

ELLORA'S CAVE TWILIGHT



Protective
Affairs

Close Contact

REBECCA AIRIES

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Rebecca Airies

Book 3 in the Protective Affairs series.

Geneva's having a bad day. With a spell put on her by an angry witch, the last thing she needs is a werewolf claiming she's his mate—even if he is gorgeous and she can't get enough of his kisses.

Evan's happy to have found his mate; even the spell keeping them within close proximity to each other doesn't bother him. He's more than eager to stay near her sweet body and satisfy his craving for her, but her protection is his first priority.

However, the witch isn't satisfied with the results of the spell. Geneva and Evan have to stop additional attacks before they lose their chance to be together.

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CLOSE CONTACT

Rebecca Airies

Dedication

To my readers and most especially to the members of my Yahoo group, Hot Temptations – thank you for the encouragement and the inspiration.

Trademarks Acknowledgement

The author acknowledges the trademarked status and trademark owners of the following wordmarks mentioned in this work of fiction:

Taurus: Ford Motor Company

Chapter One

Geneva Black slammed the door of her silver Taurus and stalked across the parking lot to the large building that housed the Dallas branch of the Protectorate. The reflective surface of the building gleamed in the bright midday sun. Her conversation with that snotty witch from the Council of witches still irritated her. She absolutely hated dealing with the snobby women. Their better-than-thou attitude always made her blood boil.

Shivers ran up and down her spine and goose bumps formed on her arms. Okay, that wasn't natural. The air was warm even in early October. She stopped and clenched her hands at her side waiting for the feeling to pass. Even with no formal training, she could tell when magic was being used near or against her. The latent magic within her made it easier to tell that some kind of hex or ward had been cast, but this was so obvious a full human would have noticed it. If she'd had any doubts about it being directed toward her, there was also the fact that she was the only one in the parking lot. This wasn't a mistake.

That she'd had a spell cast on her didn't surprise her. As an intelligence agent for the Protectorate, she regularly came into contact with witches and wizards. It wasn't the first time she'd been hexed. The problem would be figuring out who had done it.

The first thing she had to do was get the spell checked by the Protectorate witch. She didn't feel any adverse effects, but that didn't mean that it was benign. Even if it was just meant to be an annoyance, the spell would cause some kind of problem or symptom. Eventually. Most of the time it happened when she least expected it.

She pushed open the door and walked into the large lobby area. Her heels clicked on the white and silver tile on the floor as she entered. Intent on getting to the witch, she headed straight for the u-shaped, white and black reception desk and the electronic door just beyond the scanner. She barely noticed the group of men heading there too until her skin started tingling and shivers chased up her spine. Startled at the feeling, she stopped moving and waited for it to subside. *What the...*

The sensation increased and then slowly faded. Geneva covertly looked around the room. What had caused that to happen? Something about the spell had changed, although she didn't know what it was. Nothing seemed out of the ordinary in the lobby. She saw Jake leading three men toward the door to the secure areas. Two of the men she recognized. Mark and Joe, she couldn't remember their last names right off. They were members of one of the region's werewolf packs. She'd met them while looking for information on three young weres a few months ago. The other, she hadn't ever seen before. She'd have remembered him. He was gorgeous. His cocoa-brown skin drew her eyes. She had the almost irresistible urge to walk up to him and touch him. His straight black hair had been cut in a short businessman haircut. Somehow on him

the conservative haircut didn't seem quite so strict or stuffy. Maybe it was something in his brown eyes or the sharp lines of his face, but he seemed a little wild.

Shaking her head, she focused on her problem. The tingles were gone now, but she needed to get to the Protectorate witch. Finding out what had been done to her had become even more important. The who part would have to wait until after she made certain the effects weren't lethal.

With a few hurried steps, Geneva managed to get to the scanner before the small group with Jake. She smiled at Jamie, the energetic blonde behind the desk. She pulled her ID out of the pocket on her gold-trimmed black skirt and handed it to the cheerful woman with the perfect makeup and a cold caffeinated drink on the desk. Jamie nodded and Geneva stepped through the scanner. The door buzzed and she pushed it open. The group behind her would take a little longer. Those three men would have to be registered as guests.

She paced down the hallway, heading for the elevator. Pain sliced through her abdomen and head. She stumbled to the side, leaning weakly against the wall as she drew in gulping breaths. Her hand pressed to her stomach as her eyes slammed shut. Her muscles tightened. Trying to focus beyond the pain, she straightened, but immediately fell back against the wall as her stomach clenched and another shot of pain lanced behind her eyes. It hurt to breathe. Moving sent a wall of sensation slamming over her. She wasn't in a hurry to try it again.

"What's wrong, Geneva?" Carol Wilson's soft voice barely filtered through the haze of pain. A hand rested on Geneva's shoulder.

"Don't know." Geneva gritted through clenched teeth. She couldn't ever remember feeling pain like this.

"Let's get you to the medics." Carol's arm curved around Geneva's shoulder and the woman began leading her down the hallway.

Geneva didn't have the breath or strength to agree or argue. It was taking everything she had to keep from screaming out in pain. Every step she took only seemed to make the pain worse. Her mind whirled with questions. Why? What had caused this?

A started exclamation came from the hallway behind them. She heard the sound of hard-soled shoes hitting the tile floor at a fast pace. As quickly as the pain had hit her, it vanished, leaving her feeling normal.

She straightened slowly. Frowning, she drew in a deep breath. Fucking hell, this was magic, not some sudden illness. She'd been in so much pain she hadn't even thought about the spell. Now she realized it had caused the pain. She didn't know entirely what the spell did or more importantly what triggered it, but it sure wasn't merely annoying as she expected it to be. Whoever put this on her wanted her to know she'd pissed someone off.

"Thanks for your help, Carol. Do you know if Sonya's in her office today?" Geneva took a few steps on her own toward the elevator. She needed to get to the woman's

office before another bolt of pain hit her if possible. Damn, this wasn't good. She just hoped it could be removed and that they could find whoever did it. She wanted to know why they'd put the spell on her.

"She's up in her office. You mean that the pain..." Carol raised her brows, but her eyes went to the people wearing visitor's tags standing nearby.

"Yeah, I really need her help." Geneva would feel much better if she knew what set off that spell. She'd love to avoid a repeat of that pain.

"Hold on. We'll share an elevator with you." Jake smiled as he stepped up beside her. "That way you won't be alone if it happens again before you get to Sonya."

Geneva nodded taking slow, even breaths to calm her still-racing heart. She couldn't do anything about her mind. It wouldn't slow down. She had no idea who would put a spell on her or why. This wasn't just annoyance and she couldn't understand it. She hadn't made anyone furious in months. This had to be about something more than a disagreement. Some witch had used a lot of power on this. That wasn't even taking into account the risk of censure that the witch was chancing. If the Witch's Council found out about this, she could lose her power. Maybe not permanently, but other witches' power had been taken for a year or more for spells much more innocuous than this. She thought it was probably a woman, because that was who she dealt with mostly, but she had come into contact with wizards.

The entire ride up six floors she couldn't relax. It wasn't all because she was worrying about what the spell would do, when it would activate again. That kept her hyperaware. Her mind had also locked onto big and hunky standing just behind her. She just wished he was standing in front of her. She'd love to get a good look at his butt. Not that she'd do anything about it. She had enough to worry about right now, but she wouldn't mind seeing more of that delicious body.

Stepping out of the elevator, she walked in front of them, but turned onto a connecting hallway. She heard their footsteps fade as they continued straight, probably to Steven's office. Only steps later, pain slashed through her gut. She stumbled and crumpled to her knees. Her arms pressed against her stomach as the pain grew. Her only thought was to get to Sonya's door. She couldn't stay out in the hallway. She had to get help.

Pushing herself to her feet, she hobbled shakily down the hallway. The short distance to the door to Sonya's office felt like miles. She couldn't think beyond getting into that room and getting help. She opened the door and practically fell into the woman's office.

* * * * *

Evan Connor gritted his teeth. He tried to keep his expression unreadable as he sat in a chair across from Steven Carson. The wolf inside him leaped, determined to get out and go hunting. It wanted that sweet-smelling woman from the elevator. The thought of her in pain and alone only increased the wolf's struggles. The wolf's reaction stunned

him. The animal had never reacted like that to a female before. The attraction had always just been the normal reaction of male to female, not this deep primitive need. As soon as the impact of that thought hit him, he knew why the wolf didn't want to let the woman out of his sight. He felt like an idiot for not realizing before that the strength of his reaction was something extraordinary. He'd found his mate and someone had put a spell on her. And he didn't even know her name.

His lips pulled back into a snarl. By the time he realized she was his mate, Steven was sitting forward expectantly waiting to talk. Evan couldn't stalk down the hall and find her. He could control his wolf for the meeting. He'd asked for it and he couldn't very well walk out of it.

"You do have a point that we need to work together more." Steven's fingers steepled together as he leaned forward, his elbows resting on his desk. "But it isn't going to be easy at first. Your men won't want to follow Protectorate orders and my men won't want to follow yours."

Evan sat tensely. He didn't want to hear all the old excuses again. "The Protectorate shouldn't be an entirely human force. The beings you deal with aren't human and don't play by your rules. Until that change is put into effect, we'll have to work together."

"I don't think that change will happen for years." Steven leaned back in his chair, seemingly unconcerned at the thought of sweeping change in the Protectorate organization.

"I have better contacts than you do. It's going to happen." Evan didn't have the patience to spar with the man. All his muscles had coiled into tight knots and his focus didn't stray far from finding his mate.

The phone at the right corner of Steven's desk beeped. The brown-haired man picked up the small silver handset, a frown on his face.

"Yes, Mrs. Daniels." Steven's voice held a distinct bite of annoyance.

Evan heard only murmurs from the other end of the conversation, but he saw Steven's expression turn from annoyance to concern.

"Tell Sonya I'll be right there," Steven said and quickly ended the call.

Evan tensed and then surged to his feet. His mate had gone to see a woman named Sonya. Even as urgency and fear pumped through him, part of him marveled at the immediate emotional response to a woman he'd seen for the first time today. He couldn't deny it and he knew the others in the room could probably see it. Fangs had burst through his gums. His eyes undoubtedly flashed golden in the light.

"What's wrong with you?" Steven narrowed his eyes. He stood just to the side of the desk, frowning.

"That woman is mine!" Evan growled. He kept himself from storming out of the room and finding his mate, but the strain of holding back the wolf made it impossible to be subtle or diplomatic.

“What woman?” Steven walked over to stand in front of him. He clearly had no idea who Evan meant.

“The woman from the elevator.” Mark Drake, one of Evan’s betas stepped forward.

It didn’t surprise Evan that Mark had known which woman he’d meant. Mark was very observant.

“Geneva,” Jake supplied when Steven shot him a questioning look.

“Does she know she’s yours?” Steven asked.

“She will. Let’s go. Something’s wrong with her, isn’t it? She’s in pain again?” Evan strode for the door, not waiting to see if Steven followed.

Evan walked down the hallway to the intersecting corridor she’d taken. He followed her scent to a door. He could smell the acrid bite of fear and pain tingeing the air. Throwing open the door, he walked into the room. The office held a desk and chair, but also a couch and rolling chairs. His eyes searched the small area and locked on the two women. A redheaded woman knelt beside a black couch near the woman he now knew as Geneva. Geneva sat slumped onto the couch, her fingers rubbing at her stomach. He ignored the red-haired woman, focusing on his woman.

Her shoulder-length, glossy black hair looked mussed. A rosy flush spread over her cheeks but otherwise her creamy skin looked pale. Drawing in heaving breaths, her full breasts rose against her vibrant red shirt.

“See. This is what I was trying to tell you. The pain hits, sharp and fierce and then leaves.” Geneva glanced once toward him, blue eyes glaring, but that was the only sign that she even knew he was in the room. She turned back to the unaffiliated witch who worked for the Protectorate.

“I don’t know what you did, but someone’s pissed at you. We’ll have to figure out what triggers it and what causes the pain to go away first. Then we’ll get to the spell and what we can do about it.” Sonya reached out and gripped Geneva’s hand.

Evan fought back a growl. Two quick strides carried him to the couch and he scooped Geneva into his arms. He couldn’t stop himself. He had to hold her. He sat down on the couch. She stiffened in his arms and drew in a sharp, audible breath. The stiffness didn’t last long. A moment later, she exploded into a bundle of fury in his arms. Her swinging fist slammed into his cheek. He grabbed her arms and pinned them to her side. She bucked and writhed, trying to break free. She didn’t seem to fear him, toppling to the floor or hitting any of the furniture in the room.

“She doesn’t seem to be in pain now.” Steven’s voice came from just inside the doorway.

“It stopped just before he arrived.” Sonya slanted a glance at Evan.

Geneva had stopped fighting. She sat stiffly in his arms. Apparently she’d decided to ignore him because she didn’t even glance at him. Evan leaned down and inhaled her scent, savoring her sweet arousing essence. He’d never believed it would be this immediate, this consuming. He didn’t know how he felt about it, but he knew how she

felt in his arms. There was a satisfaction and content in simply holding her that he'd never have dreamed existed. He liked it even when she seemed ready to take his head off.

Geneva curled her hands into fists. Mr. Hunky was irritating the hell out of her. If she could, she'd hit the man again, but his strong arms caged her now, holding her arms to her sides. She had no idea who he was or what he thought he was doing, but she wanted him to stop. The fingers of one of his hands splayed over her stomach, rubbing in slow circles. She wasn't about to be soothed. The tall, muscular man would have to try harder than that to make her forget that he was holding onto her and wouldn't let go. She also wanted to know why the other people in the room were just standing there watching him hold her. They should have been on him the moment he touched her. The man had obviously lost his mind.

"Steven, tell him to let me go!" She turned her attention to the brown-haired commander of the Dallas branch of the Protectorate.

The man behind her chuckled and nuzzled the hair away from the left side of her neck. Had the man actually gone insane? She'd been thinking figuratively, but he wasn't acting a like a normal person would. He was gorgeous and just looking at him earlier had excited her. She'd admit that, but she wasn't a mindless toy. He had no right to just pick her up and hold her when she wanted to be released.

Steven looked everywhere but at her as he cleared his throat – three times.

"Um, Sonya, you said she's under a spell." Steven looked at that red-haired witch.

"I haven't been able to discover many of the details of the spell. I tried to ease some of her pain, without much success. Any time I managed to take a bit of it away, the spell increased causing more." Sonya shrugged.

Geneva pried at one of the arms around her waist. She dug her nails into his arm, but the long sleeves of his blue shirt protected his skin.

"Damn it, Steven, get him off me." She shot a glare over at the Protectorate commander.

"No one's going to help you, Genny." The big man's arm tightened just a little. Hot breath brushed over her ear. She felt the slight graze of his teeth against her earlobe.

A shiver ripped down her spine. She clenched her jaw, torn between ignoring him and trying to reason with him. The fact that he was almost the only one talking to her decided the matter. If he didn't listen, she could always get some satisfaction yelling at him. Maybe one of the others would finally wake up from whatever was holding them and actually give her some help.

"My name is Geneva. Why won't they help me?" she asked.

His hand slid up her stomach and cupped the full curve of her breast. She gasped and grabbed his wrist trying to pull his hand from that sensitive area. Her nipple had tightened and hardened at his first touch. His hand didn't budge. What cave had they

found him in? He didn't even seem to care that they were in public and he was intimately touching her. She sank her nails into the skin of his wrist and finally he let his hand drop back to her stomach.

He laughed softly. "They know better than to get between a wolf and his mate. I'm Evan Connors."

Her jaw dropped and her stomach clenched with anxiety and a little fear. She'd never heard of him, but then again, she didn't have a lot of contact with werewolves. From what she knew, werewolves didn't play around about mates. "I'm not your mate."

"Let's find out what this spell does and then we'll talk." He set her to the side and grasped her hands.

She was all for anything that got his hands off her. Geneva felt the warmth of magic against her palms. It spread over her hands and up her arms. Her eyes lifted to lock with his. He was doing magic. Now she knew who he was. She still didn't recognize his name, but his ability gave him away. As far as she knew, there was only one male werewolf in the area who was also a wizard. As if she didn't have enough trouble with magic lately, now she had a werewolf who claimed to be her mate, but was also a powerful wizard.

"Turn off the lights and we'll see what we're facing," Evan ordered, still holding Geneva's hands.

The lights clicked off, but it wasn't dark in the windowless room. A hazy bluish light bloomed. She looked down and saw a glowing mist surrounding her. She'd have liked to move her hands through it to see if it was mist or just light, but she couldn't tug her fingers free from Evan's relaxed grip.

"So what did you do to the witch?" Evan asked as he stroked his fingers over her knuckles.

"So it's a witch, a woman who did this? You're certain?" Geneva asked. At least that would narrow down who could have done it to half the magic-using population.

"No, I just said witch for magic user in general." Evan shrugged. "It could be a wizard."

"I don't know what I did. Most of what I do is just ask questions, get information. I have made people mad at me before, but nothing like this has ever happened." She slowly shook her head. She didn't know what she could have done that someone wanted to cause her this much pain. She hadn't pissed anyone off in months.

"Well, you weren't supposed to be out of pain at all yet. I also think the spell activated early for some reason. We're in luck there." He tilted his head and looked at the mist swirling around her.

"Lucky? It's not you who has pain ripping through them at odd moments." She rolled her eyes. Only a witch or wizard would say something like that. As if getting slammed by a spell was something normal. In her experiences, spells were hardly ever good.

“No, we’re lucky the witch somehow made a mistake.” Sonya stepped forward, studying the hazy cloud.

“What is it? Stop discussing it like it’s a puzzle. It’s my life. I’m the one in so much freaking pain I can barely move, much less function.” She tugged at her hands to get his attention. “Why am I having sudden stabbing pains?”

“Because you were too far from me.” Evan smiled.

Chapter Two

"I don't even know you. Why would someone put a spell on me to keep me within a certain distance of you? You're lying." She narrowed her eyes. He had to be lying. That explanation made absolutely no sense. On top of that, he was smiling. There was nothing to smile about in this situation. She looked to Sonya.

"He's not lying, Geneva." Sonya exhaled. "It's not really him specifically the witch had in mind."

"If it's not him she had in mind, then what in the hell is he talking about?" Geneva wished they'd just explain. She was freaked out enough by the spell and by his claim that she was his mate.

"The witch didn't just choose a name out of thin air and decide that if you weren't close to that person you'd be in pain. The spell was set so that when it activated you'd be in extreme pain if you weren't near the man meant to be your mate. The witch wasn't counting on you being near the man at almost the moment it activated." Evan said it so easily she knew he was telling the truth.

She pushed the mate issue to the side. She'd argue about it later. Dealing with it would have to wait until she knew a little more and the spell was worrying her more than he was. If he thought she was his mate, he'd want to take care of her. She'd deal with that after she found out more about the spell. "Why are we lucky that it happened now?"

"Well, aside from the fact that you're not in constant pain because I'm near you, the spell hasn't reached full strength yet. Spells can get more difficult to stop the longer they're in effect." Evan released her hands and straightened.

"It's sort of like stopping a bowling ball at the top of a hill rather than at the bottom. It will just be easier on you and the witches working on it to remove it before it does reach full strength." Sonya smiled as she caught Geneva's eyes.

"Can you tell who did this to her?" Steven asked.

"The power and style seem local, but I can't tell you who. If we take the spell off her now, we'll destroy any chance of tracing this back," Sonya said and looked at Steven.

"How long until the spell hits full strength?" Steven frowned.

Geneva took a deep breath and tried to calm her racing heart. She knew he was weighing the pain she could possibly suffer against the need to catch the person who'd cast the spell. Even knowing the person had to be stopped, a rush of fear poured through her at the thought of being in more of that pain. It almost panicked her.

"We have maybe ten days, but no more." Sonya tilted her head, once again studying the mist.

"So the spell has to be off her by Halloween night." Steven tapped his hand against his thigh.

"I can't take the pain for that long." Geneva shook her head frantically. As much as she wanted to help catch the person who'd put the spell on her, she'd go insane within a day.

"You won't be in pain. You'll be with me." Evan's hand clasped her right wrist gently.

Geneva knew the gesture was supposed to be comforting. All it did was infuriate her. He refused to listen to anything but his own opinion. Being with him at all times was impossible. Not just because his arrogance got her nerves. Even everyday things would make being with him hard. She didn't understand why he hadn't seen it yet. Hell, he hadn't even bothered to respond to her denials. He'd just ignored them and continued doing what he liked. Freaking werewolf. Were all weres like him or was he a special case?

"I won't be with you," she told him flatly. She met Sonya's eyes then turned to Steven. "If you have to study this, put me in a coma. I can't take the pain long."

Evan actually laughed, apparently unworried. "You won't be staying here. If I have to toss you over my shoulder and carry you out, I will. No one will stop me."

Geneva felt a rush of anger sweeping through her. Someone had to do something about him and it just might have to be her. *Where are the tranquilizer guns kept?* The thought floated through her mind. She couldn't remember right off, but she knew the Protectorate had some. A couple of shots from one of those and it should settle his problem. She tried to pull her hand away from him, but he wouldn't release her.

"Look. This is impossible. I can't possibly stay with you all of the time. Within days, we'd be ready to strangle each other and forget going out in public." She angrily swept her free hand through her hair.

"Why would we forget going out in public?" His voice roughened on a distinct growl.

"What? Do you think you're going into the ladies' room with me? Most people would have a problem with that." Geneva wanted to hit him. He obviously hadn't thought about what being out in public with a spell that limited how far they could be apart would entail. Even going to a store could be difficult. He could forget about the spell and step off to get something. It could just as easily be her that forgot about the limitations.

"That would cause a stir." He relaxed and actually smiled.

"We'll find out who did it as soon as possible, Geneva. You won't have to live under the threat for long," Steven said. "And if it gets too close to Halloween before we find the identity of the witch who did it, we'll take the spell off you."

Like I have much choice, she thought. She wouldn't be able to find anyone to take the spell off without Steven's approval. The Protectorate had that much pull in the Dallas witch community.

Evan stood and tugged her to her feet. "It's time to leave."

"Well, see you. I'm not going with you." She managed to free her hand and stood her ground. As much as she'd like to make a run for it, she'd never make it past him much less Steven and the two men behind him. Not to mention the pain. She wouldn't get far when the pain ripped through her stomach and down her legs.

Straightening, she looked him in the eye and tried to keep her body language confident and controlled. She knew that showing fear to a predator only made the predator chase. There wasn't a doubt in her mind that Evan qualified as a predator now. His brown eyes sparkled with gold and an anticipatory smile curled his lips.

"You're exciting me, Genny, but there's nowhere for you to run here. I'll play chase with you after we get that spell off you." He took a slow gliding step toward her.

She backed away from him until her back pressed against the cool wall. "Since you say you're my mate, I'm surprised you're agreeable to leaving the spell on me. Shouldn't you want to stop anything that causes me pain?"

"I intend to keep you close so you won't be in pain. You're right. The wolf's not happy about leaving the spell on you. He does want you safe and that won't be possible until we find out who did this to you and why." Evan stepped close enough to reach out and touch her, but he made no move to grab her.

"The wolf's not happy. I can guarantee your wolf has nothing on how I feel about it. I want it off, but if I have to keep it on I choose where I go or stay." She pressed a finger against his chest. "Humans don't have a mate. I don't have a mate."

His fingers closed around her wrist before she could pull back again. "Witches have mates and you're all witch even if you're untrained."

He looked so smug when he said that. Geneva gritted her teeth and resisted the urge to scream. He wasn't even trying to cooperate.

Evan scooped her into his arms, turned and stalked to the door. At first, she was stunned. She couldn't believe he was carrying her off without a protest from anyone except her. No one made a move to stop him. She fisted her right hand and pulled it back. He bounced her in his arms and caught her easily. For a moment, she felt nothing but air beneath her back. She gasped, grabbing for him. In an assured move, he swung her over his shoulder.

"Damn it, let me go. I want to stay here. Aren't any of you going to help me?" Geneva pushed her hand against Evan's back.

Down the hallway, Steven, Sonya and the two Protectorate operatives just watched as Evan carried her away. The two werewolves, Mark and Joe who'd arrived with Evan, simply followed him. Both of them had huge smiles on their faces.

Not one person at the Protectorate so much as asked what Evan was doing as he walked through the building. He should have been stopped simply because he didn't have a Protectorate guard escorting him. Visitors didn't wander through the inner offices of the Protectorate unmonitored. He carried her out to his black SUV and drove

away from the building. He headed straight to his home. She didn't even have a chance to try to slip away from him. His men had been sent for her clothes.

She eyed the two-story gray house as he pulled into the driveway. This definitely wasn't what she'd expected. He was a werewolf. The entire area looked too normal, too city. After she'd found out he was taking her to his home, she'd thought he'd take her out of the city, to a ranch or a farm. She'd pictured somewhere with a lot of land. She'd never imagined werewolves living in the burbs.

"What makes you think you have the right to do this?" Geneva folded her arms across her chest and didn't move when he stopped the SUV in the garage. "This won't work. What about your job?"

The city seemed like it would be a little restrictive for him. Evan didn't seem to be inclined to play by society's rules. He hadn't even hesitated about kidnapping her and most people would consider that a crime. She was furious with Steven and every Protectorate guard on duty. They should have stopped him. The choice to stay and try to medicate the pain was hers to make.

"You're my mate. I can work from home for the most part. I own the company so if I need I can take you to work with me." His hand wrapped around her arm. "Come on. We're not going to test the limits of this spell right now. I don't want you hurting again."

Geneva rolled her eyes. He made it sound as if she was a small child who'd tag along with him. She slid across the seat and stepped out of the SUV. Apparently, being a mate was an excuse for almost any behavior. She was his mate so he took her.

"Is abduction a common way of securing a woman for a werewolf?" she asked, but didn't make any move to go toward the green-trimmed door.

"Stop trying to start an argument. You can't change the facts." He tucked an arm around her, guiding her to the door as the garage door closed behind them.

The facts. She sniffed. If it wasn't for that damn spell she'd show him the facts. She wouldn't be here if she could walk away from him. The man was handsome, but she didn't like having her decisions made for her.

"Come on. We'll go sit down and talk about your involvement with other witches." Evan drew her through a spacious kitchen and into a huge living room.

He sprawled in a large, comfortable-looking, black chair. He'd released her, so she moved away and sat on the black couch nearby. He was too freaking confident and as sexy as hell. She wanted to be able to smack his ego back down to size, but not being able to go very far away from him hindered that. After he'd taken off his jacket, she'd noticed those broad shoulders weren't a trick of the cloth.

"I don't have any real involvement with witches. That's why this doesn't make sense. I listen. I ask questions. None of them are threatened by me. In spite of being a witch, I don't know how to do even the simplest witch magic. I don't do magic. I can't see why anyone would want to do something like this to me. The risk to them is too great." She shook her head and leaned back against the plush cushion.

"Sometimes, knowledge is power. Do you know of anyone angry with you over some information you passed along to the Protectorate?" He folded his arms across his chest.

