

Changeling Press

SOPHIA
TITHENIEL

BAD MOON
RISING



Dance Wars 3: Bad Moon Rising

Sophia Titheniel

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Sophia Titheniel

The Big Bad Wolf is at the door...

It's that time again. Mating season. Adair can scent it, getting closer, harder to resist. Mating needs are not something he can control, not any more than he can control his transformations, but so far, Lachlan's been right there for him after every full moon.

But what happens when Lachlan's not there, and Cedric, Adair's ex-lover, the werewolf who turned him, shows up instead? Will Adair be able to resist the pull of his instincts, going against his own nature, or will he succumb to Cedric's advances and risk everything he and Lachlan have fought to build together?

Chapter One

The crowd at the Chlodwig feels wilder, crazier, more reckless than Adair remembers. It's sawdust and sweat, crooked lamps and beeswax candles dripping on the floor. It's hard music pumping through his veins, booze and acrid wood cutting at the edges.

Adair parts the throng easily, bodies swishing back and forth to let him pass. His mind is clear, clearer than it has been in days. His eyes focus on the corner booth where his crew is waiting for him -- Morgan, Dagan, Ezra... and Gale.

Adair's upper lip curls, and his fists tighten at his sides. He forces his walk to keep steady, shoulders rolling back with ease as he advances on them, the thrum of the bass setting the rhythm to his steps.

His shoulders are still carved with fingernail marks, the tangible proof of Lachlan's wildcat possessiveness spelled out all over his skin, covering him like armor. Adair can still feel him, his teeth, his lips, the heat of Lachlan's body writhing on top of him, the strength of his arms. Everything that made Lachlan, everything that Lachlan has given him drives him on, and as he stops a few feet short of their booth, his men shuffle from sprawling to sitting up straighter, tense looks flying across the table and past half finished pints.

"Hey there." Adair smirks, and nods towards Morgan, who immediately scoots forward to let him sit down. "How's it going?"

For the past four weeks the tension within the group has been tangible. Adair can't say he likes it, but at the same time he's had too much on his mind to even try and smooth things out. Truthfully, there was a distant, dark corner of him that didn't want to. His nerves were already stretched to breaking point with worry for Lachlan. He couldn't deal on multiple fronts.

Ezra had been the only one daring enough to ask him “What now?” Adair has to give him his dues, it *had* been a pretty bold move, but then again, Ezra has always been the no nonsense one of the crew. Adair respects him enough not to lie to him, but at the same time he couldn’t very well make a decision on that in the span of a day, nor a week, or even four.

Now though. Now Adair knows his answer.

“Nothing much,” Ezra says, shrugging his shoulders. He’s got an empty whiskey glass rolling between his palms. “Crews are on the loose, seems like every scum on Earth’s drawn to the Chlodwig.”

“Nothing new with that,” Adair says, darkly amused.

Morgan nods and finishes his drink with several long gulps, not looking at Adair. He’s been very quiet lately, and if there’s one thing Adair’s sorry for, it’s putting the three of them through the nerve eating tension of the past month.

Gale... Well, Gale is a different matter altogether. Adair doesn’t give a flying fuck how much Gale squirms. The more the better. Son of a bitch is lucky his head hasn’t parted company with his shoulders by now.

To some, it might have looked like Adair has been stalling, and maybe part of that rumor had some fundamentals of truth. After the raid -- Adair still can’t think of that day without a violent shiver raking down his spine -- he hadn’t said more than a few words to the four of them altogether, much less in individual convos. Adair didn’t even address Gale, as though he didn’t exist. As though the major fuck up that had been Lachlan’s capture hadn’t happened.

But it had happened, and in the aftermath, Adair’s willpower alone had prevented the crew from slipping a few paces off the top in the Dance Wars, the rehearsals frequent and punctuated by long, menacing silences. It would’ve been enough to crush any man’s nerves, but Adair couldn’t care less, his mind still wrapped around morbid, terrible thoughts as to what could’ve happened to Lachlan after he’d left him, possibly the single most stupid decision in Adair’s life.

Things have flipped around now. Now he has Lachlan back, and he's never felt as resolute. "I thought we could spice things up a little tonight," Adair says evenly. He can feel the four of them stiffen in their seats, and Gale's eyes sharpening on him, but he keeps looking utterly casual, as if he's discussing the matters around drinks. "It's overdue, don't you think?"

Ezra smiles, and even though Adair knows he shouldn't give the game away, he should keep his cards close to his chest, he smiles back at him. It's good to know he's got at least one loyal friend. "I most surely do."

"Good." Adair nods and shifts on the bench to fixate his glare on Gale. "Get up."

Gale scoffs. "Don't see why I would want to," he spits back, the challenge very much open.

Adair bares his teeth in a smirk. Works for him. "I'm telling you to get up." He speaks softly, but his voice can be heard around the table even above the loud thumping of the music. "And you will get up, you useless piece of shit, unless you wanna show everyone how much of a fucking coward you are."

The taunt does the trick. Gale stands, slamming his palms flat on the table. "Watch who you're calling coward, you arrogant self-absorbed dick," he seethes. "What, you've finally decided to grow some balls? Bring it on."

Adair laughs under his breath. It's a cold, chilling sound, and Morgan shifts uncomfortably at Adair's side. "Then you shouldn't have a problem stepping into the ring with me."

Gale leans on the table, glacial eyes meeting Adair's own. "Lead the way." He spits down on the floor as he pushes past a silent Dagan, coming to a halt in front of Adair. "Well?"

Adair uncurls from the booth, the fluid roll of his body already falling into pace with the rhythm of the music blaring in the pub. "A couple of ground rules," Adair whispers, going right in Gale's face. "One, winner takes all. You clear off the Chlodwig and never bother me or the guys again, ever."

"You mean, you'll clear off the Chlodwig and never bother me or the guys ever again," Gale says, his lips splitting in a malevolent smile.

The dormant predator in Adair raises its head, sniffing blood. "Two," Adair continues, as though Gale hasn't spoken, "if you want to hook up with Noah or any of our contacts, feel free to do so, but never come to Washington again."

Gale smirks. "I'm going to enjoy wiping the floor with your mutant ass so much, you have no idea."

Adair laughs. In any other circumstances, Gale would've already been out cold, but this is different. He's not about to use violence to fix this, no matter how tempting that sounds. If he wants to salvage the crew and their jobs, he has to prove himself, not only to them, but to everyone at the Chlodwig, or they're never going to get out of this.

They walk into the ring, the rest of the contestants slinking back to the sidelines to watch the one-on-one. Adair's crew stands too, uncertain, and Adair sees in his peripheral vision Ezra whispering in Morgan's ear, stopping them from coming any closer. Something flares in his chest amid the adrenaline of the fight, and he bites back a grim, satisfied smile.

He's going to settle this once and for all.

* * *

Knock! Knock! Knock!

Lachlan wakes up with a start, the rattling of the bunk's bed frame sending him to grab the knife he's hidden under his pillow. He stares blearily through the deep darkness of the bunkroom, his eyes still sticky with sleep, trying to pull the reason behind the jarring into focus. His back aches like a son of a bitch, courtesy of a twenty-four-hour ride that should've been a walk in the park, and turned into something out of a tragicomic book. He supposes he should feel lucky that he's managed to limp back to Germantown with his skin and his bike intact, but it doesn't make up for legging it for over fifty miles, all the while pushing four hundred some pounds of scraped together metal.

"What?" he rasps out, slowly sitting up.

"Lachlan?"

A cracked oil lamp sputters to life. It's time they put electricity back in the dorms, for Christ's sake. Feels like they're back in the Dark Ages or something. "Yeah, what is it?" He grumpily shoves his legs off the edge of the mattress, rubbing at his face with the back of his hand. Rae's face is thrown into sharp relief by the contrasting light of the lamp.

"There's an emergency." Rae speaks in a hushed voice, probably not to wake up the other riders who have just crashed on the bunks after their shifts.

Lachlan nods wearily and shuffles down the ladder, grabbing his jacket off the bedpost as he goes. "What kind?" he mutters as they walk quickly out of the dorms into the scarcely lit hall towards the garage.

"I got in contact with Rory, at the Northern borders. They're snowed in, no one can get out. We need to get to them, but with the snowstorms coming on..."

"Right." Lachlan stifles a yawn and shrugs on his jacket. "Fuck, it's too early for this shit."

"Tell me about it," Rae groans, falling into step with him as they move towards a slightly more alive wing of the station, where a few fellow riders are nursing headaches and heartaches with cups of alcohol. Lachlan nods at a couple of them he recognizes, and is surprised when a dark-skinned stranger separates himself from the pack, walking towards them.

Lachlan frowns, confusion spelled out all over his forehead, but Rae looks relieved and drops the lamp on the nearest table, going to clasp the stranger on the back with a smile. "Hey, buddy. Good to see you're back."

"Couldn't make it sooner, or I would have."

Lachlan looks from Rae to the guy and back again, just short of tapping his foot in irritation. Dear Christ, Rae woke him up from a nearly comatose state with his urgency and now he's making chitchat to the long-lost prodigal son?

"Lachlan, this is Keith. He's one of us," Rae adds, looking marginally uncomfortable.

Lachlan puts an extra ounce of warmth in his smile as he reaches out to shake Keith's hand. He doesn't do it for the stranger, whose liquid black eyes make him feel under a scrutiny he doesn't like much, or at all, but because Rae has always been so damn self-conscious about his powers. It's not like it was his fault, really. You don't decide what radioactive shit your folks, or your folks' folks, were doing in their time.

"I've heard a lot about you," Keith says, still staring unblinkingly at Lachlan.

"I can't say the same," Lachlan answers, stepping back. "And for the record, most of what you've heard is bullshit."

Rae snorts and shakes his head. "Rule number one. While on the road with Keith, don't listen to him."

"Wait, hold on." The cogs in Lachlan's brain wake up with a screech. "On the road with Keith?"

Rae cringes. It's quick, almost invisible, but it's enough for Lachlan to catch it. "Now, don't overreact like you usually do --"

"Don't overreact?" Lachlan echoes, baffled. "You're handing me a babysitter and you tell *me* not to overreact?"

"It's not about having a babysitter," Rae says hurriedly. "We can't afford to lose any more riders. If the storms reach this way we'll be cut off from all the roads. We need to know when something happens."

"Jeez, nothing's gonna happen. I'm a big boy."

"I can see that," Keith says, voice low, smooth like a droplet of whiskey. The hair at Lachlan's nape rises in attention, a shiver going down his spine.

"It's not about you," Lachlan says, wanting to make it perfectly clear. "I'm a solo artist. I don't do duets. I don't have it in me, okay? I can't watch anyone's back."

Keith smiles, his teeth almost too white. "I will be the one watching your back. You don't have to worry about me."

"I don't need anyone to watch my back!"

Rae pinches the bridge of his nose, and Lachlan feels like throwing one of those temper tantrums that he was famous for when he'd first started with the Pony Express. "Look, man, it's already a motherfucking bitch out there, we just want you to be safe."

Which would have been all fine and dandy, if everyone and their bastard uncles hadn't been saying the same thing over and over and over since Lachlan had *voluntarily* -- they didn't know that, but yes, voluntarily -- thrown himself in Adair's trap.

Christ, this was getting old so fast.

If they only knew, Lachlan thinks bitterly, rubbing the heel of his hand into his eyes. "Right. Whatever. Too tired to argue. I'll get coffee, and you'll work your magic and make sure we're not followed."

Rae relaxes visibly, but Keith looks completely undeterred, something that does nothing to soothe Lachlan's nerves. He marches off, his boots clinking soundly on the uneven pavement as they take a left turn down the stairs towards the garage, Keith and Rae at his heels. *Heavens know what the hell they're whispering in each other's brains now*, Lachlan thinks morosely as he kicks at the dirt.

This has in no way anything to do with Adair at all. The moon has just waned, and he'll be back in time for the next one. And he would be, damn Keith and everything else.

What pisses Lachlan off is being treated like he can't do this shit on his own. For Christ's sake, he's not a newbie. The run is dangerous, so what. Walking out of the door is dangerous, too, and if they meet a crew of bad guys it's not going to be Keith's brain that takes them out, it's gonna be Lachlan's speed.

Don't be a prissy bitch, someone whispers, and Lachlan whips his head around, eyes narrowing. Keith and Rae both give him a quirked eyebrow, nonplussed, but Lachlan could've sworn he's seen the corner of Keith's mouth twitch.

Oh, there we go. A mind whisperer. Just what Lachlan needed.

Great. Just fucking great.

* * *

Adair sprawls in one of the booths, the adrenaline of the fight still pumping through his system. The crowd is going wild, money passing back and forth as they collect their dues. Ezra slaps him on the back, grinning so wide it looks like his face is splitting in two. "Good job, man," he praises, passing him a shot of Cuervo. Adair downs it, tossing the glass down and grabbing the bottle by the neck to take another long swig.

Adair won. It hadn't even taken too much time or effort. The one-on-one had been judged by the wild roars of the surrounding crowd, the yells and cheers picking without a shadow of a doubt. Gale tried to prolong the dance, but his routines hadn't stood a chance against the aggressive counter attack Adair dished out for him. The rage and the frustration and the ghost of Lachlan's nails digging in the small of his back had given him just the edge he needed to tear that fucker to shreds.

Adair smiles as Morgan and Dagan rush to the booth, hurrying to congratulate him. Gale stands still in the background, shock and defiance written all across his features, his fists balled to the sides as though he's itching to plant one between Adair's eyes.

It gives Adair a grim sort of pleased satisfaction. He still remembers Gale's hands on Lachlan's throat. The way Gale looked at him, like Lachlan was something Gale could have for himself, still sends Adair's blood rushing to his head, the wolf howling in his chest, telling him to kill.

It's only Gale's luck that Adair's gotten laid recently enough to put himself in a mellow mindset.

"You know the rules," Adair says smoothly, pointing at him with his bottle. "Get out of my sight before I decide I've been way too nice with your fugly face."

"You won't get rid of me that easily," Gale growls, walking up close to the table.

"I just did," Adair says smoothly. "Now clear out, buddy, before I lose my cool."

"Rules are rules, mate," Morgan says quietly. "Don't wan' this to get ugly. Better leave it be."

"So you're all too scared to say what's on your mind?" Gale spits maliciously. "Just falling into line like sheep. You fucking disgust me."

"Piss off," Dagan says as he stands from the bench, his eyes alight. "You challenged Adair, Adair kicked your ass. You lost, he won. Get the hell over it and move the fuck on."

"Enough," Adair speaks suddenly, his eyes locking with Gale's across the table.

A sudden hush falls over the crew, their eyes skating downwards, not daring to stare at their leader. "You want to go against the rules, be my guest," Adair says softly. "Meet me outside."

A flash of fear goes off behind Gale's eyes, and the chill that spreads from Adair's words over the rest of the crew is almost tangible. For a few seconds, no one says anything, too preoccupied with the thick cloud of tension that has settled around the table to even draw a breath. Then Gale steps back, face red with suppressed anger, and spits on the ground before Adair's feet. "Good riddance," he snarls. "Don't come crawling back when you don't make enough to survive."

