of arousal making his head spin.

* * * *

Molly slid her hands across the smooth flesh of his stomach, her fingers wandering over the hard muscles, moving upwards to his wide chest. His nipples were hard, like tiny pebbles, and she scraped her nails over them, hearing him moan.

His mouth felt like fire against her throat, his tongue lapping at the rushing pulse at the base of her neck. She stirred under him, wanting more, wanting all of him. A low moan rose to her throat but she stopped it, still aware of the noises outside the rock wall that hid their sanctuary.

Using her palms, she pushed his shirt off his shoulders, sliding her hands down his muscled arms until the shirt was

around his wrists. He tugged the sleeves off, his chest firm against her naked breasts.

“You feel so good,” she moaned softly, arching her back to press against him harder.

“So do you,” he whispered. His hands, freed from the sleeves, slid down her sides and over her hips. “I want you.”

Molly thought she'd go up in an explosion of heat at his words, leaving only a puddle of desire in her wake. Her hands moved over him, her legs sliding up until she could wrap them around his jean-covered ass. She wanted to feel him against her; all of him, not the scratchy denim against her sweats.

Her fingers went to the waistband of his jeans, tugging at the first button until it came undone. She felt him draw in a sharp breath as the muscles in his stomach convulsed against her fingers. The second button came free more easily, leaving a tiny vee opening. She pushed against his shoulder, rolling so that she could rise above him, anxious to get her hands on his heat.

A sharp tug had the last of the buttons loose in the well-worn denim. She spread each side apart, seeing the heavy ridge that ran up the length of his boxer briefs, taut fabric outlining his girth.

“Oh, nice,” she breathed, tracing the heavy ridge and the long shaft with one finger. A small damp spot appeared at the top of the ridge, staining the fabric of his briefs. Molly caressed him with her eyes, over the edge of his jeans, up his muscled stomach and chest to his eyes.

They seemed to flicker with red flames, their melted chocolate color almost lost in his want of her. It was a heady feeling, one that made her suck in a sharp breath of her own. “You do want me,” she whispered.

Coming to her knees, she grabbed the ties to his sweats in both hands. A slow pull had the bow undone. A little shimmy and the soft, much-washed fabric slid down her legs. She was naked underneath. Reaching out, she found his hand and pressed his palm to her flat stomach. She guided it lower, hearing him moan when he felt the soft red curls that covered her sex.

His fingers slid between her swollen lips and into heat. Her wetness coated his fingertips as he found the small button of her clit, swirling his finger around that small piece of flesh. Molly

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shook under his gentle attack, barely able to stay still. She finally pulled his hand free, bringing it to her lips and sucking her juices from his long fingers.

Brady's head came up due to a sudden loud squeak; his eyes tried to penetrate the dark, to see what was causing the noise. He reached out, grabbing Molly around her slender waist, pulling her down behind him. "Stay there," he whispered.

Molly felt the bed move as he got up. Yanking up the sweats, she searched for her shirt, finding his instead. She threw it on quickly, buttoning the top two buttons before going to find him. Using her wolf senses, she could see in the dark much more easily than he could and she spotted him sneaking up the dark tunnel, his hand on the wall to guide his way.

She followed, staying one or two steps behind him the entire way, not wanting to scare him. When they reached the brick wall, Brady put his ear against it, listening to see if he could hear any noise.

Molly reached out, letting her senses flow. She felt the presence of another on the other side of the wall. He was centered in the basement, standing still.

"There's only one," she whispered, putting her hand on Brady's arm.

He jumped, cracking his head on the wall with a dull thud. Turning, he caught her arm, whispering furiously. "Don't ever do that again."

"I'm sorry. I thought I could help."

"You can, now shush," he whispered, willing his heart to slow back to its normal beat. He touched his head, feeling the scrape where he'd hit the wall. It was wet with blood. "Great," he mumbled.

Footsteps approached their hiding place, and Brady reached behind him, grabbing Molly's hand and giving it a squeeze. She squeezed back, knowing he wanted her quiet. They stood like that in the dark, waiting for the door to be pushed open and their hiding place revealed.

* * * *

“I heard something,” Francis Derrick said into the small walkie-talkie.

There was a squawk of static before a man’s voice responded. “Where?”

“I’m in the basement,” Derrick said, glancing around the large room. “But there’s nothing here. I know I heard something though.”

“Maybe you’ve got ghosts.”

“Ha ha, very funny.” Derrick stuck the walkie-talkie back into his belt and made his way to where he’d heard the noise. He prodded at the stack of bins against the wall, searching through them as if the girl they were looking for could possibly be inside. Pushing them aside, he got out his flashlight and moved it over the wall.

“What the hell are you doing?”

Derrick jumped, turning to see another of his group. “Checking on the wall. I swear I heard a noise.”

“Maybe we should bring that thing down to sniff around. She led us here.” The order was relayed and the two men stepped back as another came down, this one with a small red wolf on a leash at his heels.

The animal lifted her head, her intelligent green eyes incredibly sad. Derrick couldn’t help but feel a pang of sympathy for the strange beast.

“Is your sister down here?” the man holding the lead asked, tapping his leg with the small cattle prod used to keep the bitch in line.

Tallie lifted her head, her sister’s scent fresh in her nostrils. A long lonely howl emerged from her mouth. Its eerie tones freaked Derrick out and he found himself backing away from the wolf.

A sadistic expression came over the face of the man that held Tallie’s lead. He brought around the prod, hitting the button that sent lightning sparking between the two electrodes. “Do you want more of this, bitch?” Tallie scuttled away, her tail between her legs, as far as the lead in the man’s hands would allow. “I didn’t think so. Now do what we brought you here for and find your bitch of a sister. I owe her.”

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Tallie raised her finely-shaped head once more, her nose moving as she scented the air. She walked slowly, hampered by the lead that was so tight around her throat. Going to the wall, she sniffed carefully, finding the line of the door easily. Whining just a little, she moved away, going to the next space and then the next until she came to the wall under one of the small windows that lent scant light to the basement.

She lifted her head and howled again, a lonely mournful sound.

“That window ain’t big enough for a man to go through,” Derrick said as his boss reeled in Tallie. “That wolf must be on drugs.”

“No, we took her off the drugs for this,” the man said. “She knows better than to cross me. Molly must have been here and gone.” He jerked the lead, the collar biting into Tallie’s throat. She yelped, cowering before him.

* * * *

“Tallie,” Molly gasped, hearing her sister yelp. “They’re hurting her.” She shoved at Brady, trying to get by him, desperate to get to her sister.

“No, Molly, stop.” He grabbed her waist, pulling her back down the tunnel even as she fought him. “Stop, Mollie!” he whispered furiously. He slapped his hand over her mouth, holding her against him until she quit struggling. Leaning against the tunnel, he listened for noise that would suggest they’d been found. When he heard nothing, he slumped, loosing her mouth.

“They hurt her,” Molly whispered, tears streaming down her face. “They hurt my sister and I couldn’t do anything to help her.”

She turned in his arms, burying her face in his neck. “It should have been me.”

“No, Molly, don’t say things like that. We’ll get her back.” He stroked her shoulders, rubbing gently. “I promise, we’ll figure out a way to save her and the rest of them.” He pushed one hand into her hair, her head falling back to look up at him.

“Kiss me,” she whispered. “Make me forget what’s going on.”

“Molly,” he whispered, his other hand coming up to cup her cheek, drawing her up to her toes, his mouth finding hers. Sweet heat slammed through her as her arms wrapped around his neck, pulling him closer. A moan of need erupted from her throat, a sound that was almost begging.

He lifted her, letting her legs wrap around his waist, his jeans still unbuttoned. He moved in the direction he thought the bed was, stumbling over a rock and almost falling. Molly groaned, feeling him rub against her.

He tore his mouth from hers, looking around wildly in the dark.

“That way,” Molly whispered, tugging on his arm. She found his neck with her mouth, running her lips down over the thick muscles to his shoulder, nipping at his flesh. Her tongue lapped at his skin, tasting him. She ran her hands over his chest and across his back, her nails lightly scratching.

“God, Molly,” he moaned, dropping onto the bed with her over him. “You’re going to drive me nuts.”

Her hair draped over his chest, a silken caress that was unbelievably sensual. Her lips followed, finding his nipple and suckling it. His hands were on her waist, sliding up and under his shirt, cupping her breasts. She moaned.

She moved out of his reach, sliding down his body, rubbing against the bulge of his cock. Her tongue tickled his stomach causing him to suck in a breath and making her laugh. It was a wicked chuckle, both sensual and erotic.

Her hand slid inside the opening of his jeans, slipping under the waistband of his boxers. She curled her hand around him, stroking gently with almost too little pressure, making him growl.

“You tease,” he said, reaching down and grabbing her hair, yanking her up to him. His mouth engulfed hers, his tongue playing with hers. Her hand was still in his pants, fondling the soft head of his cock before stroking downward, going as far as she could before the denim fouled her way.

“Take these off,” she ordered, lifting her head.

He struggled with his jeans, finally pushing them over his bare feet. His boxers followed, leaving him naked in the cold of

the basement room. He shivered, drawing her over him, his hand in her hair to bring her closer. "Warm me up."

"Gladly," she murmured before finding his lips. She laid on top of him, still clothed, his hands tunneling under her shirt and into her sweat pants. She kissed, pouring every drop of passion that he made her feel into it, feeling the beast in her wake and howl its pleasure. Her teeth grew, her eyes shone and still she couldn't stop. She wanted him more than she'd ever wanted any man before.

With an inhuman growl, she rose, stripping off his shirt. Her fingers tangled in the strings holding up the sweats, tearing at them until the sweats loosened around her waist. She stripped them off, naked as she laid over him once more.

Brady groaned, passion eating at him with an almost painful force. He wanted to touch her, to lose himself in her sweetness and in the desire he felt running through her. He spoke a few words, words unlike anything she'd heard before and a small glow of light rose in the corner, illuminating them in its softness.

"You're beautiful," he groaned, staring at her as she sat above him. Even the fangs that he could barely see the tips of didn't detract from the picture; her body gleaming palely, her breasts high and firm, the nipples like hard little berries waiting for his mouth. Her waist was slender, her hips lush with that pelt of red fur which drew him like a moth. Her legs were long, firmly muscled, sensually soft.

"You make me feel that way," she whispered, flipping her hair from her face.

She rose above him, her hand on his cock, guiding it into her sheath. Slowly she lowered her body, letting him feel her heat and the wetness he'd provoked. His groan made her growl; his fingers digging into her thighs made her moan. The beast inside of her wanted to howl, to lose herself in the sensations of their bodies joined together.

A strange feeling came over her, an awareness that this time wasn't like any other time she'd been with a man. It started as a prickling heat deep inside, rising like a tide until her body was suffused with the sensation. She could feel his pleasure, feel his desire, feel how she felt around him. Staring down at him as she began to move, she knew.

Her hands rested against his chest, her body rising and falling quickly. His hands were on her hips, guiding her, helping her. They dug in, that bit of wildness pushing her ever onward, desperate.

“Come here,” he growled, his hands going round her waist, pulling her down to where he could reach her. She found his mouth, his tongue plunging between her lips, dueling with hers. Then he pulled her up further, finding the reddened tip of her breast and suckling it into his mouth.

“Brady!” she cried, feeling his hips moving under her, his cock sawing in and out of her wetness, slapping their bodies together. She dug her fingers into his shaggy hair, holding him.

He sat up, his mouth moving from one taut tip to the other, his hands pushing her breasts together, mauling them in his eagerness to please.

It was too much. She closed her eyes, her head back as she plunged against him. She could feel his need, the pleasure boiling inside of him. Growling low in her throat, she moved against him harder, crying out as she felt him begin to come inside of her, filling her.

Sensation burst inside and she bit down on his shoulder to keep from screaming her pleasure. He grunted at the pain then cried out her name, dragging her down hard, holding her to him.

Falling back on the bed, Brady pulled her with him. His chest heaved as he fought to catch his breath. He could hear her struggling as well and smiled even as his hands stroked over her back.

“Are you okay?” he panted, pushing wet strands of her hair away from her face.

“I’m not dead?” Molly asked, panting as her body shivered with left-over spasms of pleasure.

“No. Well, not unless I am too,” Brady joked.

A voice came from just beyond the light Brady had made, startling both of them. “I’d say you both look pretty healthy.”

Chapter Five

Molly gasped as Brady rolled off of her, grabbing for the blanket to cover her naked body. “Who?”

Father Joseph stepped out of the shadows, his hands full of supplies for them. “I have to admit, I’m shocked at you, Brady. I never thought to see the day where you’d cheat on Renee.” He set the food on the table, turning his head to watch as Brady pulled on his jeans. “You are planning on telling her, aren’t you?”

“I think we have more serious matters than my relationship with Renee, Joe. Who were those men?” He buttoned up his fly and grabbed his shirt, shrugging it on.

“They were government men. They tried to tell me that I had a gas leak, but I knew they weren’t from the gas company. They didn’t give me much choice though. I had to let them down here. I have no doubt that there are at least two of them outside my house now, watching for you. They had a dog--” Joe paused, turning to look at Molly, “—or maybe a wolf with them. I didn’t get much of a look at it.”

“At her,” Molly said. “You didn’t get much of a look at her. My sister, Tallie. The government men are using her to find me. She led them on a false trail.” Molly dropped her eyes, staring at the hands that were clutching the blanket to her chest. “They hurt her.”

Brady sat on the bed next to her, letting his hand rest on hers. “We’ll find her and free her, Molly. I promise.”

“How?” she said, looking up at him, tears glistening in her beautiful green eyes. “We can’t even get out of here.”

“Yes, you can,” Father Joseph said. “Come here Brady, help me.” He walked to the far corner of the room. “I know it’s here, I’ve just never been able to find it.”

“Find what?” Brady asked, coming up behind Joe.

“There’s another tunnel here. I’ve never been able to find the door but I know it’s here. The tunnel goes to the church. I never found the entrance over there either, but I was told about it.” Joseph began pushing different stones. “The father before me said that they used to run slaves through here. It’s part of the Underground Railroad from Civil War days.”

“Move out of the way,” Brady said. “Let me try.”

Closing his eyes, he took two deep breaths. When he opened his eyes, they flickered with the same red fire Molly had seen when they’d made love. She gasped, feeling his magic as it flowed out of him, touching the stones, touching her.

It flowed over her and she gasped, her eyes closing, her head tipped back. A low moan was the only sound she could make.

Brady heard that sound. It drew him, making him want to forget about doors, forget about Father Joseph, forget about anything and everything but being inside of her again. His concentration wavered before he gave himself a mental shake. They had to find the tunnel to the church.

Molly rose from the bed, dragging the blanket with her. She tucked it around her toga style, walking on the rough concrete floor with her bare feet. Her hair fell in long curls, fiery in the dim light.

She heard Joe gasp in shock, but the witch inside of her, the woman inside of her was too intent to pay attention to him. Her eyes were on Brady, and she felt her magic rise, filling her as it had never done before. Taking Brady’s hand, she combined her powers with his.

The door opened, grating loudly in the silence, pushing through layers of cobwebs left by the eight legged residents of the tunnel. Inside was a dark passage, gloomy and unwelcoming.

Molly felt depleted. It was like nothing she’d felt before; her witchly energy had pulsed wildly, focused by Brady to perform the task. She took one step, her knees shaking, and fell.

Brady caught her, lifting her easily into his arms. “Are you okay?” he asked, carrying her to the bed that they’d just shared.

“That was... awe inspiring,” she finished. “I’ve never felt anything like it. It was almost sensual, the way your magic felt.”

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Her hand came up, fingers tracing over his face as if trying to memorize it. “It was amazing.”

Brady smiled, sitting down next to her. “Glad you enjoyed it,” he said with a leer, making her laugh.

“If you two are through, we should go make sure that tunnel is clear.” Joseph stood, his arms crossed over his chest, trying to give them a disapproving air. It didn’t work.

“You stay here, Molly.” Brady slipped on his shoes and picked up one of the flashlights. He also lit the lamp. “We’ll be right back.”

Molly watched them walk away, snuggling into the blanket.

* * * *

“You know we need to talk about this,” Joe said, as he pushed through a large cobweb. “You have to figure out how you feel about what just happened.”

“The magic? I’m cool with the magic, Joe. You know that.”

“No, Brady, don’t piss me off. You know perfectly well what I’m talking about.” Joe turned his flashlight so the beam caught Brady in the face. “I’m talking about what I just walked in on.”

“Yeah, I know.” Brady rubbed a hand across his face, the whiskers gritty against his skin. “I don’t know how it happened, Joe. One minute we were listening as those men hurt her sister and the next, we were in bed.”

“How was it?” Joe asked, chuckling when Brady looked at him in shock. “You know what I mean, how did she compare to Renee?”

Brady stopped dead in his tracks. “Is this why I’m not getting the usual lecture you throw at me whenever you think I’ve crossed the line? You think Molly is the one for me and that I should dump Renee, don’t you?”

It wasn’t really a question, it was a statement, but Joe answered it anyway. “Yes, I do. I’ve seen you around Renee. You always have this look of long-suffering exasperation on your face. Your eyes don’t follow her when she moves away from you. You don’t glow around her. But with Molly, it’s not a

glow, it's a shine. You can't keep yourself from looking at her and you touch her every chance you get."

Brady was quiet, his mind whirling as he tried to grasp what Joe was saying. "Are you insinuating that I'm in love with Molly? Come on, Joe, I've only known her a little over fourteen hours."

"Sometimes it takes less than five minutes to recognize your soul mate." Joe pushed through another cobweb, using his flashlight to rip it in two. "Some people never find theirs. You should be grateful for the chance to be with yours."

"I never thought I'd see the day you condoned me sleeping with a woman not my wife, much less telling me she's my soul mate." Brady shook his head, rolling his eyes. "You don't believe in that hokey nonsense, do you?"

"Did you ever wonder why I dropped out of college and joined the seminary?" Joe asked, glancing back at Brady.

"I always figured it was because you got the 'calling,'" Brady said. "It wasn't?"

"Partly," Joe said, grimacing as he forced himself to remember that time in his life. "Do you remember Angelique Saxton?"

"Long blonde hair, eyes the color of the sky, tanned and sexy as hell," Brady answered. His eyes narrowed. "Didn't she die, some kind of automobile accident?"

"Yes," Joseph said quietly. "A drunk driver came out of nowhere and t-boned the car into a telephone pole. Angie was alive for four hours while they tried to cut her out of her car. She screamed. God, her screams were horrible. I still dream about them."

"Joe, you mean to tell me that..."

"Angie was on her way to meet me when she died, Brady. We were going to tell her family that we were engaged. She was supposed to pick me up. When she didn't show up, I tried calling her than I started walking, figuring I'd find her with a flat tire or something. I didn't even recognize her car when I saw it."

Brady dropped his hand onto Joe's shoulder, squeezing. "God, I'm so sorry, Joe. Why didn't you tell anyone?"

"You were busy trying to get into every girl's pants you could. Besides, what Angie and I had, it was so special, so

wonderful that I was afraid. Afraid that if anyone knew what I'd found in her, they'd take it away. And they did just that. It was only my faith in God, my belief in him that kept me going. I... I can still feel her blood on my hands, feel her squeezing my hand. I watched her die and there wasn't a damn thing I could do about it. She was my soul mate, Brady, and I watched her die without doing a damn thing."

"You were with her, Joe. You held her and made sure she wasn't alone when she died. That means a lot."

"But it wasn't enough."

"So you pledged your life to the church, became a priest to hide your pain behind a collar?"

"That's not what I'm doing," Joe said quickly. "I looked for salvation through Christ. I gave my life to God because... because..."

"Because what?" Brady pushed. "Because you were too afraid to try again? Because you couldn't face me or anyone else to help you with your pain? Because you were running away?"

"We aren't having this conversation," Joe said, turning away from Brady and walking down the dark tunnel.

"So now you're too scared to talk to me." Brady pushed through the cobwebs and hurried to catch up with his friend. "You're still running away. Did you ever think there might be more than one woman out there for you? Many people lose spouses and go on with their lives, finding someone new to fill that hole."

Joe turned, his eyes fierce in the beam of the flashlight. "I didn't want anyone else, dammit! Don't you understand that? Angie was my everything. I didn't want to find someone new to take her place in my heart. The only thing that kept me going after she died was my faith that, if I believed in God enough, I'd be with her again in heaven."

"So instead of letting me help you through this, you packed up and left, running to the seminary school. You turned your back on your friends and went to God."

"Yes." Joe shrugged. "I couldn't tell you, Brady. I was a mess. I wanted to tell you, but every time I opened my mouth, it wouldn't come out."

The men reached the end of the tunnel, finding a short ladder which led to a trap door. Brady grabbed Joe's arm before he could climb the ladder. He pulled his friend into his arms, hugging him fiercely.

"I'm sorry," he said. "I'm sorry I wasn't there for you."

"It's okay, Brady. I know if I told you, you'd have been there in a heartbeat." He patted his friend on the back. "Come on, let's get this done so you can get back to *your* soul mate."

* * * *

Being alone in the cold, gloomy cell-like atmosphere of this room was definitely getting to her. Molly got up, hugging herself under the blanket she had wrapped around her. She shivered; spotting her clothes on the floor, she put them on, wishing she had a pair of socks for her feet.

The pile of foodstuffs and bottled water caught her attention and she went to the table, sorting things. It was a way to keep busy and to be organized, a trait she learned from her white witch mother.

She found a bundle that held clothes and almost squealed in delight when she spotted the thick white socks on top. Clutching them to her chest, she sank down on the side of the bed, snuggling her cold feet into the warmth of the socks.

She picked up a bottle of water, opening it to sip. Then she went to the doorway, peering down the long tunnel to see if there was any light.

"There you are!"

Molly managed to get out one good scream as the man grabbed her from behind. Then he slapped one hand over her mouth while picking her up around the waist. She fought silently, using both her nails and her feet to beat on the man. Her struggles grew more frantic as the man pinched her nose closed, his hand still tight over her mouth so that she couldn't breathe.

She tried to free herself, using her elbows, her feet, anything to hurt the man enough that he would let go of her nose and give her lungs the precious air they craved. As a last resort, she started to change, her muzzle growing, her teeth changing to

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fangs. She bit the man, his blood filling her mouth, the coppery scent of the stuff in her nose.

He screamed and released her, pulling out the long handled cattle prod that they liked to use. “Fucking bitch,” he screamed. “This will teach you to bite me.”

Molly was in mid-change, the clothes she was wearing hampering her agility. She tried to run, but the socks she’d been so thrilled to find tangled around her paws. She fell on her side.

Brady! she screamed in her mind as she felt the pointed electrodes touch her skin.

* * * *

Brady stopped climbing, staring down the long tunnel over his shoulder. “Did you hear that?”

“Hear what?” Joe asked, waiting patiently for Brady to continue up the ladder. “I didn’t hear anything.”

“I swear I heard a woman screaming,” Brady said, shaking his head.

“I didn’t hear anything.” But he glanced back down the dark tunnel too. “I could go check.”

They both stood silently, listening intently for any more noise. When there was nothing more, Brady kept moving and finally reached the trap door. The metal bars that had locked it were rusty and stiff from long years of non-use. The metal grated and screeched as he pulled them. He was pushing the door open when he felt it.

Brady!

It was so loud in his mind that he almost fell from the ladder, the trap door slipping out of his grasp as he held his head. “Shit,” he cried, grabbing onto a rung of the ladder. “She’s in trouble. Joe, we’ve got to go back.”

“How do you know?”

“Talk later,” he growled, his head still spinning from the force of her call. He jumped from the ladder, racing back the way they’d come, flashlight off.

* * * *

Molly tried to scream again as the man shocked her, but her body was beyond her control, her muscles quivering in spasms of pain. Her mouth was open but no sound came out. Her four legs shook terribly, extending straight out from her body. Then the pain was gone and she could breathe again, though parts of her still quivered in literal aftershock.

She stumbled to her feet, turning to face the man with the prod. Unsteady, she knew she wouldn't be successful attacking him and running was almost impossible. Even as a wolf, the stuns she received from the prods would make it difficult for her to do anything. She slunk back, teeth bared in a snarl, her tail between her legs.

"Come on, nice girl, come here girl. Just step a little closer and I'll get the noose on you and we can get out of this damn place." He held the pole steady in one hand, the other on the trigger of the stunner.

Molly growled from deep in her chest. Her fur was thick but it didn't protect her from the prod. *Brady! Help me!* she screamed in her mind, snapping at the noose at the end of the pole. She got it in her teeth, shaking her head, trying to tear it away from the armed man.

* * * *

Brady skidded to a halt at the end of the tunnel, not sure what he would find in the small room. He heard growling and snarling and a strange male voice.

"Good girl, just a little more."

Holding his hands together, he slowly pulled them apart. Between his palms, a red glow started to form. A circle of spinning flames grew to the size of a basketball.

Molly yelped, and Brady stepped into the room, holding the globe of flames in his hands. He saw a man dressed all in black, pants tucked into combat boots. He had a knife at his waist, a nine millimeter pistol in a holster on his belt. In his hands, he held a cattle prod and a long pole with a loop at the end. The loop was in Molly's mouth and she was trembling. As he watched, the man put the electrodes to her skin and pulled the small trigger.

