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Tryst
SHIFTERS

Kimberly Hunter



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in a
Blue Moon

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Once in a Blue Moon
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Dedication

To my family, thank you for all your love and support. To Mike, you've cheered me on from day one; someday I'll get to that houseboat scene. And a special thank you to my editor, Leanne. I enjoyed working with and learning from you.

Only during a blue moon can the Homus Panthus, panther shifters, find a mate. But for Devon Saunders, the coming blue moon will be his last chance. Not that he would ever give up his only opportunity to find a mate, but when one of his kind reaches a certain age, the instinct to search out a mate dies. It's not a conscience choice for the Panthus, none would willingly give up the right to find the one meant for them, but a quirk of nature. Natural selection decrees that the strong survive and young breeders produce many healthy cubs. Devon was strong, but he wasn't young anymore, even if his youthful good looks belied that fact. So it was now or never for Devon. Find his mate at the next blue moon, or spend the rest of his long life alone.

* * * * *

"Hey, Nik, you coming out with us tonight, or what?"

Nik shook his head at Dave, a friend and co-worker, as they got onto the elevator. "Sorry man, but it's been a long week. All I want to do is go home, drink a cold one, and catch the scores."

Dave stared at him in disbelief. "Dude, what kind of lame-ass Friday night is that?"

Nik shrugged. "My kind."

"But, Nik, buddy, it's ladies' night." His eyes were wide with shock that Nik would even contemplate turning down such an opportunity. "Lots of drunken women. Drunk and easy."

"Sorry, my friend, but I'm going to have to leave all the drunk and easy ladies to you tonight." He gave his buddy a friendly pat on the back.

“I’m taking my tired ass home.” The last thing he needed tonight was to be stuck in a bar with a bunch of horny women. Or anyone else for that matter. His control had started to fray as the day wore on. Being in a bar where inhibitions were low was not a good idea.

Dave let out a gusty sigh. “And here I was, hoping that you’d be my wingman tonight.”

“You’ll just have to fly this one solo, I’m afraid.”

“All right,” he said, reluctantly giving in. “But if you change your mind, call me. I’m meeting up with Brad and Theo.”

Nik followed him out the elevator after the doors opened on the ground floor. “Sure. If I feel the need to get hit on by a drunk and easy female, you’ll be the first one I call.” Not going to happen.

Dave opened the glass doors for them to exit the building. “Excellent.” A few steps away, he stopped and turned back. “Don’t forget, now. We’re meeting at eight.”

Nik waved him off with a nod and turned in the opposite direction. He expertly dodged the evening crowd, making his way to the subway and the long ride home. Once there, he stripped, got a cold beer, and relaxed on the couch. His day had been long, but the night was going to be even longer. Already he could feel the need, the drive, humming in his blood. It was a siren’s call, but one he would never answer. Not for the past thirty years, and certainly not now. He couldn’t afford too, not with his mixed heritage. The consequences were just too great.

So he would stay locked in his apartment, try to drink himself silly, and jack off when the need arose. Thankfully, he didn’t have to worry about shifting during a blue moon. The drive to find a mate overrode that need. A drive he was not about to answer. It was the best he could do during a blue moon.

Actually, it was all he could do to dull his senses enough to stay put. Otherwise, he would be scouring the city for his destined mate, and that was not an option. He had seen first hand what the penalty was of such a pairing, and he wanted nothing to do with it. His life was fine just the way it was. Yes, it got a little lonely sometimes, but that was what bars were for. And since he liked both male and female partners, well, it just gave him more choices than most had.

Finding a mate was not a choice. It was a death sentence.

* * * * *

Every year for the past ten years, Devon had gone out with his best friends Kane Solomon and Ryan St. John to celebrate their blue moon mating. That was, when there was a blue moon. Some years had none, leaving the mated pair to celebrate the date instead. Although, with Kane and Ryan, they really didn't need much of an excuse to celebrate. Ten years later and they still acted as if they were newly mated. It was disgusting some days, but that was what being mated did. Devon didn't think he would ever experience that joy.

There was only seventeen hours left. He had yet to find his mate, and the hours were quickly running out.

For the last few years, his instincts had led him to this city, knowing somehow, somewhere, this was where his mate was. Devon had yet to find him or her. And it didn't help that the city was so large. It was as bad as trying to find a needle in a haystack. And this was his last chance.

"So, I heard you set Lexi and Talon on their rears," Kane said conversationally as he and Devon walked a ways down the sidewalk while they waited for Ryan.

He snorted. "They're lucky I didn't give them a formal reprimand in front of the council."

"I had just gotten back when Ryan told me the news, but not all of the details."

Devon nodded. "My sister and her mate have let their cubs' discipline go for far too long," he began. "I had gone over to their place to get the details on yet another complaint. I opened the front door and Reena runs, jumps, shifts in mid-air, and tackles me. She gouged my neck with her claws and nearly broke my leg when we flew out the door and onto the sidewalk. Then the brat shifts back, laughs, and runs off like it was all a big game."

"Damn, Dev, I'd laugh, but your right. Their antics have gone on long enough."

“Yeah, well, I’m afraid I lost my temper after that. Especially when Lexi comes out giggling like a fool, her false concern in asking if I was all right crystal clear.” He sighed and shook his head in disgust at both his sister and himself. “I snapped, Kane. I had her in the air by the throat before I knew what I was doing. Then that hothead Talon comes out, teeth bared and growling.”

“Oh, no,” Kane groaned.

“After I had them both pinned to the ground in their front yard and suitably meek, Reena had the guts to charge me.”

“Jesus!”

“I sent her flying while the other three watched and had the good sense to stay put. Being partially shifted myself by this point, I didn’t think any of them wanted to take on the eight-foot alpha of the family.”

Kane chuckled. “I wouldn’t think so, no.”

“When I had them all together, I laid it out. Lexi and Talon had one month to get the cubs in line, and all are to give the clan and council a formal apology. If not, I’m going to take over the discipline myself.” His voice was harsh, his anger renewed. “Then the second oldest, Jacob, smarted off, earning a cuff to the head.”

“Cubs.” Kane shook his head. “They never listen.”

Stopping abruptly, Devon rounded on Kane. “That’s just my point. Lexi and Talon have let them go so long that they don’t, and won’t, listen. And though we all still see them as cubs, the three oldest are in their late teens. Much too old to be causing such mischief.”

“I agree, Dev, but I have to admit that all of us on the council have been lax as well.” He reached up to rub the back of his neck. “What with your last blue moon coming closer with every passing day, and Tobias taking off again, well, we thought we’d handled things enough to make it easier on you.”