Adair laughs, shaking his head as Gale turns his back on them and disappears through the crowd.

"Well, that was fun," Dagan says morosely as he drops back in his seat.

"Don't worry 'bout him, man," Ezra scoffs, filling up a series of glasses for the rest of them. "We're well rid of him."

"Agreed," Morgan says as he reaches for his shot. He raises it with a smirk. "So, this is to our leader."

"To Adair," Ezra and Dagan echo as they mimic Morgan's gesture.

Adair, however, doesn't raise his glass.

His eyes are fixated onwards, wide, staring at something only he can see.

"Adair?"

Ezra looks worried, but Adair doesn't heed him. There, all the way across the club, leaning against the door that leads to the outer staircase, there's the face that still haunts Adair's dreams, unacknowledged between the hours of waking and sleep.

Long red hair and stubble. Piercing blue eyes. A smirk pressed in Adair's memory like a flower drying in the pages of a book.

Adair stands, knocking over the shot glass. Tequila spills on the table and onto the floor as he slides out of the booth, leaving his confused crew members behind and marching through the throng, his wide shoulders parting the drinking, partying crowd easily enough.

It's like his stomach is pulling in, refusing to let him draw a full breath until he can get *there*, and see with his own eyes. Half of him still expects it to be a hallucination, brought about by the stress and adrenaline of the fight.

"Hello, kid."

Adair stops short of the wall, his nerves pulled taut enough to crack.

It's not a hallucination.

It's pretty fucking real.

"Cedric?"

Chapter Two

"Nice job out there." Cedric smiles and stretches, lazy as a cat, before leaning closer to him, his smell enveloping Adair like buzzing smoke, sending his head spinning.

"Don't call me kid," Adair whispers, voice biting and rough. "It's Adair."

Cedric chuckles, long locks of red hair falling out of his ponytail, shadowing his face. "You never change, do you," he murmurs, coming dangerously closer.

Adair shoves him away, teeth gritting together, his temples pulsing with a mixture of shock, resentment and rage. "Get the fuck out of here, and I mean now," Adair growls, their foreheads nearly touching.

"Or what?" Cedric sounds amused. "You're gonna make me?"

Adair grabs hold of his biceps, yanking him closer. "Don't fucking play games with me, Cedric. Why are you back? What's your deal?"

"Maybe I just missed the old place," Cedric drawls, tilting his head forward. "Have you ever thought of that?"

Adair pushes him back, heart thundering in his ears. "What's your end game?" he grits out.

Cedric raises one eyebrow. "I don't know what you're talking about."

"Bullshit. You never do anything unless there's something in it for you. What do you want now?"

Cedric smiles at him, leaning back against the wall, dark blue eyes piercing through Adair like a hot knife through butter. "Like I said, I don't know what you're talking about. I missed the old place, that's all."

"Right," Adair scoffed. "You think I trust you?"

"You used to."

Adair's hand drops to his side, covering the phantom pain of a never healed mark. Cedric probably feels the shift of tension in his shoulders and comes closer to him, turning the tables, pinning Adair back against one of the columns of the club.

"Maybe you still do?" Cedric enquires, a slow, predatory smile making its way to his face.

The scent of him is too strong, pungent in Adair's nostrils, and for an instant he feels dazed, as though his brain were wrapped in cotton. "No," he grits out, shoving Cedric away, his feet slipping slightly on the mixture of spilled beer and sawdust covering the floor. His head is pounding, and he feels like springing on his heels and snapping his jaws at Cedric's neck, red haze whispering in his head. "Get the fuck out, Cedric, I mean it."

"Gonna make me, big boy?" Cedric leers.

"You're fucking pathetic." Adair stands his ground, both his palms flat on Cedric's chest, keeping him as far away as his arms will allow.

Cedric laughs, shakes his long hair out of his eyes, amusement dancing on his features. "You want to recheck that statement, kid. I'm not the one holding on here."

Adair's hands fall to his sides as though burned. He takes a step back, his shoulders meeting the wood of the column behind him. Cedric smiles, running his fingers through his hair as he, too, steps away from Adair. "I like it here. I'd forgotten how it feels to hide in plain sight." He lets his sentence hang in midair, his eyes sparkling with dark amusement. "I'll see you around, kid."

"No, you won't," Adair grinds out. He knows he should be the one turning away first, he knows, and he wants to -- it's not about that. He wants to turn his back on Cedric fully *knowing* that it's the last he'll see of him.

Cedric did that once before, and Adair has taken forever to get over it. This time, he wants to be one hundred fucking percent sure.

Cedric cocks his head to the side, his smile growing darker, intimate. It makes the hair at Adair's nape stand up with a shiver. He stands still, unmoving, till Cedric

walks past him, his fingers brushing against Adair's hip as he disappears through the crowd.

* * *

There are several things that get on Lachlan's nerves. Admittedly, Lachlan is not a naturally calm person, he will give you that, but he is laid back enough to get along with most people on a daily basis. It also helps that in order to do his job, Lachlan's interactions with other beings are limited, going from one station to the other, but still, he's pretty sure Keith would manage to drive every saint in heaven for the nearest whiskey flask.

It's not so much that Keith annoys him. *Everyone* annoys Lachlan when he's working. It's not quite Keith's fault. He's used to working alone, and that has suited him just fine for over a decade, so it would follow logically Lachlan would pretty much detest working alongside someone else. And yet, he's been on his best behavior -- really, he has -- no detours, no wild courses, no (as Rae had put it) "purposefully trying to shake Keith off."

So yes, it's not only Keith's presence. It's Keith's persona that makes his brain short circuit -- starting with the continuous chatter. Lachlan's not up for small talk in normal conditions, and surely not while shooting 180 mph across the countryside, the road slippery with mud and slush and ice, the tires crying wearily every turn, every bump in the road a potential disaster.

This Keith dude needs to shut the fuck up before Lachlan tosses him off his bike and takes off on his own, danger or no danger.

"How long have you been working as an Express?"

Lachlan grits his teeth and accelerates. It's a marvel that Keith can keep up. His voice carries to Lachlan against the wind whipping at his face. "You're quite young, aren't ya? I started when I was around nineteen, three years ago now. Figured I'd put my abilities to good use."

If Lachlan can just ignore him, maybe he'll disappear. Or he'll get the message and shut up. Lachlan squints onwards, gunning the engine.

"Have you ever been across Colorado?"

"Shouldn't you, like, concentrate on whatever the fuck we might be expecting rather than mouthing off nonstop?" Lachlan snaps, his irritation getting the best of him.

"There's nothing on air," Keith replies, too fucking cheerful for Lachlan's liking. "All's clear for six hundred miles and if we shake ass, we can make it by morning."

Lachlan clenches his jaw and starts counting backwards from fifty.

Right. He's just trying to make himself useful. They're in this together, by no wish of Lachlan's, and he's trying to state the obvious only to show he's actually doing *something* besides zigzagging by Lachlan's side.

He can keep his cool. He can. It's just a matter of trying harder.

"You're not that talkative, are you?"

Well, no shit. "I'm a little preoccupied with the road," Lachlan snaps, and there went his cool, right out the proverbial window.

Thunder cracks ahead, and hard, heavy, pelting rain rattles across Lachlan's back and into his goggles. Keith laughs, he fucking *laughs*, the little bitch, and guns his engine, sprinting forward, overtaking Lachlan. "Race you to the next station."

These six hundred fucking miles can't go by fast enough.

* * *

Adair proceeds to drink his way through a bottle of Cuervo and one and a half of JD before leaving the Chlodwig. Everyone and their bastard cousins want to buy the winner a drink, and if there was one time when Adair had needed alcohol more than tonight, he can't recall.

Ezra has been the only one brave enough to ask him about his weird behavior, and Adair told him, in no uncertain terms, to keep his nose out of business that didn't belong to him. He's in no mood to discuss Cedric, not with Ezra, not with anyone.

Four years and it feels like not even a moon has waned. Jesus Christ. Adair downs the last of the booze, his lips numb by now, a pleasant, continuous buzz going through his head, and makes to stand.

Dagan's gone off way earlier, probably to get laid -- the kid's sex drive is somehow legend at the Chlodwig. Morgan is playing a round of poker with a couple of other fellas from the pub, and Ezra's nursing his own bottle of Scotch, a pleased smirk on his lips.

"I'm off," Adair says, keeping his voice quite steady.

"See you tomorrow?"

"You will."

They bump knuckles together, smiling, and Adair feels his breathing get easier. He just needs to lie down and chill. It's gonna be a few lonely weeks, waiting for Lachlan to come round again, and he fully intends to take full advantage of those. Without Gale on board, he feels like the vast majority of his problems have been solved. He won't let a fucking ghost from his past trouble him.

He and Cedric are done. Have been done for ages now. He doesn't want him, doesn't need him, and if Cedric has enough brains to fill a spoon, he's hopped in that battered tin can of his and cleared the zone.

Adair walks out of the Chlodwig, the chilly early morning air slapping his long hair off his face, bringing his sharpness back into full focus. One of the perks of being a werewolf is that he can drink as much as he pleases without getting trashed. His metabolism just works through it like water and sugar.

He stretches, filling his lungs with the sharp tang of wood and dew, and walks off, hands deep in the pockets of his jeans. It's not till he's at the edge of the woods that he hears that familiar roar, going deep through him, like an electric jolt down his spine.

"Going home already?"

Adair stops dead in his tracks, his breath accelerating. "I thought I was clear," he replies without turning. "Both now and four years ago."

"Hmm, we might agree to disagree on this one," Cedric says cheerfully, triggering Adair into rounding on him, arms rigid at his sides.

"Which part of 'get out of my life' wasn't clear to you?" Adair says, sarcasm giving his voice an edge.

"I don't know." Cedric leans out of the car's window, looking pensive. "Maybe your words sounded muffled because you had your mouth full of my cock."

Adair doesn't even think. With a leap worthy of his inner wolf, he's right in Cedric's face, grabbing the collar of his shirt to yank him out of the running car. "You son of a bitch," Adair growls, spit flying from his mouth as he fists his fingers in the fabric of Cedric's top. "Don't you fucking dare. You knew what you'd done, you knew I wouldn't be able to say no, you fucking *used* me just because you needed to get laid."

"It was mating season," Cedric purred, not in the slightest bit undeterred. "You know how that feels now, don't you?"

Adair grinds his teeth together, rage and resentment sending his blood flowing to his head with a mad rush. "You never gave a shit about me," he whispers. "You only ever cared about yourself."

"Nature, kid." Cedric grins, tracing the curve of Adair's profile with his fingertip. Adair pulls back as though burned. "It's what we are."

"I'm not like you," Adair seethes, tossing Cedric back against the car.

"You're a werewolf."

"And who the fuck should I kill for that?" Adair growls, taking another step forward and pinning Cedric against the doorframe. "You didn't even fucking *ask* what I wanted. No, you just fucking take as always, don't you Ced? As long as you're getting your end, no one else matters, isn't that it? Well, fuck you. I'm not like you. I'm *nothing* like you."

"Right, because you don't want to fuck right here, right now," Cedric laughs, and for a split second Adair feels a howl rise from his chest, the desire to tear that smile off Cedric's face strong enough to taste it on his tongue. "It's that time of the year, kid," he adds, his chuckle ending in a low, sultry tone. "Don't pretend you don't feel it."

Adair's fingers curl in on themselves, as though he's expecting them to sprout claws at any minute, and he pulls back, heart raging in his chest like a trapped butterfly. "Get out of Washington, Cedric," he orders, voice dry and burning like whiskey. "I won't ask again."

He turns his back on Cedric -- and this time he's the first -- and takes off, long, sharp strides that have him blending into the darkness of the woods, the noise of the running engine fading with every square foot of vegetation.

Too many thoughts clashing around in his head. He can't concentrate. He walks mechanically through trees and bushes, stepping over familiar stones and branches without pause, the only sound now the jarring echo of Cedric's voice.

Shit. He hasn't changed a bit, has he. Self-assured, egoistical ass. Adair is well rid of him. The idea of him being in Washington makes his skin crawl. He can feel the scar of his bite on the side of his hip, as though the wound is still open and bleeding, and no, Adair is not going to let him get one over on him. He's not a kid anymore, and thanks to *him*, he's a killer. A *peer*, like Cedric had said. Well, the peer is fucking ready for his goddamned game now.

Adair kicks the door to his cabin open, restless, agitated. The bed is still undone, sheets not changed since the last time Lachlan slept there. It smells like sex and it smells like them, and Adair kicks off his boots, lying down on his disheveled bed, chest still heaving as though he's been running for miles.

Maybe he has. Years, even.

He sighs in frustration and drags one hand over his face, as though smoothing his frown away. He needs to let go. He can't allow Cedric to get to him like this. It's like he's falling into step all over again, and no, he's already established he's not going to do that anymore.

He closes his eyes, his nostrils flaring as the thick, dusty scent settles around him, on his skin, under his clothes. Slowly, he allows himself to drink it all in. Flashes of the night wash before his eyes, like old, faded photos from another era. The one-on-one challenge with Gale, the spite, the roar of the Chlodwig's inhabitants, the jubilant cheer of his crew as he kicked Gale out of the competition, everything shuffles and blends together --

Until Cedric's face pops up. Adair groans in frustration, slaps his hand over his hip, tingles spreading from his groin to the rest of his body.

It's not Cedric. Adair kicks his legs open, resting both palms on the inside of his thighs. It's not Cedric. He buries his face in the side of his arm, his eyes closed, his anxiety growing exponentially. He needs to shake that son of a bitch out of his system or he will go do something incredibly stupid.

His hyperawareness shoots from his spine down to the rest of him, and before his eyes swims the image of Lachlan's eyes, his lips, the curve of his neck, down to his arms and chest -- all the disconnected pieces that made Lachlan Lachlan juxtaposing in his mind's eye. A sigh escapes his lips and he lets the phantom of Lachlan's presence envelop him. He cups his groin with one hand, feeling himself harden, and he pulls his zipper down impatiently, hand dry against the rising stiffness of his dick. His nostrils flare, taking in the thick, arousing smell of sweat, musk and skin, his nerves singing with the sudden rush of want, from his tailbone up to his head and down to his toes.

Adair grunts, bites into his lower lip and presses his fingers down behind his balls, spreading his knees as wide as he can. His hand, sliding up his throbbing cock, finds coarse hair and shifts back lower on damp skin. Adair covers his mouth with his own knuckles, biting and licking them as he rocks into his fist, slow at first, then snapping up into a crescendo. Tight, too tight, too dry, too fast, pressure building at the base of his spine until he's dizzy with it, Lachlan's pretty, puckered lips swimming in and out of focus before him. He pictures Lachlan's crotch in front of him, legs spread at either side of Adair's face, his dick hard and heavy and beautiful, and he sucks his own fingers between his lips, precome slicking the way up and down his shaft as he flicks a thumb over the slit.