MAGIC MAN

“Leave her alone!” he shouted, throwing the globe at the man.

The flames enveloped him. He screamed, dropping the cattle prod and the pole to beat at the flames on his clothing.

Molly stood, spitting out the loop. She reached down and picked up the cattle prod with her teeth, crushing it in her powerful jaws.

Brady grabbed the man, yanking his pistol from the holster even as he helped put him out. Setting the scorched man down on the chair, he put the pistol in his face. “Don’t give me the excuse, because I really want to pull this trigger.”

The man gulped and held still.

“By all that’s holy,” Joe exclaimed, entering the room. “Here.” He handed Brady a coil of rope from the pile where Molly had found the socks. Brady immediately began tying Molly’s attacker to the chair.

“What are you going to do with him?” Father Joseph asked, helping him wrap the man in rope.

“I’m going to question him. Then I’ll let Molly decide his fate. She was the one he hurt.”

Molly growled ominously, her green eyes never leaving the man. Her long tongue slicked over her lips, as if she were trying to decide how he would taste.

“No,” the man shook his head. “You can’t do that. She’ll kill me.”

“If that’s what she wants, I’m all for it,” Brady said, shrugging. “Now you’re going to answer some questions for me and then maybe I can talk Molly out of making you a meal.”

Molly pushed against Brady’s leg, creeping closer to the man in the chair. Her eyes lit up and she snapped at his leg, barely missing flesh and bone as she tore his charred pants in her teeth.

“Okay, okay, just keep her back,” the man cried. He tried to move his leg but it was tied too tightly. “I don’t know what I can tell you.”

“We can start with your boss.” Brady said, reaching down and stroking his hand in Molly’s fur.

“His name is Dr. William Parnell.”

Molly growled at the name, her startling green eyes growing even more fierce and focused. She stood against Brady's side, letting his stroking hand calm her.

"What agency does he work for?"

"He doesn't work for an agency. The man is rich, he does all of this on his own. Do you realize how long a lifespan these wolves have, not to mention the other animals he's got in his lab?"

"What does their lifespan have to do with torture and imprisonment?" Father Joe asked, stepping a little closer.

"Dr. Parnell is working to find a way to take what is in their DNA that makes them live so long and inject it into a normal human. He would be able to lengthen anybody's lifespan."

Molly growled, nudging Brady's leg. Brady looked down into her eyes. "I don't know what you want," he said, frustrated.

"I do," Father Joseph said. "She wants to know how a flunkie like you could possibly know all this. Does he trust just anybody with the knowledge of what he hopes to accomplish?"

"I work in his lab. I guard the animals." He paused as Molly let loose a snarl and surged forward "No! Don't let her..."

"Then don't call her kind animals," Brady growled, wanting to hit the man himself.

"I'm sorry, really sorry," he cried, trying to make his body small enough that she couldn't get him. He jumped when her huge white fangs snapped closed next to his crotch. Shrieking, his feet slammed against the floor, knocking the chair over.

Brady gave a cruel grin that sent chills up the man's spine as Brady righted the chair. The man was almost blubbing.

"Oh, stop it, she didn't hurt you," Brady snapped. "I want to know where this lab is."

"J-j-just o-outside of W-Wolverine, off h-h-highway t-ten," the man stammered. "I-it's up in t-the woods."

"You can find it?" Brady asked Molly, seeing the answer in her eyes. "Okay, now we know where we have to go. But what should we do about him? We let him go and he'll be running back to this Parnell."

"Let me deal with him," Joe said. "I'll make sure he sees the error of his ways. He won't be a threat."

MAGIC MAN

“Oh God, you aren’t planning on giving him one of your world famous lectures, are you? Those should be banned by the Geneva Convention as cruel and unusual.” Brady chuckled when Joe narrowed his eyes.

“When you get back, you’ll get your own lecture, my son. So shut the hell up.” He smiled when Brady laughed. “What are you going to tell Renee?”

That sobered Brady up. “It’s a case. She’ll understand.”

“But will she understand what I found you two doing in here earlier?”

Brady glanced down at Molly, who seemed absorbed in watching her two front feet. He almost swore he could see a smile on her wolf face. “I don’t want to talk about that,” he said quietly.

Joe smirked. “I brought down some clean clothes. They get donated to the church all the time and we hand them out to the needy in the area. I can’t think of anyone needier right now. Molly should get dressed and then we can see where that other tunnel comes out.”

They waited while she changed, going down the tunnel for privacy. Brady stood close to the end of the tunnel, holding clothes. He could hear the creaks and crackles of her bones, hear her moan as she changed back to a woman. He couldn’t help but think of what had happened earlier in bed. She was amazing, free spirited and wild when it came to pleasure.

He felt his cock twitch at the memory of the way she’d tasted, the depth of her passion, the way she’d felt around him when he’d plunged into her. He should feel guilty for what they’d done. He didn’t.

A frown crossed his face. Why wasn’t he feeling guilty? He felt it when he used his magic on someone who didn’t deserve it. He felt it when he’d used it on Renee. Just a tiniest bit of magic to get her to become less restrained, more passionate and he’d felt guilty as hell for doing it.

So why didn’t he feel terrible for what he’d done? So lost in thought was he that when Molly touched his shoulder, he jumped and spun around to confront her.

She stood there gloriously naked in the dim light from the lamp on the table. Her body was pale, gleaming white in the

shadows. She was perfection, with lush curves highlighted by the long curls of her fiery hair. He couldn't stop staring; all thoughts of Renee flew from his head.

"Brady?"

"Yes," he said absently, his eyes on the red curls that guarded her sex.

"Can I have my clothes?"

He looked down at the bundle of clothes he still held in his hands, then back at her. "Must you?"

She laughed, the husky trill sending a shiver of lust down his spine. "I think we'd draw a bit too much attention if I left like this."

"Yeah, you're probably right." He glanced behind him, seeing the shadow of Joe on the wall. He was talking to their prisoner, and if he knew Joe, starting a lecture that would have the man's ears bleeding. Turning back to Molly, he narrowed his eyes in concentration.

Molly squeaked when she felt herself lifted into the air and taken to Brady. She laughed again when she felt his free hand slide around her waist, pulling her to him.

"It'll cost you a kiss," he whispered, bending to speak into her ear. He couldn't help but slip his tongue around the whorl of her ear before drawing her lobe into his mouth and nibbling on it.

Molly shivered, but it wasn't due to the cold. "Just a kiss?" she asked.

"We don't have time for anything more." He groaned. She was pressed so intimately against him, he could feel every naked curve. It was so tempting an idea to just strip and push her against the wall, plunge his cock into the wetness he knew would be there. He could almost see it.

When she groaned, her leg coming up around his waist, her body undulating against him, he knew she could feel his thoughts as if they were really happening. He knew she felt him slide his cock into her wet pussy, filling her with his girth. She moaned as he concentrated upon her breasts, thinking of how it would feel to suckle upon one of those ruby-colored nipples. A low growl came from her and her hands came up against his chest.

MAGIC MAN

“What are you doing to me?” she whispered, her voice husky with passion. “How can I feel your cock in me?”

He smiled, concentrating upon her pleasure. “Because I want you to,” he growled against her ear. “I want you to come for me. I want to hear you call my name.”

Her body shuddered at his words and he closed his eyes, feeding her passion with his magic. It sparked and crackled around them, their auras blending. “It’s what you did to me,” he said, reminding her of the bit of witchcraft she’d performed in his office. “How does it feel?”

“Oh God,” she growled, her nails digging into his shoulders as she rode one wave of bliss and then another. They kept coming, each one bigger and wilder than the last, until she threw back her head, her eyes closed tightly, her teeth biting into her lip to keep from screaming his name.

He felt each of those waves as well, felt her climax almost as if it were his own. Her pleasure, her emotions, all seemed tied to his. Their auras merged, pulsed red, then a violent purple, then red once more.

Brady held her against him, one hand still holding her clothes, his mind trying to figure out the connection he felt to her. He frowned, his mind going in circles.

Then he felt her hand touching his face and looked down.

“Why the frown?” she whispered, her fingers slipping over his mouth.

He stared at her. It would be so easy to tell her, he realized. She would have some kind of answer, he was sure. But his feelings were too new, his confusion a bit too personal to confide. Not yet; not just yet.

“I was hoping I didn’t stain my jeans,” he joked. “You should get dressed.” He handed her the clothes, stepping back. He tried not to see the hurt in her green eyes as he turned away. It wasn’t an escape from her so much as a way to flee his own feelings.

He was talking to Joe when she came into the room, dressed in a baggy sweatshirt with a hood and jeans that fit her curves very well. No one would mistake her for a boy with her ass highlighted the way it was. He could barely keep his eyes off it himself.

“We have to go, Joe.”

“I know.” Joseph reached into his pocket, pulling out a roll of bills. “Take this. You can pay me back when you get home.”

Brady took the money, stashing it in the front pocket of his jeans. “You be careful,” he told his old friend. “When this one doesn’t report in, they could come looking for him.”

“Don’t worry about me. I have some tricks left from when we used to play cops and bad guys when we were kids.” He reached out for his friend, pulling him into a hard hug. “You just make sure you get back here safe.”

He hugged Molly. “I’m a priest, I believe in God and I believe in good. You’re good,” he whispered into her ear. “Take care of him for me.”

She nodded, returning his hug just as fiercely. “I’ll do my best.”

“That’s all I can ask.” He let her go and handed her a flashlight. “My car is in the garage. The keys are on the dash. I did a sweep around the church and didn’t see any more of these guys. You should be able to get from the church to the garage safely. If not, I left your car over on Elm Street, just behind the big storage tank.”

“Thanks Joe,” Brady said once more. He took Molly’s hand and the other flashlight and headed down into the tunnel.

Chapter Six

The beam from the flashlights tore through the blackness, showing the ripped cobwebs and their angry residents. Molly passed by the spiders as if they weren't there, reaching up once to pull a sticky strand of web from her hair.

"Where are we heading?" she asked quietly. Everything she'd just been through, the lovemaking, being captured, the change and the cattle prod, was finally taking its toll on her.

"Out of here," Brady said, laying his hand on her shoulder and squeezing. "We'll get the car and take off, north to Wolverine. I don't think they'll expect us to come to them."

She turned suddenly, stopping him in his tracks. "Thank you, Brady. No matter what happens next, you've repaired some of my faith in humans."

"We're not all bad," he teased. Pulling her into a one-armed embrace, he settled the pack that Joe had given him a little easier on his shoulder. "Come on. We still have to get out of the church."

Above them, as if in reaction to his words, a rumble of thunder sounded, starting out soft and growing as it growled into the night. Brady laughed, though it sounded a bit nervous. "Think Joe had a hand in that?" he teased.

"Depends," she shot back. "When was the last time you were in church?"

"Ha ha, funny," he said. They reached the end of the tunnel and Brady went first while she held the flashlight, shining it at the trapdoor above his head. He pushed it open slowly, peeking out before pushing it all the way open.

"Give me my light," he said, reaching down for it. He hoisted himself through the door, shining the light around the room. "Come on up," he whispered loudly to her.

She shimmied up the ladder, pulling herself through the door and then looking around the room. It was some kind of store room. The trap door had an old fashioned braided rag rug glued to the top, hiding it from being noticed.

Brady closed the trap door, setting it quietly on its stops. He slid his hand down her arm, finding her hand and closing his own warmly around it. "Ready?"

Molly nodded, smiling gamely. "I am, if you are," she said, her voice quivering a bit.

"It'll be okay, Molly. I promise."

"You shouldn't make promises you can't keep." Taking her free hand, she pushed it through her hair, shaking it back so that it was out of her face. Her eyes moved around the room, studying the different objects sorted onto the shelves. "Let's get out of here. This place makes me nervous."

He snorted. "I thought it was vampires that hated crosses."

"It is," she said, tugging on his hand to get him moving. "But it's crucifixes they hate. Anybody can make a cross. A crucifix is something that has been blessed. It's the blessing and the belief in that blessing from the holder that makes it so dangerous to the undead."

Brady gave her a strange look, stopping at the door to listen before opening it. They found a set of stairs, climbing up them to another door. "You can't mean to tell me that there are actually vampires, for real vampires, out there somewhere?"

"Let me see, you can do magic, I can do magic and change into a wolf, and you're having problems believing in vampires. Is there something wrong with this picture?"

"Okay, you got a point, but... come on, real, blood-sucking, night-walking vampires?"

Molly was about to answer when something caught her attention. She grabbed Brady just as he was about to open the door that led from the church to the parking lot outside. Yanking him back, she pushed him into the shadows of the hallway, flattening herself against him. "Shh," she whispered.

Brady turned his head, staring out the window in the door just in time to see another of the darkly garbed henchmen walk by, stopping to rattle the knob. When he found it locked, he moved slowly past, picking up his walkie-talkie.

MAGIC MAN

“That was close,” Molly breathed, looking up at him.

“You can say that again,” he said, glancing down at her. He dropped his head and kissed her when she opened her mouth. “I didn’t mean you had to say it again,” he teased when he lifted his head.

“I wasn’t going to. How are we going to get past him?”

“Magic,” Brady said, smiling. “I need to borrow your back.”

“You need to what?”

“Just turn around and watch our friend out there.” He pushed her close to the door, trying to keep her as much in the shadow as possible. Staring out the window, he took a deep breath and concentrated on the man whose back was to them. He used one finger, trailing it over Molly’s back as he had the table cloth in the restaurant. *Was it only yesterday?*

* * * *

Harold Fredrickson had been working for the Department of Paranormal Research for over ten years. The DPR had become like his second home. He’d do anything for the founder, Dr. William Parnell, especially since Dr. Parnell occasionally turned a blind eye when it came to some of the more “exotic” of the female animals. As long as his test subjects were still able to stand, he’d let Harold and some of his buddies cash in on a perk or two.

Harold smiled, thinking of a couple nights before and the little red head, Tallie. Now that was a prime piece of ass if he’d ever seen one. Turning on the special buffing system that Dr. Parnell had devised kept the little bitch from changing into a wolf. She’d been an easy target, doped on Ketamine; she’d barely been able to lift her head.

He smiled, lost in thoughts of how that soft mouth had felt around his cock, her tears dripping on his upper thighs. Then he felt it. It was like someone had brushed a finger across the back of his neck, sending a chill down his spine.

Twirling, he raked the area with his eyes, the barrel of his nine millimeter following the path his eyes took. “Who’s there?”

His eyes tracked through every shadow and over the side of the church but he didn't see anything. "I'm imagining things," he growled, dropping the arm that held the pistol. "Musta just been remembering that little bitch and it gave me a chill." He smiled to himself. He liked redheads. He liked them even more when that red hair covered their pussies. There was just something about white skin with that whorish red curls covering their cunts that turned him on. Harold turned, about to continue around the church when he felt it again.

Someone grabbed my ass!

"Who's there?" he shouted, turning quickly and lifting his pistol. "I know you're there, come out where I can see you!" His eyes examined every aspect of the parking lot, falling on the ornate iron gate that opened into the cemetery. "Fuck," he breathed. "No, I don't believe in ghosts."

Picking up his walkie-talkie, he was about to call in, to report what was going on, when he felt it again. This time his belt was being undone, the button on his camouflage pants opening and his zipper slowly tracking down. Harold screeched, almost dropping his pistol as he reached for his pants, holding them up as he felt a definite tugging on them.

"Stop it!" he yelled. "I don't believe in ghosts!" His walkie-talkie picked that minute to squawk, scaring him enough that he dropped it onto the cement. It broke open, pieces scattering. "Fuck!" he shouted. "I don't believe in you, you hear me! I don't believe in you!"

There was a popping noise and Harold watched in disbelief as his hunting knife was drawn slowly from its sheath, rising through the empty air to dance in front of him.

"Oh God, Oh God!" Harold whispered, his eyes locked on the moving blade. He lifted his pistol, shooting wildly at the knife, the bullets ricocheting harmlessly on the pavement before burying themselves into the grass by the cemetery gate. He unloaded the clip, finally throwing his pistol at the still dancing knife. He screamed and ran.

* * * *

MAGIC MAN

“He screams like a little girl,” Molly gasped between gurgles of laughter. “You’ve got to teach me that trick sometime.”

“And give away all my secrets?” Brady chuckled. “I don’t think so. Besides, it wouldn’t be as much fun when I do this if you know how to do it too.” He circled his finger against his palm, hearing Molly gasp again and then moan as her nipple contracted against his touch.

“You’re evil,” she said, reaching out and slapping at his hand. “Stop it. We’ve got to go now that you’ve freaked out the big bad army-type guy.”

“I just wish he hadn’t broken his walkie-talkie. It would have been nice to be able to listen in on what they’re saying.” He went to the door, checking the parking lot again before slowly opening it and slipping through. Molly followed immediately behind him.

Closing it softly, he drew a circle over the door lock, smiling as he heard it click back into place. Then he reached down and grabbed Molly’s hand. “We’re going for my car,” he whispered.

They stayed in the shadows, flitting from one to the other. The storm that had been threatening all evening finally broke, drenching them before they could reach Brady’s car. Molly was shivering, her arms wrapped around herself, trying to stay warm.

“You don’t have the keys, do you?” she asked as she shivered.

“Keys aren’t really necessary.” He popped the lock with a quick move of his finger and then reached out and opened the door to let her in. Molly leaned across the seat, opened his door for him, and then curled into a ball on her seat.

Brady turned the ignition with a wave of his hand. Leaving his lights off, he turned up the heat and then put it into drive.

“Can you do that with anything?” she asked.

“No,” he said, glancing over and smiling at her. “I have to be able to picture in my mind what I want to happen. If I didn’t know how this ignition worked or how the door locks worked, I couldn’t do it.”

“So any machine that you can picture in your head, you can work? What about an ATM machine?”

“That’s illegal, but yeah, I could probably figure it out.”

“Bank vaults?”

“Molly...” he said, the tone of his voice conveying a warning.

“Oh come on, don’t tell me you’ve never thought of it.”

“I’ve thought of it.” He drove down the street, his eyes cutting through the dark curtain of rain, watching for signs that anyone was following them. “I wouldn’t do it though.”

“Neither would I,” Molly sighed. “Damned honesty.”

Brady chuckled. “Why don’t you change into some dry clothes?”

“Promise not to look?” she teased, grabbing the pack from the floorboards at her feet.

“I’m a gentleman,” he protested. “But hell no, I won’t promise not to look.” He wiggled his eyebrows at her, making her smile.

Molly climbed into the back seat and fished out the clothes Father Joseph had thrust at them. Pulling off the wet sweatshirt, she left it off as she fiddled with her jeans. She could see Brady’s eyes in the rearview mirror, staring at her. She shivered, but it wasn’t from the cold. Instead, it was from the fire that shone in his eyes. Vivid red in the chocolate irises. Just that look caused her nipples to contract and create a rush of wetness that had nothing to do with the rain still pouring down outside.

“If you keep staring at me like that, we aren’t going to make it to Wolverine tonight.”

“Would that bother you?” he rasped, his tongue slicking over his top lip as if he were tasting her already.

“God no,” she breathed. “But it might bother you if we end up in a car accident.”

“I’m a different kind of man,” he said, glancing at the road and then back to her. “I can chew gum and walk at the same time.”

Molly chuckled, a deep husky sound, running the flat of her palms from her waistband up and over her ribs to her breasts. Cupping the soft mounds in her hands, she lifted them, squeezing gently. A soft moan escaped her lips, hanging in the air between them as an invitation.

MAGIC MAN

“Damn,” Brady twisted the steering wheel, swerving as a horn blared. Another car barreled past them, a car that Brady almost sideswiped. The driver flipped Brady off, shouting something obscene.

“So much for multitasking,” Molly laughed.

Brady flushed, but his eyes raked over her. “Then maybe you should get dressed and quit tempting me.”

“Where’s the fun in that?” She laughed as he growled then watched his eyes in the mirror as her hands went to her waistband. “Okay then, I’ll just change my clothes.”

The snap opened easily, the zipper sliding down the wet material. She struggled with the denim material. It clung to her skin, cold and wet. She managed to get the material over her hips, the wet panties coming off along with the jeans.

Pulling off her shoes, she pushed the soaked denim off of her feet, sitting back in the seat. She knew Brady was still watching her. Her hair was a soaked mass of tendrils that clung to her skin. She reached up, pulling the heavy mess of it off of her neck and twisting it.

“You couldn’t conjure me up a hair clip, could you?” she asked, teasing him and making him look in the rearview mirror again.

“I wouldn’t if I could. Your hair is too pretty to be kept up.”

He melted her heart, that was all there was to it. She’d been more than attracted to him when she’d first run in to him, back when he was in college. Now, after making love with him, he was going to be very hard to forget.

Wolves could be very promiscuous. At least they could until they were mated. A wolf mates for life, even a half-wolf like Molly. She’d heard of wolves that had mated even though they truly did not love one another. Their lives were living hell, especially if one or the other found their true life mate after the mating. Molly had been very careful to stay away from that kind of commitment. She’d seen what it had done to others. She wanted more; she wanted what her parents had.

Stretching once more, she reached into the bag of clothes and pulled out the change of clothing Father Joe had picked for her. She would have to hang up the wet ones to dry until they could get other clothes. Pulling the dress over her head, she

decided to forego underwear, picking up a short jacket to wear over the short-sleeved, scoop-necked dress. It was blue and green flowers on a soft off-white background and was very pretty. The skirt fell to about halfway down her slender thighs.

Grabbing her shoes, she climbed back in the front seat. "Much better."

"Yeah, I'd say. Anybody ever tell you that you look incredible in a dress?"

Molly fiddled with her necklace, moving the pentagram across the thin gold chain. "Yeah, but I wouldn't mind hearing it again."

"You look absolutely incredible in a dress. Edible even," he teased, letting his hand rest on her bare knee and running it slowly up her leg.

Molly leaned over, dropping a soft kiss to the skin just under his ear. "Thank you," she said, parting her legs. His long fingers stroked over the soft flesh of her inner thighs before moving higher and resting against the russet-colored curls.

She shivered as he teased her with light touches, never going where she desperately wanted him to touch. "Mmm," she moaned. "Brady, don't tease me."

"What do you think you were doing to me back there? Revenge is a bitch, baby," he quipped, tracing slow circles on the swollen lips of her sex. His fingers felt cool and tantalizingly hard, making her realize how empty she felt.

"I want you to fuck me," she groaned. "I shouldn't want this, I shouldn't be so forward about it. You're engaged to be married and I've made you break your vows to her." She grabbed his wrist with desperate hands. "I... you should stop, Brady."

"What if I don't want to?"

She moaned again as he pressed one finger, sinking into her heat and wetness. His finger swiped down her slit, gathering her natural lubrication and trailing it over her clit, making her jump in reaction. "But you should want to," she groaned. "What about your fiancée?"

It was almost as if he were rebelling against the thought. His finger circled her clit and he resisted her every move to pull him

from her flesh. When he pushed one and then two fingers inside of her, she thought she'd go up in flames.

Molly moved her hips against the seat, tiny gasping cries coming from her lips. Her hand wrapped around his wrist, no longer pushing him away but keeping him there. Her other hand was grasped around the door handle, holding on for all she could as he drove her crazy with the thrusts of his fingers.

"I'm going to come on this seat," she breathed, her hips rocking hard against his hand.

Red and blue lights filled the back window of the car, making Brady curse. Molly's eyes opened, a look of near pain upon her face. Slowly, regretfully, he pulled his hand away from her, hearing her hiss of frustration at the interruption.

Brady pulled over to the side of the road and put the car into park. Rolling down his window let in a cold misty rain. The police officer came up to his side of the car, shining his flashlight into the window.

He was a tall man, opposing in his uniform. "Good evening, sir. Do you know what I pulled you over for?"

"Uh, no sir, I really don't have any idea," Brady said, turning his head to look up at the man.

"You were swerving all over the road." He played the flashlight over Brady then turned it on Molly. Her skirt was still pushed up; her legs still parted, allowing the officer just a glimpse of soft pink wetness. "License and registration, please."

Brady pulled his wallet out of his back pocket, pulling his license out. He also handed the officer his PI license as well as his license to carry a concealed weapon. Opening up the glove box, he pulled out his registration and proof of insurance. "I'm sorry officer. I guess my girlfriend and I have had a very long evening."

"Is this address current?"

"Yes, it is," Brady said, refusing to say anymore unless asked.

"Does your girlfriend live there with you?"

"Yes, I do, officer," Molly almost purred, slowly closing her legs and turning toward the window.

"Do you have any identification?"

Brady glanced at Molly then back at the officer. "Uh..."

“It’s okay baby.” Molly pretended to open a purse, pulling out a pretend wallet and then pulling a pretend license from it. “Here you go, sir,” she said, pretending to hand it to him.

The officer held it above Brady’s, using his flashlight to read something that wasn’t there. “I’ll be right back,” he said, then turned to go back to his car.

Brady watched the silhouette of the officer in his rearview mirror. “We’re in trouble,” he said softly.