Devon stiffened. “I’ve already handled my little brother to let him know what his obligations are, but dammit, Kane, I’m on the council too. I should have been made more aware of this.”

Kane held up both hands. “I know, but we were worried and wanted to make things easier.”

Devon sighed, pinching the bridge of his nose. "Sorry, but as Alpha of my family and a councilman, it's my duty to make sure every member of my family stays on the straight and narrow. If those cubs had been allowed to continue, who knows what mess they could have caused? Maybe even risking us by exposure to the humans."

"You don't have to tell me about duty, Dev. I've been Alpha of my family almost as long as you have of yours." Then he grinned sheepishly. "Still, we only wanted to help, not make the situation worse."

Devon saw how truly sorry his friend was, and it warmed his heart to know he had such kind, caring friends. Shaking his head and chuckling, he laid a hand on Kane's shoulder. "Fine, but next time, act sooner. It would have saved me a headache." He gave the shoulder a little shake.

Kane brought Devon in for a brotherly hug, then stepped back. "I don't think that you'll be having much of a problem after such a dominant display. You made a suitable example for the whole clan."

He laughed at that. "I'm just glad Mom and Dad weren't around to see it."

"I bet Lexi and Talon are as well." He shared in the amusement. "Your dad would still be chewing them a new one, and your mom would have those cubs bent over the nearest fence, warming their asses."

They laughed harder at that image, remembering their own times at various fences around the clan.

"And just what is so funny?" Ryan asked as he came up behind Kane, wrapping his arms around his mate's waist.

"Just remembering a bit of disciplinary nostalgia, love," Kane said.

Devon watched as Kane melted into Ryan's embrace, happy for his friends, yet envious as well. He shook it off, not wanting to taint their plans for the evening. He could wallow in his lonely self-pity later, when he was alone. And with the way his last blue moon was going, he would be doing a lot more than wallowing. Getting shit-faced would be first on the list.

"My mother was one who gave out punishment like cookies to those of us who needed a good set down," Devon explained when Ryan gave him and Kane a confused look. Being from a different clan, there were still a few things Ryan didn't know.

“And it didn’t matter whose cub either.” Kane’s amusement was still evident in his grin and the slight chuckle underlying his words. “If you got into trouble when she was around, you got bent over the nearest fence and your ass whipped.”

“Sounds like my gran,” Ryan said with a grin. “Man, that woman had an arm.” He rubbed his ass cheek as he obviously remembered the pain.

Kane and Devon laughed, and then they all resumed their walk, Ryan taking Kane’s hand. They talked further about childhood antics and the resulting punishments, swapping stories like baseball cards, each trying to outdo the other. Then Devon caught a smell, a spicy musk that had his mind reeling and his body at instant alert. Stopping short, he closed his eyes and inhaled deeply, needing to take the enticing scent into his lungs.

“Dev, you all right?” Kane asked.

“That scent,” he murmured, once more breathing it in. “So good.”

Ryan caught him by the shoulders as he began to sway, clutching him to keep him steady. “Kane?” Concern laced Ryan’s tone.

“It’s him,” Devon said on a sigh, blinking his eyes open as if he were coming out of a trance. “I’ve finally found him.”

“Him?” Ryan asked, looking from Kane to Devon.

“Are you sure, Dev?” Concern and worry filled Kane’s frown.

Devon’s lips split into a wide grin. “Oh, yes. There’s no mistake.”

Kane threw his head back and laughed with joy, and Ryan gave him a big hug.

“A male, huh?” Ryan asked with a grin.

“A female wouldn’t smell so... I guess you could say, earthy and spicy.” He nodded. “And my instincts are screaming male.” His cat as well, the feline inside him practically purring as Devon continued to inhale the scent.

“Good, you deserve to have the kind of mate you’ve always wanted,” Kane said, then rubbed his hands together. “Now all we have to do is find him.”

“You mean that’s all Devon has to do while we lend moral support,” Ryan corrected.

“Well, yeah, that’s what I meant.”

Watching the byplay between his two friends, Devon had to chuckle. Kane was dark-haired, dark-eyed, had an olive complexion, and was bigger of the two, but it was the fair-haired, green-eyed, pale-skinned Ryan who was the dominant partner in their relationship. The dichotomy of the two never failed to amuse Devon, considering that Kane was the Alpha of his family.

“And since I have the best nose and tracking skills in the clan, as well as the scent, it won’t be a problem to find him,” Devon assured them.

“That’s true.” Kane nodded. “All right then, lead on, Macduff. We’ve got your back.”

Ryan gave Devon’s shoulders an encouraging squeeze, then let go and stepped to stand beside Kane and take his hand once again.

Devon took in his surroundings, the scent strong in front of a tall building with glass front doors. A large bronze plaque to the left proclaimed the office of Walters, Williams, and Wallace Law Firm.

“Wow, a lawyer,” Kane said, clearly impressed.

“Or not,” Ryan countered.

“Doesn’t matter to me.” Devon snorted. “He could be part of the janitorial staff for all I care.” The scent led him out to the middle of the sidewalk, then right.

Thank goodness it was late enough that there wasn’t a lot of foot traffic. Otherwise, sniffing the air like an animal would have gotten quite a few stares. Not that Devon really gave a rat’s ass. He was on the trail of his mate, and there wasn’t anything in the world that would stop him from achieving that goal. Although, when they all got to the subway, he nearly lost the scent, but thankfully, one of the cars opened, sending Devon back on the hunt.

“We lucked out, Dev,” Kane said. “This particular train has only two stops. The station where we got picked up and its end fifteen miles down the track.”

“That’s a relief.” He let out a breath in gratitude. “I hated the thought of having to get off at several stops to sniff around. This makes it a lot easier.”

“Us as well,” Ryan agreed as he looked out a window. “Even as dark as it is, I recognize where we’re going. And my birth clan isn’t that far from here. A group of us older cubs used to sneak into the city from time to time.”

“Well, no wonder you remember your grandmother’s arm,” Kane said around a snicker. “She must have gotten quite a workout with you.”

Ryan bumped Kane’s hip affectionately with a sheepish grin. “I wasn’t that bad, but the times I did get caught, she certainly made sure to make my punishment memorable.”

“I bet,” Kane purred, rubbing a hand over Ryan’s ass.

“All right, you two,” Devon said, breaking up the lovey-dovey crap before his friends could get too involved. “Let’s not get arrested for public indecency when I’m so close to finding my mate.”