Adair tightens his grip and whimpers, swallows around his fingers. He pulls them out of his mouth, eyes tightly shut as he cups his balls and rolls them against his palm, the skin hot, stretched over his sac. He turns his head to the side, mouths at his own shoulder, tasting the salt and the sweat there, fingers rubbing into his nipples until they're sore, hard enough to hurt, and yet he keeps flicking them, first one then the other.

A slight sheen of sweat has broken over his body, his now damp shirt sticking to his chest like a second skin. Adair moans, low at the back of his throat, animal sounding, and slides his hand lower, his fingertips teasing his furled opening. His cock pulses hotly, a fat dollop of precome trickling down his shaft into the dark curls surrounding the base.

Christ, Lachlan's legs part so easily, like he can't wait to spread 'em for Adair every time they're together. Sometimes Lachlan is hard even before Adair transforms back to his human form, and that gets him on the hook faster than basically anything in this world. He plays Lachlan's soft, kitten-like moans as he pictures him sitting on his lap, rubbing the crease of his ass against Adair's hard dick.

He pushes two fingers in, dry, burning and stretching, and his breath breaks, a puff of air tingling his lips as he digs his head back, strokes his own leg. Adair curls his fingers in, moving them in tandem, little flicks of his wrist that are not nearly enough to get him off, not when he gets like this, when Lachlan's all he can see behind his closed eyelids, mile long limbs gracelessly sprawled atop him as he rides him like he was born for that. Adair groans, a hint of breathless chuckle sounding in his mind, Lachlan's evasive smell strong and pungent in his nostrils.

Adair squeezes his eyes shut, twisting his fingers until he can rub that sweet bundle inside of him that makes heat coil up in his belly. He fists his cock and starts pumping in time with the motions of his own fingers inside of him, hips jerking helplessly as he keeps pumping until he's got nothing else to give. He comes, pearly white ropes covering his wrist and stomach, and he pictures Lachlan's hands kneading his hips and rubbing spunk into his skin as he lowers himself on Adair's face, weeping cock just within reach of Adair's mouth.

He lifts one come-covered hand to his lips and he massages his spent cock with the other. If he closes his eyes he can pretend the heaviness on his tongue is the head of Lachlan's dick, rubbing at the roof of his mouth and over his lips as he pulls out and smears his release over his chin. Lachlan tastes bittersweet, a tang that has little to do

with Adair's own taste, but he doesn't care. He doesn't feel spent, or sleepy, or even remotely tired. Quite the opposite.

Adair's wired. He'd figured that if he jacked off, he'd get rid of the unsettlement in his belly, the agitation lurking just beneath the surface. He hasn't. He still wants, if possible even more desperately now, as though his orgasm has triggered something at the back of his mind that made him yearn for more.

Across the top of the hills, a long, guttural howl carries back to him, shaking the closed window and going deep into Adair's bones, making him shudder. It's like an awakening, and he curses, low under his breath, turning his face to the side to smother himself in the pillow.

It's mating season.

Fuck. Fuck, fuck, fuck, *fuck*.

That's why Cedric's back. That must be it, there can't be any other reason -- even though he's been gone for over four years, even though they had parted so bitterly it had taken Adair months to get himself back together, get used to the transformations, to the initial pain, the uncontrolled call of the moon. It would fit so fucking well with Cedric's usual schemes.

Adair groans and pushes himself abruptly to a sitting position, shaking his head as though he wants to clear it of muddy water lurking in the corners. It takes him a few instants but he finally musters up the will to rip the sheets off and toss them in an overflowing bucket in the corner of the room. He doesn't think he can cope with being surrounded by the lingering smell of sex and Lachlan, not when his body so clearly hungers for both.

Christ. It's gonna be a long four weeks.

Chapter Three

The hailstorm hit so suddenly that the best Keith's psychic abilities had been able to do was to take a second turn to the right, changing their course toward the closest station instead of speeding forward to their destination. It did take them off course by about a hundred miles, but neither of them give too much of a fuck. What matters is that they will, at some point, get to shelter.

Lachlan grits his teeth and speeds on. They can't run too fast, not with the shit pelting down on them, but the promise of safety is too tempting for them to attempt to slow down. He's freezing, he can't see, and the package is too bulky to allow him any of his swift turns. Keith's skirting the edge of the road, right by his side, and Lachlan thinks he should've figured out that not even a fucking hailstorm would shut the fucker up. Only he's not flapping his trap, no. He's sneakier than that.

The motherfucker is chattering away inside Lachlan's *brain* and he will fucking drive him off the road if he doesn't cut it out sometime soon. What's even more annoying? Keith knows, he goddamn knows, that Lachlan has no means to reply to him, not with the roar of the wind, the rain, the mud and the scattered gravel of the shit road they're eating up.

So, he's just talking, or whispering, or whatever it is that he's doing, for sheer annoyance's sake.

Lachlan will fucking leave him at Kamloops and depart on his own, and who gives a fuck about the raids. Keith should consider himself lucky Lachlan will be gracious enough to let him live.

The station looms through the gloom ahead. Keith laughs in Lachlan's head, and Lachlan curses colorfully, hoping that the asshole will pick the vibes up. The bikes screech through the storm, gaining another mile. Kamloops is off course, and a hole in

the wall on top of that, but it looks pretty damn fine from behind rain-splattered goggles, and Lachlan feels relieved despite himself.

They push through the muddy road and they manage to skid to a halt in front of the boarded up garage. Besides being an annoying brat, Keith must have done some of his multitasking tricks and forewarned the people in the station that they were on their way, because the moment they slam their fists against the garage's door, they hear movement from inside. In a matter of minutes, the door is pushed up, the hail rattling noisily against the metal. Lachlan and Keith swiftly shuffle in, their engines spluttering with low gas and weariness, much like their owners.

"Hey there, fellas," a burly, salt-n-pepper-haired guy welcomes them in with a grim smile. "Nice of you to drop in with this weather."

"I'm laughing on the inside," Lachlan says, pushing his bike against one of the supports, his wet hair falling into his face.

Keith laughs, but Lachlan's pretty sure by the tone of it that he's the only one hearing it. Motherfucker.

"Where you headed?"

"North," Keith answers evasively. Lachlan watches him as he secures his bike, and hurries to do the same, unloading their package and punching in Eric's security code number.

"Well, looks like you'll be stuck with us for a while," the man says, pushing his hat backwards. "Another four riders came in earlier, when all hell broke loose. One of your kind," he nods towards Keith, "said the storm's gonna be a bitch for another week."

Keith frowns. Lachlan steps up to his side, pushing his goggles up and shaking his hair to get rid of the water. "We can't afford a week-long delay," he says, voice tight through chattering teeth. "We gotta be at our stop by tomorrow at the latest."

"I don't think that'd be wise," the man says, stroking his chin pensively. "Tell ya what, you can get dried out in the main room and you can check in with the other guys. There's no way you can get back on the road now at any rate."

Lachlan has to grudgingly concede that the man has a point, and follows him through a high, empty doorframe up a rickety staircase, Keith on his heels. His bones ache as though they've been beaten down with a stick, and his body temperature has dropped lower than standard, which really sucks because Lachlan doesn't have the highest balance on a normal day, let alone after hours spent under the storm.

Keith shifts closer to him, rubs his hand up and down his back. "You look like death warmed over."

"I am anything but warm," Lachlan grunts, wrapping his arms around his chest as they reach the first landing.

"Ya'll get first spot in front of the fire," the man throws back over his shoulder, smiling at them. "And by the way, I'm Sahale, the head of station."

"Lachlan," he says, nodding at him.

"Keith," he extends his hand and shakes Sahale's hand. "You said there's another psychic here?"

"Yeah, she's one of the ones the tide waved in," answers Sahale, pushing the door to the main room open. "You can get your heads together and figure out what the fuck's going on with the weather lately. Bad world," he adds with a shake of his head. "All fucked to hell and back, and we have to stand it."

That's one way of looking at it, Lachlan thinks as he moves through the room to drop down on the couch in front of the fire, his limbs numbed by the bone-deep cold. Keith squishes himself between Lachlan and the armrest, giving him a broad, wide grin that makes his white teeth shine in his tanned face. "Still so averse to company?"

"Even more so now," Lachlan grumbles, pulling his knees up and kicking his boots off. His feet are soaked, like the rest of him, and he shivers despite the fire.

"Aw, c'mon now." Keith nudges at Lachlan's ankle with the tip of his foot. "We had a good time."

A good time? A *good time*? Holy hell, Lachlan is so going to leave him tied up in front of the fireplace and take off on his own, and he's not even kidding.

I heard that, Keith whispers in his head, his voice tinged with laughter.

Lachlan's fingers twitch as though itching to curl around the handle of his knife. He grinds his teeth together and slides further down in the couch, trying to ignore the amused vibes coming from his unwanted companion. He fishes for his hipflask, taking a long draught of amber-colored liquid, and lets his head fall back.

So you think we should lay low for a while?

Lachlan groans and turns around to face him. "I'm right here," he seethes. "Do you think you can lay down the sixth sense crap for five seconds and use your mouth like a sensible human being?"

Keith laughs. "Sorry, just force of habit I guess."

"Well, fucking lose it. Holy shit," Lachlan snaps, irritably. "I can't deal with people on a regular basis, much less when they blab nonstop in my fucking *head*."

"Jesus." Keith shakes his head and laughs. "Rae was right, you are an uptight prissy bitch."

Lachlan's eyes bug out of his head. "Excuse me?"

"You heard me."

"Too much, at that."

Keith chuckles again, and Lachlan turns resolutely away from him, trying to get some feeling back in his legs and arms. He's not fond of staying put anywhere, especially given the fact that he's stuck with Keith, but it wouldn't be any different even if he were on his own. The only place he likes to be is with Adair, and that alone opens a can of worms that he doesn't even want to touch with a stick.

It's been eighteen days and he already wishes he could be back there. Back with the feeling of skin and muscle pressing against him, and coarse stubble tickling his nape, hands pressing into his chest, dragging him closer.

* * *

Lachlan stirs, doesn't open his eyes, but he does scuttle forward a little, to give Adair a bit more room. Adair stifles a yawn in the crook of his elbow, buries his face in the back of Lachlan's head, inhaling deeply. Adair's fingers follow the curve of

Lachlan's bare shoulder blade, trying to follow a pattern of tiny moles, as if he's working out a riddle only he knows the answer to.

Adair doesn't speak, he rarely does, not during the times between twilight and dawn, but Lachlan feels him against his back, and that's enough. He's missed him. Even if it's been no more than their usual dry spells, Lachlan has missed him. The faint smell of sawdust and beer, the scarred, weary look Adair carries behind his gray eyes, the calluses on his palms when they mold against Lachlan's hips. "I missed this," he confesses, his breath ghosting over Adair's arm.

He hopes he'll be too sleepy to remember come morning.

Adair's mouth presses against Lachlan's shoulder, and Lachlan makes a sound in the back of his throat, scurrying backwards a couple of inches, seeking Adair's warmth. Adair's arm sneaks under the pillow, the other drapes across Lachlan's belly to pull him into the curve of his body.

In a matter of minutes, Adair's snoring softly, his breath fanning Lachlan's nape and caressing the long locks at the base of his neck. The bunk squeaks as Lachlan shifts closer, trying to stay awake just so he can soak in the feeling of closeness.

He doesn't know how long they lie there, maybe he has fallen asleep at some point, but when he opens his eyes again they are flush together, a sheen of perspiration painted on their skins, slick and hot where he's pressing over Adair's thighs and chest.

They fit, Lachlan thinks with his half asleep brain. Toned muscles and long limbs molding perfectly against the lines of Adair's hard body, all angles finding just the right places as they curl around one another. His ass is snug over Adair's lap, and Lachlan suppresses a shiver when Adair runs his palm up and down Lachlan's abs.

Lachlan leans into Adair's touch with a sigh, head tilted backwards. Adair echoes his breathing and brings his lips to the juncture of Lachlan's neck, sucking kisses into the skin as he shuffles lower still, the gentle friction stirring a wave of heat to pool in Lachlan's groin.

Adair doesn't speak, raining a line of kisses over the wing of Lachlan's shoulder, and rocks his hips a little, sweat dulling the edge of his movements. The palm of

Adair's hand dips lower on Lachlan's stomach, toying with the happy trail of hair that leads down to Lachlan's cock, half hard and thick between his thighs.

He feels Adair groan against his back, the vibrations shaking him to the core. Adair's long fingers curl loosely around Lachlan's cock, and Lachlan bites his lip, turning his head sideways into the pillow. Adair squeezes the base, then draws his hand up to thumb the slit and brings it down again, working Lachlan slowly to full hardness.

Lachlan moans thinly, pressing the heel of his hand against his mouth. Eric's still around somewhere, maybe even sleeping in the bunk underneath them and Christ, they can't be heard. Adair jerks his hips minutely forward again, his hard dick sliding hotly against the back of Lachlan's legs, the friction sending a jolt of electricity down Lachlan's spine, the weight of the blankets now almost physical as their body heat spikes up.

Adair curls his arm beneath the pillow, winding it around Lachlan's chest, his fingers brushing teasingly over Lachlan's nipple. Lachlan arches into the unusual tenderness, his breathy moan filling the room, ending on a choking note as he buries his face into his arm, trying to keep silent.

"Shh," Adair mumbles, cupping Lachlan's balls against his body as he rubs the head of his cock just underneath Lachlan's ass. Lachlan stifles a keening sound in the back of his hand, the motion going straight to his dick, heady and potent. He bites into his lower lip to keep from groaning too loud, and Adair's teeth sink lightly in the muscles of his shoulder as he slides his now rigid shaft along the crease of Lachlan's thighs. Lachlan shudders against him, his hips twisting up, wanting Adair to do something, anything, his balls pulsing in the cage of Adair's hand. Lachlan's dick is leaking now, fat beads of precome oozing at the head, and Adair's fingers slip up to collect the stickiness and spread it down Lachlan's shaft.

"Please," Lachlan whispers, the heat and sweat and teasing touches driving him insane. "C'mon, Adair..."

Adair's hand curls into a fist at the base of Lachlan's dick and he squeezes, drawing out another aborted moan from Lachlan's bitten lips. He picks up his rhythm, breathing raggedly and damp against the juncture of Lachlan's shoulder, and Lachlan pumps his hips forward, wanting more, needing more.

Adair sucks at a stretch of skin right below Lachlan's ear as he bucks his hips up again, and again, until his blood-heavy cock pushes through the narrow passage of Lachlan's thighs. Lachlan can just imagine what it feels like, hot and slick, coarse hair and burning friction around Adair's length, and he clamps his legs together, stifling a moan in the back of his hand.

It's rough and fucking perfect, and Adair tightens his fist around Lachlan's dick, feeling him shudder underneath his hands, their heavy breathing and the smack of skin on skin the only sound in the room. Adair cants his hips up, and Lachlan clenches his legs tight in response, pulling a low groan from Adair's lips, pressure building at the base of his spine.

