



Wolf
In

Mens Clothing

Dakota
Rebel

NOT QUITE WICKED

A Wolf in Men's Clothing

A Not Quite Wicked Tale

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A Wolf in Men's Clothing

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This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places and occurrences are a product of the author's imagination. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, places or occurrences, is purely coincidental.

*For Mr. Rebel, I love you more than words can ever say.
Thank you for everything you don't even know you do for me.*

XoXoXo

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Chapter One

In retrospect, falling in love with a hunter might not have been the smartest thing I could have done. But I suppose you don't really get to choose that sort of thing. Love, I mean. It usually chooses you, and chose me it did. Right in the chest. Literally.

Wait, I'm getting ahead of myself. If I'm going to tell the story, I should probably start at the beginning.

Once upon a time...

What? Too cliché? Fine.

I was born a handsome, happy baby boy. Bright blue eyes, full head of jet black hair...

What now? Too long ago? Get on with it? Damn picky, aren't we?

Last month...

Happy? It doesn't have the same ring to it as once upon a time, and it's not exactly the beginning, but whatever. It's not like it's *my* story or anything.

Last month, two days after the full moon, I met Rhys Stone. He was walking around a busted heap of a car with his cell phone held above his head as if he could force it to catch a signal. Unfortunately, his car had broken down in the dreaded dead zone that is Grayling, Michigan. And worse, it was right outside of Hartwick Pines, the land which I call home, but miles from anywhere he should have been alone.

Yet there he was. All six foot two of him, with his blond hair lying across his forehead, barely visible under the red hoodie he wore, pointy cheekbones, and bright green eyes full of frustration. It took more restraint than I'd like to admit not to tackle him at a full run, pin him against that jalopy and have my way with him.

"Need some help?" I asked.

He spun around to face me as I walked out of the forest toward him. I noticed his hand twitched as if to move behind his back, and I froze, not wanting to spook him anymore than I already had.

“Dude, where the hell did you come from?” he asked.

“In there,” I said lamely, pointing in the direction of the trees.

“Do you work for the forestry?”

“Not exactly.” Damn, he was nosy. And judging from the reaction to my presence, he was armed, too. Fantastic. Good thing most people who carry guns don’t have them equipped with silver bullets, or I would have had to be even more cautious.

Oh yeah, I’m a werewolf. See what happens when you get all pushy about where people start their stories? You miss stuff.

Anyway, I kept myself at the back of the car, figuring he could come closer if he wanted to. I was quite happy to stand there and stare at him all day long. He was gorgeous, and I had nothing better to do for a while.

“Is there a pay phone around here somewhere?” he finally asked after looking me up and down so hard I felt my cock twitch in response.

“Pay phone?” I laughed. “I haven’t seen a pay phone in years. I have a landline at my cabin if you want to use it. It’s about half mile that way.” I pointed back toward the trees.

“You live in the woods? I thought this was a state park.”

“It is. But my family owned the cabin long before the park popped up around it.”

“And you have a phone?” He sounded skeptical.

“Well, the cabin *has been* updated since the 1700’s. I’m not a mountain person for God’s sake. There’s plumbing, electricity and everything. Just like you city folk have.” I rolled my eyes. He was hot, but I couldn’t help feeling he might be a little dumb. Perfect.

“What’s your name?” He walked toward me with his hand out.

“Christian Dale,” I said, shaking his hand.

“I’m Rhys Stone. Sorry if I seemed rude. I wasn’t expecting someone to pop out of the woods and come to my rescue. I should have known this piece of crap wouldn’t make it all the way to the U.P.”

He kicked the fender of the car on his way past. I stopped, waiting so he would walk next to me. My nostrils flared at the smell of gun oil. He had touched his gun recently. Probably he

kept it in a holster in the vehicle, and when he'd gotten out, he'd moved it to his body. I wasn't too concerned about the weapon. I was more worried about how I would convince him to get naked when we got to my cabin.

We walked in silence for a little while, listening to the needles crunch under our feet. It was fall, and the weather was turning colder. Being a werewolf, my blood tends to run warm, so I was fine in just the thermal Henley I wore, but when I glanced over at Rhys, I noticed his shoulders were hunched and his hands were plunged into the front pockets of his hoodie.

"So," I said, thinking conversation would take his mind off the temperature. "What are you going to the U.P. for?"

The U.P. is short for the upper peninsula of Michigan. Pretty much anything north of Grayling was "up north" and anything in the peninsula was simply "the U.P." Town names aren't all that important to people who don't actually live in them.

"It's my gran's eighty-fifth birthday, and I wanted to get up there to celebrate with her."

"That's nice," I said. "Are you two close?"

"Close enough. I don't get up to see her often, but we talk on the phone a lot. She's a cool old lady." He smiled now, and I saw he had dimples in both cheeks.

I was watching him so closely that I tripped over my own feet. Rhys tried to catch me, but we both fell off balance and somehow ended up on the ground with him sprawled over the front of me. Pinecones and rock debris dug into my back, but I don't think I'd ever felt as comfortable as I did in that moment.

I couldn't help noticing from the growing hardness pressed against me that Rhys didn't seem to mind the situation either.

"My what a big...set of hands you have there," he said softly, a blush creeping up his dimpled cheeks.

"The better to feel you with," I growled, running my hands up his thighs.

"I just want you to know that I never act like this with strangers," Rhys said, his voice breathier with every word.

"Act like what?"

"This." He kissed me hard, his tongue forcing my lips apart before I really realized what he was doing. But I caught on quickly, wrapping my arms around his waist, which confirmed my suspicion he carried a gun.

I ignored the metal at the small of his back and slid my hands up his shoulders, holding him tight against me as we explored each other's mouths with our teeth and tongues. After a minute, he pulled back, propping himself over me.

"Didn't you say you had a cabin around here somewhere?"

I nodded, not sure I could speak for a moment. I had only been half kidding myself when I thought I would get him naked at the cabin. But it was looking like maybe my luck was better than I'd thought.

Rhys climbed to his feet, holding out a hand to help me up. I didn't need it, but I wasn't going to pass up any chance to touch him. I kissed him quickly on the lips and kept his hand in mine as I led him the rest of the way through the woods to my cabin.

Now, I am by no means a prude, but the closer we got to the house, the more I started to worry things were moving just a tad fast. I hadn't survived the past twenty-nine years as a werewolf by not paying attention to warning signs. A big red flag was waving behind my eyes.

I knew he had a gun and a raging hard on. That was about all I could vouch for. I hadn't witnessed the car breaking down. I didn't know for sure that he was really on his way to his grandmother's house. I didn't know anything about him really. He wasn't supposed to know anything about me either, but he seemed instantly willing to follow me to my house. *In the middle of the woods.*

I wanted to believe the gun gave him a sense of security so he felt he had nothing to fear from me. But he couldn't know I didn't have twelve men at my house waiting to ambush him. For all he knew, I was some crazy mountain person who preyed on innocent people who stumbled across my neck of the woods.

"What are you, stupid or something?" I asked when I couldn't take it anymore. I turned to look at him and felt that my eyes were narrowed in anger.

"Excuse me?" He let go of my hand and stared at me. "What the hell is that supposed to mean?"

