

Changeling Press

SOPHIA
TITHENIEL

RULED
by YOU

Dance Wars 2: Ruled By You

Sophia Titheniel

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Sophia Titheniel

Embattled Lovers...

Adair leads a very successful band of scavengers, bandits who prey on Pony Express riders and their motorbikes. But since the first night he spotted Lachlan in the crowd at the Chlodwig's, Adair's been far too relenting with captured Pony Express riders, and he's been concentrating his efforts on winning the Dance Wars rather than snatching their prey.

Adair's crew is getting suspicious -- has their leader gone soft? There's no place in their world for a sappy Werewolf. Adair rashly promises a kill for their next capture - only to have his world come crashing down on him when Lachlan's motorbike falls in their trap.

Adair can't go back on his word. Seems there may be only one option left -- one neither rider nor werewolf is ready to face...

Chapter One

The sky beyond the window is slowly tinting with pale pink and amber-yellow. It slithers through the filthy glass and onto the rumpled, discarded sheets trailing on the floor, hesitating there for an instant as if asking permission before going up a pair of long, beautiful legs. It dances on panels of finely toned abs and lean, smooth pecs, to paint the skin golden.

Lachlan shifts in his sleep, a flurry of movement that has unruly blond hair falling across the sharp lines of his face, hiding him from Adair's attentive scrutiny. Adair's fingers curl in Lachlan's forelock, pushing it off to the side. The light of morning gives Lachlan's body an ethereal quality. Adair's thumb runs across the sweep of Lachlan's cheekbone, down to his jaw and up again to stroke kiss-bruised lips. A rather vivid image of those lips wrapped around his cock surfaces to the forefront of his mind. He swallows, elbows his way down on the bed until they're level, and draws his fingers on the expanse of Lachlan's chest. He's loathe to wake him, but at the same time he knows he ought to. If he waits any longer they'll probably find more scavengers afoot. The fact that his crew gives Adair a two day break before and after the full moon doesn't mean everyone else is not taking advantage of his absence.

"Lachlan," he whispers, palm skimming over his lover's arm, down his side. "Lachlan, wake up." A grunt, and Lachlan sinks deeper into the mattress, burying his face into the pillow. Adair leans closer, nudging his forehead with his chin. "Wake up, c'mon."

The sound that Lachlan makes could've been anything between "fuck you," "not ever," and "forget it." Adair doesn't need to know; he thinks he's got the gist anyway.

He tries not to sigh in frustration. They've been through it a hundred times. Lachlan's as stubborn as a mule and twice as conceited. Somehow, the notion that

something might happen to him, either coming or going from Washington every full moon, has completely escaped Lachlan's self-assured ass. Of course, it works in Lachlan's favor that Adair really doesn't want to think about what could happen if Lachlan gets snatched by one of the crews -- and they both know he could. It's like Lachlan simply refuses to contemplate the possibility, and it scares Adair, far more than he's going to admit.

"I'm too good," Lachlan had told him only the previous night, the light of the moon not yet faded from the sky and Adair's eyes, the wolf's instincts still rearing under Adair's skin.

"Too insane," Adair had growled as he toppled the both of them over the bed. They'd been frantic, burning with need after a month without seeing one another, and Adair hadn't pressed the point.

Now, though. The sun's rising, and soon it'll be harder to avoid detection. Adair looks at the sharp dip of Lachlan's jaw, the sunrise sharpening the collection of brilliantly red love bites down his breastbone and kicking Adair's possessive streak into overdrive. He molds his hand over the finger-shaped bruises he'd etched on Lachlan's hips earlier and pulls him closer, delivering tiny nips up Lachlan's arm as he watches him cling to sleep with eyes screwed tightly shut.

"C'mon, it's past dawn already," Adair whispers, trying and failing to sound stern, his breath blowing cool over saliva-damp patches of skin. He can't resist sinking his teeth a little harder on the tender hickey on the juncture of Lachlan's neck, remembering how he'd pushed him face first on the bedding, mouth branding every inch of Lachlan's upper body as Adair fucked him with rough, short thrusts, taking Lachlan to the edge and pulling him back so many times that Lachlan had been crying by the time Adair had finally allowed him to come.

"Ngh," Lachlan grunts eloquently, but he arches backwards against Adair's chest, still halfway between conscious and dream, turning his head to the side to bare his neck for Adair's pleasure.

The submissive act stirs ever-burning coals in Adair's gut, and he spans the width of his hand over Lachlan's belly, fitting himself to his back as he licks a line from the furled tip of Lachlan's ear down to the ruby-red mark on his shoulder. He can see Lachlan's cock from this angle, already half hard and heavy between lean, muscular thighs. He sneaks his other arm under Lachlan's armpit, circling his waist and lazily fisting the base of Lachlan's cock, giving it a couple of soft, slow pulls and grinning against the back of Lachlan's head when he hears him groan.

"Oh no you don't," Lachlan mumbles, angled elbows trying halfheartedly to pull back. "No nookie. Sleep."

Adair's surprised at the laugh that wants to spill forth from his lips. He'd forgotten what it was like to have fun in bed. Sometimes, he thinks he'd forgotten how to have fun at all. It still feels weird, like a jarring note in a familiar tune, but it's not unpleasant. Adair would call it freeing, even. He teasingly circles the head of Lachlan's rapidly hardening dick with thumb and forefinger, kissing the underside of Lachlan's jaw lightly and nudging a knee between Lachlan's legs.

"You wouldn't wake up," he murmurs, voice a notch or two lower than usual, still scratched with the aftermath of the full moon. "Had to get creative."

"I don't -- ah," Lachlan moans, hips rocking up in Adair's hand, "see the creativity here."

"Would you like for me to get creative?"

A dark chocolate eye cracks open to look at him, dawn spinning its light to gold, and Adair feels his chest constrict weirdly. "Knock yourself out," Lachlan purrs, twisting in Adair's arms until he's pressed up flush against him.

Adair bows his head to cover Lachlan's mouth with his own, tongues sliding past parted lips, joining together, fighting for dominance. Adair's fist tightens around the root of Lachlan's dick, making him shudder violently.

Lachlan gasps inside Adair's mouth, fingers covering Adair's hand on his shaft and trying to get him to go faster, the air around them heavy and smelling like sweat and sex. Adair groans, tongue gliding over Lachlan's gums and against the roof of his

mouth, Adair's spare hand covering the inside of Lachlan's thigh and pulling it higher up above his own hip. Lachlan's fingers tighten painfully on Adair's fist, both of them grunting in sync as Lachlan pulls, harsh and rough, at his own dick, cockhead pushing through their joined hands and leaving scorching trails on the inside of Adair's palm.

The way Lachlan lets himself go never ceases to amaze Adair. Lachlan lets Adair take whatever he wants, never passive, always offering more, more, more. It goes like a jolt of electricity up to his head and down to his groin, his dick growing harder, throbbing valiantly as Lachlan's ass crease brushes over the damp length. "So fucking hot," Adair whispers, raking his teeth along the fullness of Lachlan's lower lip. His finger pads follow the symmetry line down Lachlan's chest, over his hip, down the curve of his ass until he reaches between Lachlan's cheeks. Adair bites back a grunt as he brushes the slit of his own cock with his thumb, collecting the fat dollops of precome and spreading the white stickiness over Lachlan's quivering hole.

"C'mon," Lachlan encourages him, his tongue tracing a swath from Adair's chin up to his jaw line. "C'mon, not gonna break." Eyes squeezed shut, Lachlan ruts back onto Adair's finger and up in their entwined hands, trying to force Adair to go faster. Adair screws his thumb up just right, his stomach clenching viciously as he's surrounded by shocking wet, tight heat. Lachlan's always, always so tight. No matter how many times Adair takes him, his little hole still clamps down like a vice, like nothing else ever got in there. It sends Adair into an over-sexed drive, makes him wonder what it's going to take for Lachlan to finally loosen, to get him pliant and mellow under Adair's touch.

The thought is not even fully formed in his head when a frenzy takes hold of him, blood rushing southwards with alarming speed, leaving Adair dizzy and breathless.

He wants to find out. Wants Lachlan begging beneath him, to stop or go on or both, wants to feel him open and wanton and owned by Adair, wants the feeling of himself inside of Lachlan to last till the new moon.

Adair withdraws his finger, the displeased moan the motion brings forth forcing him to grab the base of his dick and squeeze, hard, teeth gritted in an attempt to regain some form of control. He lets go of Lachlan's cock, swatting Lachlan's hand away, and rolls Lachlan to the side and on his back, looming above him as he raises on his knees, settling between Lachlan's gracefully splayed legs.

"Tease." Lachlan grins, strands of light, fair hair falling in his eyes. He raises his hands to run down Adair's biceps, grabs holds of his wrists and yanks him down, their chests smacking together, faces half an inch from one another. "I can play this game," Lachlan whispers, tongue darting out to lick at his own lips, barely brushing Adair's own with the gesture.

Adair growls, deep in his chest, and smashes their mouths together. He twists his fingers into Lachlan's, clenching urgently as he ravishes Lachlan's mouth with his tongue, and Lachlan moans, hips rocking up fruitlessly in search of friction. Adair can see his cock, red and angry-looking, curled upwards on his stomach in a stark contrast to his pale skin, throbbing anew with every tantalizing slide of Adair's own dick in the groove of Lachlan's hip.

Adair sucks Lachlan's tongue into his mouth, puts Lachlan's hands behind his head and around the railings of the bed frame. He unwinds their fingers, guiding Lachlan's hands to curl around the thick bars of the headboard, and squeezes them in warning before pulling back. He feels the ripple of a shiver going down Lachlan's spine, and Adair bows his head to deliver a line of tiny nips on the curve of his shoulder.

Adair's head is swimming, feels like he's moving underwater, movements slow and yet urgent, frantic. He spans the width of Lachlan's belly with his palms, follows the edges of his abs with the tips of his fingers. Lachlan has a body made for sex. He ticks all the boxes Adair has and then some he didn't know he had.

"Roll over," Adair rasps out. "Don't let go of these," he adds, knowing Lachlan wouldn't. They can read one another by now, though if Adair has to be honest with himself, Lachlan always could, from that very first time in the backyard at Chlodwig.

"That what you want?" Lachlan gives him a smoldering look through heavy-lidded eyes, before twisting in an arch and ending up belly-down, his perfectly shaped ass swaying teasingly in front of Adair.

Mine, Adair thinks, a half-suppressed, possessive howl rising in his throat. He covers Lachlan's body with his own, nuzzles the spot between Lachlan's shoulders for an instant before he trails his tongue down each bump in Lachlan's spine. Lachlan shivers, silencing a breathless sound against his bicep, and Adair bites his lip, breathing hard through his nose. "Fuck, the things you do to me," he murmurs, finding the hickey he'd left at the base of Lachlan's spine the night before, just after he'd transformed back, and pulls at the reddened skin with his teeth, breath growing shorter when he hears Lachlan's groan. He presses his lips to the blossoming bruise, soothing the sting as he continues his journey south, not stopping until he reaches the dark valley between Lachlan's cheeks. Adair's hands knead the firm, round muscles of Lachlan's ass as he spreads him apart, and lets his tongue run in a circle over Lachlan's hole, hiding a smirk when Lachlan's legs buckle on the mattress, the catch of his breath sending all of Adair's blood flowing to his groin.

Adair knows spit won't cut it for what he wants, but the sight's too tempting to give up. He thrusts the tip of his tongue past the guardian ring, feeling Lachlan's thighs shake with the effort of keeping himself upright, a drawn out, keening sound filling the air around them. Adair's dick throbs in earnest, leaking drop after drop of precome from where it bobs eagerly against his stomach, and he puckers his lips around Lachlan's hole, sucking wetly at the swollen ring of muscle.

Lachlan thrashes beneath him, curses and moans spilling from his lips like a litany as he rocks back on Adair's face, legs as wide as they can go over the mattress. Spit trails down the crack of Lachlan's ass, slicking up the passage for one of Adair's fingers to join his tongue as he stabs continuously into his center. Adair groans, head spinning, as he feels Lachlan's muscles clasp, sucking him in, heat and friction driving him wild. Lachlan mewls wantonly in answer, his hips spasming against thin air.

"Fuck me already, c'mon Adair, c'mon, gotta. Please -- gotta, just -- fuck me, please -- fuck me --"

Adair wants to laugh, crazy and exhilarated, but holds back. Lachlan has no idea what's in store for him. He flicks his tongue around his finger, stroking in and out purposefully, crooking it up to find that spot inside of Lachlan that will have him screaming.

And Lachlan does. Cries out like pleasure and pain are the same thing, the walls of his channel squeezing down, hard, desperate. "Adair," he begs, voice scattered raw already. "Adair, God damn it, just do it -- not gonna break."

Adair doesn't heed him. He bites at the muscled swell of Lachlan's ass, pulling and suckling until blood rushes to the surface before letting his tongue slide again down the dip between his cheeks. He pushes in as he's pulling his finger out, switching one for two, working them in tandem to pry Lachlan open.

Lachlan lets go of a breathy cry, knocking his legs wider apart as he rocks back on Adair's fingers, the muscles in his arms pulled taut as he grips the headboard. "Fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck." It's a continuous string of gasps and broken breaths, Lachlan's thighs trembling with the strain of holding him up. He won't last long -- Adair knows the signs. He screws his fingers in, sliding his tongue out and letting it trail wetly all the way down to Lachlan's balls. He wants to hear him scream, feel him come undone underneath him, and he's going to make him.

Adair shuffles back a couple of inches on his knees, eyes darting around in search of proper supplies as he keeps stroking Lachlan's inner walls with firm, hard stabs. Lachlan's chest is heaving with ragged pants, his cock bobbing against his stomach with every shudder and shiver that rakes his body. The sight has Adair faltering in his pace, to the point he's almost gonna say fuck it, and just ram his own aching dick into that hot, tight little ass.

Almost.

The wet, obscene popping sound his fingers make as he slips them out of Lachlan's ass echoes like gunshot in the room. Adair grunts, squeezes his own dick to keep himself in check.

Lachlan tosses his sweaty-damp hair back, looking at him through heavy-lidded eyes, his lips parted and needy. "Who told you to stop?"

Adair grins, slow and feral, and stalks closer, grabbing Lachlan's jaw with his hand and smearing the taste of sex over his lips, smothering a groan in the back of Lachlan's neck as Lachlan's tongue darts out to lick at the web between his fingers. "I got better plans," he breathes out, turning Lachlan's head halfway up so he can clash their mouths together, curling his arm around Lachlan's chest to pull him back against his own body.

Lachlan whimpers and lets go of the headboard, his hands grasping Adair's hips, trying to force him closer. Adair bites Lachlan's lower lip, slowly letting his forearm slide down toward Lachlan's groin, until he can wrap his hand around Lachlan's throbbing hard cock. Lachlan's breathy little "ah" as he pumps his hips forward goes like electricity to Adair's neglected dick, a bout of precome trickling down Lachlan's ass crack as Adair fits the length of his dick between Lachlan's cheeks.

"You want this?" Adair teases, rubbing his cockhead right against Lachlan's clenching hole. Lachlan garbles out a moan. "Think you can take it all? You're so fucking tight, Lachlan. Too tight, too hot." Adair thumbs the slit of Lachlan's cock, scraping the pulsing vein on the underside before going to cup Lachlan's sac with his palm. "I'm gonna open you up good 'n proper now," he promises, his stubble scratching the sensitive skin of Lachlan's neck as he peppers it with teasing nips and licks, Lachlan's pulse fluttering excitedly underneath Adair's lips.

Adair lets go of Lachlan's cock with a sloppy smack. Lachlan dips his upper body forward, burying his head in his forearms as he braces himself on his elbows, legs wide apart and ass on display for Adair to take.

The unspoken invitation shoots like fire through Adair's veins, nearly sending him tumbling over the edge without a hand on his dick. He bites through his cheek,

needing a little spike of pain to keep focused as he shifts on his knees until he can grab the tube of lubricant from the excuse for a nightstand next the side of the bed. There might have been a time when he wouldn't have bothered, when he'd have gone with spit and prayer and not given a fuck about how it was gonna hurt. Wanting it to hurt.