“Don’t worry, Dev.” Kane’s grin was carnal and mischievous. “We’re not into the public stuff.”

“I appreciate it,” Devon said dryly. “I consider you both family and would rather not have to bleach my eyeballs.”

“Not sure if I should be insulted or flattered by that comment,” Ryan quipped, his eyes shinning with mirth.

“Makes me wonder as well,” Kane agreed with a deep chuckle as he held Ryan securely in his arms.

Devon shook his head, smiled, and rolled his eyes. But an aura of love and contentment surrounded his friends. Soon, he thought. Soon he would have the love and contentment he always wanted.

When the train finally stopped, the three got off, Devon in the lead, his nose in the air. The scent was strong, leading Devon to the conclusion that his mate was a regular at the station and no doubt lived nearby. That conclusion was proven right when the three came to a well-kept apartment building ten blocks from the station. And as luck would have it, the front door didn’t have to be buzzed open, letting the three enter without any problems into a small lobby.

“The place certainly looks clean enough,” Kane observed as he looked around.

“I’ve seen worse,” Ryan added, he too giving the place a once over.

Devon merely nodded, letting his nose guide him up flights of stairs until he reached the sixth floor, Kane and Ryan being sure to stay a good distance behind so as not to muddle with his tracking.

Reaching the landing, Devon saw that there were two doors to the right and four doors to the left. He sniffed to the right first, getting nothing, then the left, the scent of earthy spice leading him to the last door. There he stopped, eyes closed with gratitude and joy, his heart nearly beating out of his chest with excitement. He felt the happiness from his cat as well. And relief. The search was over.

He opened his eyes when Kane spoke.

“I can see from the look on your face that you’ve got the right one.” His voice was soft, and he held Ryan’s back to his front in a loving embrace.

“Yes,” was all Devon could say.

Ryan stepped away from Kane to give Devon a hug. “I’m so happy for you.”

“Thanks.” He returned the hug, then got one from Kane.

“You deserve this, Dev.” He pulled back to give Devon’s shoulder’s a last squeeze, then took Ryan’s hand. “We’ll leave you to it then. But call us later and let us know everything.” He winked and let Ryan lead him away.

“Have fun,” Ryan called as they walked down the stairs.

After hearing his friends leave the building, Devon took a deep breath, not really sure what he was going to say to the man that lived behind the door.

“Damn.” He sighed. How the hell was he going to tell a complete stranger that he was his mate without sounding like a complete nut job?

Shaking his head, he simply screwed up his courage and knocked. He would figure it out as he went. After all, his mate was Panthus, one sniff would be all his mate needed to know what was going on.

* * * * *

After several more beers and an unsatisfying masturbation session, Nik wasn’t feeling quite as mellow as he wanted. It wasn’t for lack of

trying. It seemed that the older he got, the more intense the blue moon became. The last five, especially. Even his cat had begun to get antsy. Not good considering the precarious control he had during full moons when he had to shift. If his cat started to get out of control during future blue moons, it could be a problem he didn't need. So maybe it was just time to move on. He had moved here, one of a dozen cities he had lived in over the years, to be one of many in the crowd. And to keep away from any of his kind or a potential mate. It had worked so far, and would continue to as long as he didn't stay in one place too long.

Maybe it was time to find a new place. He sighed in the quiet room.

He had stayed here longer than he usually did, so maybe it was his instincts telling him that it was time to leave. He trusted his instincts.

Nodding, Nik decided that he would start searching for another place in the next few days. Maybe somewhere near the coast. He always did like the beach. A smile curved his lips at the thought as he got up to put his empty bottle in the trash.

Someone knocked on the door.

Looking at the clock in the kitchen, he frowned. It was almost ten-thirty. Not many knew where he lived. Even Dave had only been by once, though Nik knew it wasn't Dave. He had just spoken to Dave over an hour ago, disappointed that Nik wasn't coming, but not so disappointed that he would leave the bar just to come by.

Getting his blue robe from the bedroom, he went to the door and looked out the peephole when another knock sounded. He didn't recognize the dark-haired stranger.

"What do you want?" he demanded, continuing to watch the guy through the peephole.

"I'm sorry to disturb you so late in the evening, but could I have a moment of your time?"

The man's deep, velvet voice washed over Nik, sending delicious tingles straight to his balls. He shook it off though. Now just wasn't the time to be having this kind of reaction to a strange human. Especially during a blue moon. His sex drive was already high, but it increased with the blue moon. The human outside his door wouldn't be able to take him in the state he was in at present.

“Whatever you’re selling, I’m not buying,” he said, still watching the man.

“I’m not selling anything, I assure you. But it is important that I talk to you.”

That voice washed over Nik again, sending his heart pounding and his dick rising, it even had his cat taking notice. It kind of pissed him off. The one time that he really needed to get laid and he couldn’t risk it because the guy was human. They were fragile creatures, so he had to be careful with them even when it was just a regular need. His need during a blue moon was just too much for a mere human to handle. No matter how big and strong the stranger outside his door looked, Nik could easily hurt him. And since his cat was just as interested, well, it was best to send this stranger on his way.

“Look, it’s late, and I’m not interested,” he snapped. “Go back to wherever you came from.”

“I don’t think my clan would appreciate it if I go back empty-handed.” The guy chuckled.

The mention of clan got Nik’s attention, his eye narrowing with suspicion. “You’re Clan?”

“This hallway isn’t the most appropriate place to be holding such a discussion.”

He watched the man look around, then lean in close to the door and whisper, apparently knowing that Nik would have no problem hearing him.

“Especially with so many human ears around.”

Nik jerked back, his suspicions confirmed. Only a pure blood Panthus would say human with such a condescending tone. But the man was right; the hallway was no place to discuss their mutual heritage.

“Dammit,” he growled, unlocking the door and jerking it open.

The stranger’s scent hit him like a freight train, literally snapping his body to attention. He closed his eyes and inhaled deeply with a low and ragged groan, his cat writhing and mewling inside.

“So beautiful.” A warm hand caressed his face with reverence.

Nik jerked back, his eyes popping open with panic. “No, this can’t be happening.” He backed away, shaking his head in denial, even though his cat was screaming for the stranger.

The man entered, closing and locking the door behind him, then leaning on it with a seemingly casual pose. Nik wasn’t fooled; he could see the tension, smell the lust boiling off the man’s skin. It set his heart to pounding and his body to tighten with painful need.