Lachlan garbles out a muffled groan, bucking in Adair's hand, eyes squeezed shut and head thrown back against Adair's chest, his mouth half open as he twists back against Adair. Blankets dampening with perspiration as Adair thrusts over and over into the tight spot created by Lachlan's legs, his hair sticking to his forehead, his fingers playing with the hard nub of Lachlan's nipple.

Lachlan's little pants and moans of want increase. Writhing against the solid wall of Adair's body, he feels Adair losing his pace, hips stuttering as he grunts and fucks. Burning need spreads from Lachlan's groin to his thighs, Adair's wrist twisting with every upstroke in his quest to get Lachlan to come before him, and it doesn't really take much more than that.

As Adair's hips come to a staccato, he tightens his grip on Lachlan's cock and thumbs the pulsing vein on the underside, and that's it, Lachlan's done for. He coats Adair's hand with pearly white ropes, shaking and trembling as Adair gets him through the aftershocks, his own hips gracelessly thrusting up into that hot, wet spot until his back goes rigid and he comes, hard and messy all over Lachlan's thighs.

They lie quivering and spent, their breath rough and broken, warm over damp skin. Neither of them moves for a few minutes. Adair's fingertips caress Lachlan's side, Lachlan's cock softening in Adair's loose grip.

I missed you, Lachlan wants to say as he shifts even closer, but he doesn't. Instead, he places a quiet kiss over the corner of Adair's mouth.

* * *

"Lachlan?"

Lachlan bolts up, shaken out of his reverie, his hand automatically reaching for his knife. "What?" he mutters groggily, trying to blink the memory of Adair out of his sleep-clogged eyes.

Keith raises his hands in front of him, as though to say he's meaning no harm. "I talked to Leanne -- she's the other psychic who got in before us. It started to snow. Roads in and out are blocked."

Lachlan groans and buries his face in his hands. He can smell a headache coming.

"I think we'd do better just to sit tight and wait until it's cleared. There's no way we can make it any further north now."

"Yeah, yeah, all right." Lachlan pushes himself up, rubbing his temples with his knuckles. Had he fallen asleep for real? "Whatever."

A brown bag with a bottle's neck sticking out of it is presented under his nose, and Lachlan's eyes travel up the bag to the hand holding it, and the arm and body attached to it. Keith is smiling, as usual, even though there's a hint of something in his eyes Lachlan's sleep-muddled brain can't quite place.

"Truce?"

Lachlan sighs, and shuffles on the couch so that Keith can sit next to him.

"Only if you shut the fuck up for the rest of the night."

Keith laughs, doesn't answer, but doesn't add anything else, either aloud or in Lachlan's head, which Lachlan considers a small victory. He takes the bottle from

Keith's fingers and draws a long sip, feeling the liquor burn and blister as it slides down his throat, the buzz of warmth spreading from his tongue to every pore of his skin.

Getting soundly and resolutely drunk sounds like the best option he's got.

Chapter Four

Adair is waiting, frustration reaching its peak. The war's already in full swing. Ezra's leg jitters nervously next to him, and Morgan's stealing looks across the table to each of the three different entrances to the main hall.

"He'll be here," Ezra repeats for the thousandth time. "You know him, he's probably somewhere getting laid."

"I don't give a flying shit where he's sticking it," Adair growls. "He fucking knows it's War night, he fucking better be here right the fuck now."

Morgan cringes. "He'll be here," he tries to reassure Adair, nudging at his beer with his fingertips. "He's always made it."

That was indeed true. Dagan might have had his head in the clouds or his dick buried in someone's ass, but he had never actually missed a practice, or worse, a war. Still, the clock's ticking and Dagan is nowhere to be found.

"I'm going to kick his ass so hard he won't be able to get any action for a month once he's here," Adair seethes, downing the last of his glass in a gulp.

"Maybe you're just jealous that he's getting laid and you aren't," says a voice behind him. Adair snaps around, his eyes narrowing, and nearly chokes on his own tongue when he sees Dagan, looking flustered and freshly fucked, standing right beside none other than Cedric, his leering smile telling Adair all that he needs to know.

"You," he barks at Dagan, "get in with the guys. We're on in five. And *you*," he adds, standing and stabbing Cedric's chest with his finger. "Come with me. Now."

Dagan sheepishly sits next to Morgan as Adair marches off. He knows Cedric can feel the anger radiating off him in waves, and he doesn't even bother trying to calm himself down. Once they reach a somewhat secluded corner of the place, he rounds on

Cedric, grabbing a fistful of his shirt and damn near slamming him against the wall. "What the fuck are you playing at?"

"What are you now, jealous?"

"I wouldn't go near that with a ten-foot pole, you self-absorbed prick," Adair spits. "I told you to get out of my way."

"You don't own the place, kid, and I can assure you, your boy was *very* willing."

"I don't give a flying fuck about how willing he was. If I see you around here one more time you can rest assured I will kick your fucking ass so hard you'll need a map to distinguish it from your head."

Cedric laughs and catches hold of Adair's wrists, as if to either keep him close or toss him away, it's not quite clear. "Temper, temper," he singsongs, smirking. "You know what they say about that."

"You know what I say about that?" Adair snarls. "Fuck off. I mean it, Cedric."

"Why should I? You're so entertaining." Cedric's icy eyes glow darkly. "Like a kid tossing teddies out of the pram."

Adair steps back and runs his hands over his face, trying to keep his breathing in check. The DJ changes songs, and he can see with the corner of his eyes the rest of the crew looking anxiously at him.

"You better get going," Cedric whispers, his long red hair falling out of his ponytail and brushing across Adair's face when he leans in. His erection presses against Adair's leg. "Unless you'd rather keep your boys waiting."

Adair pulls back, slams his fist into Cedric's jaw, sending him reeling against the wall. People cheer and whoop excitedly, but Adair doesn't listen, making a beeline for his table and motioning the guys to follow him. He needs to release some stress, or he's going to do something stupid real soon.

"What the hell --" Ezra splutters once Adair reaches them. "We have to go."

"I know," Adair snaps as they march on the dance floor. "Let's fucking move it then." He glares at Dagan, who cowers behind Morgan, his eyes wide and fearful.

Great. Just what he needs, Cedric to go after his crew.

Motherfucker.

"Midnight's crew is on the floor," the DJ roars, pumping up the volume.

Adair leads them on, his boots slamming down on the uneven floor, his long hair swishing in his face, blurring the crowd around them. Dagan shifts with Ezra to the sides, repeating Adair's moves as he and Morgan go back-to-back, grinding down long enough to brush the pavement. The crowd cheers them on, and Adair shifts up again, while Morgan rolls on his back and slides through Adair's open legs, only for Ezra and Dagan to grab his extended arms and have him cartwheel between them amidst the wild encouragement.

Adair grinds low, his leg drawing an arc through the air, and he spins on the heel of his boot. Dagan does the same, mirroring him, and they both end up facing one another as Ezra and Morgan slide behind them, the four of them drawing a two-coupled circle on the floor, like hawks studying one another. Adair is the first one to break through, Ezra following, both of them bending backwards in a graceful curve, their hands almost brushing the floor.

The energy flow keeps them going, Adair's adrenaline rush just spiked up by the crew's counterpoint steps. The crowd's cheers go through him like shots of bourbon, and for a moment he doesn't feel anything, doesn't know anything if not the bass rhythm pumping through him.

It's bliss. After spending most of the week worrying out of his skull about the raids ending with nothing, after Cedric showing up again and dear Christ, fucking Dagan, and with mating season upon him, it's only the freedom of dance keeping him sane.

That, and counting the days to the next full moon.

God, whenever Lachlan would come along, it would never be early enough.

He snaps back up, ending in the middle of the floor, the guys flanking him, their feet keeping up the beat, opening up in an arrow-shaped triangle, leaving Adair free to stand on his hands, both legs shooting up for Morgan and Dagan to catch. Adair ends

standing on their shoulders, just as Ezra cartwheels back to position, finishing the number as he slides down to his knees, framed between the three of them.

The cheers spike through the roof, and Adair jumps off the guys' shoulders, pumping his fist through the air. The crew flanks him, just as Riff comes round with a bucketful of cash, yelling as loud as he can, above the clapping and screaming.

"Midnight's crew wins again! Give it up for Adair and his men!"

Adair grins, his heartbeat drumming in his ears, echoing the music's rhythm, energy flows like electricity over his skin.

"Let's get our share," Ezra yells in his ear, pointing towards Riff the broker. Adair nods against him, clapping Morgan's shoulder and kicking Dagan in the shins, giving him a half-hearted glare that melts quickly in the light of Dagan's half terrified glance. It's not Dagan's fault that Cedric --

"Good job, kid."

Adair snaps around, but Ezra puts one hand over his shoulder, restraining him. Dagan steps quickly backwards, looking at Cedric with pure mistrust. Cedric leers, hands deep in his pockets, and Adair nods at the crew, silently telling them it's all right, and they retreat. Not before Morgan squeezes Adair's wrist, telling him where he'll be finding them. "Thanks," Adair says without taking his eyes off Cedric.

Cedric shakes his head, still smiling from ear to ear. "Well, you certainly grew into yourself."

Adair stands in his face, adrenaline and booze and rage spurring him on. "Stay away from my crew, or I swear to God, I will find you and you won't have anyone else to turn."

"This is what you think of me?"

"Don't flatter yourself," Adair says, smirking himself this time. He can see Cedric flinching briefly, and it makes Adair's blood pump faster.

"I have no interest in you, or in anything you do. You can stick around as long as you like, but you leave the boys alone. There can only be one wolf in the pack, Ced. You

should fucking know that." Adair pulls back, patting Cedric's shoulder patronizingly as he walks off through the mass of people crowding in on him.

* * *

Four days stuck here, and Lachlan's going insane. He has to get back on his bike and the fuck out of Bumfuck Nowhere, Snow, before he commits suicide. Or murder. Or both, not necessarily in that order.

Keith is on the murdering list.

Next is Leanne, the other psychic who's been harassing Lachlan since they got there, and who doesn't get the message that unless she has a ten-inch cock he is not even going to turn a backwards glance.

Then maybe Sahale, who makes Connors look like a cute kitten.

Lachlan tosses a baseball against the wall, his frustration rising higher with every hour. The hailstorm turned into thick, heavy snow that covers every inch of available road. Just as Keith predicted, which turned him, if possible, into even more of a self-confident asshole.

Keith seems to be right in his element, which just adds to Lachlan's impatience. In less than a day Keith knew everyone's first name and was playing poker with Sahale and the other guys, cleaning pretty much everyone out. His persistent cheerfulness is more annoying than the mother-fucking weather.

Lachlan had been ready to leave Kamloops five minutes after they'd parked their bikes. Now, Lachlan's ready to leave and burn the place down after he does.

Come on, don't be a moody bitch.

Lachlan grits his teeth and bangs his head against the railing of the upper bunk, trying to block Keith's laughter out of his brain.

"You're cute when you're angry." Keith speaks this time, and climbs up on the bunk next to him. Lachlan smothers a groan in the sheets.

"You're like the one-night stand that just won't clear the fuck out," Lachlan moans without resurfacing. "What the fuck did I do to deserve this?"

"The one-night stand you keep wanking off to?"

Lachlan rolls on his side, giving him a murderous glare. "Turn on the radio if you don't like it."

"And shut off free porn?"

"You're *not* watching my thoughts!" Lachlan splutters, pushing himself up to a sitting position.

Keith's eyes twinkle mischievously. "Well, so who is he?"

"He's none of your fucking business."

"He looks hot." Keith shuffles closer, nudging Lachlan's shoulder with a wink. "Or maybe it's just because he's under you. Oh, hey!" He leans away, looking halfway between amused and alarmed. "That's not a very nice thing to say."

Lachlan grinds his teeth together. He then exhales, deeply, trying to calm himself down because if he murders Keith he'll be stuck in Bumfuck Nowhere for about forever. And Leanne will probably tie him to a wall and punish him.

"She'd do that." Keith grins. "Plus you won't kill me. I'm cute."

"You keep telling yourself that."

"So is he as good as he sounds?"

Lachlan sighs. "Better," he mutters under his breath, just because he's been thinking about Adair all the fucking time since they'd been stuck there.

Keith doesn't say anything, which in hindsight should've shocked Lachlan more. He just nudges at him again and grins. "Let's go get wasted. We've found another Scotch reserve."

Lachlan shakes his head, flinging back horizontal. "No."

"Did I interrupt your self-lovin' time?"

"Well, you *would* know, since you're living in my head."

"Fair enough, and I know I didn't interrupt anything important, so let's go." He grabs Lachlan's hand and yanks him down off the bunk with a laugh. "I don't want Sahale to finish it off all by himself without givin' fair share."

Lachlan sighs and shakes his head. "Fine, fine."

Maybe if he gets wasted he will be able to block Keith's voice.

The giggle he's sure only he can hear as they walk down the stairs to the main room tells him he'll probably need to do more than that.

* * *

Okay, maybe Lachlan has had more brilliant ideas. He's on his second bottle and cruising happily on his happy buzzing cloud of happiness. Christ, he shouldn't drink so much, not on a job, but this stopped being a job seventy hours ago. If he were in Germantown, or Dulles, he'd probably have someone to get wasted *with*, which at least would make it entertaining. Here, he's just drowning his sorrows in booze for the sake of numbness.

And silence. Peaceful, blissful silence and rest from Keith's continuous crap.

He's willing to let himself loose a little if it means he can have peace inside his own head. Maybe Thorn finds that sixth sense deal arousing, or maybe Rae is more discreet, but Lachlan's done with psychics for the rest of his life.

Christ, give him his fucking werewolf already.

Keith flops beside him on the ratty old couch, taking the bottle out of Lachlan's hands. Lachlan sighs but lets it go, eyes closed, head resting on the back of the couch. He's drunk, he's mellow, and for once in four days he's not fucking restless. He can even tolerate Keith, if he concentrates.

Keith puts his feet up across the couch, legs above Lachlan's lap, and grins at him over the neck of the bottle. "You look like you could use some company."

Lachlan snorts. "Go figure."

"You guys... I don't get you." Keith shakes his head, wriggling a little on the couch to get comfortable. "What's the point of running all across this shit we call world if you can never take a break and enjoy life?"

"I do breaks," Lachlan says, "only not the breaks you think."

"With that guy?" Keith chuckles, pointing at Lachlan's head.

Lachlan considers telling him to shut the fuck up, but he's not at his brightest, and what's more, Keith has had his own peep show for three days now. Pointless of

Lachlan to be all secretive about it. "Yeah," he mutters, staring off into the crackling fire. Shit. Another week, at least, before he can get to Washington.

"Where is he?"

"None of your business."

"Uh huh, I see." Keith shifts closer. "Doesn't look like he cares too much to me. Lets you wander off all by yourself, doing God knows what."

Lachlan eyes him blearily. He's seeing two Keiths. He's either in hell, or he probably should've stopped drinking sooner. "We're not like that. We're not..."