Adair shakes his head to clear it a little, dissipating the dark shadow that had fallen in front of his eyes. That time's long past and it has no room resurfacing here. He presses a fleeting kiss over the side of Lachlan's neck, just to feel him there. Lachlan's thighs flex in anticipation, his messy blond hair loose like a curtain above the arch of his shoulders and arms, gorgeous and waiting. Adair blankets his body from behind, hiding his face in the dip of Lachlan's shoulder blade. He unscrews the cap of the lube one-handed, squirting a rather large amount on his fingers before bringing them to prod Lachlan's swollen hole.

Lachlan sucks in a sharp breath, shivering against the unexpected surge of cold, but he rocks backwards onto Adair's hand, trying to force him inside. Adair molds his spare hand over Lachlan's dick, feeling him tremble at the contact, and begins to leisurely stroke it, not rough enough to grant Lachlan release, but enough to keep the pressure building in his belly.

Lachlan groans in frustration, tossing his head this way and that, fingers flexing on the messy sheets underneath him. "C'mon, c'mon," he mumbles, eyes veiled and feverish, a sheen of perspiration making his whole body gleam under the rays of sunlight, like a jewel. "Please, Adair, please, was ready, 'm ready, please --"

Three of Adair's fingers slam home inside of Lachlan, and he cries out, lurching forward and scrabbling for purchase on the bedding. Adair squeezes his eyes shut, not able to stare his fill without fear of coming right on the spot. He corks his fingers up, finding Lachlan's prostrate and stroking it relentlessly as he works up a steady, forceful pace, the friction smoothed out by lube and spit, the heat unbelievable. Lachlan whimpers and seizes down on him, pushing back on Adair's hand and forward in his fist, fast and greedy, moans and pleas slipping past his lips and dying against his arms.

"Fuck, like that," Adair grunts against Lachlan's back, licking up the salty sweat that has pooled down Lachlan's back. He opens his eyes a fraction, watching Lachlan's body undulate under him as though through a heat wave. He scissors his fingers as he's pulling out, keeping Lachlan on the edge for a few, interminable seconds before pushing them straight back in, knuckle-deep.

"Ngh --" Lachlan's guttural groan is enough of a warning. Adair tightens his fist around the base of Lachlan's dick, squeezes hard, feeling him shake and buck wildly beneath his body, the grip of Lachlan's channel around his fingers almost too much to bear. "No," Lachlan grounds out, burying his face into the sheets, sweat rolling down his arms and nape as he twists on Adair's digits. "No, fuck, no, God, please, need it, please, Adair, please."

"Not yet," Adair whispers low against Lachlan's ear, nearly blind himself with need. "Not yet."

He keeps Lachlan still until he feels him shudder, his release stalled, chest rising and falling sharply with every breath he takes. Adair nuzzles the side of his neck, lips caressing the wild beat of Lachlan's pulse point as he waits for the shaking to subdue.

Finally Lachlan looks up at him, eyelashes clumped with unshed tears, his dark chocolate eyes swimming with mist. Adair laps at Lachlan's lower lip, slides his tongue into that willing parted mouth, eating up Lachlan's whimpers and mimicking each of them with a moan of his own. He lets Lachlan's angry-looking cock slip from his fist and goes to frame the side of Lachlan's waist, slowly working his fingers out and back in Lachlan's clenching hole, feeling the muscles give way with every new thrust.

Lachlan muffles a helpless groan into Adair's mouth, his legs knocking violently. There are bright pink patches of color high in his cheeks, and Adair knows that if it weren't for his arm, firm around his hips, Lachlan would've collapsed under the slow torture already. He breaks the kiss, sucking in a lungful of air before he slides free from Lachlan's ass, blindly groping for the lubricant and coating his hand liberally with the gooey substance before tucking the pinky finger along the other three and slipping all four of them back in with one single, smooth thrust.

"Oh God," Lachlan moans, body thrashing on the sheets. He arches with every flick of Adair's wrist, his thighs quivering, balls taut and full at the base of his weeping dick, hips valiantly humping forward to try and rut against something.

"How does that feel?" Adair grits out, voice so rough he doesn't sound like himself. "Wide open and stuffed full with my hand?" He twists his fingers up but avoids Lachlan's prostrate, not wanting him to come before he's through with his plan.

Lachlan groans wordlessly and burrows his face in the mattress, his back stretched taut like a bowstring. "Talk to me," Adair spreads his fingers slightly, feeling the muscles surrounding him tremble and give way before clamping down again. "Do you want more? Hm? You want my whole hand up your little ass?"

Lachlan nods, cheek plastered to his forearm, sweaty hair sticking to his nape and forehead, crossing all shades of gold and brass. He licks at his own fingers, eyes half-mast and veiled with unshed tears, too strung out to speak, utterly at Adair's mercy. The ultimate surge of raw, undiluted owning that goes like a flash of white-hot flame up to Adair's head and down to his dick. It's nearly the end of him. He keeps the tips of his fingers inside Lachlan's hole before he folds his thumb against his palm, slowly pushing back in, watching, transfixed, the way Lachlan stretches wide apart to accommodate him, the violent shake of his body making Adair's whole arm tremble.

"Fucking amazing," he grinds out, flexing his other hand over Lachlan's hipbone. "Dear Christ, Lachlan..."

Lachlan sobs, broken, exhausted, his dick so hard it looks like it's just about to explode. Adair lowers his head to map out Lachlan's back with kisses, soothing, calming, whispering "So good, so good, mine," all over the broad expanse of rippling muscles. He eases his hand almost all the way out before he slowly pushes back in, curling his fingers in a fist as he does so. The struggle's minimal -- Lachlan's loose now, and his body opens for Adair with a shudder.

"Please," Lachlan moans, looking sideways up at him with bright, feverish eyes. "Adair please. Need. Need, gotta. Please -- gotta, so bad, hurts, *please* --"

Adair nods, tightens his grip on Lachlan's hip as he does so. "Yeah. Okay." He inches his fist up, raps his knuckles over Lachlan's prostrate once, blood roaring in his ears as Lachlan convulses underneath him. Tight, wet, burning, Lachlan squeezes down on him, his cry borderline pained as he falls forward, falling apart at the seams as his orgasm is ripped from his body. Adair howls, the world turning gray as he's hit full-on with the feel and scent of Lachlan's surrender, and he manages to grab his dick just in time before his own release hits with the force of a rocket, coating his wrist and arm and the back of Lachlan's ass.

Adair doesn't know if he's blacked out or not, but he probably has. He doesn't remember laying face-down on Lachlan's back, but when he opens his eyes he's looking straight at Lachlan's profile, his cheek pressed to the side of Lachlan's head. Adair smiles then, knowing Lachlan can't see him, and places a light kiss to the dip of his shoulder before slowly, carefully prying his hand out of Lachlan's ass.

Lachlan groans and tenses for a split second before relaxing again. He's landed straight in the pool of come, but he looks too completely wrung out to care. Adair turns him over, gentle as he can be, still feeling dizzy with the aftermath of his orgasm, not quite believing he'd almost managed to come simply by taking Lachlan that far. It might say something on the level of his involvement he's not really ready to face yet, so he pushes it from his mind.

Lachlan opens one eye to stare blearily at him. "That -- was. Yeah."

Adair snorts and pulls the soiled sheet off the bed. He doesn't have clean ones -- something he'll need to get before the next full moon.

"Yeah," he agrees, settling down next to him and draping one arm above his waist.

"If tha' was a clever plan to gemme out of 'ere, backfired on ya." Lachlan slurs, eyes falling shut even before he'd finished speaking.

Adair laughs, soft in the back of his throat, and glances out of the window, sun shining bright over the remains of their world.

Maybe it'd be safer for Lachlan to leave with the cover of darkness anyway.

Chapter Two

"Lachlan."

"Nhf."

"Lachlan..."

He sighs, turns on one side and throws Adair a bleak glance. He doesn't need to speak -- he knows Adair will get the "What the fuck are you ruining my afterglow nap for?" message anyway.

"Don't," Adair says quietly. He runs his palm down Lachlan's face, as if he wants to erase Lachlan's less than pleased look. "You know you have to."

Second verse, same as the first. Lachlan swallows back a weary sigh and pushes himself up on his elbows. "It's early," he says, his voice so hoarse it sounds like he's whispering. Adair doesn't look at him, something Lachlan knows is not a good sign. He rolls out of bed, padding around the room to get dressed. Lachlan does sigh this time, and makes to stand, too, only to be reminded -- rather painfully -- that he just had a fist up his ass, and that harsh movements are so not on for today. Christ, riding back is going to be hell.

"C'mon," he murmurs, quiet as he's learned to be when Adair won't speak. "It'll be fine, I don't have to be anywhere for a fortnight."

"But I do," Adair answers without turning, still apparently looking everywhere for his clothes. "I should've been at the Chlodwig an hour ago."

"Then go." He grabs Adair's t-shirt from where it's resting atop the empty candleholder on the nightstand and tosses it at his head with a smirk. "I might even come watch the Wars."

"No," Adair snaps, plucking the piece of clothing out of his hair and turning to glare at him. Way too twitchy for a man who's just gotten laid, in Lachlan's opinion. "You don't get anywhere near the Chlodwig, and that's final."

A trickle of annoyance goes down Lachlan's back. He puts both his feet on the ground, carefully testing the situation for an instant before getting up. "You know," he begins, keeping his voice as neutral as he can as he stares holes in the back of Adair's head, "you can't exactly forbid me to do anything."

"Watch me," Adair says darkly, pulling up his jeans and stalking closer, bare feet not making a sound on the uneven floor. Lachlan puts both palms on Adair's chest, and if it's to keep him away or hold onto him, he doesn't know. The silver in Adair's eyes seems to simmer, just as it does when the moon's close to rising and the wolf in him starts to take over. "Get out of here."

"Givin' me the boot now?"

Adair growls in frustration. "That's not what it's about and you know it."

"I don't, actually. Enlighten me."

"You're fucking impossible when you do that, you know that, right?"

"What I see is you trying to boss me around. I've been on my own since I was a kid, been doing this shit for over ten years," Lachlan says, trying as he might not to let his irritation show. "I can take care of myself."

"Right," Adair snorts. "And walking into a scavenger's nest is a pretty amazing way to take care of yourself."

Third verse, same as the first. Dear Christ. Sometimes Lachlan wonders if Eric's right and he's indeed fighting a lost battle. He smiles, trying a different tactic. "Worrying about me is cute, but it won't give you round four. I doubt I'll be able to sit for a week."

Adair's lips press in a thin line, the scar above his upper one stretching to the side. Dangerous omen. Lachlan lays his forehead against Adair's shoulder, both arms going around his back and holding him close. "C'mon," he murmurs, squeezing Adair's waist briefly. "I don't wanna fight every time."

"Then go," Adair mutters, back ramrod straight in Lachlan's embrace. "Save us both the trouble."

"I've been to more dangerous places than Washington," Lachlan tries to reason again.

It's not easy. At times, it's like Adair refuses to understand that running those risks is part of Lachlan's life. Like he wants to take upon himself any responsibility for what happens to Lachlan, as though Lachlan hasn't a perfect grasp of the situation and of what it implies. "I've took runs to places I knew jack shit about, where I had no idea where the fuck I could end up if I took the wrong turn on a chase. I know the wheres and hows of Washington like it's Dulles now." He dares to place a tiny kiss on the hollow of Adair's throat, his heart fluttering when Adair doesn't push him away. "Stop fretting. I know what I'm doing."

"So do we," is Adair's low answer. Lachlan cringes and falls silent, but refuses to let go even though Adair starts fussing. He gives in once he realizes Lachlan won't budge, and raises his hands to twist in Lachlan's hair, tilting his head up to look in his eyes. "Promise me you'll get out of the area tonight and won't be back before next month." Lachlan hesitates for half a second, and Adair's fingers tighten in his hair, the molten silver in his eyes shining dangerously. "Promise me."

He gives in. "All right." Lachlan's fingernails dig in the small of Adair's back, pressing their bodies flush together. "But I can stay till nighttime."

"What about curfew?"

"I'm a Pony Express rider," Lachlan grins, "occupational hazard."

Adair relents. Lachlan can feel it in the sudden jerk of his shoulders, as though a knot of tension had been released. "It's your funeral," he says then, but Lachlan can see the tease behind the harsh words. He doesn't tell him it's what Eric and Thorn say to Lachlan every time he takes off to the Coast. It's no one's business but his own, and fuck it, he can take care of himself.

* * *

The Chlodwig is packed. Adair breathes in the smell of damp wood and sawdust, standing still for half a second on the last step of the rickety staircase before joining the crowd that takes up every square inch of the club's pavement. Lachlan's left not half an hour ago, and he can still taste him on his tongue, at the back of his throat. Adair watched him leave on his bike, the tires screeching dangerously loud, a wink tossed over his shoulder as he'd reared on its back tire and sped away under the shadow of the setting sun.

Adair's sure the strident, obnoxious echo of gravel crunching under the two-wheeler had been Lachlan's gracious parting salute, in lieu of flipping Adair off. He snorts and makes his way to the corner booth, where his crew's waiting for him.

Gale is the first to stand up when he sees Adair approaching. "Well look what the tide brought in," he grins and grasps Adair's hand, and they bump their enclosed fingers against one another's chest in greeting.

"You look remarkably relaxed," Ezra says as he shuffles over to make room for Adair to sit. There are several empty shot glasses on the table already, and a barrel of beer in front of Morgan, who's lounged back on the bench, a sly grin on his lips.

"Welcome back in your circle, man."

Adair's eyes scan the rest of the tables quickly, a frown contracting his eyebrows. "Where's Dagan?" If the kid misses another fight, he's going to have to knock some sense into him.

"Off fucking," Gale snorts and fills up a glass, sliding it across the table to nudge Adair's fingers.

"At least he's getting some." Adair grabs his shot and finishes it in one go, feeling it bite and burn at the back of his throat, erasing the feeling of Lachlan, at least for a short while. "As long as he gets back in time for the first call," he adds, craning his neck to look over the top of Morgan's head to the dark curtain that obscures the backroom from view.

"That he will. He just got tired of waiting for your ass to show up."

Adair glances at Gale. Only a split second, but he can see Morgan and Ezra exchange a look in his peripheral vision. He decides not to remark. "Who's on the ring tonight?"

"Losers," Ezra says, sounding bored. "Usual folks from 'round here. Someone's new though."

"But we're still down two rounds since you weren't -- available."

Adair's eyes narrow as he fixates Gale's light blue ones with a warning look. His transformations are not up for discussion, everyone in the crew knows that. It nags at him that Gale even dared to mention it, but before he can open his mouth and growl him back in his place, Dagan stumbles against their table, a lopsided walk and an easy smile on his lips.

"Oh hey! You finally remembered you had a war to win tonight?" Dagan slaps Adair's back and flops in a chair opposite him. He's the youngest in the crew, a couple of years between him and Ezra, and he's also the fastest. Adair's seen the kid do some fucked up twists when they were this close to losing the fight -- contortionist if he ever saw one. Sometimes he wonders if Dagan really is 100% human, but then again if he doesn't want to share, it's not Adair's place to pry and poke. He smiles wryly. Not like he can say anything to that, either.

Morgan snorts and bumps Dagan's closed fist with his own. "Was he any good?"

Yeah, fuck he was, Adair thinks, unconsciously licking his lips.

Dagan grabs the beer, taking a long draught instead of giving a straight answer, which prompts for catcalls and whistles. Adair smirks and leans back, taking a good look around the club. Ezra's right, the Chlodwig's packed with losers. He can spot a few of their usual opponents, and a group of new faces in the far corner beside the audio set. It should be a walk in the park, and part of him relishes in the feeling of routine that it brings him.

This is something he can do, this is something he's good at. He doesn't need to think, he just walks onto the ring and lets himself go, knowing he is, at all times, in

control of the situation. Here, he doesn't feel constantly on the edge, constantly wanting, unable to say no.

Adair shakes his head and motions for Morgan to give him another shot. No good dwelling on that. Not for another four weeks, at least. He tips his head back, downs it in one gulp. "Let's get going then, boys." Adair pushes his chair back and stands. There's a fine line of sweat beading on his forehead, result of the booze and the music pumping loud from the strategically placed speakers. He breathes in the smell of sawdust and human clouding the smoky venue as he pushes through the crowd, his crew at his back, joining Riff at the edge of the cleared up space.

"Place your bets, ladies and gentlemen, place your bets!"