“You can’t be the one.” Nik’s legs hit the couch, and he came down hard, his breath whooshing out.

“Of course, I am.” The man’s chuckle was dark and dangerous as he walked into the room and better lighting. “Mate.”

Nik gasped at that and how unbelievably gorgeous the man was, standing at least a half head taller than Nik. The dim lighting in the hall had hidden the glossiness of his jet hair, the smooth tan of his skin, how the tight, black leather pants and red silk shirt emphasized a muscular yet lean body. And his eyes. Such mesmerizing eyes. They glowed with topaz fire the longer Nik gazed into them, a range of emotions passing through them. Lust, need, happiness, wonderment. His cat purred with satisfaction.

All Nik felt was fear. The fear of being consumed, of ending just like his mother. But what scared him most was that there was nothing he could do about it now. They had each other’s scents, making the mating instinct that much harder to resist. And resistance was futile.

* * * * *

Never had Devon seen such a beautiful and well-built male. And his coloring was exquisite. Redheads were extremely rare, his skin a smooth, pale cream. Cats loved cream. He could feel his own cat’s happy reaction to that thought. He smiled, continuing to look his fill.

The male was shorter than Devon’s six-foot-three inch height, maybe five-ten or so. Not that Devon cared. That just meant he would fit better in Devon’s arms. Even sitting as he was, Devon could see firm muscle peeking through the thick blue robe, the broad shoulders and lean waist, the impressive erection the robe could never hope to cover. The

thought of all the delicious possibilities for that body and erection made Devon's mouth water. But as he looked into eyes the color of the finest jade, those thoughts came to an abrupt halt.

It was fear he saw. Yes, there was desire, lust, need, but it was the fear that made Devon pause, made him take a step back until he, too, was sitting. The comfy chair he chose kept the distance casual, yet he could still touch if he so desired. That would come later, though, after he learned the cause of his mate's fear.

"Why are you afraid of me?"

His mate drew his legs up and wrapped his arms around them. "It's not an easy story to tell."

Devon nodded. "I didn't think it would be."

"My mother was human. Not a very common occurrence from the little I've been told." A half smile touched his red lips, though without humor.

"No, not all that common. Only about one in a thousand mated pairs." Devon's mind raced with questions, but he refrained from asking them, letting his mate continue. They had time.

"My father was, well, he was a distant man, not overly emotional or affectionate. But he loved us, in as much as he was capable." Devon watched those remarkable jade eyes go distant. His jaw clenched with remembered pain. "On his way home from work, a big rig jack-knifed, throwing the trailer on his car. He was crushed under the weight and killed instantly."

"Christ," Devon softly exclaimed.

The Panthus were a hard lot to kill, but there were ways.

"My mother knew the moment he died." His voice was husky with emotion. "She slit her wrists that night, unable to live without him."

Devon let out a deeply saddened sigh, knowing that saying he was sorry would be woefully inadequate. "How old were you?"

"I had graduated from college the previous year, so at least I was an adult."

Devon nodded in consolation, small though it was.

"The day I buried them both, I made a promise to myself." He looked at Devon head on, eyes blazing jade fire. "That I would never have

a mate. Never put myself in a position where I needed another for my own wellbeing, dependant on that person for my happiness, only to have it ripped away in a heartbeat. And I had thought I'd done a good job of keeping that promise. Never staying in one place more than a few years, constantly making sure I lived and worked in well-populated cities.

“Until you knocked on my door.”

Not about to feel guilty, Devon returned his stare, raising a brow. “I hope you don't expect an apology. I've been searching for my mate for more years than you've been alive. And while being half human is a surprise, it's not enough to scare me off or send me packing.”

His mate sighed, shoulders slumping in defeat. “No, I didn't think it would, but I had hoped that my explanation would be enough to make you understand why I don't want a mate.”

Devon relaxed, smiling gently. “I do understand, but your fears are unfounded.”

“But...”

“Now, it's time for you to listen.” He held up a hand then frowned. “I have totally forgotten my manners. I'm Devon, Devon Saunders.” He rose smoothly from the chair and held out his hand.

“Nikolas Zannig.” He shook Devon's hand without getting up.

Devon blinked, not sure he heard the name right. “Zannig?” His mate nodded. “You wouldn't happen to know a Jackson Zannig by any chance?”

“My father's name was Jackson. Why?”

“Good God.” He sat down heavily, his mind spinning. “Jackson's son.” He looked hard at his mate, seeing his old friend in the young male before him. His dead friend. That thought brought a pang to Devon's heart. He hadn't heard that Jackson had been killed. Although, now that he thought about it, it wasn't all that surprising. Jackson's infrequent calls had dropped down to none over the course of his long absence. Between having a family and his death, it explained much. Devon just hoped he was at peace now.

He and Jackson grew up together and had been as close as Jackson would allow anyone, considering his past. A past Devon was sure Nikolas had no clue about. Not many in the Clan knew the facts. It wasn't exactly

the kind of topic one brought up in polite or everyday conversation. But it was something Devon was going to have to share with Nikolas. His mate seemed to have a few misconceptions about what being mated was all about. Although, having Jackson for a father, Devon could see why.

“You knew my father?” The question seemed casual enough, but Devon heard the painful curiosity.

“Since we were young cubs.” His smile sad but sincere.

Nikolas nodded.

Seeing the jade eyes full of unanswered questions, Devon plowed ahead. “Look, you have to know that how your father was had nothing to do with being mated.”

Nikolas snorted with derision. “I somehow doubt that.”

Devon ignored the remark, knowing where it came from. “If you’re willing to listen, I’ll tell you what only a handful in the clan have been allowed to know.”

He shrugged his shoulders with seeming indifference.

“How did you put it earlier? This isn’t an easy story to tell?”

“They never are.”

Devon took a deep, calming breath. “Jackson lived in a neighboring clan several states away. His father and mine had been best friends, so we knew each other well. He was such a happy cub back then, quick to laugh, always had a smile on his face. He was the cub everyone wanted to be around, his charisma drawing others to him like bees to honey.” His heart nearly broke at the memory. “Unfortunately, a rival clan had been making trouble, complaining about hunting rights and so on. Since my Clan is the seat of the ruling council for the entire eastern seaboard, my father was called in as head of the council to deal with the problem. And he had thought he had.”

“But he didn’t?”

“No.” Devon frowned. “Confident that my father had though, Jackson’s parents decided it was time to teach him to hunt bigger game.” He paused, the memory of the day that Jackson was brought to them vivid in his mind. “They were attacked by six members of the rival clan. Jackson’s parents were torn apart right before his eyes. He barely escaped with his life.”