She sighed and rolled her eyes. "Sure there are people who get angry with me, but this would take more than anger. This is hate."

"They certainly put a lot of energy into the spell," Evan admitted.

That had to be the understatement of the century. She ran her fingers through her hair and closed her eyes. Her life was in chaos and Evan's behavior only added to the tension, but he wasn't the major force. A vengeful magic user held that position. She knew that once he'd scented her, the wolf in him wouldn't just let him walk away from her. If it was just the fact that he'd claimed her as mate, she'd happily fight and argue about it. The spell on her made things even more complicated. She didn't have the ability to run from him if he was too stubborn about it.

"You're brooding. Come here, Geneva." He lifted his hand, extending his palm toward her.

"Of course I'm brooding. I have a spell on me that won't let me get farther than eight feet from you." She crossed her arms and didn't move. Oh, no, she wasn't going over to him. It was already hard enough to resist him without getting close to him. "And if it's not off by Halloween, this could be a permanent situation."

"You're just upset that it won't be taken off you right now. It shouldn't take us long to discover who put it on you," he said. His fingers curled in a beckoning gesture. "If I go over there, I'll be tempted to put that couch to use."

Geneva sighed. That was an idea she needed to keep out of his head. Just being here was more than she wanted to think about right now. She got to her feet. Walking around the gleaming coffee table, she slipped her hand into his.

He pulled her across his lap. Nuzzling her shoulder-length hair away from her neck, his tongue lapped at the base of her collarbone. He inhaled deeply. She frowned. Every time he took her in his arms, he did that. She didn't understand why and asking would probably result in another pointless, frustrating exchange. Almost all his answers regarding why he did something involved "because I'm your mate". It made her want to scream.

His warm hand slipped between the buttons of her red shirt, brushing over the skin just below the bottom edge of her bra. Tingles skittered through her as his fingers traced the edge of the undergarment. She felt her breasts swelling against the fabric and her nipples tightened into hard points.

"I can smell your desire." He brushed his lips against hers. "I want to taste it, to feel your juices surround my cock as I thrust into you."

She drew in a sharp breath. Oh, how she wanted that, but it would complicate things. Somehow, she had to stop him before it became that intimate between them. Even on her side, that wasn't going to be easy. She ached to touch him. She felt slick liquid flow from her pussy dampening her panties.

While the hand under her shirt moved to cup her breast, his other hand worked at the buttons on her shirt. She grabbed his hand. Sitting half-naked in front of him wasn't a good idea. She wondered why her body was reacting so intensely to his. His thumb brushed across the hardened peak. She drew in a sharp breath and froze. By the time her mind cleared, he'd flicked open the last button. Cool air hit her skin. Her nipples tightened from anticipation and the temperature. Sharp sensation arrowed straight to the tightening ball of need in her core.

All thoughts of why this was a bad idea began slowly fading from her mind. She ached to feel his hand on her bare skin. It felt so good through the cloth.

"We should stop." She forced the words from her mouth even when her body hummed with desire.

"Is that what you want? I want to kiss you," he whispered.

His lips brushed across hers softly. She moved restlessly against him. Her hands rose to his shoulder as she leaned into him. She felt the tips of his fingers against her back and then the release of her bra. He tugged one of her arms off his shoulder and slipped the lace garment free of her body.

"These are beautiful." His hands cupped her full breasts, lifting them.

She looked down. The contrast of his dark skin against the light cream skin of her breasts looked so exciting. She swallowed and arched her back, pressing her breasts into his hands. His thumb brushed across one tight bead.

"Such hard nipples. Would you like me to take one of them in my mouth?" He nipped at her shoulder.

She nodded. Her hands gripped his muscular shoulders. Her breasts ached and she barely resisted the urge to push his head down to the reddened tips. His hand lifted the right mound, just as he placed kisses over her chest. Hot breath fanned over the hardened peak. The nipple tightened even more sending a sharp spike straight down her spine. Her nails sank into his shoulders. She tugged, trying to get him to quit teasing. He laughed and his lips closed over the hard crest. She gasped as he sucked on it.

His hand slid down gathering her black and gold skirt. He drew the fabric up her legs. The light skirt felt deliciously abrasive to her sensitive skin. Her hands stroked over his back, hoping he'd do something more. His fingers brushed over her thigh. She spread her legs, wanting his touch. He cupped her pussy. Only the thin silk of her sheer gold panties separated his hand from her trimmed bush and it was making her wild. She was a breath away from pressing her palm over his and riding his fingers.

The doorbell rang. Evan stiffened, but kept worrying her nipple with his teeth. The bell chimed again.

"Fuck!" Evan slowly stood, still holding her. "Come on. We need to see who this is and then we'll get back to what's really important."

Geneva drew in a shaky breath as he put her on her feet. That doorbell couldn't have rung at a better time. She'd wanted him. Her body still sizzled and they'd done

little more than kiss. Okay, so he'd had his mouth on her breasts, but her body shouldn't have gone so crazy. How powerful would the feelings be when they did more than kiss? She didn't try to fool herself. The attraction between them was too strong to ignore for long. Since the spell wasn't coming off immediately, they probably would have sex. It was going to make things even harder. He already thought he had a claim on her. She walked beside him to the door and tried to shake off the hold of desire. Just his scent sparked an instantaneous reaction. Warm liquid pooled and desire stirred.

He checked the view screen. Genny saw a woman, but he shut it off before she could get a better look. Groaning, his head rested against the wood for a moment.

"Button up your shirt, Genny. Unfortunately, I can't send this person on her way. She'd come back in five minutes just to annoy me," he said, but there was a note of affection in his voice.

Geneva buttoned her shirt and stood just behind Evan as he opened the door. A young woman stood on the front step. Wearing jeans and a purple button-down shirt, she somehow appeared elegant. She had cocoa-brown skin and gleaming black hair. The tall, slim woman was very pretty. Anger and jealousy stirred inside her. Just who was this woman and what was she to Evan? Shaking her head, she tried to shrug away the thoughts. They didn't make sense. She'd just recently met the man, but she couldn't stop the irrational surge of jealousy.

The woman stepped forward and hugged Evan before walking into the house. "I heard about your little visit to the Protectorate. You know we're trying to revise our image from an animal ruled by wild emotions to a thinking being."

A growl rumbled from Evan's chest and his cheeks darkened. "Geneva, this is my sister, Anne. She's probably the only person in the city who'd tease me like that."

"Hi Geneva, I just had to come see the woman who'd managed to break through my brother's control. As alpha, he gets his way too often and he's never gone wild man before." Anne stepped forward and hugged Geneva. "It's nice to see something finally have an effect on him."

"Genny hasn't accepted the truth yet." Evan closed the door and turned to curl an arm around Geneva's shoulders. "Did you hear about the spell on her?"

"No, just about how you carried her out of the Protectorate over your shoulder. So something's wrong and that's why you reacted so strongly. What kind of spell? How bad is it?" Anne frowned before turning to lead the way into the living room.

Evan sighed and cast a frustrated look at his sister. "Come on. She won't go away until we answer her questions. She's annoyingly persistent."

"I think she has something in common with you." Genny glared at him. Persistence was probably coded into their genetics alongside the arrogance and great looks.

He drew Geneva into the living room. Going over to the chair, he sat. Even though Geneva stiffened and pulled away, he tugged her into his lap. His arms wrapped loosely around her waist. She sat forward, touching him as little as possible. He didn't try to get her to relax against him. She'd have probably hit him if he'd insisted on it.

"Genny apparently ticked someone off. The spell causes her pain if she gets farther than eight feet or so from her mate, me. The spell hasn't even reached full strength yet," Evan informed his sister.

Geneva saw all the layers of civility fall away from the other woman. Anne suddenly looked deadly serious.

"What's the timeline?" Anne sat forward, her brown eyes were narrowed.

"Halloween, at the latest, if the effects of the spell don't get too bad before then. They want to find the witch or wizard responsible. As long as Genny isn't in pain, I'll let them look. The moment that changes, I'll call you and we'll take the spell off her." Evan's voice hardened.

Geneva looked up at him frustrated. "Need I remind you it has already hurt me? I wasn't exactly having fun when it hit me."

"As long as you're near me, you won't hurt. Since I intend to be in the same room as you until the spell is taken off you that won't happen again." He raised an arrogant eyebrow as if daring her to argue.

"And my alternate suggestion of an induced coma would have almost guaranteed no pain as well, but you wouldn't talk about that." Geneva rolled her eyes. Sonya's office had seemed tiny and he'd appeared to grow larger when she'd first suggested it.

"That's because he's your mate and needs to be with you." Anne laughed. "Anything that separates the two of you is an obstacle that will be removed. Very elemental, but it's not something he'd negotiate."

"I'm not a werewolf. I may be a latent witch, but that doesn't mean anything. I don't have a mate." She pushed her finger against Evan's arm emphasizing each word, meeting his eyes.

Evan's expression turned fierce, his arms tightened, pulling her back against his chest. He growled.

"Witches have mates. It's a well-known fact. You don't have to use your magic to have a mate." Anne's calm voice carried over Evan's low growl.

Geneva shook her head. Hell, she hadn't known about her latent magic until she'd started working with the Protectorate. She'd been adopted by a human family and led a very normal life until she was eighteen. Her understanding of witches and their culture had been limited at first, but she was a witch even if she didn't know how to use her power. Witches and wizards talked with her more readily than they did to someone who didn't have magic.

His breath fanned over her ear. "I'll make sure you know without a doubt I'm your mate."

She gritted her teeth and resisted the urge to shout a denial. Relaxing against his chest, she decided to let him calm down before she took up the argument again. She wouldn't get anywhere with it when he was in this mood.

Anne stood. "I'll leave you with your mate. If you need any help, call me. You have some work ahead of you even convincing her of your claim. Acceptance is a long way off."

"I've got time." Evan hugged Geneva tight to him.

He sounded so smug she wanted to drive her elbow right into his ribs, but thought that might be a bit much right now. She turned in his arms to glare at him. His chuckle tested her restraint. If she didn't know better, she'd think he was doing it on purpose.

He stood, holding her close for a long moment before he put her on her feet. With an arm curled securely around Geneva's waist, he walked Anne to the door. Anne hugged Geneva again and then left. Evan locked the door and turned to face Geneva. A wide smile curved his lips and golden lights sparkled in his eyes. He stepped forward. She backed away from him, keeping her eyes locked on the predator in front of her. Her foot slowly slid back. He leapt across the small distance between them and pressed her against the wall.

Chapter Three

She drew in a sharp breath, a little shocked, but felt no real fear. She didn't know why. The situation certainly warranted it. She knew very little about him, he claimed to be her mate and she had a spell on her. His lips slanted across her open mouth. The second his lips touched hers, desire roared through her body as if they'd never been interrupted. Reason and caution slid out of her mind. She relaxed against him.

"I'll play with you when we get this spell off you, Genny. Any game you want." He nipped her lips before licking at them and kissing her again.

Without thought, she began to respond to the delicious feel of his lips. Her fingers slid across his shirt. She wanted it off him. Slick moisture seeped from her pussy. She pressed closer. Her hands eased under his shirt. She'd thought that it would feel nubby, but it was soft and felt like t-shirt material. The warmth of his skin drew her. Her hands slid across his back and over his ribs. His shirt quickly got in her way. She pushed it up, the fabric bunching under his arms. He drew back just enough to pull the shirt off. Her fingers skimmed over his chest. The expanse of dark flesh tempted her. She wanted to touch and kiss him everywhere. Pressing her lips to his shoulder, she let her hands trail downward. Her fingers traced over the muscles of his abdomen.

She felt his fingers brush against her back. Her bra loosened and the straps fell down her arms. She tried to scrape her fingernails across his nipple, but the tug of her bra on her arms distracted her. The drooping garment restricted her movement and the confinement soon irritated her. She lowered her arms and the shirt and silky bra fell to the floor.

Lifting her hands to his shoulders, she kissed him. A low groan rolled through his chest. His hips rocked into hers, pressing her against the wall. She moaned and her fingers clenched on his shoulders. Heat tightened low in her stomach. Shifting her feet wider, she held onto his shoulder and lifted into the slow grinding pressure.

His chest brushed against hers. Her sensitive nipples stung and ached. She wanted more than the friction of their bodies. She needed to feel his hands and lips on the tight aching flesh.

His fingers trailed across her stomach. Her skirt loosened and he tugged her away from the wall. The fabric fell around her feet. Her skin tingled and the air seemed cool on her skin.

Geneva moaned and pulled at him. She felt his hard hands moving between them, but he wasn't touching her. She leaned toward him and dropped a kiss on his shoulder. She felt skin, the brush of his cock against her belly. Nuzzling his neck, she licked and kissed her way up his throat. She nipped his neck just above his collarbone.

Her only warning was a low growl as he pinned her to the wall. His hips thrust against hers. "Genny, you test my control."

She gloried in that rough sound. She wanted his control gone. Hers had certainly vanished. She wanted him to be as desperate as she was. Each touch only added to the hot sensation burning inside her. She needed him inside her, moving against her.

"Evan, I need you inside me," she whispered. Lifting her leg, she hooked it around his, trying to get closer to him.

His fingers slid to her panties, pushing them down, but they snagged in the bunched fabric. It ripped and the silk fell to the floor. His fingertips slid down over her clit and to her opening. They circled the sensitive edge before pushing into her. She lifted into those tormenting touch.

"You're wet. Your muscles are tightening and pulling at my fingers as if to take them even deeper." He nipped her lips as his fingers moved in and out of her clenching passage.

She moaned, trembling, clinging to him. He kissed her as his thumb flicked across her clit. Sensation built.

"Don't torment me, Evan." She curled her hand around the back of his neck.

His hand withdrew. She felt the head of his cock brush against her pussy. His hands cupped her buttocks, lifting her. Cursing, he put her down and knelt, digging through his pockets. He pulled out a condom and ripped it open. He rolled the latex onto his erect shaft. He lifted her again. Her legs wrapped around his waist, unwilling to let him put distance between them again. His cock slipped between the plump wet folds, bumped against her clit. The rounded head nudged her entrance. With a thrust of his hips, his shaft drove deep into her.

Geneva sighed and her fingers curled, nails sinking into his shoulders as he filled her. It felt so good, so right. Her hips tilted, taking him a little deeper. He pressed against her from shoulder to pelvis. His hot breath fanned over her lips as he drew in huge gulps of air, not moving. She needed him to move.

"Fuck me." She tried to move against him, but he held her still.

"My woman, mate." His words rumbled across her lips as his shaft withdrew and then pushed back into her.

At that moment, she didn't care what he said as long as he kept moving. She nipped at his lips. He growled and his mouth slanted over hers in a feral claiming. She felt his lengthened fangs scrape her tongue. Her inner muscles clenched around his shaft as pleasure built to an almost unbearable peak.

"Come for me, Genny." His hips ground against her in a sharp circular motion. He lifted just enough to slip his hand between them to pluck one of her hard nipples.

Fire streaked through her. She whimpered and her body trembled as wave after wave of sensation hit her. Breathing hard as the orgasm ripped through her, she felt him tense and groan. His body jerked against hers and he stilled.

Her hands stroked over his back. Long languid strokes. She savored the feelings rippling through her. Her mind slowly began to think beyond the pleasure. The intensity that he drew with just a simple touch made her nervous. Now she was really scared. That orgasm had hit like a bolt of lightning, slamming into her and raging over her. She wouldn't have been surprised if her body had been smoking from the heat.

His lips brushed against her cheeks. "My mate."

She tensed and closed her eyes. Denial automatically rose to her lips. With effort, she held back. She knew denying him wouldn't be the wisest thing at the moment. Hell, she couldn't even leave him. Realization hit her. Fucking hell! She inwardly raged at her own stupidity. He'd been claiming her. That was the reason behind his intensity. All that was missing was the bite.

His head lifted and a gentle smile crossed his face as he brushed a few strands of hair away from her cheek. "Let's go to bed. There's so much I want to do with you."

Evan smelled the increase of her arousal. He wished he could feel her juices on his cock instead of the tight grip of latex. His fingers flexed on her buttocks. He loved the feel of her soft curves in his hands, moving against him.

He carried her up the stairs toward the bedroom. He could tell by the growing stiffness of her body that she'd regained a little of her caution. That was all right. He didn't expect her to accept everything immediately. She'd have to see that the mating was fact on her own.

"We need to talk." She looked up at him. Her lips turned down in a frown.

He couldn't miss her serious intent. His conscience was already kicking him about rushing her. He couldn't have changed what happened, not with her in danger. With that threat, he wouldn't try to fool her or himself by lying about that. He still didn't like the way it happened.

He strode down the hallway and into his bedroom. Shutting the door, he walked to the bed and gently put her down on the dark-blue blanket. She looked utterly sexy sprawled there. Her black hair was mussed. Her full red lips made him want to kiss her again. Stark naked, she somehow managed to look sated and hungry at the same time.

He straightened and paced over to the bureau. He turned to face her. The distance was absolutely necessary. He knew that if he joined her on that bed they wouldn't be talking long. She pushed into a sitting position, frowning at him. Reaching behind her, she grabbed a pillow and pulled it onto her lap. A growl escaped before he realized he'd made a sound. His animal half definitely didn't like her hiding her body from him.

She raised a brow at him, but kept the pillow in front of her. "For someone who claims be my mate, your actions sure do make it difficult to believe that."

Evan gritted his teeth and resisted the urge to show her he was her mate. "What do you mean? What doesn't fit with your view of what I should be doing?"

“Well, just to start, I’ve always heard that the first few days after a were-male finds his mate, they’re hardly ever away from each other. Always touching kissing, having sex.” She squirmed a bit on the bed as if she was uncomfortable.

Evan smiled. It looked like she was learning just why they were hardly away from each other on her own. The pheromones of his scent and from his kiss would keep her aroused. Nature’s way of hurrying the mating. He could smell her desire rising and would bet that her gorgeous nipples were hardened into tight little beads.

“Mates also want to make each other happy. You wanted to talk. If I was over there with you, we wouldn’t be talking too long.” He smiled and watched her arousal rise.

A pink flush spread across her cheeks. She licked her lips and her eyes darkened.

“Um, okay.” She took a deep breath. “What about the condom? Not that I mind. I like a responsible man, but werewolves don’t use a condom with a mate. At least—”

“That’s what you heard,” he finished for her. “I used a condom, because I don’t want to change you until we get the spell off you. I don’t know what effect the change would have on it. And before you ask, that’s the reason I didn’t put my mark on you. Your safety comes first.”

“And your semen would change me?” she asked.

“It could start the change. It would probably take more than once, but I’m not putting you at risk,” he said. He didn’t know how long he could stand here calmly talking when he really wanted to taste her.

“You’ve said you reacted so strongly because of the spell. Would it have been so different if I hadn’t been in pain and had a threat hanging over my head?” She tilted her head and bit her lip.

“It might have been a little different. I definitely wouldn’t have been so blunt. We might have gone out on a few dates. Growling ‘you’re my mate’ isn’t my usual style.” He grinned. He hadn’t been able to think about anything but keeping her out of pain.

“Dates, as in you ask me out and walk away if I refuse?” Her dimples flashed and laughter lurked in her voice.

He could tell she didn’t quite believe the image of them having a regular dating relationship. In truth, he couldn’t see them going through such a tame courtship. “You’d have found yourself under siege.”

“That I believe,” Geneva said.

Evan watched her legs move and his mouth watered. Any more questions would have to wait. He pushed away from the dresser and walked over to the bedside table. Pulling open the small drawer, he grabbed a condom.

Her eyes rounded as he plucked the pillow out of her hands. Finally, he could see all of her body. He reached out and cupped the full globes of her breasts. She shivered and the dark pink tips hardened. He wanted to taste those reddened nipples.

“Lay back, Genny,” he urged.

She arranged the pillows behind her and leaned back against them. He climbed onto the bed beside her. Her legs shifted, widening, giving him a glimpse of the moist pink flesh between her thighs. He trailed his fingers across the soft, short hair covering her pussy.

“Are you going to play all night?” she asked breathlessly. Her hips lifted against his hand.

He bent and dropped a kiss on her stomach. He inhaled, drawing their combined scents into him. He found it deeply satisfying to smell his scent on her body. It almost had the wolf inside him howling with pleasure. He liked the small sign of possession and wanted to see a permanent mark on her shoulder. The urge had sharp canines lengthening in his mouth.

At that moment, he knew that they’d have to work fast to find out who’d put that spell on her. He would be able to resist the desire to change his mate for long. Only the need to protect her, to remove any threat to her helped push back the hunger now.

“I don’t know about playing, but I’m definitely going to taste tonight.” He licked the underside of both breasts.

His mouth skimmed up her left breast. He felt her breath hitch as he lapped at the stiff nipple. Her hands slid up his arms, her touch light. The hard bud tightened even more.

“Tell me what you like, what you want,” he said his attention on her breast. His hand cupped the other firm globe, squeezing gently. “Do you like that?”

She moaned and writhed. “Your mouth. I want your mouth.”

He closed his lips over the nipple and tongued the hard peak before sucking at it. Her taste fed his hunger, the whimpers and sighs urging him on. Her hands felt hot as they brushed over his chest. She plucked at the hard nubs of his nipples, sending a sizzling streak of heat straight to his cock. He couldn’t let her have all of the fun. He tugged at one nipple as he grazed his teeth over the other. She shivered and cried out.

“I bet I could make you come just by playing with your breasts. You love having your breasts played with, don’t you?” He nipped at the sensitive peak.

She gave a wordless cry and her body arched upward.

“Such pretty breasts and later I’ll feast and suck,” he told her, giving the globes one last firm squeeze before he moved between her thighs. “I’m going to lick your pretty pussy until you’re begging me to fuck you.”

Her color rose and the scent of her arousal intensified. He thought she just might like dirty talk. He lapped at her thigh, drew her slightly salty taste into his mouth. His lengthened canines scraped the tender skin. Her leg shifted and she gasped, but he knew she liked it. There wasn’t a hint of fear in her scent. Parting the plump lips, he drew his tongue from the glistening entrance to the nub of her clit. He lapped at the delicious juices and then moved back up to the hardened clit just begging for attention. He flicked it with his tongue and sucked on it. Her hips twisted. He slipped two fingers into her snug pussy, stroking in and out. Hot juices surrounded his fingers and her

inner muscles tugged at him. The scent of her arousal filled his senses. His cock throbbed and his balls tightened. He wanted to feel that slick fluid on his shaft.

"Evan, please!" she cried. Her nails dug into his shoulders.

"I'm with you." He thrust his fingers into her, taking her to the edge. "If you want something I'm not giving you, you're going to have to tell me."

She drew in gasping breaths. "Please fuck me, Evan!"

He paused only long enough to roll on the condom. He rose over her. His cock brushed against her and then he rolled his hips. Her tight muscles clasped around him. He wanted to draw out the pleasure. She felt so good.

He kissed her lingeringly. The rhythm of his tongue matched the long slow thrusts of his hips. She moaned and her hips lifted against his. Her nails scored his back as she tried to urge him to a faster pace.

He felt her muscles begin to ripple around his cock just before she shivered and cried out her pleasure. His control evaporated. He pumped into her hot pussy, wanting, aching. His body tightened and he couldn't think beyond the need pulsing through him. His hips surged against hers. Pleasure exploded, slamming over him. He collapsed against her.

He drew his hand up her side and slowly withdrew from her. He rolled onto his back and drew her with him. She watched him, her face still flushed. He saw the moment she remembered she'd wanted to stay out of his bed. If he hadn't mentioned the word mate or spoken of the future, she'd have had no problem with having sex with him. That had been clear through her attitude.

"We'll go to the Protectorate soon. I won't be able to leave the spell on you long. I need to make you mine." He dropped a kiss on her frowning lips.

"Haven't you done that?" She glanced down to where his cock pressed against her leg.

"That's just sex. The wolf part of me won't be satisfied until I've marked you and you've begun the change. We have to find out who put the spell on you," Evan said. "Now cuddle against me and go to sleep."

"Cuddle? I don't cuddle." She put a hand on his chest.

He tugged her close. After a little initial stiffness, she relaxed against him. She still fought the attraction, the desire that rose between mates. He wasn't worried about that. Eventually, she'd see that there was no denying the truth. She'd sense the rightness. Because of the spell, it would just take her a little while. He closed his eyes and let sleep take him.

Chapter Four

Geneva glared at the man sitting beside her. He'd woken her, urged her into her clothes and rushed her out with only a muffin for breakfast. Evan had said that he wanted to find out who'd put the spell on her. As sleepy as she'd been, she was just lucky that her clothing matched. The red shirt she now wore could have been complemented by a yellow skirt. She'd never expected to sit for four hours straight. Evan, Sonya and one of the trusted Coven witches sat around her. Her hands rested on the sturdy worn fabric of her jeans and she tried to stay still. The room had been darkened. She could feel the magic pouring over her. A hazy glow pulsed around her and the three people obviously saw something in it she didn't. She was curious about what they could learn from what seemed to be light and mist.

"It's definitely a local witch. I've felt the magic before, but I can't quite identify the person. It's not someone I come into contact with much." The Coven witch frowned as her hands hovered just in the cloud.

"Not someone you see often. Does that mean you don't think it's a higher level Coven member?" Steven, head of this branch of the Protectorate, frowned.

"I can't say that. We know it's someone with connections and there are a lot of higher level Coven and Wizard Council members who don't come regularly to meetings." The woman swirled her fingers through the misty haze.

"There's a strange taint to the magic. I've never felt anything like it," Evan said. His voice sounded almost clinically detached, but his eyes burned with intensity.

"I have," Sonya McCallister said. "The few witches I've encountered with that tainted feel have been insane in one way or another. Somehow the mental problems are translated into the witch's or wizard's magic."

Geneva drew in a sharp breath. The idea of dealing with a vengeful witch had been bad enough. Facing an insane witch or wizard sent cold chills sweeping through her. There had always been the hope that maybe the witch had made a mistake and would realize it. Even discovering why the spell had been put on her was probably a lost cause if the person was insane. There might not be a reason. She didn't know if an insane person needed a reason to cause havoc.

"Do you know which it is?" Geneva was hoping for at least something positive coming out of this long session.

"Not for sure, but I'm leaning toward a female," Sonya said. "A little more study will allow us to narrow that down completely."

“Don’t worry, Genny. We’ll get the spell off you and we’ll catch the person. They won’t get a chance to hurt you again.” Evan’s hand passed through the mist and brushed over her cheek.

She smiled. She was getting used to the fact that he sometimes knew what she was feeling, especially when she was worried or afraid. That ability still unnerved her and she wasn’t really happy that he could do it. He either read her expression or was using some werewolf trick she’d never heard of. She didn’t think he could read her mind.

“Well, first, you’ve got to figure out who the person is and none of you seem to know anything about the lunatic.” She glared. She itched to get up and walk, but every time she started to move, Evan’s hand would push her back into her seat.

“Give us a few days. We’ll find out who this is.” Steven moved to stand behind Sonya. “There has to be some connection to you. This witch didn’t just pick your name out of the air. I already have people pulling the files on all the cases you’ve worked in the last year.”