“Why?”

The officer glanced up and then spoke into his radio again. “They’ve flagged me.”

“What do you mean flagged?” Molly asked, turning to glance behind them.

“Those government types who took you. They flagged my file so that they could find us. Fuck!” He started to reach for the ignition when Molly grabbed his arm.

“He’s coming back. Can’t you,” she made a motion with her finger against her hand, “like you did to the other guy?”

“He’s just doing his job, Molly. I don’t want to fuck with someone’s mind who’s innocent.”

“So you’d rather go to jail for helping me and see me go back to that place?” she asked, her voice shrill as she began to panic.

“No, no of course not. Fuck,” he said again.

“Sir, I need you to get out of the car.” He was back at the window, his hand on his gun, the safety flap unsnapped. His voice was still polite but it seemed more tense and excited.

Brady closed his eyes, taking a deep breath. When he opened them, his eyes were flaring red. “Is something wrong sir?” he asked without turning his head.

“Sir, you need to get out of the car and come with me,” the officer said again.

Brady turned his head, hearing the officer gasp as he saw his eyes. “That’s not really necessary, is it?”

“No, no it’s not,” the officer said, his voice monotone. His face was completely devoid of emotion.

“Then I think you should hand us our things and let us be on our way. You want to go back to your car and radio your

dispatcher. Tell her you were mistaken. We aren't the man and woman that you have the 'Be On The Look Out' for."

"I was wrong about the bolo," he replied.

"Go now," Brady said. He waited until the officer stepped away from his car, then pulled out quickly. "We need to ditch this car."

"Damn," she breathed. "Share the force, Obi-Wan."

"Shut up," he said, grinning. He brushed his knuckles against his shirt. "I can't help it if I'm good."

"No, you can't help it if you're cocky. I'd love for you to meet my father."

"Why's that?" Brady pulled the car into the first busy parking lot he found, a Wal-Mart that was open twenty-four hours. He pulled into a spot about midway through the parking lot and turned off the car.

"He'd take you down a peg or two," she said. She turned around, reaching for the clothing still in the backseat. Pushing it all into the bag, she gasped as she felt his cold hand slide up the back of her thigh. "Yep, you definitely need taking down a peg or two."

Brady slapped her lightly on the butt. "Get it together girl, we've got to go steal a car."

"Watch it, buddy. Remember, I bite," she growled, rubbing her abused posterior. "Why should we steal a car? Can't you just do some voodoo on them and make them give us their car?"

"I could, but it doesn't always stick. That cop could be coming back here anytime looking for us. We need to go quick." He stepped outside into the misty rain, slamming his car door shut and grabbing the pack she slid over the car roof at him. Looking around the parking lot, he found what he wanted; a sedan, a boring tan-colored four door. "That one will do," he mused, pointing toward it.

It was easy enough for him to pop the locks, settling into the older model car and tossing the pack into the back seat. Glancing over at Molly, he fiddled with the ignition, trying to start the car. It took two tries before the engine kicked over and he could put it into drive.

"We've got a full tank of gas," he said, checking the gauges as he pulled out of the parking place.

“Well, that’s good,” Molly said, looking around nervously. “I hate this stuff.”

“Me too, but we didn’t have a choice.”

“I feel so bad about getting you involved. It was bad enough when I didn’t know what I was dealing with, but now that we do...” She reached up, pulling her seatbelt across her lap and buckling it. “Is Renee going to be safe now that they know you’re working with me?”

For a minute, Brady frowned, confused by her question. *Renee who?* Then it hit him and he felt like a fool. “Yeah, she’ll be fine. Her dad’s into politics and with all the backstabbing and double-dealing, he pays for her to have a bodyguard when I’m not around. She’ll be fine,” he repeated, feeling guilty because he hadn’t thought of her. He had not thought of her once since they’d been on the run.

He probably wouldn’t have worried for her safety at all if it hadn’t been for Molly. He pulled his cell phone out of his pocket, staring at it for a second before putting it away.

“You should call her,” Molly said quietly.

“I can’t,” he said.

“If you’re feeling guilty about anything we’ve done...” she began.

“No, it’s not that. My cell has a GPS system. If I turn it on, it can be used to pinpoint our position. I know it’s a long shot to think that they might consider that, but I don’t want to take any chances.”

“How about one of those pre-paid phones? Aren’t they untraceable?”

“Yeah, I’ll buy one tomorrow.” They pulled out of the parking lot, driving north toward Wolverine and the lab where Molly had been kept.

* * *

“I’ve got the tapes on the parking lot where that car was reported stolen,” Officer Lambert said, holding up two VHS tapes. “We could get something off of one of them.”

“Great,” Captain Bruce Longstone said, taking the tapes from him. “Go back on patrol, Lambert, you don’t need any part of these governmental types.”

MAGIC MAN

“Thanks, sir. Good luck.” Lambert turned and left out the same door he’d come in, anxious to be away from the strange-looking dog one of the men was controlling. He’d been around police dogs that had tried to attack him but none of them scared him like the strange green eyes of this dog.

“Let’s see them.” The leader of the group, a Doctor Parnell, took the tapes from Longstone. He slid one into the VCR, hitting play and fast forwarding it.

“There they are, sir,” the man who held the leash of the dog said, pointing at a blur of movement.

Parnell slowed down the tape, watching as his quarry moved from one car to another. “Does he have a key?”

“No, not that I can see.”

“But didn’t the owner of the car say he’d locked his doors?”

“Maybe he just thought he had,” Longstone said. “He was just getting off work from pulling a double. Maybe he forgot this one time?”

“Look how easy he gets the car to start. He must have a key.”

Parnell watched the tape, rewinding it and watching it again. His eyes were no longer on the redhead. He watched the man, noting every move he made in the slightly fuzzy tape. “Is there another view?”

“Yeah,” Longstone said, handing him the other tape. “This is from the front of the building.”

Once more the tape was fast forwarded. This time, Parnell slowed the tape down, watching with eager eyes so he could get a better view of the man. “What is his name?”

“Brady Knight.”

“What do we have on him?” Parnell asked excitedly.

“Not much. He runs a detective company. He’s done some work with the police and has a pretty good record.”

“I bet he does,” Parnell breathed. “I just bet he does.” He clapped his hands together, his glasses almost falling off his nose as he turned excitedly. “He might be the one we’ve been searching for, gentleman. We have to find him. Get me everything you can dig up on Mr. Brady Knight.”

Chapter Seven

Tallie Wolfe sat in the back of the white van, her eyes locked upon the side window where she could see green trees through the heavy rain. What she wouldn't give to be out there, running free.

Her sigh was heartfelt, but the paper gown she wore barely moved to show it. She sat as still as she could, a wide leather collar around her neck, a chain locking her to the side of the van. The collar was so tight that if she tried to change, she'd probably choke to death.

"Hey bitch, hungry?" The questioner, Dr. Parnell's head of security, was one of her biggest tormentors. He held a paper sack in his hand. The scent emanating from it caused Tallie's mouth to water. She slowly turned her head to look at him, standing in the side door of the van.

"I asked you a question, bitch. Are you hungry?" He held up the sack like it was a prize, swinging it back and forth in his hand. "I've got a burger, french fries. Any of that sounds good to you?"

"Yes, please," she croaked, her throat raw from the abuse heaped upon her. His name was Ronald Camden. She knew the names of all the security men. She knew their scents and the sounds they made when they came inside her. She knew which ones would be fast and which ones would want to hurt her first. Someday, someday very soon, she would know the taste of their blood.

"Aww, now isn't that just the sweetest thing? The little wolf bitch is so very polite." He tossed the bag at her. "You'll just have to remember to thank me later." He slammed the door closed and she could hear him talking outside.

Wasting no time, because Camden had a habit of changing his mind, she opened the bag. The smell of roadside burger was

MAGIC MAN

overwhelming and she wanted to gulp it all down as quickly as she could. But she forced herself to take it slow. Pulling out the burger and fries she almost moaned when she saw what else was in the bag.

A bottle of water, icy cold and dripping with condensation, sat under the burger. She pulled it out, holding it like it was gold. Opening it, she took a careful sip, letting the water sit upon her tongue before painfully swallowing it.

Tears she'd been able to control before began to drip down her chin. Tallie ignored them the best she could, unwrapping the burger and eating it with slow, small bites. Every time she swallowed, pain lanced through her body. After only a few bites, her shrunken stomach protested the feast. It was the best she'd had in ages.

Rewrapping the rest of the burger, she hid it, the fries and three quarters of the bottle of water under the seat in front of her, stashing it up and into the springs. Then she sat completely still again, feeling stronger than she had in ages.

"I could reach her," she whispered to herself. "I think I could now." Tallie wiped at the tears that still stained her cheeks. Last night had been terrible. She'd been so close to Molly; she had not only smelled her scent, she'd felt her presence in her heart and soul. It had taken everything inside not to yip in joy and scratch at the hidden door that her sister was behind. But she wouldn't betray her sister. Molly would come for her, she had no doubt.

Taking a deep breath, Tallie closed her eyes, reaching out with her thoughts. She felt the men outside the van, their thoughts dark and malignant, and went further. She touched those she came upon with the lightest of mental brushes, searching for one. She found it.

Like a beacon to men lost at sea, her sister's aura pulsed strong and pure, the light so white it almost hurt to look at it. "Molly," she whispered, pushing closer. "Molly, help me."

* * * *

The Motel 8 on Route 2 was a far cry from a four star hotel in New York City, but everyone had to make sacrifices. Molly

was curled into a ball, her back to the warmth of Brady's naked body. He held her close to him, even in sleep, a fact that made her feel safe and wanted for the first time since she'd been taken off that road in Montana.

Her eyes twitched under their lids as she dreamed and a small moan left her lips. Brady was kissing her, his tongue driving her mad with want as he teased her. "Brady," she moaned, parting her legs and feeling his big body settle on top of her.

"I love you, Molly Knight," he whispered, lifting her hand and kissing the ring on her finger. "I want to be one with you, your true mate." He lifted, rolling her over so that he lay against her back.

She could feel the long length of his cock pressing intimately against the roundness of her ass. Parting her thighs, she urged him to slide home, her wetness engulfing his cock as he moaned into her ear. He held still for a moment, pressed against her, his cock throbbing inside of her with the rushing of his blood.

Then he began to move. Molly felt his hands cupping her hips, drawing her back to meet each of his thrusts until their bodies slapped together lustily. She pushed herself up on her knees, grabbing his wrist and bringing it to her lips.

"Are you sure?" she groaned, licking at the flesh lightly.

"God yes," he growled. "Bite me."

Her teeth grew in her mouth, her fangs pushing forward a bit as she fought to keep her muzzle from growing. She had to stay human but for the teeth, at least for right now. Licking his flesh one last time, she snarled and sank her fangs into him.

His blood flowed thick and hot into her mouth. He tasted sweet, meaty, and marvelous. She wanted more. She wanted to wallow in him, in his cock and the way it thrust inside of her, in the gasp he gave as she punctured his flesh, in the coppery scent of his blood as it flowed into her mouth.

She heard his groan and felt him moving quicker over her. A sound like the crackling of stiff paper sounded in her ear and she smiled against his wrist. He was changing, his body accepting her wolf and making it his own.

MAGIC MAN

With one last lick, she let go of his wrist, reaching to move her hair to the side, baring the nape of her neck. “Your turn,” she rasped. “Bite me.”

His arm came around her, holding her tightly to him, his lips moving over the tender flesh she’d exposed. She felt the pinch and then the pain of the bite, gasping at the pleasure that flowed through her.

He suckled upon the wounds he’d inflicted, drinking her blood like it was mother’s milk. In a way it was. The wolf inside of him demanded the blood, demanded the sacrifice she so willingly gave. Molly knew he could feel it growing, her blood giving the wolf the sustenance it needed to take hold inside Brady, changing him forever into one of them, into her mate.

He released her. As her climax took her, she turned her head, wanting to lock eyes with her mate, the man she would be with now and forever. A scream left her mouth even as her body convulsed against him; the man wasn’t Brady, not the man she loved.

Instead, the man behind her, his head thrown back in ecstasy, her blood dripping from his lips, was Dr. William Parnell.

Her screams filled her mind, her dreams. She couldn’t stop, the horror of what she’d done overwhelming her. His laughter was coarse and obscene and he plucked at her nipples with his knobby fingers. “Thank you, wife,” he growled in her ear, lapping at it with his tongue.

Molly pulled away, crying, retching, her stomach rebelling against the blood that she’d drank so eagerly when thinking it was Brady’s. She couldn’t get away from his laughter. It seemed to rebound around the room, the walls closing in until all she could hear was him.

A bright light pulsed in the shadows, growing larger, pushing away the walls and the man, who cried out her name as she was pulled from him. In the light, she saw Tallie. “Help me,” Tallie called. “Please, Molly, help me.”

* * * *

The scream woke Brady and he sat straight up in the bed, his eyes darting around the room. "What the..." he began, only to feel Molly rolling next to him, struggling against her dreams."Molly?" He leaned over to grab her arms.

She fought against him. "No! Not you! Never you!" she cried, over and over. She pushed against Brady's chest, her eyes open but unseeing.

Then suddenly she calmed, her screaming over.

"Molly?" he asked cautiously. "Are you okay?"

"Tallie," she said; then she suddenly pushed him away with a strength he'd never felt and rushed into the bathroom. He got up to follow her, hearing her retch.

Brady grabbed a towel from the stack folded next to the sink, wetting it. He sank down on the cold floor next to her. To his credit, he only flinched a little when his bare ass came into contact with the cold tiles. Draping the wet towel over his leg, he gently gathered her hair, pulling it out of her face with one hand and stroking her back with the other.

He waited until she was through, handing her the towel and letting her wipe her face. Sweat and tears dotted her cheeks and she stared at him mutely.

"Better?" he asked, lowering the lid on the toilet and flushing before he rose. He leaned down, lifting her in his arms easily, turning to sit on the lid of the toilet with her cradled against him.

She nodded, wiping her eyes with the towel.

"Bad dream?"

She sighed and a sound suspiciously like a sob left her mouth. "Terrible," she managed to say.

"Going to throw up again?" he asked, feeling her shiver.

"No," she whispered, shaking her head.

He hugged her close for a moment before setting her on her feet and steadying her when she swayed. "Wanna brush your teeth before we get back in bed?"

"God, yes." She shuddered at the terrible taste in her mouth.

"Stay here." Brady hurried back into the other room, gathering up the small bag of personal toiletries he'd managed to buy early this morning, before they'd rented the room. They'd dumped the car they'd stolen from Wal-Mart in another parking

MAGIC MAN

lot, walking five or six blocks before stealing another car. That car sat around the block in yet another parking lot, in a different motel. He wasn't taking any chances.

Pulling out the toothbrush he'd bought her, he loaded it with toothpaste and handed it to her, standing behind her and holding on to her waist while she brushed and rinsed and then did it again.

Then he picked her up, carrying her back to bed and tucking her under the scratchy sheets and thin blanket. He joined her and held her until she stopped shivering. "Ready to talk about it?"

"I don't know if I'll ever be ready to talk about it," she said softly, remembering the look in Parnell's face as he'd climaxed inside of her, filling her womb with his seed. A shudder of disgust shook her and she wrapped her arms around her stomach, rocking as much as Brady's body would allow.

"It was a dream, Molly. Nothing more. Telling another person about it will release the grip of fear it has over you." He stroked red hair back from her pale face. "You know, I'm terrified of clowns."

Molly blinked, staring up at him. "Clowns? Well, I guess those red noses could be a bit scary."

Brady faked a shiver. "They're evil, with the white faces and red lips. Ick!"

"Evil? Don't you think you're pushing it kind of far? I mean, I always loved the circus." She looked up at him, watching his face suspiciously for a moment. Then she pushed at him as he broke out laughing. "You're a dick, you know that?"

"I'm sorry," Brady said. He ducked his head like a boy being scolded, but a smile was still on his handsome lips. "I was just trying to make you feel better. Did it work?"

Molly shook her head. "Men," she sighed, though she did cuddle up against him more.

"Am I forgiven?"

"No, absolutely not. You think a little *I'm sorry* is going to do it. No way, mister. I want flowers and expensive gifts." She smiled even as she scolded him.

"I brought you your toothbrush. Does that count?" he asked, running his hand down her arm and letting it rest on her flat stomach.

“Yeah,” she sighed. “I guess I’ll have to forgive you.”

He snuggled down against her, sharing her pillow. “Good, now tell me about the dream.”

“You don’t want to hear about that,” she said quickly, rolling to her side so that her back was against his chest.

Brady stared at the back of her head suspiciously. “Sure I do.”

“No, it’s finished. I don’t want to think about it again.” She reached behind her, grabbing his hand and pulling it around her. Cupping his unresisting fingers over her breast, she moaned softly. “Couldn’t you think of something more interesting to do than listen to some stupid dream of mine?”

“Molly?”

“What?” she asked, arching into his hand and reaching behind her to let her own roam over his thigh.

“Spill it. I know it has something to do with me, I can tell by the way you’re trying to squirm out of telling me.”

She sighed. “Okay, fine. This is going to sound so damned cheesy and stupid.”

“I don’t care. Cheesy and stupid is my life.”

“We...” she paused, sighing again.

“Molly...”

“Okay!” She pulled away from him, turning to sit with her back against the ugly headboard. Pulling the covers up to her throat, she stared down at the paisley print on the spread. Yellow and green warred with a putrid shade of purple on a cream background that was so ugly, she would probably have nightmares about it, too. “We were in bed together. You... aww hell, you told me you loved me and called me Molly Knight.”

She glanced up into his face, then back at the spread, feeling like a high school girl with a crush. “I was wearing a wedding ring and you kissed it and told me you wanted to become true mates.”

“True mates? What does that mean?”

“My people believe that when you find your true mate, you take a bit of them inside of you. We truly mate with a non-wolf when that person wants to become like us, wolf pack. We share blood.” She turned and looked at him. “You wanted that in my dream. We began the ceremony.”

“Ceremony? Like being married?”

“No. We have sex, I guess you would consider it doggie-style. While we are connected, I bite your wrist and take some of your blood into me. Right before you come, you feel my wolf growing inside of you, becoming yours. Your fangs would grow and then, well, you’d bite me, back here.” She dropped the spread and moved aside her hair, showing him the nape of her neck.

“Okay, so what’s so scary about that?”

“Because, when I was... was coming, I turned and looked at you but it wasn’t you...” She took a deep breath, fighting the nausea that boiled in her stomach.

“Who was it?”

“P-Parnell,” she stammered. “He was laughing, my blood dripping from his mouth. He’d gotten what he’d wanted out of me. He kept laughing even as he... he came inside of me.”

“God, Molly,” Brady said, gathering her stiff body back into his arms. He held her tight, rubbing his hands over her back, trying to warm her cold skin. “Now I know why you kept yelling ‘not you’.”

“Tallie was there.”

“Tallie... why was she there?”

“She wasn’t in the dream, Brady. She pulled me out of the dream.”

“Like astral projection or something?” he asked, nuzzling his face in her neck.

“Her aura was so bright, so warm and good. But she was pulled away.” She pushed herself from him. “We’ve got to help her. If Parnell ever finds out how to become a wolf, Tallie’s as good as dead.”

“We will, Molly. We’ll find her and free her. I promise you.” He pulled her back into his embrace, feeling her relax against him. Brady could only hope he wasn’t making promises he couldn’t keep.

* * * *

Tallie kept her eyes on her feet, trying to ignore the presence of her captor as he stamped around her.

“What do you know about this Brady Knight?” Parnell snapped at her, startling her enough that she glanced up at him. “Well, bitch? Tell me!”

“Let me, sir. I know how to make her sing,” Ronald said softly, walking up behind Tallie, her chain looped around his fist. He tapped a riding crop cruelly against his booted leg, then licked her cheek. “She loves to sing for me sir.”

“Back off, Camden.” Parnell moved in front of Tallie, grabbing her chin in his big hand and holding her so she had to look at him. “Have you been in contact with your sister?”

Tallie couldn't help the surprise that came to her eyes. She dropped them almost immediately, hoping that Parnell hadn't seen it.

“Yes, I know you can communicate with each other. The stronger the relationship between the two animals, the more of a connection you share. You and your sister have a very strong relationship, don't you?”

“Y-yes. She is my litter mate.”

“Litter mate? You were born from the same womb?” Parnell took a notebook from his breast pocket, scribbling some notes before he looked up. “Well?”

When she didn't answer quickly enough, Camden yanked on the leash, choking her for a second.

“Y-yes. Molly is oldest.”

“How many were in your litter?” Parnell asked, pacing in front of her.

“J-just t-three. My mother couldn't bear a bigger litter.” Tallie shivered, feeling Camden behind her. His hand brushed against the back of her thigh, lifting the tattered edge of the paper gown she'd been given to wear. She turned her head, her eyes meeting Camden's for just a moment, long enough for him to hold his finger up to his lips.

She knew what would happen. If she made a noise, he'd use the whip on her later before he raped her again. Instead, she forced herself to be still, feeling his fingers push between her thighs, sliding up and into the dryness of her ravaged flesh.

“W-what?” she asked, realizing that Parnell had asked her something she'd missed.

MAGIC MAN

“Were you the runt?” he repeated, emphasizing every word as if she were an idiot.

“I-I was the l-littlest.” She wanted desperately to pull away from the fingers that were pushing and prodding, hurting her. She felt his thumb push against the small rose of her bottom and a tear fell down her cheek.

“Camden, leave the wolf alone. We are going to need her in shape to run later.” Parnell looked at the man over Tallie’s shoulder. “That means no fooling around with this one. Not today, got me?”

For once, Tallie felt gratitude towards Parnell, but it evaporated quickly at his next words. “When I get Molly and her companion tonight, you can have the sister then.” He chuckled, watching the expression on Tallie’s face. “Until then, I need her strong. Feed her, and then let her shower. She reeks.”

“Yes, sir,” Camden said, though he was obviously unhappy. He pulled his hand away slowly, flicking his fingers over her clit one last time before moving away. Tallie was forced to follow him, as he still held her leash wrapped around his fist. “Come on, bitch. Let’s get you fed and washed.”

“Wait!” Parnell called. He walked up to her, lifting her chin in his hand. “Did your mother nurse you?”

“W-what?”

“Did she breast feed you and your litter mates?”

“Y-yes, I-I think s-she did.”

His hand turned quickly and before Tallie could move, he’d grabbed the neckline of her paper gown, ripping it downward, exposing the entire form of her body to everyone in the room. There was one long whistle, and Tallie jerked, but she didn’t try to cover herself.

Parnell ran his hands over her, starting at her collarbone. He pushed and prodded, squeezed and twisted, moving over her breasts and her nipples, which were hardened by cold and fear. Lifting the small mounds in his hands, he felt under them and then down over her ribs. “Curious,” he muttered. “I shall have to have you get pregnant.” He squeezed her hips, his hands measuring the space between her hip bones. “I’m curious about the litters. Perhaps I shall even father them,” he said, almost to himself.

Reaching between her thighs, he fingered the soft, pink flesh, ignoring her startled cry. “Yes,” he whispered, sliding one finger inside of her. “It even feels human.” He pulled away, lifting his hand to his nose and breathing in her scent. “When we get you back to the lab, I think it’s time to take the experiments to the next level.”

Tallie stared at him, beyond astonished. If these were his plans for her, she’d make sure she didn’t make it back to the lab. She would be better off dead than mated to Parnell. She was still staring at him when Camden yanked on her leash once more, cutting off her air and hurting her already tortured throat.

“Come on, little mama,” he said sarcastically. “Daddy wants you cleaned up.”

* * * *

The trees were thick, cutting out any sunlight that might have shone upon them. But since the clouds had grown thicker and a steady rain was pouring on the leaves above their heads, Molly was glad of the overgrowth. She held her flashlight in front of her, pointed at the ground, scared to give any hint of their presence in case the guards were still patrolling this area since her escape.

“Are you sure it’s this way?” Brady asked again, the tenth time in as many minutes.

“Yes, I can still smell my scent. It’s faint but it’s there.” She swung her flashlight beam toward the top of a hill. “Up that way. We should see the compound soon.”

Brady glanced at his watch. They’d been hiking since about one o’clock; it was close to six and she hadn’t found the compound yet. He was about to call it quits for the day when he heard a noise.

“Turn off your light,” he hissed, doing the same with his own. The sound of two men talking could just barely be heard above the sound of the rain.

“I saw a light, Fred. I’m serious.”

“You’re seeing things. No one comes out here. Not even the hunters like this area. I think you’re sipping again on duty.”

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“Hell no, I know I saw a light. It was down there. Come on, come with me to check it out.”

Brady caught Molly’s glance, nodding toward a small dip where a rotten tree had come to rest. He grabbed her hand, pulling her along behind him as he tried to stay away from sticks or anything that would betray their presence.

Pushing her down first, nodding toward the slight depression under the tree. “Get in there and be quiet,” he hissed. “And pull up your hood.”

It was a tight fit, but she wiggled under the tree, yanking up her hood and tucking her hair under it. “Come on,” she whispered.