Keith chuckles and drapes one arm around Lachlan's back. "Exclusive?"

Lachlan shakes his head. "Yeah. No. I mean, yes."

"I could give you a good reason not to be," Keith purrs, fingers tracing down the opening of Lachlan's shirt, finding perspiration damp skin. "I could give you plenty."

Lachlan shakes his head. "I don't know what the fuck you're on about -- Keith -- nhg --"

Keith's mouth covers Lachlan's own, dragging his lips over Lachlan's, pulling him closer to the side. Keith's leg winds its way between Lachlan's thighs, his breath hot across Lachlan's parted lips. *Been wanting this since I saw you, heard you moan that fucker's name every time you jacked off. Saw you spread yourself for him, God, so fucking hot...*

Lachlan groans, his dick throbbing in his pants, Keith's tongue pushing past his lips as he keeps whispering filth in Lachlan's head. It feels good. Hot. Sweat and alcohol map stripes on barely visible skin, and Lachlan fists Keith's shirt, his hips jerking against Keith's solid thigh.

Keith's fingers thread through Lachlan's hair and he yanks his head back, pressing his mouth over the hollow of his throat. Lachlan shudders, heat pooling in his groin, but when Keith's teeth rake across his neck he snaps back up, shoving him to the other end of the couch, pulse racing under his skin.

"I can't," he mutters, shakes his head, trying to clear the alcohol fumes. "I can't, that's not it."

Keith cocks his head to the side, his mouth slightly parted, breath still coming harsh through his nose. "Your body seems to think otherwise," he states hoarsely, nodding at Lachlan's very obvious erection.

"I want *him*," Lachlan mutters again, rubbing at his forehead with his closed fists as though he could straight iron it. "Not you. You can't fuck with my head like this, man, you just can't."

Keith flicks his head back irritably. "It's already all in your head. I didn't do anything but play on what you already wanted."

"I didn't want it with *you*," Lachlan grits out, staggering to stand.

"That's a new one. Rumor has it, you fuck everything that has limbs and pulse."

Lachlan laughs, ragged and short. "Maybe I do, maybe I don't. But something rumor hasn't told you, Keith --" He lowers himself down so he can stare in Keith's eyes, so different from the tumultuous gray of Adair's, so plain against the ever shifting moonlight that shone from Adair's irises. "I'm the one that calls the shots."

He walks away, leaving Keith speechless on the couch. He's sobering up with every step he takes, and once he's in his bunk, he buries his face into the pillow and fists his dick, cheeks burning with shame as he gets himself off with quick, rough strokes, too dry, too fast, hurtful enough to wash away the memory of his moment of weakness.

He comes with Adair's name on his lips and rolls over, breathless as though he's been running for miles.

Snow or no snow, he's going to leave Assfuck Nowhere with the first morning light.

Chapter Five

He can make it another couple of days. Adair's one hundred percent sure he can. If he doesn't go insane first.

There have been wars every single night at the Chlodwig, gangs coming up from the Cities to have a go at what is rumored to be the unbeatable Midnight's crew. The raids have been put on hold, and Adair has been working out all his stress during practice at day, and at the pub at night.

It still doesn't help. He tosses himself into bed until the sun rises, antsy, restless, forever wanting, tasting Lachlan's absence like it's physical. He hasn't yet been away from Lachlan during mating season. With every day the moon keeps drawing fuller, and Adair's stress levels are going awry.

Add Cedric on top of everything, and yes, Adair can't wait for Lachlan to arrive, or the moon to pass, one or the other. Possibly both, or he will end up murdering someone, or fucking the first available hole. And given that the only people he's constantly around are the guys, it's a non option.

And Christ, Lachlan -- he can't do that to him. Natural instincts or not.

He closes his eyes, something he does way too often now, and lets himself remember the last time he'd been with Lachlan. Almost four weeks, and his yearning for him hasn't decreased one bit.

* * *

Adair's hands grip Lachlan's hips, strong enough to bruise, his mouth pressed hot and wet over the juncture of Lachlan's neck. Lachlan keens and spreads his legs as far as they'll go with his pants pooled over his legs, his hands grabbing for purchase at Adair's biceps behind him.

It's still chilly, drizzle falling on their backs, dampening their clothes, mixing with sweat and trailing down in rivulets over toned, firm muscles. The thrill of being out in the open, just a stone's throw away from the station, a stone's throw away from being seen and outed, cuts through them in a frantic, needy rush of arousal.

Adair flicks his tongue above the curve of Lachlan's ear, bites down into the fleshy part and wraps one arm around Lachlan's stomach, his other hand braced against Eric's garage's wall as he draws back until he's almost out of him, only the tip of his dick keeping Lachlan open, wide and obscene. Lachlan wails and Adair smiles, presses his lips against the skin behind his ear.

"Please," Lachlan begs, twisting his hands into the sleeves of Adair's shirt, his breath coming in short, tiny bursts. Adair fastens his mouth over his neck and guides him down, slowly, inch after inch after inch of his hard dick filling Lachlan up completely, more than he'd ever thought possible. Adair's eyes roll in the back of his head, and he mutes his groan against the nape of Lachlan's neck.

It's too much and too good. It feels like he won't last another second, but he has to. Gotta make it back to the main track, get Ezra to pick him up before nightfall. Can't stay, no matter how much he wants to. Adair's teeth pull at Lachlan's skin, keeping him still as Lachlan tries to rock back against him. He sucks and bites and leaves marks all down Lachlan's back, while he keeps him stuffed full and burning.

Lachlan whimpers, edges his head back and leans it against Adair's shoulder, his mouth open in a round "O," lips bruised and swollen like strawberries. Adair's hand flits over his side, tickles. Lachlan huffs out a chuckle as Adair tosses his hair back, nuzzling the side of his face.

"God, so fucking hot, Lachlan," he whispers, holding him still, blanketing him with his body. The metal of Adair's zipper is digging over the curve of Lachlan's ass, and Adair knows it's got to hurt. Lachlan's skin is reddening where the metal rakes up and down as he shifts on his feet, sinks in half an inch deeper, but Lachlan doesn't seem to care. He wants, he always wants, like Adair is his drug and Lachlan's flying high, and fuck, that is the one single hottest thing Adair has ever felt.

Lachlan's the only one who's ever made him feel like he's living again.

"Please," Lachlan murmurs, voice thin and shredded to pieces, almost lost in the quiet of the desert twilight. Adair shifts his arm down on Lachlan's stomach, slides lower, wraps his hand around Lachlan's dick as he starts to thrust into him, slow, purposeful rolls of his hips that have Lachlan whimpering and moaning as he's pinned between Adair's solid body behind him and the wall in front of him.

"Fuck, fuck --" Adair grunts, his balls slapping against Lachlan's ass, his fist slick with residual grease and Lachlan's precome. Lachlan stuffs his fist into his mouth as he tries to stifle a keening cry, his body shaking with every rough, quick shove of Adair's cock in his ass.

Adair tightens his fingers around the base of Lachlan's cock and starts to stroke him, loosely, too loose to give him any release, but just enough to keep the pleasure building at the pit of his stomach. Lachlan convulses around his cock, sending tiny little dots dancing before Adair's eyes and he impatiently rocks back, quiet, breathy little moans dying against his knuckles.

"Gotta hear you," Adair grunts, his eyes stinging with sweat and rain. He takes Lachlan's hand, pulling it away from his mouth, and places it against the wall to steady them both. Lachlan's answering moan sends his mind reeling, a rush of powerful owning sneaking under his skin. He fits his arm between Lachlan's legs, the crook of Adair's elbow curling under Lachlan's knee as he lifts his leg up, kicking free of his pants, parting Lachlan as wide as he will go before driving into him to the hilt with one quick, hard thrust.

Lachlan wails, head falling forward and thudding against the wall. "More," he moans, long blond hair twisting in knots as Adair buries his face at the back of his neck, mouthing at the wet skin. "Again, Adair, please --"

The change in angle has Adair hitting on Lachlan's prostate with every twist of his hips, and Lachlan's cry dies on his lips in a string of breathless little moans. "God -- Adair -- oh, oh --" Lachlan bites into his lip, eyes shut tight, and Adair can't hold back anymore. He loses his rhythm, pounding into him mercilessly, his mouth covering

Lachlan's as he mumbles things unspoken and curls his tongue inside, entangles it with Lachlan's for a breathless, sloppy kiss.

Lachlan's groan vibrates through him like liquid, burning oil. Adair snaps forward in a staccato, and just like that Lachlan chokes out a warning and shoots, coming hard and fast and messy against the wall, his hand clinging desperately to Adair's arm. Adair grunts, breaks the kiss with a long, drawn out moan, a loud white roar in his ears extinguishing every other noise as Lachlan tightens around him, pushing him over the edge as he fills him up with his come. He almost blacks out with the force of his release.

* * *

"Adair?"

He shakes himself awake. "Yeah?" Christ. He's hard again. This is not shaping up to be good.

Ezra groans, dragging one hand over his face. The rest of the crew has stopped, looking uncomfortable.

Shit.

"Okay, man... is there something wrong?"

"No, nothing." Adair kicks imaginary dirt off his boots, not looking at any of the guys. "Sorry. Just --" He sighs and pinches the bridge of his nose. He's usually concentrating and precise as a fucking Swiss clock during practice, but lately he's managed to fuck up even that.

"Do you wanna talk about -- stuff?" Morgan offers awkwardly, sitting down on a bench next to the truck. "You've been..." He trails off, not knowing how to end it or probably aware that whatever he would say might tick Adair off.

Adair spares a split second to feel sorry for the bastard, but Ezra picks up on Morgan's sentence. "Weird. Now don't get me wrong, we've been winning as usual but..."

"We're worried," Dagan finishes with a nervous look. Since the time Dagan showed up late -- almost too late -- for the war because he was with Cedric, Adair hasn't been exactly friendly towards him.

Their collective concern makes Adair feel a bit like an asshole. "Don't worry. It's just -- it's nothing."

Ezra nods seriously. "Right." Adair sees him exchanging a brief look with Dagan, who hastily turns away. "It's not because of that new guy?"

"Which new guy?"

Dagan coughs.

Adair grits his teeth together. "It's not because of him."

"Is it the moon?" Morgan dares to ask, taking a seat next to Ezra.

Adair barely restrains a groan. "I appreciate the concern, but no. It's nothing." He straightens himself up, and reluctantly, the guys follow him, but not before Ezra places a hand over his shoulder, squeezing and holding him back.

"You know you can talk to us if you need anything," he says seriously. "We can help out."

Adair strains his mouth in a smile, and they go back to practice.

* * *

Coming back from the last run has been a fucking pain in the ass. Once the snow cleared out and he'd put Assfuck Nowhere in his rearview mirror, Lachlan ditched Keith. He'd left him in Seattle after the quickest, quietest ride Lachlan had experienced with Keith, for which he had not filed any complaint.

Seattle had been an in and out drop off, which didn't in the slightest make up for the four days stuck in Assfuck, and the lingering, disquieting feeling that had settled under Lachlan's skin since Keith -- since *he* had let Keith kiss him. Christ. Neither he nor Adair had ever said a word on the nature of their relationship, but the simple idea of having someone else touch him felt wrong all over, as though there was something that went deeper than he knew, right in his gut, something that made sense only when he was with Adair.

Christ, he won't be back in Washington one day too soon. And he'll have a word with Rae about working in a team *ever* again. Lachlan grits his teeth and guns his engine, the bike shooting through the open, broken down stretch of interstate before him.

There're still two nights before full moon, and he'll make it.

He has to.

* * *

The War's on. It's more vicious than any other night, the pub packed to the ceiling, people hanging off the balcony's railings to watch the fights. Tonight's excitement rates wagers going through the roof, money passing back and forth through brokers and individual betters alike. It's heady, goes to the brain like a shot of bourbon, like bolts of lightning.

Adair's crew is waiting for their turn to step up to the challenge, glasses of whiskey passed back and forth as they stare at the competition with hawk-like eyes. The new crews have little to nothing on them, but they're vicious nonetheless, daring in their routines. They're all there to win, and Adair smiles at his companions as he motions for another shot.

"It's gonna be fun tonight," he yells above the thump-thump-thump of the music, eyes shining above the rim of his glass. Dagan raises his own in agreement, and the others quickly mimic them.

No one can throw their challenge yet -- the newbies have to win their way up to the top before dancing against Midnight's crew, which leaves Adair with plenty of time to scope out the crews scattered around the Chlodwig, checking for the comings and goings, identifying worthy opponents or other scavengers that are just here to deal with the black market bidders.

The market is suffering thanks to the shitty weather up north, and even though they are well covered with the income from the Wars, he doesn't want Noah to think they're bailing on him. Thankfully, everyone is in the same boat regarding the raids.

Adair supposes he should feel at least mildly concerned about it, but for the life of him he can't. The preliminaries are finally over. They're up next.

"Let's show 'em," Ezra says as he stands, nodding towards the ring. Adair does the same, cracking his neck and arms as he stretches.

There's not even room for a contest. The moment they step on the floor, the roar of the crowd makes the basement hall rumble on its fundamentals.

It's quick and dirty. The approaching of mating season also means that Adair's sexual frustration floods through his steps, raising the stakes up to a whole 'nother level. It's hips grinding and hands sliding, grabbing fistfuls of clothing that spin them around, facing one another, legs hooking above elbows, chest to chest, back to back, a whirlwind of high tempo and sizzling chemistry.

The other crew tries to answer, but there's no way any of them can keep up with Adair's charge. Their routine gets booed by the overenthusiastic crowd, and Riff skids to a halt in the middle of the ring, raising Adair's arm in triumph.

"And it's Midnight's crew again! Give it up for Adair and his men!"

Adair feels elated, wired up as though electricity is flowing through his body. He can smell the acrid, pungent sweat on his crew members, musky hot and thick, settling around him like a blanket. The wolf in him howls inside his chest, nearly desperate with want. Need.

They collect their share and they pile back in their booth, and Adair's acutely aware of their excitement, their own energy crackling through the air. His heartbeat thunders in his ears, and he bites the inside of his mouth, drawing blood.

They are his companions, for fuck's sake. He can't possibly be thinking of fucking them. He might be a werewolf, but he's got more dignity than that.

Christ, he's gotta clear out of the Chlodwig before he does something incredibly stupid. "I'm going home, I'm beat," he says, and he hears his voice as though it's a stranger speaking. "I'll see you tomorrow, same time same place?"

"Wait, Adair -- man, wait. Aren't you gonna stick around for some celebratory rounds? We deserve to get wasted." Ezra grins broadly.

Adair strains to smile back, and shakes his head. "You go ahead. As long as you show up tomorrow."

"Right." Morgan waves at him with a two-fingered salute. "See ya."

"See ya." Adair waves and grabs his share of cash, stowing it in his back pocket before marching towards the exit. Some fresh air will do him good, he thinks as he inhales the dewy smell of grass and earth, gravel crunching underneath his boots as he cuts across the parking lot towards the woods.