Geneva shifted restlessly. This was probably the longest she’d sat in one place in months. Usually, she was on the move. If not trying to find one of her contacts, she was checking facts.

“It won’t be much longer. We just have a few more things to do while the magic is around you.” Sonya reached over and put a hand over Geneva’s clenched fist.

Geneva smiled. Well, she hadn’t exactly been hiding her irritation, although she’d contained her glares to Evan. She blamed him for this. She had grumbled and moved in her seat a bit. The man wouldn’t even talk to her more than a few reassurances during their observation. She’d been bored for almost the whole four hours. They’d talked, but most of what they’d said had been about the magic and above her rudimentary knowledge.

“We need the syringes now, Steven. They’re in the drawer of the table over there.” Sonya turned and pointed to a small table.

Geneva blinked surprised. Syringes? Why did they need needles? Turning her attention back to Evan, she tugged at the hand he still held. It immediately gained his full attention. “Why do you need a syringe? I’ve never heard of a witch or wizard injecting anything?”

“Not injecting. They’ll take a little blood.” Evan’s hand squeezed hers gently.

“Take blood why?”

“There’s a spell they can do using the magic-infused blood that will give a general location of a witch within the city. That will help narrow down our list of possible witches,” Evan explained.

“Do you know how many witches and wizards there are in the city?” Geneva rolled her eyes. While she didn’t know the exact number, she knew there were four large Covens and over a thousand active members.

"I said narrow down. Once they know the general area, we can begin really hunting." His mouth kicked up in an anticipatory smile. "After they get what they need, we'll leave for today."

"You don't need any blood from me?" She looked into his eyes. She thought he'd be more aggressive in the hunt. He seemed a little relaxed.

"No, they'll do the narrowing down. The Protectorate wants this person in one piece and if I find her or him, the person won't be," he said. His voice was quiet and steel-hard.

Sonya took syringes and a tourniquet from Steven. In moments she'd drawn blood and pressed a pad to the puncture.

"Thank you for trying to find the person who put the spell on me." Geneva smiled at Sonya as the magical haze was disbursed.

"This kind of thing can't be allowed. It's against Coven law and Protectorate laws set up to govern witches. I know that was a long session. The others shouldn't take this much time." Sonya stood and stretched.

"We'll see you in two days." Steven put a hand on her shoulder.

Evan shot to his feet, a growl rumbling in his throat. He took a step toward the Protectorate Commander. Geneva pushed to her feet, stumbling a bit as she put herself between them. Damn protective werewolf.

"What do you think you're doing? You can't go after every man who touches me. He put his hand on my shoulder, not my breast." She planted her hands on his chest and shoved. He didn't budge, but she did get his attention.

"You're mine." Evan's hands fastened at her waist.

"Yeah, you've said that before. A touch on the shoulder or a handshake isn't going to change it. Get control of this possessiveness," she ordered.

"I'll be able to do that when you're finally mine. Holding back is driving the wolf inside me insane." He pulled her close and wrapped his arms around her hugging her tightly.

* * * * *

Evan jerked upright, a growl rumbling in his throat. He put his body between the door and Genny, protecting her. At first, he didn't know what had woken him, put his instincts on the alert. A crash and the tinkling of glass breaking answered that question. He leapt out of bed and ran to the window, looking down to the lawn at the front of his house. He saw a dark figure just outside the light of a street lamp. The figure's hand drew back and hurled something. The sound of breaking glass followed. His muscles tensed and his hands moved to raise the window. He was set to go out the window after the men. A moan from the bed drew his attention.

Genny lay on the far side of the bed. She moaned again and her hands moved to her stomach. Realization shot through him. The spell. He'd completely forgotten about it.

She must have rolled and with him at the window they were too far apart. He didn't hesitate. Moving back over to her, he gently woke her. She frowned and her hand still rested on her stomach.

"What?" she asked.

He put his fingers to her lips and drew her from bed. Keeping to the side of the window, he looked out again, but couldn't see any sign of the shadowy figure. Not taking any chances, he tugged Geneva after him as he checked the house. Every window at the front of the house had been broken. Certain the person was really gone, he picked up the phone and called the Protectorate. The operatives would know about Genny's problem and wouldn't question why they had to stay close to each other. He didn't think this was simple vandalism. After speaking briefly with a woman, he put the phone on the table. He turned and saw Genny staring at him.

"What happened?" She put a hand on her bare hip. "Tell me fast. We both have to get dressed. The investigators will be here soon and I want to hear before them. Is it just the windows?"

His smiled and let his eyes roam over her creamy skin and full, curvy form. Her assertive demand excited him and he'd have loved to press her against the wall and fuck her until she was whimpering his name. Unfortunately, she was right. The investigators would arrive quickly. He knew Steven would have put the investigators and operatives on alert just in case help was needed.

"Just the windows? I'll have you know I don't like having my property destroyed. Someone broke every first floor window on this side of the house and they will pay." He curved an arm around her waist and guided her up the stairs.

"Do you have enemies that do that regularly?" She smiled up at him.

"I don't have any enemies at the moment," he explained. "If I did, they wouldn't just break my windows."

Her smile faltered and faded. "You think it was the one who put the spell on me."

He nodded. They dressed and got ready for the agents' arrival. There really wasn't any other explanation. If it had been any of his enemies, they wouldn't have stopped at a few windows. They would have come after him. The person who'd put a spell on her was a witch. He or she could have used magic. It would have been much more damaging. For whatever reason, the person must have been afraid that the magic would have been recognized. As an attempt to scare him away from Genny, it barely rated and had no hope of working.

The Protectorate agents arrived in short order. By the time the evidence had been collected and statements taken, the sun was rising. Evan called a few friends and they covered the windows until he could arrange to get them replaced.

He urged Genny up the stairs. He was a little worried about how quiet she'd become since she'd learned she was the target of this attack. She was brooding, probably thinking she was responsible. He could almost see her turning everything over in her mind, trying to find out what she'd done to cause this. He could smell the

fear as well as a hint of panic. None of those emotions would fade quickly on their own. She'd never get back to sleep while held by those volatile emotions. He knew he couldn't soothe her with words. Not now. The feelings were too raw, the situation too recent.

As they neared the door, he swung her up into his arms, her hands gripped his shoulders for a moment before sliding around his neck. Surprising him, her lips brushed over his and she desperately kissed him.

Geneva let his heady taste wash over her. She threw her whole being into that moment. She wanted to block all the thoughts whirling in her head even if it was just for a few moments. Until he'd picked her up, she'd been lost wondering who hated her so much and why. She hadn't done anything to anyone. She couldn't think of anything she could have done to cause such an intense reaction. He didn't ask any questions just kissed her back.

Barely recognizing when they got into the room, her tongue continued to stroke against his. His hands tugged at the t-shirt she'd put on, pulling it up over her head. His palms stroked up and down her body as if trying to soothe her a little before his fingers glided inward as if he couldn't resist the temptation offered by the swell of her breasts. She tugged at his shirt, managing to undo the buttons. The material parted and she slid her hand across his warm broad chest. His hands cupped her buttocks, lifting her against him. She moaned as he rolled his hips. His cock felt hard as it pressed against her pussy. She lifted into the grinding pressure. Gasping, she tore her lips away from his, her body quivering with need. His hand slipped down to cup her pussy.

"I can feel your heat, smell it. Tell me what you want." His teeth nipped at her lips.

She licked the tingling lower lip and tugged at his hands. "I want you."

He smiled and unbuttoned her jeans. "Get out of those pants and I'll give you what you need."

He was out of his clothes before she managed to get halfway out of hers. He climbed onto the bed and waited for her. She stepped out of her pants and moved to the bed. He tugged her onto the mattress. She braced a hand on the soft sheet. His lips closed over hers as he rolled with her, pressing her beneath his body.

She savored his weight and warmth. He drew his hand down her body, lifting her thighs as he settled between her legs. She smiled and kissed him. Her hips rocked into his. She wanted his cock inside her. And if he didn't move soon, she'd do whatever was needed to get what she needed. He reached between them as she tugged at him.

"Fuck!" Evan cursed and pulled back. He moved to one of the bedside tables and grabbed a condom from the drawer. A growl rumbled in his voice. "I can't believe I almost forgot."

The package ripped and a moment later, he'd rolled on the latex. He moved between her thighs and drove into her, his cock sliding deep. Her nails scraped down his back. She wanted him filling her, but she needed him to move. His hips surged

against her in a fast, hard rhythm. Her legs tightened around his thighs as she rose to meet each thrust. Sensation pulsed low in her belly. It felt so good.

His teeth nipped at her lips. She gasped, her mouth opening for his kiss. He continued moving against her. Her heart raced. She thrust her tongue against his, desperate for more. She felt the sharpened edge of his teeth. A thrill of anticipation sizzled through her. She arched and drove her hips against his.

“More.” She nipped at his neck.

His hips thrust hard against hers. His eyes blazed, almost seeming to glow golden as his hips drove against her. He looked wild and seemed barely in control. She wanted to rip that last vestige of willpower away from him. Her nails raked down his back. She felt the pleasure building even higher. Her body quivered with the pulsing sensation and she knew she’d come in only moments.

His hand lifted her leg, raising it higher as he continued to thrust into her. “Is this what you need?”

He drove into her, grinding his pelvis against her, before withdrawing and thrusting forward again. White light burst in front of her eyes and pleasure arced through her body. Even her toes tingled with the sharp sensation. He pumped into her, each thrust sending an echoing ripple through her body. He stiffened over her, a growl rumbling against her chest. With a last thrust of his hips, he collapsed against her.

For long moments, his head rested against her neck. Only the sound of their breathing broke the soft silence in the bedroom. She stroked her hand down his back enjoying the heat of his body, just the feeling of security she got being close to him. All too soon, thoughts of the broken windows and the person behind them returned to her mind. Whoever was behind this wanted her away from Evan. Geneva knew enough about werewolves to know that wouldn’t be happening. He’d claimed his mate. He wouldn’t leave her in danger.

Evan nipped at her neck. “You know what I’d like to do?”

“What?” Geneva arched her neck, giving him more access to the curve of her neck. Those nips stung, but also sent a ripple of anticipation through her.

“I’d love to flip you over onto your stomach and draw you to your knees. I want to push my cock deep into your hot wet pussy and close my mouth over this muscle right here.” His lips dropped a kiss on the spot where her neck and shoulder joined.

“But you’re not going to do that?” Her voice sounded breathless. She could easily imagine that scene. His large muscled body over hers, his dark skin contrasting with her lighter skin. She could almost feel the heat of his body, the thick cock pressing into her.

“No, I couldn’t hold back. I’d bite you and in that position, I wouldn’t be able to stand the confining grip of a condom. I’m already having trouble holding back. You’d begin the change.” His hand cupped the side of her face and his head rose. His eyes were once again a rich deep brown and she could see hunger and possessiveness in that intense stare.

“What is the change? Does it completely change me at one time or does it take days or more?” She couldn’t deny she was curious. It could very well happen if they didn’t find the person behind the spell soon. He wouldn’t let her out of his sight if he thought she was in any danger.

“It takes time. The full conversion could take up to a year, but even the beginning stages would destroy much of the spell work, but not the spell.” He slowly withdrew from her. “Now go to sleep, you need to rest.”

“But if you bite me, I’ll turn into a full werewolf? Not just something more than I am now.” Geneva wanted to know all of the details.

“You’ll be a full werewolf, not just a stronger witch. Sleep. You know you’re tired.” He settled beside her a frown on his face.

A werewolf. It might be interesting... She shook her head. Imagining what it would be like to change shapes wasn’t something she should be thinking about. She was trying to avoid being bitten and even this mating thing. She had no idea how she’d do it even if the witch just walked into the Protectorate and confessed tomorrow. At the very least, she’d have to move. Werewolves were persistent.

* * * * *

“Why are we going back to the Protectorate? I thought the witches were going to try to locate the person who put the spell on me and you were going to stay out of it.” She sat in the front seat of his SUV and shot glares at him any time she could catch his eyes.

Evan slashed a glance at her as he pulled into a parking space. He loved the challenge in her voice and her attitude. She wore tight jeans and a close-fitting deep-blue shirt with a deep v that sent his blood rushing south. It gave him some interesting ideas about proving which one of them was in charge. He’d enjoy the tussle later. She’d been sleeping when he’d made the call. He knew she’d had trouble getting to sleep again last night, but after the window incident, he didn’t waste any time. He’d called Steven almost as soon as he’d woken.

“We won’t be dealing with the witches today, Genny. Steven’s arranged for us to look over the files of the missions you’ve contributed to in any way.” Evan opened the door, reached back in and helped her out of the vehicle. “It’s most likely someone you’ve angered. It’s unlikely someone just decided it would be a great day to put a harmful spell on a stranger.”

Geneva grimaced. “I know you’re probably right, but I don’t really get that involved with anyone. It’s not like I’m an operative. I don’t have that much interaction with anyone who’s done something wrong.”

“You might not see the connection, but someone obviously blames you for something and wants you in pain.” Evan drew her to the doors of the Protectorate building. The glass gleamed almost blindingly in the bright sun.

Jamie smiled as they entered and waved them to the door. A buzz sounded and the door opened. Geneva went in just in front of Evan. After they entered the hallway, Evan stepped up beside Geneva. Steven waited in the hallway. Evan saw Geneva's eyebrows rise.

"I've got a room ready and the files of the cases she's worked on that have been closed are already there. Going back five years as you asked. Since this person seems so intent, he or she might have been planning this for a while." Steven led them down the hallway to a glass-walled room.

Three laptops sat on a long table. "The files are there and as we find more, we'll send them on to the computers for you. One of our researchers will be coming to help with the coordination. If you find someone of interest, Danielle will begin looking into the person." Steven stopped just inside the room.

"Good. We'll begin the search. This will probably take a while." Evan nodded and went to the table.

Geneva followed and sat on one of the chairs in front of a laptop. She turned on the computer and looked at it dully. Evan knew she was having a tough time acknowledging that someone wanted her in pain or worse. She opened a file and then looked over at him.

"How am I supposed to know what to look for? I don't know why this person is doing this." She ran a hand through her hair and sighed.

"Try to remember if there was any kind of anger or scene. If you met the person held accountable. Any kind of remarkable case," Evan said. "We'll keep a list of those."

A woman came into the room and smiled. She introduced herself as Danielle. Her black hair was short and slightly curly. Evan nodded and looked down at the computer.

"If you find any interesting people just tell me and I'll begin the search." Danielle smiled and her long lashes fluttered.

He accessed the first of the files on the computer. The report seemed straightforward and not that important. A young wizard had been using his magic in public. He probably wouldn't have drawn the Protectorate's interest if he hadn't injured someone doing it. Witches and wizards tended to keep a low profile. Their powers tended to make some people more nervous than the existence of werewolves and vampires did.

"Tell me about this person," Evan urged, showing the file to Geneva.

"He's just a boy. He wanted to show off. From what I know, he was lonely, trying to find a place. His parents had just moved here. He got a slap on the wrist and a mentor. Besides I don't think he'd have the power or knowledge for this." Geneva shrugged.

Evan nodded. "We'll put him in the not likely category. Let's move on to the next file."

They'd gone through three more files when Geneva suddenly sat up straight. She stared at the picture on the screen. He saw her look at him and then back at the screen.

"I remember this one." She touched the picture and it filled the screen. "If he was alive, I'd say you definitely needed to put him on the list, but he killed himself rather than let the Coven and Council judge and punish him." She tapped the screen and the picture returned to normal size. "His family wasn't happy. They thought the charges and the evidence had all been created to hurt their standing."

"His family goes under investigation. This could just as easily be a relative, especially if they really believe the evidence was faked." He wasn't prepared to ignore the possibility.

"If you're going to investigate every family member who's said something they regret, the list is never going to end. Family members tend to stand up for each other." Geneva folded her arms across her chest and sent him an annoyed look.

"Then there will be a lot of names to search." He moved on to the next file and waited until she'd followed suit. Protecting her came before worrying about how much work he was putting on someone or making someone angry. Even her. She'd have to see that her safety would always be a priority for him.

She rolled her eyes, but moved on to the next file. Frowning she read it. "This woman gave me chills. She didn't care who she hurt. She used magic to commit robberies and hurt people while she did it. She's lucky she was only stripped of power and put in prison."

Evan understood what she was saying. The woman could have been put to death for it. Her file didn't list any family or even a next of kin. Just judging by the few cases they'd read, they'd have a difficult time narrowing down the people who might want to kill her. Frustration and anger built. He wanted this finished now.

"Does she have any relatives?" Evan leaned forward and looked at Genny. The woman sounded unbalanced.

"It's not listed in the report and I didn't find any." She drummed her fingers on the table. "This could take days."

"Then it will take days. I don't want any person who could be angry with you left off the list." He reached over and grasped her hand, squeezing gently. He wanted to comfort her, to pull her into his lap and hold her, but held back. "Let's move onto the next. Do you remember anything about it?"

She turned back to the screen and began studying the files. They worked for hours. He'd ask her questions if she didn't have any immediate comments about them. When she started rubbing her temples, he knew it was time for a break.

"Would you like to go get something to eat? I'm a little hungry." He pushed his laptop back and waited.

She looked over at him, blinking for a moment. "I am hungry, but don't we need to work on this more?"

"We can take time to eat and let someone else work on this for a while." He stood and held out his hand.

She rose to her feet and slipped her palm over his. He drew her over to the door, but stopped to look back at Danielle. He checked his watch.

"We'll be back. Steven's arranged for others to look over the files and they should arrive soon. If there are any questions they need answered have them flag the file," Evan told the woman just before he opened the door and urged Genny out in front of him.

"Where are we going to eat?" Geneva asked.

"I know this place that makes a great steak and a fabulous iced tea. They have an excellent wine and beer selection, but there's still work to do." He could almost taste the rare meat and his mouth was watering just at the thought of it.

"That sounds good. A nice long lunch is just what I need. I was beginning to get a headache." She smiled seeming to relax as they left the Protectorate building.

* * * * *

Geneva had enjoyed the meal, but inevitably they'd had to go back to the Protectorate and wade through the files. She felt a headache growing and no amount of rubbing at her temples was going to relieve it. She just didn't understand where this was going to get them. Already they had a list of over fifty suspects and that didn't include the people flagged for further investigation. There were going to be too many suspects to narrow down in a short time. The spell would be removed long before they knew who did it. She sighed and added another person to the suspect list. Hands fastened on her shoulders and pulled her out of her seat. She knew it was Evan. Aside from the fact that he tended to get vocal if another man touched her, she recognized the feel of his hands.

"It's nearly seven and we've had a long day. It's time to go home, eat and get some rest," he whispered in her ear.

She agreed readily. She was more than ready to get away from that growing list of people before it began to seem even more futile. They left and Geneva stared out of the window in silence. She thought about the future. Getting the spell off her wouldn't be the end of it. The witch or wizard could easily put another more lethal spell on her. Whoever it was didn't seem to have any respect for the Witch's Council or the law. Geneva didn't think going another step farther would faze them. Until that man or woman was found, she'd be in danger. She just wished she had some idea of why the person had put the spell on her. Was it revenge for something she'd done? Was the person trying to right some perceived wrong?

"You're thinking about this too much." Evan's voice sounded, drawing her eyes away from the passing buildings.

"Sorry. I can't think too many happy thoughts when someone's trying to make my life hell at the very least." She clenched her hands as she thought about the pain she'd be in if she wasn't near Evan. If he hadn't been close, she probably would have been put into a coma or the magical equivalent.

"Haven't I told you that we'll get the spell off you and catch them?" His attention remained on the road, but she saw the smile on his face and heard it in his voice.

She shook her head. "You haven't even managed to find out who did this much less get close to catching him."

"Or her. This could very well be a woman. You've gathered some information on some very powerful witches. It's going to take some searching to find out if one has a grudge against you," he said easily.

Geneva frowned. He didn't seem to be taking this at all seriously. She knew he did, but he was too relaxed, too confident. She honestly didn't think it would be easy to find the person. They had put the spell on her, wanted her to suffer and now she wasn't. She could only hope that if the person tried to get at her in another way, it would lead to some clue about who he or she was.

He pulled into the driveway slowly. His eyes moved over the area before he pushed the button to open the garage door. It rose smoothly. Once it was open and he'd confirmed that the garage was empty, he drove into the shelter. He got out and waited until she'd followed him across the seat. Lifting her down, he slipped his arms around her in a quick hug.

"Come on. You can help me make dinner. What do you want? I have some chicken and some lean steak." He led her into the house.

"Chicken sounds good. What else do you have? A salad would be good." Her mouth watered at the thought of food.

"We'll go see what we can find to go with the chicken." His fingers laced with hers and they walked slowly into the kitchen.

The kitchen was large and light green with light wood cabinets. They worked companionably. He started preparing the chicken and she put water on for some herbed noodles and began chopping veggies for a salad on the gray granite countertop. Just as he put the chicken on, she dropped noodles into the boiling water. While she waited, she sat at the round table near the window in the kitchen. There was a long wooden table in the dining room, but she wanted the intimacy of the smaller table. The scent of grilling chicken filled the room. She drained the noodles and mixed in the herbs and parmesan.

"Everything looks great and the noodles smell wonderful. I have a nice wine that will complement this." Evan took the platter of chicken and carried it over to the table. Geneva stayed close enough to him to stop the pain as she put the dish of noodles on the table. He got the salad and wine as she found two wineglasses. Sitting down at the table across from him, she was amazed at how well they'd worked together. It felt good, relaxing in a way. After they finished eating, they dropped the dishes into the

dishwasher. As they left the kitchen, he clicked off the light. His arm curved around her shoulders just before urging her up the stairs.

"I think we both deserve a restful night after a day of going through those names," Evan said. "I've got a huge tub up there and I want to see you in it."

She almost moaned at the thought. It sounded like absolute bliss. Her mind automatically supplied visions of a warm sudsy bath and the scent of her favorite oil.

Evan stopped and she heard him sniff. Turning her head, she saw him looking around the room. She had no idea what was wrong. He looked a little confused, a small frown tugging at the corners of his mouth. At least, he didn't look worried or have that aggressive angry look he had when danger was close.

"Do you smell almonds and vanilla?" He glanced over at her and sniffed again. "It's definitely there and it wasn't earlier."

She frowned and inhaled. Yes, she did smell almonds and vanilla. The smell was instantly recognizable. It was her favorite bath oil. She hadn't used it since she'd last been at her home. That strong smell couldn't come from her body heat.

"Yes, I smell it. It smells like my almond vanilla bath scent." She looked around trying to think of some answer. The bottle of oil hadn't been among the things that had been brought from her apartment. Whoever had packed her things hadn't grabbed it.

He leaned his hip against the stair rail. His face relaxed and he smiled. "Does this happen around you a lot?"

"What? You're the one who smelled it first." She frowned, not understanding what he meant.

"Do you ever want something and it just happens? You were thinking about taking a bath with your favorite bath scent, weren't you?" He tugged her closer, but maintained eye contact.

"Yes, I was thinking how great a bath would be and about the scent, but what difference does that make? And everyone sometimes gets what they want unexpectedly." She shrugged, taking the opportunity to move closer to him. She didn't even try to deny the urge to feel the warmth and hardness of his body.

"Not everyone, not like that. What just happened was the most basic kind of magic. If you'd been trained, you'd have been taught to control it," he said as he began to lead her up the stairs again.

"So I do magic without knowing it. I don't see a bottle of my bath oil. What exactly did I do?" She walked slowly up the stairs beside him.

"Your power isn't focused enough to make the actual bottle appear. It made the scent. If we'd been in the water, we might have come out smelling lightly of it. It's a sort of wish fulfillment. You've probably been at a restaurant. Maybe you thought that something would be good and your waiter brought it to you without any explanation." Evan looked over at her. His words came out as if he was trying to find a way to make her understand.

“Well, yes, that’s happened. It’s happened all of my life.” She grinned. Mostly with dessert and almost anything chocolate. She’d never really thought about why it happened. It had just been part of her life.

“You’re a strong witch. When you’re trained, you’ll be formidable.” He opened the door to his bedroom and tugged her inside the room.

The master bath was attached to his room. She went to get some clothes and walked with him into the spacious room. The entire room was done in blue and gray and trimmed in white. He’d insisted she unpack her suitcase. It was too much too soon for her. The man wanted a commitment and he wanted it now. She didn’t know what to do. If she could run, she would have. The “you’re mine” thing would have sent her into panic mode if she didn’t have bigger problems. She wasn’t ready for any kind of commitment. On top of that, she wasn’t sure she wanted to do anything about her magic.

He bent down and started the water in the bath. Water rushed into the large gray tub. Evan unbuttoned his shirt. Geneva began working on her clothes although her eyes stayed on him. His chest gleamed in the light. She let her blue shirt drop to the floor and unfastened her bra absently. Just as she unbuttoned her jeans, Evan stepped forward. His hands slipped around her waist. His hips pressed into hers.

His lips closed over hers. He sucked the full lower lip between his. His tongue stroked over the curve. Prickles of sensation flowed from her lips and down her body. She moaned, curling an arm around his neck and her mouth opened beneath his. She stroked her tongue across his lips wanting to deepen the kiss. He chuckled and his tongue thrust deep into her mouth. Her arm tightened, pulling him closer as she sank into the kiss. Lord, he knew how to kiss.

His thumbs brushed across her nipples once and then again with a bit more pressure. Her back arched and she moaned. She could see and feel how much he wanted her. His cock pressed against her, the hard ridge evident even through the fabric of his jeans.

“I love how quickly your body responds to my touch. We have to go back into the bedroom. I forgot to grab a condom as we went through.” His teeth nipped at her neck.

She shivered. He seemed to know just where to touch. She stroked her hand up his side, wanting to arouse him as much as he did her. Her hand found the flat hard disk of his nipple. His breath hissed between his lips.

“You’re a little tease,” he whispered against her lips, but there wasn’t accusation in his voice, just sensual promise.

“No teasing. I just don’t want to play any games.” She let her hand slide slowly down his stomach.

A grimace twisted his lips as he caught her hand pulled it away from him. “Not quite yet. I want to get in the water and we still have to get that condom.”

His fingers moved to her wrist. She let him lead her out of the bathroom. He grabbed the square packet. She smiled as he hurriedly urged her back into the

bathroom. He turned off the water and then finished undressing. He was naked and stepping into the water.

She laughed and skinned the jeans down her hips. Slipping out of them, she took the final paces to join him. A smile curved her lips as she stopped at the rim of the tub.

"You could have helped me. I wouldn't have objected if you did." She joined him in the water and slowly sat. She felt his legs slide along hers.

He moved forward, water rippling softly. "If I'd helped you, I would have had you on that counter. I want you too much to play very long. Get on the edge of the tub. Let's see how much you want me."

"I can already tell you. I'm more than ready for you." She didn't move.

He rose to his knees. His tongue swept slowly over her lips. His hands closed around her waist.

"I'll judge for myself if you're ready. Am I going to have to lift you up there?" He raised an eyebrow.