Gale at his left side, shoulders straight, his steps falling into tempo already. Morgan and Ezra behind them, with Dagan bringing up the rear, triangle formation. Not attacking, not yet. Waiting. Prepared.

"Places your bets," Riff calls out, hoarse and loud. "Place your bets, Midnight's crew on the floor."

The new group is first. They always are, Adair muses, his lip curling upwards. It makes it less entertaining, especially for the crowd pressing in from the sides, jumping on each other to see the outcome of the fight, but not any less fun for them.

The music stops. A loud, deafening beat of silence that slams down on everyone, taking their breaths away, before the rhythm picks up again, calling in the new challengers.

It's War Night at the Chlodwig, and Adair's gonna win.

* * *

Riding back to Dulles Station hadn't been hell. It had been an abso-fucking-lutely bitch-on-the-rag on top of everything else. Lachlan had had half a mind to stop somewhere on the road, bunk down and pray to the Gods that no one would find him, but every time he pulled the bike to the side, ready to crash for the night, he remembered the promise he'd made Adair not to linger in the area and not to come back until the next moon, and trudged on.

Of course, next thing he knew he'd hit a hole in the road, and white, flaring pain went up his back -- he wouldn't feel quite so keen to follow Adair's instructions, then. Freaky-sized fucker.

One way or another, he manages to get to shelter. He discards Connors' insistence that he needed a fresh rider to get something over to Denver, telling him in no uncertain terms that he's anything but fresh, and collapses on the first available bunk he'd found, dead to the world.

He sleeps for over ten hours, something unusual in and out of itself. When he wakes up, he grabs a five minute lukewarm shower before heading over to Eric's garage with his bike. The tires are worn down to the rims from two runs over the Appalachians back to back. By now they're beyond repair. Eric will chew him a new one for not stopping for a check earlier, and it's with some apprehension that he brakes in the yard at the back of the crumbling hangar where Eric lives.

"Anyone in?" Lachlan calls, knocking at the closed door. It's a couple of minutes before he hears the cranking of an engine, and the door slowly starts to rise. He hops off the bike, pushing it through the gap, head bowed to avoid collision with the edge of the door, and greets Eric with his brightest grin. "Ahoy there."

"Still alive." Eric takes off his protective goggles and smirks at him.

"Well fuck you too," Lachlan says easily, propping up the bike. "It's just grand to have friends that worry about you."

"Damn straight." Eric walks over, wiping his hands on a grease-streaked rag. He's looking more and more built as the days -- weeks. Months. Whatever. As time flies by. "Is the girl okay?"

Lachlan blinks at him, gaping for a split second before he regains ability of speech. "He's very much not a girl --"

Eric's rolling his eyes at him before he's finished the sentence. "Dude, mind out of the gutter for five seconds, will ya. I meant the bike."

"Figures," Lachlan snorts. "She's good. She just needs new shoes."

"Don't they all." Eric kneels down next to Lachlan's bike, and Lachlan holds his breath.

"Fuck it, man!"

Lachlan cringes.

"What in the goddamned name of hell is this?"

Lachlan inwardly sighs. He knew it was bound to happen anyway. "It's a bike that needs her tires changed."

"Incorrect. This is a bike that needed tire changing at least eighty miles ago. Fucking Christ, are you suicidal? No wait, don't answer that." He raises an imperative hand, "I don't really wanna know."

"I couldn't bail in the middle of a job," Lachlan says, trying to defend himself. "There weren't any stations in the area --"

"Pretty damn hard to find mechanics in Washington, I agree."

Lachlan exhales as though punched in the gut. *Another verse, same tune.*

Maybe he ought to stop the musical references.

"Washington is twenty-five miles north," he says, refusing to rise to the bait. "I went straight from the last run. Now, can you change 'em or do I have to go down to Baltimore to get a freakin' check up?"

Eric grumbles something unintelligible. "Roll her up there," he says then as he stands and nods to the lift on their right. Lachlan does as he's told, securing the bike with the harness at the four corners of the lift before stepping back and making a beeline for the top bunk stacked in a corner of the garage.

"You're walking bowlegged."

"Acute spirit of observation. It happens when you get laid. I'm sure you'd appreciate the advantages if you went out and did something about it yourself," Lachlan says, knowing he's taking out his frustration on the wrong target but not really caring.

Eric doesn't reply, which only pisses Lachlan off more. He lays down (on his stomach, thank you very much), and stares mutinously at the back of Eric's head as he maneuvers the lift until the tires are at an acceptable level for him to work on.

A few minutes pass by in relative silence, only the clanking of Eric's tools and the dull *thunk* of calipers being arranged on the table breaking the quiet. Lachlan's bursting with a number of unpleasant retorts, because he just can't let Eric have the last word on this -- no matter if he had, indeed, been the last one to speak. Somehow, Eric's silence is louder than any speech.

So what if he took a day or two for himself? He's been running like a bottle rocket to every corner of the godforsaken states, and he'd handed in his parcel. He'd done what they paid him to do. It's no one's business if he wants to chill for a couple of days before touching base. He doesn't have to be anywhere until he picks up a job, technically speaking.

Eric still doesn't say anything, and that annoys Lachlan way more than it should. "What?" he snaps then, irritation thick in his voice.

Eric looks up, eyebrow cocked. "What, what?"

Lachlan doesn't really know. "You tell me," he retorts, scowling.

Eric sighs and puts down the tire iron he'd been brandishing, turning around the table to lean against the edge and look up at Lachlan's face peeking from the top bunk. "Look, man, I don't have a problem," he starts, crossing his ankles in front of himself.

"But?"

"But you're not going to get my approval, either."

Like Lachlan cares about it. Lachlan doesn't need anyone's approval, as long as he thinks it's fine, then it's fine. If his stomach's clenching it's just because he hasn't eaten in awhile, and he's getting a little hungry.

"It's none of my business," Eric speaks again, voice sounding far away, as though at the end of a tunnel. "But you're not yourself lately, and it worries the crap out of me. I always knew you were a little insane -- you have to be or you wouldn't be running on this wreck." He pats the handle of the bike fondly, a little smile quirked up

the corners of his mouth, then his expression turns serious again. "But this isn't being reckless, this is..." He looks around, as if struggling to find a word that would rightly encompass how he thought Lachlan was. He finally gives up, throwing his hands up in the air in frustration and shaking his head. "Shit, Lachlan, you can't keep this up."

Lachlan's so taken aback that he doesn't ask 'what', he just whispers, "Why?"

Eric looks at him with an expression akin to pity in his eyes, and that, more than anything, sends Lachlan's blood boiling. "Because you're not sharp on the job."

"What the hell does that mean?"

"It means what I said it means. You're not sharp. You run with tires that can bust your ass at the first bump in the road. You forego switching stations and taking up runs so you can make it to Washington every full moon --"

"That's not true!"

"When's the last time you took a run down south?"

Lachlan opens his mouth to answer, then closes it again. He honestly doesn't remember. It must have been before he and Adair had started this -- thing, whatever the hell it was.

Eric doesn't push the matter. He walks around the platform again and grabs the tire iron without another word. Lachlan bites his lip and lays back over the mattress, crossing his hands over the pillow and burying his face in the bedding.

Shit-piss-fuck.

"Ours ain't only a job," Eric says. To hear him over the clanking of the tire falling off and onto the platform and the strident squeak of the harness Lachlan has to strain his ears. "State things are in, we have to get shit across the borders. It's not only food or light bulbs -- there're medicines, there're supplies, life in a nutshell. We run the risks we run 'cause if we don't do it, no one else will."

"I know that," he muffles out.

"Then try 'n start thinking with your upstairs brain, will you?"

Lachlan raises his head, finding Eric's sharp eagle eyes staring back at him. Lachlan knows he's supposed to agree, but the words that come out of his mouth were none of the planned ones. "I can't miss a full moon."

"Can't, or don't want to?"

Lachlan worries his lower lip with his teeth. He doesn't answer, and Eric gets back to work.

* * *

Connors is still rummaging through parcels behind the L-shaped counter of the station when Lachlan gets back with his new tires. He doesn't look up at the roar of the bike. By now he's too used to riders coming in without stopping at the garage to bother to scold them. He's in his fifties, he probably quit arguing and trying to uphold regulations a decade or so ago.

Lachlan slows down, putting his feet to the ground as he approaches the counter and raps it with his knuckles, bike still running. "Got anything for me?"

Connors glances up at him with a quirked eyebrow.

"Thought you were tired."

"I was. Got better."

Connors shakes his head, mutters something about younglings as he goes through the number of boxes, envelopes, tightly wrapped tubes he's got laying in their less-than-ordinate pile. "I got this to take down to the old borders, near Lace Bay. Urgent shit."

Lachlan's stomach twangs, uneasy. "Right."

It's just the first quarter. He can get there, drop off the package, and head back in twenty-two days. Easy as pie.

Connors looks at him, dubiously, as though he's just as unsure of his yes as Lachlan is. "Don't get drunk, don't get caught --"

"-- who ya think you're talking to, Thorn?"

"-- and touch base as soon as you get there. There're psychics in the area, so we should be able to track you if anything happens."

“Well, aren’t you just the ray of sunshine today.”

“There’ve been more and more raids around the borders to Mexico. They’re moving out of the Coast and into the country. It’s pretty fucking dangerous.”

Lachlan shrugs his shoulders. “It’s our job, right?”

Connors gives him “the look.” Lachlan’s been on the receiving end of it too many times to care. “Come on. Give it up and let me go already. You said it was urgent dintcha?”

“It’s your funeral.”

Lachlan sighs, secures the parcel in the tank pack and grins at him. “Ya’ll’re getting sort of boring, you know that?”

Connors’ eyebrows knit together, but Lachlan doesn’t wait around to answer his puzzled question. He’s out of the hangar and on the open road heading south before he can chicken out and ditch the run.

Chapter Three

They're back at the Chlodwig. It's almost dawn, but Adair's not tired. Adrenaline's pumping through his veins, the leftover of the fight thrumming underneath his skin, going in sync with his heartbeat. Victory's left him exhilarated, energy to spare pounding on his eardrums like vertigo. He's always been more ferocious the days following the transformation, something that he's been able to pass on to his crew members, their routines executed to perfection, something raw and feral that left their opponents with no choice but surrender.

Morgan's got his feet kicked up on the table, going through the pile of bucks they've snatched -- it's ridiculous the amount of money people waste on such things, given how they're all barely surviving in this goddamned wasteland. Still, not his place to complain. Not when they've made enough to lay low for another couple of weeks, which is way more than Adair had ever hoped for.

"Seriously good haul," Morgan states, shuffling the bills like he was getting ready to play blackjack, a sly smirk barely visible from behind the green. Ezra nods his approval from where he's sprawled on the bench, pulling lazily at the butt of his cigarette as he watches the smoke twirling upwards. "You should always get laid before a War, it does you good," he grins, pointing his cigarette toward Adair.

Adair bites the inside of his cheek and forces his eyebrows to contract in a perfect puzzled expression. It's not 'til he hears Dagan chuckle behind him that he realizes Ezra isn't talking to him. Better.

"I'll make it a habit then," Dagan says lazily, stretching and walking over to grab a handful of bills out of Morgan's hand.

"As long as you don't pay for it with my money."

"Our money," Gale corrects, pointing his beer bottle at Ezra, who just rolls his eyes at him.

"Adair's back now," he says, light and amused. "No need for you to play the steward anymore."

Adair looks round at Ezra and Gale, his brows furrowed. Gale doesn't turn his head to glance at him, spine rigid, and Ezra winks at Adair. "So, what's next?" he asks, completely untroubled.

All Adair can see of Gale is still the back of his head, so he decides to let it go for the time being and answers Ezra instead, "More practice."

"I thought we were supposed to be working on a job?"

Morgan winces. Ezra shakes his head, and Dagan's eyebrows shot up in his forehead.

Enough's enough.

Adair grabs Gale's shoulder and spins him around to face him. "I'm pleased the crew managed without me for a couple of days," Adair says, low and smooth. "Now, fucking remember your place when I'm around, gotcha?"

Gale grits his teeth. "We haven't pulled a job for a month," he says, almost spitting out the words. "The others have made a fortune while we're idling."

"Did they?" Ezra says, very ironically. He gestures around the now nearly empty Chlodwig. "Must have had a real good heart to come back here and say hi."

Adair knows what Ezra's saying. The Chlodwig caters to everyone in the area who makes do with whatever cards life has dealt them. Everyone hates being there, but no one leaves. It's the only place for miles that'll have them and keep them goin' for another week, another month. Adair's lost count how many times he's said, or heard someone say, "This is the last job. I make enough, I'm outta here."

But no one did. At times Adair wonders if the place had indeed been cursed, before the world split in two, when sorcery was seen as the last answer against the Third War. It would explain why the only ones who didn't get back to the Chlodwig were dead.

"It's not the point," Gale hisses. "We're lagging behind. Noah was here yesterday, and he'll be back in a week. We gotta have something to give him, or he'll think we're yanking his chain, and he'll start dealing with other crews. We can't afford to lose the only connection we got!"

"I'll talk to him," Adair says, low and controlled. "We'll give Noah his due and more than. But you," his eyes glint dangerously and he tightens his grip on Gale's shoulder, pushing him down to sit on the bench, "Don't fuckin' dare tell me what we gotta do ever again. Am I making myself clear?"

No one even draws a breath. Adair's adrenaline has blended into anger, shimmering under the surface, ready to raise its head and strike at the first wrong move. Gale's moss dark eyes stare on, unblinkingly, for the longest of instants, but nods at the end.

Adair lets go of him and turns to address the rest of the crew. "Anyone else got a problem with how we're working?"

Ezra shakes his head, looking very satisfied, even though Adair doesn't really know what for. Maybe he should have a talk with Ezra too, find out what's been going on the past three days. He glances at Morgan and Dagan, who both mimic Ezra's gesture in haste.

"We'll meet up tomorrow night and set up a trap near the Lakes," he says brusquely. "Now everyone fuck off."

No one says a word as they depart the scene. It takes a moment for Gale to rise again to his feet, but when he does, the challenge in his eyes has the wolf inside Adair growling. *Bring it on.*

* * *

The beaches around Houston used to be amazing. Lachlan remembers going there during winter time, seeking refuge from the biting cold he carried with him from the Northern areas. He remembers lying under an intricate roof of leaves, getting drunk and waiting for the sun to rise so he could hop on his steed and head toward Orlando.

As he slows down his run, the weary groan of the brakes echoing the one that fights to escape him after about nine days with little food and even less sleep, he can't say he's met with anything worth remembering as far as eye can see. The fog's eating up what little of shore he can see, high tide submerging the few crumbled shacks that litter the edges like solitary watchers. Lachlan frowns, stopping short of the dirty, murky waves, scanning the ground for any sign of the address he's supposed to be at.

Shit.

Shit, shit, *shit*.

He turns the bike around, goes downtown to find the station and ask for news. It's not hurricane season, but who the fuck knows -- it's hard to time anything as unpredictable as weather. He's lost count of how many times he's had to bunk down when a storm caught him on a job, freezing to the bone under the downpour and worried the bike wouldn't survive the night, much less the rest of the run.

Connors had told him there were psychics in town. They should've picked up Lachlan's presence by now. Lachlan never really got how that worked -- he's never needed their help in the decade he's been working as a Pony Express and, truth be told, he'd like to keep it that way.

He doesn't have anything personal against the psychics. They're just like the rest of them, byproducts of a world that got so far before collapsing onto itself, leaving its bastard children to fend for themselves in the ruins it left behind. Lachlan knows a couple of them -- Rae, stationed in Dulles, and Derek on the West Coast, but the policy's the same with them as with anyone else. Don't ask, don't tell. Everyone's got their own shit to deal with, most of the times the only thing needed is a bottle of Jack and a friendly face.

Psychics are natural aids for the Pony Express. They run on the longest routes, they help out the search parties, their heightened senses enabling them to know if one of the riders is snatched, and where. They're not Seers, but they're the next best thing. The only reason Lachlan is not too fond of the idea of them helping out is that it'd mean he's in trouble, and Lachlan doesn't get in trouble. Not on the job anyway. He guns the

engine and speeds toward the other end of town, hoping he'll find someone that will let him know where the hell he's supposed to go now.

