



Werewolf on Somana Two

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Chapter One

She stood watching him sprawled across the rollaway bed in her makeshift clinic, with his bulky, muscled body taking up every available inch of the small contraption. He had dozed off for a moment, and she couldn't resist the urge to run her fingers along the contours of his broad chest, down to that narrow trail of hair just above and below his navel. A pulse of mind-numbing need sprang to life inside her, and she told herself to stop, but her fingers would not obey the halfhearted command her brain sent out to them.

With her fingers hovering at the waistband of his pants, she paused when his weight made the bed's springs creak in protest beneath him. She tried to remember just how tall he'd been when he'd towered over her as he stumbled in her front door. Even bent, holding his side, he had stretched high above her five-foot-ten-inch frame. She didn't speculate on the exact height. No, that would give her fantasies too much detail to work with, and it was sure she would be dreaming of dark hair and bewitching blue eyes tonight, that and the taut, warm skin stretched across too-powerful muscles.

Nothing specific mattered about him, she told herself, trying with little effort to tug her gaze and her hands away from his inviting body—not his name, not where he'd come from, and certainly not what he was doing in her herbal-magic shop with a gaping wound in his side. A wound that could not possibly have come from an accident on the street like he said. No, Mr. Tall-Dark-and-Edible had been up to no good before he came to her. But then so were many of her patrons. Her service was unique, after all.

"Who is he, Kelly?" her assistant, Tame, asked, who was anything but tame.

Kelly shrugged. "A customer. One who paid up front, more than I was asking. What do I care who he is?"

Tame shook his head and poked out his thin lips. "Hm, I should have known when you brought that bed home from the salvage ship there would be trouble. We've always been a regular shop, an herbal grocery store, if you will, but this?" He gestured to the back room, which they had sparsely furnished with the rollaway bed, a few shelves for supplies, a table and chair, and a small sink she had used to wash away the blood from the stranger's wound. "This is asking for more trouble. They find out you actually patch people up back here, and we're really in for it. Practicing medicine without a license. Bad, very bad."

Kelly chuckled. "Practicing *anything* on Somana Two without a license is bad, Tame. You know that. Besides, what I do pays the bills. With The Agency cracking down and getting into everyone's business, it's no wonder they come to me. And I ask you, who has real earth-grown herbs like I do? No one. No synthetic materials in this shop. There's enough of that poison back on Earth. No thank you."

"Earth-grown? Don't you mean Somana Two-grown, or even moon-grown?"

She waved her hand and turned away. "Never mind. Go watch the front. I'm going to . . ." She paused when the lobe of her left ear began to itch. Ever since she was eight years old, the feeling had been a signal to trouble coming, and it had never failed her once. She shoved Tame ahead of her and slammed the door closed on her patient. By the time the two of them made it to the front of the shop, two agents were strolling in the front door, their weapons drawn and suspicious expressions marring their faces.

"Hello, gentlemen, what may I do for you today? A little peppermint for indigestion, perhaps?"

The scowls deepened, and Kelly had to fight not to laugh at the insult she'd dealt them.

"We're looking for a man," the first agent responded.

Tame rolled his eyes. "Aren't we all?"

Kelly suppressed another chuckle, but the agents weren't laughing. As far as anyone knew, none of the men who worked for the corporation they called The Agency—which for all intents and purposes owned Somana Two—had a sense of humor. Their one aim in life seemed to be to make everyone else's life as miserable as possible. Every day there were new restrictions. If Kelly didn't have a few tricks up her sleeve, she was sure they would have shut her down long ago.

"We're looking for a specific man . . . a beast, actually," the agent went on. He held up a gruesome picture of bodies torn apart and blood everywhere. Beyond a quick glance, Kelly didn't scrutinize it too much. "There's a werewolf on Somana Two, and we mean to capture it dead or alive."

Tame would not be kept out of the conversation, and when Kelly didn't respond right away, he jumped in with his two cents. "That's impossible. Werewolves are not allowed on Somana Two. Goodness, if even one got loose—"

"Exactly," the second agent snapped. "Twenty-four hours, seven days a week of a full moon. Miss, have you seen anyone suspicious?"

It wasn't the blood that had thrown her off balance, but the residual torment of the people involved. That overwhelming emotion had clung to the photo long after they were buried, no doubt, but that was another of her gifts—or curses—sensing strong emotions, usually the negative ones. At last, having pulled herself together after seeing the photo, Kelly spoke up. "No, I haven't seen anyone suspicious. Yet, how would I know? People are arriving here from Earth practically every day. I don't know them all, and they don't all come into Kelly's either."

"Well, if you do come across someone you think might be who we're looking for, it would be in your best interest to contact us immediately. I don't need to tell you the consequences of harboring a werewolf—or any fugitive—on Somana Two."

"No, you don't." She turned away without saying "Have a nice day" and left Tame to see them out. When she was sure the agents had left the shop, she entered the back room. The man was no longer on the bed but poised with his hand on the knob to exit through her rear door.

"*Serratura*," she commanded with a wiggle of two fingers, and the lock clicked into place, unable to be opened unless she released it. "Just where do you think you're going, mister? I said that treatment needs to stay in place for a full hour in order for you to heal properly."

He turned slowly to face her, his light blue eyes having gone dangerously dark, a shade similar to what she remembered Earth's ocean being when she'd seen it years ago. "Why didn't you turn me in?" he asked.

"I—"

"I could be the werewolf they're looking for."

When had he crossed the floor to stand in front of her? Correction, tower over her, as he'd done when he arrived. Good grief he was massive, and he smelled like . . . her grandfather's tiny plot of land with the even smaller old house on it—like home and safety. Kelly shuddered. That was an illusion, of course. She didn't know this man, and she hadn't been home since her grandfather passed and The Agency gobbled up in fees what little she had left in the world.

Kelly put distance between her and the stranger, and the smirk that spread across his five-o'clock-shadowed jaw did little to ease the longing she was feeling to touch him again, to see if he tasted as good as he looked. She tried for boldness, a tact she used to hide her fear, and when that didn't work, she'd always resorted to magic.

"You're not the werewolf."

"What makes you so sure?" He cocked his head to the side and let his gaze drop down to her body, lingering on her breasts. The sheer heat from that gaze made her think twice. The werewolves were an aggressive bunch, taking what they wanted, killing what they didn't, and adding to their numbers by the droves—up until The Agency herded and imprisoned them, that is.

Kelly licked her lips, capturing his attention, and took a step back. He followed like the predator he was suspected of being.

“Do you feel up all your patients?” he asked out of nowhere.

She froze, shock and nerves vying for dominance inside her. “I . . . uh . . .”

He grinned and came closer. “Because I’m wondering if I get a turn to touch as well.” He raised a hand in the direction of her breast. He inched closer and lowered his head like he was going to kiss her. Kelly tried her best not to sway into the wide, hard palm and offer her mouth to him.

“Well . . .” She swallowed. Could she be so bold? When was the last time she’d had a man? Last year? The year before? He had been passing through, he said. Didn’t like Soman Two, but maybe he’d stop in again. She was not in the habit of jumping into bed with strange men, but like this one, *yum!* A small sampling wasn’t so bad, and disease of that type had been all but wiped out. They had a whole new set of ways to die in this day and age. Instead of addressing his touching her, she went back to the safer of the two topics. “You would have killed me by now if you were a werewolf because the moon makes them crazy. They’re killing machines, can’t think straight except to eat and destroy.”

“And mate,” he reminded her.

Kelly’s mouth dropped open. For a moment, she thought the man would swoop in for what he’d more than hinted at, but he drew back with a teasing grin. “I’ve got to go. Unlock the door, beautiful.”

What choice did she have? Kelly uttered the word that would undo her spell, and the man moved across the room to the door.

“Thank you for taking care of me and for not turning me over to the agents. If I can ever return the favor, I will.”

Just like that, he was gone.

Chapter Two

“Aw, we’re going back?” Tame whined. “I hate the docks. They’re smelly, and the workers over there are impatient and mean. There’s never anything salvageable. Just piles and piles of junk. The ships that fly that crap are worth more than what they bring on any given day.”

Kelly sighed as she shouldered through the crowds of people in this section of Somana Two. Just as Tame had said, the docks, and even the city nearest them, weren’t the best. The station was just twenty-five years old, being the second station built on the moon after the first blew up, but this side of town looked a good hundred years old with its heavier population and buildings that looked like they’d been tossed up with salvage materials from Earth.

Still, Somana Two, with all its problems and issues, was a world better than Earth. Their home planet was way overpopulated, dirty, crime-ridden, and nowhere on its vast surface could one find soil that wasn’t stripped bare of all minerals. That was why one hundred percent of the food on Earth was genetically altered and synthetic. If it were as simple as an apple, one could guarantee it wouldn’t taste like one. Then again, it had been so long Kelly wasn’t sure what original apples had looked like, let alone tasted like.

Her garden behind her shop, which she kept under magical lock and key from prying eyes and fingers, was a place where she proudly grew fresh herbs and a few limited fruits that were integral to her spells. Well, the fruits were just plain good eating. She would not trade what she had here for anything, even if she had to trudge through what Tame called the dark side of S2 to meet with the man she sometimes traded with for seeds. She had no idea where he got them, but she could not be fooled about their authenticity.

Meeting with the man was better on the salvage ship than at her shop because she had no intention of allowing the agents to watch her where she worked. Let them sniff around this dung heap if they wanted to.

“Are you done complaining, Tame? You know I sell a few small furniture items in the shop, and the only place to get them is at the salvage ship. So buck up and stop whining.” Kelly wasn’t often so firm with Tame. She loved him like a younger brother, and he was a sensitive creature. It was just that today her ear was driving her nuts, and even though she had waited for the afternoon ship to come in, the itching hadn’t stopped. If anything, it was worse.

Something was in the air, and if it weren’t for the fact that sales were down this month, she would cancel her meeting with the supplier. However, her best client was out of the facial cream that made her look twenty years younger, and Kelly was not going to pass up whipping together a new batch for a profit of seventy-five curans. That was a bit pricey, but herbal magic didn’t come cheap, not being illegal anyway.

At the gate leading out of Somana Two onto the actual docks, Kelly and Tame stopped in a long line of people waiting. She stood on tiptoe and peered beyond the crowds, and although she could just make out the dull silver hull of the massive ship, she could not see the entry ramp that led up to it. She knew from experience officers who worked on the ship would be standing guard to check IDs and ask inane questions like what was she looking for in the salvage heap. In her mind, such questions were pointless, just like those asked at airports back on Earth about whether a person’s bag had been out of his sight at any time. Kelly loved to annoy them by responding that she would know what she was looking for when she spotted it. Then she would launch into a diatribe about love at first sight with an old table or chair on her last visit, and soon she would be moved along, having frustrated the hell out of the officer.

She didn’t get much entertainment out here in the middle of space, so she had to find it where she could.

The line shifted forward, and Kelly scratched her earlobe while watching the sky, or rather the stars, through the near-transparent globe over the station. A few small ships glided by as they left the moon's surface, and she wondered if *he* was on any of them, the man she'd patched up. As she had predicted, she had dreamed of him all night long and had ended up using her fingers to satisfy herself in the early morning hours. The fire burning inside her hadn't lessened even after she'd brought herself to three orgasms. She needed a man, and soon.

"Move along!" someone called out.

Kelly snapped out of her daydream and shuffled forward. At last they were at the platform leading to the ship. Before she could open her mouth to begin her monthly ritual, the officer waved her on with a grumble.

"See?" Tame whispered while they ascended onto the ship. "Told you they were grouchy. Would it kill them to be pleasant?"

Rather than get into it again and say something that would have her assistant pouting the rest of the day, Kelly pointed past him toward the south end of the ship. "You go that way, Tame, and I'll go this way. If you see anything we could turn for a fast curan, bring me up on the holo-phone so I can see it, okay?"

Before he could turn away, she stuffed a few vouchers from her bank into his hands. Sometimes even with her on the holo-phone saying yes to a piece she wanted to buy, the officers didn't go for it. A physically present customer with vouchers or actual curans in hand got the merchandise. She would not lose out on a golden piece for a mere technicality.

Tame stomped off, and Kelly chuckled while she headed in the opposite direction. She really didn't know what she was looking for, but there were plenty of newcomers to Somana Two, every day, who needed furnishings for their houses. Most of the junk on the salvage ships was just that, but Kelly used a wiggle of her fingers, a few choice words, and raw materials could be popped back into mint condition. She couldn't make something out of nothing, but she could renew paint with a word, bump out a dent, and just use her imagination.

While she headed down the narrow corridor, with doors on either side, some open, some closed, semibright lights overhead, an odd feeling came over her. She stopped midstep and was immediately bumped aside as people behind her hurried to get past. Something wasn't right. Emotions, dark emotions, angry and sad at the same time, ebbed from the room up ahead on the left.

Kelly's limbs began to quiver. She darted a glance up and down the hall that was suddenly empty. All she had to do was not go in there, right? Just pass by like it was no big deal. For a moment, she considered going back the way she came and then joining Tame where he was, but her feet shuffled forward anyway, like fate drew her.

She paused in front of the door and tried to move on, but she couldn't. She went inside. A pair of stools caught her eye. They seemed to glow golden, which was why she called the pieces she eventually bought "golden." Under normal circumstances, she would get them without hesitation. She surveyed the room instead and found an officer with a register in hand no bigger than a small pad. Old, bent, and, in some cases, rusted furniture filled every available space, leaving a narrow aisle to walk along to the outside wall, down the middle of the room, and back to the door.

Kelly stepped farther inside.

"Ms. Kelly Winters?" someone said behind her.

She froze but didn't speak.

"Ms. Kelly Winters, the herbalist who also uses illegal magic in her shop?"

She spun in a slow arc, her limbs feeling weighted and her mouth going dry. With supreme effort, she forced a smile to her lips. "Don't be silly. Magic is a myth."

The two-inch orb floated over to her, and an unseen force pulled at her wrists. Before she could protest, her hands were in cuffs. Arrested? *Impossible*. She couldn't be under arrest. Kelly searched

her mind for a spell, anything that would cloud the minds of the men standing before her, the agents.

"Nube di confusione," she mumbled. Nothing happened. Blinking in confusion, she tried her spell a second time. There was no response from the men. In fact, if anything, they appeared amused that she had tried to cast a spell on them and failed. What the hell was going on? When she opened her mouth to try a third time, a man who had just walked into room interrupted her.

"Don't bother, Ms. Winters." His beady black eyes held menace, and Kelly did all she could not to step back from him. "Your spell won't work because, you see, I have blocked you from using your gift while I'm here."

A storm of emotions hit her. She didn't know whether to be terrified, angry, or give in to the confusion of wondering what was going on. Always, without fail, she had used her magic to protect herself. She'd cast a spell around her shop and herself that would cloud the agents' minds, keep them convinced that she was just an ordinary herbalist, nothing more. Kelly had gone so far as to make it seem like she had nothing but synthetic goods, nothing fresh, nothing moon-grown.

Yet, now, she realized that everything was cut off. The normal tingle of awareness she had in her own power, lurking just beneath the surface of her will, was gone. Not subdued. Just gone, like someone had severed her connection.

Her magic was a part of her. It almost defined her. To be cut off left her naked and terrified. Still, she never gave in to fear if she could help it, and this wasn't the time to begin. With a hand on her hip and defiance in her glare, she faced the dark-eyed man. "I don't know what you're talking about, sir. I'm just a simple herbalist trying to make a curan just like everyone else. Are you going to begrudge me that?"

He threw his head back and barked a laugh that Kelly felt was a tad on the dramatic side. "You're kidding me, right? You? A simple herbalist?" He waved a hand. "Never mind. I'm not going to try to convince you that I know who and what you are, that I broke through the barrier you had around yourself and your shop to keep us blinded all these years. What I will say is that I have sealed your spell-making ability with my more powerful spell, and you will be taken into custody to stand trial for your illegal activities."

Kelly's heart pounded in her chest. She glanced around, tugging at the cuffs that bound her while she searched for a way of escape. If she went to jail, who would care for Tame? He had been with her ever since she moved to Somana Two. She'd picked him up off the street, starving half to death and bruised from being beaten up because he couldn't stop speaking his mind about what didn't concern him. He needed her to be there for him.

In silence, she studied the man before her. He'd said he bound her magic with a spell, but Kelly was more than her magic even though it was a big part of her. She also sensed emotions, and what this man was giving off was false, like he was one big lie. The two agents stood confidently on both sides of him, ready with weapons. She figured the man in the middle was a consultant, someone who didn't work full-time with The Agency, or maybe one who they called in only when it became necessary with a nonhuman. The problem with all of this was that her senses were never wrong. This man, whoever he was, was not a magic user. Whatever spell he had cast, it wasn't from himself. It wasn't his power he was wielding.

She wanted to know more about what was going on. For now, she would keep her mouth shut and her ears open. At some point, someone would slip up, and she'd figure out what the real story was behind this arrest. Tame would be okay. She had to believe that.

"Take her," the man commanded.

The agents raised annoyed eyebrows at him, probably thinking that he was getting above himself. Still, one of the men moved forward and took her arm. He turned and tugged her ahead of the others toward the door, but a low growl stopped them all where they stood. Into the doorway

crept the biggest wolf Kelly had ever seen. He crouched low, as if he was ready to attack, and bared teeth so sharp her stomach knotted and her throat went dry just staring at them.

“What the fucking hell?” one of the men shouted.

“It’s *him*, the werewolf,” the man who had cast the spell over her said. “Shoot it! Kill the beast!”

The whine of electric pulsing guns sounded around Kelly, and she was thrust backward to land on her ass as the agents pointed their weapons at the animal. Blue light illuminated the dim room followed milliseconds after by small pops as they squeezed off round after round. The wolf seemed unafraid. Like a demon from hell, it sidestepped the shots, leaping first one way and then another. The thing’s claws sank into the chest of the first agent and sent him to the floor.