She shook her head as she slowly rose to sit on the edge of the tub. He was so fond of giving orders. She might have to do something about that sometime, but right now, all she wanted was to feel his hands and mouth touching her.

His hands slid down to her knees and pressed them open wider. She eagerly leaned back, bracing her hands on the tile floor. He leaned forward and his finger stroked over her clit just before his tongue lapped at her pussy. She moaned and bit her lip. She felt her inner muscles clench. Sharp sensation speared through her. She gasped as his fingers lifted and his mouth replaced it. When he started sucking, she nearly came off the edge of the tub. His hands moved to her hips, holding her in place. He feasted on her, his tongue lapping and swirling over her clit. Pleasure built, tightening in her stomach. His fingers circled her entrance before pushing into her. If he didn't stop soon, she was going to come even before he got inside her. She was going to be mad if that happened, she wanted his cock inside her when she came. She reached down and cupped the back of his head. His hair was too short otherwise she'd have grabbed a handful of it.

"Evan, please, come inside me. I want to be with you." She gasped, her voice sounded strained even to her.

His head rose and he licked his lips. Without a word, he tugged her back into the water. She sighed as the warm water closed around her. Her legs tightened around his waist. His shaft pressed against her pussy briefly as her buttocks settled against his thighs. She rose a little. As she reached between them, he rolled a condom onto his cock. He moaned as she grasped his shaft. She guided it to her entrance and slowly lowered onto it. She shivered and her head fell back. Rocking her hips, she enjoyed the sensation of his shaft, sliding deep into her.

"Ride me." His fingers flexed on her buttocks, lifting her up until only the rounded head of his cock remained inside her.

She shivered as he slowly lowered her. She drew in a hissing breath. Her hands rose to his shoulders and she gripped the thick muscled mass. She tensed and tried to rise. His hands held her still.

Leaning down, she kissed him because she couldn't resist. She wanted to touch him any way she could, even though her body was burning with need.

"I have to move," she whispered against his lips. She sucked on the full lower curve. "Stop trying to control everything."

He laughed softly, but it sounded strained. "Remember who you're talking to here. Move."

His hands on her hips controlled her movements. She couldn't move as fast as she wanted. The slow controlled strokes were pushing her to the brink, but she couldn't go over the edge. Her muscles had coiled tight and her breath came in gasping pants, striving for the pleasure, but it remained just out of reach.

"God, Evan let me..." She shivered and her head tipped back.

"You need this?" His hands moved her hips in a circle as he pressed her down onto him.

Geneva couldn't say a word. Her clit rubbed against his pelvis and she felt electricity shoot through her body. She shook and even her fingers tingled. She gasped and moaned. His hands guided her hips up and down his shaft. Her muscles clenched, gripping and pulling at him. Burning sensation burst through her, spreading through her in waves.

He tensed, his hips lifting even as he pulled her down onto his cock one last time. His lips pressed against her neck and she felt the scrape of sharp teeth. She tensed, freezing, immediately pulled out of the haze of pleasure. She had the feeling he was only a breath away from biting her. She didn't say a word. She didn't want to push him into doing it, because he saw her pulling back or objecting as a rejection of his claim. Drawing in a slow breath, she tried to relax. That was yet another thing she'd need to talk to him about. He kept coming close to doing it and he'd said he didn't want begin the change in her just yet.

Eventually, his body relaxed and his lips lifted away from her neck. His hands stroked up her back. He lifted his head and kissed her softly. She slowly rose off him. Her pussy clenched around his shaft as if to hold onto him for a little longer. Moving to the end of the tub, she leaned back against the slightly angled edge. Puddles of water pooled at either end of it. She tapped her fingers on the tile surround as she thought of a way to bring the subject of his near biting her into conversation. Subtle probably wouldn't work. He'd get the reference, but he probably wouldn't see how serious she was about it.

"Evan, this biting thing. I felt your teeth again. I know it's not something you can really control, but it keeps getting closer to happening." She bit her lip. Knowing what to say and how to say it was difficult. She knew how he reacted when he thought she

was denying his claim. This wasn't about that so she didn't want to deal with his stubbornness in that area right now.

"I want to make you my true mate. I can't deny that. The wolf inside me hates that you're in danger." He grimaced. "I will hold back until we get the spell off you."

"I can get something to make sure you don't bite me. The protectorate has some chain mail garments. Some just cover the neck and shoulders rather than a full shirt," she offered.

He frowned. "It could make things worse. I know you only want to help, but the wolf could see it as you trying to keep him away from you, denying him."

She sighed and ran a hand through her hair in frustration. It seemed like everything could be seen as denying the claim. If she wasn't under the spell, she'd show him what denying the wolf and that arrogant claim actually was.

"All right, I can see your point even if I don't completely understand it. What are we going to do about your other issues." She picked up a bar of soap, a sponge and began washing.

"What other issues?"

"Well, there's your tendency to control. Even when you told me to ride you, you controlled everything. The force and pace, even the depth of the stroke." She raised her leg and trailed the sponge down her thigh.

His palm cupped her heel and his lips curved upward. He didn't seem even a bit offended. She'd expected more of a reaction to what she'd said.

"I'm always going to be a bit on the bossy side. I won't always control our pleasure. In fact, I look forward to seeing you become assertive at times." His fingers traced the back of her calf.

"So what's your excuse this time?" She couldn't help returning his smile.

"No excuse. I'm just getting to know you. If you'd pushed or teased, I'm not certain I could have held back if you'd gone too far. Which I know you'll probably do at some point. Finding out who put the spell on you is too important. I won't have you living in fear for the rest of your life." Evan took the sponge from her and drew it over the curve of her calf.

She pulled her leg free of his loose grip. "Now let me wash you and then we can go to bed."

A thrill of anticipation curled through her. The surge of feeling startled her a bit. She was beginning to like his touch too much, crave it. That couldn't happen. She wasn't going to buy into his mate beliefs. Most of all, when that spell was off her, when the danger was gone, she intended to put some distance between them. At least two or three states.

Chapter Five

"I don't like this." Evan turned the SUV onto a side street in a mostly residential area.

"You've said that before, but you know as well as I do that to find out who put the spell on me we'll need more witches see the spell. You even thought it was a good idea before you found out to get more opinions we'd need to go to the witches not the other way around." Geneva folded her arms across her chest and glared at him.

She didn't know what he thought would happen. The witch had put a spell on her and then committed an act of vandalism or had it done. She or he hadn't made any move for a physical attack. Evan seemed convinced the witch would attack the moment they got near any witches or wizards. He'd actually snarled at her when she'd walked to the door just in front of him. He clearly didn't like meeting with the Witch's Council.

"The witch has made it clear he or she wants you in pain. After failing to scare me away, there will be another attempt. The only question is when," Evan said as he stopped the car in front of a yellow house.

"You actually think this person's going to attack now. You haven't even had time to think about walking away from me." She moved across the seat to get out on the driver's side.

"I don't think this person is going to leave me in any doubt that they're serious. There will be another attempt either on you or me soon." Evan put his hand at the small of her back and led her up the walk to the house.

"Since the person found your house, they know who you are. What kind of idiot would physically attack a werewolf who's a wizard?" She rolled her eyes. The person would have to be stupid beyond belief.

"The witch won't be thinking about what I can do. Her, his, only goal will be making you feel the pain." Evan knocked at the wooden door.

A moment later the door opened. A dark-haired, petite woman stood there. She stepped to the side and let them into the house. Geneva walked in just ahead of Evan. The woman led them to a dining room. Geneva saw Sonya sitting at the table near a red-haired man and a blonde woman. She didn't recognize the other two people.

"I'm Maria Cruz. That's Stacy Darren and Carver Knowles. We're going to see if we can find your attacker." The black-haired woman introduced the others. "Take a seat and we'll see if today's the day that spell comes off you."

"Thank you. I hope you can identify who set this spell. I'd like to get back to a normal life." She sat down in the polished, golden wood chair.

She had high hopes. These people dealt with most of the area's witches and wizards on a regular basis. They should know local magic. If everything went exactly right, she'd be able to walk out of here knowing that she'd soon be free to go anywhere she wanted. She'd know who her enemy was. Hopefully, that person would be too worried about either the Coven, Council or the Protectorate finding them to cause any more trouble.

Again magic surrounded her. She put her hands in her lap and watched the witches' faces as they began studying the magic. They all frowned, but she had no idea what they were thinking.

"I can't recognize this magic. With the taint, I'm sure I'd remember it." Stacy Darren's fingers grazed the misty magic.

"So the insanity or whatever it is, is keeping you from identifying the woman or man," Geneva said on a long sigh. Her shoulders slumped. "Is there any other way to identify this person?"

"Let's see if we can find any kind of signature work. A lot of witches work together often. We might be able to recognize how it was done instead of the magic." Maria put her hand on Geneva's arm. "Give us a little time."

Frustrated, Geneva didn't reply. She gritted her teeth and waited. She'd have been screaming if she didn't have her jaw clenched tightly. The delays, the assurances from people who had no idea what being under this spell was like. She'd like to have some privacy again. She'd also love to not have to worry about some witch coming after her with a more dangerous spell.

"It's been a long time since anyone's broken Coven rules so blatantly. She obviously meant to torture you for as long as she could," Maria whispered.

"You're certain a woman did this to me? The others couldn't be sure." Geneva bit her lip. Right now, any information, no matter how small, would be welcome.

"Yes, I know it's a witch. The spell has matured a little since it took hold." Maria's head lifted and her eyes met Geneva's.

Geneva's blinked. A little bit of elation swept over her. Finally they knew something. This hadn't been a wasted trip. They still didn't know who had done this, but they now could be sure it was a woman who'd set it. That eliminated half the magic-using population in Dallas. It was a little better than before. She wanted to know more, but she knew she had to be patient.

A hand settled onto her shoulder. She looked over and saw Evan watching her. His hand tightened. She could see the concern burning in his eyes. She had the impression he was a moment away from stopping this session.

"Is that all you're going to do today? If it is, I'd like to get Geneva home." Evan turned and looked at the witches sitting at the table.

His frown clearly made the witches nervous. She actually heard one of them swallow. They pressed against the back of their chairs. Every one of them looked as if

they wanted to run. Glancing over at him, she could see why. His eyes were glowing a fierce gold.

"We're finished." Maria nodded.

"Good. If you need to see her again, we'll make the arrangements. Just remember, this spell won't be on her much longer. Regardless of whether you find this woman or not, the spell will be taken off her. I'll deal with any attacks as they come." Evan stood.

Geneva rose to her feet beside him. His arm curved around her waist and briefly tugged her against him. She was tempted to lean into him and stay like that, but she did want to leave. In spite of knowing that it was a woman, she was still frustrated. She wanted this spell off, now.

Evan's fingers tightened on her hip. With slight pressure, he urged her away from the table. With a sigh, she paced beside him. Maria slipped out of her chair and hurried to catch up with them. Geneva nodded to Maria as she escorted them to the door.

"I'm sorry. I wish we could have given you the name of the witch, but the magic is unrecognizable." Maria reached out and gently clasped her shoulder. "If we think of anything..."

"Please call if you get any idea of who's doing this." Geneva tried to smile, but knew the effort had failed at the woman's concerned look.

They walked out of the house. She felt the guiding pressure of Evan's arm at her back. She just wanted to get home and not think about this anymore tonight. His hand tightened on her hip, drawing her attention. She glanced up at him.

"Don't worry. I promise you. We'll catch this woman. She won't keep attacking you." His eyes met hers.

"She won't stop and we still have no idea who did this. The only thing we did was manage to narrow down the search a little bit." She focused her eyes on the SUV. She hated feeling so damn defeated.

"We'll catch her because she won't walk away from this," he said as he leaned down and brushed a kiss over her forehead.

She glared up at him. "I'm not going to break into tears. You don't have to comfort me simply because we didn't discover everything today. We did learn one important thing."

Just as they reached the front of the SUV, men swarmed around the back of it. Evan shoved her behind him without a word. Geneva's eyes widened. She stumbled a bit and braced a hand on the hood of the car. Three to one seemed bad odds to her, but Evan didn't look worried. His fists were bunched and his body leaned forward in an aggressive crouch.

The three men seemed a little nervous as they stood in front of Evan as if they couldn't decide who would move first now that they'd confronted them. Two of the men lunged forward and the third man quickly followed. She gasped, clamping a

sound of alarm behind her lips. She didn't want to distract him and maybe have him get hurt.

Evan surged forward. His fist slammed into the jaw of the closest man. He whirled shoving another man back before grabbing the third man by the throat and throwing him across the yard. Geneva wanted to help, but she knew she'd just get in the way. Her hands tightened into fists. She wished she knew more about fighting than she did, but most of what she knew was meant to get her out of trouble, more defense related.

The first man slammed into the SUV and slid to the ground. He sat there stunned for a moment, but slowly got to his feet. The second stumbled as he rose from the ground. He rushed forward. Almost at the last second, his fist slashed upward, snapping Evan's head up and back. Evan growled. Geneva blinked as Evan's face seemed to change a bit. For a moment, he looked as if he wasn't quite solid. His face lengthened. Sharp canines became more pronounced. He looked wild, absolutely fierce and frightening. He seemed to get bigger.

Evan drove his fist into the man's stomach. He leaped for the first attacker. Geneva caught movement out of the corner of her eyes. She whipped around and saw a blond man in a denim jacket sneaking around the hood of the SUV. He had a pock-marked face. He smiled revealing a gap in his teeth where two had fallen or been knocked out. Geneva gulped and turned to fully face him. She loosened her muscles slightly, her stance widening just a little. She didn't yell out, because she didn't want to distract Evan from his fight with the others. She'd have to handle this man. A yelp came from one of the men Evan was fighting. Did the witches in the house even know anything was happening out here? Could they hear the fight, see it? Why weren't they helping?

The blond man rushed at her. His hands were outstretched as if he wanted to tackle her or grab her. At the last possible moment, she stepped to the side, shoving his shoulder. The man's lip curled and she heard a low, angry growl. She didn't know if that was Evan or the man. She was careful to stay close to Evan, as close as she safely could. The blond man didn't pay any attention to Evan and Evan seemed equally unaware of him. She saw Evan still grappling with two of the men from the corner of her eyes. Grimacing, she hoped he would finish with them soon. The other attacker was sprawled on the lawn, seemingly unconscious.

The man came at her slowly this time. She clenched her hands into tight fists. She wasn't going to have a chance to throw him again. She had no idea what he was going to try to do. She wasn't going to just let him do it. She took a slow step back. A twinge of pain stabbed through her stomach. She gasped, her hand pressing over the gnawing ache. Her attention wandered just for a second. The blond lunged forward. His right arm swept around her waist. He began dragging her around the car. She clawed at his arm and twisted, trying to slip out of his hold. Pain built into a screaming, blinding wall blocking out almost everything else.

"Evan!" she called as the man carried her around the SUV.

The pain ripping through her caused her muscles to spasm with every jolting step. She desperately tried to tear herself out of the man's arms. He cursed under his breath

but continued to haul her down the sidewalk. She could see a dark van in front of the house next door.

She heard Evan shout her name. She couldn't see him. The car blocked her view. Swinging her elbow up and back, she twisted hoping to hit the man in the jaw or ear. Her elbow hit, but there wasn't the sting of bone hitting something hard. He dropped her, gagging. She realized then she must have hit his throat. She got to her feet and stumbled toward the car. She'd just reached the back bumper when the pain suddenly disappeared. Immediate relief rushed through her. Evan was close. She knew she wasn't out of danger yet. One of the men could have a weapon. Anything could happen. There could be more men who hadn't rushed to help yet.

"Genny!" Evan stopped beside her, his hand resting lightly on her shoulder.

She looked up at him. Her arm pressed over the still twitching muscles of her stomach. She got to her feet and stayed behind him. Looking to her left and right, she made sure no one was near enough to grab her again. Getting dragged away once was bad enough. She didn't want to let it happen twice.

The blond man stumbled to his feet. His eyes widened and he turned and ran for the van. Evan started to follow the man, but stopped after a single step. The van revved and the tires spun on the asphalt as it sped away.

Evan came back to her and pulled her into his arms. Sliding his hand into his pocket, he pulled out his cell phone. His hand stroked down her back as he waited for an answer on the other end. Geneva leaned into him. Her heart still pounded. She couldn't understand why. She knew the men had been sent to cause her pain, but what had she done to make that woman want to hurt her? Evan's hard body offered comfort, but she felt a little chilled even with the heat of the day. When was this going to end?

"That was too close, Genny. I'm not taking any more chances with you." His hot breath filtered through her hair.

Her fists tightened on his shirt. For once, even his shortening of her name didn't irritate her. He could call her anything he wanted as long as he held her like this. She didn't want to let him go just yet.

He spoke briefly with one of the men from the Protectorate. Evan's face had reverted to completely normal only moments after the van had driven off. He didn't let her go the entire time he was talking. She didn't protest. His arms felt too good and she stayed tucked under that muscular shelter for as long as possible.

"There will be someone here to take the three men on the lawn to the Protectorate soon. I told them to hurry. I don't want you out here too long. It's dangerous. I'm taking you home." He urged her around the back of the car.

She saw the three men sprawled on the grass unconscious. With the torn clothing and burgeoning bruises, she didn't think they'd be moving before the men from the Protectorate arrived. They'd chosen the wrong man to attack. She doubted whoever had sent them had given them an idea of what they'd be facing.

“Do you think anyone saw you?” She looked around at all of the houses along the street. There were too many people around the area for someone not to have seen something. Not that anyone had tried to help in any way. Hell, the police hadn’t even come yet and if they’d been called, they should be here.

“If anyone saw me, they probably wouldn’t have noticed anything strange. Not unless they expected to see something out of the ordinary. If they did, they’d probably write it off as a trick of the light.” He smiled down at her. “You know that I’m a werewolf. You expected it.”

She thought about it and bit her lip. He was right in a way. Most people would discount anything strange unless it practically appeared in front of their face. So maybe there wouldn’t be a problem with any of these people. If there wasn’t someone out on the lawns staring and pointing now, she doubted there’d be anyone screaming about a werewolf attacking innocent men later.

Finally, the black Protectorate vans pulled up in front of the house. The three attackers hadn’t moved in the entire time Geneva and Evan had waited. She watched as the Protectorate men handcuffed the three men and carried them to the van. One of the Protectorate men walked over to them after the last man was shoved into the van.

“We’ll take them back to the Protectorate and question them. We’ll call you with any the information we get. Are either of you hurt? What information do you have for me?” His eyes ran over both of them in a quick cursory inspection.

“No, we’re not hurt. I’m going to take her home. We’ve had enough excitement for the night.” Evan’s arm tightened around her, pulling her closer for just a brief moment.

She wanted to go home. Just being out here, she felt vulnerable. She hated that feeling. Before the witch had put the spell on her, she couldn’t remember ever feeling like this. She knew the agents needed to know everything they’d seen and heard during the attack even if she didn’t like it.

“The blond man who grabbed me, the one who got away, you won’t be able to miss him. He’s got a pock-marked face and missing teeth.” Geneva leaned into Evan, her head resting on his chest.

“We didn’t manage to get all of the plate on the black van, but we’ve got the last four. It should be enough to help narrow down the search,” Evan said and then quickly rattled off the number.

“Steven will call you later. We’ll do mop up here, make sure there aren’t any people having hysterics over seeing something strange,” the agent assured him.

Evan urged her into the car. He drove straight home. She could see the tension in his jaw. Her gut churned with fear and anger. Energy pumped through her. If she could, she’d probably be pacing. Her fingers threaded through her hair. She rubbed at the back of her neck. He reached over and clasped her hand. She tightened her fingers and gave him a small smile as he pulled into the driveway.

Getting out of the car, Geneva kept her hand in his. She fell into step beside him. Now that they were here, fire burned through her blood. She had an almost irresistible

urge to push him up against the nearest wall and strip his pants off him. Her fingers tingled with the urge. She knew the intensity was probably because of the attack. At the moment, she didn't care. She managed to wait until he'd shut the door, before she stepped close to him again.

She brushed her hips against his and slid her hands over the soft fabric of his shirt. His shoulders shifted beneath her hands and his fingers clasped her hips. His lips slashed across hers as he backed her down the hallway. His hands slid down to her buttocks, squeezing before he lifted her off her feet. She wrapped her legs around his waist. She stroked her tongue over his, before drawing back and nipping at his lips. She wanted him fast and fierce. She needed to feel his body moving against hers. She wanted him over and over until neither of them could move.

"Don't move. This is going to be hard for me, Genny." He pressed kisses to her cheek. He carried her toward his bedroom. She just hoped he hurried. The urgency built and she could feel the slick juices on her thighs. She ached to feel his touch.

"I can feel something hard." She rocked her hips against his. The hard ridge of his cock, nudged against the folds of her sex.

His hands tightened holding her still. A distinct growl rumbled in his voice. "No more. I'm too close to the edge."

She blinked, a little stunned at the deep sound. "Is something wrong?"

"The fight and you being dragged away from me. It's almost too much. I'm having trouble keeping the wolf from making an appearance." He put her on the bed and knelt in front of her, his hands stroking over her thighs.

It was the almost yellow eyes that nearly freaked her out. They were locked on her neck and shoulder as if he was eyeing some tasty bone. It shook her, but it didn't change her desire.

"I want it wild and rough tonight." She framed his face and stared down into his yellow-gold eyes.

"No, you're not understanding me. If you make me too wild right now, I'll bite you. The spell's still on you. That can't happen," he whispered as he leaned close.

She could swear she heard him inhale. His body shook. She licked her lips and her eyes locked on his mouth. She could easily imagine his teeth biting into her. The idea wasn't as scary as she'd once believed. At least right now. She knew he was worried about the effects of the change on the spell. She didn't have any idea what it would do so causing changes to it absolutely panicked her. What could she do to help him?

"I could ease your need a little." She glanced significantly at the bulge of his cock pressing against the fly of his jeans. Maybe taking the edge off the lust would help. She'd love to explore his body, to taste him. The thought of taking his shaft into her mouth sent a thrill through her.

His lips tipped up in a very male smile. "I'd love to have your mouth on my cock, but it can't be now. It might push me over the edge."

“How can I help you?” She laced her fingers with his. It would help if she knew what wouldn’t push him.

“Just let me love you slowly. I’m going to peel you out of your clothes and lay you back on this bed. I’m going to lick you and touch you until the wolf part of me knows that you’re alive and safe.” His fingers slowly unbuttoned her shirt.

Her heart kicked into a faster pace and hunger grew with every intense word of his description. She wriggled beneath his fingers, eager to see just how much of what he’d said, he’d actually do. He looked so intent, that she didn’t think he’d make it through half of that.

He pulled off her shirt and unclasped the front fastening of her bra, freeing her breasts. His hands cupped the full mounds for a moment as if he couldn’t resist touching her. She slid her fingers over his forearms. He clasped her hands and put them back on her legs.

“Hands on your thighs.”

The man liked to give orders, but she did as he said without a complaint. She knew he was stressed by trying to control the wolf part of him. She’d do her best to give him what he needed.

“Do you want me to help you take off my jeans? It might be easier for me to do it.” She kept her voice soft and slow, not wanting him to think she was challenging him.

“I’ll do it.” His eyes glittered as he unsnapped her jeans.

She leaned back as he tugged the zipper down. He gripped the waistband, taking her panties with it as he tugged. The fabric bunched just above her knees. He skimmed the denim down to her feet where he had to stop to tug off her shoes before finishing the task.

His hands circled her ankles. Very slowly, he urged her legs apart. His lips lowered to her right knee. He dropped small, stinging nips up her leg. His hand slid up her thighs to her waist. His fingers tightened lifting her. She gasped as her buttocks left the bed and she felt a sudden sense of disorientation.

He laughed as he carried her to the middle of the bed. He put her down gently, arranging her just as he wanted her. She let him widen her thighs and press her hands to the pillowy comforter next to her head. She raised her eyebrows. She’d love to push him, to test him, but now definitely wasn’t the time. She didn’t want to be bitten. He knelt on the bed beside her, his eyes slowly trailing over her body from head to toe. His tongue slicked over his lips. He looked as if he was getting set to enjoy a feast.

A shiver rippled over her body and she felt a rush of desire. Her juices coated the lips of her pussy. The cool air seemed to make her skin even more sensitive than normal. His hand brushed up her thigh, sending a wave of tingling sensation rolling over her. The sight of him leaning over her, still fully dressed, looked unbelievably erotic, especially when she was naked and aroused. She didn’t know if she wanted to peel him out of those clothes or have him make love to her while he was dressed.

"You smell and taste so good." His tongue swirled over her thigh, drawing a moan from her lips and causing a quiver to run down her body.

She bit her lip and tried to stay still, to let him move at his own pace, but the need built so much. She wanted to arch up and tangle her hands in his hair. His warm, moist breath puffed over her thigh. So close to the throbbing ache in her pussy. She grabbed the blanket beneath her, pulling it hard to resist the urge to grab him.

He lifted one of her legs. She braced her foot on the blanket, eager to find out what he was going to do next. Her heart pounded. She wanted him to lick her pussy, touch her. He seemed to be taking forever to get to the more intimate areas. It was driving her wild and she felt like exploding. She didn't know if she could hold back until he was inside her.

He nipped at her inner thigh. Her leg jerked and she gasped. A low growl rumbled through Evan. She felt the sharp edge of his teeth. She raised his head. There wasn't any way she could stop from reacting to that sting. Any harder and she would have jumped off the bed. Or tried to.

"Be still." He lifted his head and narrowed his eyes at her.

"I'll try, but that bite had an edge to it," she whispered.

"I'm in control, my witch." He licked high on her thigh, nearly to her pussy.

Her inner muscles clenched. She wanted his mouth on her pussy, his tongue lapping at her. It was all she could think of with his breath puffing against her thighs. Waiting and wondering was pure torment.

His tongue traced the slick lips of her labia and she heard a deep hum from him. She wanted to scream with satisfaction. He drew his tongue down circling her clit. She lifted her head and glared at him. The man was being deliberately slow. He had to know she wanted him to touch her clit. His mouth moved down again. He lapped at the juices spilling from her pussy. He lifted his head and rose. She could stop her groan of frustration as he moved up her body.

"Give me a kiss and then I'm going to play with your breasts a little." He licked his lips.

She raised her head as he lowered his. Her lips brushed against his. She tasted a bit of a musky flavor, but his essence soon overwhelmed it. She sucked on his tongue desperate for more. His hand cradled the back of her head. He deepened the kiss taking control. He slowly drew back, a very satisfied smile on his lips. She drew his lips between hers, hungry, desperate for more.

His hands brushed over her shoulders. His eyes locked with hers as both his hands swept down to the mounds of her breasts. His hands cupped and lightly squeezed. She licked her lips. The pressure felt so good, but it only ignited a desire for a firmer touch and the feel of his lips. She arched her back, lifting into his hands.

"I can smell your hunger and see it on your flushed face. I want to feel your hard nipples beneath my tongue." He leaned down and traced a path on her left breast over to the taut peak at the top of the right mound.