The parcel between his knees burns like a judgment. Every time the place he was supposed to deliver his package hasn't been where it should be, the weight of whatever he was carrying turned out to be unbearable. It's a psychological reaction of some sort that Lachlan's never been able to shake off.

He wants to drop off whatever he's carrying and put the town in his rearview mirror. The whistle of the wind is eerie, sweeps across the land like it's a graveyard. Gray sky melts in gray waters, the light dimming, close to sunset. There's not a slice of moon in the sky, and the absence gives Lachlan chills. He should have met someone by now. The silence is not natural.

He follows the main road, ears perked and eyes peeled. The station is further up, maybe two miles off the shore, and once it comes in his line of sight Lachlan lets go of a small breath of relief. There're people about, civilians by the look of them, but at least he knows he's not suddenly dropped in a ghost town.

He throttles back, scanning the tiny crowd in front of the hangar as he coasts to a stop. He spots two children looking at him with big, wide eyes, excitedly talking among themselves and pointing at him as though they've never seen anything quite so exciting in their lives.

"Hey stranger!"

Lachlan turns round, incredibly grateful to see a guy dressed in black and red leathers jogging toward him. "Hey yourself. This Houston's block?"

"Indeed. And you are?"

"I come from Dulles Station. Lachlan."

The guy extends his hand and shakes Lachlan's own. "Juan. What's that you got here?"

Instincts tell Lachlan to keep his mouth shut. Habits are hard to break, and he's seen too much of these wastelands to shake off that natural diffidence. "They've not said. I should've handed this over but the address has been eaten up by the tide."

"Ah," the guy's eyes turn sad. "Right. C'mon in."

Lachlan secures the bike, props it up inside the hangar and follows Juan. The station's not a station anymore. There are people huddled on couches and in the corners, spread out on quilts, families looking the worse for wear and younglings with death in their eyes. "What happened?" Lachlan finally asks as they get to the counter behind which the ins and outs of the station are stacked high.

"Storms happened. Nasty ones. Shit hit the fan, people began flocking in from all over and we couldn't toss 'em out, this is the only building that's got fundamentals." Juan sighs. "All our riders are out with pleas for food and medicines, but you can imagine how well that's going down."

Lachlan shudders. He totally can.

"What's your address?"

"445 East Shore Drive. Mulligan."

Juan scans a list he's got taped to the wall, deep frown furrowing his black eyebrows. He runs the tip of his pencil down the columns twice, but in the end he turns with a grim shake of his head.

Lachlan's stomach hollows out. "Right."

"I'm sorry."

Why is Juan telling him, Lachlan wonders detachedly. He's alive. "Right. I should probably head back, then."

"How long have you been on the road?"

"Nine days," he answers truthfully. He can see Juan raise his eyebrows, impressed, but he couldn't care less. He just really wants to leave Houston behind.

"You could get some shuteye upstairs. If you need to touch base up north, I'll get hold of Leon. He's out with the others now, that's why I didn't see you comin'."

Leon must be the resident psychic. Lachlan looks around, his shoulders burning as though he's been on his feet for weeks. The idea of crashing somewhere and letting sleep take over is one of the most tempting that's crossed his mind in a good few days.

"If you were to stick around for a day or two... we do need all the help we can get."

Fuck. Lachlan eyes Juan warily, his mind providing him with an endless list of reasons why it would be a very, very bad idea. For one, he's gotta get back, and if the storms hit again, that's going to be a lottery. He's got to turn in the unclaimed package, go through God knows how much crap to prove he's actually made it and that he couldn't complete the delivery -- those things are always a bitch -- and... and he's gotta be back before the full moon.

"I --" he begins, but the words get lost somewhere on the way out of his mouth. Juan's looking desperately hopeful, and Lachlan knows that only a few months ago he would've turned back on his bike and never be seen again in Houston. "All right." Juan beams in relieved delight. "But I gotta head back north soon." Sooner than soon.

"That's not gonna be a problem. Look, go get some rest now. You look dead on your feet." He clasps Lachlan on his back. "And thank you."

Lachlan shrugs awkwardly and doesn't answer. Once he's secured his unclaimed delivery (it's not about Juan, really. Lachlan just doesn't trust anyone), he climbs on the first free top bunk he sees, and lays down with a grateful sigh. He's already regretting saying yes, but it's not like he can go back on his word now. He doesn't even know why he's agreed. All of his instincts told him it was the worst possible decision he could've made, but then again Lachlan's not known to listen to reason at any rate.

He falls asleep before his fatigued brain can debate the matter further.

* * *

It's close. Adair can feel it in his blood, pumping through his veins like liquid fire. Scents, noises, smells. Everything magnifies, transfers to him like a powerful blow to the stomach, awakening every nerve he possesses. The music's too loud, but it doesn't bother him. It sharpens his senses, cuts through white hot, leaving him bare, wanting.

It's close. There's something raw under Adair's skin, that is as much a part of him as the moonlight, as tissue and bone. He stopped fighting it long ago. Now he just lets it go, flowing through him, driving him on.

The Chlodwig welcomes him with open arms. He doesn't see people, he feels them, through shape and form. The arousal is thick and fickle like smoke, and he breathes it in, out, in, out, following the rhythm of the music.

It's close. The fights are on, the beginners trying to work their way up to challenge them. Adair watches through slanted eyes, feeling the moon growing fuller, calling him.

Soon he'll be seeing Lachlan again. He licks his lips, his heart speeding up, heat spiking in his limbs. There's a challenge on the floor, but it's not their turn yet. Morgan's drinking from a bottle in a paper bag, quietly watching the fights. He's the only one who's moving. Gale and Dagan are both sitting up straight, eyes fixated onwards, and Ezra's by Adair's side, chin resting on his crossed arms, straddling the chair. Adair knows they can feel it too -- they always could. It's like a cloud of static energy is floating around them, intimate and powerful.

"We're gonna win this war," Morgan whispers, and somehow Adair picks it up even if the music's close to deafening.

Adair stands. It's their time now. He's first, Ezra behind him with the others, and the moment they step inside the circle, the whole club roars its approval. The challengers are foreigners. Adair can smell the wind and sand of the Northern lakes on them. They won't be easy to kick off the floor, but that's okay with him. It makes him smile, low, feral, like a predator that has scented his prey. His instincts tell him where he should go, how he should move. The beat of the bass is inside him, under his pulse and it spurs him on, the steps easy, fluid like underwater.

Snap of hips, twist, turns back. Dagan follows him, Gale on his heels. Sways, falls down to his knees in a half turn, Ezra and Morgan hauling Adair up against their chests, arms spread wide. Their routine is intricate, takes nothing to screw up, but

Adair's leading them on, knowing how far he can push to get the best out of each of his crew members.

Up, down, Adair arches, legs straight to the ceiling, hands pinned on their shoulders as the crowd screams in delight. He pushes himself upright again, just as Gale and Ezra mimic his move, sinuous undulating of limbs. The wilder they get, the wilder the noises, the bets. There's no competition. As the music picks up pace, Adair advances on the ringleader of the other crew, eyes narrowed, dark in the flickering lights.

No newcomer would dare challenge Adair, not when the war's so clearly in his favor. The man's eyes are dark like coal, his hair long, damp with sweat and rain. For an instant, his face is replaced by someone else's, and Adair's body heat spikes up.

God, it's so close. Only twenty-four hours. Adair can't believe he's managed to last until now without jumping the bones of the first pretty face he's seen. With mating season upon him, his need for Lachlan's gotten to alarming heights.

The other leader steps back, and the roar of the throng surrounding them makes the walls shake. Adair smiles, the background noise dimming as Riff shouts their victory and collects the money. Another easy one. He walks out of the ring, leaving his companions to bask in the glory and collect the prize, needing some space, needing to put a distance between himself and the opponent's leader.

Every single fucking month it gets harder and harder to find it in himself to resist. Not like they've ever said a word on the matter, but the sole idea of Lachlan being with someone else makes the beast in him raise its ugly head and growl, possessiveness flowing in his blood like a tangible presence. Adair knows that no matter how casual they're trying to be, he can't ask of Lachlan to give himself completely while he sleeps around.

"We gotta talk."

Adair turns around, head tilted to the side. "And by 'we', you mean who?"

Gale's eyes narrow. "I mean us. The crew."

"Yet I see you here, not the rest of them." Adair sits down at their usual booth, shoving an empty bottle of beer off the rough wood and crossing his ankles upon a corner of the table.

Christ, Gale's starting to become a fucking loose cannon. He's gotta do something about him before matters turn sour.

"It's our fifth win in a row," Gale says, not heeding Adair's comment.

"You complaining about it?"

Gale shakes his head, leaning forward with his closed fist on the table. "We're slacking. You are slacking," he corrects himself, and Adair fights the impulse of grabbing him by his neck and tossing him against the nearest wall. Morgan and Dagan are eyeing them warily, a few paces behind Gale. "We've not had one successful run since the last full moon."

That was true. It was getting harder to find any of the routes Pony Expresses were likely to travel. The last snatch they managed had been right before Lachlan had showed up, something like a month ago. "Guess hunting season's done," Adair says easily, voice low, not wanting to slip toward threatening yet.

"It's not done," Gale counters, his eyes narrow slit in his face.

"I'm sorry?" Adair stands, towering above Gale with all of his six feet five of solid muscle. "I thought that I was running this show, not you."

"That was when you actually were running it," Gale ploughs on, rather bravely Adair thinks, given how he could have wrung Gale's neck without breaking a sweat. "You're more concerned with the wars than with pursuing real income."

Adair smiles, dangerously so. "Am I?"

Gale juts his chin out, defiance gleaming in his icy glaze.

"Morgan."

Morgan cringes at being singled out, but still takes a few steps forward. "Yeah?"

Adair doesn't turn to face him, his eyes fixed on Gale as he asks, "Do you think we're falling behind on the hunts?"

Morgan swears under his breath, and Adair watches out of the corner of his eye as Ezra glares at Gale, who glares right back.

Adair knows he shouldn't have had his temper get the better of him. The fact that there's a bit of truth behind Gale's outburst only serves to fuel his anger. He should've had a better grip on the situation -- or on himself.

"I think we're good," Ezra says, walking 'round the table to perch himself on the edge of the bench where Adair's sitting. Adair glances at Morgan, who still hasn't said a word, and Dagan, right behind him.

"I'm cool," Morgan says at long last, "although --"

He should've foreseen this. He grits his teeth, but doesn't even blink.

-- although you've been a bit off lately," Morgan rushes to finish.

"A bit off," Adair repeats, tasting the words on the roof of his mouth. "So what is it that you're saying, that we should slaughter any of those that cross our path even though they don't carry anything valuable?"

"Hell no," Dagan shakes his head, crosses his arms above his chest with a frown.

"But you're letting the riders walk away unharmed -- even though they could easily spill the beans on us and change routes." Gale's eyes are burning, Adair can smell the resentment, thick in the air like smoke. "Has it ever occurred to you that's why every trap's a dud?"

"Do you really want a kill, Gale?" Adair asks, quiet enough to be a whisper.

The smirk on Gale's face freezes, and Morgan hastens to take several steps back. Ezra chuckles, rubbing his closed fist underneath his chin, the heel of his foot drumming against the solid wooden back of the bench.

"You'll have one." Adair sits back down, his nerves taut, zinging. The music in the club sounds even louder, deafening in the wake of the utter silence that has fallen after his pronouncement. "Tomorrow's the full moon." He can hear his voice in his own head, as though he's listening to an echo. Ezra and Dagan lean closer, Dagan's expressive green eyes wide and attentive, and Morgan falls into step behind them.

Lachlan will get there tomorrow. As long as he can get him out of Washington as soon as the moon wanes, he should be all right.

"You'll keep to yourselves, and once I'm back, we'll move southwards." He speaks directly to Gale, silver meeting blue, predator meeting prey. The buzz of the suppressed fight races through him, blends with his nature, but he manages to stare Gale down without betraying a flicker of emotion.

"You'll have your kill then."

Chapter Four

Shit, shit shit shit shit. Lachlan flies, the moonlight tossing shards of silver gray ahead, drawing a maze out of the broken road that stretches and twists before him. It's so fucking late. He's never been so fucking late before, not on a full moon.

He grinds his teeth, and the tires groan their disapproval as Lachlan kicks the engine to full throttle. He should never have stayed behind. Ever. The package burns between his legs, heavy and undelivered as it had been fourteen days ago. Dear Christ, why did he ever listen to Juan? He knew it would come to this.

"Come on, come on, come on," Lachlan chants under his breath, the frozen ground whining under the sharp turns of his steed. The roads are fucked to hell and back, a cold unexpected for the season, trails of the hailstorms that had hit Houston leaving the lands barreled, void as though the War hadn't ended over a century ago, but mere weeks.

"Shit-piss-fuck," Lachlan doesn't allow himself to squeeze his eyes shut, but God he wants to. It's not just the utter, absolute need that threatens to drive him insane. It's fear, the knot in his stomach that pushes him so close to the edge he's a hair's breadth from falling through.

If he doesn't make it -- he doesn't know what can happen if he doesn't make it. He can't, doesn't want to think about it. He should've already touched base, discarded the package, and possibly washed off the two weeks of filth, mud and earth that still clings to his skin.

No time for that now. He'll be lucky if he manages to get there before Adair transforms again. He'll fucking blame this on Eric. Stupid meddling ass. It's easy for him to flap his trap about their job, and what they shoulda, coulda, woulda. It's not like he's got anything to lose.

Well, technically neither has he. Not quite. Not that they've ever had that kind of talk, and not like Lachlan wants to. But still.

He shakes his head, his goggles fucked to hell but still hanging in there, shielding his eyes from dust and wind. He can smell burning acrid and he prays to God it's not his tire. He's still got ten miles to go, and he can't stop, not for gas, not for food and most certainly not for rest, not if he wants to make it there by dawn.

"What the fuck, c'mon, we gotta make it, c'mon." His numb fingers cling at the handles of the bike, skidding through the sudden bursts of light and darkness that weave on his path as clouds cross the round moon.

He's at the outskirts of Washington, the Walls looking as dismal and abandoned as they always do. He accelerates, sweat chilling his spine as he forces himself to trudge onwards, the whiplash of the wind on his flushed cheeks helping him to keep focused. The sky's indigo black, so maybe he can still make it. He can. He hopes.

The forest is still where he left it, still dead and evergreen and blanketed in darkness. The sight warms Lachlan's heart, and he pats the flank of his steed with a whispered thanks.

He knows where he has to go now. Left, left, right, under the willow branches that shield the entrance to the clearing, he tosses his bike away still running, panting, gasping for breath as though he'd been the one eating up that distance, and not his faithful ride. Lachlan falls on his knees, grasping at the fallen leaves and crumbling wood with both fists, and he only stops short of kissing the ground.

"Adair?" Lachlan swallows, his voice feeling hoarse and roughened out like whiskey on gravel. "Adair?"

The moon hasn't set yet. Adair shouldn't have transformed. He's here, Lachlan can feel it in the goose bumps that raise up all over his arms and chest underneath his leather vest.

"Adair?"

The answering howl falls on his ears like a blessing. He rolls on his back, staring upwards at the dark, clouded sky, until the familiar shadow falls on his body like a

caress. "Yes," Lachlan breathes, raising his arms, just as the wolf looms above him, teeth bared, snarling, his thick gray fur raised as though he's scented his kill. Lachlan licks his lips, throwing his neck back in surrender, waiting for Adair to assess him, the moonlight shining through the canine's eyes, owning his body and mind.

The wet snout of the wolf nuzzles the curve of his neck, right where Lachlan's pulse point races wild under his wind-burnt skin. Lachlan's palms flutter against the thick, coarse ruff on the wolf's neck, his panting breath so loud it echoes in the gloomy silence of the forest, a weird counterpoint to the wolf's quiet, low snarling.

Lachlan lets him sniff, feel, sense his body alive and giving underneath his powerful limbs. It's enthralling, the way the wolf's grown accustomed to his presence over time -- at first, his instincts were rabid, feral. Adair had explained to him how the wolf couldn't tell the difference, how it controlled his mind, his thoughts. When the werewolf took over, Adair fell under the rule of the moon, and until it faded, nothing mattered to him but prey. Primordial, brutal even, and yet Lachlan wouldn't want to be anywhere else.