At least Cedric had been nowhere to be seen tonight. Adair can be grateful for small mercies. It's only two nights until full moon, and then Lachlan will be there. Hopefully, that will take care of it.

If Lachlan isn't here in time... Adair doesn't want to think about it. Suffice it to say it would suck a lot. He chuckles at his own pun, then wonders briefly if he's going insane -- it would be possible to go crazy with need, he supposes, but he'd rather not experience it.

Before he knows it, he's turning left under the weeping willow's low branches, the dark shape of his cabin coming into view. He sighs in relief. A few hours of sleep, and then he'll try to release some stress the old-fashioned way.

Everything would've worked, if he hadn't heard the low rumble of an old 1600 car engine for a split second before it's killed.

Blood rushes to his head and he snaps around, stalking fast through the wilderness to the spot behind his cabin -- the one where Lachlan usually hides his bike - - and yanks Cedric out of that trashcan of a car. "What the fucking fuck do you think you're doing?" He yells this time. There's no one to hear at any rate, and he's so fucking fed up with Cedric's mindfuck games it's not even funny.

"What do you think I'm doing?" Cedric breathes in his face, his teeth bared in a feral smile. "You've been running in circles since I came here, kiddo. Time you own up to your desires."

"My *desire* is to level your fucking head even with your shoulders, you arrogant prick," Adair growls, close enough to Cedric's face to smell the change in him, the

unique blend of animal and human that shoots through his blood, through *Adair's* blood.

Cedric laughs, crazy and undeterred, and grabs hold of Adair's jacket, pulling him closer, their hips crashing together with the force of the impact. "I can feel that," he whispers, breath tickling over Adair's lips. He lodges his leg between Adair's thighs, their foreheads knocking against one another. "You can't fool me, kiddo. You've been wanting this as much as I have."

Adair's breath grows ragged, strained. Cedric's blue eyes are almost completely swallowed by black, painted in the darkness, pupils blown wide. He bites Adair's neck, their chests slamming together as he pulls him closer. "I know you, Adair. Been knowing you before you knew yourself."

Adair groans and twists his fingers in Cedric's hair, hot, burning want and rage and sheer *need*, rising to a level Adair can't control. He pushes Cedric down on the hood of the car, his heart ramming in his chest like a thunder roar, and Cedric grunts his approval, pushing Adair's jacket off his shoulders and raking his nails over his biceps.

"Yeah, c'mon," Cedric urges him, his legs fanning apart, knocking Adair off balance and tripping him above his body. "Should've known," he smirks against Adair's skin, and skins his teeth in the fleshy part of Adair's shoulder.

Adair growls and answers accordingly, ripping Cedric's shirt in two with one swift move of his hand, his hard dick digging painfully against the metallic teeth of his zipper. His sense flies out the window, and he cups Cedric's dick through his pants, feeling his hard-on, hot against his skin through the heavy denim.

Cedric slides his hands underneath Adair's top, finding the groove of Adair's hips and pulling him closer, crushing Adair's hand between their bodies. "You surely filled out," Cedric grunts, stroking the indent of his skin and bone until he can curl his fingers around Adair's cock, fisting roughly at the base and pulling up to the head, slick precome easing the way. Adair knocks his forehead against Cedric's chin, biting, scratching, wanting Cedric to shut the fuck up. He yanks Cedric's pants down his legs, molding his palm above his cock, the chill air whipping over sweaty, hot skin.

Adair's falling through a haze of distorted, craving desire. Cedric's leg hooks over his waist, and he rolls them over on the hood of the car, pinning Adair underneath him. Adair growls in frustration, bucking up, hands flying to grasp and pull, their clothes coming off of them in strips. One of his legs shoots out, knocking Cedric's knees further apart and off balance. Cedric falls with a growl and Adair tosses him on the ground, crawling atop him. He smothers a howl in Cedric's chest, his groin throbbing painfully as he rides the indent of Cedric's thigh.

Cedric arches up, fists Adair's hair and shoves his face down on his chest, lower, towards his aching dick. Adair doesn't let him steer. He nips Cedric's abs before shooting his head up to bite at one of Cedric's nipples. Cedric groans and tosses his head back, shifting on the ground until their dicks bump together, getting identical moans out of the two of them.

Adair spits in his hand, and one long, thick finger presses up against Cedric's ass. The hand around Adair's dick tightens, and Adair grunts, his finger sliding smoothly past the ring of muscle. Cedric hisses and squirms, his fist dragging restlessly on Adair's cock, extracting bout after bout of precome out of the plum-shaped head.

Adair adds another finger with the first, dry and rough, and groans again when Cedric goes to fondle his balls. "Told ya you'd like it," Cedric smirks, licking a swath up Adair's neck. Long red hair whips across Adair's face as he turns to the side, rocking himself back on Adair's fingers. "Now c'mon and do it like you mean it."

Adair snarls and yanks his fingers out, cups Cedric's face and mashes their mouths together as he shifts on his knees, grabs hold of Cedric's waist and impales him on his dick.

It's tight and scorching hot, dry enough to burn the skin right off him. He doesn't pause, Cedric's body giving way as he shoves his cock in up to the hilt, and when his balls slap against the back of Cedric's ass, Cedric's nails sink painfully into the small of his back, urging him on.

Adair bites at Cedric's lower lip, drawing blood, and he pins him to the ground as he starts to move. It pulls his stomach in with every rough, shredded breath, his

bangs plastered to his head with sweat as he slides all the way out before ramming back in, making Cedric cry out in ecstasy and pain both.

It's hard and fast, the ground digging harshly into Adair's knees, Cedric's fingers bruising Adair's waist. Adair's teeth pull blood to the surface, leaving coin-sized marks on Cedric's chest, and Cedric rocks back into every hard, violent thrust.

There's no finesse, no lingering touches. Adair's hand pushes Cedric's other leg up against his chest, bent at the knee, his hole stretching obscenely open around the thick girth of Adair's dick as he thrusts into him with a frantic pace. The change in angle has Adair balls deep, the smack of skin on skin adding to their panting breaths and strangled groans.

Cedric rises up, his hands molded against Adair's chest, and he pushes Adair back, sitting on his lap, his motion forcing a deep, garbled moan from Adair's lips. Cedric cups Adair's face and yanks him closer, heavy breathing exchanging around their entwining tongues, mouths open against one another. "More," Cedric gasps, spreading his legs wider as he rides Adair like a demon.

Adair damn nearly howls, Cedric's ass squeezing him hard enough to break. He uses his knees as leverage as he pushes up, holding Cedric's legs wide apart over his lap as he slams himself home, once, twice, losing his rhythm as he feels his release from his tailbone to his groin and the rest of his body.

Cedric fists Adair's hair and clamps his mouth over Adair's, hot, dirty and taunting, just as it had always been, and Adair comes, spurting fast and thick into Cedric's hole.

"Fuck, fuck," Cedric cries out, his body clamping down viciously, hips moving so fast in Adair's lap they're almost a blur. He fists his own cock, pulling hard, milking the last of Adair's orgasm out of him before he comes, too, coating Adair's stomach with his spunk. "Fuck, there we go," Cedric pants against Adair's shoulder, the usual smug trace in his voice. "Not so hard -- or not anymore, yeah?"

Adair grits his teeth together and shoves Cedric off, running his hands through his sweaty hair, his heart racing like a winning horse in his ribcage. "Get back in your

fucking car and get out of here,” Adair grunts, zipping himself up. He doesn’t know if he’s ashamed, angry, or still feeling the curse of the moon throbbing under his skin.

“Good thing you left it running.”

Cedric cocks his eyebrow at him. “I didn’t.”

“Then what --” Adair frowns, turning around, and freezes. “Oh God.”

Chapter Six

Lachlan stares, wide eyed, the tremors of the running bike masking the bone deep shivers running through his body. Adair's covered in spunk, his chest bare, jeans tattered and ruined, top button undone, and the guy sprawled on the ground leers up at Lachlan, waving cheekily. The bite scar on Adair's left hip glows eerily in the half darkness, and his gray eyes stare at Lachlan as though he's seen a ghost.

Lachlan takes in the red-haired guy, who's taking an exceptionally long time getting to his feet and fucking covering his spent dick, and then Adair again, standing stock still in the center of the clearing like a goddamn statue.

"Lachlan..."

Lachlan pulls himself back together and turns the bike off, slowly climbing off it, hardening his glare. "Surprise," he spits out, mockingly.

Adair finally takes a step forward, away from the unknown car, and runs a hand through his hair. "You shouldn't be here --"

"That's for damn well sure I shouldn't," Lachlan says, surprising himself with how hoarse his voice sounds. He can't fucking believe it, and he says so, frustration and -- and something else, something Lachlan's scared to give a name to -- taking hold of him. "I can't fucking believe you."

"Oh, so he's the one." The red-haired guy stands up, assessing Lachlan with a leer. "Now I get it. Part of it, at least." He stalks closer, and Lachlan takes a hasty step back, hating himself the moment the guy sneers.

"Cedric, stay away from him," Adair growls, stepping forward.

The use of a first name for the stranger cuts through Lachlan like a stab of ice. Lachlan blinks and swallows down the tight ball of rage that attempts to roll out of him.

He can't.

"I would never fucking have thought this," he whispers, the words hurting on the way out, more than in his own head.

"It's not how it looks --"

Lachlan laughs, short and bitter. "Christ, are they still using that one?"

"You feeling left out, Prince Charming?" The guy, Cedric, puts his arm around Lachlan's shoulders. "We can see to that..."

Lachlan shoves hard at him, making him tumble backwards. "Get your fucking hands off me! God only know where they've been."

"You've just been a witness to that." The guy smirks, tying his hair in a ponytail. "You shouldn't be so squeamish considering you obviously have had a piece of *that* yourself..."

"Shut the fuck up, Cedric!" Adair snarls as he strides forth, pushing the redhead out of his way. "Lachlan, please... it's not -- I mean, it definitely is, but not quite, not really what you think. I couldn't -- I couldn't resist."

"Oh that's flattering," Lachlan laughs, almost hysterical. "Thanks so much, pal."

"Let me explain," Adair says, his voice getting a slight begging note towards the end. "Christ, I couldn't -- I didn't want to but --"

"And I suspect you just happened to slide your dick in this particular asshole?" Lachlan yells, wildly gesturing towards a smirking Cedric. "That's so laughably lame I won't even take it into consideration. Try something else."

Adair hangs his head, shoulders taking a definite slump. "I -- he --"

The car's engine revs into life, startling both of them, and they turn around to see Cedric backing out of the clearing, waving at them out of his broken window. "I guess I'm out of here," Cedric tells Adair as he goes. "Thanks for the ride."

Adair growls and makes as though he wants to follow Cedric, but he doesn't take more than one step. He turns back to face Lachlan, something in his eyes Lachlan has never seen before, and he's surprised to feel his chest constrict, the silence blowing between them like a whirling spiral of bleak clouds.

"It's mating season," Adair confesses, looking weirdly out of place in his own backyard. "Cedric -- he is... me and him... we have a history," he says, with some difficulty.

His hand goes absentmindedly over his scar, and Lachlan closes his mouth audibly, looking away to hide the flash of pain that he's sure will show in his eyes. "I see," he whispers, his fingers tightening on the handles of his bike.

"It's something I can't fight. I've been trying to, Lachlan, I have, he's been onto me for a whole month, but you weren't here --"

"Oh, I get it now," Lachlan says, strangely detached. "I wasn't here, so you found someone else."

Adair grabs at his own hair in frustration, his chest heaving with his sharp breaths. "That's not it."

"Then what is it?"

"You weren't supposed to be here until the full moon --"

"Dear Christ, I've spent a week getting harassed by a fucking mind reader and yes, I know how nice it would have been to just let go for a while and *fuck*, especially when it's twenty-two degrees and you're stuck in the middle of fucking nowhere --"

Adair's eyes flash. "What did you do?"

"You don't fucking get to be fucking jealous now!" Lachlan screams, leaping from the bike. "Don't you fucking dare pile that bullshit on me, Adair! Not after what you did!"

"It's more complicated than that!" Adair yells back. "Christ, I don't even *like* him!"

"Then why did you fuck him?"

"He's the werewolf that turned me," Adair whispers, finally looking up.

Lachlan wishes the ground would open up and swallow him whole. A rush of heat flushes his neck and up to his face. It's like his stomach has been carved out with a knife.

"We used to be lovers. I asked him... he... I wanted to understand, know more. I couldn't just be *with* him, I had to be just *like* him. And -- that was four years ago," Adair says, voice crippled.

"Is that what you want of me?"

"No, God, Lachlan, no..."

"Then what is it you want?" Lachlan asks again, feeling like he's drowning in quicksand.

"I don't mean it like that," Adair says, his voice rougher now. "There's a connection between me and Cedric, and no matter how I much I hate it..."

"There's something I will never have."

"You don't understand, you can't." Adair shakes his head, "You're not --"

"A werewolf!" Lachlan finishes, coming to stand right in front of Adair. Christ, he'd forgotten how breathtaking Adair is. Even when painted with come that was not Lachlan's. And that shouldn't hurt, it really shouldn't.

"So that's it, isn't it?" Lachlan whispers. Fuck, his eyes are burning. He's gotta get out of here. Lachlan throws a leg over the seat and kicks his bike into life, hating the way his throat is searing, hating that he can feel his voice getting rougher by the second, hating that Adair will just stand there without moving, without doing anything. "I'm just fucking sorry I ever, ever believed what we had meant something to you."

And with that, he puts Adair behind him, a tiny dot in the taped-up rearview mirror of his bike, and if it gets blurred as Lachlan speeds away it's only because he forgot the goggles, and the wind is fucking hurting his eyes.

Yeah. That must be it.

Lachlan grits his teeth together and accelerates, wiping at his face with the back of his hand and taking a turn towards Dulles. He knows what Thorn would say -- running home to mommy, but what Lachlan could use now is a bottle of hard Scotch and Eric's top bunk.

And what's more, a friendly face wouldn't hurt.

* * *

"I won't say I told you so."

"Then don't," Lachlan says blithely, parking the bike inside Eric's garage. "Please?"

Eric shakes his head and waves him in. "I have someone over," he says, disgruntled. "So keep your voice low."

"Finally you're getting laid." Lachlan attempts to smile as Eric leads him through the empty garage. "Who is he?"

Eric waggles his eyebrows as he pushes the sliding door to the side, metal clanking noisily in the stillness of the place. "I don't kiss and tell."

"Lame." Lachlan's humor is weak, and they both know it, but Eric has enough respect to not inquire. He turns the light on in his working room, gesturing towards the empty top bunk awaiting Lachlan.

"You should probably check in with Connors," Eric says as Lachlan climbs up his ladder. "I'm sure he'd be glad to know you're safe and sound. Till Keith reported back, we thought you'd gone AWOL."

"You have him to thank," Lachlan snaps, irritation getting the best of him. "I was ready to fucking kill that motherfucker. Never. Again. Hell, I'd take Thorn for a ride before I'm subjected to another psychic for more than fourteen seconds."