“No room,” he hissed, shaking his head. He pulled a pistol out the back of his pants, slowly ratcheting the slide back.

“Brady,” she whispered. “I’ll make room, please!”

He knelt, scooting down as far as he could, pulling some dead leaves over the two of them. They were pressed together in a space barely big enough for one. They could hear the two men, walking down the hill, the noise of their descent enough to keep track of their position. They were getting closer.

Molly turned her head, finding Brady’s eyes. Her terror was evident in the green of her eyes and in the way she grabbed his jacket with both hands. “It’s okay,” he mouthed, wishing he could be sure he was telling the truth. “It’ll be okay.”

The men were almost upon them. They were arguing, the one wanting to go back up the hill, the other wanting to continue the search. “I know I saw something. Come on, you wouldn’t want to be the one responsible if the boss was right about that she-bitch wolf coming back to the compound and we didn’t find her.”

“I think you’re both nuts. And those things Parnell experiments on are freaks of nature. Nobody normal can change into animals. It’s some kind of freak show that the Doctor is running and we better hope that the zoo don’t get turned loose. Especially not the big boy. He could eat his weight in people easy.”

They moved a few feet closer and then the conversation cut out completely. Molly strained to hear something, anything, but

WENDY STONE

there was no noise. She lifted her head, peaking out through the leaves, trying to control the harshness of her terrified breathing.

A loud crash made her gasp just as Brady's hand came down over her mouth to stop the noise.

"Okay, we see you in there. Come on out and we won't have to shoot you."

Molly looked at Brady, her eyes like green fire. Brady shook his head, refusing to move.

"Out! Now!"

Chapter Eight

“Out!” the man shouted again. Molly was about to move, to give up, when a rabbit burst from under the brush in front of them, streaking past the two men.

Both men jumped back, then began laughing. “Stupid fucking rabbit,” Fred said, chuckling. “I guess you were right. There’s no one out here.”

“Good, I’m glad you see it my way for once. Now come on, I’m starving and it’s Dan’s turn to cook tonight. He’s making chili.”

“Shit, I think I’m out of antacids.” Fred slapped at his chest pockets. “Every damn time he makes chili, the bunk room smells to high heaven for days.”

“What’s a little gas between friends?” They both laughed, heading up the hill, Fred grabbing for a tree as his foot slipped.

Molly and Brady waited until they were gone, finally crawling out from under the rotted tree. “I can’t believe that rabbit was there. I didn’t see it before,” Molly whispered, brushing herself off.

“It wasn’t. It was the only thing I could think of at the time.” Brady chuckled as Molly stared at him. “It wasn’t real, it just looked real to them.”

“And to me,” she said, awed. “Maybe you have a reason to be so cocky.”

“Told you I was good,” he said, then bent and kissed her gently. “But you’re better.”

“Nicely said,” she laughed.

They started up the hill, carefully watching for anything that would make noise and give them away. At the top, Brady motioned her back, using brush and other cover to get a good look at what the men were guarding.

For a moment, he stood there speechless, not believing that what he was seeing could possibly be true. There was a compound stretched out in the valley below him, surrounded by a high fence and security cameras. Men walked the perimeter, some with huge dogs, others just packing pistols and rifles.

From where he lay, he could see how the trees had been cut back and away from the fence, making any kind of secretive entrance all but impossible. Brady sighed. This wasn't going to be easy. Turning back to Molly, he motioned her to come up. He put his fingers to his lips to indicate silence and then motioned to the huge facility below. "Is this where they kept you?" he hissed, his voice barely audible.

She nodded, her eyes taking in the walls, fences and the guards below. "They've doubled the guard since I escaped but it doesn't look like anything else is new."

"This isn't going to be easy. There's only one reason you build a research lab way out in the middle of nowhere. You don't want the government or anyone else to know what you're doing. This doctor you told me about probably doesn't have government sanctions, otherwise he would be in a nice tidy laboratory instead of out here with his hired thugs." The man in the tower glanced their way and Brady ducked back. He noticed that Molly's hair might be what caught the guard's eye. It shone brightly in the afternoon sunshine. He tugged up the hood of her sweat shirt. "We're going to have to come back, Molly. We're going to have more company in a minute and we don't want to get caught."

"Okay," she said, unwilling to argue with him even though she could almost feel the pain of those trapped in the buildings below. Before she backed completely away, she sent a thought to them, letting them know she was here, that she was going to help.

A loud cacophony of sound came from the building she knew housed the rest of the Weres. She smiled. Her message had gotten through.

She followed Brady to where they'd left their borrowed wheels, on a back road in the middle of nowhere. Climbing in, she waited until he'd started it, sitting in the passenger seat and

saying a small prayer of thanks to her gods that they were still okay.

“What are you smiling at?” Brady asked, reaching over and tugging gently on one stray strand of fiery hair.

“I was just thinking what a multi-talented person you are. You pull bunnies out of thin air and can make a girl squeal in pleasure with the same casual aplomb.” She laughed as his ears turned red. He reached out and touched the ignition with his fingers, a spark traveling from the end of his finger and into the switch. The car started with a roar and he put it into gear, anxious to get away. He could almost smell it, the antiseptic smell of illness and death.

It coated that place, made the neatly placed white boxes of the buildings seem darker, evil. Bad things happened there. That knowledge made him almost physically ill. He couldn't help but wonder what Joseph would think right now and what his advice to him would be. The priest would be shocked that such things could actually happen in this day and age.

Brady could almost hear his advice. “Stay away from that place, Brady, or else you could be the next one in it.”

“Never,” he whispered.

“Huh?” Molly asked from her side of the car, where she was trying to plot their position so that they could find it easier later.

“I'm sorry, I was just thinking what Joe would say if he could have seen that place.”

“He'd probably think I belonged there and that you should take me back personally and collect the reward,” she sighed, thinking of the handsome priest and his ideas on witches and werewolves.

“There's a reward?” Brady asked.

“Hey,” Molly turned toward him. “Don't even think about it.”

“Well, no one told me there was a reward,” he griped, picking on her a bit.

“You are so not funny,” Molly growled, the green in her eyes swirling.

“It was a bit funny,” Brady said with a grin. “You know it was.”

“Not even a smidge funny.” She narrowed her eyes at him. “Don’t make me hurt you.”

“You wouldn’t even if you could, Molly.” He leaned over, looking away from the road for a second to pull her to him for a kiss. “You’d miss me keeping you warm at night.”

“I could get an electric blanket,” she snapped, though she did kiss him again. “Now watch the road,” she said with a small smile.

“Yes, ma’am,” he replied. “You’re the boss.”

The trip back to their motel took very little time. Molly sank down in the seat every time a car passed, though since it was getting darker she was pretty sure she wouldn’t be spotted. “So what do we do next?” she asked.

“Well, we’re going to go and buy a couple of those pre-paid cell phones. I need to get some information and since I can’t use my own system, we’re going to have to hit an internet café somewhere. Then I figured dinner and bed. I’m starving.”

Molly reached out and plucked a stray leaf from his dark hair, twirling the stem in her fingers as she sank into her thoughts. “Do you think I could use one of the phones to call my brother? He’s got to be worried sick about us.”

“Brother? I didn’t know you had a brother.”

“He’s my half-brother on my father’s side, from his first mating. But I know he’s worried. We’ve never gone this long without speaking.” Molly hit the window button and let it roll down a few inches, holding the pretty red-speckled yellow leaf up so that it caught in the wind. It pulled out of her fingers with a sound like paper flying in the wind. Then it was gone and she rolled the window up again.

“You can’t tell him where we are,” Brady warned. “If his phone’s been tapped and I’ll almost bet you that it has, telling him would bring them down on top of us. Okay?”

“B-but Nashe might be able to help,” she said softly.

“I know, baby, and I know you’re worried about your sister as well. We can’t just rush in there all willy-nilly and rescue them. I wish we could. But that might end up with us thrown in cells for their amusement as well.”

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“I couldn’t do that again,” Molly said, her face going pale as she thought of the horror of captivity. “I just couldn’t survive it again.”

“I know,” he said, reaching out and covering her hand with one of his and giving it a gentle squeeze. “So, we’ll go buy the phones, dump this car somewhere and pick up a new one. Then we’ll find a café and I’ll buy you a coffee. We’ll take this slow and carefully and we’ll get Tallie back so you can take her home.”

“Then you can go back to your fiancée,” Molly said, feeling a strange pang like pain near her heart. “And back to the life you knew before I ran into you on the street.”

“Yeah,” Brady said, feeling a pang of his own. His was of guilt, because he hadn’t thought of Renee in a very long time. Not much at all since he’d run into the pretty little witch on the streets. Definitely not since the basement, where he’d made love to her. “I guess I should call her as well.”

“Yeah, she’s probably worried about you.”

Brady sighed, but didn’t answer. She probably was worried about him. He pushed the thought away. “What sounds good for dinner?”

“I don’t care,” Molly said. “The one thing good about being partially Were. We eat anything.” She didn’t tell him that she’d been craving a nice rare, juicy steak more than anything else in the past day or so. It meant that her protein levels weren’t being kept at a consistent rate and her body craved red meat.

“Okay then,” Brady said. They drove passed their motel before turning around and stopping in a restaurant. It was sit-down style and a little on the swanky side, but they’d been frugal so far. He wanted to take her out someplace nice, wine and dine her a bit.

He found a spot to park in the back and then helped her out of the car, brushing bark and grass and stray leaves off her from being under the log. “Come on, gorgeous,” he said finally, holding out his arm. “I’m hungry.”

The hostess looked at them oddly for a moment and then shrugged, showing them to a quiet booth in a corner where they could talk undisturbed. She handed them each a menu and took

their drink order, nodding her approval when Brady chose a Yamhill-Carlton Pinot-noire.

Then she left them to peruse their menu, promising to send over their server right away.

“Nice place,” Molly said, opening her menu as she glanced around. “There are no prices,” she said, staring at the neatly printed entrees.

“The prices are on my menu,” he said. “It’s to keep you women from worrying about pennies when you’re out having fun.”

“Okay, since you have the prices, you choose my meal,” she growled, sitting back and closing her menu, placing it neatly on the table near her silverware.

Brady glanced down at the menu then eyed his companion. With a smile, he closed his own menu and reached across the table, snaring her hand with his own. Playing with her fingers, they sat in a comfortable silence, each lost in their own thoughts until the waitress arrived.

She was an attractive brunette who smiled widely at Brady with an “I’m available” look that drove Molly nuts.

She got a watered-down version of that smile, much more lukewarm than the one given to him. “How are you tonight?” the brunette asked. Her name tag read Rita.

Molly murmured some comment, distracted by Rita’s large double D breasts, which seemed to defy gravity and float upward on her chest. She glanced over at Brady and felt a small spurt of aggravation at the slightly goofy look upon his face.

Rita’s white blouse was too tight and pulled across her large breasts as if straining to hold back a flood. She wore tight black pants that seemed painted on her rounded ass and long legs. Molly looked around the room and noted that Brady wasn’t the only one affected by this one’s abundant charms. She still gave Brady a kick under the table.

“Ow,” he said, reaching down to rub his shin and then giving her a glare. He gave their dinner order to Rita and finally turned back to her when the curvaceous brunette finally took her leave, glancing over her shoulder at him.

“What are you, two?” Molly growled. “Dammit!”

“What’d you kick me for?” he growled right back.

“I thought you might want to pull your tongue off the floor and shove it back in your mouth before that brunette bimbo tripped over it. Of course, with those boobs, she’d probably just bounce back up.”

“Is that what this is about? I found a waitress attractive so you have to get grouchy?” he asked.

“Found her attractive? I thought you were going to push me out of the booth and invite her to eat with you.” She snarled deep in her throat, feeling the wolf pushing against her control.

“It wasn’t that bad,” he snapped right back.

“It’s not any of my business,” she said suddenly, her face paling. “I have no claim on you. You’re doing me a huge favor by taking this case. You are my employee, not my lover,” she said.

“I am too your lover,” he roared, pissed off by her dismissive attitude of their relationship.

“Brady, you’re making a scene,” she said softly, looking around the restaurant. “Keep it together, we don’t need anyone noticing us.”

“Then admit that we have more than an employee/employer relationship,” he said, his voice lower. “Admit that you mean something to me and I do to you,” he dared.

“You do mean something to me, Brady,” Molly said softly

As soon as she spoke, it began to rain outside, the skies opening and letting loose a deluge that reduced visibility to nil. Lightning flashed and thunder crashed, sending the lights in the room flickering. Conversations were drowned out and in the corner, one woman let loose with a small shriek.

“But,” Molly added slowly, reluctant to discuss something that had been bothering her a lot. “You don’t belong to me, no matter how much I might wish you to.”

“I belong to no one but myself,” he said belligerently.

“The ring you put on Renee’s finger says you belong to her. Maybe this wasn’t such a good idea after all,” she said, glancing around the room. “Maybe we should just go.”

“But we’ve just ordered and you haven’t even tried the wine yet,” Brady said, reaching out and taking her hand. This time he ignored Rita when she came with the glasses and the wine bottle, opened to breathe in a silver champagne holder. It was poured

and tasted, okay'd by Brady and then she left once more, adding a bit more wiggle to her walk to try to recapture Brady's interest.

It didn't work. His eyes were firmly entrenched on Molly. Molly glanced over, watching as Rita looked back to see if she was still center of attention and smiled when the woman almost snarled in rage.

"You have to admit, those tits of hers are something else."

Molly chuckled. "They aren't real," she said, leaning across the table like she was sharing a secret. While she was that close, she brought her other hand up and caressed his face, ending with a lingering kiss, breaking the hold Rita and her magic tits had on him.

"Mmm," he hummed when she sat back. His eyes were still closed and he licked his lips, as if savoring her taste. "Rita who?"

"Good answer," Molly giggled, watching him grin as he opened his eyes and stared at her. His eyes were dreamy. He couldn't stop touching her, holding her hand or laying his hand across her arm. His foot moved, rubbing against hers under the table.

He refused to talk about the case or how they were going to get into the enclosure. That would still be there to deal with tomorrow. Tonight, he asked about her, curious as to how she grew up. "Who was your first kiss?" he asked, stopping when the buxom waitress brought their food.

Molly could smell the steak before it came out of the kitchen. Her mouth watered and her wolf howled from deep inside, sharing her pleasure. When it was placed before her, cooked rare and beautifully pink inside, the juices oozing onto the plate, she thought she'd lose control and change in public.

It took a lot of concentration but she managed to hold back, though her green eyes changed briefly, the dark brown that ringed her iris growing more pronounced.

"Are you okay?" Brady asked, reaching over to touch her hand.

She nodded, unsure of her voice.

"Molly," he said again, insisting on eye contact. He stared at the swirled colors in her eyes and she could see the alarm on his face. "What's wrong?"

“My wolf has been craving red meat for a long time,” she whispered. “I’m having a bit of trouble controlling her.”

Brady gave a start and took a good look at her. “Would it be better to take it back to the room? I could get the waitress to make it to go.”

“No!” she snapped, then shook herself, seeming to come out of some kind of trance. “If she tried to take it away, I might do something bad. I’d know she’s bringing it back but I don’t know if I could translate that to my wolf right now.”

Brady felt something under his hand and looked. The hand he’d been holding had sprouted fur, half-changing to a red wolf paw. He could see the fur growing up her arm. “Oh shit, Molly, your arm is changing.”

Molly started, pulling her hand under the cover of the table and its long white cloth. “Could you cut me a piece of it,” she asked, nodding at the gloriously spiced meat.

Brady did, feeding it to her and seeing her eyes shut in ecstasy. She moaned deep in her throat and he felt his cock harden in his pants. There was just something incredibly sexy about the way she ate.

“Another, please?” Molly asked, blinking her bright leaf-green eyes at him.

He placed the rare meat on her tongue and again heard that same purring little growl of pleasure. “You sound like you do after we make love,” he whispered to her as she opened her eyes.

“I feel like I do *before* we make love,” she whispered back. Kicking off her shoe, she slid her foot up his leg, trailing it over the seam of his pants until her foot was in his lap, the hardness of his erection under her toes. “Is this for me or for Rita?”

“It’s all yours,” he groaned, his eyes closing as sensation rolled through him. Lifting his glass, he watched her do the same, her hand once more human. “To what comes next,” he said, clinking his glass with hers.

“Wouldn’t that be better as *to who* comes next?” she teased. She sipped the wine, a small drop of it catching on her lip. Before she could lick it away, Brady leaned forward, his tongue coming out to catch the drip and then to lick inside her mouth, tasting the lushness of her passion and its dark flavor.

“Is everything okay here?” Rita asked, her murderous blue eyes blaring a warning at Molly. Molly blinked back, suddenly noticing something else about the young waitress.

“What pack?” she asked, certain her instincts were correct.

“I don’t belong to a pack,” Rita snapped, not even bothering to deny her true nature. “I’m a loner.”

“Loners don’t make it long out here, Rita. You’d better find a pack.” Molly dug a piece of paper and a pen out of her bag and wrote down a name and a number. “Call him, he can get you a job at a great restaurant and he can help to make sure you’re okay.”

“Why would you want to help me?” Rita asked, obviously surprised. She stared at the number and the name.

“Because I know what it’s like to be alone and helpless and it isn’t something I liked the feeling of. Call him, he’s my brother. He’ll make sure you get a place to stay and a job at a restaurant much nicer than this one.”

“I will,” Rita said, tucking the slip of paper down inside her cleavage. Molly could sense that she meant it and wondered at the instant trust between them. It was bewildering, but she couldn’t deny that it felt right and natural. “Thank you.”

“Could you put the rest of this in a doggie bag?” Brady asked, seeing that Molly had calmed down and had control of her wolf.

“Yeah, sure.” Rita took their plates before Molly had a chance to speak.

“What are you doing? I’m fine now, my wolf is under control.”

“Yeah, I know. So when we get back to that room, I’m going to let you eat your dinner using me as a plate,” he said, his eyes sparkling.

“Do I get to lick my plate too?” Molly asked, hearing him groan and smiling when he nodded.

It took only a few moments before Rita was back. By that time, Molly had Brady extremely worked up. He was ready to just throw some money at the bill and rush out of the restaurant in his hurry to get back to the hotel.

MAGIC MAN

“I’ve taken care of this,” Rita said, refusing his money and handing him the big bag. “I also threw in some dessert I think that you’ll enjoy.”

“Thank you,” Molly said.

“No,” Rita said, reaching out and hugging Molly. “Thank you. You’re right, it’s scary alone. You two be careful. There’s been a van load of scientist types hanging around the area and they smell wrong. Dangerous, maybe even evil. I can’t explain why. I think there’s something going on up in the mountains, but I’m not sure what it is.”

Molly impulsively returned her hug, feeling those huge mammaries of Rita’s press against her own. It was a strange feeling.

Then Brady was hustling her out of the restaurant and into the car.

Chapter Nine

Kiteria stared down at the folder sitting open in front of her. She'd read and reread the damn thing so many times that she almost had it memorized. A mixture of elation and dread filled her and she took a deep breath, trying to calm the butterflies in her stomach.

This was the first major case assigned only to her team. She couldn't blow it, especially when it involved the creator of ASP's daughter and her supervisor's mate's sister.

The elation came from being given such an important case. The dread, and most of the butterflies, came from a large element of the unknown. The file wasn't complete; not even close.

"Problems?"

"Nothing I can't deal with," Kit said, looking up into Gunner's handsome face. She crossed her arms over the files in front of her, hiding the name from Gunner's eyes. "Can I help you with something?"

Gunner tilted his head as he stared at the beautiful lioness. She had long, golden hair, which flowed down to her ass when she left it free, and deep brown eyes that tipped up at the edges. But even they held a golden magic in their chocolate depths. Everything about her seemed to shine with an inner light, especially when she smiled. There was an inherent sense of goodness about her.

"Yeah," he said, moving from door he'd been leaning on and sinking down in the chair facing her desk. "Go out with me tonight?"

"Gunner," Kit began, giving him the usual spiel, the same thing she quoted to him every time he asked her out, "You know the regs in regards to two team leaders dating."

MAGIC MAN

“I knew the regs under Daniels’ rules. They no longer exist. There’s a new regime. Come on, Kit. Besides, it’s not really a date if you meet me for a drink after work. It’s more like two colleagues winding down after a long day.” Gunner leaned forward, his hand brushing across the back of hers.

Kit felt that single touch rush through her body, her eyes growing slightly heavy as passion and desire began to flow. This was the true reason she didn’t want to go out with Gunner. She knew where it would end. She would be heartbroken when he got his way and she was left to pick up the pieces of her heart. Gunner’s *love ‘em and leave ‘em* attitude was almost as famous as Marcus’s had been before he’d given up his bachelor status to move in with Angel Rand.

“One drink,” he said softly, “I promise I won’t even try to get you into bed.”

Kit jumped. Not because of Gunner’s obvious falsehood or the thrill that went through her at the image of bedding him, but because her phone went off, startling her; picking up the headset from a console that looked like it could fly a jet, she answered. “Yeah?”

Her eyes found his as she listened to the voice on the other end, giving noncommittal answers and writing something on the corner of one file before hanging up. “I have to get to a meeting,” she said softly.

“Drinks?” Gunner asked one last time, holding on to her hand so she couldn’t move. “Just one teensy weensy drink?”

“Fine,” Kit said, giving in when he held her still with the mere touch of his hand on hers. “If I can make it. Where?”

Kit wrote down the address he rattled off and stuck the paper in a pocket of her uniform. “Now I’ve got to go,” she said, pulling her hand out from under his. She ushered him out of the room, picking up her briefcase and adding the two files to the small stack inside. With that case under her arm, she hurried toward the briefing rooms.

* * * *

Brady moaned as Molly’s mouth slicked down over his cock, the wet heat almost sending him over the edge. She’d

wanted to make love to him, to touch him and kiss him without him touching her. He'd been resisting for almost an hour now, but her every touch, her every kiss had him so wound up that all he wanted was to throw her to the bed and ravish her.

His hand wove through the soft fiery strands of her hair, moving it so that he could see her face, her cheeks hollowed out as she tried to take more of him. Her throat moved over the end of his cock and he jerked. "Oh fuck! Molly," he growled, the urge to come becoming almost overwhelming.

She didn't move except to bob her head a bit faster, sucking and licking at his heavy cock, moaning her own pleasure.

Those little vibrations were more than he could take. His hips jerked up, the tip of his cock contracting as he let loose with a tide of spunk. Some dribbled out of the side of her mouth before she could swallow, making him growl again.

His hands dug deep into the sheets, his eyes rolling back into his head as he closed them. White lights flared behind his lashes as he let his climax roll through him. Then it was over and he felt wrung out and weak.

He felt her climb up his body, rubbing her incredible breasts over him, the nipples dragging against his skin. His cock twitched at the sensation and he stared at her in wonder. "What are you, some kind of natural Viagra?" he moaned.

* * * *

Molly grinned at him, feeling his cock grow against the heated wetness of her pussy. She'd made love to him for hours, starting with the ride to the hotel and ending just moments before when she finally let him come. Now it was her turn, and she wouldn't be denied. "I didn't think you were old enough to need Viagra?" she teased, sliding her wetness against his cock.

Brady grabbed her arms, making her squeal as he flipped her onto her back on the mattress. Moving his hips slowly, he used his rapidly hardening cock to tease her, sliding it against her wet pussy and letting the tip brush her clit. Concentrating for an instant, he cast a spell over her, his eyes shining with the red flames that marked his powers.

MAGIC MAN

She groaned, climaxing almost immediately. “What did you do to me?” she gasped, feeling the head of his cock part swollen lips that seemed almost too sensitive to believe.

“I made you come,” he growled, burying his face against her neck as he pushed inside her. She climaxed again before he had a chance to bottom out, her muscles clenching almost desperately at the invader giving her such pleasure. “Yes, baby. Do it again,” he groaned.

His touch was heavenly against her skin, his mouth both soothing and invigorating at the same time. He began to thrust inside of her, slowly, every stroke causing more and more pleasure.

He watched as her head began to roll on the pillow, her fiery hair rising to caress him as if it had a mind of its own. Opening her lovely, emerald eyes, she reached up to him, dragging him down so that he touched her from breastbone to where they were connected so intimately. Her nails raked down his back, not breaking the skin but sending a shiver through him.

She grabbed his ass, yanking him hard, enough to make his balls slap against her bottom. “More,” she ground out, “don’t stop!”

Her moans and whimpers grew more frantic, her hands hanging on for dear life as he seemed to pull her inside out with pleasure. She cried out, and he felt her cunt pulse around him yet again, her hot juices flooding over him. It triggered his own orgasm and he spent himself inside of her, jets of hot seed filling her womb.

They were both covered in sweat, Molly’s hair growing even curlier. He pulled himself free of her almost reluctantly, falling to lie down beside her. His hand rested against her stomach, as if he couldn’t let her go completely.

“Molly,” he rasped, his throat dry. “We need to talk.”

Those four words, spoken in such a serious tone, made her eyes fly open and her body tense. They were never a good thing to hear in any relationship. “About?” she asked fearfully

“About Renee. I’ve made a decision and it has to do with you. I need to know how you feel about me.”