The wolf's jaws snap, and Lachlan shudders, eyes squeezed shut, his fingers tightening in the coarse fur. Eric's drilling warnings are miles away, just like the hailstorms in Houston. There's no room for that now.

"Sorry I'm late," he whispers, opening his eyes to lose himself in the brilliant silver of the wolf's.

The wolf stares him down, his claws tearing into the leather of Lachlan's jacket, and Lachlan knows he should be scared. Rationally speaking, he is -- he always is, every time the new moon rolls around, but not for the reasons sane people would be.

Lachlan watches as the wolf tosses his head back and howls, the sky above already tinted with pale gray, and he shudders, clinging onto the wolf's back as an icy cold wind billows in the clearing, blowing dust and dry earth in his eyes. He struggles to keep looking, feeling the fur slide through his fingers like cupped water, limbs lengthening and uncurling as the moon sets beneath the cover of the trees.

It will never stop enthralling him. The way Adair shifts through his forms, uncontrolled, wild, face screwed as if in agony while claws retreat and jaws melt away, leaving the bright, sparkling silver of his eyes as the only tangible proof that the werewolf in him beats and lives, and has just gone to sleep.

“Thought you wouldn’t make it,” Adair rasps out before he clashes his mouth over Lachlan’s in one needy rush.

Liberated, Lachlan groans, melting against Adair’s lips and tongue. His fingers clutch at broad shoulders, sinking in the kiss like he’s drowning, his body arching off the ground to slide against Adair’s, feeling his muscles tense and taut above him.

Lachlan can’t catch his breath, he’s not allowed to, Adair’s licking him open and stealing every sound he makes. His hands settle on Lachlan’s breastbone, above his loudly thumping heart. It’s as though the want and the wait have been shimmering under their skin, yearning to get out, to crash and burn like it’s the first and last time all rolled in one.

Lachlan smells like fire and mud, and he knows he’s gotta be disgusting, but Adair doesn’t seem to mind, his eyes boring into Lachlan’s as he fits his hands in the rips of his jacket, finds warm, sweaty skin under the folds of the leather. Their tongues entwine, spit sliding down Adair’s stubble-dark chin as they pant against each other’s mouth, too frenzied for proper kissing. Lachlan moans and scratches down Adair’s back, finding the swell of his ass and pressing closer, the hard ridge of his dick riding Adair’s naked thigh as Lachlan spreads his legs, fighting to get more contact.

Adair grunts and bites down on Lachlan’s lower lip, fingers fiddling with the zipper of Lachlan’s vest and ripping it out of the way. Lachlan laughs, the sound echoing shockingly loud, crazy in the quiet of the first morning light. “You’re costing me a fortune in clothes,” he mumbles against Adair’s face, the cold tip of his nose fitting in Lachlan’s ear in a surprisingly tender gesture. Adair smiles against his cheek, Lachlan can feel the corners of his mouth tipping up, and he nibbles at Adair’s lobe, his hands curling around strong thighs, pulling him closer still.

Adair's palms skim under his jacket to fit around Lachlan's lean torso, mouth peppering Lachlan's throat with nips and licks, leaving tiny, angry red marks that will turn into bruises come night. Lachlan tosses his head back, eyes half mast as he stares at the gold-painted sky above him, the intricate pattern of the treetops cutting rays of light to grace the beautiful, hard body on top of him. His dick is heavy in his pants, jutting a little to the side in the hard confines of denim, burning for lack of friction. He moans and tries to buck up, his legs wide, knees raised to frame Adair's waist, but doesn't get anywhere. Adair's keeping him pinned to the ground, taking his time as he ravishes his neck and chest, lips and teeth shifting on his collarbone, down to his navel and up again to suck on a nipple.

"Fuck the foreplay," Lachlan groans, his ass clenching down on nothing, shifting on the unforgiving dry grass, fighting to get closer. "And fuck me."

"Shut up," Adair growls, teeth pulling at the tender nub until Lachlan's moans turn to whimpers. He's looking at Lachlan with dark, dangerous eyes, the light playing in the silver irises, turning them the color of molten iron. "You don't get to ask for anything tonight."

Lachlan tightens his grip on Adair's thighs, leaving raised, half-moon marks in the strong flesh. Jesus Christ, only listening to Adair's voice gets him harder. "Come on," he groans, bucking his hips up again, a fat dollop of precome dampening the inside of his jeans. "Adair, for Christ's sake --"

He's silenced with a forceful kiss, teeth clashing painfully as Adair fastens his mouth against his own and slaps Lachlan's hands away, pinning them down to either side of Lachlan's head with a growl. "I said," Adair whispers, teeth sinking in the line of Lachlan's jaw, then down against the tendons in his neck before finding his swollen lips again, "Shut up."

Lachlan gasps in Adair's mouth, falling easily into the steps of that dance he's learned by heart. His wrists twitch in the solid grasp of Adair's fingers, tingles spreading from his toes up to his head as he tries to give back as good as he gets, tongues sliding past parted lips, tasting like rain and earth, stale and wonderfully alive.

Adair's heartbeat's off sync, his nipples hard against Lachlan's, rubbing into one another, his knees digging in the soil, keeping Lachlan's legs open wide.

Adair's been hard since he's transformed, his beautiful dick curled upwards on his belly, precome gleaming on the plum-shaped head, sticking to his stomach in thin threads. Lachlan struggles to keep his eyes open, wanting to stare as long as he can, drinking in the sight of Adair crouching above him, naked and gloriously hard for him, because of him.

Adair breaks the kiss first, transparent streaks of saliva keeping their mouths glued together, and Lachlan licks his lips, coy, teasing. Adair's eyes skate over him, more intimate than any touch, and Lachlan shudders, heat spreading from where Adair's gaze caresses him to every other cell of his body. He juts his hips out, the shape of his hard-on straining the damp fabric, crying out for release. He hasn't jerked off in weeks -- too desperate to make it there on time to stop for gas or food, and much less for alone time -- and when Adair's heated gaze stops on the bulge between his legs he bites back a moan, shivering under the sharpness of his scrutiny.

"Fuck, look at you."

Lachlan's breath quickens, the quiet whisper washing over him like a wave of buzzing warmth.

"Don't move."

Lachlan manages to nod, and his wrists are squeezed once before they're released. Deft fingers undo his belt, then his zipper, and the shock of skin on skin contact sends a bolt of white hot pleasure down Lachlan's spine. His pants are peeled off him and tossed God knows where behind Adair's head, freeing Lachlan's aching dick from the strict confines of the denim.

Lachlan swallows a mouthful of saliva, his hips bucking up wantonly, cock heavy and neglected on his stomach. "Please," he says thinly, even though he knows Adair won't heed him. If Adair's set in his head that he's going to drag it out, begging for it will only spur him on.

Adair's mouth travels, ghost-like, across the panels of his abs and stomach, following the golden trail of hair that leads to his weeping cock. Adair halts for a split instant, then pulls back and pushes Lachlan's legs backwards, fitting them against Lachlan's chest, extracting a frustrated moan from Lachlan's lips.

Adair dips his head between the open V of Lachlan's thighs, his eyes scorching in their intensity as he zeroes in on the round swell of Lachlan's ass, barely scraping the ground.

"Hold yourself open," Adair rasps out, voice low and commanding. Lachlan whimpers but obeys, trembling hands settling underneath his own knees, keeping them wide and high as instructed. He flushes as Adair just stands there and looks, even though he should be immune to any sort of inhibition by now, even those he hadn't known he possessed.

"Such a good little slut," Adair whispers, fitting his mouth against Lachlan's neck, Adair's rock hard nipples brushing against the back of Lachlan's thighs, making him shiver. "Putting yourself on display for me."

Lachlan shudders, the damp-hot trail of Adair's quiet rumble against his skin setting his crotch on fire. He never got this embarrassingly hard, not so soon, not without a hand on his dick, and yet there he is, splayed wide, wanton and waiting, waiting for Adair to do something, anything.

The plea he wants to utter dies on a keening cry when Adair's middle finger pushes steadily in, dry and rough, fueling a burst of heat that spreads from the center of him to flow through his veins like fire. Adair chuckles darkly as Lachlan scrambles to push back on that finger, and presses the heel of his hand against the soft skin between Lachlan's hole and his balls, fitting his digit in knuckle deep. It's too tight and too hot, the friction hurting more than it should, but Lachlan's too worked up to care. He arches toward Adair's touch, head tossed to the side, the corded veins in his arms straining as he holds himself in position.

Adair twists his wrist up, crooking that single finger inside of Lachlan until he meets his target and Lachlan screams, pleasure bursting behind his closed eyelids in

swirls of black and white. Adair switches one for two, and this time it's slicker, as though he's wetted them with something, but Lachlan doesn't care, he can't. "C'mon, c'mon, please, Adair, c'mon," he moans, incoherently, until Adair shuts him up with his mouth, stealing his breath away.

He forces his eyes to open, finds Adair's heavy-lidded gaze branding into him, his dark eyelashes shadowing the curve of his cheekbones as they lose control of the kiss, too far gone to do more than lap and pant against each other's lips. Lachlan whimpers, his fingers tightening around his own legs, knowing that he'll have bruises there by the time they're done, and the fact that Adair made it so Lachlan had to leave 'em himself makes him grow even harder, his balls tingling painfully against his body.

"So fucking tight, holy fuck, what do I gotta do to loosen you up? Hm?"

"This -- ah fuck- this works just fine for me," Lachlan grits out, his head lolling from side to side as Adair's fingers slide in and out of his hole, scissoring inside of him, stroking the inner walls of his channel. "Adair, Adair please --"

"Didn't I tell you --" Adair growls, sinking his teeth against the juncture of Lachlan's neck and shoulder, "You don't get to ask for anything. I know what you want, and --" he sucks a mark above Lachlan's heart, "I'm gonna give it to you."

Swiftly, Adair's fingers slide out of Lachlan's ass. Lachlan whimpers at the loss, but before he can voice his disapproval, Adair's anchored himself with a hand on his thigh, the wet head of his cock nudging at Lachlan's entrance and slowly pushing past the slick ring of muscle.

"Oh, oh God..." Lachlan's voice is thin and ragged, like his puffy breaths. His eyes roll in the back of his head as Adair draws back until only the tip of his cock is inside of him, stretching him wide around his girth, then plunges back in with one smooth thrust, his balls slapping against the back of Lachlan's ass. "Fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck," Lachlan keens, his fingernails digging in the soft skin underneath his knees. In his current position there's nothing he can do but let Adair take whatever he wants from him, open wide for Adair's pleasure.

"Look so fucking hot, Lachlan," Adair grunts, his hand grabbing a better hold of Lachlan's ass as he angles him up higher on his knees. He pulls out, then rams back in, short, edgy, filling Lachlan up as he drags him back on his balls with every twist of his hips. "Needing this, taking this, so good, holy fuck."

Sweat is sticking Lachlan's back to the hard ground, his jacket riding halfway up and digging painfully in his shoulder blades. He moistens his lips with his tongue, his arms and thighs quivering with the strain of keeping himself in position for Adair's punishing rhythm, black pinpoints of light dancing in front of his eyes as he writhes on the end of Adair's dick.

"So amazing, feels so fucking incredible, you don't even know it, got all of me, all of me without even trying, Lachlan --" Adair tenses, his muscles shining under the sunrise, and grabs hold of Lachlan's hips with both hands, thumb rubbing in the dip where Lachlan's hips meet his groin as he hauls him up higher. The angle has him pressing on Lachlan's prostrate with every hard shove, his rhythm faltering to a rapid staccato before he spills his load inside Lachlan's ass, head tossed in a feral howl.

The feel of Adair's come filling him up inside sends Lachlan's senses into overload. He clenches down on Adair, his whole body convulsing as Adair's release washes over him in waves, Adair still rocking inside of him, mumbling filth in Lachlan's ears as he rides out his orgasm. Lachlan's cock is throbbing with need, sliding between his stomach and Adair's, leaving white streaks behind with every push and pull. He groans, his fingers sliding stiffly on his sweaty legs, fighting to keep hold, until hot, wet heat engulfs the head of his dick.

Lachlan wails until his voice breaks, his body falling apart at the seams as he comes down Adair's throat, limbs shaking like a leaf on the wind. Blood rushes in his ears, extinguishing every other noise until he collapses, spent, legs and arms askew on the dirty ground.

Chapter Five

Adair's eyes gleam like rebel diamonds cut out of the moon, his chin resting on Lachlan's thigh, lips obscene and shining with Lachlan's release. He waits until Lachlan raises his weary head to lick the come off his mouth, and Lachlan whimpers, his dick twitching in valiant effort.

"Fuck."

"Yeah," Adair mutters. Lachlan sees him glance sideways and grin. "Didn't you forget something?"

"Huh?" Lachlan grunts, forcibly turning his head sideways and nearly choking on his own tongue when he spots his bike, laying forgotten against the external wall of Adair's cabin. "Fucking hell!" he groans, slapping one hand over his eyes.

"Someone was in a hurry," Adair whispers, licking lazily at the dip of Lachlan's thigh.

"Fuck you, it's a miracle I'm standing," Lachlan mumbles, suddenly feeling the weariness of the last week's ride crash down on his shoulders, settling deep in his bones. He thinks there's a hint of worry in Adair's face, but then again maybe he's too fucked out to see straight. With a stupendous effort, he rolls on his side and tries to heave himself up on his elbows, only to fall down, face first, when his arms give way under his weight. "Fuck."

"C'mon," Adair murmurs, sliding one arm underneath Lachlan's stomach and hoisting him up against his chest. Lachlan stifles a moan and tucks his head under Adair's chin.

"M good," he mumbles, trying to disentangle himself from Adair's arms. "I'm good."

Adair lets him go and Lachlan stumbles, bare-assed, to where he's unceremoniously tossed his bike once he reached the clearing. The package is still there, still possibly intact (he hasn't checked since he got to Houston), and even though he knows Adair wouldn't dare take something from him, he still secures the bike with Eric's top-range metamorphic charm and covers it with a few dry branches for good measure.

That should hold. He doesn't think that anyone will come this close to a werewolf's hunting ground, and he's not seen anyone in the months he's been there, but all the same, one can never be too careful.

He turns around, only to be met by 6' 5" of strong, hard-ridged muscle, and he sinks gratefully in Adair's embrace. They fit, Lachlan notices idly in his post-orgasmic bliss. They do fit, his head snug under Adair's chin, arms tucked around his middle, feeling the raised welts of the marks he's left on Adair's body, a surge of possessive pride going through his chest.

He's made it. In time. Even with Houston's hindrance, with the storms blowing two villages off the map and with his delivery going missing. He's managed, and he's with Adair now. He almost thinks that if he raises his head, their lips will meet, briefly maybe, just a touch, a reassurance. He doesn't do it, though, basking in the knowledge that he can, and closes his eyes with a sigh.

"You can't stay long," Adair whispers, fingers flitting through Lachlan's longer hair.

Lachlan cringes. Too good to last. "You won't even invite me in?" Lachlan speaks without raising his head, trying to cling to the moment. Adair's sigh is drawn out, Lachlan would say *long suffering*, even.

"But you have to go before nighttime," Adair urges, tipping Lachlan's face up with two fingers under his chin. "Understood?"

"Why, you're planning to have someone else over?"

The words are futile, and unnecessary -- Lachlan knows it, but they tumble out of his mouth anyway. He regrets them almost instantly, because the look of pained

surprise on Adair's face is too plain to be disguised, but there's not much he can do now.

"That's what you think?"

"No," Lachlan kicks dirt off his boots, feeling very self-conscious all of a sudden. "I'm sorry. I shouldn't have said that. I -- I just had a very bad day -- very bad month, that's all."

Adair says nothing, hands resting atop of Lachlan's shoulders. They stay silent for a short while longer, Lachlan trying to gauge just how much he's damaged his chances to stay and get half a day of rest with his stupidity, words and thoughts clashing about his head, fighting for priority at the forefront of his mind. Part of him wants to share what's been going on down south with Adair, but doing so would expose potential tracks for the scavengers to trace, with all the comings and goings taking place right now, and he can't risk that. Another, rather larger part of him wants to close his eyes and forget all about it, at least for a little while.

"How long have you been on the road?"

"Eight days." He doesn't tell Adair how many miles. Pointless.