She raised her hands. She had to stop his playing. He caught her hands just as her fingers touched his shoulders. His head lifted and he pressed her hands back onto the bed. His lips pulled back baring the distended fangs. She blinked. So he wasn't as calm as he'd seemed.

"Be still." His voice was quiet and intent.

She relaxed in his hold, intent on giving him what he needed even if it made her insane. The strain of holding himself in check showed around his eyes. Whatever he saw in her face must have reassured him, because he relaxed, his head lowering to her breasts again.

His tongue trailed up the underside of her left breast. She drew in a slow shaky breath. He licked around the darkened disk before flicking at the hard nub of the nipple. His teeth closed around the tip, tugging at it again and again.

Sensations streaked with every scrape and every pull. She lifted into his touch. When his mouth closed over the taut peak, it was all she could do not to cry out in joy. She wanted that almost more than taking her next breath. All the while, his hand cupped her other breast, squeezing and lifting it, before moving to toy with the distended nipple. He sucked at the aching flesh as if this was his last chance to do so. He savored and feasted. Then he turned his attention to the other breast and began again. Pleasure rippled through her body and each drawing tug sent another pulse flowing over her. It was almost a mini orgasm. The strength of the building sensation had grown beyond anything she'd ever experienced before.

"Do—" She gasped, arching as his thumb rasped over the peak of her breast. "Do you think you'll be calm enough soon?"

Her heart was going to explode if he didn't find some calm soon. She could feel the hot liquid on her thighs. She was ready for him, more than ready. If he touched her clit again, she'd come.

His tongue swirled around the nipple and he lifted his head as if he wasn't in any hurry at all. His eyes seemed much calmer as he looked at her. She didn't know how that was going to hold during sex, because he always seemed wilder when he was fucking her.

"Raise your hands and lace them behind your head." He moved over her, his lips dropping light kisses over her face.

She did as he asked, slowly lifting one arm at a time. She didn't want to trigger his instincts with quick movements. She put first one hand behind her head, then the other, lacing her fingers together. He smiled and nipped her neck. She gasped and shivered.

His cock brushed against the soft folds of her pussy. She splayed her thighs wider arching against him. He reached between them and fitted the head of his cock to her slick entrance. His hips rolled forward. Tingles danced over her skin as the inner tissues stretched as his shaft slowly slid into her. His eyes locked with hers as he set a steady pace. She tightened her thighs around his hips wanting to pull him closer but his strokes were shallow and slow.

"This feels so good." His hips rolled forward and his shaft sank deep. His eyes closed and a soft groan tore from his lips.

She had to fight to keep her fingers laced together as he wanted. The focus only seemed to make the churning sensations rise even higher, hotter. She arched her hips meeting his downward thrust. His slow pace was pushing her control.

"Evan, move faster." She lifted her head and brushed her lips across his cheek.

He laughed softly as his hips pushed against her. "You want fast. I thought you liked it slow."

"I like it slow, but I want it fast now." She needed to touch him, but used only her lips. His face, his neck, his cheek, she covered them with kisses and small nips. Her teeth scraped over his neck.

He stiffened and pulled away from her. His lips drew back, exposing both upper and lower descended canines. His eyes glittered. She tightened her legs around his hips, arching up and taking his cock deeper. His eyes closed and he slowly sank into her. His hips swirled and he drew back. She rubbed her breasts against his chest. The scrape of her nipples against his muscled chest sent an extra gush of slick liquid around his shaft. He surged back into her. She gasped at the fierce tide of pleasure that streaked through her. She strained up against him. The last of his control seemed to be ripped away from him.

The building tension in her body felt like it was going to rip her apart. He moved against her. Her skin felt so sensitive that even the feel of his thighs moving against her legs was unbearably erotic. She arched, her body tightening, seeking release. His hips thrust against hers. She gasped as a jolt of lightning slammed through her. He continued moving inside her. He tensed. Hot seed spurted into her and his weight settled onto her. She slowly unclasped her hands and flexed her fingers as she brought them down to her side.

"I can't believe I kept my hands behind my head. I wanted to touch you so badly. My fingers tingled and burned with the urge." She traced her fingertips through his hair. She wished she could see his face.

He slowly stirred. His elbow braced on the bed beside his shoulder and he slowly rose. She trailed her hand across his jaw. He turned his head into her soft touch.

"I'll have to remember that there are times when you can follow orders exactly." He leaned down and moved his lips softly on hers. She returned the lazy kiss, sucking at his full lower lip.

"It wasn't easy and if I hadn't known you were a little wild and needed my help to control yourself, I might have touched you," Geneva whispered.

"A little wild is an understatement. It's not going to get easier to control the wolf side of me. You're in danger. I'll arrange with my sister and Sonya to take the spell off you. The witch won't be able to hurt you like that again." He slowly withdrew and sprawled on the bed beside her. His hand rested on her stomach.

"Why now?" She blinked up at him. He'd been protective of her before, but it hadn't caused him to take the spell off her.

"I nearly lost control of the wolf tonight. I couldn't think beyond touching you, holding you and fucking you. The animal inside needed proof that you were still with me and the demanding urge to completely change you was almost blinding. I didn't use a condom and the spell on you will definitely change because of it. There's no use leaving it on. We can't track her with it anymore." Evan sounded angry, but she knew from his expression that the anger was directed at himself.

She blinked. The spell would be off her soon. She wouldn't have to be near him. She could leave him. The thought sent a sudden shaft of sadness through her. It seemed strange, but she'd come to like being with him. She didn't know about that mate thing. She really didn't think there was any need to rush into anything. The sex was great, but there was so much more to him. She couldn't forget how caring he'd been. How he'd put her first. The man hadn't even complained about her temper and she knew that she'd been a bit of a whiner and snappish at times. She needed time to think, but she'd been with him long enough to know he wasn't going to let her disappear. She wasn't too sure she wanted to leave anymore. Maybe she was going a little crazy, but she was seriously thinking about giving him and this relationship a chance.

"Are you excited?" Evan tilted his head a bit and his eyes locked on her face.

"A little, but it won't solve the problem. The witch could just put another spell on me. Or send someone after me." She bit her lip. "It might be better if I just go away for a while. You're going to be a target as long as I'm with you."

"It wouldn't be better if you went away." Evan rose onto his elbow and frowned at her. "The witch wants to hurt you. If you're on your own, it would give her the perfect opportunity. Not to mention making me almost insane. Do you think I'd stop worrying about you because you're not with me?"

She sighed and rolled over onto her back. "No, I don't think you'd stop or that you'd even be all that willing to let it happen. You would be safer."

"I'd be chasing after you is what I'd be doing. I wouldn't rest until you were safe and with me again. The wolf wouldn't be satisfied with anything less." His hand cupped her chin ensuring she met his eyes. "We face this together."

"It's not really your problem." She lightly touched the side of his face, a small smile curving her lips.

"I ought to turn you over my knee for that bit of stupidity. You're my mate. Anything that threatens you is my problem." He leaned close until they were nose to nose.

She felt cared for, warm and safe. She had no doubt that he meant every word he said. He would chase after her and probably catch her before she left the city. She could count on him that way. The thought of him putting her over his knee was surprisingly arousing. Not threatened at all, she just raised an eyebrow. His hand moved to her shoulder and he stared into her eyes. She didn't know what he saw, but he didn't seem

worried. He relaxed back on the bed beside her and hooked an arm around her waist. She snuggled into his warmth.

Chapter Six

Geneva stared into Evan's eyes. His hands lightly squeezed hers as she sat in a cushioned chair in Sonya's office at the Protectorate. Even in the dim light, she could see his smile. He'd rushed her out of bed and through her bath. He seemed in more of a hurry than she was to get the spell off her.

Sonya and Anne sat to the side of her. The white misty glow again surrounded her, but today it was different. She could see the patterns forming in the mist. Geneva wasn't entirely sure it was more than her imagination at work. Excitement, relief and a little fear bubbled inside her, making it hard to stay still. She wanted the spell off her. That had been her main goal since she'd learned of it. Not being able to do anything had made her feel so helpless. She hated that feeling. Watching the two women working, Geneva knew she had to stop ignoring the witch half of her. She had to learn magic so she could defend herself from other attacks. Not that it would help now. Geneva really didn't expect the witch to stop once she learned the spell had been removed. The person would have to be stopped.

"You're looking determined. What are you thinking about?" Evan asked softly.

"I'm going to take you up on your offer to teach me how to use my magic." She stroked her thumb over the back of his hand, enjoying the contact even if it was necessary.

"It wasn't an offer. I'm going to teach you." He shrugged.

She didn't know if he was being deliberately difficult, but then again the man wasn't subtle. Whatever his reasons, his arrogance was infuriating. She tightened her fingers around his hand just to let him know he was getting on her nerves. The man needed that attitude taken down a peg or two. She just didn't know how she was supposed to do it.

"Ignore him, Geneva." Anne's voice was full of soft laughter. "He doesn't get the fact that he can't control everything and everyone."

Evan laughed. That infectious sound and the easy smile coaxed her out of her anger. She returned his smile and shook her head at him.

"How long is this going to take?" Geneva shifted positions in the seat. Although it was padded, it seemed like she'd been sitting there forever.

"As long as it takes." Evan shrugged. "You're going to be sitting there even longer than that. After the spell is removed, Anne and I will be putting a shield spell on you to make it more difficult for the witch to put another harmful spell on you."

"More difficult, but it could be done. Right?" She gave him a considering look. She wasn't fooled by his assurance. Just his wording told her there were no guarantees.

"Yes, it can be done. If the witch tries, I'll know and I might be able to track the person by the magic." Evan slowly slid his fingers up to her wrists and rubbed his thumbs over the soft skin.

Geneva sighed. "Don't try to fool me. It's not if, it's when the person attacks again. If she was going to stop, they would have done it at the first sign of someone helping me."

"You're right about that. We'll have to catch the person and we will. You'll be safe, Genny." Evan leaned into the mist surrounding her and feathered a kiss on her lips.

"Get your face out of there. We're trying to work here." Anne reached in and cupped her palm over his forehead and pushed him back.

He relaxed back in the chair. Geneva smirked at him. She didn't know if he was trying to make her smile, but she couldn't resist responding. He stroked his thumb along the inside of her wrist. She'd love to be in his arms, but she knew that until they were finished with the removal, she'd have to stay in a separate chair.

Eventually, the women relaxed back in their seats. Their hands fell into their laps.

"That's done and we're going to have one angry witch." Anne looked over at Evan.

"I'll protect my mate." Evan glowered at his sister. "There's no need to stress the fact that the witch will attack again."

Anne just raised a brow and smiled. "Geneva needs to be aware that she can't relax. She still needs to watch everyone around her. Especially now that she can go places without you."

Geneva didn't respond to that. She knew that Anne had meant to remind her of the danger, but suspected there was more to it than that. Anne was pushing Evan's temper. From what Geneva had seen the two of them were very close. They teased and joked and sometimes got into friendly arguments.

"Let's get started on that shield spell, Anne." Evan stood and took the single step necessary to be closer to Geneva. "I want her protected as soon as possible."

Anne nodded and put her hand on his arm. "We'll keep her safe."

The two of them worked quietly together. She felt the magic moving over her. A little heat tingled across her chest. She just wished she knew a little of what they were doing. She felt lost, but watched their every move. She didn't want to disturb them and cause them to make a mistake. Finally both of them stepped back. Evan reached out and urged Geneva to her feet. She stood, stretching out the kinks with a groan.

"So now I can get back to some sort of normal life." Geneva tilted her head and looked at Evan. She didn't try to fool herself. He wasn't going to withhold his opinion. He'd been protective from the first.

"You mean go back to work. No. The witch will use any opportunity to get to you and a work routine will give the person more chance. You know that witchcraft isn't the only weapon she will use." Evan glared down at her and gave a firm negative shake of his head.

"I can't just sit around doing nothing. It will drive me insane to wait and watch." She folded her arms across her chest. When she hadn't been able to get more than a few steps away from him, the restriction had been something she could understand, but she needed to be doing something to help with the search now.

"You won't be just sitting around and watching your back for the next attack. You'll be going through files and helping track information on the women who might hold a grudge against you." Evan smiled at her. "You're not going to be bored by sheer inactivity."

Geneva stifled a groan. She'd be stuck behind a desk for most of the day and in spite of what he said very bored. "Might hold a grudge. We've been through this. How am I supposed to know who it is? It's not like I got hate mail. It could be someone I cut off while I was driving."

"You know it's nothing that simple." Evan took her hand and led her to the door.

She grimaced and silently admitted he was right. There had to be something more than a minor inconvenience behind this. This hatred came from something else. Geneva didn't know what else to call it. The woman was risking everything she held dear to do this so the emotion behind it had to be intense. Geneva walked beside him down the hallway and out the door. She knew searching the files and mission records was necessary. The faster they found out who'd done this, the sooner the danger would be completely gone.

* * * * *

Geneva pushed back from the computer. She stood and stretched. Her arms rose above her head as she reached for the ceiling. The stiffness and tight aching in her back eased a little. It felt so good to be out of that chair. As plush as the cushion was, sitting in it for hours at a time was uncomfortable.

"Now that's a beautiful sight." Evan's voice came from the open doorway.

Geneva turned and found him leaning against golden wood door jamb. His black hair was combed back strictly and he had a dark gray suit with dark blue and gold tie hanging loosely around his neck. He'd just returned from a business meeting.

She smiled. "I've always been admired for my fine ass."

He laughed and came away from the door. As he walked, he pulled off the gray jacket. He tossed the jacket and his tie onto a chair as he passed. She watched as he unbuttoned his shirt. He strode over to her until he stood right in front of her. His body nudged against hers and his thigh slipped between hers. She looped her arms around his waist and leaned back to look up into his face. His big palms molded her hips for a moment before they slipped around to cup her ass. She felt the warmth of his body even through the sturdy material of her faded jeans.

He leaned down and brushed his lips over hers. "I want to see that beautiful butt without the clothes."

“Well, then it seems to be a good thing that you have a home office. Although having sex with you and knowing someone might walk in as we’re in the moment...” She licked her lips and glanced up at him through her lashes.

“I never knew you had such a kinky side to you, Genny. We’ll have to see just what else you like.” He nipped her lips.

“I think you should have suspected something when you held me down and I only got more excited.” She slipped her hands underneath his shirt, tickling him a little.

“Maybe I should have suspected. I always thought you were such a straitlaced good girl,” he teased.

“Ah, how sweet—” she began but stopped as feeling of lightheadedness hit her. A tingling heat swept up her spine. Her nails dug into Evan’s skin as she held onto him. Her eyes locked with his as the feeling swept all the way down to her toes.

“Evan...” She knew that that sensation had been caused by magic.

“I feel the magic, Genny. It’s another spell. This one didn’t take hold so you don’t have to worry about any possible effects from it.” Evan ran his hands up and down her arms.

“When will the witch know that the spell didn’t work?” She leaned into him. Relief seemed to have sapped the strength from her muscles.

“She will know almost immediately. She won’t be happy. Expect more magic or some kind of attack.” His arms tightened around her.

She groaned and rested her head against his chest. More attacks. More spells. When would it all stop? Would the witch ever be caught? A feeling of desperation hit her. Now that the spell had been broken, they were no closer to discovering the woman’s identity. Anger and fear rose within her. She just wanted it all to end. She knew her life wouldn’t go back to where it had been before, what she had called normal. The big man holding her didn’t seem inclined to let her go even if there hadn’t been danger. Evan definitely had something permanent in mind.

“We’ll be ready for her and she won’t get to you,” he soothed. His hands patted gently, if a little awkwardly.

Geneva wasn’t worried about the witch actually killing her. Whoever it was seemed to want her to suffer and Geneva didn’t think that was going to change. Whatever her reason, the witch wanted Geneva to pay. Geneva had racked her mind, but she couldn’t think of anything that would engender that kind of hatred.

* * * * *

Evan watched Geneva swim in the indoor pool at his gym. She’d wanted to go over to one of her friends’ apartments and swim. The idea of her being out in the open and vulnerable had sent chills down his spine. Getting her to agree to this compromise had been difficult. She’d been getting more adventurous lately and it was making him a nervous wreck. He didn’t know if she’d decided that the witch had backed off or what.

She wanted to go out with her friends. Evan had been able to get her to settle for them coming to her. He knew that wouldn't last forever. She wanted the freedom too much and was beginning to get too confident. He didn't have much hope that she'd calm down and see the danger on her own. He'd probably have to stop her before she was hurt by one of the witch's ploys.

She'd been working hard on finding some kind of connection, but hadn't been able to find anything yet. Her frustration had been building with every dead-end she found. Maybe that was part of the problem. Compromise wasn't going to work forever, for either of them.

"You know sitting there and frowning at me doesn't seem all that interesting. Don't you think you could have more fun if you got into the water with me?" She rested her chin on the arm braced on the edge of the pool.

"It's a public pool, Genny. We'll both want more than we can have here." He knelt in front of her, keeping his voice low so that only she could hear the words. "And they have cameras here. I'm not going to have your sexy body plastered all over the internet."

"Possessive, aren't you?" she smirked, pushing away from the pool's edge. She lazily back-stroked the length of the pool.

He'd have loved to haul her out of there and show her just how possessive he was, but the reasons he was keeping his distance hadn't changed. He waited until she once again came to the surround.

"I never did share very well." He smiled.

"Well, since you don't like public pools so much, you might think about having a pool put in. I like to swim." She stretched, raising her hands above her head.

He rose to his feet and extended his hand down. "You'll get to swim. I spend part of each summer at a cabin near the ocean."

She smiled. He saw the wicked light burst into her eyes. He knew what she was going to try even as her slick cool fingers slid over his palm. He tensed, his muscles tightening to pull her out of the water. She planted her feet on the pool wall and tried to tug him off balance. His fingers tightened, holding her. His weight shifted back and his muscles tensed. After a few moments, she relaxed, letting her feet drop away from the wall. He lifted her out of the water. She stood in front of him, beads of water running down her body. She just shook her head at him.

"Nice try. Now go dry off. We'll go to the store and get some food before we go home." His hand stroked down her back. His palm settled briefly on her buttocks before delivering a firm swat.

She laughed and scooped her towel off the bench. Padding across the tiles, she went to shower and get dressed. He watched the sexy sway of her hips as she disappeared into the dressing room. He didn't have to wait long for her to come out of the dressing room. Her hair was lightly damp and she wore only a bit of gloss on her lips.

"Now let's go. I'm getting a little hungry." She strolled over and slipped her hand into his.

He led her out of the gym to the car. As he backed out of the parking slot, he spotted two men sitting in a small gray car. That was strange, but he pushed the thought away and maneuvered the vehicle to the lot entrance and onto the street. Stopping at a light, he glanced in his rearview mirror and two cars back saw the gray car with the two men. The SUV's height allowed him to see over the two sedans between them.

"Geneva, grab my phone." He pulled away from the light. He couldn't be sure, but he had a feeling those two men were following them.

She did as he asked, but shot a curious glance at him. "Is something wrong?"

"Maybe. We might have someone following us." Evan flicked his eyes up to the rearview mirror again.

The car was still there, maintaining pace two vehicles behind them. He turned onto another street, wanting to get a better idea of if the car was really following them. All the same, he didn't want the men to know they'd been spotted just yet. He looked in the mirror and saw the gray car turn onto the street. He headed for a large store he knew in the area. When the gray car pulled into the lot behind them, he was fairly sure it wasn't a coincidence.

"Call Mark. Don't look around when we get out. Just head straight for the store," Evan instructed. He couldn't keep the growl out of his voice.

She nodded, already finding Mark's number in his contact list. He took the phone from her just before she opened her door. She frowned at him, but didn't say anything about it. He knew he'd probably hear about it later. Mark answered just as she shut her door with a distinct slam and headed for the store.

"Hang on, Mark. I have to go after Genny." Evan didn't wait for a reply, before shoving open his door.

He growled and jumped out of the car. He clicked the remote lock on the as he slammed the car door. Gritting his teeth, he chased after her. The woman should have known to wait for him. He caught up to her near the crosswalk.

"Genny, stay close." He leaned close so that only she could hear him. His palm cupped her elbow.

"Mark, we need some men here. I think we're being followed." Evan gave Mark the address and name of the store.

"I'll send Jay and Dan out to help you. They'll be waiting when you get out of the store," Mark said. "If the car follows you again, they'll be there."

"Good. I want to know who's behind this." Evan felt a little satisfaction at the thought. This could be the chance they needed to catch the person responsible for the spell and the attacks. He snapped the phone closed as they stepped into the store.

"Well, what are we going to do?" she asked.

"Shop. What are you hungry for?" His slid his hand down and tangled his fingers with hers.

"Fish or chicken. Don't change the subject." She scowled.

"I'm not changing the subject. We're going to shop and then we're going to drive around and see if we still have someone following us." He tugged her closer and they began walking down the aisles.

They shopped companionably and walked out of the store, pushing a cart loaded with more food than they could possibly eat in one meal.

"What are we going to do if they are still following us?" she asked.

"We aren't going to do anything. If they are following, Dan and Jake will stop them. I'll go question them after you're safely at home." He looked directly into her eyes. He didn't want her to get even the slightest idea that she'd be going near those two men.

"The attacks are on me. I deserve to be there, to find out who's doing this and why." Her chin lifted and her eyes narrowed.

"You're not getting near them." Each word was evenly spaced and hard as iron.

"Damn it, Evan. I have a right to know who it is. And you don't tell me what to do." She put her hand on his chest and pushed just to let him know she was serious.

He laughed. "I'm your alpha, little witch. You do as I say. If you need proof, I can give it to you."

"I'm not a werewolf. So you can't be my alpha." She crossed her arms over her chest. "Stop being so overprotective. You're going to be there. Dan and Jake will be there. Nothing's going to happen to me."

"Nothing's going to happen to you because you're staying at the house. If I have to put guards on you while I'm gone, I will." He cupped her chin briefly and then urged her into the car while he loaded the groceries.

She gritted her teeth. He would put guards on her. She glared at him as he started the car. There wasn't much she could do about it. She couldn't change his mind and as for following him, he'd probably spot her before they got two blocks from the house. If she thought she'd have a chance, she'd give it her best shot. Hell, if she thought he'd just continue on to the meeting after spotting her, she'd do it. He wouldn't lead her to the two men. He considered it too dangerous and would keep her away from it if he could. The man was consistent in that area.

"I'll stay, but we're going to have a long talk when you get home," Geneva conceded with a nod. She hated being shut out of the details, especially when he and others would have everything under control.

"Yes, we are, but probably not the talk you're expecting."

Chapter Seven

Evan drove toward the address Jake had given him. The men had definitely been following. They hadn't even been subtle about it. Jake and Dan had stopped them. Evan had driven Genny back to his house and escorted her to door. He'd stayed long enough to make sure she'd locked the door. He'd called his sister and she'd agreed to come over to be with Genny. Evan was sure she'd be safe for the short time she'd be alone. The fact that the witch was after her was always on his mind. She hadn't been happy. Her parting shot hadn't been at all comforting. What if it was all a trap? What if the witch had hoped he'd leave her alone? He'd almost hauled her out of the house right then. Anne would keep any trouble away from Genny and it would only take a minute for Anne to get there. He pulled into the parking lot where Jake and Dan had the car stopped. Evan picked up his cell phone and started dialing as he stepped out of the car. Geneva answered on the first ring.

"Hello, Evan, I'm still fine." She sounded annoyed.

"Has Anne arrived yet?" he asked, smiling now.

"Anne's here. You want to talk to her?" Her voice was short and clipped.

Before he could answer, he heard the transfer of the phone from hand to hand.

"Hi, Evan, I'm here. She's safe." Anne sounded amused.

"I'll talk to you later." Evan flipped the phone closed and focused on the two men.

The two men stood near the car. Jake and Dan waited on either side of them. Both men looked calm and a little confused as if they couldn't understand why they'd been stopped. A blond man, glasses and an obvious salon bronze leaned against the door on the right next to Jake. The other was a black-haired man in a striped shirt and black pants. Both of the suspects looked like businessmen. Especially next to the casual jeans and t-shirt worn by Jake and Dan. Evan wondered where the witch had found him and his partner. He'd expected thugs, someone whose services could be easily bought.

"Have they said anything?" Evan asked. "Have you called the Protectorate?"

"Yes, they're on their way. As to these two, they haven't said a word. Not even when we first stopped them. A sure sign that they aren't innocent."

Evan tilted his head. "Not even a why in the hell are you stopping me? That is suspicious. Most people would be as angry as hell about being forced to stop."

He walked around the car and looked into it through the windows. Other than a paper bag in the middle of the seat, the car was clean. The gray vehicle would blend in with hundreds of others like it.

"Who told you to follow us?" Evan rounded the car and stood in front of the dark-haired man.

The man's mouth opened. Evan actually felt the spell take hold. It was powerful. He could tell that just from the feel. Evan watched as the man grabbed his throat and his eyes widened. His mouth worked, but no sound emerged. The witch had put a spell on the men to keep them from revealing her identity.

"Fuck." Evan clenched his fists and swung away from the two men.

Until they managed to get that spell off the men, they wouldn't be able to learn anything about who sent them or why. He knew enough about the witch now to know that it wouldn't be easy to remove the spell. She'd make it extremely difficult to remove her safeguard and still leave the men in a condition where they could speak.

"They'll have to be guarded by a witch," Jake said. "If she's willing to take away their choice, it wouldn't be much of a jump to killing them to keep her secret."

It wasn't a stretch at all. Evan just didn't know if these two men knew enough for her to take that kind of chance. She'd already broken many of the witches' laws, but the witch hadn't killed anyone yet. He didn't know if that was something she didn't want to do or if she just hadn't gotten angry enough to do it.

"Make sure the Protectorate guards understand that. I want to know as soon as they discover anything," Evan ordered.

He stayed only until the Protectorate arrived. He wanted to get back to Genny. They really did need to talk. He had a feeling she was still thinking about their relationship as a temporary affair. That would stop. Also, her comment that she wasn't a werewolf had struck a chord. He hadn't changed her after the spell was removed. The urge had been there, but he'd decided she needed time. Time apparently hadn't shown her that what they had between them was more than great sex.

He pulled into his driveway, making sure he didn't block Anne's car. The talk he planned to have with Genny definitely didn't need an audience. Genny wasn't going to like everything he had to say and would probably have plenty of opinions of her own.

Anne met him at the door. She smiled. "I've got to go. I have a date and if I hurry, I still have time to get ready."

Evan shook his head. "Don't seem so eager. Make him wait for you."

Anne laughed. "We have reservations, but maybe next time. I'll be sure to tell Geneva how fond you are of waiting for a woman."

"Ah, but she lives with me." He stepped out of his sister's way. "I'll talk to you later, Anne."

"Good, I'll want to know if you've found anything new." Anne waved and hurried down the steps to the path leading to the driveway.

Evan watched until she was in the car and then he closed the door. He walked down the hallway intent on finding Genny. This wasn't the best time for the talk he knew she'd want to have. Her remarks earlier had stirred the beast in him. The importance of keeping her safe had pushed it to the side for a while, but he hadn't

forgotten. The wolf inside wanted nothing more than to prove in the most elemental way possible that she belonged with him and hurry the change in her.