Nikolas gasped. “The jagged scar on his neck.”

“That one wasn’t even the worst.” He grimaced, not about to go into detail. “He was found by several older cubs near our border who’d been doing some hunting of their own. It was touch and go for several days.”

“My God.” The explicative was soft but heart wrenching. “How old was he?”

“Ten.”

Nikolas got up and went to the kitchen. He splayed his arms over the sink, head down and back to Devon. “Why? Why did he never tell us?”

“He couldn’t, Nikolas.” Devon sighed. “For nearly four years after the attack, he didn’t speak at all, and then when he did finally start talking again, it was one or two word sentences.” He turned in the chair. “He was traumatized, Nikolas. Even in adulthood, the memories were too much, the nightmares devastating. And no amount of help we got him worked.”

Turning back around, Nikolas took a deep breath then went back to take his seat on the couch. “Looking back, this explains a lot about my father’s lack of training and closeness.”

“Training?”

Nikolas gave a wan smile. “He thought since I was half human, I would be better off not knowing too much about my heritage or my limited abilities.” A frown marred his beautiful face. “Even after I shifted for the first time, he still refused to tell me everything, and he gave me the excuse that ignorance is bliss.”

“Jackson, you fool,” Devon whispered.

“My mother had even tried to talk him into joining the local clan after my first shift, but he adamantly refused.”

Fool indeed, he thought. “How did your mother take your first shift?”

“Shocked at first.” A small smile played on his full lips. “But not scared, just surprised. Then proud.”

“That’s good.” Devon nodded. “Most human parents seem to act and treat their children differently when and after they shift a couple body parts for the first time.”

“Body parts?”

“Sorry.” He smiled sheepishly. “Hope that wasn’t offensive. It’s hard to put into terms when a half like you shifts like that. Unless it’s a partial shift,” he amended. “What limbs can you shift?”

Nikolas blinked with confusion. “Limbs?”

“Yes. Arms, legs, hands?”

“All.”

Devon smiled with pride. “Wow, that’s impressive.”

“No, I mean all as in my whole body.”

It was Devon’s turn to blink with confusion.

“I’ve been able to since I was about six or seven. But only when it’s a full moon,” he explained. “And I’ve only in the last few years been able to control it somewhat.”

“Wait.” He held up a hand. “Let me get this straight. You can maintain a full shift, but only during a full moon?”

“Yeah. Why?” His eyes narrow with suspicion. “Can’t the other halves do it?”

“No, they can’t.” He looked at his mate with shocked awe. “Nor has there ever been an account of one either.”

“Surly you’re mistaken?”

Devon shook his head. “Most halves can’t even maintain a partial shift because their human side is too scared of their cat, so they repress that side of themselves and try to lock it away. But you can’t lock away all that you are, and some of the cat gets out. Hence the partial and few limbs shifting.”

“But isn’t that dangerous?” His brows furrowed and eyes widened with the question. “One of the few things my father did tell me was that denying your cat could cause serious problems. And though it’s been hard, and I haven’t fully accepted that side of my nature, I haven’t locked it away either.”

Devon sat back, truly in awe of his mate. “It is true that it’s dangerous and why, I’m sad to say, that most halves don’t live all that long. Their human side just can’t accept their cat and they, well, it’s not a pleasant sight.” He grimaced with the memory of the last half he witnessed dying in such a way. “It’s good that you haven’t denied that

part of yourself, but if you want to have complete control, then acceptance is the only way you're going to achieve it. Otherwise, your cat is going to keep taking charge when you shift."

Nikolas nodded thoughtfully. "I know, but it hasn't been easy. Especially with no one to guide me and tell me what I need to know. And to be honest, I feel like if I do accept the cat, he will take over and I'll lose myself completely."

"That's just your human fears." Devon chuckled softly. "When you accept your cat, you become one being, able to use your cat's abilities and still be you."

"So I won't feel like a passenger the way I do now?"

Devon gave him a gentle smile. "No. Once you accept your cat, you and he will share, I guess you could say, a symbiotic relationship. Able to use each other's abilities in either form. And to be honest with you, it could also mean shifting without the full moon. You're strong and your ability is unprecedented, so it could be a possibility. Although, don't think that's written in stone," he added hastily. "Like I said, no half has ever been able to shift fully, so we'll just have to wait and see."

Nikolas nodded, eyes thoughtful. "I'll think about it."

"Good." Devon grinned. "Considering how powerful an Alpha your father was, I guess I shouldn't be surprised."

"My father was an Alpha? I thought only wolves held that distinction."

"No." Devon laughed. "In all species there are leaders. Those more powerful, stronger. Alphas, if you will. With the Panthus, we don't form packs or have that kind of mentality because of our cat nature, nor do we have a pride mentality because we are a different kind of cat, but we do have family units that live in large clans. Each family has a leader, an Alpha that is in charge. If your grandparents hadn't been killed, then your father would have taken over as Alpha of his family."

"But how can you tell who is an Alpha and who isn't?"

"By how early we shift." Glad that his mate wanted to learn more about his heritage, he went on without hesitation. "The earlier the shift, the stronger and more powerful the Panthus, resulting in a natural-born Alpha."

“When did my father shift?”

“A few hours after his birth.”

“What?” Nikolas’ eyes widened with shock.

Devon laughed at Nikolas’ expression. “Trust me; your grandparents were beside themselves with joy.”

“I’ll take your word for it.” He gave Devon a wan smile. “Are you an Alpha?”

“Yes, I shifted at the tender age of six months, securing my position and a seat on the council after my father would have stepped down.”

A red brow rose at that. “Would have?”

“My parents were killed in a plane crash on their way to the Summoning, a yearly meeting for all council members across the globe.”

“I’m sorry to hear that.” His tone conveyed his sympathy.

Devon nodded. “Like you, I was an adult. Not that it helped.”

“No, it doesn’t help.”

They both lapsed into companionable silence, each lost in their own thoughts. Until Nikolas’ stomach rumbled.

His cheeks flushed rose. “Sorry ’bout that. I haven’t eaten yet.”

Devon checked his watch and noted the time with a little dismay. “No wonder. It’s after midnight. If you want to fix something or order out, that’s fine with me. Or I could cook for you.”

That got Nikolas’ attention. “You can cook?”

“Oh, yeah.” He grinned. “Mom made sure my brother, sister, and I learned for when we got out on our own and if we were lucky enough to find our mates.”