Adair nods, runs his thumb over the juncture of Lachlan's jaw in a soothing caress. "C'min," he says then, shaking damp dark hair out of his eyes. He steps back, walking to the door of the cabin, and Lachlan shivers at the loss of body warmth. He waits for half a second before following, collecting his ruined pants and discarded goggles as he goes.

The bed in the center of the one-roomed hut has never looked more inviting, but Lachlan doesn't actually fall forward on it as every fiber of his being is calling him to do. He glances at where Adair's picking up his clothes, and wonders if there's a way to lift the heavy curtain of tension that's separating them. Probably not. That's how it's gotten to be lately. Spaces filled with heavy silences, the unsaid hanging like a tangible presence.

"Hey."

Lachlan blinks and Adair's suddenly in front of him, a frown creasing his brow. Guess he's spaced out without realizing it. "Yeah," he shakes his head, swaying where he stands.

"Christ," Adair catches him by his elbows and leads him to the bed. "Get some rest," he mutters gruffly, running one hand down the curve of Lachlan's arm. He's still wearing his leather jacket, crusted in places, scratched and torn by Adair's wolfen claws. "Did you mean eight days non-stop?"

Lachlan grins, sheepish. He stretches down on the bed, kicking off his boots. "I had to make it back here," he says, by way of explaining.

"You," Adair speaks slowly, as though he's talking to a kid, or someone with mental issues -- and hey, maybe that is how everyone sees Lachlan as, but it's a bit unnerving that his partner/lover would do the same, "are insane. Do I even wanna know how you managed? Did you eat?"

"Are you worrying about me?"

Adair stops dead in his fussing, fingers still curled around the ends of Lachlan's leather jacket, and Lachlan has time to curse his big mouth again. "Forget it," he says wearily, shrugging the vest off and sinking into the mattress with the hope that if he closes his eyes, maybe he'll be able to erase everything and start from scratch.

"Maybe I am."

Lachlan cracks one eye open, looking at Adair upside down. "Are you?" he asks, because somehow even after months of nagging, Lachlan's never quite believed that Adair would give two cents -- it was more their little power game, equal to the one they play between the sheets.

Adair rubs his knuckles against Lachlan's jaw. "Idiot," he mutters, as though he's read his mind. "Crazy idiot," he amends, as though the finer points might have escaped Lachlan's attention.

Lachlan grins, rolls on his side, chin resting on his crossed arms. "Can I stay then?"

"What do you think this is, a hostel?" Adair shoots back, but he's grinning, his fingers threading lightly through Lachlan's hair.

Lachlan flips him the bird and buries his face in the pillows, sighing contently when the warm weight of Adair's arm falls on his back.

* * *

It's a few hours past twilight when he decides to wake Lachlan. Adair just couldn't bring himself to do it any earlier. Lachlan hasn't quite slept -- he practically passed out cold to the world the moment his head touched the pillow. Adair doesn't want to think about what Lachlan's gone through to be here, or about the risks he's run. He knows from Noah that scavengers down South have gone wild within the past month. The market is overflowing. He'd be lying if he said he hadn't feared, more than once, whether he'd recognize a spare part belonging to Lachlan's bike, and he'd be lying if he said he hadn't spared a moment to thank the gods when the moonlight had faded from his mind and he found himself face to face with that familiar smirk.

"Lachlan?"

His only answer is a grunt. However, by now Adair is fluent in Grunting, which occasionally pairs up with Signs and Mumbling, and he gathers that Lachlan doesn't even want to think about waking up. He places a hand above Lachlan's shoulder, hating that he has to do it, but knowing he can't let Lachlan stay, not with the crew waiting on him down at the Chlodwig to set up tomorrow's raid.

Lachlan would be a hell of a lot safer away from Washington.

Adair squeezes his shoulder, rolling him on his back, away from the warmth of the pillows. Lachlan scrunches up his face, blond hair falling like a curtain into his eyes as he swats blindly at Adair's arm. "C'mon, it's almost dark outside already," Adair murmurs, his fingers catching Lachlan's flying hand and holding it in his lap. "You gotta wake up."

"Dunwanna."

Adair sighs. He's been watching Lachlan sleep, taking in the shadows under his eyes, the exhaustion spelled in bright bold letters in his body language. He would give

anything he owned to let him rest, but Adair knows he can't allow that. "Lachlan, c'mon."

Lachlan sighs, his fingers twitching in Adair's grasp. He blinks himself awake, struggling to keep his eyes open as he pushes himself up on his elbow. "I was dreaming," he slurs, and Adair notices he doesn't pull his hand out of Adair's grasp.

"Yeah?"

"Yeah," Lachlan squints at him, running his other hand through his bangs and pushing them off his face. "You weren't being an ass and letting me sleep. Figures."

Adair tries not to let him see his grin. "It's late."

"Yeah, I got that memo," Lachlan wipes at his mouth and rights himself in a sitting position. "Why such a hurry, we didn't yet have round two," he mutters then, shaking his head like a wet dog. Lachlan looks up at Adair through unruly blond strands. "We've established you don't have anyone over," he adds with a small, self-deprecating smile that tells Adair he does feel like a jerk for having blurted that out.

Adair shrugs, looks out of the ratty, battered window at the stretch of starry sky he can make out on the other side. "I gotta be at the Chlodwig."

"For the Wars?"

"No," Adair answers before he can think, and he immediately bites his tongue hard enough to taste coppery salt on the roof of his mouth. Fuck.

Lachlan doesn't speak after that.

There it is again, old friend silence. It stretches like a pattern of ice in the middle of a lake, frail and numbing. Neither of them says anything else, Lachlan doing up his clothes best he can, Adair staring at something far beyond the window that holds his complete attention.

When Lachlan puts on his boots, the heavy *thunk* of the heels echoing in the confined space, Adair stands, walking up to him and turning him around, hands over his biceps.

"What?"

"Stay out of the area," Adair orders, and he hopes his voice will come out right this time, "until the next moon. Promise me."

Lachlan sighs, looks away. Adair feels dread curl up in his stomach and tightens his grip on his arms until Lachlan clucks his tongue impatiently and looks back up at him. "All right," he huffs out, cocking his head to the side. "I'm going."

"You promise?"

"I do."

Adair strokes Lachlan's arms once before releasing him. Lachlan pulls on his gloves, walks out of the cabin making a beeline for the branches under which he's left the bike. Adair looks away as Lachlan unplugs the security code, something he's always done, even though Lachlan seemed quite amused by it. He only turns again when the engine's roaring full power, and Lachlan's testing the brakes. How that piece of shit can ever run is beyond Adair, but he still has a white bite scar on his hand from the time he dared say anything on the matter to Lachlan, and he's not keen on repeating the experience.

"Adair?" Lachlan calls without raising his head. He's still got a package strapped to his tank, and Adair tries not to look at the address on top of it.

"Yeah?"

"Be careful."

Dry earth and rotten leaves crunch underneath hard worn tires as Lachlan kicks off, and Adair whispers "right back atcha" once the dust has settled again, and the only echo he can hear of Lachlan's words is in his mind.

An owl hoots nearby, and Adair pulls himself together, walking back in the hut to gather his things before heading for the Chlodwig.

Time to get this show on the road.

* * *

It's started to rain, light drizzle that turns to fog even before it hits the ground. Adair shields his eyes, glances down at where the road twists and turns elbow-sharp, ten feet before the collapsed tree blocking the way. Morgan and Ezra are settled, hidden

at each side of the turn with shotguns at the ready. Dagan is right beside the dead tree trunk, and Gale is stationed a few feet back on the main road. The trap's easy enough -- chase the rider toward the obstacle, make him think he's got a way out, and block him as soon as he takes the turn.

Adair runs one hand over his brow and sighs. He hopes he can get the job done quick and clean, and fucking silence Gale once and for all. He could take him any day, but he hasn't yet a clear idea where the other three stand, and Adair would rather not risk the solidity of his crew because Gale's got some delusions of grandeur. Adair will put him back in his place, and hopefully they'll move on after this.

Adair shields his eyes against the thin downpour, then retreats behind the evergreen he's using as his hiding place. He can see Ezra's unruly mop peeking out from among the leaves, and the silver glint of Morgan's rifle. They've been standing under the rain for the best part of the afternoon, and everyone's tense, the wait stretching their nerves to the breaking point.

They have to show up. All the other routes are flooded, and it's the only way out of Baltimore. Sooner or later a Pony Express rider will zoom down into their waiting jaws. They just need to be patient. They've been doing this for years, they know how it works.

The tiny radio set down by Adair's feet cackles into life. He waits, trepidation drumming in his chest, until he can hear Gale's voice through the distorted speakers.

"He's coming."

Grinning, Adair sets his arm out to signal the start of the operation to Ezra. He can hear the roar of the bike now, faint through the light sweep of wind, and even if the thrill of the job is lacking, there's the knowledge that at least one issue will be put to rest after today's hunt. It's got to count for something, yeah?

"Let's do this," Adair transmits back to Gale, then cocks his rifle, crawling on all fours at the edge of the trees, waiting for the biker to turn into the trap.

He blinks water out of his eyes, wiping his face with his forearm. He must be more tired than he thinks he is. For a split instant, he thought he's seen the gleam of

brass and dark blue driving through the fine mist. It can't be. He's got to face that he's getting way more obsessed than he could've imagined.

"Now!" comes Gale's voice through the speakers, and the signal must've gotten to Dagan, because the tree trunk blocking the road suddenly cracks into flames. Smiling grimly to himself, Adair directs Ezra and Morgan forward.

"Closing in!" Ezra yells, his rifle cocked and in position. Predictably, the bike swerves to the side, trying to edge back, out of the fire range of the shotguns, but Dagan and Gale are right on track -- another tree falls with a earth-shattering thud at the end of the road behind them, effectively blocking every possible escape route.

That's when Adair sees him.

His blood freezes, stomach swooping sickly at the sight of wild blond hair plastered to the broken goggles, the tires screeching, mud and water flying high over the graveled concrete. Adair stares, transfixed, as Lachlan nearly runs over Dagan as he tries to back the bike out of the circle of splayed guns, the shouting and the yelling muffled background noise to Adair's ears.

"Seize him -- seize him!"

"Shoot! Don't let him get away!"

"Bastard sonovabitch -- I said seize him!"

The shot echoes weirdly in the mayhem, as though it comes from somewhere much further away, and it wrenches Adair out of his trance. In a matter of seconds he's right on the scene, between the upturned, still running bike and Gale, who's looking for all the world like Christmas has come early, a manic glint in his eyes as he holds Lachlan down with a gun to his head.

"Pretty damn neat, huh?" he beams, teeth bared in a grin as he nudges the hollow of Lachlan's throat with the barrel of the gun.

"Nearly fucking killed me," Dagan seethes, holding his arm against his chest with a very foul look on his face. "You have piss poor aim, motherfucker."

Adair picks up the bike and turns it off, his brain feeling as though it's swimming underwater. Lachlan still hasn't said a word, hasn't even looked up from

where he's being squashed to the ground, but there's a stiff set to his shoulders that tells Adair he's about to strike. How can Lachlan ever think of getting an upper hand, he wonders detachedly. There's five of them, and he's alone, and weaponless, but Adair knows him well enough to read his body language by now.

"Let him up," he calls, the words hard to shape in his mouth. Gale leers at him, then nods, sliding the barrel of the gun under Lachlan's chest to heave him up to his knees.

"C'mon up, darling. You heard the man."

The side of Lachlan's head is bleeding. A twang goes off in Adair's chest, and he has to bite the inside of his mouth, hard, until the soft tissue breaks and bleeds too. Lachlan catches his eye, briefly, but a split second of distraction is enough -- there's a yelp of pain and a muffled curse, and Gale is sent flying backwards, skidding to a halt on his back right on the edge of the dyke.

"Goddamnit motherfucker!" Both Dagan and Ezra launch on Lachlan the moment he moves to reach for his bike, grabbing hold of him and punching him into submission as Morgan grabs their treasure by the handle to drag it further away, out of its owner's grasp.

"Enough." Adair growls, anger rearing close to the surface, primordial instinct of protectiveness kicking in without his permission. "Bind him."

Dagan does so, making quick work of trying Lachlan's wrists as Ezra grabs his jaw, steadying Lachlan's head up to face Adair, a grim set to his mouth.

"Better be careful," he mutters as Adair walks forward, hands crossed over his chest. "Fucker's rabid."

He knows. Whirlpool of emotions clashing in his chest, Adair crowds in against Lachlan, eyes narrowed as he stares at the cut on Lachlan's forehead, congealed blood washed away with the thin drizzle. Lachlan stares right back at him, mouth curled in a taunting smile. His expression is hard, unreadable, something akin to the one Lachlan wore the first time they'd met.

"Guess you took a wrong turn after all," Adair whispers, their faces merely inches apart.

"Guess so," Lachlan spits back, somehow managing to put all the arrogance he cloaks himself with in those two syllables. It makes Adair see red.

"Search him."

Ezra nods, forcing Lachlan down on his knees and stripping him out of his jacket -- the very same jacket with claw-like tears in it, Adair realizes with a jolt.

Lachlan never left Washington.

"Let me do it."

Adair snaps his head around so fast he cricks his neck. Gale's staggered in a standing position again, elbows bleeding profusely from where he'd tried to break his fall and a very nasty set to his smile. The mere thought of Gale's hands on Lachlan, for whatever purpose, sends Adair's blood boiling, and he steps forward, arm outstretched to prevent Gale from coming closer.

"Ezra's got it."

There's a muttering behind him, but Adair doesn't turn to check who it's coming from. Gale raises one eyebrow, but says nothing until Ezra's finished emptying Lachlan's pockets of valuables and declares him clean. "There's nothing on him, if not the bike."

"Right." Adair meets Lachlan's defiant glare head-on. So he must have stopped somewhere to drop off whatever it was that he was carrying. And instead of steering clear of the area as he'd promised Adair he would do, he'd walked right back into their trap. As though he was looking for it...

"Bike's gonna turn out gold from Noah," Morgan says with barely constrained excitement. Adair sees Lachlan's eyes flare, and his stomach clenches viciously. He's gotta think of something, and think fast. Gale's wearing a hungry look that Adair has rarely seen before. It's not bloodthirsty, it's vicious, low, and it triggers all of Adair's instincts on full alert.

"Take care of it," Adair snaps, and Morgan hastens to drag the bike up and load it on the back of their truck, well hidden from view in the wilderness that flanks the road. The flames from the tree trunk are slowly extinguishing under the beating rain, casting just enough light to counterpoint the rapidly setting sun ahead.

"Before we clear this up," Gale says, slowly, dragging out every word with a sneer. Adair sees out of the corner of his eye Ezra flicking his head, as though to displace an irksome fly. "I'm thinking we can have some fun."

Adair battles with himself for half a minute before he can speak without betraying any emotion. "Fun?" he repeats.

Lachlan's still kneeling, unmoving, his eyes dark, devoid of emotions other than disdain and shimmering rage. "You just try," he says through a very tight jaw.

"Fun," Gale leers, stepping forward. "Adair's gotta finish him off, or he'll start babbling to all his buddy whores."

"I say you've talked enough for one day," Ezra says suddenly, voice harsh.

Gale doesn't heed him. "He's our prey." He glances at where Lachlan's kneeling, half naked, and runs his hand through Lachlan's hair, circling his neck. "He's going to die anyway," he whispers, malice lacing every word. "Why can't we play a little first?"

The reaction's instantaneous. Adair twists his hand in Gale's collar and slams him against the nearest tree, nostrils flaring in a low growl. "I'll tell you why now, and you better fucking listen closely," he breathes in Gale's face, all the tendons in his arms and neck straining, thick with the need to maim. "He's not your prey. I'm the fucking runner of this God damned show, and don't you ever, ever dare tell me what to do again."

Adair's eyes flash dangerously, silver bleeding toward iron, dark, echoes of the waned moon. "I'm fucking sick of your attitude, so either you buck up and deal or I'll give you the kill you wanted so bad right now."

No one draws a breath. Adair thinks even the trees have stopped their secular work to listen in. He tightens his fingers around Gale's throat, until he can choke a

sound out of him. "Do I make myself understood?" he whispers, so low he can barely hear it himself.

Gale nods, once, breathing harshly through his nose. Adair tosses him down on the ground like a string-less puppet and takes a step back, fist clenched at his sides.