Molly sighed, turning over in the bed so that her back was to him. “What does how I feel have to do with you and your fiancée, Brady?”

She didn’t see him close his eyes as his thoughts raced, but she could feel him tighten behind her, coming up on his elbow, a hand stroking through her long hair. Every once in a while, the back of his hand would stroke down her spine, sending shivers of renewed heat to her loins.

He took a deep breath and Molly froze, almost afraid of what he wanted to say.

“You are constantly in my thoughts,” he began slowly, his hand moving to her shoulder and pulling her gently to her back. He leaned forward, kissing her cheeks, her temple and finally her nose. “I can’t quit thinking and remembering how you taste, how it feels to be inside of you. I can’t even remember what Renee looks like. When I try to think about her, all I see is you. You’ve bewitched me, Molly.”

“I-I didn’t mean t-to,” she stuttered, her eyes locked upon his.

“I know that,” he said in exasperation. “I know it’s my problem and not yours, unless you want it to be. I’ve fallen for you, and fallen hard. Molly, I don’t think I can let you go.”

* * * *

Shadow was sitting in the first chair as Kit walked into the briefing. He gave her a smile, and she detoured over to sit next to him for a minute as the rest of her crew showed up. “Hey, big guy. How’s the head seat feeling?”

“Very strange,” Shadow said with a grin. “I’m more used to going on these than sending others to deal with them, especially since Callie is involved. I had to almost hog-tie her to get her to stand down on this mission.

“That’s right, Callie is what, half-sister to this Molly and Tallie Wolfe?”

“It’s a little hard to understand. Callie’s mom and dad were mated a long time ago. It didn’t work out well but Callie’s mom had two litters. Then she disappeared. Callie’s dad tried to find her but then fell in lust with a beautiful panther.”

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“A wolf and a panther? That’s a bit of a strange mix, isn’t it?”

“Yes, and Nashe Wolfe and one of his sisters are the only leftovers of that relationship. Wolfe married again, this time to Tallie and Molly’s mother. She is a white witch, a very strong one. You’ll be working with her on this.”

Kit nodded, glancing over at the three members of her team that had arrived while she was talking to Shadow. She noted the look in Drake’s eyes as he looked down at Lelia Storm.

“That could be trouble,” Shadow said, following the direction of her gaze. “Let’s not let it become a problem, okay?” he whispered to Kit before rising and heading toward the door. He stopped just as he got there. “The company jet is going to be available to you for the trip to Michigan. I’ve arranged for two rented Hummers to be waiting at the Detroit airport. Both will have GPS and will be programmed to show you to where our last sighting of the couple was.”

“What about the local cops?” Kit asked.

“Uncooperative,” Shadow said. “Find a way to make them cooperate without having to hurt them too badly.” He nodded at Mage, who just smiled slightly. “Good luck!”

Kit watched Shadow leave the room and turned to face her team. “I hope you’re not afraid of flying.”

“Road trip?” Drake asked, his eyes glittering.

“By plane though,” Lelia added, obviously excited. “Why are we going to Michigan?”

Kit grabbed the two photos she’d been given, one of Mollyne Wolfe and the other of Brady Knight. Passing them around, she began the briefing.

“Mollyne Wolfe is half-sister to Callie Wolfe, Shadow’s mate. She disappeared about eight months ago, followed quickly by her sister Tallie. Molly and Tallie are half-wolf, half-white witch and we think they’ve been picked up by a crew that works for Dr. William Parnell.” She paused, holding up a picture of the doctor, one that had been taken at an airport not too long ago.

“Dr. Parnell owns many properties but the information we’ve been getting shows that huge electrical surges have been taking place at his property in Wolverine, Michigan.”

“What does Dr. Parnell want with them?” Lelia asked, looking up from the picture of the pretty redhead.

“Brady Knight is a bit of an unknown. At one time, we had a man tracking him but we couldn’t get anything concrete on his powers. He is a magical being, this much we know. The rest? Well, your guess is as good as mine.” She looked at the other picture that Lelia held. “Molly Wolfe went out one summer night and wasn’t seen again. She’s been off the radar for close to eight months. If it hadn’t been for a police bolo, we wouldn’t have seen her this time.”

“So this Dr. Parnell is kidnapping Weres and other magical beings. Now we just need to find out the why and decide how to shut him down.” Drake nodded, happy with a concrete plan.

“Without hurting any of the humans involved. We also need to get Tallie Wolfe out of their grasp and home as well. If you need to take anything with you, I suggest you go and get it now. We’re leaving within the hour.” Kit gathered the papers up and put them back in her folder.

Chairs scraped back and Kit felt the soft touch of Mage’s fingers against her skin. Looking up, she smiled as she saw the question in his eyes and heard his thoughts in her mind. *He’s to be disappointed again, is he not?* the empath said, flashing a picture of Gunner in her head.

“It’s not my fault he can’t take no for an answer,” she growled. “I told him that we shouldn’t date. Dating between team leaders could lead to some very hurt feelings.”

He truly likes you, though, Kit. Don’t you want to find someone for yourself? Isn’t it the dream of every one no matter there species to find that special person who makes them feel complete?

Pictures flashed in her mind, pictures of lunches where he’d held her chair and paid for her food, making her laugh and keeping her entertained. Pictures of him helping her fit in here, introducing her to others and making her feel like one of them. The everyday scenes intermixed with others of a more “sensitive” nature that sent a flush to her cheeks and had her grabbing the table with two hands to stay on her feet. “Mage! Knock it off!” she growled at him. She heard him chuckle in her head.

MAGIC MAN

I only showed you what was in there already. He grinned.

“I could very well grow to despise you, Mage,” Kit said, punching his bony arm. “Stay out of my head and my daydreams.”

“Is he bothering you?” Gunner’s voice snapped Kit back to reality and she jumped at the note of anger in his voice. It wasn’t directed at her, but at Mage.

Mage smiled serenely. *Told you so.*

“No, its fine, Gunner. He’s just helping me go over last minute details before we head out. I—I was going to call you. Looks like I won’t be able to take you up on your offer of a drink. I’m heading out on assignment.” She jumped when the door closed hard behind Mage, leaving the two of them alone.

“I heard,” he said, moving closer slowly but surely, almost as if he were stalking her around the room.

“Can I take a rain check?” she asked cautiously, backing away from the files as he stepped into her personal space.

“Sure thing,” he said as he backed her into the corner. “Only there’s one small problem.”

“What’s that?” she asked, her chest heaving as a strange emotion fluttered to life in her belly. It was joined by what felt like thousands of butterflies.

“I don’t think I want to wait for the good night kiss,” he said softly, a definitively sexy growl emphasized in his low voice.

Kit put her hand against his chest, holding him back when he leaned forward to find her lips. “Who said I’d have given you one tonight anyway? I thought it wasn’t a date? Just two co-workers kicking back after work?”

“Two co-workers who are very sexually attracted to one another,” he said, pushing against her hand until he could feel the swell of her breasts against his chest through the skin tight gray suit. “You know you want this as much as I do, Kit. Why fight me so much?”

“You promised you wouldn’t try anything,” she reminded him, almost kicking herself when he suddenly pulled free of her.

“Yes, I did promise that. You’re just everything I’ve been looking for in a mate...” He stepped back even further when the door to the briefing room burst open and Drake and Lee stepped inside.

“Whoa,” Drake said, pulling back on Lee’s hand that he still held. “Are we interrupting?”

“No,” Kit said at the same time that Gunner growled “Yes.”

“Okay,” Drake said, “uh, which one?”

“No,” Kit said again, squeezing past Gunner and back to her files. “You two ready to go?”

They carried identical black backpacks formed from unbreakable plastic. Inside these packs were everything one needed, depending upon species, to be able to survive for a week, including food and water. Kit’s was in her office and she would have to go and get it before they left.

“We could go and get yours for you, Kit,” Drake offered, his gaze going to where Gunner stood, his eyes fixed upon the sultry leader of Kappa Group.

“That’s a good idea,” Lee said quickly, tugging at his hand and heading toward the door. “We’ll be back in a couple of minutes, Kit.”

As soon as the door closed behind them, Kit held her hands up, backing away from Gunner. “We aren’t doing this.”

“Are you afraid?” he asked, following after her.

“No,” she said, disgust in her voice. “Why would I be afraid of you?”

“Because you want me. You want me more than you think is right and it scares the crap out of you.” Gunner moved into her hands, growling at the way they felt on his body.

He should have done this all those weeks ago, instead of allowing her the little games she seemed to have to play. His golden gaze drifted down to the zipper of her suit, leaving an impression of cleavage but not actually the sight of it. He licked his lips, wanting to taste her more than he wanted anything else in the world.

Grabbing her upper arms, he yanked her into him, forcing her head to rise so that she could maintain the stare he’d started. “That’s it, Kit,” he growled, bending his head to her. His lips covered hers, at first barely brushing. Then she moaned and he wrapped his arms around her, pulling her tightly against him so she could feel him from groin to chest.

Her lips parted and his tongue plunged inside, finding and tangling with her own. Her eyes shut and her hands went around

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his neck, pulling her up on the tips of her toes to keep the contact. He kissed her until she was dizzy with lack of breath. He kissed her until her heart felt as if it would thump its way from her breast. He kissed her until she couldn't think of duty or missions, only of him.

When he lifted his head, her golden gaze was filled with brilliant fire. Her hair was mussed, strands falling to her waist as he pulled out her pins. He stared down at her, lost in her beauty and the ache he felt for her. "We'll finish this when you get back," he growled, kissing her once more. "Remember this while you're lying in you're lonely hotel bed tonight."

Kit yanked herself away, suddenly aware of what he'd done and where they were. "Who says it'll be lonely?" she gasped.

His eyes narrowed and for one moment, she swore he was going to throw her to one of the tables and take her right there. For that same moment, she couldn't help but wonder if she wouldn't have enjoyed it. Then he walked past her, going to the door and slipping out, raking her with one hot stare before he closed the door behind him. Kit sank down onto the chair at the table where her files still sat, her hand touching her swollen lips gently.

* * * *

Gunner turned into his own office, sitting down behind his desk and smiling slightly. He knew that Kit was confused by what she was feeling. He was too.

That kiss had been enough to set his soul on fire. He could feel tendrils still smoldering in his system. His palms were sweating and his cock throbbing. He shifted uncomfortably in his chair, jerking when his phone rang.

"Fuck," he breathed, grabbing the headset. "What!?"

"Boss?"

"Arabella," he said softly. "What's up?"

"We found the snitch you were looking for. He was right where you said he'd be. I've got him a room in the tombs until you want to question him."

"Good job. I'll be down in a few moments." He replaced the headset and stared at the desk in front of him. He had his own

case to work on, a vampire long thought dead who'd resurfaced and was slowly carving out a hunting ground. It was Gunner's job to stop him.

With a shake of his head, he got hold of himself, banishing all thoughts of Kit to the back of his mind, to rehash when he had the time. Grabbing the file on his desk, he patted it against his leg as he left the room, the door slowly closing behind him.

Chapter Ten

“Hey Kit,” Drake said when he saw the lithe lioness enter the private jet. “How do you turn a dishwasher into a snow blower?”

“Don’t Kit, for God’s sake, please don’t indulge him,” Lelia said from where she was sitting next to the Tinman.

“Aww, come on, you found it funny when I told it to you.” Drake leaned down and kissed Lelia. “You can’t deny that.”

Maybe it’s your kisses she finds so funny, Mage’s voice said in each of their heads.

Lelia snorted, covering her mouth as Kit laughed loudly and Drake glared at the tall, thin man.

“I don’t know, Drake,” Kit said, taking pity on the silver man. “How do you change a dishwasher into a snow blower?”

“Give the bitch a shovel,” Drake said, laughing at his own joke as Kit shook her head. “Get it?” Drake asked. “Come on, it’s funny, give the bitch a shovel.”

“You’re getting pathetic if you have to explain your jokes, baby.” Lee leaned back in her chair, pulling her belt over her lap. “The pilot said we can go whenever you’re ready.”

Kit sat down next to Mage, reaching across him to get the small phone in the wall. It would link her with the cockpit. “We’re ready whenever you are,” she said into the receiver before hanging it back up.

An attendant, dressed in the tight silver suit of the ASP agency reached out and grabbed the door, swinging it shut and locking it tightly. She came into the main cabin, tall and lithe, a gorgeous brunette with her hair in hundreds of braids.

“The captain is requesting clearance to take off and we should be taxiing out to the runway in just a few moments,” she said in a clear voice. “If there is anything you need, just push the button in your seat and I will be more than happy to see what I

can do. I know your mission is top secret so I shall leave you to it.” She smiled once more and then turned toward the small galley, securing things as the small jet jerked while backing away from the gate.

“I hate flying,” Lee groaned, her hands tightly gripping the arms of her chairs.

“I didn’t know that,” Drake said, wrapping his arm around her and pulling her close. “It’s safer than riding a bike, baby.”

“If I fall off my bike, it’s only two or three feet to the ground. Can this thing claim the same?” Lee closed her eyes as the jet jerked a bit more, turning and heading out to the runways. The noise of the engines grew louder and she flinched against his shoulder. “Tell me when we’re up, okay?”

“It’ll be okay, baby,” he said, pressing the side of his face into her hair. “I won’t let anything hurt you, you know that.”

“Tinman, I don’t think even you could physically survive a plane crash.”

The engines revved louder, a loud vibration coming from the floor of the plane. Drake watched as the sexy brunette strapped herself into the folding seat by the door. His eyes turned back to Lee just for a second before Kit cleared her throat at him. Shrugging, he gave Kit a small smile.

Then they were speeding down the runway and off, climbing steadily into the clear blue sky.

* * * *

“I don’t think I can let you go,” he said softly, stroking her hair.

“W-what about Renee?” she stuttered, desperately wanting to go back into his arms and hold him. “You can’t just do this to Renee.”

“Do what? She spends more time with her therapist than she does me,” he said, sitting up in the bed that they shared, the covers pooling at his waist and leaving his magnificent upper body bare.

“B-but she loves you and you made her a promise. You can’t just break it, Brady.” Molly didn’t move. Her heart was beating like a runaway train and all she wanted to do was bury

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her head under a pillow and forget they were having this conversation. If she could forget, she could pretend he'd never offered her the one thing she wanted the most in this world, besides to rid it of Dr. Parnell. She wanted to be his, to make him her mate, to change him so that they could live out the infinitely long lives of the Weres together.

She hadn't chosen him to help her thinking she would fall in love with him and she hated that she had. But she couldn't give up, not now, not when they were so close to finally rescuing all of those Weres that were chained in that compound.

Molly glanced at the window, noting the first soft pinks of dawn beginning to spread across the sky. She rubbed her arms, watching as he came toward her.

"Molly, whatever happens or doesn't happen from now on, I can't pretend anymore. You have to know how I feel. It isn't just the sex or the fear. It's love. I love you and you can't say you don't love me. It's there every time you touch me, every time you look at me. I can see it in your eyes."

"No," she said softly, her head shaking. "Renee..."

"Renee will find someone for herself. She won't waste her time crying or pretending it's otherwise. She'll shrug her shoulders and go on." He reached out and took her arms, his palms warm against her cold flesh. "Molly," he began slowly.

"No, Brady. I've never stolen another woman's man and I can't start now. You belong to Renee. I should never have let you touch me." A sob caught in her throat and she pulled away from him, jerking her hand free when he went to capture it again. "I can't stay here. I can't."

Molly found her clothes and pulled them on, knowing that Brady watched her with wary eyes. "Where do you think you're going to go?" he asked

"I-I don't know, for a walk or something. I just can't stay here any longer. Please," she said, staring up into the hypnotic color of his eyes, "don't try to stop me."

* * * *

Brady watched as her stiff backed gait quickly took her out of the parking lot and across to a busy shopping store. She

blended in pretty quickly with the crowd but he could see her fiery hair, so much more colorful than the drab blondes and brunettes she walked among. It was almost more than he could handle to let her go but he knew if he wanted to keep her close, he had to give her this time to get away.

He gave her a few minutes to get in the store before he threw on some clothes and followed her, careful to stay amidst the crowd.

She was just ahead of him when it happened. He felt more than saw someone come up next to him then felt a sharp pain, like that of a bee's stinger. The world spun once, then once more and he found he couldn't stay up on his feet. "Wha..." he tried to ask but the words slurred. The noises that came out of his mouth were unintelligible.

He went down hard, his head slamming on the solid flooring. Molly's voice called out his name. He heard her and he tried to warn her to get back, to run. Then he was covered in a smothering blackness.

* * * *

Brady didn't know how long he'd been under when he felt himself coming around. He blinked his eyes heavily, trying to find something to focus upon.

"M-Molly," he called hesitantly.

"No, Mr. Knight. Miss Wolfe took your advice and ran before we could get a stun gun to her. But it's no matter. Without your magical ways, Miss Wolfe will be picked up very soon and then you can watch the tearful family reunion."

The man behind the voice stepped into view, reaching out and checking the locks and the straps that held him to the gurney. "You won't get away with this," Brady hissed, narrowing his eyes and searching through the man's mind for something he could use. When all he found was a blank wall and a locked door, he gave up, staring at the man. "Who are you?"

"I'm Dr. Parnell. You're little mind tricks won't work on me or on anyone else here. We've found that certain electromagnetic waves," he said, nodding to the four generators

that sat on each wall, “knock out powers and the ability to change that these creatures seem to have.”

“They aren’t creatures, they’re humans as much as you or I,” Brady growled. “Change that. As much as I. I don’t know what the hell you are but there sure isn’t any humanity in you.”

“Oh, Mr. Knight, I’m hurt. Don’t tell me you don’t know why I’m trying to harness the powers of these creatures. They have incredibly long lives and their healing capabilities are beyond any that we’ve seen. If we can find the right gene, we can take their longevity and make it our own. People wounded in accidents would heal in a fraction of the time. We’d become so much more than what we are now. You’ve heard of the scientists that are taking human DNA and putting it into the bodies of sheep to make their organs useful for human beings? I’m just taking that a bit further.”

“And trapping and kidnapping as well. What about the things your men do to these poor people? Did you ever think of that? What of their families, Dr. Parnell? What about their rights?”

“They are little more than animals, Mr. Knight. They don’t have rights.” He turned and went to a tray, his back to Brady. When he returned, he held up a syringe. “Until we find out for sure what your capabilities are, I think it best you’re sedated.”

“No!” he shouted, but it was too late. The same sharp pain stabbed him in the upper arm and the blanket of darkness came once more to cover him.

There was bleakness in that darkness, a helplessness that made him shudder in impotent rage. But even as his eyes fluttered shut, he felt her presence like a light coming through the fog.

“Brady!”

He heard his name upon her tongue but try as he might, he couldn’t seem to respond. He struggled to speak to her, struggled to make her hear him.

Hands held him, cushioned his head against a soft pair of breasts even as she stroked his cheek and called his name. He looked up at her, a mute plea for help in his eyes.

“It’s Parnell,” she said sadly, staring around into the blackness. “I’ll rescue you, Brady. I promise. I’ll find us help,

somehow.” Then she drifted back into the blackness and he was lost again.

* * * *

Molly sat up in the bed, her eyes roaming every feature of the familiar room they'd rented the night before. If only she hadn't been so afraid of her feelings, Brady wouldn't be in this predicament. Parnell had him, which meant one of two things. He knew that Brady held more magic in his small finger than the Were community as a whole did or he was using him to smoke her out. Either didn't give her much hope. She had to have help. It was time to call.

Lifting the receiver to her ear, she dialed a zero and waited for the operator to answer.

“Yes, I need to make a collect call.” She rattled off the number by memory and waited while the operator put it through. A deep voice answered on the other end and then the operator was back, telling her she could begin her call.

“Nashe?”

* * * *

Lee leaned back in her seat in the jet, her eyes drowsy and closing. She could feel Drake's hand covering hers and the gentle caress of his thumb across her skin. Ever since they'd defeated Hood, he'd been loving and wonderful and so very different from his usual self. The only thing he hadn't done was declare his feelings.

Was she being too selfish wanting him to tell her he loved her even when every gesture, every little touch said it?

No, you aren't, Mage said, turning his skeletal head over to where he could see her out of his big brown eyes. You deserve the words as well as the touches, Lee. Don't settle for less. If he really loves you, he'll understand.

She sent him her thanks. Then she turned her head, letting it rest on Drake's shoulder, her other hand falling to his lap to lay palm up against the top of his thigh.

MAGIC MAN

Drake grabbed the blanket she'd wrapped around herself and covered her more securely, letting the blanket cover his lap as well. As soon as her hand was covered, she turned it over, finding him easily enough through the thin material of the ASP uniform. Her hand covered him, squeezing gently, rhythmically, until he was ready to groan at the sensations she brought him. "Lee," he hissed urgently, "knock it off."

"You don't want to join the Mile-High Club?" she asked softly, finding his zipper and pulling it down.

"Lelia Storm," he ground out through gritted teeth as she reached inside his uniform and slid her open hand down the impressive erection he was sporting. Rubbing her thumb over the soft top of his cock, she gathered the moisture that pooled there, using it to lubricate her palm while she stroked him slowly but firmly. "Lee, God," he hissed. "You're going to make me come."

"That's the plan," she said, her nose nuzzling into his neck, her eyes still closed. She could hear his breathing speeding up and felt him fighting the sensations.

Drake's head moved as he looked around at the others occupying the plane. The only one who looked back at him and smiled was Mage. Kit seemed occupied with her files and the brunette attendant had just taken drink orders and was busy in the galley filling them. No one but Mage seemed to be aware of what was going on. While that wasn't comforting, it was normal.

He let his head fall back in the seat, Lee's soft palm surrounding his cock and doing amazing things. His eyes closed as he felt Lee slide further down in her seat, lifting the arm rest between the two of them so she could put her head in his lap. The first touch of her lips on his cock almost sent him out of his seat, but he caught himself, sinking back as she surrounded the head of his cock with the heat of her mouth.

"Lee," he groaned, his hand going to the blanket to lift it just a bit, giving him a glimpse of her pretty heart-shaped face, her lips stretched tightly, her hand stroking the flesh that wouldn't fit. She moaned softly around his cock and he dropped the blanket his hand going to the one arm rest left and digging his fingers in.

He exploded into her mouth, a pure jet of come pulsing down her throat. She didn't gag but rode out his orgasm,

swallowing greedily. When he was finished and she'd cleaned him with her tongue, she slid him back into his pants and zipped him up carefully. Sitting back up in her seat, she gave him a look and used two fingers to wipe the corners of her mouth.

Drake stared at her with his jaw hanging until she reached over and lifted it with the same two fingers. "You'll let in flies," she teased.

"Where did you learn to do that?" he asked finally as the beautiful brunette brought around the drinks.

Lee took hers and sipped it, smiling as she saw that Drake didn't even look twice at the woman. "It's amazing what you can learn on the internet," she teased.

"The internet?!" Drake's head was spinning. He picked up his drink and drained it, coughing a bit as the carbonation tickled his throat.

Lee just smiled.

* * * *

They touched down in Detroit, transferring their equipment and supplies into the Hummer that Shadow had arranged. Leaving the airport, Drake drove while Lee sat in the back with Kit and discussed their course of action.

"No plan?" she asked, amazed.

"Nothing until we get there and see what we're up against. Shadow got us satellite pictures but they don't give placement of guards or where they're holding the captives. We need to scope it out a bit more."

"Couldn't we just capture one of the guards and let Mage loose on him?" Drake asked, turning to look at the thin man in the passenger seat.

"We could, but you know what Mage's skills do to a nonhuman. Can you imagine the destruction he could do to a human brain?" Kit shuddered.

"I wouldn't call anyone who would do the things these people have done human, would you, Drake?" Lee asked. She was reading through one of the folders, grimacing at the contents. "The body that was found had been experimented upon in the most gruesome ways. They injected him with different

drugs to see what worked and what didn't. They took repeated samples of his flesh, his bone and his brain, not including what they did to his organs...which I hope occurred after death."

Lee angrily wiped at her eyes. This was one reason she'd joined ASP instead of going with her coven as expected. Human beings were not very forgiving, and if you were different in any way, you could expect harassment. In her life, she'd met very few "people" that she considered humane.

Drake looked back at Lee in the rearview mirror, catching her movements. "Tell you what, Lee. I'll capture one and you can go batshit on him, turn his testicles into peas and fill his dick with green pus or something. How's that sound?"

"Like something I've threatened to do to you before," she said, laughing because she knew what he was trying to do.

"You like my dick too much to hurt it now," Drake said, seeing Lee's cheeks grow pink.

"Too much information, Drake," Kit said softly. "Keep your eyes on the road. How long is the trip?"

"Wolverine is about forty-five minutes south of the bridge," Drake said. "It should take us about three hours."

"Good," Kit sighed. "If you need someone to give you a break with driving, wake me up." She swept the files into her briefcase and sank down into the thick leather seat, letting her head lean against the door. She closed her eyes.

* * * *

"Nashe?"

"Molly! Are you all right?"

"No," she said, wiping the tears out of her eyes. "But I can't give you any details, not now, not on the phone."