"You don't know me—you don't know anything about me. I could be a murderer or a rapist or...or a hippie for God's sake. Why on Earth would you just wander into the woods with a strange man? Does your grandmother know you're so reckless?"

Once my mouth opened, I couldn't seem to make it shut. His face creased into a smile, those dimples appeared again, and still I kept going, berating him for wandering around the woods with strangers.

"Are you done?" he asked when I paused to take a breath.

"No," I said, getting ready to start up again, but he grabbed me and shoved me hard against a tree. Normally, a human wouldn't have been able to do that, but he caught me off guard. His lips slamming against mine stopped anything else I might have said to him.

I reached around his neck and pulled his hood down to run my fingers through his soft blond hair. He gripped my waist as if to hold me still against the tree. Luckily for him, I wasn't feeling an immediate need to move.

He broke the kiss and laughed. Not quite the reaction I'd been expecting even if he'd been smiling at my earlier diatribe.

"Christian, I'm a big boy. I can handle myself." He stepped away from me, and I had to fight not to whine at the loss of his body heat against my chest. "I'm sure you noticed I'm armed when we...tripped earlier. I'm a professional big game hunter, so I'm quite skilled with a weapon. You couldn't touch me before I got at least two shots in your chest. So to answer your earlier question, no, I'm not stupid. And yes, my grandmother knows just how reckless I can be. She says I get it from her."

A big game hunter. Perfect. My thoughts went back to what he had been doing on the side of my road. Why had he wanted to go back to my place so quickly? Did he know what I was? Had he staged the car breaking down to draw me out of the woods? Maybe he had silver shot in that gun. Maybe he was out in the woods on a hunt.

"You're not moving," he said after a minute. "Did you want me to go back to the car? I'm sure someone will be along eventually. You don't have to let me in your home if you're having second thoughts. It's all right...really."

If I were a smart man, I would have sent him back to his car. If I didn't think with my dick more often than with my head, I would have walked him back and left him where I'd found him. If he hadn't kept flashing those adorable dimples at me, I might have done just that. But I didn't. I couldn't. I had to have him. Even if it was a trap and he planned on killing me, if I got to fuck him first, I might have been okay with it.

"Come on," I growled. "We're almost there."

I didn't take his hand again, just turned and started back up the trail. It was a well-worn path and wasn't really that hard to find. I tried to convince myself that if he knew what I was, had known where I lived, he could have found the cabin at any time. I didn't hide in the woods. I just happened to live there.

"Wow," he whispered behind me when we turned a bend and the cabin came into view.

"I told you it's been updated since the dark ages." I didn't turn around to see his face. I didn't have to. The amazement in his voice with just that one little word made me smile.

My father and I had worked hard to get the cabin to its present condition. To be honest, it had been pretty much a rotting hunk of wood planks when we'd started. No one had lived in it for centuries, even though the acre the house sat on had been ours the whole time. We'd petitioned the courts to let us rebuild the cabin in the woods, and they'd agreed. Legally, they couldn't have stopped us anyway, but it's always nice to ask before building a 2,300 square foot house in the middle of a state park.

"Did you build this?" Rhys asked as he walked around me to get a closer look at the house.

"Yeah, my dad and I did. Took us about two years to get it done, but I love it. Not many people get to live like this, and I try hard not to take it for granted."

"Christian, this is amazing. Would you mind giving me a tour?"

"Not at all. Go on in."

I followed him into the house and started with the kitchen. We walked through the living room, the game room and the library before heading up to the second floor.

"Where's your bedroom?" Rhys asked. His voice was casual, but when I turned to look at him, his eyes were full of heat.

I reached for him, wrapping my arm around his waist and yanking him hard against me. I kissed him hard and fast, my tongue forcing his lips apart while I held tight to him with one hand. The other hand fumbled for the doorknob of my room. I let him go as I opened the door so we wouldn't fall to the floor.

Rhys grabbed my hand and pulled me into my room. He walked straight to the bed and sat down, unzipping his hoodie, pulling it off and tossing it to the floor. His hands moved back to my body and he slid them up my stomach and my ribs, then stood to pull my shirt over my head.

I felt a little lost and was more than happy to let him take charge for a minute while my brain caught up with my cock, which was hard as a rock and aching to be touched. Rhys, who had just removed his own shirt, set his gun on the nightstand and watched me intently.

Finally, I shoved him backward onto the mattress, climbing over him and fighting the urge to chastise him again. There was no way he could get to his gun before I did. The stupid twink was going to get himself killed one day. All I could think was thank God it wouldn't be today.

"Christian?" Rhys' eyes were wide and his breath was shallow and hot against my face when he exhaled.

"Mmm?" I mumbled as I kissed over his collarbone. I ran my tongue up his throat and sucked his earlobe into my mouth.

"Fuck, Christian. I want you. Right now."

"Now?" I asked softly against his ear. "But you just got here."

"I don't think I've ever wanted anyone as badly as I want you. Please?"

His words made my cock twitch and I felt pre-cum already spreading across the front of my boxers. I wanted him, too.

I slid my hand between us, yanking the button open on his jeans before sliding the zipper down. He arched up his hips, but there was no way I was going to get his pants off while I was on top of him. I rolled over onto the mattress and fought not to laugh at the quickness with which he got himself undressed. I glanced over at him, and any humor I may have felt was gone.

He was beautiful. I realize this is not a word most men would appreciate being called, but he was. Beyond gorgeous, past perfect, he was absolutely beautiful. I hurried out of my own clothes and reached into the nightstand for a condom and a bottle of lube.

"How do you want to do this?" I asked, my voice softer than I'd expected it to be.

"I want you inside of me," he said before rolling onto his stomach.

I stared down at his perfectly round ass in disbelief. I would have never believed when I woke up that morning that I would find the most gorgeous man I'd ever seen offering up his ass to me on my own bed by the afternoon.

I ripped open the foil packet with my teeth and slid it down my aching cock. I hoped he would stay long enough for me to thoroughly explore his body, but the man wanted me inside of him, and I always aim to please.

Chapter Two

Rhys jumped a little when the cool lubricant hit his skin. Carefully balanced on my knees behind him, I ran two fingers up and down the crack of his ass a few times before slowly pushing them inside his tight asshole. He moaned into the mattress, and I fought not to groan in return. His muscles clenched around my fingers for a minute until he relaxed against the intrusion, and it was a struggle not to come at the thought of feeling him around my cock. I worked my digits in and out of him a few times until he seemed adjusted to being stretched for me.

I poured more lube into my hand and used it to coat the condom before positioning the head of my cock against his slick hole.

“Are you sure you want to do this?” I asked him.

“Yes, I’m fucking positive,” Rhys said quickly.

I slid the head of my cock inside of him, pushing slowly, afraid of hurting him by moving too fast too soon. Inch by inch, I watched myself disappear inside of him, the heat from the inside of his body almost scalding my sensitive member. When I was completely inside of him, I stopped, enjoying the feel of his muscles clenching and relaxing against me. I probably could have come just from that sensation alone.

“Move,” he whimpered.

“Up,” I growled.

I helped him rise to his knees without pulling out of him. Balancing on the mattress would have been too difficult in the position he had been in. He dropped his shoulders back to the bed, leaving his ass up in the air so I could move more easily.

I started slowly, pulling out until just the head of my cock was in him, then pushing back inside of him before repeating the action. He let out a sigh, and I felt his body relax a little more for me. I knew he was ready for what I really wanted to do to him.