"Clear this shit up," he barks, turning toward Dagan and Ezra, who're both staring wide-eyed at him, frozen in their spots. "Now."

"Yes, sir," Dagan mutters quickly, picking up the knife and the roll of cash they've cleared from Lachlan's pockets and hastening to leave the scene.

Ezra looks between Gale and Adair, and back again. "What're you gonna do about him?" he asks, tone mild, and for a split second Adair thinks Ezra's onto him, but then he nods toward Gale, and Adair allows himself to suck in half a breath.

"Just get him out of my sight," he grits out, adrenaline still running fast under his skin. Ezra nods and picks Gale up with the tips of his fingers, as though he's afraid that touching him any more than strictly necessary will contaminate him. "I'll dispose of this," he nods to where Lachlan's kneeling, proud and insolent under the thickening rain. The sight fuels on the confusing, contrasting feelings in Adair's chest, and he clenches his jaw. There's going to be some explaining to do.

Chapter Six

Lachlan looks at Adair through narrowed eyes. Wet hair's plastered to his face, yet he doesn't move, just stares on, watches as the sonovabitch's hauled away by the motherfucker who's picked his pockets, Adair standing still and unmoving a few feet away.

A loud, spluttering roar from behind the curtain of the trees tells Lachlan the backup's gone, and they're now alone in the dead end trap. His knees have seized up long before this, gravel and solid concrete cutting at the threadbare denim, sinking past skin and bone, but he doesn't really care. He waits for Adair to make the first move, heart thundering away in his chest as time stretches on, dividing them by more than mere space.

"Get up."

Lachlan bites back a retort and does as he's told, wincing when his knees lock with the movement. His wrists feel heavy with the weight of the rope, sore where it's been wound too tight. Only when he's finally standing does he shake his hair out of his eyes, shivering as Adair advances on him, eyes burning with anger. Lachlan's left leg is quivering, and he tries to tell himself it's just because it's gone numb. He squares his shoulders, watching as Adair stops a foot away from him, high cheekbones enhanced by the unforgiving downpour of rain, giving his face an ethereal glow.

He doesn't speak, and neither does Lachlan. Adair's hair is hiding half of his face, only a dangerous gleam of silver shining through, his lips flat in that line that speaks of restraint, and Lachlan feels compelled to push -- that's how it goes, that's the steps of their dance, and if the ground's shaking then why beat around the bush? "So that's how you work. Nice."

"Shut up."

The whiplash is so harsh it makes Lachlan cringe. He doesn't back down though, juts his chin out boldly, glaring right back at him. "Or what? You gonna make me? Or do you wanna have some fun first?"

Lachlan doesn't see it coming. He staggers backwards, teeth catching on the tender tissue inside his mouth and breaking it, blood flooding in with the shock of the punch.

"Have you -- any -- idea," Adair breathes out, grabbing Lachlan by his upper arms and yanking him flush against his body, "-- *any* idea of what could've happened?"

Lachlan collects the blood inside his mouth with his tongue, coppery salt and acrid, and spits it out by their feet. "You could've killed me," he says dryly, voice meant to cut, hit right on target like a gunny. "Yeah, the situation got my attention."

"You think it's a fucking game?" Adair grinds out, face, hips, chest, pressed against Lachlan's, so close the water sways down both their bodies, same drops caressing Lachlan's bare skin and Adair's tight shirt. "You promised me," he adds then, so sudden and short Lachlan's sure Adair has never meant to say it, but it just tumbled out of his mouth before he could stop it, burst of pain, needle-sharp through flesh and bone.

"Promises are made to be broken," Lachlan whispers, blinking water and blood out of his eyes as he loses himself in the impossibly dark hue of Adair's irises. He can still smell the remains of the dying fire, ashes mingling with the rain on his face.

Adair grits his teeth, his fingers tightening into Lachlan's arms, carving half moons in the ridged flesh. "That's what you think?"

Lachlan's throat works around a mouthful of blood and saliva, yet he doesn't answer immediately. Images of Houston and the devastation he left behind, of Juan's pleas, of raids that lasted for days on end flash before him, and he hardens his heart. He backtracks, trying to work the focus back where he's on safer ground. "You'd have killed him. Whoever it was. If it hadn't been me, you would have -- and why? Because some asshole who can't even draw an O with a glass said so."

"I told you it was dangerous. I told you to get out of the way and you said you would. You fucking promised me you would. This ain't Snow White and I can't bring back the heart of a fucking deer --"

"-- doe --"

"-- whatever the fuck it is. This is real, Lachlan."

"I fucking know," Lachlan snaps, voice raising abruptly over the monotone rush of the rain. His heart's beating rapidly in his ribcage, a weird tingling in his ears, as though a distant whistle's blowing. "Don't you go thinkin' otherwise. I know it's real, because guess what? It's my life, too. It's my friends' lives, it's my neck on the fucking line every time I take a run and I know what risks I'm running." His breath's getting worked up, steams against Adair's mouth through the drizzle. "You can't keep me safe, Adair. Not from yourself, not from your friends."

"So what the hell was this? A test? You wanted to show me how far you can fucking push it to prove your goddamned point?"

Lachlan shakes his head, hair whipping across his jaw as he does so. "No tests," he whispers. "This is real, Adair."

Adair snarls, "You think you're being funny?" and Lachlan nearly stomps his feet in frustration. He pointedly raises his bound wrists, shoves them half an inch from Adair's face.

"Yes. No money. No bike. I'm shitting myself laughing here."

Adair growls, low in the back of his throat, and Lachlan braces himself for the blow he knows will come.

His lips tear against Adair's teeth, harsh, cursed, his hair twisted in Adair's grasp, coming loose in his fist. He gasps in Adair's mouth, pain flaring at the back of his skull, jaw throbbing where Adair has hit him, and he closes his eyes against the wintry downpour.

"You're fucking suicidal," Adair snarls, forehead hitting Lachlan's, too hard, uncaring, eating at Lachlan's comeback with teeth and tongue.

Lachlan pants, bleeding inside out, every breath he takes feeling like a stab to the chest. "At least -- least I do it of my own free will."

Adair yanks him closer by the grip of his hair, eyes dark and scorching into Lachlan's. "What's that supposed to mean?"

"You're better than this." They're so close, Lachlan could count all the whiskers on Adair's face. "What if it hadn't been me? You could've told that sonofabitch to fuck off any time you wanted. Would you have caved just because he pushed you to it?"

"You don't get to talk to me like that," Adair spits out, the hold on Lachlan's arm hardening to the point of turning it numb. "You just don't."

"Why not?" Lachlan grits out. "Because you don't wanna hear it? You gonna hit me again if I do?"

For a brief instant, it looks like Adair's going to -- for an instant, Lachlan thinks he's gone too far. But Adair merely inches him closer, their mouths a breath apart, dark shutters going off behind his eyes. "You," he whispers, venom lacing every word, "are not worth it."

The words hit worse than any sucker punch. Lachlan staggers as Adair shoves him backwards, the sudden rush of circulation in Lachlan's arm aching painfully, echoes of Adair's fingers imprinted in his flesh. Adair makes quick work of the knot on the rope around his wrists, and steps back as it coils neatly in a puddle at Lachlan's feet.

"Get lost. If anyone else finds you, they will kill you."

Lachlan stares on, the rapid pounding of his heart lost in the thundering of the rain as Adair walks past him without another word. The question slips past Lachlan's lips before pride and reason can step in to stop him. "Where're you going?"

Adair's voice is carried back to him by the chilling wind. "To find a doe's heart."

* * *

It hasn't stopped raining yet. Three solid weeks, and the tail of the storms that have wreaked havoc on the Coast still hinder life as they know it, flooding all possible routes in and out of town. No deliveries can be made, except through the closer stations, and even then very few riders are willing to go. Dulles Station's packed with

people who've lost their houses and possessions to the floods, bringing nasty memories of deaf screaming, of mud and death to the forefront of Lachlan's mind.

Eric's not yet said anything to him, which is both relieving and slightly foreboding. Lachlan doesn't know how or where or if he wants to start, so he mostly keeps quiet. He's moved out of the station after the refugees have started to knock, and even though the situation is fucked beyond belief, he's sort of glad he doesn't have to ignore the sympathy looks anymore. He's lucky to be alive, they said, and Lachlan still doesn't know how he managed to nod his head and look contrite, and not bite anyone's head off for trying to "cheer him up" for a whole week before he moved out. Living with Eric was a sure improvement. Lachlan enjoys the silence better anyway.

He's not stupid. He knows he's been lucky. If it hadn't been for Rae's psychic abilities, God only knows if he would have ever made it back to the nearest stop in one piece. Thorn chewed him a new one all the way back to the station, but Lachlan was too out of it to appreciate the finer points that went beyond "idiot," "crazy," "crazy suicidal idiot" and the rest of the thesaurus.

The clang of a metallic something coming from downstairs snaps Lachlan out of his train of thoughts. It's become a regular occurrence by now. He spaces out, his thoughts dancing between Adair, Adair's words, Adair's departure, until Eric wrenches him back to reality.

Adair's gone.

Lachlan heaves himself up on one elbow and looks down from the top bunk to where Eric's putting together something that has yet to resemble anything Lachlan knows the use of. "You need a hand?"

"No."

Sighing, Lachlan lies back down and allows himself to wallow a bit more.

* * *

It's close. Lachlan can feel it, as though the moon's now calling to him as well. Four weeks of doing nothing, and he's reduced to climbing the walls. It's still raining, and even though the streets have cleared out a little, he has nowhere to run to without a

bike. He tries not to think about it, because thinking about it will kick the lid off the proverbial Pandora's box, and Lachlan could really live without self-analysis.

"Do you want something to eat?"

"No. No, thanks," he amends, looking up from the selection of pistons he's been staring forlornly at for the past half hour to find Eric frowning at him. A twang of guilt goes off in his chest. His friends have been way too relenting with him, and sooner or later he will have to do something about his current situation -- he's got to find another job, either to get himself some cash to buy the parts for Eric to assemble in a new bike or just to survive on until he can figure out what he's gotta do next. The past month has passed as though in a limbo, and it seems he cannot pull himself out of it.

"Man, this has got to stop."

Lachlan cringes, looks away. "I know."

"It was him, wasn't it? Snatching the bike?"

Lachlan lets go of a long breath, hands fisting his hair as he stares down really hard at the curve of a particularly large bolt in front of him. "Yeah."

"Christ, Lachlan --"

He shakes his head and stands. "No. Please. I can get out of your hair. I know I'm a sucky guest, and you've got enough on your plate. But I just don't want to talk about it or hear any 'I told you so's,' no matter how entitled you are to tell me off."

Eric tilts his head to the side, crossing his arms in front of his chest. "I wasn't going to," he says calmly. "You do a fine job of beating yourself up on your own."

Lachlan sighs and absent-mindedly kicks at invisible dirt on the ground. "I'm not."

"Sure you aren't."

"I'm not, okay?"

"Did I say anything to the contrary?"

Lachlan glares murderously at Eric for a few seconds before deflating and going to sit on Eric's lower bunk, head between his hands. "I knew he was up to something, and I couldn't -- I know him. He's not a killer."

"And you went to seek him out?"

Mutely, Lachlan nods. There's something fighting to get out of his throat, but he swallows it down, the movement burning like he's shoving down needles.

Eric purses his lips but says nothing. Lachlan looks down on his hands, imagining the faint abrasions left by the rope to be still visible, a tangible proof that it really had happened and he couldn't chalk it up to a bad dream. "Look, I knew what I was facing," he whispers, not looking at Eric. "He warned me to stay away but I couldn't leave knowing..." He breaks off and sucks in a deep breath. Adair's face looms through a white haze, cold, empty eyes glaring at him. "He always tried to keep me out of his range," Lachlan goes on in a brittle voice. "I used to think he cared."

"Used to?"

Lachlan snorts. "Yeah, yeah I know. Pretty pathetic, even for me."

"You are clearly even more stupid than I thought."

Lachlan laughs, though forced, and lays back on the bunk, staring upwards at the springs in the upper one. "I know."

"No, you really don't." Eric sits down next to him, a deep frown furrowing his brow. "Not if you think in past tense."

"What?"

"Oh, I can't believe it!" Eric throws his hands up with an irritated little snort. "Dude, you're here. You're alive and breathing. You were bold enough -- and stupid enough -- to go challenge him, risk everything for the both of you --"

Lachlan's eyes widen in incredulity. "Are you defending him?"

"-- and you walked out of there alive and proved your goddamn point and you think he doesn't care?"

Lachlan blinks. "You *are* defending him."

"No, you stupid ass," he growls, slapping his arm. "I'm defending you. The two of you. Who must be the stupidest, most idiotic people I've ever come across in my life."

"I thought you didn't approve," Lachlan says, the corners of his mouth tipping up in a smile for the first time in a month.

"I still don't. Mostly because you just proved it might get you killed sooner or later. But honestly?" He levels Lachlan with a look he's never seen on Eric's face before. "You should try and clear this up. It might be worth it."

Lachlan's smile falters, and he hears again the same words he does every time he lulls between waking and sleeping.

You're not worth it.

He swallows, blinking rapidly to try and clear his vision. "I doubt it," he whispers, the words tasting foul on the roof of his mouth. Eric clasps down a hand on his shoulder and stands.

"You should eat something."

"I'm not hungry," he mumbles, but he pulls himself up and follows Eric to the kitchen. He can't see the moon, not behind the thick clouds of rain pouring from above, but Lachlan knows it's rising. He feels it, as though the ancient metamorphosis has settled under his very skin. A howl in the distance, or so he thinks, he imagines, and the empty ache of his stomach fills with acid.

Maybe he's fucked up. Maybe he hasn't. Maybe even knowing how it'd play out, he'd do the same thing over and over. He only knows he misses Adair with every breath he takes.

Aw, fuck it.

"Do you have any whiskey?"

Eric glances at him and shakes his head, but he grabs the neck of a half-empty Cuervo bottle and tosses it at Lachlan. "Tequila."

Lachlan unscrews the cap and takes a long draught. Long as it knocks him out, everything works.

* * *

Lachlan doesn't sleep that night. Even though he's drained half the booze supply in Eric's house, it does nothing for him if not enhance his awareness. It's the first full moon he's missed since it all started, and he wishes, he so wishes, that it wouldn't hurt.

But it does. More than Lachlan cares to admit. He shouldn't miss something so bad. It screws with everything his whole life has rotated around till that point. He feels strangely void, and passes the time listening to the steady drumming of the rain over the rooftop, replaying their parting scene over and over in his mind and trying to break it down to its root.

Yes, he did want to prove a point and yes, he did want to spare someone else from getting caught in Adair's net. Had he thought it through before acting? Of course not. He never does, it wouldn't be him.

So he broke his promise to Adair. He hadn't thought it would be a big deal, but apparently it was. Is. Fuck. Lachlan groans and rolls on his stomach, burying his face in the pillow.

The sun is coming up, or it would, if the gray sleet wouldn't cloud every millimeter of visible sky. Eric's right. He's gotta do something. Anything to get rid of the overwhelming void that threatens to swallow him whole. Anything if it means he can stare in those liquid eyes again, even though it might be the very last time.

* * *

"What the hell are you doin' up at this ungodly hour?" Thorn grumbles, looking very disheveled, his Mohawk lying flat and all over the place as he pulls open the door of the garage.

"I need a favor." Lachlan twitches on his feet, eyes darting around the wide, cluttered space, his heart twanging like a giant elastic band in his chest. Eric just left. If he's lucky, he can make it there and back without him noticing. "It's a very big one."

"You need Rae's help?"

"I -- no?" Lachlan frowns, momentarily distracted by the question. "Why would I ask you if I needed his help?"

Thorn hesitates, splutters something unintelligible and hastens to turn away and march back inside, Lachlan hot on his heels. "I'm sorry, why would I need to ask you of all people if I wanted something out of Rae?" He grins, poking at his friend in the ribs.

"Shuddup."

"Hey, you were the one starting this!"

"I thought you needed a favor."

"And you thought I needed to talk with our resident psychic and needed your permission?" Lachlan teases with a sly smirk. Thorn cuffs him on the head and Lachlan punches him on his shoulder in retaliation. "Smooth, man."

"Fuck you," Thorn shoots back good-naturedly, hands deep in his pockets. "So what the fuck do you need?"