He'd wanted to do it since the spell had been taken off her. If she'd been out of danger, he wouldn't have any hesitation. But she was in danger. She still had a witch who wanted to hurt her and it was affecting every part of her life. She wasn't sleeping well. There were days when she hardly ate and then only at his insistence. At times, she jumped at the smallest sound. The tension hadn't eased a bit and he was beginning to worry about her health. She looked fragile and so tired. He knew the change would throw her life into even more chaos. She'd feel the certainty of the mating, but he had no doubt that she'd still fight it and herself. She didn't need the added stress.

Knowing it and sticking to that plan were two different things. A part of him didn't want to wait and wanted to follow his instincts. He took a few deep breaths and thought he had himself under control. He should be able to handle the talk unless she tried to run away from him.

Her sweet scent filled his senses. He felt his body harden with arousal. Maybe if he took her to bed, he could delay this argument and relieve a little stress for both of them. He found her in the living room lounging on the couch. She looked up when he stopped in the doorway. She didn't smile. She slowly straightened, her hands on her legs. Her head tilted to the side and her shoulders shifted just slightly. She looked like she was getting ready for a fight.

"What did the men say?" she asked quietly.

Her tone and the tension in her body told him more clearly than words that she was angry. She tapped her foot. He held back a smile at that impatient gesture. She hadn't wanted to stay here and she'd probably fumed since he'd left. Deliberately, he walked at a slow pace to the chair and sat down. He rested one arm on the padded rest. She needed a little time to calm down. He didn't want to get in an argument with her now.

"They didn't say anything. The witch put a spell on them. Even if they wanted to tell us anything, they couldn't have said a word. The Protectorate witches will protect them as well as remove that spell." He shrugged. It was the waiting that would test both their tempers and patience. He knew the answers wouldn't come quickly.

"Damn." She shoved off the couch and began crossing and recrossing the room.

She turned and started back toward the couch. He watched her pace for a few moments, letting her burn off a little of the anger and frustration. He was more than ready to talk about their relationship. Since he'd decided he couldn't tie her to him with the change, he needed to do it in another way.

"This is impossible." She thrust a hand through her hair. "We're never going to stop her at this rate."

"We'll stop the person." He stood and walked over to her, wanting to comfort her.

She shook her head. "I've made a decision. You're not going to like it, but I'm not going to change my mind."

He looked at her and could see the determination in her eyes. She wasn't totally calm, but he knew she'd come to some conclusion. She should know by now that he wasn't going to let her risk her life or do anything foolish. He tensed. She was probably right in her belief he wouldn't like what she had to say. He braced himself trying to get a firm grip on his control.

"What decision did you make, Genny?" he asked slowly. He didn't want to immediately shout a denial and scare her, but he wasn't going to let her have any doubt on the subject.

"I'm not going to play this waiting game any longer. I'm tired of it. The witch will never show while you're near me. We could still be doing this two years from now and I won't do that." Her eyes focused beyond him and she drew in a shaky breath.

He gritted his teeth and took in gulps of air, fighting to keep his hands at his side. He wanted to stalk over there and hold her still until she listened to him. He had to wait a few minutes until he gained a little more calmness before he could say anything in a voice close to normal.

"What are you thinking of doing?" He kept his eyes locked on her and saw her swallow and ease back a step. Maybe she saw something of his feelings in his eyes or maybe she'd just guessed that the calm appearance was a façade.

"I'm going to leave tomorrow. As soon as the witch is caught, we can settle what's between us." She lifted her chin and met his eyes without looking away.

"No. You won't be running into danger. I won't let you be vulnerable like that. You're my mate." His hand slashed through the air and he took a step forward.

"I'm not your mate, damn it. Lover, yes, but that doesn't give you the right to tell me what to do when it's me that's most affected by this freaking spell. I'm tired of living in fear of what the witch is going to do next." She put her hands on her hips and scowled at him. She looked as if she wanted to strangle him. He stalked closer to her, half expecting her to bolt. The wild animal part of him tensed in anticipation and anger. He wanted to put all doubts that she was his mate out of her head. She wasn't going anywhere and it was past time that she faced the truth. His hand cupped her chin, but he didn't hold her. He didn't want to chance bruising her accidentally.

"You are my mate, my woman, my lover. Do you think I can just let you walk into danger?" He struggled with the urge to just grab her, take her to bed and talk later.

"This is getting us nowhere. I'm not going to change my mind about this. I'm going to stop this witch. You can help or you can make this more difficult." She tapped her fingers on her hip. There was no mistaking that she was serious with that ultimatum.

"Do you think that I'm playing some kind of game? Denying you simply because I like to have my way? I can't stand for you to be in danger. The wolf part of me won't be able to tolerate it." He dropped his hand to his side because the temptation to haul her close was getting too strong.

"I don't think you're playing a game, but you haven't thought of this from my point of view. I'm tired of hiding from the witch, from her spells and her hired thugs." She threw her hands up and turned away from him, exhaling loudly.

"You're going to have to be a little more patient. We'll catch her, but you're not going to act as the bait." He hoped she'd just let the matter drop, but he knew she was angry. She'd probably be keeping pushing the issue.

She slashed an angry glance at him. "You just won't listen, will you?"

She spun and walked away. He thought she was just putting some more distance between them until she grabbed her car keys off a small hook. He jumped forward and simply stood in front of her, blocking her way.

"Give me the keys." He held out his hand. "You're not going anywhere."

He waited for her to realize he wasn't moving. She gritted her teeth and shifted on her feet. He smiled slightly at the sign of her nervousness. She'd hand over the keys soon.

"I'm leaving now, Evan. This is my choice," she said slowly.

"No, it isn't your choice. It would affect both of us. You're not going to take these chances." He tried to keep a smile off his face. He loved that she wasn't afraid to fight with him and the challenge in her eyes excited him.

Geneva wanted to punch him. He wouldn't listen. Hell, he didn't even seem to see any problem with the way they'd been doing things. She knew hitting him wouldn't work. He just stood there like a large rock and punching him would probably hurt just as much as hitting stone. There had to be some way of getting him to move. Her fingers closed around the keys. Metal bit into her palm. She remembered the other set of keys on the back hook beside where hers had been hanging. Evan's keys.

"You want these?" She held them up and jingled them.

He merely arched one of his eyebrows. The freaking arrogant man didn't so much as nod. He was so sure that he was going to get his way. She clenched her teeth to keep from yelling at him. That attitude was getting on her nerves just as much as the waiting.

"Fine." She tossed them to the right of him toward the front door.

His eyes followed the keys until they hit the floor. "Now we're going into the living room and talk this over calmly."

She didn't want calm. She wanted to do something to stop the witch. Now, this minute, before she went crazy. She was tired of living with the fear. Grabbing the second set of keys and running straight for the front door wouldn't get her out of the house. He must have seen something in her eyes, because he stepped closer to her and watched her intently.

"No more, Geneva. Try to remember that you being in danger isn't easy for me either." His hands cupped her shoulders. The weight of his hands felt both confining and comforting, but she was too keyed up to let herself relax. Staying here with his

sister as he went to check on the two men had left her with nothing to think about except that all she'd been doing so far had been hiding and running. No matter what he said it was going to stop. She felt like a coward.

"It isn't easy for you." She drew in a quick outraged breath and put her hands on her hips. "You can do things. You go and face those who come after us. All I do is wait and worry."

"You think being able to go out and confront them would solve everything. It would only make it worse. The witch would see an opportunity and become more aggressive." His hands tightened just slightly.

"The witch would make a mistake." She knew that giving the witch or wizard an opportunity would be dangerous, but staying out of sight wasn't getting a thing done. She wasn't afraid of something happening to her. She was afraid that someone else would be hurt. Something had to be done. This could go on indefinitely. She wasn't sure how much more of the tension she could take.

"They might or might not, but it would push me to the edge. I've been controlling my instincts so far. I'm not human. The danger you're in doesn't just make me want to protect you. I want to rip your tormenter apart. I want to take you where no one will find you. I need to change you so you're harder to hurt." His voice roughened.

She just shook her head. "You're always saying things like that, but I haven't seen any proof of it. You're handling the stress better than I am."

"No, I'm not. All I'm managing to do is hold back from doing everything I want to do." He lifted one hand and held it up in front of her.

She drew in a sharp breath. A shaft of fear crawled up her spine. The hair on his arms had lengthened. The hair wasn't as heavy on the back of his hand, but it was his nails that caught her attention. They'd changed, darkened to blunt-tipped, black claws. She realized he wasn't in as much control as he seemed to be. She bit her lip. That wasn't comforting. She knew her own temper was nearly out of control.

"I can't just wait anymore." She closed her eyes. This wasn't something she simply could rethink and change her mind. The facts would still be facts. She couldn't do this anymore.

"Come on. We'll go talk about it." He stepped back and gestured her to precede him into the living room.

Talking wasn't going to help. She wasn't going to let him talk her out of this.

"No, I'm not going to change my mind. There's nothing to talk about. It's my choice. I'm going to stop that witch whatever it takes." She met his eyes unwilling to let him have any doubt she meant what she said.

A low growl rumbled. She lunged for the second set of keys on the hook and bolted. His lips pulled back revealing lengthened canines. Her heart slammed against her rib cage. Her only thought was that she needed to get away from him before he grabbed her. If he caught her, he wouldn't let her out of his sight. She dashed down the hallway to the kitchen. Fear and urgency pounded through her. Her feet skidded on a

rug in the hallway. She gasped. Her feet slipped and her arms waved as she fought for balance.

She managed to stay on her feet, but felt the brush of his fingers on her back. She thought for a moment he had her. Her eyes widened and she expected those fingers to clench and haul her to a stop. She felt a brief tug and then his fingers slid down her back. Relief flooded through her. She heard a thump, but didn't dare look back over her shoulder. She didn't dare risk slowing down. Keys jangled with every step.

Even if he'd fallen, he was too fast to risk it. She fumbled with the lock to the sturdy door, but pulled it open. She darted forward. Her hands hit the latch on the glass outer door just before she ran into it. She heard footsteps on the kitchen tile as she leapt down the steps onto the grass. She ran for the gate. If she was lucky, she could get out into the front yard. He wouldn't grab her or do anything to bring attention on what he was in this area. At least she hoped he wouldn't. Too close, he was too damn close. She heard what sounded like a low howl and the pounding thud of footsteps. The door slammed into the wall.

She ran into the gate, bounced back a step. She reached for the latch as she approached it. Her fingers missed it. She managed to get it unhooked and shoved it open. She dived forward intent on running for the open area at the front of the house. An arm curled around her midriff. Her breath burst out of her as she was hauled to a quick stop. She felt the puff of his breath through her hair. He hauled her back against his body, lifted her off her feet and pulled her back into the yard. The gate swung shut.

She went wild. Her fingernails dug into his arm and she kicked back at him. Her tennis shoe slammed into his shin. His head lowered and a growl rumbled. She felt the vibration against her back. His teeth closed over her shoulder. She felt the sharp prick of teeth even through her shirt. She stilled. Her feet dangled just above the grass. Hot breath filtered through the fabric. Maybe it was time to try to calm him down. She knew she wasn't getting out of his hold. His arms felt like steel bands around her waist. As soon as she relaxed, his mouth moved to her neck. His teeth nipped. She gasped at the tingling sting. His tongue lapped at the small spot.

"Evan, we really need to talk about this." She kept her voice soft. Yelling at him probably wouldn't be a good idea. He was angry enough. No use provoking him even more.

"Not now." His arms tightened and a rumble in his throat showed just how much his instincts were in control.

He pulled the gate open and carried her to the back door. She licked her lips. Talking and running were out. As much as she might want to, she knew she wouldn't faint or lose consciousness suddenly. She wasn't that damn lucky. Short of that, she couldn't think of a way to stop him. As wild as he was, she knew he wouldn't hurt her. She was also afraid that he'd begin the change even though he didn't want to do it. Unintentionally, she'd loosed the beast. He carried her through the kitchen door and slammed the solid metal door shut.

"The keys. Put them down now." The words sounded like they were forced through a rock crusher.

She dropped them onto the counter near the door. He grunted and walked over to the island in the center of the kitchen. He put her on her feet. She stayed still even though part of her was screaming for her to run, to get out of there before those teeth sank into her shoulder. Keeping her feet planted on the floor was hard, but she knew she might still have a chance of calming him down if she managed it. The really perverse thing was that she was getting aroused.

She should be spitting mad, but her mind was flooded with arousing images. She couldn't stop them. His body dominantly holding her in place. The thick length of his cock pushing into her. The thought of him fucking her when he was this wild excited her. His body crowded her forward, pressing her against the wooden counter. She braced her hands and looked back over her shoulder, frowning. What was he doing? She was still fully dressed in jeans, not a skirt. His hands tugged at her shirt and she felt the material stretch and then give. He ripped the shirt completely and then pushed the ruined garment off her shoulders. It fell around her wrists. She twisted her hands a little freeing her wrists.

"I'll take them off. You don't have to rip my..." She stopped when she felt the brush of his canines over her throat.

His hands fell to her jeans. The material pulled taut. She stood still, but doubted he'd be able to rip them. Jeans material was durable. A loud tearing sound filled the kitchen. She felt the fabric loosen and he pushed the jeans down her hips.

"Step out now," he growled. His hot breath seared her neck.

She kicked out of her shoes and stepped free of the bunched fabric. She felt him moving behind her and heard the rustle of fabric. His body crowded closer to her and she felt his cock against the cleft of her buttocks. She shivered and not in trepidation. She wanted him and could already feel her juices on her thighs.

"Don't be afraid. Please, don't fear me." His hands swept down her body.

"I'm not afraid that you'll hurt me, but you're not completely in control." She slid her hand over his as he put it on the counter beside hers.

She knew that she was at least partially responsible for this. She'd pushed when she knew he was tense and angry, but she hadn't been able to see beyond her own anger and determination. What was she supposed to do now? He seemed hungry and set to claim. His scent swirled around her. Strong, arousing and wild, it intensified her need. She pressed back against him, showing him that she trusted him.

His hands slid up her stomach to her breasts. His lengthened nails scraped over the underside. She drew in a shaky breath at the sign of his wildness. Tingles of heat spread over the swell of her breast and she felt her nipples tighten into hard beads. His hands squeezed the full globes. She moaned. His thumbs flicked across the tight tips before his left hand slid down her stomach. He pulled back enough so that he could slip his hand between the counter and her body. His fingers feathered through the tight curls at her

thighs. She arched, her stance widening without any urging. His fingers slid lower. He parted the swollen lips of her pussy and stroked her clit. She shuddered and shivered pressing into those circling fingers.

"I love the smell of your arousal." He nipped at her earlobe. His tongue swirled over the slightly stinging skin.

She moaned and tried to straighten. He growled and pressed her back down against the cool surface of the counter. The tile counter pressed against her breasts sending sharp prickles dancing straight to her core. Her nipples tightened into hard points. He fitted his cock to her entrance. He moved slowly. She felt the tension in the hand at her hip as he held her still. She pushed back into him, but couldn't move far enough to take his shaft deep.

"My woman." His tongue swirled across her neck. "I can't lose you."

She didn't know what to say. She couldn't think to save her life. Lifting one of her hands, she put it over his where he cupped her pussy. "I'm safe. I'm right here."

"And you're going to stay safe." His voice throbbed with intensity.

His hips rocked forward and his cock slowly filled her. She removed her hand from his and braced it on the counter. That intensity wasn't just in his voice. She could feel it in his taut body. He was wild and probably wouldn't be able to hold back much longer.

His lips moved over her bare shoulder. She licked her lips wanting his taste, the feel of his mouth moving on hers. She clenched her hands, frustrated.

His hips thrust forward. His balls smacked the wet lips of her pussy. She pushed back into his thrusts. His hand slid up her stomach and cupped her breast. She shivered. Heat sparked and spread as his nails scraped over the underside of the full curve. He plucked at the nipple. His teeth closed over her shoulder. She felt the sharp canines on her skin. They hadn't broken the skin yet. She tensed. The prick of those teeth sent a thrill through her. She arched back trying to take him deeper. She tried to turn a bit so she could kiss him.

His teeth clamped down on her shoulder and he growled. She froze, but not with fear. A surge of hunger speared through her and she felt her inner muscles clench. His hips pressed her forward. She met each deep stroke. Her heart slammed as everything inside her tightened. She needed more. He held her almost still with the hand at her pussy. His fingers rubbed her clit with a slow deliberate looping motion. The circular strokes sent her over the edge. Her fingernails scraped on the counter. Fire swirled over her and she shook. He pumped faster. His teeth clamped harder and through the haze of pleasure, she felt a sharp piercing pain in her shoulder. She stiffened, crying out. He came, his body stiffened as he pulled her tighter to him.

His head remained against her neck and shoulder. His tongue lapped at her shoulder. He kissed her neck.

"I'm sorry. I never intended for it to happen like this," he whispered as he stepped back.

She heard regret and guilt in his voice. She was torn. She couldn't deny she was angry that he'd bitten her, but she knew this was partly her fault. She'd seen the first signs of his slipping control. Her own anger had pushed her past caring. As much as she'd like to blame him for everything, she couldn't let him take it all.

"I was part of it too, Evan. I could have stopped pushing when I saw how close you were. Hell, I saw your fangs and the changes to your nails and body. It didn't stop me." She took a deep breath. In truth, they both had a part in what had happened.

He looked down at her and grimaced. "Well, *we* just accelerated the change in you. I wanted to give you time without the pressure of being hunted."

"It would have been nice, but do you think that we would have been able to keep hold of our tempers much longer? We were bound to clash. I'm just amazed that we've managed as long as we have without a major blow-up." She shrugged.

Taking a deep breath, she tried to focus. Part of her wanted to rant and rave and wallow in blaming him. Damn it, he'd bitten her and without even talking it over with her. The change if it hadn't begun before, it was definitely started now. Her anger had helped get her into this. She wasn't going to let it do any more damage. She would control her anger. Yelling wasn't going to change anything. Neither was raging about how all her choices had been taken out of her hands. Right now, she had to find out just what this had done to her and how and when it would affect her.

"I was sure you'd be yelling, maybe even trying to run out on me again." He pulled her into his arms.

She stiffened a little before relaxing into his loose embrace. She did want to be held. She slipped her arms around his waist. Her head snuggled against his chest and she inhaled deeply. A very distinct musk filled her senses. She'd recognize it anywhere as unique to him. His scent both calmed and excited her. She rested her hands on his soft shirt and frowned at him. She'd been leaving, but she hadn't been leaving him. Not in the way he meant.

"I wasn't running out on you. I wanted leave because you weren't even trying to see my side of the issue. I know you need to protect me, but I can't hide forever. It's better if we draw the witch out instead of letting her choose the time or place." She leaned back enough to look up into his beautiful eyes.

"That's not something we're going to agree on, Genny." He slid his hand down her back.

She grimaced. Probably not. He wouldn't change his mind about drawing the witch into an attack. She wasn't going to change her mind either. They'd have to argue about it later. It would probably be a good idea to change the subject.

"How long is the change going to take? You said the full change could take as long as a year. Am I going to get furry in just a few days, will I go half wolfy or will the shapeshifting hold off until I'm fully a werewolf?" she asked.

"No, you won't go furry or half wolfy. The shapeshifting will begin before you're fully converted, in the later stages, but you won't have control of it until the end. Within

a week and a half, you should begin to see and feel a few of the changes. You'll be faster, have better eyesight. We'll start watching for it around six months." He drew his fingers down her cheek.

She relaxed. She'd had some worries about going to bed and waking up all furry. That had answered one part of her questions, but she had so many more.

"Is it going to hurt?" She cuddled closer as a cool breeze from the central air brushed over her bare backside sending a shiver up her spine.

"You're cold. Let's go get you something to wear." He urged her down the hallway. "What do you mean by will it hurt? Do you mean the overall change or changing into another form for the first time?"

"Both." She walked along with him. She'd really only wondered about the complete conversion to a werewolf. If the changes would cause any pain. Now that he'd mentioned changing into another form, her mind kept running images of possible transformations. Slow, bone-cracking, body-twisting spasms as fur sprouted and claws burst or the more attractive hazy blur from woman to wolf. And the thought of going through the pain of the bone-cracking change made her a little nauseous.

"As for the overall change, you wouldn't even be aware of it if you didn't know that a bite resulted in the transformation. The first shift won't really hurt, but it will feel strange. Movement beneath your skin, that kind of thing. I'll let you get cleaned up and if you want we'll talk some more." He pushed open the bedroom door.

Geneva nodded and headed for the shower. She'd have liked him to join her, but knew if he did, talking would be forgotten for at least another hour. It was good to know that she wasn't going to have to worry about pain ripping through her as she changed into a werewolf. Now that she didn't have to worry about that, her mind went back to finding some way to stop the witch. Hopefully, that would happen before she completed the change into a werewolf. She had no idea how that would change things other than turning into a furry animal. Also, she was definitely going to have to get Steven's help. This wasn't something she could do on her own. She'd need someone with some magical backup to watch out for her when the trap was sprung.

Chapter Eight

Evan walked up the sidewalk to his business. He hadn't wanted to leave Genny, but he'd been needed at the office. Anne had come over to the house to stay while he was gone. He wasn't going to leave her unprotected with the witch still a threat. She hadn't been happy, but she hadn't argued too much. That had roused his suspicions. He knew that she hadn't given up on her idea of drawing the witch into attacking her. She'd just stopped trying to talk him into helping her. That was even more scary than when she'd first presented the idea to him. He didn't want to help her, but he also didn't want her trying to do anything on her own. She could get taken or killed trying only to end the witch's attacks.

He pulled open the door and stepped forward. He heard a resounding crack then felt something tear through his shoulder. He stumbled into the building. He felt the blood slowly running down his shirt. The warmth spreading along with a wave of pain. He moved out of the opening to the door.

"Fuck, Evan, what happened?" Sam came into the small waiting area of the office and gaped at him.

Sam didn't stay stunned for long. He ran for the desk and brought back a first-aid kit. He grabbed a wad of bandages and handed it to him while he dug for his phone in his pocket.

"Did you see who did this?" Sam asked.

"No, but I have a pretty good idea who's behind it even if I don't know their name." Evan grimaced. He could tell it was a flesh wound, just by the feel, but it was going to need some attention. Pain ripped through his shoulder.

"This about your witch?" Sam asked. He looked carefully out the window to see if there was anyone out there waiting to take another shot at them.

"It's about her and the witch who wants to hurt her. My guess is that the witch has decided the only way she's going to get to Genny is to get rid of me." Evan pushed the compress tighter to the wound. "Is there anyone out there?"

"No. Let's get you to the doctor." Sam opened the door and led the way into the parking lot.

Evan followed Sam to his car not far from the front of the building. Evan slid into the front seat, automatically buckling the belt. He trusted Sam to get him to a good were doctor. He kept his eyes on the cars and the people in them. The person who'd shot could still be waiting. He knew that chances were that bullet had been meant to kill. Evan was just glad the man had missed. He didn't want to leave Genny any more than he was willing to take chances with her life.

"I'm taking you to Pennington. He's not the closest, but he's the best and also has a healing witch on staff. Just in case that bullet had some kind of spell on it," Sam said as he stopped briefly at a red light before going through it.

Evan nodded. He was fairly sure that the bullet was simply a bullet. He could understand Sam's caution. They were dealing with a witch and he had to admit it was hard to take off a spell if it was on the person trying to remove it. He hadn't felt any stray power though.

"When we get there, call the Protectorate. I want Steven to know about the witch's latest attack. They most likely won't find any evidence, but I want every step taken." Evan exhaled heavily as Sam pulled the car into a slot at a busy medical clinic.

The witch had attacked often enough that he was accustomed to the pattern. This person covered their tracks fanatically. She used spells to guard against her thugs even telling her hair color. Even if he had managed to see and catch the person who'd taken the shot, there would have been a spell to guard the witch's idea. Tampering with that spell had resulted in two cases of amnesia so far. It wasn't a simple spell and unraveling it was going to be difficult.

Evan walked to the building and into the cool roomy interior. He didn't need to read the placard in the small lobby section. Heading down the hallway, he strode toward the first floor clinic, but just as he neared the first door, a searing wall of pain rose and then everything went black.

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Geneva tapped her fingers on the desk. She knew that there had to be a way to get the witch to show herself. The problem was doing it in spite of Evan's objections. He'd try to keep her away from anything he'd considered dangerous. First she had to contact Steven and even that wasn't as easy as it should have been. She stared blankly at the computer screen. Her mind wouldn't focus on anything but the witch and the attacks. She barely heard the phone when it rang.

Anne spoke softly on the phone. Geneva heard her concerned tone and turned just as Anne heavily put the phone on the table. She looked stunned. Geneva watched as she slowly straightened.

"We have to go. Evan was shot." Anne's voice sounded a little hoarse.

Geneva lunged out of her seat. Her heart raced and a feeling of sick horror spread through her. He couldn't die. Not now. The thought of him dying or even being hurt shook her. She hadn't realized just how deep her feelings for him had become until this moment.

"He's alive. The wound isn't that serious. The only problem is that there was a spell. It did more damage than the actual bullet did." Anne rushed over and put her hand on Geneva's shoulder.

"He's going to be all right?" Geneva's eyes locked with Anne's. She didn't want to miss one expression. This was Evan's sister, but she had to know for sure. If the woman was trying to soften the truth, Geneva didn't want to be surprised.

"He'll live Genny, but the witch's spell did the damage it was intended to do. He lost a lot of blood. The bullet actually exploded inside him. He's going to have a nasty scar." Anne put her hand on Geneva's shoulder.

"I thought that spell both of you have on you would have stopped something like that." Geneva ignored the part about him having a scar. She didn't care if he was covered with them as long as he was alive.

"The spell was delivered on the bullet, inactive. It was only activated after the spell was inside him. The protection spell doesn't work unless the magic is active," Anne explained. "Let's get Evan some clothes and then go see how he's doing. I'd bet he's already growling at the doctors and nurses."

"Are they going to keep him overnight?" Geneva headed for the bedroom. Relief flowed over her, slowly relaxing her muscles.

"They'll probably want to, but I doubt they'll be able to convince him to say." Anne smiled. "He'll want to be with you to protect you."

"A tranquilizer would take care of that. Does he think he's the only one who can watch over me? I'm sure someone else can do it for one night." Geneva shook her head.

She wasn't going to argue about having someone else with her. Specifically someone who knew magic. The witch had proved that she wasn't going to fade into the background. Anger built slowly within her. Even though the witch had attacked Evan before, it had never been aimed solely at him. It had always been an attempt to get to her. They'd had to get through him.

"It might take a tranquilizer." Anne laughed. "But we'll see what we can do to get him to stay where he needs to be."

"If he wants, I'll stay with a group of trusted witches. I don't want him to risk his health." Geneva shook her head. She'd do whatever it took to keep him in that hospital where he could get the care he needed.