Kelly scrambled backward, trying to get distance between them and her. Over and over she uttered spells while hoping against hope that what bound her would wear off and she could get away. She jerked at the cuffs, but the small orb, whose maker she cursed, wouldn’t let her go. It darted back and forth between her wrists as Kelly struggled.

“Let me loose, damn it. That thing will kill me,” she pleaded with the beady-eyed man. But he was too busy climbing over the junk that filled the room, trying to make his own escape.

With both agents dead, the beast went after the false magic-user. He screamed and pleaded for mercy like the weak thing he was. The creature closed in, salivating. Kelly watched in horror, wanting to turn away, but not able. She knew that she was next and that she should run for the door while the beast was distracted, but her legs wouldn’t obey her command to move. Beneath her, she searched for a weapon, something sharp or strong to defend herself, to give her more time for someone to come and help.

The beast closed in on the man, but there was another flash, this time a red one. The light blinded Kelly, and she had to shield her eyes from it. The lights overhead buzzed and popped. When the red beam dissipated, the room was plunged into darkness.

Several feet from where she sat were the glowing eyes of the wolf. Kelly waited for the sound of it ripping into the man, but there was nothing. Instead, the beast began to growl as it had done when it came into the room—slow, teasing, menacing.

Kelly closed her fingers around what felt like a pipe, and she dragged it free of the debris covering it. She held the weapon like a shield in front of her and found the strength to slowly rise to her feet. The growling came closer, along with those haunting eyes. She swallowed, tears wetting her cheeks.

Without warning, the wolf leaped at her, and Kelly swung with all her strength, an awkward move since her hands were bound. Still the pipe connected with its target. The impact jarred Kelly’s wrists and caused shooting pains to race up her arms. The beast yelped, followed by a crash she assumed was it tumbling among the debris.

She wasn’t waiting around to see if she’d killed the thing. Tossing the pipe away, she ran, stumbling over the junk in an effort to reach the door. A lump formed in her throat, and sobs choked her. From habit, she chanted as she worked her way to the exit, but none of it stopped the thing from careening into her back like a train.

Kelly went down hard, and something dug into her stomach. She felt the piercing of her flesh beneath her seconds before her forehead came down on the floor. As darkness descended, the growl above her let her know this was the end. Better to be unconscious, where she wouldn’t feel a thing.

Chapter Three

Kelly woke keeping her eyes closed and her other senses alert. Almost immediately, the memory of what had happened to her came back to mind. Of course the ache in her stomach and head helped to bring it all back. She concentrated on her surroundings in hope that she hadn't given any sign to anyone around her that she had awakened. No growl or heavy panting reached her ears, and she almost sighed in relief.

What did reach her were emotions of heavy guilt and sorrow. Following that was a strong scent, something earthy, like home. She knew in an instant what it was. *Him*.

Startled, she opened her eyes only to come face-to-face with the man she had treated in her shop. He leaned over her, his blue eyes intent on studying her. Lowering her gaze, she squeaked to find him bare-chested and then cried out to discover she was naked with a thin sheet separating them.

"What in the world!" She shoved at the massive chest with no effect.

"No, don't move," he instructed her. "You'll open your wound."

"Get off me!" She tried to sit up, but doing so would only bring her breasts against his chest, and damn it if her nipples weren't already hard. She didn't need to brush them against his solid body. "Why am I naked, and why are you naked? Where are we? What am I doing here?"

"Slow down, little witch," he said, gentleness in his tone. "If you will take a breath, I will explain."

Kelly waited for him to move away and almost fainted again when he slid off the bed and stood up, stark naked. His firm buttocks drew her attention, and she was almost salivating at the hard thighs dusted with dark hair. He moved with feral grace to a chair and picked up a pair of jeans before he slipped them on. Only after he turned around to face her did Kelly see the deep gashes on his chest and along one arm.

She clutched the sheet higher, wrapped it around herself, and then focused on him again. "What happened to you?"

He shrugged. "In a fight."

He wasn't very forthcoming, but she wasn't going to let him get away with that. "And?"

"After what happened on the salvage ship, I brought you here. I removed the cuffs, and . . ." He grinned. "When the beast takes control, I'm not always rational. You looked like a tempting morsel. I considered it necessary to remove your clothing so you would be comfortable."

"The hell you did!" She shot up off the bed still clutching the sheet. "Did you . . . uh . . ."

His thick brows lowered over his eyes. "I didn't rape you if that's what you're worried about. And I said to be careful. You cut yourself there on your stomach. I don't know how to heal you, not having your ability with herbs nor the supplies if I did know how."

"You're still a pervert," she snapped. "Where are my clothes? I'm getting out of here."

"No," he said simply.

She stopped scanning the room for her things and looked at him again. "What?"

He strolled toward her, and she stumbled back from him.

"I said no. You're not leaving. This place is safe for now. You do realize that you have both The Agency and the werewolf after you?"

She swallowed. "The werewolf?"

He nodded. "The beast has picked up your scent. He will not give up until he finds you."

"W-Why? Why me? I'm no one special." She ran her hand through her tangled hair and winced when her fingers caught in the mess. A sudden thought struck her, and her eyes widened as fear rose inside. "The werewolf. You are. You denied being a werewolf, but your injury at the shop and just now you said . . ."

He was standing directly in front of her now, and she raised a hand to ward him off. Dizziness assailed her. Her legs grew weak. She would have fallen on the floor if he hadn't caught her. When she glanced down, she was horrified to find that blood steadily soaked the sheet.

"Oh no," she cried.

The man lifted her into his arms even while she protested, and he carried her back to the bed to lay her down. After a few moments, she was too weak to fight him, and she barely made a whisper when he removed the sheet. Of course he found it necessary to take the whole thing off her, exposing even her pussy. Anger surged within her, but she couldn't speak.

He surveyed her body with a little too much excitement in those alluring eyes. But then he went to work cleaning her belly and changing the butterfly bandages that he had used earlier. Kelly watched him with half-closed lids, determined to defend herself if he dared venture too far south, or north, for that matter.

She hated the fact that she was so turned on by him, despite the pain in her gut, that she wanted to spread her legs and invite him to do what he wanted. She licked her dry lips, and he caught the movement, interest flickering in the depths of his eyes. The room seemed charged with her sexual desire, and his too, she was sure. This man could have been the one who murdered those agents and that other man, and here she was lusting over him like a sex-starved idiot.

"It's deep," the shifter announced. "You need a doctor, but we can't risk it." He scratched his head and ran his hand over his jaw as if trying to figure out his next move.

Accepting of her fate, Kelly closed her eyes. "I need a few things. You'll get them for me."

"Yes, princess," he answered with a fake obedience.

Kelly opened her eyes to glare at him, but it took too much effort with the blood she had lost. She let herself relax and whispered her instructions. "At my shop, there are jars that contain the ingredients for an herbal spell to heal me. Works better than what any doctor could do. I'm not sure you'll be able to get it, since I suspect the agents will be watching the place."

"I'll get them. Tell me exactly what you need."

Studying him, she believed he would succeed in getting the ingredients for her healing spell. "I need orrisroot, Sampson snakeroot, and vervain. They can all be found in labeled jars at the front of the store. Each has been ground into powder. Bring the entire jars, please." When he rose to go, she stopped him. "Wait."

"Yes?"

"I-I don't know your name."

He faced her and bowed slightly, a smirk spreading over his handsome face. "Gabriel."

"Hm," she mused, "a demon with an angel name."

He laid a hand over his heart. "You wound me."

She snickered and then winced since the laugh tugged at her abdomen muscles. "Doubtful."

Gabriel. She rolled the name around in her head and came to the conclusion that the man's name was as hot as he was. And then all thought of his moniker left her mind when he stripped off the jeans he'd just donned. When he caught her staring at the thick, hard cock that extended from his body, he had the nerve to wink.

Kelly tried to look away, but she couldn't. Her thoughts turned to how he would taste and what it would feel like to slide her tongue up and down that pole. Memories of the flavor of salty come filling her mouth flooded her senses. Kelly chewed at a knuckle and cut off a soft moan of need.

Gabriel strolled over to her and stopped with his erection just inches from her face. "You like it, don't you? You want some?"

"You arrogant prick," she muttered.

He was undeterred, instead stroking himself for her pleasure . . . and his. His guttural moan sent chills over her flesh.

“Dying here,” she reminded him.

Without hesitation, he released himself and stepped away. “I apologize, but when a woman looks at me with such lust, I respond. Or rather, the beast responds. If I let him take over, he would have sex all day and all night.”

From where Kelly was lying, that was so not a bad idea.

“I promise I will come back with what you need.” He turned and left the room. The soft patter of his feet hitting the tile outside the door changed to the click of nails, and Kelly gasped in awe knowing that he had changed that fast into a wolf.

Maybe she should get away while he was gone. After all, he was a werewolf, and while she had no real prejudice against them like The Agency and most humans did, that didn’t mean he wasn’t dangerous. Her desire for this man made her want to believe he wasn’t the beast that attacked her, but at the same time, she could be wrong. He could be pretending to have saved her and was, in truth, working with the werewolf that killed those men. His job could be to earn her trust.

These arguments made perfect sense, but for the life of her, she couldn’t make herself get up. Not just from the weakness that attacked her body either. She wanted him like she’d never wanted another man. Kelly was not given to fairy tales. She didn’t believe in a predestined mate, that there was a man out there meant only for her. Gabriel was just a hot-as-hell man, and she was a horny woman who had gone way too long ignoring her physical needs.

She searched within herself and found the connection to her magic that had seemed severed earlier. The knowledge that it had returned soothed her troubled mind. She would let Gabriel bring her the herbs, and she would guide him in what to do to prepare the healing potion while she said the spell over it. Then maybe she would give herself over for a quickie. After that, she could be on her merry way to find out just what was happening on Somana Two. Her first move would be to locate Tame, and once she knew her assistant was safe, she would be back on track. Gabriel would be the fodder of delicious dreams once more.

Chapter Four

Gabriel sat in the shadows across from Kelly's shop. He knew he was taking a chance being this close, but he had already sniffed out the agents in various positions around the place. They thought they were hidden, of course, but he could sniff out one of those bloodsuckers anywhere. Not that the agents were vampires, but they might as well be the way they bled the citizens of both Earth and Somana Two of all their hard-earned curans.

While he watched, Kelly's assistant strolled up to the door of the shop, unlocked it, and slipped inside. Gabriel considered waiting until the man left, but thought better of it. Kelly had lost a lot of blood, and if her concoction would work to make her better, then he needed to get it to her as soon as possible.

He glanced up to the clear dome encasing their artificial atmosphere and waited a beat for the time to appear. The digital timepiece was visible all over Somana Two, so most people didn't carry a watch, not that he would have bothered with one anyway in his animal form.

"Eight-ten," he noted when the time appeared.

The watchmen made their rounds through this commercial area about every half hour, and Gabriel was counting on the distraction of having them pass through to slip by the agents undetected. He had twenty minutes to wait it out, and he decided to spend it considering the sexy woman he had left back at the small house he had rented.

To say that Kelly was beautiful was an understatement. The woman exuded sexiness that called to his beast in such a loud voice that he had trouble filtering it out. In fact, he would not normally have stripped a woman naked like he had her. But the moment he set eyes on her, he had determined to make her his—for as long as his body craved her. His cock hardened just thinking about being buried inside her. When had she been with a man last? Did she have a regular boyfriend or a lover?

Gabriel had left her shop the day before intending to wrap up his sole purpose for being on Somana Two, and then he would come back for her. But the horror he'd experienced when he tracked his quarry and found him about to rip out Kelly's throat had almost killed Gabriel. Now he knew he wasn't going to put off taking her. He just needed to convince her to open those luscious thighs of hers and let him in.

With anticipation spreading out over him, he closed his eyes and let the images of what he intended to do to Kelly fill his lusty mind. He'd tangle his fingers in her long, dark hair and capture those wide brown eyes with his intense stare. She would not look away from him until he gave her permission to. She was no tiny thing, which had never turned him on, but tall and curvy, with nice, heavy breasts that a man could forget the moon and Earth while licking.

A growl rose in his throat as he imagined it. Damn, she was perfect in every way, and she wouldn't like it slow and gentle either. No, a fiery woman like Kelly would take all of him, rough and wild.

"Yes!" he roared, and then lowered his voice as not to draw attention to his hiding place.

Going back to his fantasy, he pictured her lying across his bed, naked and covered just enough with a sheet to tease his senses. Into his dreams now, he strolled over to her and caught the end of the sheet, at the base by her feet. He tugged, and the thin material glided off her. First, the swell of her breasts came into view, with the dark rose areolas and the stiff nipples ready for his tongue. Gabriel licked his lips.

Then her flat belly with a miniature set of old-fashioned handcuffs hanging below her navel. So she wanted him to restrain her while he took what he wanted? Excitement coursed through his body. He could do that, longed to. Lower still the sheet moved until dark fuzz appeared at her apex.

Gabriel's mouth watered. How he enjoyed eating a woman, and from Kelly's scent, she wanted it, was already dripping wet for him.

He glanced at her face. Up until now her eyes had been closed like she was asleep, but Gabriel knew better. "Open your eyes, Kelly."

Her long lashes fluttered, and she focused on him, much like she had earlier when he had come into the room to check on her. He almost fell on top of her but controlled himself. After a few moments, she realized she was naked, and panic set in as she struggled to recover the sheet.

"Do you really want to hide yourself from me, Kelly?" He reached down to unsnap the button on his jeans, and her eyes zeroed in on his movements. He lowered the zipper in degrees. She chewed her plump bottom lip.

"You shouldn't do that."

He grinned. "You want to see me, don't you?"

She frowned. "Arrogant bastard."

A chuckle rumbled in his chest before he became serious again and continued to undress for her pleasure. By the time he pushed his jeans low on his hips, she was practically salivating. How it turned him on to have a woman like her lusting for him.

Gabriel allowed his pants to hit the floor and took his swollen cock in hand. With a stroke from the base to the crown, he ran a thumb over the tip to spread his pre-release around. Kelly was on her knees, her attention never wavering.

He crooked his finger. "Come here and please your lover, Kelly."

She balked at his command, but Gabriel knew she wouldn't turn him down. She craved it as much as he did. He might be an arrogant son of a bitch when the beast reared its stubborn head, but this lovely woman and he were a match physically, if not in more ways. He'd kill himself to pleasure her, even if it took all night long, or several nights.

From the moment her lips encircled his cock, Gabriel had to fight for control. Damn, her mouth was dangerous. She was bold too, taking him deep into her throat, teasing his sensitive head by circling it with her tongue, and then swallowing him again. Gabriel knotted his fist in her hair and drove her forward. She moaned but didn't pull back. Soon he had a rhythm going, moving his hips to slide in and then back.

Even the sounds she made while she sucked him drove him insane. His balls tightened and rose, but he forced himself to remain calm enough to enjoy it and not come just yet. He wanted her taking him into her mouth until she didn't have the strength to continue. Only then would he let go. After that, he would be ready to feast between her legs and pound until she begged for her own release.

"Yes, yes, this could go on all night," he murmured. There was nothing like a woman's warm, sweet mouth around his member.

* * * *

Kelly tossed and turned, the ache between her legs growing in intensity. She needed to come like yesterday. Her body was on fire, and the face that filled her head, the face that was driving her to the brink, was that bastard Gabriel.

She had never really gotten off much on sucking a man's cock, even though all of the men she'd ever met loved it. Choosing whom to give it to was important because of that, and yet, here she was trapped in the hottest dream she'd ever had, and it was one where she was getting off on swallowing Gabriel of all men!

The way he had commanded her to please him had pissed her off, but it had excited her too. From the second she wrapped her lips around his piece, she was hooked. How in the world could a

man taste this good? How could she enjoy running her tongue up and down his stiff length and love the bit of salty liquid that she had licked off him?

Maybe it was the man himself, she mused. Sexy as anything and so hard. His height, his build, his hair, and, yes, even that damned ancient caveman-type attitude. The combination was heady, and she couldn't resist. Still, she had some control over him, she realized, when she drew back and teased the tip of his cock. The disappointment that he wasn't buried in her mouth was plain on his face.

Kelly grinned up at him and tilted her head to the side. She kissed his cock. "What's wrong, baby? You don't want me to stop?"

His nostrils flared. He seemed about to grab for her head, but Kelly ducked and took him into her mouth. His head went back, and his eyes closed. His shout of pleasure sent ripples of awareness over her. While she drove her mouth up and down his length, she reached down between her legs and began to stroke her clit. The little bud was swollen and almost too sensitive to touch, but from years of practice, when no man was around to meet her needs, she knew what to do. She parted her folds with her first and ring finger while running her middle finger over the tiny head.

Kelly matched her strokes with Gabriel's thrusts into her mouth. His growl was guttural, and her cry filled the room as her orgasm raged through her loins and spread up over her abdomen. She wiggled her hips but didn't lessen her fast rubbing. She came once, but she didn't stop. She continued to suck him until his thick release filled her mouth, and while she drank all he had to offer, a second wonderful orgasm hit her, sending spasms up and down her legs.

Kelly fell back on the bed. That had been so good. How she loved that smaller second orgasm that always came close on the heels of the first. Even though it was over quicker, the intensity was always higher than the initial climax.

She grinned, waiting for the feeling of complete satisfaction to slide over her. But it didn't come. Instead, the heat that meant she was turned on but couldn't come gripped her. And the truth hit her as she opened her eyes in the small room where Gabriel had left her. It had all been a dream. She was just as horny now as she'd been when he left, maybe more so after her hot dream. On top of that, the pain in her stomach was back.

Kelly groaned and tried not to roll over and aggravate her injury. She hoped Gabriel would come back soon.

Chapter Five

She didn't need extra sensory perception or even the sense of smell of the wolf to know he was coming. He was larger than life, his presence almost tangible, and when the footsteps sounded on the outside stairwell leading up to her room, she knew it was him.