He cried out the first time I slammed into him, but not in pain. That sound escaping his lips made me forget to be careful, forget that I was so much stronger than him. I forgot everything except how amazing he felt around my cock.

My hips bucked against his ass cheeks, and my balls slapped against him with every thrust. When I finally remembered that I should be more careful with him, I started to slow down, but he threw his ass into me, encouraging me to keep up the pace I'd set.

I gripped his hips in my hands and continued to pound in and out of his tight asshole until my orgasm built. I knew I was losing my rhythm, and Rhys must have felt it too because he clenched his ass muscles around me and I came screaming, letting go of his hips and collapsing on top of him.

My heart pounded against his back, and it was a struggle to catch my breath for a minute. Finally, I slid out of him and rolled onto my back next to him. I pulled off the condom and dropped it into the trashcan while Rhys fell to the mattress and looked over at me with a grin on his face.

"You're amazing," I said, my voice strained with my effort to breathe.

"No, that's you. I don't think I've ever been fucked so hard or come twice in a row so quickly."

I was pissed at myself for being so wrapped up in my own pleasure that I hadn't paid attention to Rhys coming twice. Unless he had the world's quietest orgasms, it seemed like something I should have noticed.

"I'm sorry if I was too rough," I said.

"Mmm, you weren't. You were perfect." He propped his chin up on his hand and continued to smile at me.

"What?" I asked, starting to feel a little self-conscious.

"Sorry," he said. A blush crept up his neck and I fought not to reach out and caress his cheek. The motion seemed too...familiar, I guess, for the situation. "I just never thought my day would end up like this."

"Yeah, me either," I replied with a laugh. "But I'm really glad it did."

“Me, too. Hey, does this fancy-ass cabin have a shower I could use?”

“Of course. Indoor plumbing and everything. Not bad for hill-folk, huh?” I rolled off the bed and watched him do the same. We walked to the door, and I ended up behind him in the hallway and couldn’t help watching the way his body moved.

Being a werewolf, my muscles worked differently from humans. When I walk, it sometimes comes across as a strut because of the way ligaments and bones shift with my movements. I couldn’t help noticing that Rhys had a bit of that, too. His muscles moved more fluidly than most humans. I could only assume he had learned to move that way when hunting, mimicking animals in the wild.

“So where exactly is all of this indoor plumbing you speak of?” he asked.

“End of the hall,” I answered, slightly distracted by the sway of his hips and the way his nakedness was making me hard again. “Do you mind if I share the shower with you?”

“Not if you promise not to hog the shower head,” he said, opening the bathroom door. He walked into the room and stopped, looking around. I couldn’t see his face, but I could imagine the expression.

Of all the rooms we’d built, I’d been most picky about the bathroom. I had special ordered two-way glass so that the entire room looked out over the forest, but from outside, the panes looked black, almost like solar panels. The shower had three moveable heads so that no matter where you stood in the enormous tub, you would get great water pressure.

My father had made fun of me for wanting such an extravagant bathroom, but on the rare occasions I brought men home, it was worth it to get them up there. Not to mention, feeling like you’re showering in the middle of a forest is pretty fucking cool.

“Christian, this is amazing.” Rhys turned to face me.

“Thanks. I love how it turned out.” I pulled him against me and kissed him. “Now, I believe you said something about wanting to take a shower.”

His cock was hard again and pressing into my thigh. I took his hand and led him to the tub, promising myself that this time I wouldn’t miss him coming for me. I turned on the shower, and the hot water quickly filled the room with steam.

Once we were both in the shower, I pinned him against the wall and kissed him again. His hands slid around my neck, and he pulled me tighter against his body, his fingers running through my now-wet hair.

I broke the kiss and licked a line of water off his neck as I ground my erection against his hip. I couldn't believe how badly he could make me want him. I had never moved so fast with anyone before, but the more time I spent naked with him, the more I realized how right the situation felt. As I lathered soap in my hands and started to rub the suds over his smooth chest, I told myself I had just been paranoid earlier.

I dropped to my knees, moving my soapy hands over his hips and down his thighs then back up to his cock. I gripped his member in both hands, sliding the slick bubbles up and down him then letting the water rinse him off.

His cock was hot and swollen, and I had to taste him. I glanced up to see him staring down at me with wide eyes and biting his lower lip. As much as I wanted to suck that lip into my mouth, there were other things to be sucked right at that moment.

He let out a sigh when I took him into my mouth, and his hands moved back to my hair. He gripped a handful of strands in his fist while I slid up and down his shaft with my tongue. I tasted pre-cum on my tongue and wondered how many times I could make him come for me before he left.

I found the soap on the floor of the tub and managed to awkwardly lather my left hand while my right pumped his shaft. Using the suds as lubricant, I slid two fingers inside his ass while I sucked the tip of his cock and continued jerking him off.

Rhys groaned and tightened his grip on my hair as I finger-fucked his ass and focused my mouth on his cock. When I pressed against that sweet spot inside of him, he cried out, filling my mouth with his cum and throwing back his head so fast I heard the thud of it against the wall of the shower.

I let go of him and stood to make sure he was okay. He kissed me, licking a drop of his own seed from my lip. I smiled and ran my hand over the back of his head to make sure there were no bumps.

"I'm fine," he said with a shaky laugh.

"Well, I'm suddenly relieved I didn't use tile on the walls in here. You could have given yourself a concussion."

"Would have been worth it."

I turned off the shower, and we climbed out together. I grabbed a couple towels and we dried off quickly before returning to the bedroom to get dressed.

Rhys looked over at the clock on the nightstand and groaned.

“What’s up?”

“It’s really late. I don’t think I’m going to get a tow truck out here tonight.”

“Do you want to stay?”

He turned and looked at me. “You wouldn’t mind?”

“Of course not,” I said with a laugh. “I mean, you don’t have to sleep in here if you don’t want to. I have a guest room you could use. If you want to.”

“Right,” he said. “Well, thanks. I appreciate that. Do you mind if I call my gran? I don’t want her to worry.”

“Not at all. There’s a phone downstairs.” I led him down to the library and handed him the cordless. “Are you hungry?”

“Yeah, starving actually.”

“Me, too. I’ll get some food together while you make your call. I’ll be in the kitchen when you’re done.”

I closed the door on my way out and headed for the kitchen. I wasn’t used to having company for dinner and wasn’t entirely sure what Rhys would eat. After digging through the fridge, I could only hope Rhys wasn’t a vegetarian. I mean, I knew he hunted big game, but that didn’t mean he ate it.

When he came into the kitchen fifteen minutes later, I had a huge plate of cheese, crackers and sausage set on the table. I pulled a couple beers from the fridge and handed him one.

“Everything all set?” I asked.

“Yes, I told her my car broke down, and I was sleeping with a complete stranger who’s concerned that my behavior’s irresponsible. She said she loves you and would you like to come with me to visit her tomorrow.”

I laughed but stopped quickly when I realized he was serious.

“She wants me to come with you? No offense, but what is up with your family?”

He laughed, and I was glad I hadn’t offended him. Not everyone gets my humor.