"You'd be with me if we can get him to stay in the hospital, at least for the night." Anne slid a glance over at her.

Geneva had plenty of time to think on the way over to the hospital. She frowned. She was surprised to see Anne pulling into what looked like a medical complex. She'd expected an actual hospital. This place couldn't have anything more than some doctor's offices.

"Don't be fooled." Anne's voice cut through the silence. "This place has a fully equipped small hospital for the special needs we have sometimes."

Geneva blinked and whipped her head around to stare at Anne. What special needs? What kind of special help would they need that couldn't be given at a hospital?

“We’ll talk about all those questions I see on your face later. Let’s go see Evan.” Anne guided the car into a parking spot.

Geneva took a breath and nodded. She pushed the questions to the back of her mind. She had to see how Evan was and if he really was going to be all right. She wouldn’t believe it until she’d seen him or heard him rattling off orders like he usually did. She headed toward the entrance with Anne at her side. Once they were actually inside the building, Anne led the way, but kept Geneva in her sight. Geneva wasn’t thinking about going anywhere until she found out how Evan was doing now. They walked down the hallway to an office at the very end of the hallway that had no name plate. Anne waited for Geneva to enter first. Geneva stepped into the spacious waiting room. Painted a cheerful cream and yellow, the room seemed welcoming. Cushioned chairs lined two of the walls. Anne didn’t hesitate to head for the door on the other side of the room. She pushed it open and headed down the narrow hallway. She seemed so familiar with it that Geneva knew she’d been here at least a few times.

“How many times have you been here?” Geneva asked. She noted the doors they passed, wondering if Evan might be behind one of them.

“For most of my checkups and usually anything that requires more than stitches. The doctor’s a werewolf and treats many of the weres in the city. Only once for anything serious though.” Anne pushed open the door at the end of the hallway. “This isn’t the doctor’s office though. We go to Doctor Pennington. This is the way to the elevator to the hospital.”

Geneva followed her to the sliding doors of an elevator. Descending two levels, Geneva could only wonder what else she didn’t know about in this city. She’d never have thought there was anything beneath this building. Exiting the elevator, she saw a nurse’s station in the center of the wide open area in front of the elevator doors. A long hallway stretched out behind the oval desk. Geneva was still gaping while Anne spoke to the nurse on duty. It only took a few words to discover where they’d put Evan. Anne led the way to the room, but Geneva needed no urging to step into the room in front of her. She needed to see Evan. Her muscles were clenched tight with dread and she knew it wouldn’t go away until she was certain he was alive and safe.

His eyes were closed and his cocoa-brown skin looked extremely pale. A stark white bandage covered one shoulder and an IV slowly delivered fluid. Only the steady rise and fall of his chest as he breathed reassured her. The room was mostly white with a couple of uncomfortable looking yellow chairs along one wall. She walked over and put a hand on his arm. He didn’t even stir. That sent a jolt of fear through her. He never slept that heavily. What was wrong with him? Where was the doctor?

“It looks like they must have decided that he needed to stay the night.” Anne laughed. “That’s one way of keeping him from arguing.”

Geneva realized that the sleep would be good for him, but she’d expected to find him awake. Especially after Anne had speculated he’d want to go home when they arrived. At least he wasn’t hooked up to a bunch of machines. She slid into a chair near the bed. She felt a little weak-kneed with relief. A man wearing a long white lab coat

walked into the room a few minutes later. The dark-haired man focused on Anne. Geneva didn't know whether to be offended or relieved at being ignored. Maybe he hadn't seen her.

"Your brother's going to be fine. He didn't make treating him easy. More difficult than usual in fact. He kept saying he had to get back to Genny. We need to watch him tonight so he's sleeping," the doctor said in a cheerful voice.

"Doctor Pennington, this is Genny, Evan's mate." Anne gestured to the chair where Geneva sat.

"Evan's going to have my ass for this. No wonder he was so difficult." The doctor shook his head.

Geneva stood and walked over to meet the doctor. He shook her hand firmly. He was nothing like any other doctor she'd met. Even though he wore a lab coat she could see that he was muscled and fit. He didn't look like he worked in an office or hospital all day.

"Hello, Doctor Pennington. When I saw him sleeping so heavily, it worried me a little. I kind of expected him to be awake and ready to go." Geneva smiled.

"He lost a bit of blood before we could stop it, but no serious damage was caused by the bullet. He'll be here for the night so we can get some fluids in him and watch him, nothing more." Doctor Pennington smiled as he stepped back. "He won't wake up tonight. You should both go home and get some rest, because you're going to have to deal with him tomorrow."

Geneva smiled at the not so subtle nudge. She looked back at Evan. She didn't want to leave him. She watched the doctor stride out of the room. Anne walked over and put her hand on Geneva's arm.

"Let's go. We'll come back early tomorrow and pick him up," Anne suggested.

Geneva nodded. She turned to the door just in time to see it open. Steven took a single step into the room before he stopped. He looked at Evan sleeping and Geneva as she stood near Anne.

"I thought he'd be awake," Steven said.

"They gave him something to make him sleep. You'll have to wait until tomorrow to talk to him," Anne said softly.

"Before you leave, I need to talk to you." Geneva took a slow step forward. Although she still had no idea how it could be done, she wasn't going to lose this opportunity to speak with him.

Steven nodded, but he looked a little cautious. Smart man. He probably wouldn't immediately agree, but this attack had shown her that waiting was only inviting danger. The witch was escalating, not backing away from the attention drawn to her actions. And the bitch had gone after Evan. Geneva wanted to kill the woman for that alone.

"I'm not going to let you put yourself in danger any more than Evan would, but I'll let you talk to Steven." Anne gave her a serious look.

Geneva almost groaned. She hadn't thought Evan would have told his sister anything about that. Anne didn't leave the room, but she took a seat on the far side in one of the uncomfortable looking mustard yellow chairs. Geneva wished for just a little more privacy, but would make do with this. She looked at Steven and gathered her thoughts. Geneva shot a glare at Anne. She didn't need Evan's permission and she certainly didn't need Anne's.

"This has to stop," Geneva said softly.

"We'll get the witch. You have to be patient." Steven reached out and took her hand in his.

The fatherly act wasn't cutting it with her. He was too young and she'd been through too much to just take his advice. The witch had gone too far. It was bad enough that the woman attacked her. Geneva could deal with that, because she knew the woman felt she had some reason. What Geneva couldn't handle was someone else getting hurt because of their association with her.

"I was patient and look what happened." Her hand slashed out and she gestured to Evan. "Does someone have to die before you think it's time to act? I'm not willing to let that happen."

"No one's going to die because we're not going to do anything stupid." Steven shook his head.

"Doing nothing got him shot. The witch isn't going to step forward and show her hand. Not without some encouragement. There has to be some opportunity or at least some appearance of a chance to get to me." She put her hands on her hips. Why couldn't he see the truth?

"No, absolutely not. I am not putting you out there in danger." Stephen took a step back from her releasing her hand.

"It's my choice, my life. I want this finished." She wasn't going to back away from this. If he saw how serious she was about this, he'd have to help her.

"It wouldn't work and Evan would rip me apart if I even thought about it." His voice was flat and hard.

"This isn't about what Evan thinks is right. I can't just stand to the side and watch things happen anymore." She gritted her teeth. This wasn't something she'd just tossed out there. She'd thought long and hard about this and little else for days.

"Putting yourself out in the open and vulnerable won't work. The witch will just send someone to hurt you. She won't have to get close." Steven looked like he was at the end of his patience.

"And waiting's working so damn well." She glared at him, getting more frustrated with each denial.

"What we have to do is limit access to you. Make it so that your attacker has to come to you. She sends people because they can get to you. If they can't she'll have to try herself," Steven offered calmly.

"All of you thought she'd make a move to get me or back off if Evan stood in the way. That hasn't happened." She clenched her fists and struggled to keep her voice even when she wanted to yell and rage. "That witch had him shot!"

"He's right, Genny." Anne rose from the chair and came forward. "The only way this is going to end now is if she has no other option but to come after you herself. That means making it impossible for anyone she sends to get to you or Evan."

"That's impossible." Geneva ran a hand through her hair.

"Not impossible. Isolating the two of you that effectively won't be easy, but it can be done." Steven nodded. "I'll begin arranging it and discuss it with Evan when he's awake."

Geneva watched him walk out of the room, a little bemused and still angry. The problem was that she could see his point. As long as there was the option, the witch had no reason to try anything risky. The men she'd sent had been too successful.

"You know Steven wasn't lying." Anne's voice interrupted her thoughts.

"What wasn't he lying about?" Geneva looked over at Evan's sister who was standing beside the bed.

"Evan would have ripped him apart if he'd let you take the risk of setting yourself up as bait. Especially if you got hurt." Anne walked over to join her near the door. "Come on. Let's go by my house so I can get some clothes and then we'll go back to Evan's house and eat."

"All right." She shrugged. This wasn't something she could do on her own as much as she might like to try at this moment. She needed someone to catch the witch.

"Be patient. It will be over soon." Anne's palm slid over Geneva's.

"That's easy for you to say. My life hasn't been normal for nearly a month and it will probably be even longer before it will be back to something close to that. That witch will test and probe before realizing no men can get to us. If Steven can manage to set that up." Geneva felt tired and alone. She'd have liked nothing more than to curl up beside Evan and stay with him for the rest of the night.

"It will get back to something approaching the old normal. You'll have a little more adjusting when you and Evan marry." Anne opened the door.

"Who said we'll be getting married?" Geneva shot a frown at Anne. She wasn't ready to think about marriage. She hadn't even thought about living with him after the witch was finally caught.

"Evan's going to have something to say about it. He's going to want a real commitment. Mates are for life." Anne's head tilted to the side a bit.

Geneva shook her head. That was something she wasn't going to argue about. She knew neither Anne nor Evan was going to see any other option. She knew she'd have a

hard time getting Evan to see her side of the situation. What they had was a relationship forced on them by circumstances. They needed some distance and time away from each other. It would help her know if what she felt for him was real or if the intensity was just caused by the danger.

Chapter Nine

"Hello, Genny." Evan's voice sounded cheerful and strong.

Geneva stood frozen in the doorway just staring at Evan. He was sitting up in the hospital bed. The white blanket was draped across his thighs. He wasn't wearing a hospital gown. She had no idea if he had on boxers beneath that blanket or if he was naked. He looked almost unhurt. Only the bright white bandage against his dark skin marred the image of vital energy he projected. A smile curved his lips. She almost couldn't believe it.

"Hi, Evan." She smiled. Relief flowed through her.

Even with the doctor's assurance, she'd had a restless night. She moved quickly across the room to the bed. His arms swept around her, pulling her tightly against his chest. His breath puffed through her hair and feathered over her neck. She heard him draw in a deep breath and then another. She held onto him, but didn't squeeze. She didn't want to hurt him. She didn't know just how badly the wound hurt.

"Don't be timid. I want to feel your arms around me," he said as he nuzzled her hair away from her neck.

"I don't want to cause you any pain." She pulled back a little so she could see his face.

"You're not going to hurt me. The wound is healing. If the doctor hadn't drugged me, I would have been at home with you where I belong." He pulled her back against him. "Now let me feel your arms around me."

She hugged him tightly, but kept her focus on him. If he so much as flinched, she was releasing him. She couldn't entirely block out her reaction to being near him. It felt so good. The warmth of his body was so reassuring. Her nipples hardened and tingled. He hummed, the sound satisfied and happy. When she looked down, she saw the edge of the blanket had moved and she could see that he was wearing something. He was dressed in the pants they'd brought for him. She savored the sight of his broad chest, but the bandage there reminded her that he'd been hurt.

"I heard you had a little discussion with Steven." He drew back a small smile curving his lips.

"Not that it did any good. Who told?" She sighed. She'd expected him to find out, but not just yet.

"Steven called me and talked about that and his suggestion for drawing the witch to us." He released her and stood.

She watched him, looking for any sign of weakness. He stood straight and confident. He put on the shirt and then his shoes. She leaned against the wall. He didn't even seem to feel any tenderness when he moved his arm.

"Not much use anyone telling you anything. No one would give my idea any serious thought. I barely got the first words out before they started rejecting it." She ran a hand through her hair. That still frustrated her. She didn't want to sit, hide and wait, but she knew that's probably what would happen for at least a few weeks.

"I thought we'd settled that earlier. I told you it wasn't a good idea."

"No, we didn't settle it. You said it was a bad idea. I didn't agree. I still don't, but apparently I'm the only one who thinks that it's worth trying." She stepped forward and tried to push away the feelings of frustration, sadness and defeat.

"It would be too much of a risk. No way of controlling what the witch would do. Keeping both of us out of reach of any of her plans should push her into making some kind of move. All of us know she's not going to stop." Evan curved an arm around her.

She took a deep breath. "If we're still confined somewhere this time next year, I'm not going to be an easy woman to live with."

"If this lasts that long, I'm going to be the one who's close to growling and biting." He laughed. "Now let's go. Where's Anne? I know you didn't come here on your own."

"She's getting the nurses and doctor to get the paperwork together to release you as soon as possible. She thought I might like a few minutes alone with you." Geneva leaned into him a little more now that she was sure he'd be all right.

"I definitely want time alone with you, but not here." He grinned down at her.

She shivered as that sexy rumble rolled over her. Her lips twitched, but her mind flew toward thoughts of getting him in bed and kissing him all over just to make certain he was really as healthy as he looked. She pushed the thought back. He'd been injured. He wouldn't be in any condition to make love. She didn't want him hurting himself trying to prove that he hadn't been hurt that bad.

"You were shot. We'll have to take things easy until you're healed." She smoothed her hand over his arm. Lord, she was going to miss that, but at least she'd be able to sleep next to him tonight.

"If you think we're not making love soon, you just might need to see the doctor, because you're delirious. The wound is healing and you'll see that soon enough." He stopped and leaned down until their noses touched.

She sniffed, but held his stare. He wasn't the only one involved in that decision. He was going to have to realize that.

"You're pushing me, Genny. You should be damn glad I had a couple of hours to calm down after Steven told me about your bid to implement your plan while I was hurt." His hand cupped her chin.

“And what did you think you would do to me if I had been close by?” She put her hands on her hips and resisted the urge to step back. He wasn’t going to intimidate her with any dire prediction. She’d done what she thought was right. She’d do it again.

“It was a toss-up between bending you over my knee and spanking you until you couldn’t sit or fucking you until you couldn’t even think of doing something that stupid again.” His hand slid around to the back of her neck.

She had the distinct feeling he wanted to shake her. His fingers were clasped firmly around her wrist, but the grip wasn’t bruising. She met his eyes and saw anger and determination there. He certainly wasn’t showing her the slightest hint of humor.

“So what did you and Steven decide to do?” She reached up and tugged at his hand. It didn’t budge.

“We’re going into seclusion,” he whispered as his thumb stroked along the side of her neck.

“Where?” She tilted her head. He was deliberately drawing this out, teasing her.

“You’ll see. Just wait.” He released her. “Now let’s go. I’m ready to get out of this place.”

“I told you he’d be ready to break out of here.” Anne walked toward them from the nurses’ station. “You’re free. The doctor released you and the nurses are ready to wheel you out to the car.”

“I don’t need to be wheeled anywhere.” He scowled at his sister.

“Now don’t be a baby about it. They’re only doing their job.” Anne laughed.

“An alpha isn’t wheeled anywhere. It’s a sign of weakness and invites challenge,” he growled.

“You’ll survive a wheelchair ride.” Anne laughed at him. “You can worry about challenges after your Genny is safe. But don’t try to fool me. No one’s going to challenge you.”

He glared at Anne, but sat when the nurse brought a wheelchair. The woman didn’t even look surprised to find him on his feet waiting for them. Geneva walked beside him. He wouldn’t stay in the chair if she was behind him or in front of him. She shot him a frustrated look, but stayed where she was.

Anne drove. Geneva sat in the backseat with Evan. His arm slid behind her and he tugged her a little closer. She rested her head against her chest and watched the buildings move beyond the windows.

Houses and business complexes passed, but Anne showed no sign of slowing. When the car drove into a warehouse district, Geneva began to wonder if Anne even knew where to go. She shook her head. Maybe Anne was driving around to make sure that no one was following them.

“Are we just doing one big circle to ensure we’re not followed or do you actually have a destination in mind?” Geneva asked softly. She knew both Anne and Evan would hear the question.

"We have a destination. We're almost there. If we have followers that's good. I want the witch to know where you are. It will save time and might get us out of here a little faster." Evan's hand clasped around hers, squeezing gently.

"In a warehouse district. There's nothing here." She straightened and had to stare at him. There wouldn't be anyone around to see if the witch did anything, to hear if they needed help.

"That's exactly the point. The only people around should be those who have business in the area and our people. Anyone else will stand out almost as soon as they enter the district," Evan said tugging her back against him.

"And the people who are going to be watching us, where will they be?" She put a hand against his chest and pushed away a little.

"In the buildings around us." Evan gestured to the large buildings as they passed.

"A normal warehouse won't be equipped for living." She sat up and reached for the door.

"We'll be comfortable. This warehouse has been set up for us. The agents watching us won't be as comfortable. Some of them will actually be working in the warehouses." Evan slid out of the car behind her. His hand settled in the small of her back.

She glanced back over her shoulder. His eyes ran over the large buildings around them. He seemed immensely satisfied. If she hadn't seen him in the hospital, she'd have never guessed that he'd been shot. He looked healthy, vital, as if he could run a marathon. She shook her head. He could at least look like he was hurt. Geneva walked toward the building just ahead of Evan. Anne moved up beside her. Her eyes moved from the left to the right. Geneva realized that Anne was also looking for signs of an attack. Geneva's head swung frantically searching for signs of danger. They had to see something since they were looking around so intensely.

"It's all right. The witch hasn't had time to set up a trap here. She couldn't have known what we were planning. Anne's just being cautious," Evan said in a reassuring tone.

Geneva relaxed a little. The single metal door opened before they reached it. Geneva recognized the Protectorate operative standing there. She'd worked with Jake before. He stepped back letting them into the warehouse.

"Everything's ready," Jake said. "Come on in and we'll show you some of the measures we've taken as well as your living quarters for your stay here." Jake's arm swept wide as they walked into the room.

The huge warehouse was mostly empty. Couches, a table, television and lamps sat in one area. A long table was lined with computers and monitors. A man and a woman sat in front of the array of screens. Geneva gaped. She just hoped the bed area wasn't as open as this.

"What do you have set up so far? Steven told me a little about what he was planning. I want to know how secure this place is." Evan stepped forward as soon as the door closed behind them.

"We're still working on a lot of the video surveillance. We have a few more sensors to put up outside that will be activated after the area is clear of workers." Jake led the way over to the table.

Geneva followed Evan to the table. She saw various angles of the cameras displayed on the screen. She watched and listened as Evan questioned the men about the angles and what the coverage would be. He wanted to know about blind spots and any possible weakness in the security. Finally, Evan seemed satisfied with what was being done in that area.

"There's a contained apartment in a loft. It's been furnished so that if you want privacy you have it. It's there." Jake gestured toward the back of the warehouse.

That end had two levels. She followed his hand. Windows on that loft offered a view of the warehouse floor. Any window facing the streets would have been sealed. It saddened her, but it also infuriated her. She knew that looking out the windows could be risky, but she was going to miss looking at the sun. Then again, all there was to see here were other warehouses so she wasn't missing much. She walked up the stairs in front of Evan. The door opened just before she reached it. She stepped into the room. A gray couch and two chairs faced a large screen. She walked past them to the doors on the far side of the room. She opened one door and saw an office with a large desk and computer. She moved to the other door. A large bed had been centered against one wall and a nightstand had been put to the right side of the bed.

"The lock is open now. You can key in an entry code so that you'll feel safe. You shouldn't need it, but it will be there just in case," Jake said from the doorway. "All the comforts of home are here, kitchen to the left, office, bedroom and bathroom down the hallway."

"Thank you." Geneva turned away from the bedroom and smiled at him.

"If you need anything just ask. Your clothes are being brought over here. We're making a production of it. The witch should know that we've put you somewhere. It shouldn't take her long to come after you." Jake leaned against the doorjamb.

"We will. Just give us a little time alone and we'll be down to talk more." Evan stepped just in front of her. His frown sent the man running.

"You didn't have to do that. He was just showing us around." She pushed on Evan's shoulder. A flush heated her cheeks. The man's attitude was getting on her nerves. He didn't have any reason to start that possessive posturing. Not to mention the fact that kind of thing would eventually drive her insane. She wasn't going to let him get away with it.

"He wanted you." Evan's eyes narrowed.

"No, he didn't." She rolled her eyes. She loved the way he thought she was sexy and irresistible, but he was wrong this time.

"I can smell his arousal," Evan said flatly.

She sighed. "It's not me he's attracted to."

He turned to fully face her. His eyes widened. "You mean he's attracted to me? You're not lying to me?"

"No, I'm not lying. Jake likes males. He's got good taste. He knows a nice body when he sees it. You've got to know you have a delicious body." She let her eyes drift down his broad chest covered by the shirt.

He shook his head, but smiled. "That's good. I'm taken too. I thought maybe he wanted my sexy woman."

"Taken, I don't know about that, but possessive, yeah, you are that." She leaned in close to nip at his lips.

"Very definitely taken. You may talk about walking away from us, but you're just as possessive as I am." His hand slipped behind her neck.

He tugged her close for his kiss. His tongue thrust into her mouth. She sucked at his tongue. She loved kissing him. He pulled her close, his hips pressing into hers. She slipped her arms around his waist. Just when she was ready to shove him onto the couch or floor, he pulled back.

"Let's go down and talk to the others." He stepped away from her.

She didn't want to let him go. But they did need to go meet the others. She was curious about the measures they'd put in place for both surveillance and to catch the witch. She had to know or she'd worry about it. Reluctantly, she let her arms fall away from him.

"You know heating a woman and just leaving her wanting can get a man pushed onto the floor and his clothes ripped off him. Or maybe pushed over a second floor railing, depending on how mad the woman is." She gripped his shirt briefly. She really felt like doing it.

"You can try to rip my clothes off any time, Genny. The other, well, I wouldn't advise it. Let's go." He tugged her hand away from his shirt and holding her hand led her to the door. "Later we'll play."

* * * * *

Evan watched Geneva. Her eyes drifted to him often and he knew that she had definite ideas about what she wanted to do tonight. He was glad that she wasn't brooding about when and how the witch was going to attack. That hadn't been his aim when he'd kissed her, but he appreciated the benefit. The witch would attack again. This time it would probably be more violent. Evan expected the witch to send someone to try to kill him again. It was the only way Geneva would be vulnerable.

"Come with me. It's getting late and nothing's going to happen tonight." Geneva walked over to him.

He watched the sexy swing of her hips. Her jeans hugged her rounded hips and her t-shirt clung to her breasts. She looked relaxed. Lord, he wanted to grab her hips and pull her against him and feel her moving like that. The heat in her eyes and the soft scent of her arousal tempted him. He'd love to go up those stairs with her, but he was waiting for Steven. One of the Protectorate men had told him that Steven needed to talk to him.

"Go on. I'll join you after I've talked to Steven." Evan rose and took the single step that separated them. He hugged her. "Keep thinking about me."

"I'll be thinking about you, but it probably won't be the way you mean. Why do you need to talk to Steven? It's too soon for anything to have happened." She put a hand on her hip and glared at him.

"There's some things that have to be finalized, a few details probably. I'll be up soon." He didn't think Steven would want to talk about forwarding mail or working around business meetings for him. Something had to have been discovered when the agents had gone after their clothing.

"Whatever he wants, you'd better tell me about it. I'm the one the witch hates. You're not going to keep facts from me about this." Her finger dug briefly into his chest just above his nipple before she spun on her heel and marched toward the stairs.

He smiled, but returned to his seat. He'd like to follow her, but knew the meeting with Steven couldn't wait. He was a little surprised that she'd walked away from him when she knew Steven was coming. Maybe she was mad at the Protectorate commander for not agreeing to help her in her scheme. The idea of loving her out of her anger taunted him. He had to wait half an hour. By the time Steven arrived, Evan's good mood had disappeared. The other man's face was sober and he looked tired and frustrated. Evan knew that this wasn't just a formality. Something had happened as he'd suspected.

"Hi, Evan, thanks for waiting." Steven dropped into a chair. He ran a hand through his hair and sighed.

"What's happened?" Evan asked bluntly.

"Well, we retrieved your clothing, but I sent a man back to your house to watch for a while. I wanted to see if anyone came to find you. When they arrived there, your door was wide open. My people had locked it before they left." Steven leaned forward.

"Did they go inside the house or did someone just open the door and get scared away?" Evan leaned forward and met Steven's eyes.

"They weren't scared away. Someone went into your house and they were angry. It's been trashed and it reeks. I don't know what they did, but it smells worse than if they'd let a skunk into your home." Steven shook his head.

"What exactly was done?" Evan frowned.

It would be easy to assume that this was done by the witch. It could have been done by vandals, but he wasn't going to make any assumptions until he had more information. They had invaded his territory. Anger slammed through him. He felt his

teeth lengthen and his claws began to push his nails up. He took deep breaths, struggling for control. This could easily have nothing to do with Geneva and the witch who wanted to hurt her. It could be aimed at him, but he doubted it.

“In your living room every piece of furniture was slashed and stained with paints. Holes have been punched into the walls and paint was sprayed on almost every surface they could reach.” Steven sat back and shook his head.

“Just in the living room? Was any other room damaged?” Evan gritted his teeth. This didn’t sound like something any of his enemies would do.

“The whole lower floor of your house was vandalized.” Steven grimaced. “Pipes were jerked free in the bathroom and kitchen. Water was everywhere.”

“Damn.” Evan envisioned the mess. It was going to take weeks to fix that. He wanted to rip whoever had done it into small pieces.

“Was there any message for Geneva or me?” Evan wouldn’t have put it past the witch to have something scrawled on the walls.

“No. My men are processing the scene. Hopefully, we’ll find something to lead us to the people who did it.” Steven didn’t look like he held much hope that that would happen.

“I want to know if you find something.” Evan stood.

“I’ll tell you, but even if we find something I’m not giving you a name. I want them alive.” Steven’s voice hardened.

“At least you know me well enough to keep me away from the man. Notify me if anything else happens.” Evan began striding for the stairs.

Fury pulsed inside him. He wanted to hunt the men down and make them tell him who wanted Geneva to suffer. She was going to feel guilty about what had happened. He hated to see her frightened, but he couldn’t keep this from her.

He walked into their quarters and saw her immediately. She lay sprawled on the couch on her back. Her head was braced on the arm rest. She was reading a book, soft music playing. As soon as the door closed behind, the book lowered. She looked at him for a long moment.

“What happened? You didn’t discuss simple details with Steven. I can tell by your expression and the stiffness of your body.” She tilted her head and looked like she was prepared to wait all night for his answer.

He loved that she was beginning to read him so well. Walking over to the couch, he lifted her legs so that he could slide under them. She was barefooted and wore a soft green short nightgown. He could see the dark shadow between her legs. He wanted to slide his hand between her thighs and discover if she was wearing anything beside that gown. He lowered her legs onto his. He rested his hand on her thigh. With extreme effort, he resisted the urge to let his hand roam higher.