The door opened, and he stood there a moment in silence watching her.

"It's you," she said unnecessarily.

"You were expecting someone else?"

She hadn't met his eyes when he came in, her mind too full of the dream and its aftereffects. But when his tone indicated irritation, she took exception. "Don't snap at me. Did you get what I need?"

Seeming to come to life, he broke out of his reverie, and when he stepped aside to bring his other arm into the room, the one carrying the bag, she noticed his hard-on. So that was why he was irritable. Kelly fought not to laugh. He was just as needy as she was, and she wondered just how often the big bad wolf was grumpy.

The tiny room grew tinier still when he entered it and dropped into a folding chair in the corner. He tossed the bag onto the bed and stretched his long legs out in front of him before crossing his thick muscled arms over his chest. Kelly found herself sweating even though she didn't have any clothes on.

"I don't suppose you have clothes in here?" she asked as she searched the bag. Before he could answer, she retrieved a T-shirt and a skirt, along with flats. "Can you turn around so I can get dressed?"

His eyebrow went up. "What for? I've already seen what you have to offer. And might I add it looks tasty." He ran his tongue along his even white teeth, and she visualized them jagged. A shiver rocked her, and she turned away.

"You are such an ass. I don't know what I saw in you in my shop. I thought you were a gentleman." Beneath the sheet, she was about to struggle into her clothes, but he stopped her.

"Shouldn't you do your hocus-pocus before you get dressed so you won't mess up your clothes?"

She stopped, realizing he was right. Irritation at the fact didn't make it better. "Will you help me, or are you going to continue to act like a grump?"

"It's not acting." He smirked. "I get that way when the beast isn't satisfied. Sorry it ruffles your delicate feathers."

"Well, satisfy the beast, damn it! I'm not in a good mood myself! What do you need, meat or something? Which reminds me, what do they feed werewolves on Earth, meat being almost nonexistent? Do you eat that synthetic crap they make and call it 'meatlike'?"

Gabriel shuffled to his feet and stomped across the few feet separating them. He leaned over her and rested a hand on the bag, which held the ingredients for her spell. His mouth was inches from the top of her head, and she resisted looking up at him. When he spoke, his breath stirred her hair. "It's not meat that I need right now. And from the way you're hiding beneath that cover, it's not likely you're going to offer me what it is I do crave."

Kelly's mouth dropped open. She clutched the sheet until her fingers ached. Her head began to spin, and when her breathing picked up, Gabriel had the nerve to lean out a little so he could watch her breasts rise and fall. The suggestive expression on his face said everything. She licked her lips. She had decided she would jump him, hadn't she? Why was she shying off now?

No man had ever intimidated her, not even when she lost her virginity at a tender age. She'd been nervous then, of course, but that had run along the lines of would she do it right, would he, and would it feel as good as it seemed to in the romance novels she'd had glued to her fingers at every opportunity back then. But this—this was different. Never had she desired a werewolf. They

were beasts. Sexy as hell, every one, if the rumors were all true, but Gabriel was more than that. The power he exuded, the wildness, left her weak and achy, and he hadn't even touched her. Kelly considered herself a confident woman who didn't take crap from anyone, but she was actually scared she couldn't satisfy this man, and that was unacceptable.

Straightening her shoulders, she tossed him a withering look and quipped, "Down, boy. This is neither the time nor the place."

"I beg to differ."

"Whatever." She became businesslike and removed the contents of the bag to line them up on the bed. "I need you to use this bowl and combine the exact amounts I tell you of the herbs. Set it up there on the chair, but bring it closer to me so I can cast the spell. Before you know it, I'll have us both as good as new."

For a long moment, he didn't move or speak, and she held her breath, praying he would not argue. Her words might have been brisk, but she was weak as a kitten. All it would take was for him to stroke her arm or kiss her, and she'd fall into his embrace. That couldn't happen.

At last, he straightened and did what she asked. Kelly tried not to blow out her breath of relief, but instead focused on getting her mind right for her spell. She had cast this healing spell on herself only once before, and this was a more severe case. The sooner she was well, the sooner she could find out just what was going on and why someone seemed to be targeting her.

Gabriel brought the bowl to her, and she instructed him on the measurements of the orrisroot, the vervain, and the Sampson snakeroot. He frowned and tried to pinch his nose while he worked.

She laughed. "What's wrong?"

"Stinks" was his response.

"Be patient." She shook her head. "One minute, you're this big, strong bully of a man, and the next, you're a baby. Who are you, Gabriel? Where did you come from? What are you doing on the moon?"

He pointed to the bowl. "Finish quickly."

Kelly rolled her eyes and rested the fingers of one hand over the bowl. The power stirred in her belly, the location she liked to think of as her center—not the physical pouch that took in food, but a deeper place, the place of her spirit. "*Alcoolici curativi*."

With the potion ready, she smeared some on her stomach and then prepared more for Gabriel.

"You know these wounds aren't as bad as that first time, and I heal quickly, right?"

She didn't look up from what she was doing. She couldn't, being that it took all her concentration to keep from jumping the man since she had to use her fingertips to smooth the paste over his wide chest. What irked her more was that Gabriel took it all in stride, like her touching him was doing nothing for him. How she hated his guts.

"I need you well now since you will be my bodyguard," she told him with as much callousness as she could muster. "I suspect that false magic-user got his spell from someone else. If I come across that person, and he binds my magic before I can get a handle on things, then I am a sitting duck for attack. That's where you come in."

"You've got this all figured out, huh?"

Finished, she cleared away the mess. "Not all of it."

Gabriel stopped her hands, slid a finger beneath her chin, and forced her to look up at him. "I want you. Make no mistake about that. When you touch me, it sets my body aflame, and it is all that I can do to keep from ripping that damn sheet off of you and taking what the beast says belongs to me."

Kelly squeaked in both fear and excitement at his admission.

“*When* I taste your body, it will be when I have plenty of time to enjoy myself.” He stood up and stretched, flexing his thick muscles. Kelly could only stare. “Feels better already. You’re a miracle worker. Now, we must get moving. We’ve been here long enough. Get dressed.”

Kelly reached out and grabbed his arm before he could move toward the door. “Hold on! We’re not going anywhere until you explain to me what you know about that other werewolf.”

Gabriel paused and looked back at her. He seemed to consider his next words before he spoke. “Sure, we can stay here and talk.” He tapped the side of his nose. “But you should know he has your scent, and right about now he is closing in. He will be here in less than ten minutes.”

Chapter Six

Gabriel hadn't been lying to her. He knew the wolf was closing in. He'd decided to stay and meet him but rethought that decision when he'd gotten another glimpse of the wound on Kelly's stomach. He'd lived his life on his own for the last twenty years and had never felt the need to care for anyone. Traveling from place to place back on Earth, staying one step ahead of the agents so he wouldn't be tossed into that prison they called a werewolf reservation had become the norm for him.

Yet, now here he was feeling sorry for this woman, feeling responsibility, and—he had to admit it—guilt about her getting hurt. After all, the other werewolf was his brother, Michael. Not that he was going to admit that truth to Kelly. He would tell her as much as she needed to know and nothing more. He'd find Michael and contain him. Then he would bed her, give them both pleasure, and be on his way. The sooner he was off this dreary rock, the better. Artificial atmosphere did not agree with him, and frankly, he was getting fed up with resisting the madness that must be running rampant in Michael right now. What he couldn't control was the irritability and the constant sexual need having Kelly's scent in his nostrils. Without a doubt, the best course was to finish this and be gone, no matter what the beast was whining inside his head about her.

When Kelly was dressed, Gabriel opened the door to the street and peered out. He sniffed the air to gauge whether any known enemies were about. At the time he had rented the room, he had spent a few hours getting to know the scents of those who lived in the area. If anyone new came around, he'd know it. On a breeze, he caught a whiff of agents, and his brother was coming, from a different direction. They had to move.

Without giving her a moment to think or to argue with him, Gabriel took Kelly's hand and tugged her out the door. As they descended the stairs at a sharp clip, he explained. "You'll keep quiet and do exactly what I tell you. At any time, if you disobey me, you will likely get yourself killed and me injured. Is that clear?"

She opened her mouth to speak but shut it again and nodded instead.

"Good."

He hurried them along the street while looking up and down for a taxi or a hack giving people rides illegally. His ultimate goal was to get them on a busier street. With Michael's senses out of whack, it was possible that he wouldn't be able to distinguish Kelly's scent among others.

Two blocks down, they came out of the narrow residential street where he rented the room, onto a busier thoroughfare. Aircars zipped along at breakneck speed, and the safety rails that kept pedestrians off the road were raised. That meant the sidewalks were crowded to the point that Gabriel had to grip Kelly's hand and shoulder his way through the crowd. More than one curse was thrown at his head, but he ignored them all. The greater part of his attention had to be on keeping himself under control and not losing his temper. As it was, a growl had started in his throat, and he couldn't for the life of him stop it.

Finally, they came out on another corner where there was a break in the safety rails. The robotic traffic signal zipped through the air to where he and the rest of the crowd waited, as if they couldn't see the Don't Walk sign unless it was inches from their noses. After a few moments, the sign changed to Walk, and a dronelike voice chanted, "Walk, walk, walk."

Gabriel guided Kelly to the waiting taxi on the opposite side of the street, and they slipped into the back. He leaned forward and waved his palm over the payment mechanism between the two front seats. His name came up on a six-inch monitor embedded in the back of the seat, along with the preset number of curans they had to pay just for stepping into the vehicle.

"Gabriel Hunter," Kelly commented. "So that's your last name, huh? Sexy."

He shrugged. "The one I took on a long time ago."

She looked over at him, curiosity shining in her beautiful brown eyes. "What does that mean?"

"Nothing. Forget it." He leaned toward the driver and offered a few curan bills. "Take us to the edge of the city and forget you saw us."

Kelly stiffened beside him and grabbed his arm. "That part of the city is more dangerous than the docks. There are people who—"

"I'll protect you," he interjected.

"And who will protect you, Mr. Big Shot? You aren't the most powerful beast on the moon, you know?"

He laughed. "No? You wound my pride."

"Come off it." She huffed and sat back with her arms tucked beneath her breasts. He liked the view it gave him of her cleavage. When she caught him watching, she rolled her eyes. "Gabriel, the boundaries are in place for a reason. The outskirts of Somana Two are not safe. There are those who flout the law and will kill anyone who interferes with their lives. Even the agents don't venture over there unless they have to. Only those having a dire reason live in that part of town."

"Exactly."

Understanding seemed to dawn on her, but she still appeared worried. Moving closer to him, she dropped her voice to a whisper. He breathed in her heady scent. "If you were going to bribe the driver, why did you give your scan?"

He took a moment before bothering to answer, and instead rested a hand on her thigh and teased the delicate skin behind her ear with the tip of his tongue.

She shivered. "Gabriel, what are you doing?"

He wanted more. Slowly, he ran his hand up her thigh until he reached her panties. Her little clit was already swollen for him and was straining behind the thin material of her underwear. He stroked it while he caught her earlobe between his teeth. She cried out his name a second time.

"You play a dangerous game, little flower," he murmured.

She quivered. "I-I don't know what you mean."

"Leaning so close to me. Did you imagine I could resist? Or would?" He demonstrated his words by pushing aside her panties and delving between her soft folds. Damn, she was wet. With one finger, he pierced her, and clutching his arm, she squirmed on the seat. He pushed in farther and found her lips at the same time. While he pumped between her legs, he invaded her mouth and took greedily what he needed.

She whimpered, and the sound was almost his undoing. With his other hand, he'd almost begun to rip her blouse open if she hadn't stopped him. "No, Gabriel," she pleaded. "He's watching."

Gabriel glanced back to find the driver had stopped at a light and was staring in the rearview mirror at them.

"Eyes on the road," Gabriel snapped. The man jumped and turned away. By the time Gabriel focused on Kelly again, she had shoved his hand away and was straightening her blouse and her skirt. Disappointment made him grumble.

"Sorry, but I'm not having sex in a taxi, or in public, for that matter. I like it hot and wild just like the next woman, but that's a bit much, especially on this street." She surveyed their surroundings as the car began to move again. "I would look no different than the local entertainment, if you know what I mean. Funny how the agents overlook that."

Gabriel settled in his seat and pulled the crumpled letter he kept with him at all times from his pocket. He wouldn't read it. He knew the contents by heart. "A man has to have his needs met," he told her.

She tried to read the inscription on the envelope, but he covered it. "What's that?"

"The reason I'm here." He held up a hand to hold her off from asking further questions. "Listen, I want off this rock, and soon. I don't like it here. I want you to know the pertinent facts

that I know of. There's a werewolf here on Somana Two who has been sent to find you. He was sent by a very powerful man, both with curans and in magic. I don't know his name or what he wants with you. Werewolves cannot be controlled by magic, so I'm thinking this man offered him something to cooperate, freedom from the reservation maybe. I don't know how much control the man still has over the werewolf now that the moon's influence has taken hold of him. My only interest is in capturing the werewolf."

"Thanks a lot. And I take offense in the fact that you don't like Somana Two. I love it here. I'll never return to Earth."

He raised an eyebrow, studying her lovely face. "Well, then there are no illusions between us, are there?"

She froze looking back into his eyes and then nodded as if in slow motion.

"Good. As I said, I want this werewolf—unharmful. I will capture him when he comes for you, but I warn you that it's possible this man will not stop after I get the wolf. He may come after you again, and it might be in your best interest to leave the moon. As big as this station is with a few million people, Earth is still much bigger, with many more places to hide, even from those with a powerful sense of smell."

She grinned and leaned in close to him. "Are you offering to take me home with you?"

"No."

A frown marred her face. "You are more than an ass. You know that?"

Gabriel didn't like fooling himself. He was fully aware that if he let himself go, he could become obsessed with her. Maybe he already was a little. He reached out and, stroking her silky hair, allowed the strands to flow between his fingers. To his surprise, she didn't pull away in her anger at him. "I want you. More than I can say right now. But . . ."

"But you'd never let it be more?"

"Yes, that's right."

She sighed. "Okay, I accept that. Tell me more of what's going on. I won't pretend I'm not scared out of my mind, but I'm not backing down either, and I'm damn sure not being run off of Somana Two."

Chapter Seven

Kelly peered around the cave they were situated in, and cave was what it was. The boundaries of Somana Two's artificial atmosphere extended out past the actual city to this rough terrain that was dirty and creepy. There was always light, day and night. The builders had made sure of that, but overall, the days and nights were similar to Earth. Everything was artificial, of course, because the moon's real length of day was two weeks long instead of twenty-four hours.

Nearby where Gabriel wanted to stop were the massive generators that were inspected in person once every three days but were monitored by computer constantly in a remote office. Gabriel had felt that being close to them while still out of sight of any agents would be the safest place.

"Safe for him maybe," she complained under her breath. Why couldn't he have chosen a more comfortable hideout? Something told her that it was because of the other werewolf. For some reason, Gabriel wanted to keep him safe. He had murdered countless people, but that made no difference at all since he was one of his own.

That last thought made Kelly pause. Was the other werewolf kin to Gabriel? It would make sense, and for that matter, why was that guy out of his head because of the moon and not Gabriel?

When he had completed his search of the area to be sure no one was near, Gabriel entered the cave. The lighting from outside was dimmer, but she could still make out his face. "Why are you okay, and he's not?"

He didn't ask her who she meant. Instead, he turned and dropped a bag she hadn't noticed him carrying to the ground. He searched its contents and pulled out two aluminum cans. There were no labels on them. "Simple. I am an alpha. He is not."

"An alpha?"

He used a can opener on each of the cans and then handed her one. She grimaced seeing that it was cold creamed corn, not one of her favorites, and less so because it had more than likely been processed in one of The Agency's plants.

"Yes, I have the power to change whenever I choose, and I can help my fellow werewolves to change if they're having trouble," he explained.

She watched his expression. He seemed reticent to discuss it but hadn't ignored her questions. That was a good sign. "By change you mean shape-shift?"

"Yes." The impatience had obviously kicked in again. He scooped his corn from the container with two fingers. He ate so fast she was certain he couldn't taste a thing. Kelly thought that was a good idea and tried to scarf hers down as well.

Gabriel tossed the empty can away and stood. "Stay put. Do not come out for any reason. I will wait for him out there and deal with the situation. It's not likely that the humans will follow him. They'll hang back at first." He stepped to the mouth of the cave and glanced back at her. The caressing look must have been her imagination. "Get some sleep. I'll be in by morning."

Still wary of her surroundings, Kelly lay down on the hard ground and tucked a jacket that Gabriel had tossed her under her head. She rolled to her side and tried closing her eyes to rest, but her mind was filled with speculations on who Gabriel Hunter was. Why did he change his name? Was it only because of the agents and the threat of being locked away in the werewolf reservation, or had he at some point broken the law? Somehow she couldn't picture him as a murderer, and he hadn't exhibited signs of madness. She did remember the emotions of intense guilt he had been feeling when she first woke up after the attack.

Considering his situation reminded her of her own and of how she had been forced to leave her grandfather's farm after he died. Six years before that, her mother had left, in the middle of the night, with no explanation. Kelly was an only child, but her mother hadn't wanted her because she reminded her of the man who had broken her heart. So Grandpa had raised her and showered her

with his love. However, her grandpa had had Kelly's mother when he was already up in age, so by the time Kelly was grown, her grandpa didn't have long to live.

Remembering the only person who had loved her caused tears to spring to Kelly's eyes. Was it like that for Gabriel? Did he care about this other werewolf and would try to save him no matter what he had done so he wouldn't lose the one person who loved him? She knew it was a stretch. Everyone's situation wasn't the same, and neither of them was that young anymore. Gabriel looked about thirty-five or so, and Kelly would hit the big three-O next year.