"Your bike."

It would've been worth asking just to see Thorn turn a nasty shade of greenish-white, much like the milk Eric keeps in his fridge insisting it's edible. "You're high. Or drunk."

"Maybe both. So can I take it?"

Thorn eyes him shrewdly. "You're going back to Washington." It's not a question, it's not worded like one, but Lachlan feels the enquiry behind the words.

"I'm -- I -- Yeah."

Thorn sighs, "Figured." He glances up at the sky. "It's the full moon, yeah?"

"Yeah." Lachlan worries his lower lip between his teeth. "You can laugh at me, but I promise I'll bring it back. I swear, even." Thorn looks at him, eyes narrowed, as though studying him, and Lachlan begins to sweat. "Please?"

"Is it really important?"

"Fuck, would I ask if it wasn't?"

"You took it to answer a booty call six months ago."

Lachlan makes an impatient sound in the back of his throat. "That was then. Please? Fuck, man, I really need to go. I gotta -- I have to. It's important. I gotta go to him."

Thorn laughs. "You won't need to."

Lachlan gapes, flabbergasted. "What? No, man, you don't understand --"

"He's right behind you."

A full on body shudder goes through Lachlan, and he spins around so fast he knocks Thorn off his feet. "Oh, God."

Things like this don't happen in real life. Of that Lachlan's sure. Not in their life, not in their world. And yet Adair's there, standing under the falling rain like he can't feel it, hair swept back and hanging loosely curled at the sides of his face, Lachlan's motorbike roaring between his legs.

"This came through at the Lost and Found office," Adair calls, voice strained. "I thought it might interest you?"

Lachlan doesn't know anything that's happened between the moment he was standing inside the garage with Thorn and the next one where he's climbed up on his bike, kissing Adair like his life depends on it. He doesn't know and truth be told, he doesn't give a shit. Adair's there. Adair's there, and Lachlan can't get enough of his lips, his tongue, his hands clinging at the back of Lachlan's shirt, the sounds he makes when Lachlan grabs his hair and pulls him closer, melting into him, in his arms.

"I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry," Lachlan mumbles like a litany as he keeps kissing Adair all over, on his face, on his chin, over his lips, hunger that cannot be sated, the emptiness in his chest clawing at him as it yearns to be filled.

Adair catches him under his legs, hoisting him up a little better on his lap to prevent a disastrous fall to the ground as the bike sways under their weight. He nudges at Lachlan's forehead with his own, catches his lips to silence him, tasting like earth and water. "Me too."

Chapter Seven

What Eric doesn't know can't hurt him, Lachlan thinks as they stumble through the mechanic's doors, pulling at each other's clothes as though they were burning. Some distant corner of Lachlan's mind knows that they can't solve everything in bed, they just can't, but the rational thought is drowned in an undercurrent, thrumming wave of *need, want, mine, now.*

Adair grabs hold of his waist and pulls him up, Lachlan's legs locking around him as he yanks at Adair's shirt viciously, needing skin contact, wanting, desperate, *more.* He thinks he's said so because Adair whispers "Soon," and sucks a kiss at the base of his neck, his hands kneading Lachlan's thighs, pulling him higher. He can feel Adair's hard-on pushing against the crease of his ass and he moans, breathing hard against Adair's cheek and rocking against him in needy little thrusts.

"Now, now, now, please, now, please, Adair, please," Lachlan gasps, teeth sinking in Adair's earlobe, fingers sliding into the collar of his shirt when all his attempts to rip the wet cloth off prove futile. His dick presses against Adair's abs, impossibly hard in his denim cage, and he ruts up shamelessly in search of friction.

"So fucking worried," Adair whispers as they knock into things left, right, and center. "Insane motherfucker."

Lachlan laughs, as though to prove his point, his fingers twisting in Adair's hair, yanking him toward his mouth, biting, searching. "I am," he mumbles as he licks his way in Adair's mouth. "I am. Fuck, oh, God --" Lachlan's voice breaks, and he squirms against Adair's body, the stiff press of Adair's dick through his pants sending a spike of fire to flare up his spine. Adair guides him down on his erection, as though he's fucking him through two layers of clothes, and Lachlan moans deliriously, bucking on his lap.

There's a definite clank behind him, and he thinks they finally might have broken something, but the next thing Lachlan knows he's hauled up in the air to land on his back on Eric's work table, bolts and unnamed metallic instruments cluttering the floor as Adair sweeps them off.

"Eric's gonna kill me," Lachlan whispers right before Adair's mouth steals his breath away, crowding him on the table. Lachlan digs his heels into the small of Adair's back, urging him closer. He's rock hard inside his jeans, the head of his cock pressing against the buttons, straining to get free, and when Adair's dick rubs up against him, black stars erupt behind his closed eyelids.

Adair's tongue curls around his own, sucks it into his mouth before mowing down, teeth leaving marks on the tender skin of Lachlan's neck, marks that spell Adair's name all over. Adair grabs one of Lachlan's hands and guides it between their bodies. Lachlan makes for the button on Adair's pants but his fingers slip on the wet metal, and he's forced to move past, until they curl over Lachlan's own dick, Adair's hand molding above his own.

"That's how hard you get for me," Adair whispers in his ear. "And fuck, Lachlan, if you only knew what you do to me."

Lachlan swallows, the unexpected confession sending tingles all over his body. He opens his eyes, staring into the deep hues of Adair's, and bites back a whine when Adair squeezes down on their joined hands, fondling his hard cock. "Yeah," Adair whispers, flexing his fingers, coaxing Lachlan to do the same. "Like that."

Lachlan whimpers and thrusts his hips forward, hand held in the cage of Adair's own. The pressure against his dick sends white hot stabs of pleasure flowing from his groin to the rest of his body, the short, sharp flexing of Adair's fingers driving him wild. Lachlan's cock throbs heavily against the wet denim, growing harder with each stroke.

Adair's tongue laps at Lachlan's parted mouth, eating every sound he makes. With Adair guiding him, Lachlan slides his fingers beneath his waistband, the shock of skin on skin making him twist his hips upwards with a breathless cry.

"Missed this," Lachlan groans, the heels of his boots heavy against Adair's back as he rocks up into their entwined fingers, hot, pulsing flesh scorching on his palm. Precome slides through his fingertips and slicks the way, Adair's grip hard and skilled around Lachlan's hand. "Missed you."

Adair grunts and sucks another bruise on Lachlan's breastbone, catching the wet fabric of Lachlan's shirt with his teeth as he goes. He speeds up their rhythm, jacking Lachlan off hard and fast, thumbing the slit as he forces Lachlan to squeeze at the root, stalling his orgasm only to rebuild it again. Lachlan's chest is heaving, broken pants dying on his lips, his own wrist flicking in quick, rough strokes over his weeping cock. He ruts up in their combined fists, tossing his head to the side, pleading for Adair to let him come.

"You want to?" Adair takes one of Lachlan's nipples in his mouth through the thin fabric. Lachlan nods desperately, his toes curling in his boots as he arches up against Adair's solid body, his other hand sliding between them to fight with Adair's zipper, wanting to feel Adair's cock pulse against him, without the restraint of clothes.

Adair seals his mouth over his chest, pulling rabidly, teeth and tongue twisting at the hard nub as he quickens Lachlan's strokes until it gets too hot, too tight, Lachlan's back tensing as a bowstring as he twists helplessly under Adair and screams out his orgasm.

He blacks out for a few instants, release washing over him in a blinding white rush, come coating both their hands and the inside of his jeans, sliding sticky wet in the crease between groin and thigh. When he opens his eyes next, Adair's staring at him, his eyes louder than words. Lachlan wants to say something, thinks maybe they ought to talk properly, clear the air, but Adair slides his arm under Lachlan's back and hauls him up, Lachlan's legs automatically locking again around Adair's hips as they spin around, until Adair's sitting on the table and Lachlan's straddling his lap. "Better," Adair murmurs as he catches Lachlan's mouth again. "Gotta see you."

Lachlan moans his approval and pulls his hand out of his pants, looking intently at Adair as he raises it to his lips. Lachlan grins wickedly at him before taking a long

sweep with his tongue, the heady taste exploding on his taste buds. "Fuck." Adair grunts, slaps Lachlan's hand away and surges in to lick the taste of Lachlan's come out of his mouth.

There's a distinctive ripping sound, and Lachlan hiccups a laugh in Adair's mouth. "I'm on my last pair," he mumbles as his jeans are shoved down. He kicks them off, baring his ass to the rather cooler air of the empty garage.

"You look best without," Adair shoots back, his come-coated hand riding the dark valley of Lachlan's ass cheeks, spreading the cooling fluid on the clenching outer ring. "Too long," Adair groans, nudging at Lachlan's chin up with his own, teeth raking along his jaw line, then down on his throat, sucking at his pulse point. Two fingers breach through, and Lachlan hisses, the flare of discomfort quickly fading as Adair twists them inside his hole, quick, short thrusts, directly aimed at the hidden bundle of nerves, each press wrenching a cry from Lachlan's lips. Soon he's undulating on Adair's hand like he can't get enough, legs spread wide on either side of Adair's hips, his dick raising against his stomach.

"More," Lachlan orders in a groan, raking his fingers at Adair's broad back, getting his hands twisted in the damp cotton of Adair's shirt. Adair chuckles, albeit breathlessly, and adds another. Lachlan keens, head falling forward on Adair's shoulder, the muscles in his legs tensing with the strain as he pushes himself up and down on Adair's fingers. "God yeah, please -- Adair, please."

"So fucking gorgeous when you beg," Adair mumbles against his skin, lapping at the blossoming red bruises he's left on Lachlan's collarbone.

"You are," Lachlan mumbles, framing Adair's face with both hands and staring hard at him. Adair falters, and Lachlan surges forward, pressing their mouths together for a hot, brief, possessive kiss. "Beautiful. Mine. Mine, Adair. Don't want nothing else. Won't change with nothing else."

Adair's eyes flash, bright silver through the hued, lust filled haze, and he slips his fingers out, hauling Lachlan up before letting him sink down on his cock, one fluid move that feels like dancing. Perspiration covers their skin, hot where the rain was cold,

and Lachlan tosses his head back with a blissed out moan, hands curling around the wings of Adair's shoulder blades. "Yes," he whispers, heart drumming wildly in his chest, counterpoint to Adair's own. "Yes."

Adair grabs hold of Lachlan's hips and guides him up, down, slow building of a pace that feels too soft for Lachlan, too thorough, like Adair wants to turn him inside out, outside in, catching every ragged breath with his lips and tongue, his fingers leaving red tattoos on the groove of skin and bone of Lachlan's waist through the clothes.

"Faster," Lachlan groans, raising on his knees and sinking down again, a full body shudder tearing a cry out of him as Adair reaches even deeper inside of him, every rocking motion hitting right on Lachlan's prostrate, sending hot bursts of pleasure surging from the center of him to his head and toes.

Adair grunts, powerful hands sliding down Lachlan's body to yank at his hips, finding Lachlan's ass and spreading his ass cheeks wider as he shoves hard into him, the table creaking ominously with every push.

"Yes, fuck, please, that's it." Coming without a hand on him feels different, like his whole body just gives up the fight and falls apart in Adair's touch. Lachlan fights to keep his eyes open, locked on Adair's as he shudders and clenches down, vice-tight on the thick cock spreading him open. White buzzing noise fills Lachlan's ears as his body seizes and he comes with a long, drawn out moan, rope after rope of come coating the space between their bellies, his cock sliding slickly on cloth and hard, ridged abs.

Adair bounces him on his balls, fucking him through the throes of his orgasm, tiny grunts of exertion leaving his lips as he flexes his thighs and thrusts up, Lachlan's body squeezing him tighter with every push-pull-slide of his dick in Lachlan's hole.

"C'mon, fill me up, know you wanna. Please. C'mon Adair, please," Lachlan chants as he lazily traces the curve of Adair's neck with his tongue, licking off the bitter taste of Adair's skin. Adair grunts, holds him down as he fucks in once, twice, and growls something that sounds like a curse and Lachlan's name as he empties his load inside of Lachlan, eyes squeezed shut as though in pain.

Lachlan groans, his legs finally giving way underneath him, and he collapses against Adair's chest, arms hanging limply around Adair's neck, back where he belongs.

"Maybe we should have that talk now," Adair mumbles after a while, his hands running in slow circles at the small of Lachlan's back.

"Maybe," Lachlan agrees with a sigh. He forces his eyes to open again and raises his head half an inch, just enough to put Adair in his peripheral vision. "That means I gotta get up?"

Adair snorts. "Yeah. Maybe." He helps Lachlan off his lap, and catches him when Lachlan sags, boneless, against him. His pants have disappeared under the table, and he fishes for them before he guides them more sedately to his bunk.

"You just had to have the top one, huh?" Adair muses, looking genuinely amused. Lachlan can count on the fingers of one hand the times he's been like that, and he smiles, nodding cheekily.

They climb up and settle more or less comfortably on the lumpy mattress, and once they're there, it's clear neither one of them wants to bring up how they'd parted a month ago. Lachlan nibbles at his lower lip for a few seconds, staring at the ceiling and listening to Adair breathe beside him before sighing and rolling on his side to face him. "I meant what I said earlier," he speaks softly, quietly, as though he doesn't really know what Adair wants to hear. "I'm sorry -- I didn't think it through and I could've fucked you up real good, and I never meant that. To do that, I mean." He swallows, fingers drawing mindless shapes on Adair's chest.

"Well, you were right," Adair murmurs, nudging at his forehead with his closed fist. "I should've told Gale to fuck off right away, not play along with his schemes. I'm sorry I was too angry to see that."

"Does he --" Lachlan can't quite finish the sentence, but Adair understands, and shakes his head.

"No one knows."

The burst of relief is short lived. Lachlan chews on the corner of his mouth and looks away. "How did you get the bike back?"

"Bought it."

Lachlan's eyes bug out of his skull. "You what?"

Adair gives him a careless half-shrug. "I've been told that gifts are the way to a woman's heart."

"Fuck you," Lachlan gasps, punching his arm. "First of all, I'm not the woman, and second of all, the bike was mine and --"

Adair cups the back of Lachlan's head and cuts him off with a short, hard kiss that leaves Lachlan dazed-looking. "You're welcome," he says then, grinning softly.

Lachlan flushes and buries his head in the crook of Adair's neck in a gesture he will deny till his life is over. "Right. Um. So... what happens now?"

"Now that you proved your point that you could die any day at the hands of people like me, you mean?"

Lachlan cringes and looks away. "It wasn't just about that," he mumbles, twisting at a loose strand in the blanket underneath them.

"I know," Adair pokes his ribs, shaking his dark hair out of his eyes. "I know."

They don't say anything else for a while. The silence settles, and it's just beginning to get as tense as it ever was between them when Adair speaks again. "I will take care of Gale soon." Lachlan looks back at him again. "I have to figure out how to smooth things over with the rest of the crew, but I will."

"Right."

Adair nods, as though he wants to reaffirm his point, and finds Lachlan's hand on the mattress. Lachlan knows it's up to him to offer something, and he says the only thing he knows, deep in his heart, that he will hold true. "I won't break my word again," he says, squeezing Adair's fingers. "And uh. I'll try --" he shakes his head, needing to get all the words out there before he chickens out. "I'll try to be more careful."

"Will you listen to me?"

Lachlan smirks. He knows the serious moment is over and he grabs hold of Adair's other hand, rolling to the side of the bed and bringing Adair on top of him.

"Never."

Sophia Titheniel

Shy, bashful Sophia Titheniel -- NOT! She's part elf, part video editor, part photographer. She likes her men feisty, snarky, and getting it on with one another!

Originally from Italy, Sophia's now hopping the Atlantic to land in Vancouver, Canada, and looking forward to giving her professors a heart attack with her M/M projects.

Obsessed with caffeine, M&Ms (pun very much intended) and with everything supernatural, she's known to carry her laptop to the most improbable locations (those include, but are not limited to, beach, bathroom, train, and day-job) to be able to finish whatever she's writing at the moment.

Spirit Boys, her ongoing free serial, makes its home at <http://titheniel.livejournal.com>. Want to harass her to hurry things up? Drop her a note at titheniel01@yahoo.com -- Sophia would like to add she takes full responsibility for any thigh-clench and change of panties that might occur! ;) Enjoy...