“There was some vandalism done on the house after the Protectorate agents collected our clothes,” Evan said.

He felt the tension burst through her. The book dropped to the floor as she sat up straight. He saw her hands clench into fists.

"What kind of vandalism? How bad is it?" Her voice sounded tight and he could see the anger burning in her eyes.

"Just about anything you can think of. It's going to take some time to fix the damage." He tried to keep the anger out of his voice. It wouldn't help either of them.

"I'm so sorry. If you didn't think you were my mate, I bet you'd run from this. I wouldn't even blame you. This witch doesn't give up." She shook her head and looked away from him.

He cupped her cheek and forced her to meet his eyes. "This isn't your fault. I wouldn't leave you even if you weren't my mate. This witch is a menace and has to be stopped."

"You say that now, but how much of this could anyone take? Hell, the witch makes me want to go after her or run as far as I can." She grimaced, but didn't try to pull away from his loose hold. "And we still don't even know what the fuck set this person off. What did I do to make her so damn mad?"

"We probably won't discover that until we know who she is. Since there hasn't been any communication other than the attacks, she doesn't want an apology, only revenge." He couldn't stand to see her looking so sad and alone. He pulled her into his arms and wrapped them around her. "Try not to think about it. We'll stop her and we'll catch the witch."

"I can't stop thinking about it." She rested her head on his shoulder. "Who's going to end up dead because of something I did?"

"No." His voice was hard and uncompromising. "Not because of you. No one blames you. You need to think about something else."

He saw her eyes run down his body. He hadn't really expected her to take him at his word. He'd wanted her to get angry, to fight with him. As long as she was angry, she wouldn't be afraid.

"You're right. I need something else to think about." She stood and pulled off her nightgown.

His eyes locked to the reddened tips of her nipples. He slid off the couch and moved over to the chair, hoping that distance would remove a bit of the temptation. As much as he loved seeing her naked, he knew she was just reacting, not thinking. He licked his lips. This probably wasn't a good idea, but he wanted to touch her. A scrap of green panties shielded her pussy from sight. He saw her fingers grip the thin strip of silk. She pushed it down and let it fall to her feet. What happened to women wanting to talk?

"Don't you want to talk about this?" He tried to keep his eyes above her waist.

"I don't want to think." She took crossed the small distance between them and began unbuttoning his shirt.

Her fingers brushed over his chest, leaving a trail of awareness in their wake. He didn't want to take advantage of her desperation. She might want time away from all of the worries, but he didn't think she really knew what she was doing.

"I could teach you to use some magic. I guarantee that after a few minutes, all you'll be thinking about is what comes next." He had to offer her an alternative.

She looked at him and raised an eyebrow. The offer was tempting and she was curious, but her body burned. "That's not what I want. You can teach me magic later."

She pushed his shirt off his shoulders. He drew in a shaky breath as her hands moved over his chest. She didn't want to focus or to think. All she wanted to do was feel. He seemed to realize that. He framed her face and leaned close for a kiss. She nipped his lip. No sweet and slow. Not tonight. She needed more from him. He growled and tangled his fingers in her hair. His lips slanted across hers. She savored his taste, taking it into her.

She really didn't understand what was going on inside her. Hunger pulsed and burned and twisted combining with the chaos of her emotions. Her tongue stroked into his mouth. His tongue danced over hers and when she felt the edge of his teeth, it sent a surge of need spearing straight to her core. Her nails dug into his shoulders. She stepped closer, her body brushing against his.

He slid one of his hands down her back cupping her butt cheek. She held on tighter to him. She needed to feel him pressed against her. He lifted her off her feet. She felt the ridge of his cock nudging against her even through the sturdy denim. She ached to feel his shaft deep inside her, but she didn't want to move away from him. Not even to peel him out of his pants. He rocked into her. It was almost too much. She shivered and lifted her leg to hold him tighter to her. Her lips slid away. She kissed his cheek. She needed.

"I want you naked and inside me." Her low husky voice seemed to flow over him, making his skin feel even more sensitive.

Every breath she drew in seemed to heighten her arousal. She didn't understand it and she didn't want to try to work it out just now. Her teeth nipped at his neck. She couldn't stop touching him, stop pushing him. She felt him stiffen. He was fighting for control. She knew it and could tell by the harsh breaths he dragged in. She didn't want him careful and controlled. She needed him wild and untamed. So out of control, he was ready to jump on top of her, just like she felt for him. She needed it to burn away the raging confusion inside her. Sweet soft love and the softness of a bed would have to wait. She raked her nails down his back.

"You're not going to play and tease. I want you now." She unbuttoned his pants.

He just stared at her for a few breaths, surprised. It was more than enough time for her to lower his zipper. She tugged his fly wide. He stepped back, but she pushed his suit pants just over his hips. She ached to have him inside her. She pushed him back against the couch. He growled and he surged off it. She loved the fierceness she could

see on his face. He lifted her and strode around to the back of the couch. She reached down and her fingers wrapped around his cock. She stroked the length. His hips pumped forward.

Hot breath feathered over her neck. She felt the scrape of his teeth over her shoulder. He grasped her hand and gently tugged it away from his cock. He turned her around and pushed her against the couch. His hips pressed against hers. She felt him move back, but only far enough to kick out of his pants. She felt him leave her for a second and didn't have time to look. After a ripping sound she recognized as a condom wrapper, he was back.

He pressed her slightly forward over the back of the couch. She felt his cock brush against her buttocks. She pushed back against him. This wasn't the time for second thoughts. Her pussy clenched and she felt empty. She needed him there. His cock pushed into her. She caught her breath and her eyes drifted closed. It felt so good. His hips pressed against her just for a moment. She knew he was trying to think, to calm himself.

Reaching back, she gripped his thigh and sank her nails into the flesh. His hips bucked against hers. He growled low and deep. His lips brushed against her neck and his tongue lapped over her shoulder. She knew it was a warning of how close he was. She wanted him that way.

His hips brushed against her buttocks. His arm slipped around her waist, pulling her away from the couch. She felt his hand cup her pussy. He pushed two fingers between the soft plump lips. She bit her lip and groaned. He stroked her clit, his finger moving in circles on the hardened nub. His cock drove into her. She braced her hands on the couch, meeting each thrust. She pressed down, grinding her clit against his fingers.

"Move," she muttered the order. She clenched her fingers on the cushions of the couch.

His hips surged against hers in a hard, fast rhythm. His cock sank deep with every stroke. She felt the first shuddering contractions begin to ripple through her and then lost all thought. Fire ripped through her body. Sweet, hot pleasure poured over her. A low growl rumbled against her shoulder as his body tensed and jerked against hers. She sagged against the couch unsure if she could support herself or not.

Slowly the sensations began to fade and her mind calmed. She didn't know if it was the sex or the small amount of time, but she didn't feel so panicked, so rushed. She hated that the witch was destroying Evan's things. First, she'd gone after the windows and now the house had been vandalized. She knew Evan wouldn't walk away from her. Not over this or anything else. It was comforting now where it had been a little scary at one time. The funny thing was that all the time she was fighting the claim of being his mate, she'd come to care for him and now it was so much more. The mate thing, she didn't know about that biological, mystical only one forever stuff. She just knew that what she felt for him was love.

Chapter Ten

Geneva saw the activity at the table with all the video screens. She watched as three men jumped up and ran out the door. Her interest was piqued. After days of waiting something was happening. She walked over to the table and tried to see what had them all so interested. Steven was at the table with them. She didn't see anything strange on the screens. On a few of the screens, she could see groups of men in front of an open warehouse. Most of them looked as if they were eating lunch. A few of them looked as if they were talking. On another screen she saw boxes being loaded onto a vehicle. It was all more of what she'd seen the first day she was here, when she'd been hoping that something would happen immediately.

"What's going on? Why did those men leave?" She looked at Evan who stood at the other end of the table.

"Two of the men here don't work in the warehouse." Evan gestured to the screen with men eating lunch.

"Are you sure they're not just visiting friends on a lunch break?" She looked at the screen again. She couldn't see anything that looked suspicious.

"Not these two men. Watch the blond at the edge of the building. Look at his hand. Wait and watch," Jake said.

She frowned, but watched the man's hand. His hand rose. She caught a flash of light, a reflection off whatever was in his hand. Now she saw what had them so concerned.

"Is that a camera or is it a weapon?" She looked down the table waiting for one of them to answer.

"That's a camera, but the bulge under his jacket is most likely a weapon." Evan pointed to a slight lump just above the man's elbow on the grungy brown jacket. "The men will grab them and take them to be interrogated."

"So how long will it be before the witch gets frustrated?" She looked at the screen.

She wanted this part of it over. Now that she'd accepted Evan and that the relationship was permanent, she was anxious to get started with everything. She knew she had to tell him, but she didn't want to do that while she was still in danger. Part of her refused to let him have any doubts about why she was doing this. It might be a drive for him, but for her, it was much different. She loved him. That was the only reason she'd ever feel compelled to stay with him. She knew he hadn't thought much past keeping her safe and keeping her with him. That was all right with her. She was willing to wait for his feelings to grow.

“With the way this witch has acted in the past, it might be only days. Whoever it is isn’t the most patient of people. It could be days or weeks.” Gage shrugged and kept his attention focused on the screen. “Look there they go and there are John and Van on the hunt.”

She couldn’t quite hold back her groan. Weeks more of this would push her over the edge. She watched the screen. Hopefully, one of these men would give them some idea of who the witch actually was.

“Are they going to be brought here for questioning?” She looked to Evan.

“No, they’ll be taken to another location. We don’t want them anywhere near you,” Evan explained.

It seemed to take days before the men returned. They walked into the building. She couldn’t tell anything from their expressions. Her hopes fell. If they’d found out something important, surely they’d be happy about it. They walked slowly over to the group at the table.

“It’s definitely a she, our witches were right about that. That’s about all we got out of them and to get that we had to ask some obscure questions to get around her spell.” Mark dropped into a rolling chair.

“Was it the same spell as on the others and did you trigger it?” Steven asked.

“The same spell and we managed not to set it off. We couldn’t mention anything about Geneva or Evan or any reason why this was done. Oh and we found out she didn’t pay them through a middleman.” Mark ran a hand through his hair and grimaced.

“I half-expected the woman to have someone setting up the attacks for her.” Evan strode over to Geneva and slipped his arm around her. She welcomed his closeness. Her thoughts raced as she thought again about who would do this and why. They’d known it was a woman for a while, but still she couldn’t think of any way to narrow it down without knowing more about why it was done.

* * * * *

Two weeks had passed since they’d learned that the person was definitely a female. Evan and the Coven witches had been fairly certain, but Geneva knew there had been a chance they’d been wrong. She was sitting on one of the couches on the ground floor, just because she wanted to be near other people. It helped with the loneliness, but it did nothing to ease the caged feeling. The restlessness only ever went a way for a small period of time. Usually when she was with Evan.

Geneva had spent most of her time going through the files again. Almost every one of them had a woman involved in some way. She felt like slamming her head against the wall. It was getting the point where every file looked the same. She stared at the screen. When she couldn’t find anything to set this case apart, she went on to the next

case. She felt a little relieved that some of them had been ruled out, but that still left too many names to take a guess on the woman's identity.

"Wow." The single word from one of the men watching the monitors drew her attention away from the files on the computer in her lap.

She turned her head and looked toward the men sitting there. Their eyes were glued to the screen. She wondered what had them so interested, but wasn't really curious enough to go over there and see. If it was all that important, she'd find out soon enough. One of the men waved to Evan. He strode over to the desk. She watched the muscles of his ass flex beneath the tight denim of his jeans. Man, he looked great in those and the blue t-shirt he wore was as tight as a second skin. She couldn't help admiring his body as he moved. She heard him draw in a harsh breath and saw his body tense.

"Geneva, go up to our rooms." His voice slashed out, sharp and loud.

She stood, but she wasn't going to jump to do his bidding. He could be doing his overprotective thing again. She wasn't going upstairs just because there was someone strange in the area. The last time that had happened, the person had a valid reason for being there.

"Now!" A distinct growl rumbled in the order.

"Too late, mongrel. I'm already here." A soft voice with a rolling accent cut into the silence.

Geneva whipped toward the smooth sound. She was stunned to see a short, red-haired older woman there. The woman didn't even look familiar. Evan leapt forward, putting himself between her and the witch although he hadn't even been close to her. She had no idea how the witch had gotten into the building without using any of the doors.

A slicing blast that looked like a giant silver blade flew through the air straight toward Geneva. She gasped and stumbled to the side. The blade followed her. It slammed into something she couldn't see right in front of her. Her heart slammed against her chest. She was so frightened she felt like she couldn't breathe and she heartily wished she had a weapon of some kind. She had no idea if it would work, but holding it would make her feel better.

"Did you think I'd let you touch my mate?" Evan stepped more fully in front of her.

"I'm going to kill the bitch. I wanted her to suffer first, but you blocked everything I tried. She will die, just like..." The woman's voice trailed off.

Even from a distance, Geneva could see the hate and anger in the woman's hazel eyes. She still had no clue why the woman blamed her. Obviously someone had died, but Geneva knew she'd never killed anyone. Before this, she hadn't been involved in any battle. What had she done that made her this woman's target?

"Just like whom? Who is dead?" Evan asked.

The woman said nothing. Another blast of magic formed and raced toward Geneva. Geneva jumped when it hit that invisible wall in front of her. She knew the woman could do the magic without making it visible. She could only guess the witch wanted her to know the bolt was coming at her.

"You're not going to hurt her. You're going to be caught and face the Council's judgment," Evan said in a voice that sounded almost bored.

"I'm going to kill her and go home. They won't take the word of any of you over me. You're mortals and mongrels." The woman laughed.

Geneva flinched at the sound. The woman seemed insane, but Geneva didn't know if that was just because of her anger.

The door from the outside opened. At first, Geneva couldn't see anything past Evan and the angry witch. She knew someone had come inside by the moving shadows caused by the bright sunlight. She heard the tap of hard-soled shoes on the concrete floor. The witch didn't even turn to see who it was. She glared and seemed ready to try flinging another deadly wave of magic. Then Geneva saw a white-haired woman. She immediately recognized the woman as one of the Witches' Council, Sara Lafferty. Sara stopped just behind the red-haired witch.

"They'll take my word, Eliza," Sara said softly.

The witch gasped spinning around to face the new arrival. Geneva was a little relieved that something had turned the woman's attention. She trusted Evan to keep her safe, but didn't want Evan or anyone else hurt. Enough harm had been caused by the witch.

"Sara... You can't be on their side. Because of her, James is dead." The woman, Eliza, gestured back to Geneva.

"James is dead because he broke mage law and when he was confronted, he killed himself. You know that." Sara shook her head.

"She manufactured the evidence. James swore that he hadn't done it. She was angry because he jilted her," Eliza accused.

"No, she didn't. I saw the evidence, Eliza. Your brother lied to you. She wasn't involved with your brother. They never saw each other socially, never dated. He was almost old enough to be her father, not to mention the fact that he would have looked down on her for her lack of training and bloodlines. You know that. He was doing everything he was accused of and more. He made witches and wizards everywhere look bad." Sara didn't sound as if she was at all sympathetic.

"No." Eliza backed away from Sara and the two men with her.

"Yes, and now you've ruined your own life. I hope you're prepared to live without your magic." Sara took a step toward Eliza. "Why didn't you go through the proper channels? We would have shown you the evidence."

Eliza was silent. Geneva wished she could see more than the woman's back. She wanted to see the woman's expression. She knew better than to think Eliza might

apologize. She just wondered if the woman really believed what the Councilwoman had told her. Even without magic, the woman could come after and bullets could be just as deadly as a spell.

“Why do you cover for her? My brother would never lie to me. He’s dead because of her.” Eliza’s hand fisted at her side.

Evan walked over to stand beside Geneva. He clasped her hand. She found the light grip reassuring. They’d said the woman was probably crazy and it seemed they were right. The woman wouldn’t believe even the Council member. It was rare that a member of the Council took the side of a person who wasn’t a member of the local Coven.

“Your brother did lie.” Sara took another step forward. “Come with us, Eliza. It’s time.”

The woman spun to face Geneva and Evan. Geneva could see the anger and hate in the witch’s eyes. She took a step forward. Geneva didn’t see anything but she felt the magic flare.

“You’re not hurting her,” Evan said calmly.

“No, you’re not. It’s over.” Sara stepped up behind Eliza and put her hand on Eliza’s shoulder.

Eliza seemed to wilt. Geneva felt another wave of magic. She guessed that this time Sara wasn’t taking any chances. Sara had probably locked the woman’s powers until she could be judged by the Council.

“I’m sorry her condition wasn’t noticed. We’ll take care of her magic and get her some help, but...” Sara’s voice trailed off as she stepped out from behind Eliza. The older woman met Geneva’s eyes.

“But she might not follow the advice or give up her vendetta.” Geneva nodded.

She didn’t have any illusions that just the woman’s capture would solve everything. After a stint in a witch-friendly hospital, the woman would probably be released without any supervision. She wouldn’t have any powers, but magic was only one way to cause problems.

“Right. We’ll notify you when she’s released, but you’ll have to be careful.”

“No, she won’t.” Steven’s voice rang in the silence following the Councilwoman’s warning. “After she’s released, Eliza will have to face charges. She used humans for assaults on Geneva and attempted to kill two people.”

Sara looked at Steven. She raised an eyebrow, but didn’t say a word. Geneva was surprised. She knew that normally any member of the Council would have argued about the Coven policing their own people. She’d heard it many times from both the witches and the wizards in many cases.

“You can’t let them do that,” Eliza said as she was led away from the group.

Geneva couldn’t make out Sara’s reply, but knew the woman had said something. She just hoped the witches didn’t hide Eliza. She didn’t want to have to live in fear for

the rest of her life. Now that the threat was finally over, she was looking forward to a lot of things.

"She's caught. You can get back to a normal life now," Steven said.

"Well, relatively normal. I'll be job hunting." She smiled. She knew Protectorate policies and they didn't allow for the full-time employment of anyone with a strong link to any paranormal group. They occasionally contracted help, but that was different. The Protectorate witches were all unaffiliated without any link to the Dallas Covens.

"I keep losing my best operatives to werewolves and vampires. I ought to make you replace them." Steven grinned.

Evan laughed, but when Geneva looked at him he was absolutely serious.

"We'll be replacing them very soon. It's past time paranormals took part in the unit meant to police us." Evan's voice carried a trace of satisfaction that she would have missed if she didn't know him so well.

Steven shook his head. "Not going to happen. Go pack and go home. Your mate is safe."

"You won't have to wait long to see that you're wrong. Come on, Genny. He's right about one thing. It's past time we returned home." Evan led her to the stairs.

"What about the damage? The vandalism?" Geneva hadn't asked about it since it had happened because she felt majorly guilty about it. If he hadn't been between her and the witch, it wouldn't have happened.

"There have been people working on it for the past week. We'll be eating out for the next few days because the kitchen's not finished and the lower floor is a little light on furniture. Most of the damage has been repaired." Evan's voice sounded cheerful.

As they climbed the stairs she thought about what she wanted to do now that there wasn't any danger. When she'd first met Evan, she'd be certain that she'd want to put at least a few states between them as soon as possible. That wasn't the case now, but she wasn't sure exactly what to do or what he really wanted other than her with him. Was it only the biological thing for him?

She walked through the living room, looking around for stray clothing. It was all too possible. They'd made love in here almost every night. She didn't see anything, but would do a thorough search later. The last thing she wanted to do was leave her panties for someone else to find.

Heading back to the bedroom, she pulled out one of the suitcases and opened it. She tugged one of the dresser drawers open and began taking out clothes. As she strode back to the bed, she noticed Evan leaning against the wall near the bed. He was watching her so intently that it shook her. He hadn't made any move to pack. She stopped and raised an eyebrow, silently questioning him. He'd better have a reason for just standing there.

"You belong with me. You know you do if you'd just give yourself the time and really focus on what you feel." Evan's gaze burned into hers.

She blinked, her fingers tightening on the clothes she'd gathered. He wasn't sure of her. She'd never thought he'd have any doubts at all. He'd always told her that she was his mate and she belonged with him. He'd left her in no doubt that that was how he felt it should be and would be.

"I—"

"Don't even think about going back to your apartment. I'm not letting you go." Evan interrupted, his hand slashing through the air.

She shook her head and put down the clothes. "I'm not going anywhere but home with you, Evan."

His entire body relaxed. "You're going home. You don't doubt that you're my mate anymore?"

"I don't know about the mate thing. I just know what I feel. I love you and I want to be with you." She stepped forward and put her arms around his waist. "I can't imagine being anywhere but with you."

He laughed. "That is the mate thing. I've loved you almost since I met you." He leaned down and kissed her. His arms tightened. There was a distinct growl in his voice. "Packing can wait."

She smiled as he tumbled them onto the bed. She nipped and licked his neck. No way was she letting him get away with taking over everything now. He'd already started the change in her and she was out of danger.

"Now I get to explore and play." She pushed his shirt up and ran her fingers over his chest.

He laughed, relaxing back on the bed. "Really? And what do I get to do?"

"Just enjoy. You didn't know that I'd accepted you, that we should be together. I think I should show you so you don't miss it again. If you want, you can get rid of those clothes for me. I'll do the rest." She slanted her lips across his.

Her tongue tangled with his and she put everything into the kiss. She didn't want to leave him in any doubt again. He was uncertain about how she felt. She almost couldn't believe it. He seemed to know what she was thinking almost before she did. When she slowly pulled back, he ripped his shirt off and flung it across the room. In a flurry of movement, he kicked off his shoes and pushed down his pants. She laughed but didn't take her eyes off the gorgeous expanse of his chest. She wanted to taste every inch of him. Part of her craved it.

She unbuttoned her shirt. His eyes followed her fingers down the row of buttons. He looked hungry and so was she. She was anxious to give them both what they needed. She rose to her knees and managed to scramble out of her clothes. Moving carefully, she straddled his hips. She sat on his stomach and his brown cock pressed against her butt. She wanted to ride him slowly, but she wasn't ready to get to that yet even though she was wet and already hungry for him.

“What are you planning? You’ve got a sly little smile on your lips.” His hands gripped her hips.

She had the feeling he wanted to lift her and move her back onto his cock. His eyes burned with a golden glow that clearly showed his wolf side. She grinned. She liked that side of him and she’d love to see a bit more of it. First, she wanted to have a little play time with him.

“I just want to touch. If you remember, I haven’t had much chance because of your wolf and the danger. You do like to take control.” She winked as she leaned down and licked the spot just above his neck.

She inhaled. Rich and spicy, his scent filled her. She loved how he smelled. She ran her hands over his chest, loving the feel of his muscles shifting beneath her fingertips. He hummed low in his throat, but didn’t make any move to stop her. She nipped at his neck and moved down his chest. She lapped at the muscle just above the flat dark nipple.

“What if I want to touch you too?” His hand swept up her back in a long stroke.

He didn’t seem like he was in a rush or mad to touch her. She looked up and she was a little surprised to see what seemed like contentment. His hand cupped the back of her head and pulled her up for a long hard kiss. She lost track of what she wanted to do and just enjoyed his taste and the pleasure of the kiss. When he released her, she tried to catch her breath and simply stared at him. Damn, that was hot.

“Now play for a little while and then fuck me, Genny,” he whispered.

“Are you ever going to call me Geneva?” She tilted her head. Genny had sort of grown on her, but she’d like to hear his voice say her full name.

He laughed softly. “You’ll hear your name tonight if you don’t play too long, but I’ll always like Genny better. It just suits you.”

She licked her way to his hardened nipple. Her tongue swirled around the darker disk. She didn’t want to play too long here. She wanted to explore a little more. Just the thought sent a surge of desire through her. She wriggled, but focused her attention on him. Her nails scraped over one nipple as her tongue swept over the other. He drew in a sharp breath as she sucked lightly. His hands clamped at her hips.

She brushed at his hands. “A little more time. I’ve barely had time to play.”

“A little time, but don’t take too much more time.” He threaded his fingers through her hair.

She slid down his body. If she was only going to get a little more time, she didn’t want to waste it. His dark skin gleamed and his cock thrust upward. She licked her lips. She wanted to taste him and she could tell by the way his hands were balled at his side that he wanted it too. Just to draw out the anticipation a few moments longer, she dropped a kiss on his hip, trailing kisses slowly inward.

Her lips touched the crown of his cock. She flicked her tongue over the deep brown skin of the head. A low growl rumbled as her lips closed over it. She loved drawing a

reaction from him and wanted to pull more from him. Lowering her head, she took his shaft into her mouth.

He tugged her away from his cock. Her eyes locked with his and she knew he was on the edge of control. She rolled on the condom. Her hand stroked down the length. His eyes flashed and his jaw was clenched so tightly she was surprised she didn't hear the grating of his teeth.

She rose and moved up his body. His hands gripped her hips as if he was afraid she was going to suddenly pull away from him. She didn't have any intention of doing anything but riding him until she couldn't even move. She joined them. Her muscles clenched and she closed her eyes as she savored the feeling of his cock filling her. The tension was growing inside her and she knew slow and steady would go out the window soon.

She began rocking against him, wanting to extend the pleasure as much as possible before she lost control. His hand slid over her stomach and cupped her breast. When his fingers plucked at her nipple, she ground her hips against his. The sharp sting slammed through her seeming to echo and grow. Her muscles tightened, clenching around his cock. She couldn't hold back a moan. Her hips lifted without conscious thought and began a faster, harder rhythm.

He tugged her down and his lips wrapped around her nipple. Her entire body seemed unbearably sensitive and every touch sent pleasure radiating through her. But it wasn't enough. Her hips undulated as she desperately tried to find what she needed. She felt his hand slip between them as her hips rose. His fingers pressed against her clit. He rubbed in small circles each time she took his shaft deep.

"That's it, Genny. Ride my fingers, baby." His voice came out on a strained growl, barely recognizable against the skin of her breast.

A shudder ripped down her spine as his fingers rubbed the sensitive bud. She arched and her head fell back. Her orgasm hit hard and fast. Her eyes closed as white heat washed over her body, leaving her shaken and spent. His hips thrust up against her. His hands clenched her hips and rocked her against him. He came on a shout and she felt the tremor of his body against hers.

He tugged her down against his chest and his hand stroked her hair. "I love you, Geneva."

About the Author

Rebecca Airies has always loved to read. Futuristic, the classics, mystery or horror, the genre doesn't matter as long as the stories capture her interest and take her on an adventure. She soon discovered a love for writing and characters just waiting to tell their stories. Since that time, writing has become an obsession.

Rebecca lives in the heart of Texas. She loves the outdoors, growing things and working on crafts when she's not lost in the worlds of her characters. Please feel free to write and tell her what you think; she'd love to hear from you.

Rebecca welcomes comments from readers. You can find her website and email address on her [author bio page](#) at www.ellorascave.com.

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