She sighed and sat up. Sleep was not coming tonight. In the cave's entryway, she stopped to search the area for Gabriel. At first she didn't see him, but then she heard a growl nearby and spotted him hunched over with one hand and one knee on the ground like he was in pain.

She ran to him. "Gabriel? What's wrong? Are you hurt?"

He let out a menacing snarl. "Get away from me!"

"What! That's no way to—"

"Kelly . . . if you knew . . ." He panted with his chin tucked into his chest so she couldn't see his face. She wondered if he was about to change or something, if he was out of control. But he had said that he didn't have that problem. Had he lied?

When she laid a tentative hand on his shoulder and he looked around at her, she knew what the problem was, the one thing he had trouble getting a handle on—his sexual desire. The lust in his eyes made her feel stark naked and terrified at the same time. Kelly turned on her heel and would have run back to the cave, but he caught her with one hand around the neck. He dragged her back to him and held her in place with an arm slung across her chest. The other hand moved down her hip and around to the hem of her skirt. He flicked the material aside and brazenly rubbed her pussy through her panties.

White-hot desire took all the strength out of Kelly's struggles. Soon she was panting as hard as he was. "Gabriel, I'm not sure about this."

His answer was another throaty growl and a lick along her neck. He sucked her skin and grazed it with his sharp teeth. She shook from head to toe. Her mind was telling her that this was too dangerous, to stay in this man's arms, but her body wanted everything he had to offer. She didn't know what werewolves were like. She only knew the stories people told, the depraved ones where prostitutes were brought in to the lone werewolves on the reservation. These men didn't have wives or girlfriends because their kind was rare, and The Agency didn't allow procreating of the natural kind and definitely didn't allow biting to spread their numbers.

The rumors told of the prostitutes coming out bruised and exhausted to the point of fainting, but they also said the women pleaded to be sent back.

"Why?" Kelly asked when Gabriel had turned her head with a firm grip on her chin to rain feverish kisses on her lips. "Why do the agents allow the lone wolves to mate?"

Gabriel spun her around to face him, took hold of the waistband on her panties, and ripped them off her. He followed that shocking move by tearing her blouse straight down the center to expose her bare breasts. His eyes narrowed on her puckered nipples, but he didn't stop. He hoisted her up, and she wrapped her legs around his waist while he walked them both back to the cave.

"Because a werewolf male, especially an alpha who does not get his sexual needs met, is uncontrollable. He will kill anything and anyone who stands between him and his desire."

His eyes glittered in the darkness of the cave as he placed her down on the ground and followed with his bulky body above her.

She shivered. "You're a lone wolf."

"And an alpha. As I said."

She thought to make some quip like "double trouble," but the words stuck in her throat when Gabriel jerked her legs apart. She thought he was about to stuff her full of his cock, and she

welcomed it because she was already wet. But instead, he covered her moist opening with his mouth and ran a hungry tongue from top to bottom. Kelly's hips came up off the ground. She found his head and jerked on his hair as her shout of pleasure filled the enclosure.

Gabriel ate her like no other man had before. It was so good that she couldn't get enough. She wanted the sensations to go on forever. Like the wanton prostitutes she'd heard about, she rode his mouth, pumped her hips, and called out encouragement to him to eat all of her and to make her come.

Her words spurred Gabriel on. They seemed to send him even farther over the top. He licked and nibbled and tugged at her little clit until she was screaming and pleading, feeling like she couldn't take any more but was desperate for it. She jerked to a seated position and shoved him back until she could climb on top of him.

Kelly thought he would fight her for dominance, but he let her spread her legs over his head with her ass resting on his chest. Gabriel grasped her from behind and shoved her forward to his mouth.

"Gabriel," she shouted. "I can't take any more. Please, I need to come now."

He caught her clit between his lips and sucked it into his mouth. The tension built inside Kelly. She squirmed, but he tightened his grip, driving her harder to his flicking tongue. How could he keep up the rhythm, she wondered through her fevered mind, and then she didn't care. Her orgasm descended like a tornado twisting her insides, made her alternate between clenching against him and inviting more.

She fell on her hands over his head and gasped for breath. Gabriel kept licking her until he had consumed every drop of her come. When he stopped, she climbed down from him on trembling legs, but Gabriel followed behind her like a predator to the opposite wall. Kelly stood slowly, faced the wall, and looked back at him.

He closed in, his intent obvious. His cock hung heavy and long in front of him, and when he reached her, he dipped his knees so the bulbous head pierced her from behind. His lips at her ear, he warned, "You cannot deny me."

She bit into her lower lip and swallowed. "I wouldn't consider it."

But she was still afraid.

Chapter Eight

Gabriel should walk away. He should forget Kelly and let her go now because she was human and too delicate for the darkness that lurked in him. Every second he touched her, he felt the last vestiges of his control ebbing away. And yet, maybe it was already gone because he could no more stop himself from entering her than dying right here by will alone.

Kelly was on the tips of her toes with her back arched as much as humanly possible, and her sweet pussy gave around his cock while he drove it into her. Still, getting inside was the tightest fucking squeeze. He should withdraw. He didn't want to hurt her, but damn it, he was going to have her. All of her.

He pushed harder. She cried out, and he thought it might be in fear and pain, but no, he still smelled her desire. She wanted it despite his roughness, despite what he was. *Kelly*, his beast shouted in his head. *Mine!*

Hell no. He did not go in for that ancient belief that there were mates out there bred for a werewolf and that he had simply to find her and claim her. Gabriel had spent his life as a loner, and he would continue as one after he'd taken Kelly. There would be other women who felt just as snug around his cock, who made his wild side rage for more. Wouldn't there?

At times like this, he felt that the werewolf part of him and his human side were separate, when it went after with a vengeance what it wanted, Gabriel's reservations be damned. And then when he lost himself in the pleasure, when he gave in, they became one again—until the next time.

Give in, the beast urged. *Doesn't she feel good? Doesn't she feel better than all the others?*

She's no different, he maintained, but then he ran his hands along her small, curvy hips and she dipped her head back, her long, sooty lashes curling against her pale cheeks, and she captured him. He studied her, the swollen rose lips that he had kissed until she whimpered, and the graceful neck. He couldn't hold back. Just a taste. He could afford to lose himself for a little while.

With a firmer hold on her sides, he pushed his cock forward until he was all the way in. Kelly shuddered, but Gabriel didn't allow her too long to adjust. He began a slow stroke, bumping her round ass each time he advanced. He caught her around the waist and rested a palm on the wall so he could lean back a bit and watch their movements. This was right in so many ways.

"You like how I feel in you, don't you, Kelly? You want all of my cock. Say it," he demanded.

She whimpered. "Yes, Gabriel. It feels good. I want it all."

"Tell me you need it," he growled.

A muscle spasm rippled through her thighs and made the hair on his legs tingle. He picked up the pace, pushing harder each time he entered her. She wiggled and whined, at first trying to get away from him and then pushing back to get him inside her again. He knew that it was almost too good, sensations overwhelming her mind until she didn't know what to do.

Gabriel tugged on her hair, bringing her head back to him so he could claim her lips. When he raised his head, he did so just enough to speak against her trembling mouth. "I said, tell me you need me. Don't disobey me, Kelly. I will punish you for that."

Her pussy walls tightened around his shaft, and he knew she was close to coming. He pulled back from her until only his tip pierced her wetness.

"No! Gabriel, don't," she pleaded. "I'm close. It's so strong."

He tugged her hair again. "What did you say?"

"I need it," she screamed. "Please, Gabriel. I need it. I have to have it now. Please."

He plunged into her and began to pound in and out. With one hand, he teased and pinched her nipple, and with the other, he played with her sensitive clit. She bucked almost as wild as one of his own, and Gabriel's orgasm rocketed up from whatever secret place that bliss started and spread into

his cock, which made it harder, bigger. He drove into Kelly with everything he had, until she was off her feet and in his arms.

She came. He felt her passage soften around him, but he didn't lessen his pumping. He nuzzled her neck, drunk with her natural scent, the sweat of their bodies, their come, and the blood pounding through her veins. And then he bit her, hard and cruelly, breaking her tender skin. She went limp in his arms, and tears rolled down her cheeks. The moment his desire eased, the guilt set in. No, he couldn't have. He couldn't have bitten her. He had never bitten another human being in his life.

Biting anyone would make the person a werewolf. Biting a female during sex would make her . . . *No! Fuck, no!*

The last of his release filled her, and he sank with her to the ground. He pulled out, and a whimper was wrenched from both of them. Shame washed over Gabriel when he spotted the small wound as he laid her gently beside him. After he had watched her a few moments and seeing that she neither moved nor said anything to him, he stood up, dressed, and left the cave. He would spend the night outside, thinking about how to fix this shithole he had dug himself into.

* * * *

Hours had passed. The time for first light of dawn on Earth had flashed on the dome ceiling, and yet, he had not come to a decision on how to handle the situation with Kelly. All night he had been busy fighting his body, resisting the urge to go back in the cave and take her again and again. She had not come out, which he hoped meant that she was getting some rest. Even having sex with her once, he must have left her sore. She needed time to recover.

A growl split the silence around him.

Gabriel came alert and scanned the area ahead. Rocks and craters here and there blocked a straight view back to the city, but how could he not have smelled him coming? He had been lost in thought over Kelly, guilt-ridden. "Show yourself, brother. I know it's you. I'm here to help you." When no answer came, he called out, "Michael!"

The wolf stepped into view, his ears laid back against his head, his teeth bared, and a deadly snarl rising from his throat. Gabriel sensed the danger. Worse, he sensed the madness that laced his brother's blood. The moon had sent him over the edge. Gabriel guessed that the man who had sent him had filled Michael's nostrils with Kelly's scent and set him loose. Now, all Michael knew was the hunt, the very thing that every one of them thrived on, the feeling of tracking one's prey relentlessly, sometimes not sleeping for days because it was just too addictive a sport.

Gabriel had been there, many times, but he chose his prey and his location, back on Earth. And it had never been a human, not for sport anyway. Michael didn't have that mental clarity to know what was right and what was wrong, which was why he had mowed down those agents. Now the stakes were higher. As thick as blood was among family members, a mate was a tighter bond. Gabriel might not want her, but Kelly was his, and he would rip his brother in two to save her.

"Let me help you, Michael," he said into his brother's mind. *"You must sense it. She's mine now."*

He waited for the response, but none came, and Michael slinked closer. Knowing he couldn't wait any longer, Gabriel took on a defensive stance. He had to change. In his human form, he'd never be able to take his brother down. Just when Michael leaped across the gap that separated them, Gabriel stepped to the side and drove a punch into his brother's jaw. The wolf howled and went sailing against a boulder. The blow merely winded him, and soon he was coming at Gabriel again.

Dropping down to one knee, Gabriel began the shift to his wolf form. By the time his brother charged him a second time, he was able to meet him with claws and sharp teeth. The two of them

were evenly matched in size, but Gabriel was older by two years, and he had the added power of the alpha wolf. On the other hand, Michael did not have the weakness of caring whether Gabriel lived or died, making it a hell of a lot more difficult for Gabriel not to do too much damage. While they tumbled and tore at each other, he had to contain his anger and natural instinct to kill.

What felt like hours later from the ache in his muscles, Gabriel faced off against his brother for what he hoped was the last time. They circled one another, growls halfhearted from exhaustion. The hope Gabriel held on to was that Michael appeared more wrung out than he did. One good blow should bring him down and allow Gabriel to begin reaching out to his brother's mind, if he had the strength left.

Before he could make his move, a new scent lit the air around him, one that warned of danger and was familiar at the same time. Someone was coming, but Gabriel couldn't concentrate on remembering why he recognized the scent and put all his attention on his brother. To make matters worse, Kelly chose that moment to wake up.

In one fluid motion of horrifying events, Gabriel noted that Kelly was scratching at her ear like he had seen her do before with a worried expression on her face. She was walking with a tentative step, and he knew that was from his overuse of her incredible body. At the same time he was seeing her while recalling what he had done with her earlier, he felt a sharp pain in his neck and watched his brother swing around, shift to his human form, and charge toward Kelly. In two seconds, he had her pinned against the side of the cave wall, trapped with his hard, naked body.

Gabriel let out a bark and began to run for them, but when he did, his vision blurred, and he misstepped and fell on his face. Standing up turned out to be a feat in itself. He shook his head, trying to clear it, and rubbed a paw across his nose. Shadows in his peripheral vision moved around him, but he couldn't see anyone. He looked back toward Kelly and Michael and let out a howl when his brother ran his tongue along his mate's throat and she cried out.

"Let her go!" he shouted in his brother's mind.

Michael winced and grabbed his head before stumbling away. Kelly ran a few steps in Gabriel's direction, but more shadows moved between them, blocking Gabriel's view of her. He blinked a few times, but it didn't help. And then a face came down into focus before his eyes, a heavysset man with beady, evil eyes.

"Oh, don't worry, wolf. I'll take good care of her for you."

And then Gabriel crumpled to the dusty ground.

Chapter Nine

Back in cuffs again. However, instead of being taken to an Agency arrest ship to transport back to one of Earth's prisons, Kelly had been taxied to a small private ship that she was sure would make the voyage to the mother planet in no time. She tried using her magic on the cuffs, but like before, someone was blocking her ability.

Although she was mad as hell at how Gabriel had used her body and then walked away like it meant nothing, she couldn't stop thinking about him, worrying that head agent had had him killed or something. She closed her eyes and leaned back in the plush seat she occupied. No, he wasn't dead. His emotions, which were full of turmoil and guilt, were alive and well somewhere. It was odd, though, that she could even sense him. Her picking up on other people's emotions was only something she did with an article that was connected to them or if they were very near.

She glanced around the cabin she occupied. An agent stood facing her in front of the door with his hands clutched together. To his right were a couch and a side table that matched the chair she sat on. To the left appeared to be a bar with two glasses and drinks on top of it. A cold box was imbedded beneath the bar. The furniture, the bar, and every other piece of décor in the cabin were in shades of black and grey. Talk about dreary tastes. She couldn't imagine what kind of person owned this ship, except that, as depressing as it was, no expenses had been spared. The owner had money and lots of it.

Kelly peered over her shoulder out the porthole. Endless stars stretched to one side with the Earth centering the scene. On the other was Somana Two. So they hadn't left port yet. Good. If she could somehow fight her way out of here, she would find a place to hide. She'd cast a new spell, one that would cloak who she was, and she'd lie low, maybe work as a waitress in one of the bars. Living off synthetics wasn't so bad. Everyone else did it.

The sting on her upper arm caught her attention, and the circumstances as to how she'd gotten the wound slid into her head. Who was she kidding? Her life was over. That bastard Gabriel had bitten her, condemned her to be like him. The worst she could expect was to be like that other one, out of her mind and killing until someone gunned her down, or she would live in captivity on Earth until the end of her days.

The computer that regulated the entire ship spoke. "Access granted, Mr. Calvin." An indicator beeped, and the door panel slid open. The man Kelly figured was the head agent stood in the opening with that same oily grin on his face from earlier when she'd been captured. She didn't know who he was, but she hated his guts.

"Why are you holding me here?" she shouted, standing to face him. "I have rights, you know. I'm an Earth citizen, and I have a license to live and work on Somana Two."

The man laughed. "Is that so, Kelly? You do know that I'm the law when it comes to Earth and Somana Two?" He snapped his chubby fingers. "I can make one holo-call and have your license revoked. I have only to talk to one person, and your record will show that of an escaped murderess. Is that what you want?"

She stared, unable to come up with any snappy responses. For the last three hours, she had been trying to force her magic to activate, scouring her memory for anything that would override a binding spell. Nothing worked. She was dead in the water—or rather, in space. So he wouldn't have the satisfaction of knowing she was afraid, she pressed her lips together and turned to stare out the window.

She sensed him walk up behind her, and when he set a hand on her arm where the wound was, she jumped. "Maybe I should say, if you don't cooperate with me, I'll kill your boyfriend. Got a fetish for dogs, Kelly?"

"Go to hell," she shouted and moved out of his reach.

He burst out laughing and continued for so long that Kelly had to grit her teeth and dig her nails into her palms to keep from reaching for his throat. That would just make things worse for her, as the agent at the door had already become more alert the moment she had stood on her feet.

At last the man settled down to a few chuckles, his face red and sweat beading his brow. He dug around in his pockets and then pulled out a scrap of cloth to swipe across his face. When he tucked it away again, he faced her. "I suppose it's high time I tell you who I am." He pinned his almost black eyes on her, and she swallowed.

"I am your father."

"The hell you are!"

He reddened still more. "I realize there is no family resemblance. You got all your mother's looks, which was a good thing since she was a beautiful piece of ass."

"You son of a—" She went at him and would have wrung his neck if a shield of power hadn't separated the two of them. Kelly stumbled backward and looked down at her hands still cuffed together at the wrists. Now power ebbed and flowed through her. She hadn't conjured a spell, so this was . . . Gazing at him in shock, she found no words to form the questions that were jumbled in her mind.

"Yes, magic." He lifted a hand to demonstrate his ability with a blue light dancing on his fingertips.

Jealousy choked Kelly. She missed her gift. If this man was speaking the truth, she had gotten it from him. So now, he'd taken it away?

He nodded as if reading her mind. "Yes, I bound your magic. A father giveth, a father taketh away." He chuckled at the paraphrase of ancient scripture. "My duties kept me from coming to collect you personally, so I sent that fool I taught to use my magic. He could only do so because of the ability being in his genes. The useless heap has none of his own. But that's neither here nor there. Now, I have you, and I promise that it will be painless once I strip you of your abilities and absorb them into myself."

She blinked. "Strip? Absorb?"