"Where are you? Molly, baby, we'll come to you, okay?"

"I'm in Michigan," she breathed quietly. She heard footsteps outside the motel room door. She only started breathing again when they passed her door and continued on. "In a small town called Wolverine. They've got Brady and I know they're looking for me. I don't know what to do, Nashe."

"Brady who? How secure are you where you're at?"

More steps, these hesitating outside the door to the room before continuing on. Molly moved to the corner, taking the phone with her. She sank down, hiding behind the bed. “Not very secure,” she whispered. “I think they know I’m here, Nashe.”

“Okay baby, you have to get out of there. Pack up your stuff. Do you have a car?”

“No,” Molly said softly realizing there was no way for her to start the car without Brady.

“Okay, okay,” Nashe said, trying to keep her from crying. “I want you to stay where you are. I’ll be there as quickly as I can. I’m going to call Dad, let him know where you are too. He might be able to get to you quicker. Someone will be there soon, sweetheart. I promise.”

“Okay,” Molly said, the phone clutched between her hands like a life line. “Please hurry.”

“Molly? Don’t forget who and what you are. Remember, you’re not helpless, okay? You can take care of yourself, too. You know what you have to do.”

“Yeah, I know.” Molly’s answer was automatic. She did know who and what she was and where she came from--but it hadn’t seemed to work before, so how could she even hope that it would work now?

“I’ll be sending someone to protect you until I can get there, honey. He’s going to use the phrase *Dolphins swim by moonlight*. If he doesn’t use those words, he’s not from me, okay?”

“Yeah, just get here as soon as you can. I don’t know what they’re doing to him. Please, Nashe, please hurry.”

With a few more comforting words, Nashe hung up the phone. He stared at his mate, Terry, who stood by looking worried, her hand on the rounded bulge of her stomach.

“Who was that?”

“My half-sister, Molly. She was kidnapped months ago and my father has been pulling out the stops trying to find her. She’s alone in a motel in some backwoods place in Michigan. I’ve got to go get her,” he said softly, his hand going to her cheek. “I don’t want to leave you now, though.”

“You have to go,” Terry said, standing on her tip toes to lean over to kiss him. Her big belly was getting in the way of everything recently. It was a huge drain on her stamina and just today she’d begun to get pains in her lower back. “Me and the terrible triplets here will be just fine.”

“Will you go stay with Luc and Marissa, please, just until I get back? I don’t want to think of you here alone baby, this close to your due date. Anything happens to you, it’ll kill me.”

“I’m not the one rushing head first into danger without looking,” she teased, trying to make him feel better. She followed him from the living room, black and grey with bright splashes of red, into the bedroom. She’d refined it a bit since she moved in with him, but it still held its chaotic charm.

“Pack a bag, baby. I’ll take you to Luc’s on my way to the airport.”

“Nashe, I’ll be perfectly fine here. Besides, with you gone, I’m going to have to go in and run Abstracts.”

“Oh no you won’t. You’ll call Sam. She can handle everything from the books down to the scheduling. I’m hoping I’ll only be gone overnight. She had a friend helping her and he seems to have gotten caught up in whatever mess Molly and Tallie are in.”

“I don’t know if Sam will be too happy about that. She just got back from her honeymoon. You remember how *you* were,” Terry sighed, running her hand over her mate’s whiskery cheek and staring into his wickedly sharp green eyes. “I’m going to miss you,” she said, coming on tiptoe to kiss him again. “So you’d better go before I decide I don’t want you.”

He tossed the small knapsack across his shoulder and gathered her in his arms. “I love you,” he whispered against her lips.

“I love you,” Terry answered, sighing once more as the twinge in her back made the position he was holding her in uncomfortable. “Go. I’ll call Marissa and if I need anything, I’m sure Luc can come to me. I’ll call Sam too. You just get to your sister and make sure she’s okay.” She dug his cellphone out of a pile of chef magazines and handed it to him. “Call me when you have her, okay?”

“I will, baby.” He bent quickly and kissed her belly, his fingers moving over the terrible trio, as Terry liked to call them. “You guys be good for your mom. I’m depending on you.” Then he kissed her once more and was gone.

Terry heard him on his cell phone before the front door even closed. The apartment immediately seemed so empty. Maybe she should call Luc and go stay with them. She moved slowly through the quiet rooms and into the kitchen, stirring the dinner that Nashe had been making for them. It had sounded so good when he’d told her about the dish, but now, with him gone, she suddenly had no appetite. Turning off the stove, she set the pans to the side to cool.

She went to the fridge and grabbed a bottle of water. A foot kicked her. Then another and she grunted a bit at a shot to the kidney. Settling her big body on the couch, she grabbed the remote and flipped through the channels, finally finding something she could watch.

Two hours later, she sipped the last of the water and went to stand, ready for bed. A sudden wave of dizziness hit her and she grabbed for the back of the couch. “Uh oh,” she whispered as a slow trickle slid down her thigh, drenching her underwear and the loose, shapeless trousers she’d been wearing. “Not now, guys. Can’t you wait until Daddy gets home?”

Chapter Eleven

Terry moaned as the pain hit her again, low and fierce across her lower back. She rolled on the bed, grabbing hold of Marissa's hand and squeezing hard. "I never thought it would hurt my back," she cried.

Marissa held a cold cloth, using it to wipe at the sweat that beaded Terry's forehead. "Back labor," she said softly. "We've got to get you off your back. Luc!" she called. Her handsome husband's head poked into the room. "I need your help."

"I don't know nothing bout birthin' no babies, Miss Scarlett," he said in a high falsetto voice. Marissa narrowed her eyes at him and he stepped into the room, holding his hands up in surrender. "I'm sorry. Bad joke, baby," he apologized.

"You're lucky I love you so much," she said, waving her fist under his nose. "Did you get a hold of the midwife?"

"Yeah, she's on her way, with a helper. I haven't been able to get hold of Nashe though. I called the airport. His plane landed on schedule and he was on it, but he's not answering his phone."

"Has something happened to him?" Terry moaned, a low growl in her voice.

"No, Nashe can handle himself, sweetie. You just stay calm for those babies of yours." Marissa squeezed her hand. "Luc and I are going to help you get on your hands and knees, sweetie. That'll take the pressure off of your back and should make you feel better."

"How do you know this stuff?" Luc asked her, impressed.

"I watch Animal Planet," Marissa joked.

"Hey," Terry grouched. "Not funny."

Luc chuckled. "It was kind of funny," he said.

"Oh," Terry moaned as another contraction caught her by surprise. She stiffened in their hands even as they brought her up

and around so she was off of her back and on her elbows and knees. Marissa put pressure on her lower back, using the balls of her hands to knead the tightening muscles.

“Is that any better?” she asked Terry when the contraction ended.

“Oh yes,” Terry moaned, accepting a small spoonful of ice from her friend. “I’ll never forget this, Ris. When you have your babies, I’ll be here for you.”

Marissa brushed her hair off her face, watching as Luc slipped from the room, phone to his ear. “I know you will, sweetie. Don’t worry about that now, though. We’ve got to get these guys born.”

Terry rode out four more contractions before a grunt suddenly came from her mouth. “Oh God, Marissa, I’ve got to push.”

“No, Terry! Breathe, just breathe through it. Pant if the need to push gets too great. The midwife should be here soon. Please,” she whispered low enough to keep Terry from hearing. “Please let her get here soon.”

* * * *

Molly watched the shadows go across the drapes, shadows that seemed more menacing as each one passed by the window outside. She sat in the corner of the room she’d been so happy to share with Brady, her eyes wide, her heart racing, unable to stop thinking of what they might be doing to him. Tears slid unnoticed down her cheeks.

When one of those shadows stopped in front of her door, she held her breath. “Please keep going,” she whispered.

It didn’t. Instead, a loud pounding knock sounded. Molly bit back the scream that wanted to erupt, her hands squeezing around the only thing she’d found handy enough to use as a weapon.

“Molly?” the voice called, and she scuttled harder into the corner. “Molly, Nashe sent me. Open up.”

“W-What’s the phrase?” she managed loud enough for him to hear.

“Dolphins swim at midnight,” the stranger said.

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Molly flew from the corner, tearing off the chain and flipping the lock to open the door and drag the strange inside.

He was good looking, tall with golden hair that curled around his shoulders. He wore a black leather jacket over a gray tee shirt. His eyes were an incredibly deep blue. A whiskery growth graced his cheeks and strong jaw, giving him a slightly scruffy look that was almost impossibly attractive. A pair of old jeans hugged his lean hips, cupping an impressive bulge.

“Who are you?” she asked as she shut the door behind him and locked it. Turning, she held the weapon in her hand, not trusting him completely even though he had known the phrase.

The stranger glanced down at the toilet brush Molly held, a small smile touching his full, masculine lips as she waved it threateningly under his nose. “My name is Tynan Stavaros, Miss Wolfe. I am a friend of your brother’s from a long time ago. We toured Europe together during the 1800’s.”

“You’re a Were?” she asked.

“Not exactly,” Tynan said. “But it’s good enough of an explanation for now. Are you ready to go?”

“Go? Where are we going? I’m not leaving without Brady.” She waved the brush again at him. Tynan reached out and plucked it easily out of her hand.

“That isn’t necessary,” he said, watching her eyes as he tossed her weapon on the dresser. “If you want to be armed,” he reached into his boot and pulled out a wicked looking dagger, “here. This will do more damage.”

“W-what about you?” Molly asked, accepting the dagger. She lightly touched her thumb to the blade and found it lethally sharp.

“Don’t worry about me, Miss Wolfe. I’m more than well enough armed.” He smiled, and for the first time she saw his fangs. They were impressive, amazingly sharp and almost blindingly white. But the most startling fact was he hadn’t changed at all and he still had fangs.

“Stavaros,” Molly said suddenly, her eyes widening. “Your mother was Lilly Alexandros, wasn’t she?”

“Yes. She still is, the last I looked.”

“T-then your father...”

“...is Nicholas Stavaros, a vampire.” He chuckled at the look in her eyes. “Don’t fear, Molly. I’ve fed today. You’re perfectly safe. But we do need to get out of this motel. They haven’t found you yet, but they are starting to close in. My bike is outside. Nashe is meeting us at a cabin we both know of and then we are going to see about rescuing your sister and your friend.”

Molly grabbed her jacket, tucking the dagger into one of the pockets. She left everything else in the room, taking only the key with her. “I’m ready,” she said.

“I’m going to go first. You stay just inside the door, where you can see me. When I nod, you come out and take the helmet I give you.” He reached out, pretending not to notice the way she flinched from his touch and took her beautiful hair in his hands, tucking the stuff under her coat. “I want to have this disguised as soon as possible. So get the helmet on and buckled quick. Climb aboard my bike and then hang on. Okay?” he asked, staring down into her pretty green eyes.

“Yeah,” Molly said. She followed him to the door, cringing a little as he pulled it open. She could see his bike parked a couple places down from where Brady had parked the car. No one was around that she could see, but she didn’t really trust her eyes when her instincts were screaming she wasn’t safe.

Tynan walked out of the room without looking back. She couldn’t help but admire the way his jeans fit. He pulled on leather gloves as he walked, eyes searching the area for any sign of them being found. Going to the back of his bike, he unstrapped his other helmet, turning slowly to scan the lot before nodding. She was at his side quickly and he helped her put on the helmet, grabbing his own as she climbed on the back of his bike.

Getting on, he turned the key, listening to the rumbling purr of the powerful bike. “Hang on to me,” he said. Her hands came to his waist and grabbed his jacket. He reached around, taking her hand and pulling it so that it rested against his stomach, grabbing the other one as well. “Hang on *tight*,” he said before he took off.

They flew out of the parking lot, Tynan gunning it around cars and weaving through traffic. Turning onto the main road, he hit the brakes for just a moment, watching as a plain white van,

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pulled into the parking lot of the motel. “Phew,” he said to himself. “That was close.”

They headed out of town, Tynan keeping the powerful motorcycle at an easy ninety miles per hour.

* * * *

Drake stumbled his way up the hill, eyes wide as he finally came to the top. He fell to his stomach, noticing the guards that patrolled the outer perimeter as well as the dogs they had. Dogs didn't scare him much. As a Metal man, they more broke their teeth on him than hurt him; but he had the rest of the team to look out for as well. Lee's tender flesh would tear easily under the massive jaws of the huge German Shepherds and Rottweillers that were being used.

He jumped as his communicator beeped at him. “What do you see?” Kit's voice came from the speaker.

“We've got a huge compound, six, no...*seven* buildings. Surrounded by a twelve foot fence with razor wire around the top. Ten guards with dogs, a large gate with a gate house. I hope you brought your Houdini hat, boss. This isn't going to be easy.”

“Get some pictures, Drake and then get your ass back down here. The last thing we need is for you to end up a guest in one of those buildings.”

“You got that right,” he said, slipping his camera out of its pocket and turning it on. He used it to get some close ups, focusing on the gate and the gate house as well as the guards. Twenty minutes later, he was skidding to a stop at the bottom of the hill and brushing off the back of his uniform. Small hands joined his and he grinned when Lee gave his ass a squeeze.

“Can't resist me can you?” he teased, grabbing a lock of her hair and tugging on it.

“You wish, Tinman,” she said, pulling her hair free and starting to walk away. A metal arm snaked around her waist and drew her back against him. She didn't shriek, but it was close.

“You two were supposed to have that out of your system by the time you came back,” Kit said, zipping up her uniform.

“What can I say, Kit? I'm irresistible.”

“That's incorrigible,” Lee said, laughing.

“I’ll agree with that assessment.” She held her hand out and Drake dropped the camera into it. Walking behind the Hummer, she opened the back and pulled out her laptop. She plugged the camera in and downloaded the pictures.

“Here’s our entrance,” she said, pointing at a place near the center of the fence on the far side of the encampment. “This building will be our cover. If we are discovered, you are to get yourself out, understand? Don’t go back for anyone. Get out and get in contact with ASP. We’ll have to go in full force then.” She flipped through the pictures until she came upon a certain building. It was long, one story with both a garage door and a pedestrian entrance. “I’m betting they are keeping their captives in here. They’d need something with a big door and there are bars in the windows. This is our target.”

“Great, how we going to get in?”

“Mage will get us in, don’t worry. We go in, we free our people and then we get the hell out. We’re going to need something bigger than this Hummer for transport though.”

“There was a bus,” Drake said softly, pushing past Kit to flip through the pictures. He found the picture of it sitting near the front gate. “Here.”

“Okay, then. As soon as it gets dark, we’re going in. I want stunners on full. We can’t kill the humans. Also, I want to take the good Dr. Parnell back with us and see what he knows. If possible, we’ll extract his knowledge, destroy any written or computerized information and leave the good doctor wondering what he’s been working on for the past few years.”

“What about the captives?” Lee asked. “They are going to need help trying to cope with what they’ve been through.”

“They’ll get it. Shadow has brought a new doctor on the team. She’s a shrink. She’ll help them.”

“A shrink? Please tell me he’s not going to force team members to go see her.”

“If he thinks it’s necessary, yes he will. Now, we’ve got about three hours to dusk. Let’s go back to town, get food and get prepared for this mission.”

Kit was about to close up the back of the Hummer when a loud buzzing sound startled her. She looked up, her eyes narrowing as two people on a low slung motorcycle went flying

by the Hummer. The one driving the bike turned his head and looked at her. Even through the plastic face plate, Kit felt a strange sensation. It tingled along her nerve endings and she shivered.

“Kit?”

“Get the plate on that bike. I want to know who the driver is.”

Lee drew a few runes in the air, and then closed her eyes, mumbling under her breath. She rattled off the plate number, her amber cat eyes opening slowly. They seemed to spark with golden light, then she blinked a few times and it was gone.

“I got it,” Drake said, “but there’s no link with our satellite out here. Too much interference,” he said, glancing curiously around the area.

“Fine, let’s get somplace where we can.” She slammed the back gate on the Hummer and climbed into her seat, glaring at all of them until they joined her, Drake driving once again as they headed back into Wolverine.

* * * *

Terry groaned again as the pain bore down. She was sitting on her haunches now, sweat pouring off of her face as she stared at the midwife. “You want me to what?”

“Walk. You need to walk. Gravity will help bring the baby further into the birth canal.”

“Nashe Wolfe, when you get back here, I’m going to tear off parts of your anatomy!” She growled as Marissa and the midwife helped her off the bed. “He’s never touching me again,” she told Marissa.

“I bet, sweetie.”

“No, I mean it. He’s not getting that hot bod of his within ten feet of me ever again.”

The midwife chuckled. “I’ve heard that so many times. But this time, I almost believe her. Of course, with a husband like hers, it would be such a waste.”

Her assistant, a tiny thing who couldn’t have been more than nineteen nodded. “Yeah, he’s a hunk all right.”

Terry growled, her eyes glowing an eerie blue as she fought through another contraction. She kept walking, plodding one foot in front of the other even as her body cried out for rest, for a cessation of the pain, for Nashe.

“Did Lukah find him yet?” she asked Marissa, accepting the ice chips for her mouth. They tasted so good but seemed to vanish so quickly.

“No. His cell phone is off, sweetie. He’s going to keep trying and also see about getting help from others in locating him. It’s okay, Nashe will be here. He wouldn’t miss this for anything in the world.”

“He would to help his family,” Terry groaned. She sent out her thoughts, searching for his in the millions of others she could feel. “Nashe,” she groaned again. “I need you.”

They walked around the room and down the hall to the stairs, then back into the bedroom. Terry sensed that others were in the house as well, but she didn’t see anyone besides Marissa and Lukah, when he poked his head in to find out how she was doing or to let her know any information he’d found about Nashe.

“I can’t,” she moaned when they went to take her for another circuit of the room. “Please, can’t I lie down for a while?”

Her face was white and she was stumbling more than walking. Marissa didn’t wait for the midwife to agree, instead supporting her friend and helping her back into the bed. Terry lay on her side, her eyes closed. Shadows darkened the fragile skin under her lashes and she sighed heavily.

“She’s exhausted,” Marissa said to the midwife. “Isn’t there anything you can do?”

“Babies come when they will,” the woman said. “First babies especially. If she hasn’t made any progress in a couple of hours, then we’ll reevaluate. For now, she can rest a bit.”

Marissa could feel the anxiety coming off her friend. She was worried about her husband, worried about herself. Doing the only thing she knew how, she climbed up on the bed behind her and scooted close, wrapping her arm around Terry and holding her gently. She took her friend’s hand in her own. “I’m here with

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you,” she whispered, trying to comfort her. “I’m not leaving, Ter.”

“Thank you,” Terry whispered, twining her fingers with Marissa’s.

* * * *

Brady woke, his head aching from the drugs, his body lethargic and heavy. He pulled at the bindings holding him to the table, his eyes searching the area around him. He was alone.

Concentrating, he tried to free his hands. It didn’t work. He could hear the gentle hum of the generators, the ones Parnell said would hamper his powers. Anger grew inside of him like a bubble, quickly filling and starting to press at the sides. It would burst, he knew.

With a thought, he sent the bubble of anger from him, trying to use his mind to position it over one of the generators. He struggled. It seemed almost beyond his doing, this small thing that he was used to accomplishing effortlessly.

“Come on,” he muttered. “Come on.”

One huge shove barely moved the bubble, but placed it right where he wanted it. He filled it full of his rage. “Pop, damn you,” he growled, adding hate to the mix and watching the colors swirl inside. He thought of the bruises he’d seen on Molly, left there by Parnell and saw the bubble swell again. He thought of Tallie, of the petite beauty in the hands of those animals. The bubble grew larger, one side ready to blow. One last thought of Molly, wondering where she was now and if she was safe.

His worry filled the bubble and it blew, his emotions falling on the generator and shorting it out. Now only three of them hummed around him.

He was able to concentrate more and he felt the buckles holding him down begin to loosen. “Hurry up,” he growled, low in his throat. “Hurry up.”

A pulse of joy filled him as he pulled one hand free and he used that to free the other. Sitting up, he saw the IV attached to his arm and he pulled it loose, sending a squirt of liquid to hit the dirt-covered floor. With the IV removed, his thoughts seemed less disconnected.

A single thought sent up another generator and then the third. The fourth he left running, thinking the hum might cover the sound of his movements. If someone was out there, he didn't want them checking on him. Of course, the sound of the generator's shorting out should have brought them running.

He quickly unstrapped his legs and stood, looking around for his shirt. They'd left his jeans on when they'd strapped him down, but his shirt was hanging on a hook on the wall. Grabbing it, he slipped his arms in and was buttoning it, when he heard a noise at the door.

Brady quickly slipped behind the opening door, searching for a weapon.

"Has there been any sign of the girl yet?"

"No, but the doctor is determined that she'll be found before nightfall."

"That's only like an hour away." the guard said, turning his head to glance back at his partner.

"You know Parnell ... hey, where'd he go?"

Both men hurried into the room, staring at the empty gurney. Brady stepped out from behind the door, slamming one of the men in the head with the end of the IV stand. The man staggered but didn't go down. He turned, blood dripping from where the pole had torn into his flesh.

Brady hit him again, the pole vibrating in his fist. He went down just as Brady felt the first zap of a stun gun hit him. He turned, grabbing the small hand-held device before the guard could hit him with it again. He flipped the small weapon, pressing it against the man's throat and hitting the button.

For just a second, nothing happened. Then the man screamed, jerking as the voltage went through him. He fell to the ground, a stain of urine coating the front of his pants. Brady stashed the stun gun in his front pocket, reaching down and grabbing both men. He put them on the gurney, strapping one down by the wrist straps and putting the bigger man's wrists through the ankle straps.

With the door open, he grabbed the keys from the first man and then slipped out the door, locking it behind him. He was in a long hallway, the walls painted off white. He counted quickly; twelve doors, six interspersed on each side with the one he'd

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been in at the very end of the hallway. On the other end, he could see an opening, maybe a waiting room, with a spacious window and the door to the outside.

“Okay,” he said softly. “Tallie Wolfe, which one of these rooms are you going to be in?” He lifted the keys and went to the first, checking the door and finding it locked. With a sigh, he tried the first key...

Chapter Twelve

The door opened slowly and Brady peered inside. It was gloomy and dim; a pile of hay was stacked in the corner and more of those generators were running inside. He went to the generators first, blowing their fuses before turning to see what occupied this room.

He was a lynx, a beautiful animal; except this one wasn't anxious for Brady's company. It hissed and clawed at him as he moved closer, refusing to be cowed.

"Stop," Brady said softly. "I'm here to help. I want to get you out of here." He moved slowly toward the lynx, his hands held up to show he was no threat.

The lynx cocked his head, seemed to study Brady and then slowly sank down on its haunches. Brady broke the lock that held the collar around his throat. As soon as it slipped off, the lynx started to change.

Brady watched as the lynx changed into the form of a naked man. He was well built, with long, lean muscles. His hair was the gold of the lynx, with green cat-like eyes that still held a bit of wariness. "Who are you?" he asked.

"My name is Brady Knight, but we don't have time for chit chat. We've got to rescue the others."

The lynx nodded, going to a drawer in one of the many cabinets and pulling out jeans and a tee shirt as well as boots. "They took my clothes when I got here," he said. "My name, by the way, is Manix. How do you propose we rescue the others?"

"The same way I got to you," Brady said, holding up the set of keys. He turned to the door, opening it a bit before sneaking through. Manix followed, close on his heels. They tried the next door. It too was locked.

Brady used one of the keys and then pushed open the door. On the gurney in the middle of the room was a small girl. She

didn't look past 15 years of age. She had long, curly red hair that fell almost to the floor.

"It's Tallie," Manix said. "They're trying to figure out what makes her so different from the rest of the Weres."

"How do you know this stuff?" Brady asked, as he pulled a needle out of Tallie's thin arms.

"When we can, we communicate with each other--telepathically." Manix started pulling loose the straps that held Tallie down. "Tallie and I have talked a lot."

Brady lifted the girl. She weighed almost nothing. "Grab the keys and let's get going," he said to Manix.

They snuck down the hallway, rescuing a Were in every room. Most were in animal form when they found them; only one other woman had been strapped unconscious to a table.

"Okay, we need transportation and maybe a weapon," Brady said.

"On the contrary," a voice said behind him. "You all need to go back to your cells, now!"

Brady whirled, his eyes falling upon Dr. Parnell and the guards that were behind him. He laid Tallie down, out of the way of the fighting, before saying anything.

"I don't think so," he said softly. "I think your guards want to put down their weapons and then walk away."

* * * *

Terry's face was red. Sweat dripped from her forehead as she pushed against the pain, stopping only when the contractions gave her rest. "H-how much longer?" she panted.

"Not much, Terry. I can see the hair on the baby's head. Now take a deep breath and push. Hard, Terry. Push."

Terry pushed, feeling a sudden burning and then relief as the baby seemingly whooshed out of her. She lay back in relief, until the midwife placed her baby on her stomach.

His eyes were blue, staring up at her. He had his father's inky black locks, curled wetly over his head. His face was so serene. "It's a boy." She breathed, knowing how excited Nashe would be. She examined every toe, every finger before another pain suddenly took her breath away. "Oh!"