Eric cringes. "What did he do?"

"Besides driving me up the fucking wall?" Lachlan flops on his back on the tiny bunk, kicking off his boots with identical echoing thuds. "He made a pass at me. While I was wasted. And wasn't too happy with the answer I gave him."

Eric chuckles, shoving his hands in his pockets. "Figures."

"What?"

"He said he's really got to talk to you about something."

Lachlan's eyes bug out of his head, and for a split second he forgets he is miserable about Adair. "You talked to him? He's --"

"In Dulles, yes," Eric finishes, settling Lachlan's bad mood deeper in the pits of hell. "And he was worried about where the hell you'd disappeared to."

Lachlan shakes his head. "I didn't know I was working with my mother. Especially given the fact that I never knew my mother."

"It's not funny," Eric says, leaning against the ladder. "Things are friggin' dangerous out there, that's why they pair you guys up."

"They should know better than to pair me with anyone," Lachlan mutters, staring blankly at the ceiling. "I'm not dynamic duo material."

Eric doesn't say anything, but he takes a couple of steps up the ladder and reaches out to squeeze Lachlan's shoulder. "Get some sleep."

Lachlan nods, grateful for the silent acceptance, and doesn't say anything else as Eric leaves him, quietly slinking out of the garage and back to whomever it is waiting for him.

It's hours before Lachlan manages to fall asleep, the snakes in his belly twisting and turning and eating at him until exhaustion wins over, and the nearly full moon fades into a pale, washed out gray dawn.

* * *

Eric wakes him sometime before noon. Lachlan's head feels like it's been hacked open with a hammer. Even the smell of fresh coffee pierces through his hazy brain like tiny needles pressing above his forehead. He drinks it anyway, spluttering as the dark liquid runs scalding down his throat. He wishes bleaching his mind would be as easy.

"Connors says he wants your ass on a plate," Eric says, conversationally. "Told him you'd be delighted to hear all he has to say in five minutes."

"Great," Lachlan grunts, slurping down the rest of the coffee. "Thanks for nothing."

"You're welcome." Eric smiles and fills his cup again. Lachlan accepts it with a nod of gratitude, his vision clearing slightly as the fog lifts from his brain, bringing all the details of the past night in sharper focus.

"Are you going to tell me what happened with him or not?"

"Keith? Told you --"

"I meant with Adair."

Lachlan takes a too large gulp and chokes, the back of his throat sizzling at the abrupt contact. "Ow!"

Eric raises his hands, looking unperturbed. "Ain't I entitled to ask? You only drop here when you're heartbroken."

"That's not true."

"Is so, 't least since Adair came to be."

Lachlan rubs his hands over his face, smothering a groan in his palms. The headache is back in full force. "I'm not in love with him."

"Did I say you were?"

"You said heartbroken."

"Aren't you?"

"Yes -- no," Lachlan groans. "Fuck."

"Exactly." Eric clasps Lachlan's shoulder. "You wanna tell me what's going on?"

Lachlan shakes his head. "I think I will go get my new asshole chewed and then pass out at the station. Stay out of your hair."

"I don't mind." Eric shrugs. "You can stay as long as you want."

Lachlan gives him a half-assed smile. "You got company," he says with a nod towards the upper loft. "I'd rather not have you hold your breath in when you're fucking. It's unhealthy, like trying to keep in a sneeze. Or a fart."

"How romantic," Eric says with a note of disgust. "All right, clear out."

Lachlan hops from the bunk and slaps Eric on his back in thanks as he heads out.

Hopefully Connors' ass kicking will be enough for him to get his bearings back and forget Adair, once and for all.

Easy as pie, right?

Right.

* * *

Connors yells, throws his teddies out of the pram, and does everything in his power to make Lachlan feel about five inches tall. Surprisingly, it helps. Lachlan finds in himself the spunk to act carefree and superior as he usually would have, irritating

Connors to the point of telling him to just clear the fuck out and pick one of the free bunks before he changes his mind. Lachlan smiles, bittersweet, but it lasts only a second.

Keith shuffles out the dorm door, stopping abruptly when he comes face to face with Lachlan. "Hey."

"Hey there." Lachlan crosses his arms above his chest. "You made it back, I see."

"No thanks to you," Keith shoots back, but without heat. He gives Lachlan a tentative smile. "I'm glad to see you made it here okay."

Lachlan nods. "Same to you."

There's an awkward pause, and Keith kicks at the dirt. *Can I say something?*

Lachlan rolls his eyes, but surprisingly, it doesn't piss him off. "Sure," he says, his tone only superficially tinged with sarcasm. "It's not like 'no' has ever stopped you anyway."

Keith laughs and walks back in the dorms. Lachlan hesitates only half a second before following him. "So, what is it?"

"I want to tell you I'm sorry," Keith says, dropping to a seat. "I shouldn't have done what I did and it was utterly stupid of me." He pauses and looks at his hands in his lap. "I should've known by the way you thought about him... I should've known there was no room for anyone else."

"Well, he didn't feel the same way, so..." Lachlan trails off into nothingness, and shrugs. "Not the point. Apology accepted, even though you should apologize for driving me insane on the run more likely..."

Keith laughs and tosses his head back. "Oh, that was fun."

"Speak for yourself!" Lachlan grumbles. "I will be scarred for life."

"You're such a drama queen." Keith slaps his thigh and stands up. "I gotta go, I have a run to pick up and Connors doesn't seem to be in a great mood..."

"I wonder why..." Lachlan mutters.

"... and I just wanted to set things straight."

"It's fine." Lachlan waves a careless hand. "Don't worry."

Keith is almost by the door when he stops and turns to throw a look over his shoulders. "And hey, Lachlan?"

"Yeah?"

"I think you should try and talk things out with your lover. I envy you guys. Your passion, your love --"

"I don't love him!"

Keith cocks an eyebrow at him. "Could've fooled me."

Lachlan slumps down on the bunk Keith has just vacated, his thoughts whirling inside his head on a continuous loop. The truth stares him right in the face, in all its simplicity. Somewhere along the line, it stopped being sex, and he's fallen in love with Adair. It crushes him but at the same time it feels freeing, like a knot has finally untied from his stomach. He is in love with Adair.

He's in love with Adair.

Lachlan runs his hands over his face and his chest, his breaths coming easier with each one he draws. He has to get himself together, and he's gotta do something, anything. He's got to set things straight, no matter how painful it's gonna be. Lachlan's not gonna cop out. He jumps up from the bunk as though it's electrified, and he all but dashes through the main room to the garage.

It's full moon tonight, and if he can make it... if he can make it, then maybe they can still work this shit out. One thing he knows, he's not going to let Adair go without a fight.

* * *

Adair has been drowning himself in liquor since early light. The Chlodwig is open all hours, and Adair thinks that pissing away last night's victory on all the booze he can get his hands on is a fair game, given how disastrous the situation turned out.

It's full moon, so he won't be at the Wars at any rate.

The crew has the night off, and as soon as he manages to rack up a dozen different bottles, he barricades himself in his cabin and gets down to it.

Of course, giving the fact that he's going to transform as soon as night falls, liquor does little to nothing to him, but he needs the burn of the alcohol on his tongue, needs to have it to fight the numbness that Lachlan's departure left him with. He needs to try and feel himself still living and kicking, even though he's never felt as empty and void of emotions, not even after Cedric turned him all those years ago.

He keeps drinking until the full, white light of the moon crosses the sky. The bottle falls limply from his hand, his fingers lengthening, turning into claws. He shakes his head, an inhuman growl slipping from lips that are stretching backwards, jaws strained, canines pushing through. Fur spurts thick and fast, and the smells entice him, changing the perspective around him. His vision blurs and sharpens again, turns black and white and meaningless, and he sits back on his hind legs and howls, his mind blissfully free, one single thought in his mind.

His mate.

He crashes through the door, heart thundering, crickets screeching loud enough for him to howl in frustration again. Adair tears off through the woods, leaping from log to log, his nostrils flaring, trying to find the lingering scent of his mate in the dew-covered branches. The woods are his home, have been his home for long enough for him to tell apart each branch, each tree, each flower and blade of grass.

None of them has his mate's scent, and it's driving him insane.

Hours trickle through like sand through glass, and with each minute his frustration grows. Adair jumps and skids through the gravel and above the intricate patterns of bushes and wild, contorted trees. No trace, no scent, nothing that can lead him to completion.

Adair howls, until his lungs burn. He leaps back and retraces his steps, his tail wagging, loins burning with need. He thinks he's captured something, a hint, a faint, but still distinguishable shadow that tells him one thing.

His mate is there for him.

Chapter Seven

Lachlan feels him before he sees him. It's like the presence of the wolf has wrapped around the cabin and the woods, making them its own. His chest constricts as he takes in the wreckage of the door and the shattered glass of several untagged bottles.

He secures his bike and plugs in the security code before going into Adair's cabin and sweeping the wreckage into an empty plastic bag, his hands sweating. He's never been inside Adair's place without him, and it feels wrong, like he's trespassing on something private. He steps quickly back out, just in time to see the dark, imposing shape of the wolf stalk upon him.

A feeling of inexplicable peace spreads in Lachlan's chest, and he lowers himself to the ground, waiting for the wolf to sniff him and recognize him. He doesn't have to wait too long. The wolf moves elegantly through the clearing, gray eyes slanted, the wide, round moon reflecting in his irises.

The moment hangs still in the air, stretching long and untouched, before he attacks.

Lachlan falls on his back, the wolf's claws sinking into the leather of his jacket, his snout bumping on Lachlan's jaw with a low, rumbling growl that shakes Lachlan to the core. The scratches sting, but he doesn't care, he can't care. Not when Adair is above him, in all his majesty, not when all he can feel is the wolf's feral power owning him.

Lachlan knows he belongs there. Werewolf or not, he's not going to give this up.

"It's me," he whispers, no matter how many time Adair has told him it's useless to talk to him when he's in his wolf form. He always has the impression that the wolf *knows* when Lachlan is there, and who he is.

A cloud goes over the moon, shutting out the light momentarily, and a full body shudder goes through Lachlan as Adair lowers his muzzle against his chest, his claws tearing into his clothes.

The transformation is not sudden. It never is, but this time its movements are blurred, as though someone pressed fast forward on a movie. Fangs retreat, fur sinks back into smooth, toned skin. Claws shift into nails and fingers, and the glow of the moon shines once more on Adair's sharp, chiseled profile.

Adair's breath is hot and damp against his lips, the curve of his body shadowing Lachlan almost completely. They don't say a word, the echoes of the last words they'd said to each other still thick in the air, unspoken, unsaid, but hurtfully tangible.

"Mine," Adair whispers, his fingers tracing the shallow cuts he's etched in Lachlan's shoulders with the force of his tackle, his jaw trembling slightly, maybe with strain, maybe with something else. "Mine."

Lachlan's breath catches in his throat and he swallows, Adam's apple bobbing as the words hit him hard. Adair is his. "Mine," he says in answer, raising his arms to loop around Adair's neck. He is Adair's just as much as Adair is his own. No Cedric or Keith or anyone else has a chance in hell to try and step between them.

"You're here."

"Why wouldn't I be?"

Adair shakes his head and gives a short, barking half laugh. "Thought you'd made yourself clear last time."

"I was a jerk," Lachlan mumbles, the sting of the cuts cooling softly under Adair's mesmerizing caresses.

Adair threads his fingers through Lachlan's hair, stroking down his neck and up again. "Lachlan --"

"Later." He reaches up, pressing his lips to Adair's, tongues tangling, hesitating at first, then with growing desperation. Messy, sloppy kisses bestowed over Lachlan's mouth and cheeks and neck, and Lachlan gasps and arches up into Adair's body, trying to scramble backwards, finding some leverage.

"Inside," Adair grits out, kissing him anywhere he can reach. "Gotta have you. Gotta. God, Lachlan, you don't know --"

"I do, I do, I do," Lachlan chants as they both manage to stand and fall through the open door and onto Adair's bed. Adair swings one leg around and jostles Lachlan onto his lap, both groaning simultaneously at the contact, their hard-ons sliding over one another, hot and pulsing. "Lachlan," Adair murmurs, and it doesn't sound either like a plea or a request. It's softer, just like a prayer, Adair's mouth slightly open as he throws his head back and digs his fingers into the small of Lachlan's back.

Lachlan lets his eyes flutter closed, trying to find balance with his knees as he wraps his arms around Adair's broad back, his face hidden against Adair's chest. "Mine," he murmurs again, wonder coloring his voice as a rush of heat coils in Lachlan's belly. Adair's hands shift to the front and splay over his abs, mouth searching Lachlan's anew.

"Adair..."

"Right here," Adair whispers in answer, kissing his neck and stroking Lachlan's stomach with his hand for a moment before moving lower. His fingers slide into Lachlan's pants, finding his hard cock and pressing the flat of his palm against it, making Lachlan groan deliriously.

"Again," Lachlan moans, humping forward with a snap of hips, pants tightening uncomfortably. "Adair --" Lachlan bites his lip, bucking up, inciting Adair to go faster.

Adair's hand fists the base of his dick and pumps, hot, slick and callused, and Lachlan spreads his legs over Adair's lap, head tossed back in abandon.

"Oh God," Adair groans, cupping the back of Lachlan's head to draw him in for another kiss. Lachlan moans softly, his knees planted firmly on the bedding as he pushes up in Adair's hand, beads of precome sliding from the head and through Adair's nimble fingers. He whines, and Adair licks his upper lip and bites at Lachlan's lower one, then his chin and neck, grinning above his skin when Lachlan's muffled curses turn into drawn out moans.

Adair lets Lachlan's cock go, the smack of skin as his cock hits his belly causing another frustrated whine as Lachlan's hips rut up into nothingness. "Patience," Adair murmurs, maddening in his ironclad control. He hoists Lachlan a little higher in his lap and brings his precome slick hand up to Lachlan's lips, two fingers pressing through them to find the wet warmth of Lachlan's mouth.

Lachlan swallows around Adair's digits, licking them diligently as he juts his ass out, eager and wanting. "So gorgeous, mine, mine, God, Lachlan, missed you -- I'm sorry, I'm -- sorry..."

Adair's fingers slip out of Lachlan's mouth with a wet popping sound, and Lachlan grabs his wrist, brings his hand around behind his back, right under the curve of his ass. "Not now," he breathes, burying his face into Adair's neck, and licking his lips. The tip of his tongue catches the salty sweat on Adair's skin. "Not now. Please, Adair --"

Adair nods and twists, and Lachlan groans loudly when one of Adair's fingers slowly begins to circle the tiny opening to his body.

"Fuck," Lachlan hisses shakily.

"Easy," Adair soothes, the tip of his finger just dipping enough to make Lachlan shiver. "We'll take it slow."

"But I want -- and you need --"

"I got you." Adair nudges at his forehead. "I got you."