We sat across from each other and devoured the food and drank several more beers while we talked. Rhys told me about growing up in the U.P. and how he’d become a hunter. It wasn’t as horrible as it had sounded to me at first. He worked on contract for reservationists in Africa,

and several times a year, he would travel there and hunt down animals that were hurt or diseased to keep infections from spreading through the herds. So at least he wasn't harpooning elephants for ivory or anything. It was actually kind of noble work.

When he wasn't eradicating disease from the wilds of Africa, he had a federal license allowing him to do the same sort of thing in national forests. Taking down injured or sick animals to protect the rest of the population. He was like freaking Davy Crockett or something.

Every time he tried to ask me questions, I would turn the conversation back on him. I liked to hear him talk. He told me about his grandmother and how, at eighty-five years old, she still worked part-time at a library and volunteered for several different charities.

I could tell that he adored his grandmother, and when he explained that she was the only member of his family who'd supported him when he'd come out, I understood why.

"She sounds like an amazing lady," I said.

"She is. And I can't wait for you to meet her. If you'll come with me, I mean."

"Do you really want me to? I mean, don't get me wrong. I like you, a lot. But isn't it a little soon to be meeting your family?"

Rhys covered my hand with his own and smiled. It was the kind of smile one gives a kid in a helmet. Not very flattering.

"Christian, I would really appreciate it if you would come meet my grandmother. It would mean a lot to her, too. She loves meeting new people, and I think she could tell, even over the phone, that I'm crazy about you." He blushed, and this time I did run my fingers over his cheek.

"You are?"

"I know it's probably ridiculous, but yeah. I really like you, and I would love to spend some more time with you. Please come with me?"

I couldn't believe I was actually considering it. The problem was I really liked him, too. I knew eventually I would have to tell him about the...werewolf thing, but there just never seems to be a good time to bring up that sort of thing.

It would be a couple of weeks before the next full moon, so I knew I wouldn't have to worry about shifting in front of him. I couldn't imagine we'd spend more than a few days at his grandma's house, so despite my better judgment, I agreed.

“Okay,” I said. “We’ll call a tow truck in the morning to haul your jalopy to a shop, and we’ll take my car to your grandma’s house.”

“Do I have to stay in the guest room tonight?” he asked with a smirk.

“Darlin’, you can sleep wherever you want to.”

“Who said anything about sleep?”

I crooked an eyebrow at him and laughed when he waggled his own at me. I stood then pulled him to his feet too and led the way back upstairs. I wasn’t sure what I was getting myself into, but I figured it would be one hell of a ride.

Chapter Three

We both fell asleep almost as soon as we crawled into bed. It had, for me anyway, been a strange and draining day, and climbing under the covers didn't induce any intimate feelings. However, waking up with Rhys' arm flung over my chest, his body so warm and firm next to mine, did quite a bit to wake up my libido.

"What time is it?" he mumbled, not bothering to open his eyes.

"Six," I said before laying a kiss on the top of his head. "Do you want to keep sleeping?"

"Mmm." He snuggled tighter against me, and I felt a twinge low in my stomach that had nothing to do with sex but everything to do with Rhys.

I refused to believe I could love him, not after less than twenty-four hours. I wasn't sure if I had ever actually been in love before, but I was sure it took more than a couple amazing sessions of sex, some crackers and an invitation to Grandma's house. We didn't really know anything about each other. And I was withholding something pretty big from him. It wouldn't be fair to either of us if I fell in love with him, and he was just looking to have a little fun.

I was torn between taking a shower then calling the tow truck for Rhys or staying in bed holding him until he forced me to move. In the end, I decided to choose the responsible option, and with a small sigh, I carefully slid out of bed without waking Rhys.

I trudged to the bathroom and started the water, standing naked in front of the windows and watching the sun come up over the trees. I found myself wondering if Rhys would be happy in the cabin with me, but shook my head as if it were an etch-a-sketch and I could erase the thought. I climbed in the shower and let the hot water beat down on my shoulders. Even through the steam, I smelled Rhys as he walked through the door of the bathroom. I opened my eyes and

watched him climb into the shower with me, a small foil packet in his hand and a smile on his face.

“I thought you wanted to sleep,” I said, pulling him into my arms.

“The bed got cold without you in it.” He kissed me, his tongue pushing past my lips and tangling with my own.

His cock was hard and pressing against my thigh, which made mine start to swell in response. I couldn’t believe how quickly he affected me. I’d wanted him the moment I’d seen him out on the road, and I didn’t see myself not wanting him anytime in the future. He seemed so different from anyone I’d ever met. We just...clicked. And I wondered if he felt it, too.

Once again, I had the urge to tell him what I am, but then he was on his knees, running his tongue up my cock, and all rational thought went out of my head. All I could focus on was the feel of his hot breath against my aching member and how much I needed to be inside of him again.

“You’re going to make me come,” I growled, looking down at him.

“Many, many times I hope,” he said with a smile before taking my entire cock in his mouth. His throat convulsed around my tip, and I had to put a hand on the wall to hold myself upright as my knees tried to buckle.

I wanted to come, wanted to release the amazing pressure in my balls, but something in the back of my mind told me that would be a bad idea. I struggled with it for a moment and realized I wasn’t sure if ingesting my bodily fluids would infect him with lycanthropy. I reached down and grabbed his arms, urging him to his feet.

He stood, his grin and dimples back in place. I kissed him, walking him backward until he bumped into the wall. I hadn’t realized he was still holding the condom until he moved away from me to rip open the package. He slid it over my cock and looked around the shower as if suddenly lost as to how we would accomplish sex there.

I urged him to turn around so he faced the wall with his hands pressed flat on the smooth surface and his waist bent slightly. I glanced around and silently congratulated myself for keeping a bottle of lube in the shower, even if I’d only used it alone before. I was glad it was there.

One great thing about keeping lube in the tub...it warms up in the steam of the hot water. Rhys moaned when the liquid hit the small of his back and I started to work it down the crack of

his ass. I slid two fingers inside of him, bending them at the knuckle to rub over his prostate while I worked loose his muscles.

When I removed my fingers, Rhys spun around and kissed me, his hands on both sides of my face holding me still—as if I would have wanted to move. I slid my arms around his waist, bending slightly at the knee to get under his ass and lifted him up, pressing his back against the wall again for leverage.

He made a small noise in my mouth that could have been surprise or fear, but then I was inside of him and he had his ankles locked around my waist, his hands entwined behind my neck, his head thrown back and he was screaming my name.

He came quickly, his seed shooting up my chest, hotter and thicker than the water cascading over our skin. The feel of it made me come right after. I pulled him tight against me, holding him close while my cock spasmed in his ass.

“Good morning,” Rhys whispered against my ear, and I laughed.

I raised him up, pulling him off my cock before setting him back on his feet. I pulled off the condom and tossed it in the trash next to the shower, then turned back to kiss him again. He had lathered his hands in soap and moved them over all of my skin he could reach while our mouths were pressed together.

He broke the kiss and nudged my shoulder to turn around. I let the water spray over my chest while Rhys soaped up my back. His hands shifted to massage my ass for a minute before his arms wrapped around my waist and he hugged me tight.

“You’re really strong,” he said softly.

“I suppose,” I said with a shrug. My head screamed to tell him the truth, but my heart was terrified he would run out the door and I would never see him again. It was a struggle I’d never had to deal with, and honestly, my first instinct was to run. To put Rhys back in his little red hoodie and ride him right out of my neck of the woods.