The assistant midwife took the baby, taking him to be measured and weighed. “Do you have a name picked out for this one?” she asked.

“Christopher Lukah Wolfe,” Terry said through gritted teeth as she strained to push the next one into the world. That same burning pressure took her breath away and she strained against it. When the gloriously wonderful relief hit, she didn’t know how she could go through this again. The doctor laid the baby on her stomach.

“It’s a girl,” she said softly, taking care of the umbilical cord. Terry’s eyes rested on the little face. Though red and streaked with blood and other gore, she was still the most beautiful baby she’d ever seen.

“Abigail Marissa Wolfe,” she said, trailing her fingers through the thick hair on her daughter’s head. “You are going to wrap your daddy around your finger so easily.”

Christopher was wrapped snugly inside a blanket, a tiny blue hat on his head. He was placed in a small bassinet and then the assistant midwife picked up Abigail and took her to be weighed, measured and cleaned up.

Terry watched her babies for a few minutes before she noticed that she wasn’t having any more labor pains. “Shouldn’t the third one follow?”

Terry glanced at the clock. It was a quarter to midnight. If the other baby was born later, they’d have different birthdays. She felt a faint twinge of pain, but nothing like the labor pain she’d been having. “What’s wrong?”

The midwife pulled out her stethoscope and pressed it against her belly. She moved it around and then stopped in one place, concentrating.

“The baby is fine, he’s just pushed up inside you. He has to work his way down. We’re going to give him a bit of help, Terry.”

“How come I get a bad feeling from you saying that?” Terry asked.

“Well, it’s not pleasant but I don’t think you’ll have too many problems.” She waited for her assistant to put Abigail in the bassinette next to her brother before starting. They felt along

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the top of her belly, finding the baby with practiced hands. Then they bore down on her stomach, pushing the baby down.

Terry grunted at the pressure. She stayed silent, letting them work and do what they needed to do to get her baby out. Her legs were shaking, spread wide upon the bed. When the labor pains started again, she could do little but moan. Tears were streaming down her wan face. She was so tired, so tired and ready to have this over.

“Okay Terry,” the midwife said, once more sitting between her thighs. “It’s time for you to push.”

Terry grabbed hold of the assistant midwife’s hand, squeezing as she pressed down against the pain. She pushed until the midwife told her to stop, the burning pain so very fierce.

“I need you to pant, Terry. Don’t push.”

“Why?” Terry asked, trying to see what was going on. “Is something wrong?”

“We just have to get the umbilical cord from around his neck, Terry. Pant and then blow it out, okay?”

Terry did as she was told, panting through the next contraction even though the urge to push was almost overwhelming. She could feel the midwife between her spread thighs doing something, but she couldn’t see what. “Is he okay?”

The midwife didn’t answer right away. When she did, it almost sent Terry into tears. “Okay, we’ve got to get this little guy out. Push, Terry.”

The burning pain was quickly finished and the midwife handed the baby to her assistant, not even letting Terry see him first. The baby was blue in color and wasn’t making a sound, unlike the other two who were setting up a howling match in their shared bassinette. “Is he okay?”

“Terry,” the midwife said softly, “the umbilical cord was wrapped around her neck. It cut off her oxygen. We’ll do everything we can to get her breathing.”

Terry watched her baby, seeing how the assistant midwife rubbed her back, using a blue bulb to suction out her mouth and nose. “Come on, sweetheart,” she said softly, “Be okay. You can do it.”

* * * *

“Tynan Stavaros,” Kit said, staring into the monitor of Drake’s computer. “Great. Just who we need out here with us.”

“What do you mean by that?”

“You’ve heard of Nashe Wolfe, Callie’s half brother? They are related on their father’s side of the family. Callan Wolfe never could keep it in his pants. Tynan Stavaros works for the Wolfe family. If he’s here, Nashe Wolfe is probably here as well.”

Drake snorted. “I hope you never let the big guy hear you say that.”

Kit gave him a look that just screamed ... *do I look that stupid?*

“Well, if he’s out there, then he’s looking for his two sisters, Tallie and Molly Wolfe.”

“There are more of them?” Drake asked, looking up at his team leader in surprise.

“Tallie and Molly are from one litter, Callie is from another and Nashe is from a third. As I said, Callan Wolfe does not like to keep it in his pants.”

“So what’s the plan boss?”

“We go back to the commune and go in the front gate. Lee, how’s your magic?”

Lelia Storm closed her eyes, letting her head fall forward. When she lifted it, her strangely exotic cat’s eyes were sparking with golden fire.

“She’s feeling good, boss,” Drake said, laughing.

“There is a vortex here, Kit,” Lee said softly. “I can feel its power. This is spiritual land, it holds a convergence of ley lines. Bad things can happen if the wrong person finds power here, Kit.”

“Bad such as...” Kit asked.

“Such as taking over the world bad, or destroying the world bad. The power is seductive,” Lee said with a tiny shiver. “It calls to anyone who would know how to use it. They say that ley lines are geothermal lines where the earth’s crust is thinner and the magnetic power that comes through that crust gives it the power. They also say that UFO’s use the ley lines to guide them

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when they come to this world. They can draw power from them.”

“How do you know this?” Kit asked, impressed.

“I watch the Discovery Channel.”

Drake laughed. “No really, Lee. How do you know?”

“There’s some good stuff on the Discovery Channel. You could benefit from a little intellectual television instead of watching SpongeBob all the time,” Lee said, smacking him lightly on the back of his head.

“Hey, don’t mess with SpongeBob. He’s classic.”

“He’s annoying.”

“You two knock it off. We’ve got to head back out there. By the time we get there, it’ll be dusk. Mage will take out the guards at the gate. Tinman, I’m going to need you to take out the dogs and Lee, give us whatever protection you can. I’d rather not get shot.” She headed around the Hummer and got in her side, letting Drake pack up his equipment. Lee slipped in the back seat behind Drake and Mage climbed into the front. Mage was drinking from one of those cups that have the curly straws in them and smiling.

“Little things for little minds, right Mage?” Drake said, teasingly.

Mage simply nodded, sucking up more of his drink.

* * * *

Molly paced the floor of the small, one room cabin where Tynan had brought her. Her mind was on Brady and wondering what kind of torture Parnell was inflicting. She knew Parnell would do anything he could to get the answers he wanted. He wasn’t afraid of inflicting pain.

“This is all my fault!” she said for the fifth time since they’d arrived. “If I hadn’t gone to him...”

“You’d have been caught and we never would have known where you were. It’s a good thing you got out and that Brady has been taking care of you,” Tynan said. He was sitting at the small kitchen table, playing with a deck of cards.

“When is Nashe going to be here?”

“Soon, very soon.” Tynan glanced out the window of the cabin. His bike was the only vehicle in the small clearing but he knew his friend. He’d be there very soon. Then they could go in and rescue the Weres trapped in that building.

Tynan knew all about being trapped. He’d been caught once, held while white-coated lab techs poked and prodded him. They had him in a plexi-glass cage, observing him at all times. He’d almost gone mad before he’d escaped. If it hadn’t been for Nashe Wolfe, he’d still be in that cage.

He owed Nashe a big debt, so when he’d called him very early in the morning, he’d hopped on his motorcycle and gone, no questions asked.

.She saw Nashe as he slipped out of an SUV and threw open the door, rushing out to him. “Nashe!”

He turned just in time to catch her in his arms. “Hey little sister,” he said softly, brushing a lock of red hair out of her face. “So this is why you missed my mating ceremony?”

“You’ve been mated?” she asked, incredulous. She’d thought him a confirmed bachelor.

“Yes, Terry’s due any day with our first litter. You’ll love her.”

“How could I not, if she makes you this happy. I’ve never seen you like this.”

“Now we just have to get you straightened out. What’s going on, Molly? Where’s Tallie? And who is this Brady Knight you were talking about?”

“It’s best if we do this inside,” Molly said, pulling on his arm.

Nashe let her lead him inside. Tynan stood up as he came in, pulling his friend into a manly embrace. “I got her here, Nashe. Now what?”

“Now we have to break into the compound, rescue Tallie and Brady and the rest and do something about Dr. Parnell,” Molly said. “I can’t even imagine what that man is doing to them.”

“We’ll rescue them, Molly, never fear.” Nashe gave her shoulders a squeeze before pulling his cell phone out of his pocket. “Damn, I’ve got no signal.”

“You wouldn’t,” Tynan said, “we’re in a valley.”

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Nashe pushed the phone back into his pocket. He'd try her later. Besides, he'd know if anything was wrong with Terry.

They left the cabin, taking only the necessities along. Tynan carried a seven inch dagger in his boot. Nashe had a similar dagger but sheathed on his belt. Molly used her magic and created a ball of light to help them see through the darkening woods.

"How much farther?" Nashe asked as they reached another valley, hills all around them.

"Up that hill," Molly said. She bounced the ball of light once upon her hand and then it broke up, like hundreds of fireflies flying off, leaving them in the dark. "We have to be quiet. And no more light. They'll have guards out looking for us."

"Lead the way," Tynan said, rubbing his hands together. "I'm starving."

"You can't eat them," Molly said."

"I'm only going to drain enough blood so they're close to death. I haven't killed anyone in centuries."

"How come I find that hard to believe?"

"Nevertheless, it's true." He started up the hill, his boots digging into the loose soil and moss, being careful not to step on twigs or branches that might snap and give away their position. When he reached the top, he dropped to his belly, crawling through the wooded vegetation.

"Something's going on," he told the others when they arrived. "It looks like someone got free and now they are battering down the hatches, so to speak." Men were running around in the compound as if they were chickens with their heads chopped off. "Come on, now's the time to strike."

The three of them half-slid, half-ran down the other side to the compound. With a set of wire cutters, Nashe clipped the fence, leaving a space big enough for them to get through.

"You should stay here," Nashe said to Molly.

"Fuck that," Molly growled, her wolf coming to the surface, barely held in check. "I've been locked up in here. I know where everything is. You need me."

“She has a point,” Tynan said, almost laughing when Nashe turned and growled at him, his own beast wanting to break loose of his tenacious grasp.

“Which building?” Nashe asked, his voice slightly changed because of his teeth turning into fangs.

“That one,” Molly said. “I crawled out a broken window when Dr. Parnell was distracted.”

The building she pointed out was the object of the camp’s unrest, everyone rushing in that direction. Nashe pulled Molly into the shadows. “You’ve got to be crazy, Molls. There’s just no way we can go in there with all the fire power I saw. It would be suicide.”

“It doesn’t matter, Nashe,” she said, angrily wiping away a tear that streamed down her cheek. “I have to go. Brady’s in there. I can feel him. Tallie’s in there too.

“So what next?” Tynan growled, his fangs lengthening. His skin was turning a golden color and his shirt seemed too small to hold his muscular shape. His eyes were eerie, a swirling of hypnotic colors. His hands were bigger, tipped with sharp claws.

He was impressively big. So big that he made Molly feel smaller in comparison.

“What are you?” she asked, running her eyes over him.

“I’m part Panther and part vampire. I told you that before.” He turned away from her admiring gaze. “What are we going to do?” He repeated the question to Nashe.

Nashe stripped and became his beast. “I guess we’re going in. Molly, can you make us some kind of shield?”

“No problem,” Molly said. She rubbed her hands together and concentrated, her magic throwing a shield up around them. Stripping quickly, she turned into the red wolf. Rushing forward in the lead, she kept the magic shield in front of them. *Come on*, she snarled.

Chapter Thirteen

The sound of gunfire was loud as Molly, Tynan and Nashe swarmed their way into the building. Molly couldn't believe her eyes. Brady and a group of Weres stood at the end of the hall. Facing them were Parnell's men, including Parnell himself.

Her eyes narrowed as the men took aim down the hall, never seeing the threat that was coming up from behind them. They pulled their triggers before the unnoticed three could reach them. Molly saw a flash of light and heard the tinkling sound of metal against linoleum as Brady stopped the bullets in mid-flight.

Before they could fire again, they were upon them. Molly slammed into the men threatening Brady and the others, the first moments of the battle a confusing mix of blood and the screams of injured men. She took a step back. Tynan was holding onto a man with one fist, while the other arm clasped a victim to his viciously long teeth. He dropped the first, pulling the other screaming man to his mouth.

When Brady saw help coming, he and a few of the Weres he'd rescued charged. Brady used his magic, relieving the soldiers of their weapons.

Soon they had the men rounded up and subdued, except for those that Tynan had drained. Those needed no guard. Tynan stood tall amid the other Weres, turned back from the shape of the beast that inhabited his body. Blood streaked down his angular face and was caked around his full lips.

Parnell stood off to one side, shaking his head and cleaning his glasses over and over. "You must go back to your cells," he pleaded with the Weres. "My research could help millions of humans."

There was a growl and Molly knew it was coming from her. She pounced on the man who'd done so much damage to her and

to others. Her teeth went for his throat, digging into the skin. Reluctantly, she stopped short of causing permanent injury.

“Right now, Dr. Parnell, I think you should watch what you say. Molly here has a hot temper and a viciously clear memory.” Brady walked closer to where the red wolf was growling and leaving a trail of saliva that coated the doctor’s throat.

“But ... but my research...” he panted.

Nashe came forward. He’d changed back to a man and was pulling on his shirt as he walked up to the ‘good’ doctor.

“I’m sorry, Parnell, but your little lab here is done.” He turned and looked at Brady. “You have to be the guy Molly was going nuts about. I’m Nashe, her brother.”

He shook Brady’s hand, growling a bit as an electric shock seemed to arc between their hands. “Yep, Magic Man is a good term for you. So, Magic Man, what do you want us to do with them?” he said, cocking his head at the people who worked for Parnell.

“I think we should burn the compound, making sure we have destroyed all of Parnell’s research. But with them...” he shrugged.

“Uh, excuse me,” Parnell stammered. “Could one of you ... call her off?” Molly still held the man in the grip of her fangs.

Nashe stooped and smiled into the Doctor’s eyes. “Now why would we want to do that?”

“Nashe?” Tallie rose from where Brady had laid her. “Nashe, is that you?”

Brady went to help her, noting her pallor and the way she seemed to weave. Before he could, Tynan stepped in front of him and lifted the trembling girl into his arms. “You’re safe, sweetheart. We’ve come to bring you home.”

Tallie lifted her hand to Tynan’s face. “Do I know you?”

Tynan shook his head, his long hair falling around his angular face. “I’m Tynan Stavaros, Miss Tallie. I work for your father.”

“Oh,” she said. “Would you tell me what’s going on? How did I get out of that room?”

Molly heard Tallie’s voice as well. She released Parnell and rushed to Tynan’s legs. She let out a yip, standing on her back legs to sniff at her sister.

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“Molly? Oh God, I thought you were dead.” Tallie reached down from her lofty position in Tynan’s arms and ran her fingers through the wolf’s red hair.

Molly yipped again in response than hurried for the door to change, get dressed and talk to her sister. She was almost at the door when a silver man walked in. Molly skidded to a halt, noting the taser the man carried.

“What the hell is going on here?” Drake asked, pulling down the flap that hid his badge against the silver of the uniform.

Molly slipped under his arm and out the door. The compound was empty except for the agents of ASP. Even the gate had been left unattended during the fray to get the Weres back. Molly changed back to her human form and was reaching for her clothes when she felt the cold metallic connectors of a taser against her back.

“Don’t make me have to use this,” a female voice said.

* * * *

Terry stared at her tiny daughter who wasn’t breathing, willing her to live. She watched as the midwife rubbed her back briskly, using the blue bulb to suction out her mouth and nose.

“Come on, baby, breathe. Breathe for momma,” she cried softly, wishing Nashe were here.

A squeak emerged and then another. Her daughter’s skin slowly changed colors, turning pink and healthy as a loud cry came from the small mouth. Terry gave a long sigh of relief, waiting until the assistant midwife checked the baby’s lungs then cleaned her up and put a soft pink hat upon her head before bringing her over to Terry.

“You scared me,” she whispered against the soft cheek of her daughter’s.

“Do you have a name for her?”

“Faith Marie,” Terry said, bemused with the beauty of her daughter. They all had their father’s dark hair. The eyes that stared back at Terry were a dark blue, but she hoped they’d take on his green.

“She’s beautiful,” the midwife sighed, relieved that all had gone well. “Let’s get you up, change the bed and get you comfortable. I think I hear visitors coming.”

Terry was helped up and into the bathroom. She discovered that walking felt a little funny and her stomach, once round with babies, felt strangely empty. The assistant midwife helped her get clean and put on another nightgown. It was a nursing gown, with flaps over her breasts for easy accesses.

Then she was helped into a bed that had been remade with clean sheets. The plastic that had been used to cover the mattress had already been discarded. As soon as she was situated in bed, she held out her arms for one of the crying babies.

Self-consciously, she pulled aside the flap, bearing her nipple and her milk-engorged breast. A little mouth clamped down hard, making her jump a bit. Soon he was suckling contentedly upon her breast, making little cooing sounds.

“Just like a pro,” the midwife said. She put a pillow under Terry’s arm to help her hold the baby and then did the same with the other arm, laying the littlest of her babies in her arms and helping her to find the other nipple.

“Oh, I’m so sorry that Nashe had to miss this,” Marissa said from the door.

“Come in,” Terry called. “Meet your Godchildren.”

“Really?” Marissa said excitedly.

“Of course, who else would we have but you and Lukah?”

Marissa sat at the edge of the bed and the midwife handed her little Abigail. “She’s so pretty,” Marissa said.

“Her name is Abigail Marissa Wolfe,” Terry said, watching her best friend’s eyes widen as she stared down at the quiet child. “This little one is Faith Marie and this big boy,” she said, pointing with her chin at her son, “is Christopher Lukah Wolfe. Where is Lukah anyway?”

“He’s trying to hunt down your husband.” Marissa shrugged. “I don’t think he’s having much luck though. He says his cell phone goes right to voice mail, so he either doesn’t have a signal or it’s been turned off.”

“Nashe wouldn’t turn it off. He wanted to be here so badly for their births,” Terry glanced down at her nursing babies. “He’s going to be so disappointed that he missed this.”

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Christopher was asleep at her breast, his little rosebud mouth pursed, his cheeks rosy. She let Marissa take him to burp and put her other baby to that nipple.

“This is definitely going to be a juggling act,” she said.

“But a wonderful one,” Marissa said as she laid the freshly burped baby back in the bassinette. Her hand slid over his back and then touched her own flat stomach. “I hope my babies are as beautiful as yours,” she said to Terry.

“You...” Terry stuttered.

“Yes, we found out yesterday. I wanted to tell you when you got here, but you were a little distracted,” Marissa grinned.

“I’m so happy for you,” Terry said quietly, as little Faith burped and let go of her nipple. She gave Faith to Marissa and then turning Abigail so she could nurse off the nipple where Faith had been suckling.

Lukah took that moment to knock on the open door of the bedroom. “May I see the newest members of our clan?”

“Come meet your namesake,” Marissa said, standing by the bassinette.

“Namesake?” Lukah asked, his eyes showing his pleasure.

“Well, sort of,” Terry said. “His name is Christopher Lukah Wolfe.

“One boy and two girls? This is wonderful. As soon as that cousin of mine comes back home, we’re going to have a party to celebrate.”

“You still don’t know anything?” Terry asked.

“Nope, not a word,” Lukah said.

* * * *

Nashe looked up as Kit and Lelia came into the room with Molly walking in front of them. They’d allowed her to dress but their weapons had been drawn. Now she stood in front of them. “What’s going on in here?” Kit asked, seeing the blood and the men pushed into a tight circle by the Weres that guarded them.

“A rescue effort,” Nashe said, standing in front of the exotic looking woman, with her golden hair and big tawny eyes. “These Weres were being used as guinea pigs...”

“Hey,” one of the Weres said, “most of my relatives are guinea pigs.”

“Sorry, dude,” Nashe said. “They were used for experiments by Dr. Parnell. He’d captured them and kept them here against their will.”

Kit slid her taser back in her pocket, indicating that Drake and Lee should do the same. Mage came up behind her. *May I be of service*, he asked. *Erasing this whole event from their minds should keep this from happening again.*

“Can you do that without injuring them?” Kit asked out loud, though she could have just thought it at the Empath.

Of course. Mage smiled, making his face look even creepier. Nashe felt a chill run through him at the sight. He wouldn’t want to be on the receiving end of whatever they were talking about doing.

He watched as the hooded figure glided over to Dr. Parnell. The doctor, having stood up when Molly had released him, now pressed against the wall, his hand out as if to stop the strange being stalking him. “No,” he said quietly, “No, please don’t let him do this.”

“Just consider it an experiment, Doc,” Molly growled, her eyes shimmering with anger. She felt Brady move closer to her, tucking his arm around her shoulders.

“Are you okay?” he asked as Mage focused on Dr. Parnell. The man’s face took on a blank look, like he was being reprogrammed.

“Yes,” Molly said. “I feel so bad that I got you into this.”

“It’s ended well, that’s all that’s important. You can get back to your life without worrying now,” Brady said slowly, watching her expression.

“What? Oh yeah, I guess that’s true.” Molly looked up at his face, noting the guarded expression and the look in his eyes. “I guess you get to go back to Renee. She’s probably worried sick about you.”

“Yeah,” he said, dropping his arm from around her shoulders.

Molly immediately missed the warmth and the security she’d always felt in his arms. When he made some excuse and

left her side, she wanted to call him back. She wanted to tell him she loved him and beg him to make her his.

How did you tell a man you wanted him to leave his fiancée for you? Molly didn't know, so she stayed silent, going to where Tynan stood, easily holding Tallie in his arms.

"Are you all right?" she whispered to her sister, fighting back the tears that clogged her throat.

"I will be," Tallie said.

Molly stared at her little sister, seeing the core of strength that was hidden by a fragile exterior. "Yes, you will. I'm betting that dad is going to watch us both like a hawk for a while."

"Yes," Tallie said quietly. "Maybe he'll send us on a cruise?"

"Doubtful, he'd be afraid we'd get taken over by pirates or shipwrecked or something of that sort."

Tallie squinted at her, almost as if she were trying to see inside of her. "You're not all right, Molly. What is it?"

"It's nothing. I guess I'm a little tired. You know how I get when I don't get enough sleep."

"It's more than that, I can tell. I know you, Molly. I know something has you upset enough that you're almost in tears. Tell me," Tallie urged. "Please."

"I'm betting, Miss Tallie, that Miss Molly's problem has something to do with the one everyone is calling Magic Man. Am I right?"

Molly couldn't even look at him. She nodded her head, and then turned away as the first tear slid down her cheek.

"What did he do?" Tallie asked.

"He didn't do anything," Molly said softly, staring at the black leather sleeve of Tynan's jacket. "It's what I did."

"What did you do? Oh no. Molly you didn't."

"Yes," she whispered. "I fell in love with him."

She swiped at the tear on her cheek and took a deep breath, fighting for composure. When she thought she'd gotten it, she turned back to Tallie. "He's engaged," she said. "This is my problem. I'll get over it. It'll just take time." She choked back a sob. "I can't talk about this anymore. How about we get out of here?"

"Sounds good to me. Let's go get Nashe."

“I’ll do that, you stay right where you are. It’s quite the hike back to the SUV.”

Nashe was more than ready to leave now that they’d accomplished their goal. They left quietly, but Molly felt Brady’s eyes on her as she slipped out the door. “It’s for the best,” she whispered out loud. “I’m okay.”

The trip was a bit rugged, but with Tynan and Nashe, the two girls made it easily. Only when they were in the SUV did they do any real talking. By that time, Tynan had mounted his motorcycle and disappeared down the dark road before them.

“You two are okay?” Nashe asked. “Do we need to find a healer?”

“No,” they both chorused. “Can’t we just go home?”

“I’m going to put you on Dad’s jet. It’s at the airport in Detroit. Somebody will be there to meet you when you land and drive you to Dad’s fortress of steel. He’ll meet you there.”

“Sounds like everything’s figured out,” Molly said.

“Just like Dad. Makes all the arrangements and we find out about things at the last moment,” Tallie grouched.

“This time it’s in our favor,” Molly said, turning to look at her sister, who had the entire back seat to herself and had stretched out. “Why don’t you get some sleep, Tallie? I’ll wake you when we get to the airport.”

“You look like you could use some too,” Nashe said. “Don’t worry about staying awake with me, I can handle this drive easily.” The road spread out before them, the darkness only occasionally broken by the lights of another car.

Molly pushed the seat back a bit and got comfortable. “Thanks Nashe,” she said softly.

* * * *

She wasn’t sure if she were awake or asleep. It must have been some kind of dream, because Brady was holding her in his arms, dancing with her under the bright Colorado stars, the moon hanging in the sky. The moon sent beams of light to tease the fire in her hair. Brady had his hands buried in her curls, holding her head so that he could kiss her.

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His lips were firm, certain, holding the key to what she needed. She felt herself come back to life under his kiss and knew for a certainty that she'd never love or need anyone the way she did him.

Lifting his head, he gazed down at her, his eyes gleaming like the moon. "I love you, Molly," he said softly. "You are the only woman I could ever want or need. Come back to me."