Lachlan pants, sweat trickling between his shoulder blades, his clothes sticking uncomfortably to his body. Adair is naked and glorious underneath him, and Lachlan wants to ride him so bad it hurts. He kicks his legs wider and pushes back on his fingers, trying to get Adair to give in and give him more, more, more.

"Patience," Adair whispers again, small kisses peppering Lachlan's neck as Adair slowly begins to work two fingers inside of him, stretching him open. Lachlan moans and pushes backwards, a low groan falling from his lips and dying on Adair's neck.

Adair kisses Lachlan's chest, using his other hand to spread him a little wider, looking almost enchanted as he watches his fingers being engulfed by Lachlan's tight heat. Adair sinks his teeth in Lachlan's chin, thrusting up to the second knuckle and making him choke out a scream. "Mine."

"Mine," Lachlan echoes, his fingernails leaving raised welts on Adair's arms. "God, Adair, do something, please, please --" Lachlan's shivering on the bedding, his body painted in perspiration as he tries to rock his hips back against Adair's hand and forward against Adair's stomach, finding friction for his neglected cock. "Adair, please," Lachlan moans, bringing his own fingers up to his mouth to bite and lick at the knuckles. "Please."

Adair pulls his hand out and tosses him back on the bed. Lachlan groans and writhes under Adair, his mouth searching Adair's perfectly shaped muscles. Adair catches Lachlan's wrists, flipping him around until Lachlan is face down on the bed, his ass in the air, completely exposed for Adair's perusal.

Adair's tongue licks a swath along his spine, counting each tiny bump before sliding between the dark, hidden crease of Lachlan's asscheeks. At first contact Lachlan yelps out and bucks wildly, his whole body shaking as Adair's tongue eases along his furled, clenching hole, his two fingers joining immediately. Lachlan buries his face in the sheets, his back tensing hard enough to break.

"You like this," Adair murmurs quietly, his hands spread wide across Lachlan's ass. He laps his tongue against the smooth skin, dipping between his fingers.

"Please," Lachlan moans again, his knuckles white around fistfuls of sheet.

"Okay, okay," Adair gives in, his own voice strained and hoarse with restraint. He withdraws his fingers, then pushes them back in again, adding a third, the slick muscle stretching smoothly around his knuckles, one, two, and then three, until Lachlan is panting harshly beneath him, his skin damp and slippery. His fingertips brush across Lachlan's prostate, making him convulse violently before he withdraws them for a final time.

"Get on with the fucking program, Adair, God damn it, please," Lachlan groans in frustration, voice thin and ragged. He rolls on his side and pulls one of his legs higher up, spreading himself wantonly for Adair.

Adair grips the base of his cock, hard, then takes hold of Lachlan's hip, turning him around until Lachlan's on his back again.

"I want to look at you," Adair confesses, looking more open and more serious than Lachlan has ever seen him.

Lachlan doesn't say a word, simply raises one shaky hand to tug at Adair's nape. Adair meets his lips for a hushed kiss before he arranges Lachlan's legs around his hips. He nibbles at Lachlan's jaw, his hips rolling in one smooth, slow circle, hard cock breaching through Lachlan's slick, swollen hole.

Lachlan moans, head thrown back and eyes shut tight, thighs quivering around Adair's waist. Adair's hand goes back to stroke at Lachlan's erection, keeping it from wilting as he sucks and laves at Lachlan's lips, his ironclad will alone stopping his hips from just pushing forward and burying himself balls deep into Lachlan's tight heat.

"God," Lachlan gasps, clutching at Adair's shoulder to keep from breaking.

He feels so completely full. Adair overwhelms him in every way, filling him and surrounding him. Sex with Adair has always been amazing, but this...

This is different. After Lachlan's revelation, it's like something has finally fallen back into place, something he'd been missing, something he'd always wanted.

He opens his eyes. Adair's beautiful features are barely an inch away from him, his dark gray eyes half mast, and Lachlan moans, breath catching in his throat as he digs his blunt nails hard into Adair's toned muscles.

"More." He squeezes his eyes shut momentarily, panting breaths passing between his lips and Adair's, close enough to be kissing, but not quite.

"God," Adair murmurs, pupils blown wide, looking like he's on the edge of losing it already. "God, Lachlan --" He licks his lips, then bows lower to close his mouth over Lachlan's, his hips drawing back slowly, oh so slowly, stretching and stroking and driving Lachlan insane.

"I want --" Lachlan begs, his nape digging into the mattress as he curves up into Adair's body. "Please -- I want -- I want --"

"Me too," Adair murmurs, and he wraps one arm around Lachlan's shoulder, pulls him up and draws back until he's almost all the way out before he's pushing back in fully again.

Lachlan cries out and shakes, his legs wrapping around Adair's waist, heels digging hard at the back of Adair's thighs. Lachlan's head is spinning wildly, cock throbbing as it juts against Adair's stomach. "Adair," he pleads again, the only coherent word amidst moans and gasps and the sound of skin on skin.

Sucking a bite into the curve of Lachlan's collarbone, Adair thrusts his hips shallowly, only changing the amount of cock that stretches Lachlan wide by the smallest amounts.

"Don-don't fucking tease me," Lachlan orders, trying to tug Adair deeper with his heels. Adair kisses him, hungry and slow.

"Not teasing," he mumbles into Lachlan's mouth. "Who says we have to rush this?"

"My dick," Lachlan grinds out, nodding towards his hard cock where it slides against Adair's hard, flat stomach. Adair chuckles and reaches a hand down to wrap around it, and Lachlan throws his head back, ass pressed as close to Adair as possible. Adair's other arm moves under Lachlan's back, supporting him, and with a grunt and a show of animal strength, he pulls Lachlan up, settling back on his knees until they are face to face, Lachlan's legs wrapped around Adair's hips, and his own weight impaling him fully on the hard cock inside of him.

"God, Adair, God --" Lachlan cries out, long and guttural, his thighs clamping around Adair's waist, mouth open in an "O" around his moans.

"Mine." Lachlan feels Adair's hand framing his face, thumb stroking over his cheeks, wiping away sweat and even a lonely tear Lachlan hadn't known was there.

Adair kisses the wet trails away, rocking up into him, the change in angle making his cock drag across Lachlan's prostate with every rough, hard thrust of his hips.

Lachlan groans again, and again, burying his face in Adair's neck as he settles into the rhythm, his lips marking Adair's collarbone and shoulder with his teeth and lips.

"Lachlan," Adair whispers, his voice low and drawn out. He tightens the hand on Lachlan's cock and picks up his pace, thumbing the slit and going to cup his balls with every down stroke.

Lachlan struggles to take his own weight, forcing his legs to uncurl from behind Adair's back and settle on the bedding. Adair's hands stroke along his spine, his thumb brushing across every invisible curve of his ribs. The throbbing cock inside of him makes it impossible for Lachlan to think of anything else but the desperate need for release. "Adair... please, fuck. I need --"

"Me too." Adair's there, keeping him close, his fist hotly working up and down Lachlan's cock, friction hard, slick, his thumb circling the weeping slit. "It's okay." He pulls Lachlan down into his unyielding thrusts, sealing their mouths together as Lachlan blanks out with a cry, his orgasm ripped out of him in a whirlwind of colors.

Warm come splashes against Adair's hand, covering his fingers and his chest. Lachlan's body shakes violently, clamping down hard on Adair's dick.

Adair lurches forward, his control faltering as Lachlan tightens around him, his rhythm wavering, soft whimpers lost against skin as he, too, comes with the force of a freight train, his spunk flooding Lachlan's ass and trickling down his thighs.

The mattress breaks their fall, and Lachlan clings on tight, his knees bending when Adair raises them to rest Lachlan's ankles over his shoulders. Bent double by the smooth force of Adair's thrust, Lachlan can only hold on tight as he's dragged under in a tide of sensation.

Everything feels bright but blurry, almost as if he's high, and every touch leaves him raw and spinning. Adair's weight is a comfortable, solid warmth above him, and Lachlan's arms twist around his neck, holding him close.

For a while, they lay there, spent and sweaty, sticky with perspiration and come, not a word exchanged over their panting breaths. Then Adair slips out, rolling onto his back, chest heaving with every breath he takes, and Lachlan knows there are things they need to talk about.

"I thought you hated him," he begins, the sound of his voice scratchy, hoarse with the aftermath of his orgasm. He puts his hand over the bite scar, feels Adair shudder at the contact.

"I do," he murmurs.

Lachlan tries to understand, but for the life of him he can't wrap his head around it.

Adair lets him mull things over for a few instants before sighing and turning on his side, leaning on one elbow to look down at Lachlan. "He turned me, and yes, I might have wanted it -- I was young, I thought I loved him -- but I never had any idea... he did it out of his own selfishness. He didn't -- he didn't care for me."

Lachlan nods, softly stroking Adair's side with the tips of his fingers. "I didn't like him."

Adair snorts. "Christ, no kidding. When I saw you there..." Adair shakes his head and covers Lachlan's hand with his own. "I really, really fucked up."

Lachlan gives him a half shrug. "I did too. I couldn't see straight -- I was so fucking jealous."

Adair blinks. "Were you?"

Lachlan levels him with a "Well, duh" look.

Adair chuckles, shakes his head. "I'm sorry."

"I understand," Lachlan says quietly. He swallows, mouth suddenly dry. "Did you --" He stops abruptly, his eyes skating sideways. Adair squeezes his fingers, trying to catch his attention.

“What?”

Lachlan hesitantly raises his eyes, pulse fluttering frantically under his skin. “Did you... love him?”

Adair sighs.

It’s enough for Lachlan to gather the answer, and he rationally knows he has no room to be freaking out, no room to be jealous or angry, but he’s too fucked out to get a grip on his emotions. “Right.”

Adair nudges at Lachlan’s forehead, staring seriously into his eyes. “It doesn’t mean I do now. But I am what I am,” he says, his voice vibrating with honesty. “He made me what I am, and it’s my nature.”

“I know that,” Lachlan says, even though with some difficulty. “I do now, at least.” He takes a slow, steadying breath, his heart rate speeding up abruptly as he raises his face to look into the smoky depths of Adair’s irises. “But I can’t do this anymore.”

Adair whitens so fast Lachlan tightens his arm around him, alarmed.

“I understand,” Adair says, nodding and making to roll over. Lachlan pushes himself up and grabs hold of Adair’s other arm, yanking him closer and making him lose his equilibrium.

“Do you?” Lachlan asks him, his throat so dry the words burn on his tongue. “Cos I don’t think you do.”

Adair shakes his head, dark hair falling into his eyes as he tries to slip free from his grip. “Yes. I do.”

Lachlan exhales. “I have to be with you, Adair,” he whispers, so quietly it almost gets lost in the stillness of the room. “I... I can’t share you. I won’t. I can’t do it, I can’t do... this.” He gestures to Adair’s cabin, his hand flapping uselessly midair, and swallows around the brick lodged in his throat when Adair’s shoulders tense. “I know we said... I know we said it beats nothing and that it was crazy and that we shouldn’t, I know I asked you nothing and you promised nothing and I’m being... Christ, I don’t know what I’m being.” He laughs, hysterical, almost, but his fingers tighten around

Adair's wrist, as though needing to feel his heartbeat underneath the skin. "I just know that... I -- I can't."

"What are you saying, Lachlan?" Adair asks in a quiet breath, his shoulders tense enough for all the muscles of his back to stand in sharp relief in the dawning light.

Lachlan closes his eyes.

He's got to bite the fucking bullet and do it.

"I love you."

* * *

"I love you."

The silence in the wake of Lachlan's words is so tense and compact it feels like a physical weight on his shoulders. Seconds sweep past, one after another, and Lachlan's breath dies in his throat, the sound of his heart cracking the only audible noise through the rush of blood to his head.

He lets go of Adair's hand after a minute, blinking furiously as he struggles to pull himself together and up again, ignoring the steady ache of all his limbs.

At least it's out. No matter what happens now, at least it's out there in the open.

Lachlan desperately wants to believe it's enough.

Adair doesn't move a muscle as Lachlan pulls his ruined clothes back on, and that, more than anything, more than seeing him with Cedric or learning the circumstances of when he was turned, is killing Lachlan little by little. The faster he gets out of Washington once and forever, the better he'll be.

Hopefully.

It takes him less than two minutes to gather his possessions, but the moment his boots thud on the ground Adair slowly turns around, staring at Lachlan. "You really mean it." It's not a question, but Lachlan nods anyway. "Lachlan... I --"

"You don't need to say anything. I understand," Lachlan mutters, scrubbing at the back of his neck. There's dried come on his thighs. Riding back it's going to be a fucking pain.

"No, I really do." Adair stands, naked and gloriously beautiful, and Lachlan's protest dies in his throat. Adair's hands frame his face, thumbs sweeping the curve of his cheekbones. He looks in Lachlan's eyes as though he's trying to read into his soul. "You have your job, I have mine. We can't just vanish. I need the city -- I'm a freak, no matter how much you tend to pretend otherwise. I'm an animal."

Lachlan shakes his head, lifts his palms to span Adair's breastbone. "It wouldn't matter."

"Not to you, but every other person in any community outside the Cities' range," Adair whispers. Lachlan might be delusional, but he's sure he hears regret there. "I can't leave the guys to fend for themselves, and you can't give up your job. They know you. They'd want information from you, and I will not expose you to that."

Lachlan shakes his head, leans in to brush the tips of their noses together. He knows it all, and yet it doesn't stop him from wanting. "I will find a way," Lachlan murmurs, the movement of his lips caressing Adair's with a slow, tantalizing touch. "But I can't be the only one wanting this. I'm not suicidal, after all."

"Could've fooled me."

They laugh because it's easier, they laugh because they're scared, and nervous, and wavering. Lachlan turns his head to the side, lays it against the juncture of Adair's neck. "I'll come back to get you," he swears, tracing his oath on Adair's skin. "I don't know how, but I *will* get you."

Adair smiles at that, shakes his head marginally. "What do you wanna do, steal me?"

That's it! Lachlan steps back slightly, his face lit by a sort of insane, crazed excitement.

Adair frowns at him, his fingers flitting against Lachlan's back. "I was joking --"

"I won't steal you," Lachlan whispers, voice trembling with emotion. "But I can fucking well *win* you."

“Win me?” Adair repeats, nonplussed. Lachlan throws his head back and laughs, his heart banging like a gigantic elastic band snapping in his ribcage. He pulls Adair close, wraps his hands into his hair as he draws him in for a short, passionate kiss.

The Wars brought them together once, and the Wars will seal their fate.

If he can win against Adair, then he’ll be the one dictating which direction Adair will go, just as Adair did with Gale.

“If you can’t beat them,” he breathes against Adair’s lips as they tumble back against the bed, Lachlan’s jacket flying across the room already. “Join them.”

He knows Adair doesn’t understand, but it doesn’t matter now. Lips and hands and legs twisting, knocking, bedsprings creaking noisily as they roll atop one another, Lachlan’s crazy frenzy shooting through Adair and spurring him on.

Soon they will have everything.

Soon, they will be free.

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>. Check out her website at sophiatitheniel.net. 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...