“Hey, what’s up?” He turned me to face him. “You just got really tense. Is everything okay?”

“Yeah,” I said. “Everything’s fine. Sorry, just got lost in thought for a minute.”

I turned off the water and got out of the shower. I grabbed towels off the shelf and handed one to Rhys. We dried off without talking and walked back to the bedroom in silence, too. When I started getting dressed without even looking at him, he apparently had enough.

“Is something wrong?”

I blew out a sigh and walked over to him. I kissed his forehead and looked into his eyes and lied my ass off.

“No,” I said. “Not at all.”

“Bullshit. Something is going on with you, and it’s obviously directly related to me.”

“Fine,” I said, sitting on the bed and staring at the floor. I opened my mouth to tell him that I’m a werewolf and instead gave him enough half truths to keep myself out of trouble.

“I’m really worried about meeting your family. I mean, we just met, and yeah, I really like you, but I’m scared that things are moving really fast. I don’t know you well enough to feel the way I think I feel about you. It’s scary. For a lot of reasons. One, I have no idea if you feel the same way. Two, I don’t know if what I’m feeling is really how I feel or just...I don’t know, hormones or something. Three—”

I didn’t get to share three because he threw himself at me, tackled me to the mattress and shoved his tongue in my mouth. My arms instinctively closed around him, holding his warm, damp body against me while I kissed him back just as hard, just as fervently.

After a minute, he raised himself up on his hands and looked down at me, his blond hair hanging in his eyes a little and a small smile pulling at the corner of his lips.

“I like you Christian. I like you very much. And you know what? I’m a little scared, too. But I know that I’ve enjoyed spending time with you, and I know that I want you to meet my gran. Everything else we can figure out later. Right?”

I nodded. He was right. We could figure it out when we got back. After I spent some more time with him, if I honestly felt he and I had any kind of future after our trip up north, then I would tell him. Hopefully, he would understand why I waited to confess.

He got off the bed and looked around the room.

“Damn, I left my pack down in the car.”

“Well, you can borrow some of my clothes if you want. We’re pretty close to the same size. My shirts might be a little big, but not enough that anyone would notice. We can get your stuff out of the car before the tow truck comes. Which reminds me...we should call and get that taken care of so we can get on the road.”

“That sounds great,” Rhys said, smiling. “Thank you for all your help. You’ve been awesome.”

“You’ve been pretty amazing yourself,” I said with a wink. “All right, I’m going downstairs to call the tow truck. If I don’t do it right now, we’ll never get out of here.”

Rhys stepped toward me and sucked my earlobe into his mouth. “And why’s that?”

I moved backward and laughed. “I’m going downstairs. Get dressed.”

He blew out a dramatic sigh and walked into my closet to find something to wear. I thought about following him in there and “helping” but decided to just do as I should and went to make the call.

* * * *

“So where the hell do you park your car?” Rhys asked as I led him back through the woods. We’d gotten his pack from his car just as the tow truck was getting there. I’d given them my credit card to haul the car away, and Rhys didn’t seem all that interested in where it was being taken. I couldn’t blame him for that. I wouldn’t want the car back either.

“I have a garage stall over at the Ranger’s Station. They let me park out there as long as I stay out of their way.”

I chose not to admit I’m actually required to stay out of their way. They know I’m a werewolf, and most of them are scared shitless of me, which is just fine with me. For the most part, the rangers and I just forget each other exists, and it works out great.

We crested the top of a hill, and I pointed down the other side to the small compound the rangers worked from. Off to the left was my garage. I held his hand as we made our way slowly down the slope, trying not to lose footing and go tumbling like Jack and Jill. He did pretty well in the woods for someone used to working on the plains of Africa, and I told him so.

“I wasn’t born in Africa,” he laughed. “I grew up in the U.P. Gran’s house is pretty much like yours. I mean, not nearly as big, but it’s smack dab in the middle of nowhere with nothing around it for miles. I’m well aware of how to handle myself in the woods.”

“Good to know,” I said, pulling my hand from his and increasing my pace down the hill. He kept up, laughing as he tried to follow my movements around the rocks and broken branches that littered the rarely used trail. We hit the bottom at a gallop, both of us stumbling slightly when the ground evened out in front of us and laughing like idiots.

I looked around and was relieved to see none of the rangers were outside. Rhys grabbed my hand again and let me lead him to the garage where I kept my car.

There were a lot of things I'd had to give up when I'd decided to move to the cabin. City life, constant noise and chaos, pretty much all semblance of a social life. But the one thing I refused to give up was my car. I had bought it at a junkyard when I was sixteen years old and had spent the following five years restoring it to pristine condition. Every penny I'd made as a teenager had been put into the car and I have never once regretted it.

I unlocked the padlock on the garage and rolled the door up on its hinges then stood back to watch Rhys' reaction. It would have been fine if he wasn't a car guy and wasn't impressed with it. In fact, I half expected him to just walk in the garage and get in the car without a thought considering the car he drove.

"Is that a 1970 Plymouth Roadrunner?" he asked in an awed voice and right then I fell in love with him.

It wasn't just the car thing, though it was nice to hear the admiration in his voice. It was as if everything that had happened since I'd found him on the side of the road clicked into place and made sense. It had all happened for a reason, and we were supposed to be together. I just knew it.

I pulled him into my arms, kissing his lips softly.

"What was that for?"

"Wanted to," I said with a shrug as I let him go. "And yes, it is a '70 Roadrunner. I restored it myself, and it is my pride and joy."

"I can see why." He walked into the garage and ran his hand up the hood the way I knew he had touched me the night before; soft and gentle and lovingly. "Are there any other surprises you should be warning me about?"

My heart dropped, and I might have even visibly cringed. He had given me the perfect opportunity, again, and I couldn't do it. It seemed too soon. So I just winked at him.

"If I told you, they wouldn't be surprises, now would they? Get in the car."

Chapter Four

Rhys had told me that it was about a three-hour drive from Grayling to his gran's house...if you do the speed limit. But when you're driving a rare muscle car and the man you want to impress more than you've ever wanted anything is sitting on the bench seat next to you running his finger up and down your thigh, well, you don't do the speed limit.

I probably got about a six miles to the gallon, but the feel of his hand tightening on my leg when I turned corners just this side of too fast was worth it. I had to slow down over the Mackinac Bridge, but then it was full out again until Rhys told me we were getting close to the turnoff for the house.

He took me down winding roads for a good fifteen minutes until finally he pointed out her driveway. The woods around the house were even denser than around my cabin, and I found myself a little jealous of her surroundings.

"Boys!"

I looked up at the house again to see a stick-thin woman with wiry gray hair running down the steps toward us. She threw herself into Rhys' arms, and he spun around with her a few times.

When he put her down, she surprised me by hugging me, too. I awkwardly put an arm around her and looked at Rhys who laughed.

"I'm so glad you agreed to bring my Rhys up here." She stepped back and looked me up and down. "And I can see why he wanted to bring you."

"Gran!" Rhys blushed from his neck to his ears, and it was adorable.

"I'm an old woman; I am done watching my mouth and I'll say what I like."

“Yeah, ’cause you haven’t been doing that your whole life anyway,” Rhys mumbled as he walked past us to go into the house.