“Huh.” He got up and went to the small kitchen, Devon close behind, and opened the fridge. “As you can see, it’s not much, but I can fix the basics.”

Devon looked over his mate’s shoulder, the spicy earth scent filling his head and other parts of his anatomy, but he controlled himself, and his cat, knowing Nikolas wasn’t ready yet. “Well, I see more than enough for an early breakfast.” He was almost close enough to nibble an ear lobe.

“Yeah, sounds good.” The reply was breathy, the pulse in his neck speeding up.

Pulling back, Devon moved to the center of the kitchen, not wanting to push and not wanting to tempt himself further. "I'll leave it to you to get everything since this is your kitchen and you know where everything is."

Nikolas let out a shaky breath, his jade eyes dilated and robe not nearly big enough to hide the erection tenting its front, but he nodded, cheeks flushed, as he pulled out what they needed.

As he prepared their meal, Devon continued to tell Nikolas more about the Panthus, answering questions and explaining in detail what Jackson had failed and downright refused to tell his son. And Nikolas absorbed the information like a parched dessert getting its first rain. Even after the meal and clean up, the questions seemed never ending, but eventually they did end, leaving both men better acquainted and slightly more comfortable with each other.

"What happens now?"

Devon could see Nikolas' nervousness at the question, and he could also smell his arousal. Devon would never tire of a scent.

"What do you want to happen now?"

"I...I'm not sure."

Devon could see it wasn't a total lie, but not the whole truth either. Nikolas' indecision was written all over his face.

"Understandable." His chuckle was husky with need. "So how about we make this simple. Do you want me?"

Those jade eyes darkened as he whispered, "Yes."

"Good, because I've been craving a taste of you all night, and I don't think I can wait much longer." He patted his lap. "Come here."

Nikolas stood and took the two steps that put him in front of Devon, trembling fingers reaching for the lapels of his robe.

"No, leave it."

Confusion flashed in those dark green depths.

"I've been getting sneak peeks all night, so it's only fair I do the unwrapping."

"All right." He nodded as he gathered the robe around his legs, then slowly climbed onto Devon's lap, a knee on each side of Devon's thighs and nearly groin to groin.

“Oh, God,” Devon moaned as Nikolas sank down fully on his lap. Nikolas gave an answering groan that made Devon’s cock jump in the tight confines of his leather pants, his feline writhing inside with joy. The rightness of Nikolas in his arms was worth all the years Devon had searched.

Once Nikolas was situated amid much groaning and panting, Devon reached up and slowly pushed the robe from Nikolas’ creamy shoulders, revealing a well-defined, hairless chest and ribbed abs.

“So beautiful.” The tips of his fingers ghosted over satiny skin and brown nipples, causing Nikolas to shiver and gasp. The response had Devon’s rock-hard shaft twitching. “You don’t know how many years, how many decades, I’ve waited to do this. To have my mate in my arms.” His touch had become firmer, tracing the smooth muscles between shoulder and neck until his fingers were sifting through hair the color of flame and soft as silk.

“Devon.” Nikolas was able to get that much out before Devon pulled him forward and took his ruby-red lips in a demanding kiss, his tongue thrusting deep.

The taste of Nikolas exploded throughout Devon’s senses, causing his body, and the one in his arms, to jerk in response the more he tasted, the more he explored, his tongue lapping at everything it could reach. His cat purred hungrily in response.

When he was finally able to pull back, Devon saw that Nikolas’ eyes had turned nearly black with need, his lips swollen from Devon’s kisses, cheeks flushed, and breathing rapid. He was the most beautiful creature Devon had ever seen in his life.

Devon continued his exploration of Nikolas. He traced path after path with fingers, lips, and tongue until Nikolas trembled and gasped in his arms. It was such a wonderful reaction, seeing how sensitive his mate was. How responsive he was to Devon’s ministrations.

“Devon, please...” The groan tore from Nikolas’ lips as Devon suckled his tasty brown nipples. Nikolas speared his fingers through Devon’s hair. “I...I need.”

They both needed, Devon thought with a groan, Nikolas' erection still partially covered but large and hard enough to poke Devon in the stomach. It was feeling that hardness that decided Devon.

"I know, baby, but if I take you now, I won't be able to hold back, and I don't want to hurt you." His cat didn't agree with that, but after so long of a wait, Devon's control, and that of his cat, was thin. Taking Nikolas now would definitely snap that control, and he wasn't about to hurt his mate. Not now, not ever.

Nikolas laid his head on Devon's shoulder with a small whimper. "Please...please," he whispered.

Devon moaned at the sound of that whimper. It was that sound and others Nikolas made that were the main reason Devon was so worked up. Having Nikolas in his lap with the mother of all hard-ons was difficult enough, but to hear such sweet responses to his ministrations, well, he was close to the edge. But he had a solution.

"It's all right, baby." He rubbed Nikolas' smooth back, his lips leaving teasing kisses to the side of Nikolas' neck. "How 'bout we take the edge off before the main course?"

"Yes." The moan was deep and heartfelt.

If his balls hadn't ached so badly with the need to come, Devon would have chuckled at Nikolas' response. As it was, he pushed Nikolas up and away a bit, removing the robe and letting it slither to the floor in a heap. What it revealed, finally, was the object of Devon's lust-filled thoughts.

"Exquisite," he said on a breath as he gazed at the painfully hard cock before him. It was long and thick, the shaft ivory with a tint of rose, the mushroom shaped head a shade darker. Devon wanted so badly to taste it, to lap the pearls of pre-cum leaking from the slit. His cat wanted to rub it all over, marking himself with the scent, and in turn do the same to Nikolas, but that would have to wait for later. For now, he would have to satisfy himself and his cat with touch.

Wasting no time, Devon took that rose-tinted ivory column in his hand and began a slow stroking, using the drops leaking from the tip as lube.

“Oh, God,” Came Nikolas’ choked response, his hands gripping the chair arms as Devon continued to pump and stroke.

When Nikolas’ whimpering and moaning increased, and his body began to shudder, hips pumping against Devon’s hand, he knew Nikolas was close.

“That’s it, baby. Fuck my hand.”

The command made Nikolas snap his hips faster and closer to Devon’s own erection, each push forward of Nikolas’ hips caused his cock and Devon’s hand to rub and grind against Devon’s leather-covered hardness.

“Devon, oh, God, gonna...gonna...”