He turned and strolled to the door. "Oh, didn't I tell you? I became involved with your mother only so I could have a child with her. You see, she had a skill with magic that my line does not have. I tried countless times with many a spell to absorb it, but without success. All of the subjects died during the process. It was only a year or so before I found your mother that I discovered the way, and that way is through relation to the subject. You see, my beautiful daughter, because you have a part of my genes in you, it makes you more susceptible to the procedure. I'm pretty sure you won't die, and I will have your power. We all win."

"But-but my mother was in love with you." She looked him over, unable to keep the cringe that shook her. "I don't see why, though."

That he was insulted was visible in the stiff way he held himself and glared at her. "The oldest magic trick in the book, my dear, a love potion."

She couldn't believe what she was hearing. Her own father, and he apparently would stoop to any level to get what he wanted. "W-What part of my power do you want? Healing? My mother's people were great healers. You had only to ask, and I would have taught you how to cast the healing spells. Hell, I have piles of books!" She knew she was ranting, but she couldn't stop herself. "That wouldn't satisfy a person like you. Would it? No, you want it all."

He crossed the space between them and set a clammy palm on her cheek. She ducked away in disgust, and he frowned. "Fool. It's not healing I want at all. It's empathy."

She shook her head. "Empathy? What are you talking about?"

Staring into her eyes, her father leaned in close to her face. He seemed to open himself to her, and with sudden clarity, she knew what he felt—fear, desperation, even hopelessness, but most of all

greed. The emotion, and it was an emotion that cloaked his entire being, almost made her gag. She jerked from his hold and bent over panting for breath.

“That’s right, Kelly. Empathy. You are too stupid to realize the extent to which you can see inside others, know their feelings, and if that ability were honed as it was in your mother and others like her, you would have been able to read their minds. Coupled with my magic, which is also in you, nothing would stop you from forcing that mind to comply with whatever demand you place on it. Now do you get the picture?”

“You want to rule everyone and force anyone who doesn’t listen to you to do what you say.”

“You guessed it. But actually, I don’t care about the puny minds of humans. I can cast spells to make them comply. However, that gets tiring. What I want is to control the werewolves. Now *that* is power. Tell me, what human could stand up to a werewolf? Don’t you think that they would bow to whatever I wish to keep those claws from ripping them apart? A very painful way to die.”

“You’re evil personified.”

He grinned. “Thanks.” Turning toward the door, he called over his shoulder. “Get some rest. You’ll need it for the procedure. If you cooperate, I’ll let you have your dog toy—both of them.” The door shut on his maniacal laugh.

Kelly dropped down onto the chair she had vacated earlier. Her own father had made her just so he could take her inherited power from her mother. All these years, she had hated her mother for leaving her, for neglecting her before she left. And Kelly had fantasized too many days that her mother had lied to her about how horrible her father was, that maybe he was out there looking for Kelly, longing to get to know her. After she had grown up, she had accepted that neither parent would be a part of her life. That had been okay because she had made a new life, but now this man, this stranger, returned and wanted to take away the one thing she had left after Grandpa had passed.

No. She would fight. If it killed her, she would fight him. She turned away from the agent so he couldn’t see her arm, and she slid her sleeve up. The spot where Gabriel had bitten her was red and swollen. It still ached a little, but it was healing as any normal cut would. She guessed her father didn’t know about the bite, and she wasn’t going to tell him about it. Maybe in the process of whatever he did to her, he’d become tainted somehow.

There was still hope, but first she needed to find Gabriel. An ache that had grown steadily in her heart while she spoke with her father told her she needed to be with Gabriel more than anything else in the world.

Chapter Ten

Gabriel struggled to focus his mind, but the harder he tried, the more reality seemed to be slipping away from him. The room where they'd locked him contained electrified walls, and glowing white bars lined the door. He guessed the technology was similar to what was used in handcuffs.

Never in all these years had he let himself be caught. He would not spend his life behind bars like the rest of the werewolves on Earth. When he left home at fifteen, he and Michael had gone their separate ways. They had not known family life anyway, being orphans, which was not uncommon for werewolves. Their people were a violent bunch who lived on the edge.

Now, after so long, he was caught. He should have ignored the small longing he had for family, to belong. He should never have opened that letter, which had been a tipoff that someone had tricked his brother into going to the moon. Gabriel had always known that he was an alpha and that Michael was not. His brother would be driven out of his mind here if Gabriel didn't help. And what reason could they possibly have for it, going against The Agency's rules? He was closer to knowing the answer now having seen the man's face who was behind the plot, but all he could think about, all that consumed his mind, was his mate.

The more time passed after he had bitten her, the more the bond grew. In fact, he could sense her emotions, and the drug playing havoc with his system and his eyesight were making Kelly's emotions like his own. He couldn't distinguish what was his and what was hers. Right now, he suspected she was angry, hurt, and determined. But what if he was wrong? What if they had hurt her?

"No!" He couldn't lie here and wait to find out. He had to get free, and with Michael out of his head, he could have . . . Gabriel swallowed and tried to calm his racing pulse. No, Michael wouldn't stoop that low, he prayed. And the man after her needed her for some reason, so he would keep her safe, for now. Gabriel had to get his mind right and deactivate his prison. Piece of cake.

He shoved off the end of the bed and wobbled on his feet before sinking down again. His head was spinning like a top, unsettling his stomach. Dropping his forehead into his palm, he waited to try a second time. Before he could get himself together, something beeped, and he looked up in time to see the bars dissolve and the door panel slide open.

The beady-eyed man stepped into the room with two burly assistants. Gabriel had no time to think about his mode of attack. The two were on him, holding him in place while they jammed a needle into his arm.

"Get your hands off me," he shouted. "When I am at full strength, I will—"

"You will what, Mr. Hunter? Kill me? I think not." He strolled with too much confidence into the room. Too bad the effect was spoiled with the sweat stains under his arms and the labored breathing. "I will drop you off at the werewolf reservation, and you can go about your merry way. In fact, if you behave, I will allow a couple of prostitutes to be brought in to satisfy that incessant sexual desire your kind has."

The insult grated. Gabriel had expected his mind to become cloudier since they had injected him, but it cleared. The problem was his muscles wouldn't respond to his command to rise. "Where is Kelly, and Michael, and what did you give me?"

The man chuckled. "Stop the act, Hunter. I accept that my daughter must be a good lay. She is the spitting image of her mother, after all, but to think you actually care about her?" He shook his head while sucking his teeth. "Your kind has no loyalty. One woman is as good as the next. Mated werewolves are rare these days. All of you are more interested in getting what's yours. Oh yes, I've studied you all for years. Corraling you is not enough. I want more."

Gabriel hadn't heard much of the man's tirade beyond his first words. "Daughter?"

He grinned. "Yes, my blood runs through that witch's veins."

“And yet you treat her like you did, having my brother hunt her down like prey? You talk about me and my people wanting nothing more than sex and food, not having any sense of family. What about you?”

No repentance flashed in his dark eyes. “I make no excuses. My nature is precisely why your people intrigue me.”

“What do you want with Kelly?”

“That’s none of your concern.”

“Give me Michael,” Gabriel insisted. “I can help him.”

The older man spat. “He’s of no use to me anymore. Chances are his mind won’t come back even if I take him off the moon. He needn’t concern you either. I’ve had him put down.” With that blow to Gabriel’s hope, the man left the room, and the shield keeping him a prisoner slid into place again.

With all his concentration, he willed his legs to move, his arms, even his pinky finger—no response whatsoever. And then when he searched his mind for some other way to force his body to overcome whatever Kelly’s father had given him, a sharp stab hit him in the chest. Gabriel pitched forward and landed on his face on the cold, hard floor. He howled in agonizing pain, and the muscles that wouldn’t move a second before were in constant motion, spasms rocking him to his very core.

Had he been poisoned? He fought against the pain. At least now he could move just a little, crawling on his belly toward the exit. Of course, in his weakened state, he was liable to electrocute himself to death. His head was splitting. A pulse in his temple threatened to blind him. Setting one hand down after another in front of him with concentrated effort to drag his weight, he heard a pop. He paused, knowing that sound. The bones repositioning, expanding in places and shrinking in others, was what happened to him when he was shifting. But he wasn’t shifting. This wasn’t the time to do that. He hadn’t been considering it.

An earsplitting scream raced across his brain.

“Kelly!” *No. Not now. Please, no!* She was experiencing the change, and if he didn’t get to her now, she would become like Michael—faster still since this was her first time and she wasn’t born a werewolf. Normally, after a bite, it took days, maybe even a week, for a person to change, but since they were on the moon, all the rules seemed to be broken, the effects intensified. He was out of time.

Gabriel struggled to his feet, and with his jaw clenched, he hurled himself at the barrier. The bars shocked his system and threw him back across the room. He hit the opposite wall with a loud crash and then slumped to the floor. Shaking off the pain, he fought to get to his knees a second time and started toward the door. Alongside the bed, he braced himself on the unyielding surface and forced himself to stand. The pain Kelly was feeling hit him harder, worse than what the electricity had done. He sank to the floor, gasping for breath.

“*Hold on, Kelly. I’m coming,*” he called to her, having no idea if she could hear his thoughts as Michael could. Then again, Michael hadn’t seemed to hear, the madness having progressed too far.

“*Gabriel!*” she shouted in his mind. “*Help me, please. It hurts. I can’t take it. I can’t use my magic either. I think I’m dying.*”

“*No!*” He wouldn’t accept that. “*Listen to my voice, Kelly. Focus on me. Let me inside your mind. Allow my power to help you along.*” She was resisting, scared to trust that it was him and not her father. For a moment, Gabriel caught her tumbling thoughts and knew in an instant what her father planned for her. Kelly thought the man was using Gabriel’s voice to trick her. He would have a hell of a time getting through to her from here. But he had to try.

Instead of continuing toward the door, he focused on getting himself on the bed. Since he had the psychic link with Kelly, he would try to help her along that way. Expending all his efforts on

getting out of this room would risk her death. Gabriel would never live through that. Her father was right. Mates among the werewolves in this century were rare, but they were not unheard of. The ancient rules still applied. Mated wolves could not survive without each other. Kelly needed him, and he needed her.

He lay as still as he could, given that his body was feeling the effects of Kelly's change, and he worked to regulate his breathing. With excruciating slowness, he initiated the experience that all alphas were able to do. He entered Kelly's mind and projected himself as if he was physically before her. All the thoughts, sensations, the sounds, the smells that were around her and inside of her would be his reality until he severed the link—or she did. The procedure was dangerous. He could damage or destroy both his mind and hers during the process if he was not careful, but he would risk anything to reach her.

At first, he was surrounded by mist and malformed images, and then the area cleared. He made out the room Kelly occupied, nicer than the one where he was held. Glancing behind him, he found that he was in the center of the room, and no electrified bars crossed the door. But there was a guard. He lay on the floor, and from the awkward angle of his neck, Gabriel guessed that he was dead. A werewolf, even in the midst of his or her first change, had immeasurable strength compared to humans.

A whimper caught his attention, and he spun around to find Kelly crumpled on the floor in front of a couch. He rushed to her side and caught her beneath her chin to lift her head. "Kelly, I'm here. Look at me."

"No," she cried out, trying to pull away. "It's a lie. I know it's him. You're trying to trick me to take away my power. I'll die before I let you have it." She screamed as sudden pain hit them both.

Gabriel clenched his jaw. He tried to pull her closer, but his hands passed through her slender body. He was losing the connection. Kelly was shoving him out of her mind. This was what her bastard of a father was up against when he tried to control the werewolves. Even his magic would not hold on them. He could never dominate the beast. Hell, Gabriel could barely dominate it himself.

"Kelly, listen to me. It's Gabriel. If you don't follow my instructions, you will die. Do you want that?"

"Better than giving in to you!" Her eyes were glazed, almost translucent they were so pale.

"Kelly! Damn it, it's Gabriel, not your father. Focus!"

"Go to hell! You did this to me. You made me a . . . a . . . creature that can't control itself. You condemned me. I hate you. And you want to come in here and command me like I don't matter." She shook her head and pressed a hand to it, her lids sliding closed before spreading wide. "No, it's not you. Not Gabriel. It's him. I'm so confused, and it hurts."

She sank into a faint that Gabriel knew wouldn't last. He was out of options. The two of them being mated made his ability to guide her through the change harder. More challenging was the fact that her father was trying to manipulate her, and Gabriel had already betrayed her by what he had done when they were making love. The situation seemed entirely hopeless.

Chapter Eleven

Kelly opened her eyes, and the first thing she noticed was the agent's glassy eyes staring back at her from across the room. She shuddered in disgust and fear, but had no strength yet to rise and turn her head. Scanning the rest of the room as far as her peripheral vision would allow, she caught sight of a furry body lying still.

She opened her mouth to speak, but nothing emitted but a whine. What the hell? A thought to put a hand up to check her mouth entered her mind, but when her muscles twitched to make it happen, horror hit her hard enough to make her howl.

Howl? She fumbled to her feet and looked down at herself. She matched the body nearby in fur, from head to toe, or paws. *Impossible.* She had to be dreaming. She closed her eyes and chanted mentally, *Change back, change back.* Nothing happened. Instinct seemed to kick in, and a craving for something that was beyond her comprehension took over her body.

A familiar scent filled her nose, and she recognized it as that of her mate. He was what she was looking for. He was what she needed. On unsteady paws, she walked over to him. At first, she thought he was dead, but then she saw the rise and fall of a powerful chest. She cried and began to lick at his face.

"Gabriel, wake up. Please wake up." What happened to him? Had she attacked him like she had the guard? Images of her going for him had entered her mind the moment she saw him dead, and she had blocked them out. No memories of what she had done followed her seeing Gabriel unconscious. And she didn't want them to. This was her mate. She didn't reason much in this state, as a wolf, but her mate she recognized, knew him like she knew herself.

When she lowered her head to nudge him awake, her nose went through him. Kelly jumped back, eyes wide in shock and fear. She stared in disbelief as Gabriel began to fade from view. Another howl rent the confined space of the room, and Kelly padded from one end to the other, not knowing what to do, how to change back, or what had happened to Gabriel.

On her fourth pass across the door, she picked up on another scent, still her mate, but coming from somewhere else. She scratched at the door and even threw herself against it. The panel didn't open. Kelly whined, desperate to get to him.

"Gabriel!" she called out in her mind. She sensed him just beyond her mental reach, like something was blocking him from communicating with her. For that matter, how did she even know she could communicate with Gabriel in her mind? And yet, she was sure she could, sure she had done so not long ago. Images of him helping her with her transition came back to her memory, violent, pain-filled images.

While she continued to thump the door, footsteps sounded in the hall beyond it. Kelly paused, backed away from the door, and waited. The door slid open, and with muscle built for power and speed, she launched herself off the floor straight at the agent's chest. Although the instinct to rip out his throat with a vicious bite was strong, she resisted it and instead knocked him to the floor so hard his head cracked on the tile. He lay unconscious atop his dead comrade, and Kelly shot through the door before it slid closed again. With desperate need, she followed her nose down the hall and around a few corners before she was outside the room she knew Gabriel was in.

Being so close to him, she didn't have to will herself to change. The transformation took over whether she liked it or not, and her legs crumpled under the pain of cracking bones. She could scarcely suck in a breath until it was over, and then she was crouched on the floor naked.

She stood and glanced up and down the hall. No one was in sight while she skimmed her fingers over the controls to unlock the door and deactivate the electric security bars. Whoever had designed the device had not equipped it with a password, so she had only to power it down.

The moment she crossed the threshold, lust snaked along every inch of her body. He was stretched out across the bed, unmoving, with his eyes closed. Her vocal cords were working again, so she could speak without a problem, but even still, she heard the beast within whine as it did before, craving its mate.

She crossed the room to him and climbed up on the bed so that she straddled him. Running her nose along his neck and slipping the tip of her tongue out to have taste, she luxuriated in the size of her man. His rumpled shirt had somehow come up enough to reveal his solid abs, and she ran a hand over them before tugging at his pants.

He stirred, and his dark lashes parted. Comprehension was slow in coming, but when it did, he spoke. “Kelly?” He glanced around them. “We need to get out of here.”

Gabriel tried to rise, but she pushed him down. With one hand on his chest and one fighting with his belt, she licked her lips. “No, I need it.”

“When we’re safe.”

“Now!”

Before he could untangle her hands from his body, she had wrapped her fingers around his cock and was stroking it into a harder, bigger state—just as she liked it. Kelly lifted a knee and would have fed him into her moist heat if he hadn’t stopped her.

“Easy, slow down,” he commanded. “The beast is hungry, and all it knows is base instinct, but you must maintain control, Kelly.” With a lightning movement, he reversed their positions so he was on top. “You’ll heal quicker than before, and you’re stronger, but I am still much bigger. If we’re not careful, I could rip you apart, and pain is pain no matter what kind of creature you are.”

As far as she was concerned, his words were just talk to delay her getting what she wanted. Aggression rose inside her, and it would not be denied. She closed her fingers around the material of his shirt, right at the top button, and tugged. The rip and pop made him catch his breath. He glanced down at himself, and she laughed, tearing away more. When his massive chest came into view, rugged and tanned from a life spent on Earth rather than the moon, she dragged her nails along it, slicing the skin at each point of her fingers.

He growled. “You little witch.”

He caught both her wrists and pinned them above her head. With a knee, he shoved her legs apart and allowed his cock’s head to press against her heat. Her mouth dropped open, and arching her back, she pushed her breasts toward him.

“Is this what you want?” he asked her, squeezing her wrists tighter but not penetrating her between her legs. “Answer me, Kelly. Do you want me to fuck you now and risk our lives?”

“Yes,” she begged. “Do it.”

She wiggled beneath him and tried to force him to enter her pussy by lifting her hips toward him. He jerked back and then held her down with the weight of his body. Now matter how much stronger she was, how much wilder she felt, he was more so. And she didn’t need magic or instinct to know Gabriel would never allow her to rule him or to call the shots between them. Not if he didn’t want it himself.