“Young man, don’t you disrespect your grandmother.”

“It wasn’t disrespect, Gran. I love that about you, and you know it. Do you have any lemonade?”

“Of course, sweetie. In the fridge. And there are cookies on the table. Oh, and Rhys, could you start a pot of coffee for me, please? I’m going to stay out here with our handsome Christian and talk for a minute.”

“Okay, but not too long. It’s chilly out here.” Rhys walked in the house and shut the door behind him, leaving me alone with his gran.

“You two are obviously very close,” I said after a minute. The exchange between them had given me a pang of regret I hadn’t felt in a long time. That needling feeling that I should have made more of an effort with my family. My father and I got along all right, but once he’d died, I’d pretty much shut the rest of my family out of my life. Most of the time, I was fine with the decisions I’d made along the way, but occasionally, it bothered me that I wasn’t close with anyone.

“Yes, we’ve spent a lot of time together. I love him very much, and I would hate to see him get hurt.” Her tone was accusatory, and it confused me. She wasn’t being rude, but it was definitely a change from hugs and flattery.

“Are you implying that I would ever hurt Rhys?”

“Does he know what you are?”

I stared at her in disbelief. I couldn’t believe she knew. No one had ever guessed. Hell, most people don’t even know werewolves exist, and we prefer it that way.

“Yes, I know. I knew as soon as you got out of the car. Only a were will smell first and look around second.” I looked at her confused, and she laughed softly. “You probably don’t even realize you do it. My brother was infected when he was fifteen years old; that’s when we moved out here. There were many things he did without thinking. That was a big one.”

She took my hand and walked me over to a picnic table on the other side of the yard. We both faced the door to watch for Rhys to come out, and I was kind of glad she didn’t let go of my hand when we sat. It was nice to be accepted by someone who knows what I am.

“Why haven’t you told him, Christian?”

I blew out a sigh and looked at the ground. There was no good reason except for my own fear. I looked at her and smiled.

“How do you tell someone you care about that you’re a werewolf? I don’t want to lose him, and I’m afraid he’ll run as soon as he finds out. I was hoping to have a few more days with him before I had to admit it.”

“You’re not giving my grandson enough credit. He cares for you, too.”

“Did he know about your brother?”

It was her turn to look at the ground. “No, Bobby—that was my brother—. Anyway, Bobby died when Rhys was only a baby, so they never got to know each other. But I know that Rhys would have adored him.”

“And how could anyone help but love Rhys,” I said softly, looking up at the house. I could see him looking at us from the kitchen window, but I couldn’t see his face well enough to know what his expression was.

“I understand your fear, Christian. But if you really love him, and I believe that you do, you can’t start your relationship with lies. You have to tell him.”

“I know. I *do* know that. But, can’t we have the next couple of days up here? If he’s going to leave me, I’d like to have some good memories with him to look back on. Please?”

She nodded and squeezed my hand. “I won’t say a word while you’re here. But you had better tell him when you get home.”

“I promise.” And I meant it because she was right. Lying to him would make everything worse in the long run.

Rhys was sitting at the kitchen table when we walked into the house. He looked up and smiled at me, and I felt my knees go weak at the sight of his dimples. I hoped he would always smile at me like that.

* * * *

Rhys’ gran, who finally told me her name was Susan but refused to let me call her by it, made us a wonderful dinner that night. We sat around the table talking, eating and laughing until the sun went down. It was wonderful.

Gran went to bed shortly after, and Rhys and I cleared the table and did the dishes so she wouldn’t have to deal with it in the morning. Then we each took a cup of coffee and went outside to sit on the deck that overlooked a small pond behind the house.

“Are you sure you’re not too cold out here?” I asked Rhys. He had on a light jacket over a sweater, but he didn’t look very warm.

“I’m fine,” Rhys said with a smile. “God, it’s good to be back here.”

“It’s a great place.” I nodded. “And your gran is wonderful. She’s just like you described her. You’re a lucky guy to have someone so...understanding in your life.”

“She’s the best.”

“So, I don’t suppose she’s a heavy sleeper,” I mumbled, staring out at the pond.

“Um, no. Actually, any noise that isn’t made by an animal will wake her instantly.”

I looked over at him with a frown. I hadn’t realized spending a couple days up there would mean no sex. But there was no way I’d risk Gran hearing us. No matter how understanding she was, I would have been mortified to do it.

“The Roadrunner has a bench seat,” Rhys said. “Or are you afraid of ruining the leather?”

“Not in the slightest.” I put my coffee mug on the table and took Rhys’ from his hand to set it down, too. “Come on.”

“Now?”

I grabbed his hand and pulled him to his feet hard enough to draw him against my chest. “Now.”

I kissed him quickly and pulled him after me. We ran around the house so we wouldn’t disturb Gran and practically dove into the car.

Rhys ended up on top of me, his hands pinning my wrists to the seat while he ground his crotch against mine and kissed me. Our tongues wrestled with each other, sliding over teeth and lips in a passionate dance. He tasted like rain in my mouth, and I wanted to touch him, all of him, run my hands over every inch of his skin, taste his sweat and his tears. I wanted him right then, and I wanted him forever.

My cock ached from the friction of my jeans and the heat of Rhys’ body against mine. I growled in frustration, wanting him to tear off his clothes and fuck me senseless. I knew I could easily get free of his grip on my wrists, but I wanted to see what he would do first.

“My, what big eyes you have,” he whispered against my lips as he stared into my eyes.

“The better to see you with,” I said softly.

“And what a big cock you have,” he purred.

“Why don’t we get naked, and we’ll see just how big it really is?”

Rhys let go of my hands and sat up so he straddled my hips. His fingers worked loose the buckle of my belt then the button on my jeans. He moved his hands from my waist and slid them up my chest. I groaned but didn't ask him to go back.

"My, what little patience you have," he murmured, but kept his hands under my shirt.

"Rhys." My voice was hoarse with need. "Please."

"Please what?" he asked, his tone full of fake innocence and his eyes wide.

"I want you inside of me," I said.

"And I want you naked," he said quickly. I sat up and let him pull off my shirt. He threw it on the floorboard and shifted himself so his back was against the driver's door and we both started tearing off our clothes.

When we were both naked, he threw himself back on top of me, kissing me and running his hands over any bit of my skin he could reach. I shifted my hips, trying to encourage him to move into a position from which he could fuck me, but he just smiled against my mouth and kept on kissing me.

Finally, after several long minutes of wonderful torture, he slid down my body, coming to rest on his knees between my legs. He stared at me for so long I squirmed under the scrutiny.

"What?" I asked with a nervous laugh.

"You're beautiful," he said softly. "I realize that isn't the most masculine of compliments, but my God, you really are."

I didn't even think about it. I just threw myself at him and pinned him against the driver's side door, kissing him hard enough that I was lucky not to cut him with my teeth. His words so closely reflected what I'd thought about him earlier, the only way I could keep from telling him I loved him was to get my tongue in his mouth as quickly as possible.

"So you don't mind then?" he asked with a laugh when I let him go.

I shook my head and smiled. "Not at all. What I do mind is that you're not inside of me yet."