Nikolas came with a shout, hips pistoning into Devon’s hand as the smell of spunk filled the air, its hot wetness coating Devon’s hand. Senses reeling at his mate’s release, Devon stiffened, his own cry of completion echoing in the room.

Spent, Nikolas collapsed against Devon’s chest, his breathing ragged and heartbeat rapid. “Good God.”

“Mmm.” It was the only response Devon could give until his brain come back on-line.

Nearly recovered, Devon felt Nikolas move, his body turning to leave Devon’s lap.

“No, not yet.” He stopped Nikolas with a hand on his hip. “Just a little while longer.”

“But your hand is quite full.” He chuckled.

“It’ll keep.”

Nikolas shook his head, maneuvering enough to grab his robe and using it to clean the mess in Devon’s hand.

“You didn’t have to do that.”

After giving Devon’s fingers a last swipe, he threw the robe back to the floor. “Only fair, since it was mine.” He winked.

Devon snorted as he pulled Nikolas back into his arms, settling Nikolas comfortably, his head returning on Devon’s chest. He sighed with contentment, letting his hands rub soft circles on Nikolas’ warm, smooth and muscular back.

“I’m sorry.”

The statement startled Devon. "For what?"

"For not wanting this with you. For letting my fears rule."

His arms briefly tightened a bit around Nikolas. "There's nothing to be sorry for, baby. You didn't know." He touched his lips gently to Nikolas' forehead.

"But..."

"No buts," Devon admonished. "You know differently now, and that's all that matters."

There was a slight pause, and then Nikolas sighed. "All right."

Satisfied that Nikolas understood, Devon continued to hold his mate close, enjoying the lean, muscular build, the warm, soft skin, the heady scent of spicy earth. Never in his wildest dreams had Devon imagined his mate being so beautiful and well built. And he fit so perfectly in Devon's arms, as if he were made to be there. His cat certainly agreed. A feeling of smugness and pride made Devon smile.

"I never took you for a snuggler." Devon felt the grin against his collarbone.

He chuckled. "I'm not usually, no. But you're a special case," He said, his voice low as his fingers traced the knobby bones of Nikolas' spine. "How 'bout you?"

"One-night stands and brief encounters aren't really conducive to snuggling," he replied with seeming nonchalance, but Devon could hear the pain and loneliness quite clearly.

"Damn, baby. I didn't mean to bring up bad memories." He leaned down and placed a gentle kiss on Nikolas' still kiss-swollen lips in apology. He got a wan smile in return.

"Not bad memories precisely, but it hasn't been easy being with a human. Even though I'm only half, I'm still much stronger than they are. Keeping that in check has meant holding back. A lot. Not very satisfying." He sighed. "These last couple years I pretty much just gave up. It was more satisfying to take care of it myself. Safer too."

"Oh, baby." His heart heavy at what his mate had suffered, he held Nikolas close. "You never have to hold back with me." He placed a finger under Nikolas' chin and tipped his head up. "And your satisfaction will always be my pleasure." Those soft, swollen lips a temptation he couldn't

and didn't resist, he plunged his tongue deep, needing to taste and reassure his mate.

Devon felt strong arms wrap around his neck as Nikolas surrendered to his kiss, his breathy whimpers and warm, naked body rubbing so sensually against Devon's still clothed one went straight to Devon's balls. Unfortunately, the wet confines of his leather pants weren't a comfortable place for his rapidly growing erection.

He pulled back with reluctance. "Sorry, baby, but I really need to get out of these wet leathers and clean up."

"Shit! Sorry." He nimbly hopped off Devon's lap, holding out a hand and helping Devon to his feet.

Devon grimaced at the feel, which was worse now that he was standing. It was not a feeling he had fond memories of, considering he hadn't cum in his pants since he was an adolescent, hormone-driven cub.

"Nothing worse than a crotch full." Nikolas snickered as he took Devon's hand and led him to the bathroom.

Devon pulled Nikolas back at the threshold, holding his back to Devon's front. "I'll find a much better place for it soon," he purred, nibbling on an exposed ear and neck.

"God..." Nikolas shivered in his arms.

Chuckling, Devon gave his mate a slight push into the bathroom and toward the shower. "Wash first, play later." He stepped away to get out of his clothes, hearing a deep groan from Nikolas as he started the shower.

Shaking his head, Devon knew his mate was just as impatient as he was, but Devon also knew that the wait would make their coming together all the sweeter.

He stripped off his shirt first, letting the red silk puddle on the floor, and then he bent over with a grimace to unlace his boots and place them beside the shirt. The pants, thankfully, came next. One look at the mess in his crotch, and he knew the leather was ruined. But it was so worth it, he thought as he laid them over the shirt and boots. When he looked up to see if Nikolas was ready, he found a smoky jade gaze roaming intimately over his naked body, a pink tongue moistening plump

red lips, and a tower of rose-tinted ivory standing at attention, ready to play. The sight would be seared into Devon's memory forever.

"You are the most gorgeous man I have ever seen in my life." Nikolas' voice was raspy with arousal.

Devon's cheeks heated at the unabashed praise, but he was pleased that his mate liked what he saw. And Devon definitely liked what he saw; his sticky erection was proof positive of that.

A few steps brought him to Nikolas, and he was unable and unwilling to stop himself from touching all that creamy skin. "C'mon, before I lose what little restraint I have left."

Nikolas went first, his bubble-shaped ass making Devon's cock twitch as he followed, closing the stall door behind them. Steam surrounded them, the feel of warm spray welcome.

"Damn, that feels good." Devon groaned as he stood beside Nikolas under the warm water.

"Turn around, and I'll wash your back."

Not about to refuse such an offer, Devon turned, the feel of slick hands on his skin heavenly. "Mmm," he murmured, releasing a deep sigh.

Letting Nikolas explore his back, then front, had Devon to near explosion. Those hands and fingers traced bold paths, creating a delicious ache in Devon's balls. But the shower was not where he wanted to take his mate for the first time. He needed to speed things along before he lost what little sanity he still possessed. So, taking the soap from Nikolas, he thoroughly washed his mate, interspersing it with kisses and gentle nips. By the time they were clean and dry, both were at their limit.

"Devon." The name came out in a rush as Devon picked his mate up, Nikolas' legs wrapping around his waist as Devon walked quickly to Nikolas' bedroom where a king-size bed awaited them.

They came down in a tangle of arms and legs, Devon on top, taking Nikolas' mouth in a drugging kiss.

"Mmm." The whimper caused Devon to growl low in his throat and grind their hard shafts together. His cat definitely liked that sound as well; it was the sound of surrender.