Kelly would not be outdone. She whimpered and pouted. She twisted left and right so her taut nipples would graze Gabriel’s chest. The one thing Gabriel had tenuous control over was the beast, and Kelly could almost smell its want.

“He wants me if you don’t,” she told Gabriel. Despite knowing that he and the beast were one and the same, Kelly noted the jealousy flash in his dark eyes. He released her wrists and rose off her. At first, she thought he had changed his mind, that he wouldn’t take her at all. But he stood by the bed, stripped his tattered shirt, and peeled his jeans the rest of the way off.

When he was naked, he reached for her. Rough and mean, he yanked her to her feet and shuffled her around to the foot of the bed. With a hand at the back of her neck, he guided her to

bend over while he kneed her legs apart from behind. Realizing what he planned, Kelly panted and gripped the bed covers in her fists. Anticipation tightened her belly, and her pussy clenched, aching for his entry.

"You push me too far," he complained on a growl. Without preamble, he thundered up her channel. She screamed. He was right. It did hurt. When had he gotten as big as this or she so tight that she could scarcely fit him in? She rose up on her toes and arched her back, but it did nothing to lessen the discomfort. Gabriel rested a hand on her back as if he thought she would pull away. He was an uncaring bastard, she thought. Yet, if he stopped, she would figure out how to change into a wolf and kill him where he stood.

"This is why you don't rush me or provoke me," he instructed her while he eased out and then in again. When he paused to lean down and lick her back and nip her shoulder, she moaned, shutting her eyes. His lips pressed for an instant to her earlobe, and then he spoke again. "Push me too far, I lose myself to him, and he will take what is his. Do you understand that, Kelly?"

"I . . ."

He moved aside a little to smack her ass. She cried out.

"You do know you're mine, right?" he insisted.

Defiance rose in her. She was wolf now too, damn it. "And you're mine. Don't you forget it." She glared over her shoulder at him, daring him to deny it. His eyes glittered a dangerous navy, but he said nothing. She shoved her point home. "I feel her inside me, and she tells me you're hers. If she wants your cock, she'll have it. When she wants it!"

He seemed about to protest, but then he grinned and leaned back from her to grip her hips. "Then my mate will have what she craves before we go."

Gabriel bent his knees, held on to her, and began a slow pound against her ass. Kelly bit down on a growl of pure satisfaction. Both the knowledge that she had gotten the upper hand with him and the sensation of his long, thick shaft gliding up her tunnel made her ready to come. She arched as much as she could to give him better access and pushed back with each of his thrusts.

He picked up the pace and pumped harder. Kelly couldn't hold her position. She climbed atop the bed, and Gabriel wrapped an arm around her to lift her higher. He covered her with his entire body. He was so large that she felt tiny for the first time in her life, despite being called an Amazon from the time she was twelve.

Gabriel's arms stuck out on either side of hers. Just watching how he curved over her, his thick thighs making hers look more slender, got her hotter. When she turned her head, he followed with his, raining kisses along her cheek until he demanded she turn back so he could claim her mouth.

"I'm yours," she told him in her mind.

"I know."

A tear slid down her cheek. He licked it away. One minute, he was gruff and didn't treat her right, and the next, she seemed to be precious to him. She wanted to be sure. This wasn't the time, was it? Gabriel rested a palm on her belly and shook her as if he knew how her thoughts wandered. She wasn't aware of his thoughts beyond him speaking in her head.

"Come," he told her softly.

Her body, tuned to his, tightened for an orgasm. Gabriel ran his hand up to her nipples, teased them, and then he lowered it to her clit. The second he tugged, she lost it. She bucked under him, reached back to grab hold of his thigh while she drove his cock deeper into her pussy. She cried out her pleasure, and Gabriel matched it with a howl.

Kelly couldn't care less about someone coming along to find out what all the noise was about. She dropped down to the bed with her ass high in the air. Gabriel didn't slow his thrusts for a second. Even when his come spilled inside her, he pumped and pumped. Kelly commanded him to keep going, to do it harder.

She came screaming, and Gabriel pulled out of her long enough to lap at the cream dripping down from between her sore nether lips. He drove his tongue inside her, scooped up more, and then clamped down on her clit. All the strength left her body as a second orgasm ignited. She lifted one leg, tangled her fingers in Gabriel's hair, and rode his hungry mouth.

She could go on like this forever. She could come and come until she fell unconscious, but some sense of self-preservation kicked in. A second before she alerted Gabriel, he took one last lick at her pussy and then sat up, an arrested expression on his face.

He climbed off the bed and sniffed the air. How he could smell past her and his juices in his nostrils, she didn't know, but he seemed to.

"Come on. We're leaving."

This time, she didn't argue with him giving her orders. She climbed off the bed but then stopped when she realized she had no clothes to slip into. Gabriel looked down at her with a frown on his face when she didn't move.

"We'll go in wolf form."

She chewed her lip. "I don't know how to change."

His expression softened, and he laid a hand on her cheek and then pulled her closer to him. "Don't worry. I will teach you everything you need to know. However, right now, we're out of time. They're coming." Raising her chin higher and looking deep into her eyes, he instructed, "Let me in, Kelly. I will guide you to change. You don't have to be afraid because I'll always be at your side."

With a deep breath, she closed her eyes and swallowed, trying to calm the uncertainty that threatened to choke her. She believed him, and with the tender look in his eyes just now, she could almost think he was falling for her. Either way, they belonged to each other now. There was no turning back.

"Okay. Do it."

Chapter Twelve

They were on the ground again, on Somana Two, but now they were on the run. No matter how much Kelly wanted to stay on the forsaken moon, Gabriel didn't care. The safest place, the greatest chance they had of survival, was on Earth. After he had placed her somewhere safe, he would return for Michael and kill her father.

Gabriel was no fool. That bastard might have said he had killed Michael, but as damaged as his brother's mind was, the two of them still shared a familial connection. No matter how far he had traveled over the years, he knew Michael was alive. He felt him, and sometimes during that time, he had sensed his thoughts, had dreams of Michael's experiences.

At breakneck speed, Gabriel dragged Kelly through the crowds lining the sidewalks. He needed to put as much distance between them and Kelly's father as possible. They also needed to keep a lookout for agents. Those who were in his hip pocket were everywhere.

When Kelly tugged on his arm and wouldn't be pulled any farther, he slowed down and glared at her over his shoulder. "What is it?"

"Where are we going?"

"Someplace safe. That's all you need to know for now," he quipped.

She jerked her hand from his and came to a complete stop. "My ass! If it's somewhere like that dusty cave, you can forget it. We need to talk about what our next move will be and how to bring my father down. I don't want to be on the run the rest of my life."

He spun to face her and pulled her close. He'd noted the soft expression spread over her countenance when she thought he was going to hug her, but when he used the move to get her shuffling along again, she grumbled in complaint.

"Kelly, stop fighting me. I'm trying to keep you safe." Guiding her to the narrow space between two rickety buildings, he glanced up and down the street to see if they were being followed. When he judged the coast clear, he focused on her beautiful face and almost forgot the danger. "After I get you hidden with a contact of mine, I will go back for my brother and take care of your father while I'm at it."

She stared at him in silence for a few moments. "You mean kill him."

"I cannot have my mate threatened. Period."

"About that—"

"Later. We must move."

When he reached to grasp her arm again, she jerked away from him. "Okay, Mr. Big Shot. First, I'm not going to stay behind while you risk your life for me. I can fight my own battles. And two, we need to go somewhere to talk about our strategy. I know just the place. O'Malley's."

He blinked. "The sandwich shop?"

"Late-twenty-first-century menu choices. Very retro. They even have a couple of real vegetable dishes." She rubbed her stomach. "Although for the life of me, I can't figure out why that doesn't appeal the way it used to."

Gabriel chuckled. "That's because your body has changed, a drastic change. Your eating habits will as well. Another reason you cannot subsist here. At least on Earth, there are black-market cattle farms."

"You're kidding." Her eyes widened, and she looked like she wanted to grab a ship to Earth right then. When she learned that more than one werewolf had attempted a vegetarian life and failed, he didn't know what she would do. Even on the reservation, The Agency provided synthetic meat. It was what they were—carnivores. They couldn't change that after centuries of existence.

After some time pondering his words, she snapped out of it. "Well, right now, we can go to O'Malley's and talk. I'm guessing my father will not be quick to use Michael to hunt for us again. He

might need to send for another wolf since they're not kept here." At his stiffening, she touched his arm. "I'm sorry."

He dismissed the sympathy in her eyes. He could not afford to be weak. That would just get them both killed. "Never mind. I'll handle it. But we cannot just waltz into that restaurant. Agents are everywhere."

She wiggled her fingers in front of his face and grinned. "I have my magic back. I can cast a spell for a different look for both of us. Whatever my father bound me with was broken when I changed. It might not be permanent. Maybe he'll zap me again later, but for now, I can do something about us being recognized. I can't, however, mask our scent, so we better come up with a plan quickly."

Gabriel decided to humor her. He would go along and give her some trumped-up plan for getting back on the Agency ship, and then he would deliver her to his contact for safekeeping until later. This way, he would not have to battle a new female werewolf who did not know all that she was in for now that she was no longer human. He had seen this calm acceptance before, as if being turned into a savage beast was a common occurrence. Somewhere down the line, when the danger was past, and her father was taken care of, Kelly would break, and he would be there for her.

Gabriel might not have meant to take a mate, but now everything inside him screamed that Kelly was his and his alone. He knew she didn't like how he got all high-handed with her, but well, she'd learn about that too. She would fight him when he protected her like she couldn't take care of herself, but she would come to realize the two of them together was better than being apart. In fact, it was the only thing tolerable.

Inside O'Malley's, Kelly's tongue rolled out of her mouth, and if Gabriel hadn't molded her to his side with an unyielding arm, she would have leaped onto the nearest table and ripped into someone else's food. He sighed. Common sense should have told him not to come here. She was starving. He had decades of practice controlling the beast. She had hours and hadn't appeared to use any restraint.

"Easy, girl," he told her, stroking her side. "We have to wait for our own."

"I need to eat right now."

He stopped rubbing her hip because it was making him hard. Damn, he wanted her again, right here. Would it be so bad if he tossed her across one of the tables and took her? *No, Gabriel, get a grip.* His mate was a bad influence.

Soon they were tucked into a booth, and Gabriel sat watching Kelly wolf down a synthetic steak. She hadn't even perused the vegetarian menu, and frowned in disgust when the manager, who seemed to know her, suggested it.

"Sooner or later, they all go to the dark side," the man had commented with a chuckle and walked away.

Dark side was right, Gabriel realized when Kelly at last put her fork down. She seemed to remember her manners and wiped her mouth with her napkin. "Sorry. I was famished. I don't know what came over me. I don't think I've ever eaten steak. It was incredible. Does real meat taste like this?"

He grinned. "Better. I can make sure you have it as often as you like on Earth."

"Drop it, Gabriel. I'm not leaving Somana Two. Once my father's taken care of, I won't have to."

He picked up his glass and swirled the crimson liquid inside. "And us?"

She didn't respond. Gabriel sighed. This was one more thing to put on the back burner until they were freer to make decisions about where they lived. From the fire in her lovely eyes, he would have a battle on his hands. Somehow, he looked forward to it.

Chapter Thirteen

Kelly dropped her gaze to the drink in her hand. She sipped the wine slowly and wondered at the berries that made it. After stuffing all that meat into her system, she should not think twice about it. And the sad fact was, she'd do it again. Gabriel had said she had changed. That much? To where she didn't recognize herself?

When they had come into the restaurant, the smells were like 3-D, all around her, driving her mad. Not *truly* mad, because Gabriel had guided her to a safer place with his own power as an alpha, but still it lurked somewhere just outside of herself—or was it buried deep inside, with the beast she knew resided in her belly? She considered that. Her belly, the place where she believed all her magical ability lay. Did the beast occupy her space spiritually, or was it all a physical thing? Her head hurt trying to figure it out. Better to just let it go for now as Gabriel had suggested.

Thinking of him, she glanced up over her glass and studied his blue eyes, so full of intensity. He was probably trying to work out how to leave her on Somana Two while he played the hero and rescued his brother and killed her father. If he thought she was going to fall for some trick, he had better think again.

She considered what he had admitted to her, that he wanted her with him—on Earth. No way in hell. Kelly had always thought of the earth as a planet-sized garbage heap, a prison planet where The Agency ruled with an iron fist. But Gabriel insisted there were free areas, even land where real animals still roamed. Could he be lying? True, she hadn't much looked around her when she caught the first ship off that rock. All she'd known at the time was that her farm was taken away, by order of some new convoluted law The Agency had passed.

Maybe it was that she was afraid to go back, was afraid of all the hurt and loneliness that the place must be keeping nice and bottled for her to discover the second she set foot on the ground there. What about Gabriel?

"So you said Michael is your brother. Any other siblings? Parents? Other family?" Too late, she realized they'd more than likely be locked away.

His countenance darkened, and his jaw set. She thought he wasn't going to bother answering when he spoke. "Just Michael and I as far as I know. We were orphans, never knew our parents or any other close relatives. Werewolves on Earth are sort of every man for himself. They've had to be with the hardship The Agency put on them."

"And now I'm one of them. Thanks for that," she said with a sarcastic bite to her tone.

He frowned at her. "I left the orphanage when I was fifteen. Six months later, The Agency instituted the law that said all werewolves must be rounded up and put on a reservation for their own and others' safety. I managed to stay ahead of them."

"How did they know who you were? Or any of you, for that matter? Wouldn't you just need to keep a low profile, and you could stay under the radar?"

Gabriel gave her a look that told her it was obvious she'd been "born" last night. "Think about how you felt just now when we came into the restaurant. You remember how wild you felt, how desperate? All they had to do was wait for a full moon, and then we were hunted down like the dogs we are. On Earth, there's not this constant fight for control. But when the moon is in full view . . ."

Tears sprang to Kelly's eyes thinking of men, women, and children hunted, shot, and killed. She had read old reports of the bloodshed, the massacre really. The Agency dealt in fear, and everyone fell in line, human and beast alike. "I'm sorry."

Gabriel shrugged like it didn't matter. "It's in the past. Fact is I left Michael. I didn't want the ties of family then, wanted no one to be responsible for if I was going to stay ahead of my enemies. My contact sent me the letter, informing me of how Michael was being used. I decided to come and

get him. Now, whether you stay here or come with me to take care of your father and to get Michael, I still have to go and see the man. That's where I'm going from here."

Kelly nodded. "Okay, well, let's go."

* * * *

The house where his contact lived was nice. Not just for Somana Two's standards, but anyone's. The structure took up a good city block on its own, and while there weren't grounds and a gate surrounding it, Kelly could imagine such extravagance if this were Earth. Instead, the walls were constructed with bricks instead of the rough grey stone that other permanent buildings were made of here. When they passed through the doorway into what Kelly had assumed was the foyer, she found that they had entered a courtyard.

On both sides of the walkway leading up to another door were grass and flowers. When was the last time she had seen grass? It had been years—and *trees*. Somana Two didn't have trees. Oxygen was pumped into the dome. On the outside, there were no birds, no sky, but in this courtyard, Kelly picked up the tweet of birds, and thin but beautiful trees dotted the small space. The air was fresher, and overhead was an artificial sky.

"Oh wow, this is amazing," she exclaimed, about to veer off the path to explore. Gabriel, less than impressed, caught her arm and held her at his side. She scowled at him but didn't protest because the silent man who had let them in was leading the way deeper into the house.

"You can explore later," Gabriel told her. "Right now, I need to talk with the owner of all this. I have quite a few questions."

Kelly nodded. "So do I. Like what he does for a living."

They were shown into a room with couches and chairs, a coffee table, and a fireplace. Kelly stared around open-mouthed. All her furniture had been obtained from the salvage ships, and even with her magic, she hadn't been able to come up with designs this extravagant, this high quality.

After waiting for a good forty-five minutes, they both turned toward the door when it opened, and instead of a man, as they had expected, a woman walked into the room wearing a pleasant smile. Gabriel surged to his feet, and Kelly stood more slowly. The woman was, in a word, mesmerizing. Kelly imagined she turned green with envy at the sight of the long blonde hair, the beautiful face, and the body that could make a man drool just looking.

"Who are you?" Gabriel demanded. "I was expecting Willie Jamieson."

The woman chuckled, and Kelly felt some relief at Gabriel's blindness to how sexy she was.

"Isn't it obvious, Gabriel? I am Willie. Wilhelmina, to be exact, but I always hated that name." She waved a hand toward the couch. "Please sit down. I'll have Paul bring in something to drink."

Gabriel got right down to business. "Nothing for me. I want to know how you knew who I am and where I was. I want to know more about who you are and not just your name."

Her tinkling laugh rang out. "Big bad wolf wants to know, huh?" She tilted her head to the side with a look that must have been studied to bring a man down to his knees. Kelly gritted her teeth. When Willie leaned forward to place a hand on Gabriel's thigh, revealing a deep cleavage in the process, Kelly growled.

"Oh!" The hand was withdrawn. Willie swallowed, staring in fear at Kelly.

Gabriel stroked Kelly's cheek, and it was all she could do not to turn in to that touch and revel in it. She kept her eyes on Willie, amazed at the urge to attack that had come over her a second before.

"Easy," Gabriel warned. "You'd better keep your hands to yourself. She's brand new, and my control is tenuous at best."

“Controll” Kelly glared at him and slapped his hand away from her face. He didn’t appear to be fazed by her outburst.

Gabriel went on. “You’re not wolf. I can tell that. So who are you? And no games. I’ll know if you’re lying.”

“I’m just a concerned citizen,” Willie admitted. “The fact is I’ve accumulated a lot of wealth, and what I want is to be head of The Agency.”

“You’ve got to be joking,” Kelly interrupted.