"Hmm, that is a problem," he said. He grabbed his jeans from the floor and pulled a condom from one of the pockets. He ripped the foil open with his teeth and rolled the rubber down his cock. The fog on the windows was getting so thick that what little light we had been getting from the lights on Gran's property was softened inside the car, taking on a sort of ethereal feel and fueling my fantasy that Rhys and I could be the only people on Earth.

“How do you want me?” Rhys’ voice was hoarse, and I saw his chest heaving in the soft light surrounding us.

“Whatever’s easiest for you,” I said in a whisper.

“A hotel room in Hawaii would be easiest,” he said with a small laugh. “But for now, I just want to be able to look in your eyes. Can we do that?”

I nodded. It would be awkward, but staring into his eyes while he fucked me didn’t sound bad to me either.

While I shifted in the seat, he got back into the pocket of his jeans and pulled out a small bottle of lube. He coated the condom with it before helping me hook my leg over the back of the seat, spreading myself as wide as I could for him to fit between my knees and still be able to move.

“You were a boy scout, weren’t you?” I asked with a smirk as he dropped the bottle on the floor next to his clothes.

“Yes,” he said, then stuck out his tongue at me. “And you should be grateful for it.”

He ran his slick fingers up the crack of my ass a few times before sliding two fingers inside of me. My back arched off the seat at the initial intrusion, which at the angle I was in, caused my hip to pop and the sound echoed in the car.

I dropped back onto the bench, and Rhys and I both started laughing. It was one of those moments that’s usually only shared between close lovers, people who have known each other forever, but with Rhys, it was starting to feel as if we had.

The laughter faded quickly as Rhys withdrew his fingers and positioned his cock against my asshole. His hands gripped my thighs as he slowly pushed himself inside of me. He was slow and gentle, and it was lovely, but I didn’t want him to make love to me. Later yes, forever even, but right then, I wanted him to slam himself inside of me until we both came screaming and clawing at each other from the pure pleasure of it.

“Rhys,” I growled when he was completely inside of me.

“Yeah?”

“Fuck me.”

His dimples flashed for a minute as he grinned down at me. His hips rocked back, then he was fucking me, hard and fast, his cock stretching me wide and his balls slapping against my ass, and it was exactly what I wanted.

One of his hands left my thigh to grip my member. He pumped his fist up and down my shaft at the same rhythm as he pounded in and out of my ass. My orgasm built up in my balls, and I hoped he was close, too. I wanted to come with him, but I wasn't sure I could hold back too much longer.

“Christian!”

The sound of Rhys screaming my name pushed me over the edge. My back arched up again, and my ass clenched tight around him as my seed sprayed up my chest, hot and thick. His cock twitched inside of me as I fell back against the seat.

I gazed up at him and smiled at the expressions flying over his face. He looked pretty much how I felt, and I was relieved to know I wasn't the only one confused by the entire situation.

He pulled out of me and reached behind him to open the door. The cool air over my skin made me break out in goose bumps. I hadn't realized how warm the car had gotten. I sat up to lean against the passenger door while I watched him bury the condom in the dirt outside the car. He climbed back in and slammed the door with a shudder.

“Come here,” I said.

He climbed over and laid against my chest, resting his head on my shoulder as I wrapped my arms around him. There were so many things I wanted to say to him, but I had a feeling that right then none of them needed to be voiced. They would, but for that moment, it was just us in the silence, and it was magical, beautiful and perfect. Just like Rhys.

Chapter Five

I woke up in a bed I didn't recognize with the sun shining through gauzy curtains. I looked around and remembered where I was once I saw Rhys next to me with his arm flung over my chest. I heard Gran downstairs, clanging pots and pans in the kitchen, and suddenly, realized I was starving.

Rhys and I had stayed in the car together until it started to grow chilly again then decided we had better get inside. We had lain in bed talking in the dark until almost four a.m. He told me about spending summers in the woods with his gran, about his days in the Boy Scouts and about how much he loved his job.

I was happy to let him talk and deflected any questions he asked about me as much as I could. We were having such a good time; I didn't want to spoil it by letting something slip that would scare him away.

A groan escaped my lips when I glanced at the clock and saw it was almost nine a.m. I thought about closing my eyes and going back to sleep until Rhys woke up, but Gran yelled upstairs for us to get down to the kitchen, so that idea was screwed.

Rhys blew out a sigh and blinked his eyes open a few times. He turned his head and smiled sleepily at me.

"Morning."

"Yes, it is," I said with a yawn. "Is she going to come get us if we don't get up?"

"Yes."

It was my turn to sigh. Rhys flung the comforter off us, and the cool air made us both a little more alert. We still wore our jeans from the night before, so I just threw on a T-shirt and smiled when Rhys did the same.

We made our way downstairs slowly, but the smell of coffee definitely helped with my consciousness. I sat next to Rhys at the table and thanked Gran when she poured us both cups of hot java.

“You two were out late last night,” she said as she walked over to the stove.

I blushed, and Rhys kicked me under the table. But when I looked at him, I was amused to see that he looked a little pink, too.

Gran pulled dishes out of the stove and set them on the table, and my stomach growled at the sight of all the food.

“Gran, you wouldn’t be trying to show off to Christian, would you?” Rhys asked as he looked at all the food she had cooked.

“Rhys Stone, you hush your mouth,” she said, snapping her dishtowel at him. “Don’t you believe him. This child has never left my table hungry.”

Rhys grinned. “Yeah, but you’ve also never cooked every bit of food in your pantry either.”

“There are two hungry men here,” Gran said in a this-conversation-is-over tone.

Rhys and I smiled at each other then started grabbing food from every plate we could reach. Gran had made bacon, sausage, eggs, two kinds of potatoes, biscuits, gravy, and there was stuff on the other side of the table I couldn’t see well enough to identify. She could have fed an army...or two twenty-something men.

I ate until I thought I would burst. I leaned back in my chair and looked over at Rhys. He was staring down at the food on his plate, and I could tell he was thinking he couldn’t touch his fork again.

Gran clapped her hands, and we both looked up at her. I’d been seriously considering going back to bed, but she obviously had other ideas for us.

“Well, now that you’re all fed, I would appreciate it if you could give me some help around the house. I’m getting old, and there are things that I just can’t do anymore.”

“Ah-ha,” Rhys said with a laugh. “So this was bribery.”

“I would be honored to help out, Gran,” I said. “It’s the least I can do, considering you’re letting me stay here.”

“Thank you, Christian,” Gran said, dropping a kiss on the top of my head.

“You two are disgusting,” Rhys said, but he was smiling. “What do you need us to do, Gran?”

* * * *

Gran had given each of us a list of chores she needed help with. The lists kept us apart all morning, with him fixing roof shingles and me rebuilding a fence around the backyard. It was grunt work, but it felt good to be out in the trees with the cool breeze. I couldn't remember the last time I worked so hard I broke out in a sweat.

I looked up at the house but couldn't see Rhys anymore. I figured he must have been working at the other side. I was heading back toward the house to get a drink when I heard Gran scream.

I ran as fast as I could, bursting through the door to see Gran covered in blood and huddled in a corner of the room. I turned just as the bobcat attacked me. His claws dug into my ribs, but I managed to get him off of me.

My clothes ripped as my muscles and bones rearranged themselves under my skin. Only it wasn't skin anymore. It was fur. My body shifted into that of a large gray wolf. I howled through my muzzle and turned to the bobcat. His back arched, and the fucker attacked me again.