"Renee..."

"Means nothing to me. She's already moved on, Molly. She's nothing, just a way for me to be normal. But I'm not normal. I don't think I ever will be and why should I want it?"

"But..." she began only to be hushed by his fingers against her lips.

"No buts. We belong together. You tell me if you think any other man will give you what I can?"

"No," Molly shook her head. She wanted to reach out with both hands and take what he was giving her, but she was afraid. She was afraid that if she reached out, he'd disappear because she wanted him *too* much. "I'm terrified," she said softly.

"Of me?" he asked, incredulous. "I'm standing here shaking because I think that the woman I love, the woman who holds my heart in her small hands will turn away from me. I'm nothing without you, baby."

His hand slid to her cheek, holding her still. Then he lowered his mouth to hers, his lips sinking into her kiss. He moaned, a tortured sound, and reached out to drag her into his arms. He held her against him so tightly, not even one of those moon beams could come between them.

"God I love you," he growled, tearing his mouth from hers.

"I love you, Molly," he said again as he took her down onto a blanket that lay on top of the soft grasses behind her father's home in Colorado. She could hear the sound of the stream where she loved to go fishing, making its way through the pasture.

Brady's hands moved over her, magically seducing her clothes away, exposing her to that same bright moon. Her body gleamed, pale and elegantly sensual against the darkness of the blanket. Her hair shone with red fire, a glorious back drop for her slim form.

His hands shook as he softly stroked her breasts, finding the tips already hard, rolling them between his thumb and finger. She arched into his touch, her body already aflame from his kisses. When his mouth covered one taut nipple, she moaned her pleasure, feeling contractions in her womb. Her thighs grew lax and she spread wide, feeling him above her. His knee rubbed against her sex and she found herself grinding on him, wanting more, needing more.

“Brady!” she cried as his lips moved to her other nipple. “Yes, oh God, yes.”

His mouth moved from her nipple, his hand coming up to toy and play with the hard tip while his lips slipped lower, sliding over her thinly fleshed ribs to her stomach. He played with the downy hair he found there, rubbing his nose against the soft flesh just under her navel. Molly buried her hands in his dark hair, her body arching as she tried to get him to where she wanted him most.

“Please,” she whimpered, breathless in her pleasure and need. “Brady, don’t tease me.”

He slipped between her thighs, her tongue parting her thick lower lips with ease. She was wet and hot, tasting of sweet musk. He breathed in her essence, parting her with his fingers and slipping one inside.

Molly ground against his hand and the fingers he had inside of her. When he began to use his tongue, teasing her clit with it, she almost exploded right there. The only thing holding her to the blanket was his mouth. She was awash in the pleasure he was giving her, unable to breath or think of anything else.

“Molly,” Brady said as he moved above her. “Molly, wake up, baby.”

Her eyes opened and she looked around, searching for Brady. It was Nashe that had awoken her. “Brady?”

“It must have been one hell of a dream, sweetheart, but he isn’t here. We’re at the airport.”

Molly moved the seat back up, rubbing her hands over her eyes to get rid of the grit. Turning, she saw Tallie sitting up and stretching as well. It was still dark outside.

Nashe startled suddenly, causing both the girls to jump as well. He started to fumble in his pockets and brought out his cell

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phone. Looking at the screen, he quickly flipped it open. “Hey man, how...”

“What? She’s okay? The babies ... Tell her I’m on my way home now, okay? Tell her I love her, Luc. Thanks man.”

“I’m a father,” he said with the air of a man who’d gotten both good and bad news. “Holy fuck, I’m a father.”

“Congratulations, daddy,” Molly said. “Why don’t we take you as far as you’re going in the jet? You know Dad won’t mind. He’ll want to see the babies.”

“Yeah,” Nashe said as he fumbled with his seatbelt. Molly reached over and pressed the button that released his belt, almost laughing at the way cool, calm and collected Nashe was acting. “Look at you, a couple of babies and you’ve completely lost it, Nashe.”

“Oh God, you’re right. I’ve got to calm down.”

“Come on, big brother,” Molly said, taking the rental car keys and paper work from him. “Let’s get you home.”

A small voice spoke in her head and Molly wondered if she’d ever know home again. Home was in Brady’s arms. But his arms, and the rest of him, belonged to another woman. She brushed aside those thoughts as the three of them went inside the airport.

Chapter Fourteen

Brady paced the floor of his office, unable to sit and concentrate. He had clients waiting, cases that he needed to close and bills to send out. But right now, all he could think of was Molly.

She'd wormed her way into his heart and now it seemed that was where she would always be. He sighed, shaking his head in disgust with himself. He was slinking around like a wussy little boy. The buzzer on his desk went off and he reached for it, picking up the receiver. "Yes?" he growled, knowing his tone was harsher than Haley deserved.

"Renee is here, sir," Haley's voice over the intercom held a chill that he knew would stay until she forgave him. That forgiveness usually cost him a basket of flowers and a small box of chocolates.

"Send her in," Brady said, groaning and rubbing his temples. He could feel the headache growing and he knew Renee's voice was just going to make it worse.

She entered like she was at a grand ball. Sweeping into the room, she reached up and gave Brady a kiss...only she actually kissed the air about six inches from his face. "We really need to get the rest of the wedding stuff planned, sweetheart."

"I'm a bit busy right now," he said indicating the tall mess of folders on his desk.

"Too busy for even me?" she asked, trying for cute but only achieving bimbo.

"Right now, yes," he said firmly.

"You've changed," Renee said, looking at him with wide blue eyes. "Ever since you went out of town with that client, it's like you're somebody else, someone I don't know."

"I don't have a clue what you're talking about," Brady said, ducking his head guiltily. He hadn't been with Renee since he

came back. He couldn't do it. It was like he was cheating on Molly. Just the thought of that made him unreasonably pissed off.

"You haven't made love with me in ... what's it been, a month now? You don't have time for me and you're always using the excuse that you have to work. It can't all be because of work, can it?"

The guilt was eating him alive. He felt his stomach roll and knew he couldn't keep doing this to her. "Renee, you remember the trip where I was out of town?" He continued when she nodded. "My client was not a man as I told you. She was a woman and while we were out there..." he let his voice trail off, knowing that she could come up with the rest.

"You ... you ... slept with her?" Renee's eyes narrowed, the small line that Brady called his "oh shit" line showing between her eyes. "How could you?" Her slap rang hot and hard across his cheek but what came next was worse. The water works started and she dug in her purse for a handkerchief. Brady sighed and tried to put his arms around her to comfort her but she was having none of it.

Instead, she tore her ring off of her finger and threw it at him. "My father will hear of this!" Renee snarled. The door reverberated against the frame, sending two of the framed prints on his wall to shiver then drop to the floor, their glass breaking.

He felt his shoulders relaxing as the last eight weeks of tension left him in a sigh. It was as if he'd been carrying a heavy load and it was suddenly gone. He flicked on the intercom, waiting for Haley to answer.

"What did you do to that girl?" Haley's voice inquired over the speaker. "She went running out of here as if all the demons in hell were after her."

"She just broke off the engagement," Brady said with a grin.

"Is that good news or bad news?"

"It's wonderful news. Get me a seat on the first plane to Denver. And while you're at it, see if you can find the address of a Callan Wolfe. I'll need the Colorado address." He flicked the switch on the intercom. "Okay, Molly," he said softly, rubbing his hands together. "Here I come, ready or not."

* * * *

Nashe rushed out of his office when the hostess let him know that Terry and the terrible trio had arrived. He saw his mate standing by the stroller holding their babies.

“Is something wrong?” he asked, knowing the triplets had been to the doctor’s office this morning. He kissed her before she could answer.

“Nothing that I won’t get over,” she said with a sigh. “I know the vaccinations are good for them, but they cry so hard and...”

“You cried along with them, didn’t you?” he asked, hugging her close.

The trio had grown so much in two short months. They hadn’t shown any signs of the change yet, but most babies didn’t until they were a year or so in age.

“Your babies are so beautiful,” a lady said as she passed by the stroller. “Triplets. They must make life a bit more interesting.”

Terry reached in the stroller and lifted out a fussing Faith. “They sure do,” she said, unconsciously rocking the baby to soothe her. “Can I use your office? I think they’re getting hungry.”

Nashe commandeered the stroller and followed Terry into the office. He closed the door behind them, watching his wife expertly put little Faith to her breast. “That is so beautiful,” he sighed.

“What?” she asked, her brow furrowing.

“You with our children,” he said, sinking down next to her and picking up Chris when he began to fuss. “You are beautiful anyway, but watching you with our children...I just can’t believe how lucky I am.”

She leaned closer to him, turning her face up for him to kiss. “The doctor gave me some other news as well,” she said softly.

“What’s that?” he asked, kissing her once more.

“He said I’m healthy and can resume my marital duties.” She giggled as she mimicked the old doctor, who was actually a were-antelope.

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Faith fell asleep as she was suckling, letting go of the nipple and snuggling contentedly against Terry's naked skin. She moved her over her shoulder, patting her bottom until she burped. She stayed asleep as Terry moved her to the stroller. Then she took Christopher from Nashe, feeling her strong and handsome little son latch on. He drew hard upon her nipple, causing Terry to start.

"He definitely takes after you," she said, staring down at her raven-haired son, whose eyes were just beginning to look more green than blue.

Nashe laughed, picking Abigail up from the stroller. She'd woken and must have realized that her brother was getting all the attention and had started to cry. She quieted down immediately in her Daddy's strong arms. "That might be, but I think little Abby is going to be your spitting image." Abby had lost the dark hair she'd been born with and what was coming back was a pale blonde. Her eyes had lightened but hadn't changed from the blue they were at birth.

Faith was a mixture of the two. She had momma's blonde hair but she also had her father's green eyes. She was going to be a knockout when she got old enough to notice boys. Terry laughed as she thought of what Nashe would put those poor boys through.

"What are you laughing at?"

"I was just thinking about what you'll put the local boys through before allowing them out with your girls."

"We won't have to worry about that, will we, Abby?" He held the baby out a bit from his chest so that he could talk to her. "Neither of my girls are ever going to leave me or have anything to do with boys."

"Okay," Terry said, rolling her eyes. "You remember you said that when the first boy knocks on our door wanting to date your daughter."

"I found something today I think you'll find interesting." He rose, carrying Abby with him, and went to his desk. Pulling out a folder, he came back and opened it, laying the papers on the couch between them. "I think we've both been feeling a little claustrophobic with the triplets and everything they need. What do you think of this?"

This was a two-story townhouse. “Three bedrooms and a den that could easily be made into a fourth. Two and a half baths and its right across from the park,” Terry read, her eyes going from the picture of the neat front of the house to the floor plan inside. “Master bedroom with a master bathroom. When can we move in?”

“I thought you’d say that. I called the realtor and put in a bid for the house. She told me she would call me when she found out if they accepted or not.”

“Well, if not, we can keep looking, can’t we?” she asked him as their son cooed while he ate.

“We can definitely keep looking. The restaurant is doing great and I’ve almost got Lukah paid off on it. Of course, I know we won’t ever be able to afford something like what Lukah and Marissa have.”

“I’d hate to have a house that big,” Terry said, holding her hand out for Abigail and putting her to her other breast. She laughed. “Sometimes I feel like a cow.”

“But you’re a beautiful cow.” He leaned over and kissed her, taking Chris from her when he needed to burp.

“Yeah, I’ll remind you of that when my breasts are dragging on the ground.” She jumped as Nashe knelt at her feet, his hand sliding over her exposed breast.

He toyed with her nipple, leaning forward to lick and suckle from her himself. “Do you remember the first time you were here?” he asked, lifting his head.

Terry’s blue eyes sparkled as she remembered that day so long ago. Her shoe’s heel had broken and Nashe had swooped her up in his arms, carrying her into this office. “You were so hardheaded,” she said, running her hand through his hair. “I was so mad at you for invading my dreams.”

“I couldn’t help myself,” he said softly, his fingers playing gently with her nipple and making her squirm.

“Careful, you’ll make me drop the baby.” Despite the denial, her cheeks flushed and her pulse was racing.

Nashe smiled, a smile that made her even more nervous. He took Abby, lifting her to his shoulder to burp. Then he laid her next to her litter mates before turning and raking his wife with a heated stare. “Come here.”

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Terry rose, going to him. Her hand caressed his cheek as he brought his lips down, finding hers easily. His arms were hard around her, lifting her and laying her on the couch, coming down on top of her. "You'll tell me if I hurt you?" he whispered in her ear, his fingers unbuttoning her shirt and sliding around to unhook the nursing bra.

"Did you lock the door?" she asked, arching her back to help him remove the rest of her clothes.

"No one would dare touch that door," he growled, pulling her jeans off. She'd already lost the weight she'd gained while pregnant. The only signs she'd given birth were the tiny white lines that marred her flat stomach and of course, her breasts, now heavy with milk for the triplets. He leaned over, kissing her soft belly. "I've missed you," he whispered.

"You've got way too many clothes on," she said.

She rose, her hands going to the buttons on his shirt. She ran her hands over his chest, pushing the shirt off his shoulders and down his arms. Her hands slid over the lean muscles of his chest and back before she dropped to her knees. Letting her nails trace the rippled muscles of his belly, Terry smiled up at him. She could see his chest move as his breathing quickened and fire shone in the green of his eyes.

Her hands went to the belt at his waist, easily ridding him of it. She let the leather hang from her neck as she unbuttoned his jeans. His cock was hard, tenting the front of his briefs; a small wet spot showing his enthusiasm for what she was doing. Freeing him from the confining fabric, she turned, pushing him down on the same old lumpy couch where he'd first tried to make love to her.

Her small hand curled around the shaft of his cock. With a smile, she flicked her tongue over that satiny hardness. Drawing him deep in her mouth, she moaned softly as his hands rested on her head.

"God, Terry, that feels so..."

"Nashe, I heard the babies were..." the voice broke off as Marissa saw the couple on the couch. "Oh, I-I'm s-sorry." She closed the door as quickly as she had opened it.

Terry fell back on her heels, laughing. "Just like the first time, huh?"

Nashe chuckled. "Yep, just like the first time."

* * * *

Brady stepped out of the rented SUV, glancing around at the ranch and the ranch house. "Whoa," he said softly.

The place was huge, a two-story house that had been greatly expanded, wings stretching from both sides of the original building. Painted white, the style was mimicked by the outbuildings. Just the size of the place almost sent Brady back to the airport to fly home. What could he offer Molly that she didn't already have?

"Love," he whispered. He could offer her his whole heart. He walked across the dusty path that led to a wide front porch. There was a well-used swing at one end with the other holding a small table surrounded by a couple of wicker rockers. He lifted his hand to knock, but the door opened before he could.

Tallie, Molly's sister, gasped, her hand going to her breast. "Brady, you surprised me."

"I'm sorry," he said, quickly lowering his arm. "I was hoping to find Molly here?"

"You just missed her, she went for a ride to check the fences on the south pasture."

"Oh." He cursed under his breath.

"You could ride out and find her," Tallie offered. "Have you ever ridden a horse?"

"Yeah," he said. "It's been a few years though."

"Aww, it's just like falling off a bicycle," Tallie laughed. "You'll do fine. I know just the horse for you."

She grabbed his hand, pulling him toward one of the outbuildings that surrounded the house. Inside, horses shifted and came to see who was invading their space. Tallie walked by about a dozen stalls before she stopped at one. "Trickster here is one of the gentlest horses we have. He'll take care of you."

She got tack and helped him saddle and bridled the roan-colored gelding. Giving him a quick refresher on how to ride, she led the horse out and helped him on.

"Tell me I'm not making a mistake here?" he asked Tallie.

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“She’s been miserable, Brady. Trust me, she’ll be more than happy to see you.” Tallie grinned, her heart lightening. She’d been upset by the changes in Molly. She barely smiled anymore. “Just tell me you’re not here to break her heart and I’ll wish you well.”

“It’s more likely that she’ll break mine,” Brady said from the back of the horse. “South pasture?”

“Yep, through that open gate and then just follow the fence line. She’s been at it for a while. If I know her, she’ll be at the pond. You can’t miss it.”

She waved as he kicked Trickster into an easy trot, heading through the gate and following the fence.

“Good luck,” Tallie whispered, feeling an aching in her own heart. “It’ll happen some day.”

* * * *

Molly slid off her saddle with a tired sigh. She could have left the fence repairs to one of the hands but she’d always been a boss that worked with her men. She wasn’t going to stop now. But damn! The thought of the pond, whose clear blue water would be just a touch cold at this time of year, sounded wonderful.

She threw her reins over the branch of a tree, leaving her horse enough room to nibble at the soft grasses that grew in the pond’s clearing. Then she pulled off her clothes, tossing them over her saddle. Naked, she walked across the grass. The pond was deep, the water that fed it coming from a natural spring further down her property. It flowed out from the pond and crossed onto her neighbor’s land.

She felt the water with her toes and then jumped in, coming up with a shriek from the temperature of the water. Swimming a bit made her warmer and she dove deep, holding her breath to touch the bottom.

When she came up, the first thing she saw was another horse next to hers. She recognized it as one that Tallie usually rode. “Tallie?” she called, not seeing anyone. There was movement in the water next to her and she shrieked, kicking backwards from the shape in the water.

Brady pushed his hands through his hair as he surfaced. “Damn this is cold,” he gasped, turning to her. She was staring at him as if he were a ghost. “No hello?” he teased.

“What are you doing here, Brady? You ... You should be getting married.”

“That’s contingent on what you say, Molly.”

“What does that mean?” she asked, treading water as she watched his face.

“That means it depends on you, Molly. I’ve been miserable without you.”

“Did you come out here to hurt me again?” she asked, backing away each time he tried to touch her. “I don’t think I can live through it again, Brady. You ... you should go.”

“I can’t,” he said, finally backing her into a corner where she couldn’t move unless she got out of the water. “You’ve stolen my heart. I can’t live without you.” His fingers slid over her cheek and then tangled into her wet hair, pulling her close. His lips were about to come down on hers, but she turned, kicking against him to get out of the pond. Her foot in his chest knocked him backwards and he was left with a flash of her wet rear end.

She was at her horse, pulling on her shirt without the benefit of her bra, the fabric wet from her body. “No, Brady. You’ve got Renee.”

“No,” he answered slowly. “I don’t. My jeans are on my saddle, check out the back pocket.” She ducked under her horse’s head, going to Trickster and grabbing the jeans off his back. In the pocket was a print out from a popular blog. “Read it, Molly.”

The blog was short and to the point. It spoke of their broken engagement and made hints of another man in Renee’s life. Molly read it over and then read it once more before she looked up and into Brady’s eyes. “Is any of this true?”

“I told Renee that I was in love with you. She broke the engagement and I went along with whatever she said so she could save face. I didn’t care, I just wanted to be with you. I still do.”

He pressed against her arm, feeling it give way so that he could pull her into his embrace. He groaned at the way she felt,

pressed against him, her head fitting perfectly under his chin. "God, I've missed you."

Molly slowly let her arms climb from his chest, her hands moving over his naked shoulders. She leaned back and made eye contact. "I missed you, too," she sighed, raising her lips to his.

Heat slammed into both and they tangled their tongues in a wicked duel of passion. His hands slid from the fabric of her shirt, sliding down to cup her ass, squeezing the taut muscles with an added groan. He lifted her, pressing his erection into her belly, letting her know how much he needed her.

Brady lifted his head, his eyes searching the clearing until he found a patch of soft grass and tiny pink clover. Carrying her, he went to his knees, feeling her legs wrap around his hips as he helped her take off the shirt she'd just put on. He stared into her eyes, wanting, needing her to see. "I love you, Molly. I want to marry you, mate with you, be with you the rest of our lives.

Tears gathered in the startling bottle green of her eyes. "You ... You mean it?"

He lowered her until she was on her back; the fire that was rushing through him at the touch of her soft body making him groan. "Yes, I mean it."

Molly sat up, her hands going to his chest, stroking over his nipples and watching them grow hard. She shivered as his hands touched her, carefully, making her feel fragile. He stroked his fingers gently over her cheek. Too gently. She wanted more, she wanted flames and passion and ... and she wanted him to dominate her like a male wolf would.

Her eyes turned wicked, a glint of mischief warning him that she was up to something. Before he could move, she'd knocked him backwards into the grass, crouching over him. Leaning down, she took the head of his cock into her mouth, sucking as she trailed her tongue over him.

He tasted of pond water and musk and the sweetness she'd grown to love. Slowly she took him deeper. He groaned and called her name, his hand resting against her ass. She felt him at the back of her throat and ignored the gag reflex, determined to take all of him.

"God, Molly," he cried, his head going back as her nose reached the wiry mass of hair at his groin. She held him there for

a moment before pulling back. He could already feel the tingling in his balls, the pleasure of her mouth overwhelming him. "I'm gonna come if you keep that up," he warned her.

She raised her head, turning so she could look up at him, wiggling her ass at him. "Is that what you want? You want to come in my mouth?"

"No," he growled, pulling away from her stroking hand. "I want to fuck you."

Getting behind her, he swatted her on one soft buttock. She rose up, offering herself to him like a bitch in heat. He ran his hand down the crease of her ass, his fingers sliding into wet heat between her thighs. Using two fingers, he teased her, slowly finger fucking her until she cried out, pushing back into his hand, begging to be taken. His hand came free, covered with her juices.

Lining up his cock, he pushed into her in one thrust. Brady growled deep in his throat at the way she felt, tight, hot, wet, ready for him. He slid his hands over her hips, moving slowly, wanting to make this last. Her breasts filled his hands and he kneaded them slowly, pulling on the tightly-budded tips.

She pushed back against him, meeting him thrust for tortuously slow thrust. "Oh," she asked with a shiver in her voice "Can you feel it?"

"Yes," he gasped. Something inside of him grew and grew, filling him. His eyes changed, growing opaque and he felt fangs growing in his mouth. He looked down at her and an urge shook him, an urge too strong to fight. He lifted her, one hand in her hair, pulling it aside to expose soft, fragile skin. He eyed the spot, still thrusting against her. Then, he slowly leaned down and took her nape in his teeth.

Molly never felt the pain of the bite. All she felt was ecstasy of a kind that almost made her scream. Her release was hard and seemed to last forever. She convulsed around his cock, her eager sex drawing him deeper, the muscles stroking his cock, wanting his seed.

Brady drew back from the wound he'd made. He licked his lips, tasting her blood and the endorphins that rushed through it. Without thinking, he pushed his wrist against her mouth. "Do it!" he ordered. He needed it. He had to have her teeth sinking into his flesh, biting deep so that their blood would mix. When

they did, he reared back, his cock going even deeper, swelling as his hot seed pulsed through it and into her. He shouted his release, scaring off the birds in the tree above them.

Drained, he fell to his side, drawing Molly with him. "I love you," he whispered against her hair.

"I love you," she said just as softly. Licking the wound on his wrist, she admired her fang marks. "You're one of us now," she said, turning her head.

He kissed her blood-smeared lips. "I wouldn't have it any other way," he said. "You know, there is something else in my jean pocket for you. I bought it hoping that you'd wear it."

"What is it?" she asked eagerly.

Brady chuckled at her ill-concealed greed. He reached for her left hand, holding it gently in his. "Well, it's round and shiny and goes on this finger. That is, if you'll have me?"

"I don't know," she teased. "I'll have to see the size of the stone."

His eyes narrowed and he pulled out of her, getting to his feet. Walking over to the horse, he grabbed his jeans and pulled the box out of the front pocket. On his way back, he stepped on a hidden rock, cursing as pain raced through his system. "Dammit," he growled.

Molly went to him, putting his arm around her shoulders and leading him back to the soft grass. "I was just kidding," she said guiltily.

He sank down and Molly picked up his injured foot, brushing the bit of dirt off of it to see the welt on the tender arch of his foot. "Oh baby, I'm sorry." She bent over and kissed the darkening bruise. When she looked up, he held out the box that he'd opened.

"I know I'm the one that is supposed to be on his knees, not you, baby. I love you. I want you to marry me. I want Joe to officiate and my parents to meet you. I want to be with you, love you, protect you forever. Will you marry me?"

The ring was beautiful and she held her left hand out for him to put it on her finger. "I love you," she said. "Yes, I'll marry you, though you know, what we've just done has already mated us one to the other."

“Really? Does that mean I can have you whenever I want to?” There was a glint in his eyes that made Molly laugh.

“Come here, Magic Man,” she said softly, wiggling her fingers at him. “Show me some of that magic of yours.”

“I’ll show you magic,” he growled. And he did.

About the Author

A small town girl with a master's degree from the School of Hard Knocks, Wendy started writing as a way to combat boredom and keep from gaining dress sizes after an injury to her back kept her from working. No one was more surprised than she when people actually enjoyed what she wrote.

Writing as Daniellekitten, Wendy has won many awards for her writing, including Most Influential Writer in 2005 at Literotica.com, as well as Most Literary—Genre Transcending. She's been nominated for many of the Reader's Choice awards, as well as the monthly awards at the same website.

Wendy Stone resides in a small Michigan town, spending most of her time writing and enjoying time with her animals and the company of her family.