Both Gabriel and Willie flicked glances her way before they continued to talk. Annoyance rode her back. Gabriel wasn’t telling all he had sensed. Kelly might be a new wolf, but she was an old hand at sensing emotions. Just before Willie strolled into the room, Kelly sensed her excitement, and not just excitement at greeting guests in her little sanctuary either. Willie had experienced what could only be described as bliss. If Kelly didn’t know any better, she’d say this woman had feelings for Gabriel. Yet, he acted like he’d never met her before.

“You’re right. I’m not a werewolf,” Willie told them. “But I feel a great affinity for them. When I heard about what was happening with Michael, I first hired some people to get another werewolf out of the reservation on Earth.”

Gabriel paced listening to her story. At her mention of another werewolf, he nodded. “You were looking for an alpha to control him.”

Willie clapped her hands and nodded with too much vigor. Kelly rolled her eyes, looking away.

“Yes, that’s right. Everyone knows the stories of the werewolves, the myths. Well, they’re not myths since you obviously proved them true with Kelly here.”

“Is there anything you don’t know?” Kelly was getting sick and tired of the attitude from this woman. She smiled like she was their best friend, but Kelly didn’t need empathy to sense insincerity. People like her and like Kelly’s father were users, pure and simple. They ran roughshod over anyone who got in the way of their goals. Willie had already admitted what her ultimate goal was, and of course, she would want someone to take out Kelly’s father. He stood in the way of her career ambitions.

While Kelly had been speculating over Willie’s motives, she and Gabriel had been plotting. The two of them stood, and when Kelly looked up, their attention was on her. “Uh, what?” she asked, realizing Gabriel had said something to her.

“I said you stay put while I go and have a talk with this friend Willie mentioned. I will need to make arrangements for transport up to your father’s ship. That’s not an easy task without Willie’s help, given that all takeoffs and landings here must be cleared with The Agency. Willie owns a few of the salvage ships, so she can get me up there.”

Kelly tried not to look impressed. So that’s how she made her money. Kelly suspected that wasn’t the only place Willie had dipped her fingers. And to think Kelly had been lining this woman’s pockets all these years buying used goods. The way the woman’s heated gaze never left Gabriel’s body made Kelly wish she were a poor, ugly nobody begging for food on Earth.

Kelly stood up to move close to Gabriel’s side. “I can go with you.”

He caught her beneath the chin and tipped her head up. His lips brushed hers, and Kelly’s body came alive, but the kiss didn’t last long before Gabriel drew back and put distance between them. “It’s late. Let Willie’s servant show you to our room. I’ll be in after I get the arrangements made.”

Kelly would have put up a fuss except she knew that it would do no good. Gabriel was stubborn and bossy. He would argue until she was worn out just so he could get his way. And if that didn’t work, she didn’t doubt he’d carry her to her room and lock her in. She needed to pick her battles with him, and now wasn’t the time.

“Fine.” She glanced over at Willie, who looked triumphant. Kelly ran a hand down over Gabriel’s chest. “I’ll wait up for you in bed.”

That got their host turning red, and Kelly grinned all the way to her room.

Chapter Fourteen

An hour had passed before Kelly's bedroom door opened again after Paul had closed it behind him. Kelly swung around from turning down the covers expecting to see Gabriel, but instead it was Willie. She sashayed in, a cloud of the most cloying of perfumes hovering around her voluptuous body. Kelly longed for more than the skylight in the room. To throw open a window and let in a fresh breeze would be wonderful. Too bad that didn't exist here.

"What do you want?" Kelly asked rudely.

Willie tsked and shook her head. "A werewolf one night, and already you've lost the delicate manners of a woman?"

Kelly wrinkled her nose. "Delicate? I've never been that type. I grew up on a farm, and I ran one here, of sorts, until I fell in with Gabriel. Again, what do you want, Willie? It's late, and I'm sure Gabriel will be in shortly wanting to fuck as usual."

Willie cringed at Kelly's base language, and Kelly was sure the anger and disgust flashing in her eyes was due a lot more to what she and Gabriel would be doing in this room more so than how Kelly had worded it.

The woman rested her hands on hips that must have been sewn into the skintight dress she wore. "Enjoy it while you can, Kelly, because I assure you Gabriel will be all mine soon enough."

The growl Kelly had suppressed earlier rumbled up from her chest again, and she took a step closer to her hostess. "Don't push it with me. You don't know what you're dealing with."

"Correction, you don't know *who* you're dealing with," Willie snapped. "I've been getting what I want all my life, and that's not going to change with Gabriel. I want an alpha werewolf. I've chosen him, pure and simple. Case closed."

Kelly closed the space between them. She sensed the beast inside egging her on. *Shred her. She's trying to take what belongs to us. That's our way. End her now.* But Kelly also heard Gabriel in her mind, not now, but earlier when he had visited her in her mind, had guided her to solid ground. The wildness, the ache to kill and feed on anything alive with blood running through it, had almost driven her insane when she had begun to turn. That coupled with the intense pain, like someone was trying to rip her bones out of her body one by one, had put her on the floor howling in torment.

When his voice reached her through the chaos, his encouraging words rescued her. "*The beast is powerful, but you rule it. Not the other way around. You don't need to learn to control it. You already can. You just need to believe it.*"

Kelly had taken Gabriel at his word, and mentally, she had grasped the lifeline he held out to her at the time. Later, she'd learned, it had taken all his strength to bring her through. When she had seen him on the floor in wolf form, that had been more of a memory because he had gone unconscious for a while to rest. He hadn't become alert again until he heard her calling for him.

She might not know if she wanted to follow him to Earth, and frankly, she was leaning closer to not going. The thought of going back still terrified her. But she'd be damned if some hussy was going to steal him away. Kelly would give in to the beast long before that happened.

"You think you know us, Willie?" Kelly demanded as she circled the woman. To give Willie credit, this time she didn't flinch or show any fear. Kelly refused to believe she was that stupid. "You don't know us. You're just a lowly human." She grew out a claw with almost no thought and ran it across the woman's long, slender neck. This time Willie did shake, but there was still defiance in her eyes. "I could kill you right here."

"But you won't," Willie said with a smirk.

"Why won't I?"

"Because Gabriel wouldn't like it." The purr in her voice made Kelly grit her teeth. "We already have an understanding. I told you. I get what I want."

Kelly hesitated. The truth was that she didn't like Willie touching Gabriel or even looking at him, but she didn't feel too threatened either. Gabriel had said they were inseparable. No matter how she struggled against him, she would not stay on Somana Two without him there. His admission had pissed her off and was driving her to see if she'd just stay to prove the arrogant bastard wrong.

She considered it. Maybe if she waited, she could confirm to herself if he was the faithful type. If he was swayed by the sleazy likes of Willie, then even mated, he wasn't the one for her.

"Why should I believe anything you say?" Kelly asked her.

Willie grinned. "Because I know the werewolves. I've seen them firsthand. Your experience is only with Gabriel, and what little contact you've had with his brother. Me, I've lived among them."

Kelly's eyes widened. "He said you're not wolf, so . . ."

"Who else lives among them, at least for a little while?"

Kelly thought about what Gabriel had told her and what she had read in the past. "Human prostitutes!"

"Ding, ding. Give that girl a prize."

"So you slept through them all. That's how you know them." Kelly sneered in disgust and backed away, knowing she was giving the impression that she thought Willie had a communicable disease. Willie balled her hands into fists and glared.

"I did not sleep through them all. I chose who I wanted. I learned right away where the power was, and it was with the alphas. There weren't many."

"Good for your body's sake," Kelly muttered.

"Would you shut up?"

"Why? I'm not your priest. You don't have to confess to me." Kelly crossed the room and sat down with one leg folded over the other and her arms tucked against her chest to keep herself from ripping the woman apart. She was right. Gabriel wouldn't want Kelly to kill her, but knowing that wouldn't stop the beast for long. "If you want to sleep with every shifter on Earth, be my guest, but when you think you'll just take Gabriel, you'll find yourself buried."

Just enough so the woman would get her drift, Kelly willed her eyes to shift. She knew it happened by the twitch in her eye muscles and Willie's intake of breath. Along with that reminder of what she was, she grew out her teeth to sharp points and growled long and deep so that it rumbled menacingly. Willie jerked and backed up, her hands searching behind her for the door. When she connected with the knob, she twisted it without looking and then bolted out of the room.

Kelly dropped back on the bed laughing until her sides hurt. The amusement past, she thought about her situation. Was it possible for mated wolves to cheat? Was that why they were so rare in the first place? She closed her eyes and lay still, listening to the quiet house around her. She tried to sense where Gabriel was, feel his emotions, or tap into his thoughts. Nothing worked. She couldn't tell if he was even in the house anymore.

Maybe he had a way of blocking her out. Then another thought occurred to her. Gabriel had said the werewolves were less family-oriented now. It was every man for himself. Being mated made them like husband and wife. And from what she remembered of what happened on the outskirts of Somana Two, Gabriel hadn't meant to bite her. He wasn't looking for a mate. He could be searching for a way out, and Willie was presenting just such an opportunity for him to toss Kelly aside.

She rolled over and tucked her hands beneath her head. A sharp pain streaked across her chest, and she closed her eyes, surprised to find them wet. She couldn't possibly have fallen for him, could she? Not this fast. They'd just met, and it had been all about having sex. Sure, she longed to be by his side, but even she knew that was a byproduct of their connection. Gabriel had the right idea, she decided. This had all been an unfortunate accident, and while she couldn't give back being a werewolf no matter how much she wanted to, it had to be possible for their bond to be severed.

Then when her father was out of the picture, she could go back to her life, selling her potions and herbs. Gabriel could go back to Earth, and Willie could do whatever the hell she wanted.

“So long as it’s not *doing* Gabriel,” she said on a yawn, and fell asleep.

Chapter Fifteen

Kelly woke with a start. The room was dark even though she hadn't turned the light out earlier. She felt the bed next to her, but it was empty, and from the coolness, she guessed Gabriel hadn't come to bed at all. Since she didn't bother to wear a watch because the dome clock had always been visible from the window of her shop, she had no idea what time it was.

She threw her feet over the side of the bed, scooted to the edge, and stood. Since her change, the night posed no problem for her. She saw every corner as if it were cast in daylight, and she moved to the door and opened it. In the hall, all was quiet. On instinct, Kelly sniffed the air around her and caught Gabriel's scent. Longing took hold of her, and she swung right to follow the path that would lead to him.

When she rounded a corner, his scent strong in her nose, she stopped short in shock. Gabriel was there, all right, but so was Willie. It shouldn't have surprised Kelly. The hall she had followed led to a balcony built on to the back of the house. Obviously, Willie missed Earth establishments and had created her own here. Kelly caught sight of another courtyard, and this one was just below the balcony.

In this private, darkened spot was where Willie must have chosen to seduce Kelly's mate. She had exchanged her dress for something more sheer. Lights from somewhere Kelly didn't see illuminated the slip of material so that it was see-through, and her oversized breasts were just visible, the nipples puckered. Kelly swallowed her disgust and hurt and let the anger have its way.

Not aware that she knew how to change over to her wolf form without Gabriel's help, Kelly shifted and was on all fours in seconds. Her paws ate up the space between them, and the growl she had warned Willie with earlier was now a full-on bark of attack. She leaped into the air, aiming at Willie's head, when another man stepped into view. She hadn't known he was there. He moved between Willie and Kelly, and Gabriel caught Kelly in midair.

Willie screamed and hid her face in the other man's chest, while Kelly fought to get free of Gabriel's hold so she could rip the woman up. Almost rabid, Kelly took a while to register Gabriel's soothing voice in her head.

"Calm down, Kelly. It's okay."

"It's not okay! She wants you."

"It's okay. I'm not letting you go," he told her.

She fought harder. *"What does that mean? Let me go, Gabriel. I need to kill her for touching you. She has no right!"*

"No, she doesn't. It's okay now."

She felt him pushing into her mind, and she tried to get him out, but he was too powerful. Was she going to always be subject to what he wanted? He could get away with being out here with another woman, and she was supposed to accept it?

"Let me go," she pleaded.

"Never."

She couldn't resist him. Panting, she calmed, and he sank to the floor with her in his arms. Kelly shifted to her human form, and Gabriel shielded her nakedness from the other man's view. It was only then that Kelly processed the fact that he was there. Why would Willie be attempting to seduce Gabriel with the other guy there, unless she wanted them both at the same time? Kelly shivered with loathing of the woman.

"It's not what you think," Gabriel told her.

"Why don't I believe you?"

“Because you’re afraid to.” He stood up still holding her, and without looking back or speaking to the other two, he carried her out the way she had come. Kelly peered over his shoulder, her eyes narrowed on Willie, who was crying in the other man’s arms.

“I’m going to kill her,” she whispered in Gabriel’s mind.

“If you stay on Somana Two, you will hunt her. It’s our way. But I’m not going to let it go that far.”

Kelly turned back to face Gabriel just as he kicked open the bedroom door. “You want her? Is that why you’re keeping me from killing her?”

He grinned. “Want her? No, not with this to enjoy.” His hot gaze swept over her and made her shiver. “You need to remember one thing, Kelly. The same fire that drives you out of your mind to kill anyone that touches me is the same fire that scorches my insides to possess you—you and you alone.”

She gaped up at him. Was he talking love? No. It was too soon for that, although she longed to hear him say it. She didn’t dare believe they were at that point. There was too much unsettled between them, their lives too chaotic. And he was going to explain why that bitch was half naked for him to see, or else.

Gabriel’s eyebrow went up like he could read her thoughts, but he made no attempt to explain. He reached a hand out toward Kelly’s breast, but she slapped it away. “You’re not touching me until you tell me just what was going on back there, and if I don’t like your answer, you’re still not touching me.”

Kelly stood up and turned away from him and then moved to the nightstand where a pitcher of water sat. She poured herself a glass and drank with leisure while waiting for his answer. On the outside, she might have appeared calm, but her belly was churning like a cauldron. The thought of having to share Gabriel was more than she could bear. Never in a million years did she think she’d be in this kind of situation. She had guarded her heart, locked her own weak emotions away from others, because she had experienced other people’s pain too many times to count.

Years ago, when a young woman had committed suicide because her lover had left her for another woman, Kelly had felt every bit of that heartache and for a few days had felt like the experience was her own. Not that she thought she was the type to let a man get the better of her emotionally, but she hadn’t been stupid enough to chance it either until now.

Now she knew that Gabriel had the ability to destroy her, but then if what he had said was true, she held that same power over him. Would it rip his heart out to see her with another man? Would he vow to hunt the man until he rid the earth of his presence? Even while Kelly stood there drinking water, she knew if Gabriel stepped out of her way she would kill Willie. Why was he protecting her? Did he want her for himself as well?

“I won’t share you,” she told him over her shoulder, too weak to face him, to allow him to touch her. Not until they settled this situation would she give in to the lust stirring inside her, an ache to have her legs wrapped around his waist.

“No?” When his voice came so close behind her, it startled her. Gabriel rested his hands on her shoulders and tightened his grip when she tried to pull away. “You’re determined to think the worst of me.”

“You never explain. You just run roughshod over me and try to boss me around.”

“I am an alpha—”

“Does that mean you get to treat me like gum stuck to the bottom of your shoe?”

“No.” He kissed the back of her neck, and she swayed toward him before she caught herself. He groaned. “I find it hard to be accountable to someone after so many years, and yes, who I am leads me to bark out orders with an expectation of having them followed. You must understand that I’ve never stayed in one place long enough to learn how to care for a woman, especially a new wolf.”

He flipped her around to face him and backed her to the wall. She gasped when she found him naked, wondering when he had removed his clothes. The brush of his hard body against hers weakened her knees, and if he hadn't been there to support her, she would have slid to the floor. Gabriel burrowed his way between her legs with one of his, removing the space between them. She swallowed, trying to keep control. It wasn't working in the least.

He took one of her hands, threaded his fingers with hers, and raised them above her head to rest on the wall. "She's under the false impression that you and I can be separated, that it takes her showing me her body, offering herself to me to turn me away from you."

He caught the other hand and raised that above her head as well. When he bent his knees to slide his body up and down along hers, she moaned. The dusting of hair on his chest tormented her stiff nipples and made her wet and ready.

"What she doesn't know is that you and I are one. There *is* no separating us, except through death of one or the other. She could research the werewolves for years and not come to understand just how deep, how strong our bond is." His eyes narrowed on her face, and she found that she couldn't look away from him. "For that matter, you don't understand either. You think that you can stay here without me. You cannot."

Kelly firmed her jaw in anger. "Then you can't go back to Earth without me either."

"Exactly."

Tears filled her eyes. She was trapped, whether she wanted it or not. And even while the truth of his words echoed inside of her, she wasn't ready to accept them, to accept that this was her life, *he* was her life from now on.

"You don't desire other women? Everyone likes to look . . ."

"Willie thought to seduce me by asking me to meet her on that balcony. What she didn't know was that I also asked the man who will pilot the ship to get me on your father's vessel to come and discuss the last of our plans. Ace was just as surprised as I was when Willie showed up half naked. Since he is her cousin, you can see why he moved away and averted his head at seeing her like that." He planted a brief kiss on Kelly's lips. "And no, I did not want her in the least. I told you, your body is more than enough for me."

For just a moment, Kelly gave in to insecurity as she watched this sexy man, thinking about how a woman like her could hold on to him long term, and then she remembered what she was now, how the beast would defend her should he forget himself. She grinned up at him and tilted her head to the side. A slow come-hither look had his lips parting, and she stood up on tiptoe to nip them and lick and kiss her way over his chin to his neck. Against her mouth, she felt the rumble of his growl.

Two could play the game of seduction, and Gabriel was falling into her lure. She stuck out the tip of her tongue and traced the pulse at his throat. His head went back, and the hold he had on her hands loosened enough for Kelly to break free. She grasped his shoulders to climb his body until her pussy was wedged above his stiff cock. When she came down in degrees on the bulbous head, he shouted his pleasure.