“You feel so good, baby.” He sipped and licked at creamy soft skin, working his way down until he was at that rose tinted erection, his mouth watering for a taste.

Without warning, taste he did, swallowing the entire shaft down his throat.

“Devon!” Nikolas’ back arched with the sudden assault.

Devon moaned at the uninhibited response, loving how expressive his mate was, the sounds coming from his throat driving Devon wild as he continued to lav attention to Nikolas’ hard cock. He traced his tongue around the underside of the head, found a vein, and followed it down to Nikolas’ balls, where he took the two tight orbs in his mouth, suckling gently. Nikolas’ sharp cry was music to Devon’s ears, but he wanted more of that hard shaft on his tongue. He moved back up to take the tip back in his mouth, his tongue swirling around the head, and the taste of pre-cum finally pushed his senses into overload, and he could take no more.

“Lube?” The question came out like a growl, deep and raspy.

“Uh...nightstand drawer.”

Devon got it and squeezed a good amount on two fingers. He then moved up Nikolas’ body until he reached tempting, kiss-swollen lips. He then devoured them, pushing one, then two fingers into Nikolas’ tight heat. Nikolas moaned, pushing down and grinding on Devon’s fingers until a whimpering cry left his throat when Devon rubbed enticingly across his prostate.

“Devon... Devon, please.”

That was all it took. He needed to be inside his mate more than he needed his next breath. Devon lubed his throbbing cock, wrapped Nikolas’ legs around his waist, and slowly entered his mate, stopping enough to let the head push through the tight ring of muscle. They were both panting heavily and groaning by the time Devon was finally seated all the way to the balls.

He had to stop for a moment to do two things. One, get a breath before he lost his mind and came, and two, he had to know if Nikolas accepted this mating and in turn, Devon. If he did, then Devon would continue until they were both spent. If not, well, Devon would have to stop and wait until his mate was ready. Although, with the way Nikolas

whimpered and squirmed beneath him, Devon didn't think stopping would be an option. But he still had to ask. It was needed to start the bonding process.

"Look at me, Nikolas."

"God, Devon, please. Please take me."

"I know, baby." And did he ever. "But I need to know if you will accept this mating, accept yourself, and be by my side always."

Those smoky jade eyes blinked, the glaze of passion lifting a little. "Devon?"

"Please, baby. I have to know before we can continue." He looked at that beloved face, silently pleading that Nikolas would say yes.

For a moment, they stared at each other, their bodies beginning to tremble with need, sweat beading on straining muscles. Then Nikolas smiled, the joy on his flushed face blinding.

"You are my mate, and I accept all that entails."

Devon's heart swelled with happiness, his lips crashing down on Nikolas' as he began a slow in and out glide, his hips steady at first, wanting to prolong the pleasure of being one with his mate, but soon enough, they both needed more.

"Oh, God, Devon...harder, please...harder."

Control snapping, he gave Nikolas what he wanted, his hips slamming into Nikolas' ass, getting the angle right and hitting Nikolas' prostate with every in and out slide.

"Devon, Devon...gonna...I'm gonna." Then he screamed, thick ropes of cream shooting onto his stomach, chest, and even his chin. The sight, smell, and feel of his mate coming sent Devon following, his own hoarse shout bouncing off the bedroom walls.

Totally spent, Devon nearly collapsed, catching himself as he made to move and pull out. Nikolas stopped him.

"Please stay. I want to feel you inside me for just a little while longer."

"As long as you want, baby," he said with a smile, not about to turn down such a request.

Devon kissed Nikolas' lips tenderly yet thoroughly, snuggling close and keeping his weight on elbows and forearms. Ending the kiss, he

trailed his lips down Nikolas' chin and neck, more than content to lay his head on his mate's shoulder.

It was the body shuddering under him and the scent of tears that let Devon know that something was wrong. He pulled back to see fat drops sliding down creamy cheeks.

"Aw, baby, what's wrong?"

"Don't leave me, please. Please, Devon, I...I don't want to be alone anymore."

Those tears fell harder as Nikolas wrapped his arms tighter around Devon, holding on to him for dear life.

"I'll never leave you, baby. Never," he swore, nearly brought to tears himself, murmuring words of comfort to Nikolas as he fell apart in Devon's arms.

Once Nikolas quieted and the tears stopped, Devon got up and went to the bathroom. He returned with a wet, warm washcloth, wiped away Nikolas tears, and then cleaned the evidence of their mating. After giving himself a quick wash, he tossed the cloth into the bathroom. He then put Nikolas to bed, climbing in beside him and covering them both with the comforter.

"Sleep, baby." He pulled Nikolas close, his back to Devon's front. "You're exhausted."

"I'm afraid if I close my eyes, you'll disappear," Nikolas said, his voice sounding small and afraid.

Devon's arms tightened. "Never, baby. We're bonded mates now," he said, already beginning to feel the mating mark, six rows of claw-like, red lines, three on each side, forming at the top of his pelvis and ending at the top of his groin. "From this day forward, you are mine, and I am yours." He touched Nikolas' shoulder with his lips. "And when you wake up, I'll show you the proof of that. The proof that we'll be together forever." Nikolas would have a mating mark to match his own in exactly the same place.

"Promise?"

"With all that I am," he vowed.

That seemed to be what Nikolas needed to hear, because he let out a deep breath and relaxed in Devon's arms.

In moments, Devon could hear his mate's even breathing, his warm body at ease in slumber. Devon closed his eyes, Nikolas' scent surrounding him as a few tears of his own fell.

"Neither of us will ever be alone again, baby." And with that promise in his heart, Devon, too, succumbed to sleep, his cat sated, and secure in the knowledge that his once in a blue moon had finally happened, had finally given him the mate he'd always been dreaming of. A smile curved his lips as he pulled his mate closer, both letting out sighs of contentment as they settled deeper into slumber.

The End

Author Bio

After picking up *Desert Captive* by Penelope Neri at the tender age of thirteen, Kimberly was hooked on romance. Then getting her first erotica novel from her younger sister many years later sealed her fate. Romance and intense lovemaking all in one book, oh yeah! That was just the catalyst she needed to start writing her wildest fantasies. And now, years later, she has three books out with three more completed and ready to go. They are, of course, erotica in the romance genre of paranormal, contemporary, futuristic, and male/male. She is also working on several more with lots of ideas and a writer's worst enemy, time to get them done in.

To learn more about Kimberly and her works, go to: www.kimmipoo38.webs.com for updates, excerpts, and more.