"Fuck! Kelly, what are you doing to me?"

She chuckled, her voice growing rough and her teeth sharpening. "Taking what belongs to me."

Every glorious inch of his shaft disappeared up her passage, and she began to ride him with a frenzied pumping. With her claws extended, she dragged them along his back, and he flinched but didn't push her away. Instead, he grabbed hold of her hips and drove the two of them together harder. Kelly bit into the top of his chest, drawing blood. She licked it away, but they didn't slow down at all. She was going to come, and from the way he pounded in and out of her, she knew he wasn't far behind.

Gabriel wrapped an arm around her waist and bumped up their rhythm. Kelly whined and squirmed. She couldn't get enough. She never wanted it to end. "Gabriel," she shouted. "More, please more. I need it."

"You don't have to beg me, baby. This dick is yours. Take it all, every inch."

She screamed when he withdrew a little before flipping her around to face the wall. She pressed her hands on the smooth, cool surface while Gabriel threaded himself up her slick channel and slammed in and out until she thought she'd lose her mind. He slung an arm across her breast, teased a nipple with cruel pinches and tugs until her orgasm was imminent.

"Who do you belong to?" he murmured in her ear. "Say it."

She allowed herself a whimper. He pumped harder.

"Say it!"

"You!" Tears coursed down her cheeks. She bit into her bottom lip, but he was there to kiss away her tears and soothe her abused lip with his own. She came, crying out into his mouth, shaking so hard that she couldn't control it. Gabriel sent the sensations into orbit when he slid his free hand down and stroked her clit. A second explosion of ecstasy rocked her, and then he was shouting her name through his release.

When they were both calmer, Gabriel carried her into the bathroom. They showered in exhausted silence, and he dried them both off with a towel. At last settled in bed with a thin sheet thrown over them and their bodies intertwined, Kelly was dropping off to sleep when she thought she heard the words that meant most to a woman.

"I love you, Kelly."

Chapter Sixteen

Gabriel had told himself time and again that Kelly wasn't used to his people's ways. He needed to be gentler with her and soothe her, but every time he attempted it, he felt awkward and foolish. His old standby came roaring to the surface, and he let the beast dictate how he should treat her—as a possession, something he must control.

He couldn't read her mind, not exactly. He could speak into her head, and she could speak into his as well. But now that they were connected as mates, similar to her empathic gift, he could sense her emotions. And what he picked up on more often than not was that he hurt her when he was too gruff or didn't explain everything to her. They were going to be together for the rest of their lives, and he needed to learn fast how to relate to her. Otherwise, he would go on hurting her, and that was unacceptable.

Not that he was ready to think about why it got to him so much when he hurt her. Sure, last night, in a state of weakness, he had muttered, "I love you," into her head, but that couldn't be true. Not yet. It was too soon. Even mates had to grow from lust to love, from obsession to cherishing one another. Well, that was neither here nor there right now. He had to concentrate on eliminating her father. However, the man was very powerful. He could not control the werewolf mind, but he could influence with magic, which was precisely why Gabriel had left Kelly behind. She would be pissed off when she awoke and found him gone, but using his power over her mind had been his only option to make her stay. He would not risk her being injured in the coming battle.

Gabriel wished that he had more men with him other than just Willie's cousin, Ace, but they had no choice. There would be a number of agents on the ship. They would just have to cut through them all one by one until they reached Marcelino. One way or another, he would be brought down tonight.

Docking with Marcelino's ship caused less incident than Gabriel had expected. The agent's greed had played right into their hands when Ace had informed him that he was coming with an offering from Willie. The woman had used bribes in other situations to get what she wanted, so the cover hadn't caused suspicion. From what they could learn of the Agency leader's plans, he was expecting a ship with three more werewolves on board within the next three hours. They had to move fast. Gabriel would have his hands full trying to tame four wolves on the moon. The place was becoming a zoo, he thought without humor.

On board Marcelino's ship and in disguise, Gabriel followed Ace while another man led them to a room to await Marcelino's orders.

"Let's do it now," Gabriel insisted, impatient now that he had caught his brother's scent and knew that he was on board, suffering.

Ace cast him a look of warning as they entered a room similar to the one Gabriel remembered Kelly had been in. "Not yet. There's a chance his greed will make him come to us in person. Then we can take him out. Once that happens, I doubt the other agents will stand against us. My information leads me to believe he binds them in fear as well, maybe even uses magic to enhance their natural human abilities."

"You're probably right." Gabriel began to pace, unable to shake the sense of dread that had come over him. Something didn't feel right about this situation. Everything until now had gone too smoothly, and why *would* Marcelino accept a gift from Willie without question, now that he thought about it. Just as they had learned much about him, he must know that Willie had grand ambitions. He would never leave a person alive who could dethrone him, so to speak. Unless he didn't consider her a threat?

Back and forth, he pondered the situation, and no matter how he justified it, nothing added up. Marcelino had not gained his position and held it for so many years by being a fool. And it had not

all been done by magic either. The man was shrewd. He had been planning to take Kelly's power long before she was born. It stood to reason he had many more tricks in store to bring about his continued domination of both Earth and the moon.

Footsteps sounded outside the door, the same agent who had led them to the room by the scent of him. Gabriel swung to face Ace. "This doesn't feel right. Something's wrong."

Before he could finish his thought, the door panel slid open, and the agent stood in the doorway with a weapon in one hand and a holo-phone in the other. He tossed the phone to Gabriel, grinned, and stood waiting. Gabriel would have rushed him except the phone activated, and the hologram that rose up from the tiny device made him catch his breath.

Marcelino was not on the ship at all. Instead he was on Somana Two, and from his surroundings, Gabriel guessed he was inside Kelly's shop. Next to Marcelino was Kelly's assistant, and in the evil sorcerer's grasp was Kelly herself. Gabriel's heart seemed to stutter in his chest, and his mouth went dry.

"If you hurt her," Gabriel growled.

"You'll what?" Marcelino chuckled. "You're in no position to do anything, werewolf. And by the time you reach that salvage heap you rode in on, it will be too late either way."

Ace jerked the phone from Gabriel's hand. "What does that mean?"

Marcelino waved a hand. "It means as much as I love that ship, I am rich enough to buy several replacements. I have had one of my men activate the self-destruct countdown."

"You wouldn't do that. It would damage Somana Two," Ace told him. "You're not that stupid."

While they spoke, the ship came to life beneath their feet. Gabriel rushed to a porthole to find that the ship was powering up in order to move out of the moon's orbit. If they didn't get to their ship quickly, they would be blown to pieces in the middle of space. Gabriel pivoted on his heel and rushed toward the exit, but the panel slid closed, and he heard the beep of the lock being activated.

* * * *

"No," Kelly shouted. She jerked in her father's hold and would have ripped his arm out of its socket if he hadn't cast a quick spell that made her feel weak all over. She sank to her knees with him holding on to her. "You said you'd let him go if I came to you willingly. You said you wouldn't hurt him."

Her father laughed. "It's simple, my dear. I lied. People like me tend to do that. I never thought you'd be the naïve type yourself. Although I have to give you some credit, making the arrangements with me last night before your lover rendered you unconscious. You knew he would do what he could to protect you, but you underestimated me. No matter."

Another man strolled into the room, and Kelly recognized him as the false magic-user who had bound her magic that first time on the salvage ship. He seemed a lot less confident now in her father's presence, and she sensed fear in him. The man was terrified, and she guessed it had to do with his nearing uselessness to The Agency's leader.

"Ah, Morris, there you are," her father called out. "We can get started. Let's take this to the back. Don't want to scare the good citizens of Somana Two, do we?"

Kelly could have puked at his pleasant tone, like they were going to have a cup of coffee or something. When her father tugged her to her feet and guided her to the room she had set up like a clinic, she didn't resist him. What was the point of her living now that Gabriel was gone? This horrible pile of rocks and earth could do without her. They always had, and what did she care if her father unleashed evil on the people? At least when it was over, she would no longer feel the pain of being separated from Gabriel.

Silly her for missing the moment she fell in love with him. Even with his big, stubborn head so arrogant and dominant, she loved him. She closed her eyes and waited after her father had directed her to sit on the bed she had in the back. So great was her despair, she didn't consider how Tame could have fooled her all the years she'd known him. He had begun working as a spy for her father a while ago, and although he didn't admit it, she thought that something more than money was his reason for doing so.

Tame stood over Kelly, following her father's orders to strap her down and to administer a drug that would lower her mental defenses. Kelly stared at the wall, waiting for the end.

While she lay there with a tear sliding down over her nose and onto the cushion beneath her head, Tame leaned in close. "I'm sorry, Kelly. I never meant for this to happen, but . . ."

"But you'd do anything for him, right?" she finished.

Tame whimpered. "Yeah. Anything."

She didn't respond to his continued apologies. Instead, she tried to adjust her position without success and accepted her fate. At the first pinch of the needle and the burn spreading beneath her skin, the beast began to stir deep inside her.

"Don't fight it," she begged the werewolf inside. *"Just let it happen. It's for the best."*

The change was coming over her. Where her fists were curled, claws began to grow from her fingertips. She fought for control. Her father didn't know she had been bitten. From the moment she had stepped into her shop to meet up with him, he had bound her magic. She could still sense emotions, but she couldn't cast a spell. Not for a second had she considered the werewolf blood.

Kelly opened her eyes and looked to where her father was conversing with Morris and Tame. The three of them had their backs to her. Without thinking, she ripped the bonds from their attachments to the bed, and she rose. When her feet hit the floor, she followed them down to her knees as the earlier weakening spell was still in effect. But something told Kelly the beast was fighting hard to overcome every binding—magical and chemical.

This was what her father had been talking about. All his attempts to control the werewolves had been useless. This was why he wanted to combine her powers with his, because the werewolves were untamable.

Her father swung around, and his eyes seemed to bulge from his head. "What the hell? It can't be! You've been bitten? You're a werewolf?"

Kelly's teeth sharpened to razor points. Her bones cracked and reformed, and hair sprang out all over her, but she wasn't becoming a wolf. She knew this was the were-form, one she hadn't seen as yet.

"You killed my mate," she growled in a gravelly tone. "I'm going to kill you."

Kelly sprang at him, and Morris and Tame dove out of the way. She landed on her father's chest and sent them both flying backward into a table. The old furniture split beneath their weight, and her father howled at the obvious pain in his back. She pounded a hand on his chest, and he screeched, pleading for mercy. He muttered spells that had no effect on Kelly whatsoever.

"Kelly, I beg you. You're my daughter."

"I don't know you," she answered, hatred scorching her insides. "You wanted to drain me of my powers? Suffer likewise." She had no idea she could do it, not knowing how or what Gabriel had done to slide into another's mind, but the moment she began to invade her father's thoughts, she forged ahead without hesitation.

Gabriel could only slide into the mind of a werewolf, and it took a considerable amount of energy from him to do it, but Kelly felt no such limitations. She forced locks and fear into her father's head. She gave him suggestions that he was weak, a nobody who had never and could never wield magic. Her power seemed limitless, and she scarcely heard his screams of anguish as she tormented his mind.

The shouts around her took a while to register, and still she didn't draw back until someone touched her. She thought it was another enemy and fully intended to rip him to pieces when she turned around. Her claws sliced through soft flesh, reducing the man's shirt to ribbons. A solid chest moved between her and the enemy, and Kelly was hoisted off her feet and dragged away.

"It's okay now, baby. I'm here. Calm down."

She looked up in disbelief. "Gabriel?"

His expression was grim. "Yes, it's me. Calm yourself. Change back."

Kelly let herself return to her human form and laughed happily that he was okay. She hugged him to her and kissed his lips. While he did kiss her back, he drew away from her too fast and set her on her feet. She frowned. "What's wrong? I know you're not feeling sorry for that bastard."

Gabriel shook his head and moved to the side. Kelly gasped. Ace, Willie's cousin, was perched on a chair clutching his chest. Blood stained what was left of his shirt and covered his hand. "It's okay, Kelly. You didn't mean it."

"Oh no, I'm so sorry." She rushed over to him and tried to pull his hand from the wounds so she could take a look. He held her off. "Let me see. I have herbs here and a healing spell. I can fix it right up in no time and even take the pain away."

She rushed around the shop gathering up the ingredients and then dropped in front of Ace. After she had mixed the potion, she glanced toward Gabriel, but he still looked unhappy.

"What?"

Gabriel sighed. "Baby, you can heal his wound, but you can't cure his blood."

She swallowed. "Cure his blood?"

He nodded. "A werewolf's bite is not the only thing that makes a werewolf. His . . . or her . . . scratch is just as life-changing."

Chapter Seventeen

Gabriel held Kelly in his arms and allowed her to cry. He knew what she was feeling. He'd had the same sense of devastation knowing he had cursed her to the life they now led. The difference was, at the same time, he was compelled to be by her side, felt like she was his other half in a very real sense. But Ace, she had changed his life with no purpose, no drive for him, and in a few hours, Gabriel would have to guide Ace to a safer mental place or get him off the moon.

He tried to hold back a sigh from the weariness he felt. He still hadn't reached Michael completely. All he had managed to do was calm his brother and give him rest from the constant torment. Gabriel had to face the fact that he might never restore Michael's mind, but he wasn't ready to accept that. Not until he had worn himself out trying.

On top of everything else, that damn assistant of Kelly's and that other guy who had been working for her father had stolen Marcelino away while they were concerned over Ace. There had been no sign of him or them on Somana Two, and one of Willie's contacts had informed her that three men matching their description had caught a ship off the moon an hour ago. With The Agency thrown into turmoil at the loss of their leader, no one had thought to question them.

Gabriel wondered how he was going to deal with Kelly's guilt as well as explain her father's disappearance and the fact the ship carrying the three werewolves from Earth was missing. How the hell did a spaceship go missing, for fuck's sake?

The sigh he'd been holding in slipped out, and Kelly looked up at him with wet, sad eyes. Gabriel forgot everything except his mate. She was his priority, and if it killed him and he looked like the biggest idiot in the universe, he would express to her how he truly felt.

He stroked her cheek and brushed hair from her forehead. "When I thought I'd die up there without you, I came to realize that it doesn't matter whether I'm on Earth or on the moon, or even on some faraway planet no one has ever heard of. I want . . . I *must* . . . be at your side, Kelly. You are, to put it simply, everything to me. I love you. I will live on Somana Two with you if that is what you want."

Her mouth dropped open, and he traced her bottom lip with his thumb while adoring everything about her. How had it taken him so long to recognize it, seeing her in her father's clutches, knowing he would kill her, and being determined to die trying to get back to her? That must have been what opened his eyes.

"Gabriel," she whispered, nuzzling his hand, her lashes lowered and glistening with tears. "I feel the same way. When I thought you were already dead, I was prepared to die as well. I didn't care if my father tortured the universe. If I didn't have you, I wanted to die. I've never been in such a dark place, and I don't want to go back. When the beast took over me, forcing me to live whether I wanted it or not, all I could think about was exacting my revenge on him. I destroyed his mind." She shook her head as if to dislodge the memory of what she'd done. "I was lost for a while, but seeing you brought me back. I'll have to somehow atone for what I did to Ace. But I'm so glad I have you in my arms again. I love you, Gabriel, with all my heart. It doesn't matter if it happened quickly. It happened, and it's real."

He kissed her soft lips, reveling in her scent, the feel of her curvy body pressed against his. His cock hardened, and he wanted to forget about his duties and take her now. She wiggled in his arms, her tight nipples grazing his chest. No doubt, she wanted it as much as he did.

"How did you get free?"

He shrugged. "Ace is a computer genius. I don't think the system exists that he can't override. He managed to disable the lock on the door where we were being held, and he stopped the self-destruct command on the ship. It's a good thing, too, since I would not have had time to find Michael and get back to the ship we flew up there on."

When she shivered, he held her closer and turned them both so that Kelly was at his side. He knew that he should go and see Willie about locating the other werewolves, but he couldn't make himself move. He ran his hand down from her slender neck to one of her breasts. A gentle squeeze had her panting, her lips parted, making him want to have a nice long taste. However, he wasn't looking to satisfy his own needs at this moment, no matter how the beast craved her. Trailing his way down her body, across her belly to the band of her pants, he didn't break focus with her eyes.

With her zipper lowered, he slipped his hand inside her pants, past the sheer barrier of her panties, and then farther to her heat. Kelly whimpered when the tips of his fingers brushed her swollen clit, but he sought to go deeper. Gently, he parted her folds and then eased two fingers up her tight channel. Her thigh muscles quivered.

"Y-You're doing it again," she rasped out.

"Doing what?"

"Y-Your eyes are shifting, going from human to the wolf's. You're fighting the beast."

"He wants to take you hard and rough. He wants to fuck you until you beg him to stop, until your pussy is sore and you can hardly walk." Gabriel leaned closer to her and nipped at her earlobe before saying, "I have determined to treat you gently, to cherish you, and to show you how much I love you."

"Oh, my foolish lover." She tsked and pushed him over to his back so that his fingers slid out of her. Gabriel could do nothing but stare when she stood on the bed and stripped herself and then him of every bit of their clothing. "You forget that I have the beast too, and what she wants, she takes!"

Mind-numbing pleasure cut off any words that Gabriel might have uttered when his woman tossed a leg across his hips and brought down her incredible pussy on his dick. While she rode him, taking his slick hard-on deep inside and then letting it ease out, Gabriel fought to hold on, to keep from coming too soon. He knew now that there was a time and a place to be gentle with Kelly, but when his alpha wife wanted to be pleased, well he had damn sure better do it, no matter how rough and how long.

The End

About the Author

Brenda Steele loves all things out of the ordinary. She writes to gratify the cravings of her own sexual drive, and for her dear readers. Hopefully, the two won't be far apart and all who read her work will come away satisfied. Look for her hot "My Lover" series and her "Accidental Mates" series.