His teeth and claws sank into my flesh, and I screamed for Gran to get out. I wasn't sure if she could understand me, or if I even managed to get the words out, but I wanted her to get to safety.

The bobcat was screeching and gnawing at my back. I managed to shake him off and pin him to the floor. He swiped at me again, and I bit into his throat, tearing back hard enough to pull skin and thicker bits away from his body. I spit the meat to the floor and rolled off of him. I knew he would bleed to death, and I really didn't want to see it.

I didn't think about anything but getting out of the house. The fact that I looked like a giant wolf didn't cross my mind. I suppose if it had, I might have shifted back to human form before limping out of the house. Then again, maybe not. I was bleeding and hurting and needed air.

I got to the bottom of the steps and turned to see that Gran had gotten out of the house. I stalked over to her to make sure she was okay, but Rhys' voice behind me made me freeze.

“Stop!”

I turned around to look at him, and he shot me in the chest. I heard Gran screaming as I fell to the ground. It wasn't silver shot, but I had sustained so many injuries, I knew I would have to change back to human form or I would bleed to death. I blinked hard a few times until Rhys came in to focus over me.

I had to concentrate harder than usual on the shift, but managed to do it before I completely lost consciousness. It hurt like hell as my bones snapped back into place and my skin healed itself over the wounds the bobcat had left on my wolf form. The worst was when the bullet expelled itself from my chest. I screamed from the pain before the world went black.

* * * *

"What do you mean you don't know if he'll be okay?"

"I mean I don't know. Usually only silver bullets kill werewolves, but Christian was really hurt when you shot him."

"Fuck! Christian, don't die. Please don't fucking die."

"Language."

I heard Rhys and Gran arguing around me as I struggled to get my eyes open, but I was so tired. A warm hand held mine, and I think I might have squeezed back, but I wasn't really sure.

It was as if my brain had a fog around it, and nothing made any sense, nothing was quite real. Like that night in the car with Rhys. I fought to focus on that night. On the feel of him inside of me, him lying against my chest while I held him. As I wrapped my mind around more and more detail from the night, I started to feel like myself again.

"Rhys?" It was barely a whisper, but it was all I could manage at the moment.

"Christian." His voice had moved closer. "Oh God, I'm so fucking sorry."

"Apologize later," Gran said from the other side of me. "Christian, honey, you need to rest. We need you better, okay?"

I think I nodded, but I couldn't tell you for sure.

Hours, or maybe days, perhaps even weeks later, I woke up. I opened my eyes and looked around. Rhys sat next to me, my hand in his, and he slept with his head on my thigh. I raised my arm and ran my fingers through his hair. He moaned softly and pressed his cheek against my hand.

“Hey you,” I said. My voice was raspy from lack of use, but other than my throat being dry, I felt pretty good.

“Hey,” Rhys said sleepily. After a minute, his eyes snapped open, and he grinned at me, his dimples deeper than I’d ever seen them. “You don’t know how glad I am that you woke up.”

“I can guess,” I said, trying to laugh. “I’m pretty pleased myself.”

“Let me get you some water.” Rhys tried to stand, but I wouldn’t let go of his hand. He bent to kiss my forehead. “I promise I’ll be right back.”

I reluctantly let him go and watched him leave the room. I jumped when Gran spoke from the other side of me.

“Thank you for saving my life.”

I turned to see her sitting on a chair with her hands and a bible in her lap. She wasn’t crying, but looked as if she had only recently stopped.

“It was my pleasure. Well, maybe not pleasure, but I’ll never be sorry I did. I’m just glad I was able to get to you before you were more seriously hurt. Are you all right?”

Rhys came back and handed me a glass of water. I drained it completely and started feeling much better. I sat up and smiled at him before turning back to Gran.

“Oh I’m fine.” A couple tears slipped down her cheek, and I reached out to hug her. She fell into me and started to sob against my shoulder. “I didn’t even see Rhys coming.”

“Gran.” I kissed her head and tried not to laugh. “This is in no way your fault. I’m so glad you’re okay. And I’ll be fine. If anyone is to blame, it’s me. If I had been honest from the beginning, it wouldn’t have happened. Hell, if I had shifted back before stumbling out of the house... Please don’t blame yourself.”

She nodded and dabbed at her eyes with her handkerchief as she sat back in her chair. I turned to Rhys and saw that he looked on the verge of tears, too.

“All right, that’s it.” I threw the covers off myself and climbed out of bed. Thankfully, someone had put pants on me so I wasn’t standing naked in front of Gran. “I am fine. Honest. I’ve even been hurt worse than this. Rhys, you didn’t shoot me. You shot an animal stumbling out of your grandmother’s house covered in blood and walking toward her. Gran, you didn’t tell Rhys what I am because I asked you not to. And you were completely shaken and hurt, so it’s no wonder you weren’t exactly aware of your surroundings at that particular moment. Can we be done now?”

They both hugged me, their combined weight against me making me fall back to the bed and they came with me. We laughed, and I felt a twinge of regret. I hadn't lost them yet, but when Rhys made me leave, I would miss both of them terribly. I should have known better than to believe I could have a real family again. But I was glad I'd gotten to feel loved and happy for at least a couple days.

"Well," Gran said, standing up and fixing her apron back in place. "I'm going to run to the market. I'll leave you boys to talk. I'm sure that should keep you busy for a while."

She kissed my cheek and bustled out of the room, sniffing softly.

I took a deep breath and turned to face Rhys. There was no way to steel myself for his reaction, so I didn't even try. I just looked at him and waited for him to start screaming at me to get away from him.

He looked at me for a few minutes, his chest rising and falling steadily and his face expressionless. I waited for him to talk first, then started to worry that he was waiting for me. I didn't want to go first. I wasn't even sure what I would say. Finally, he broke the silence, and I exhaled a breath I hadn't realized I'd been holding.

"Why didn't you tell me?"

"Because I like you." It sounded stupid even if it was the truth.

"If you like me so much, why did you lie to me?"

"I didn't lie, not really."

He gave me an eloquent look and I sighed.

"All right, I kept it from you because I was afraid you would freak out and take off. And I love you so much, I just wanted a couple more days with you. I swear I was going to tell you when we left here. Can you understand that? I know it was wrong, and I know that I hurt you, but that was never my intention and... Why are you looking at me like that?"

He was smiling, and his eyes were shiny. He wasn't crying, but he could have if he'd wanted to.

"You love me?"

"Of course, I love you!" I threw my hands up in exasperation. "How could you not know that I love you?"

"I don't know. I guess I just didn't believe that you could love me back, especially this soon. I thought we'd come up here, have some fun then go back to our separate lives."

“It is soon, I know that. The thing is, it only takes a moment to fall in love. I don’t think it matters if that moment is seven years after meeting someone or ten seconds from the time they come into your life. Falling in love doesn’t have to be gradual, does it?” I tried to keep my voice steady, but I wasn’t sure how long I could keep my tone even. “If you were looking to just go back to our lives like this weekend never happened, I do understand, I guess. Is that what you want?”

“No, that’s not what I want.” Rhys took my hand and kissed the knuckles. “Christian, I love you. And if you can ever forgive me for shooting you, I’d like to give us a chance.”

“I love you, too. And I’ve already forgiven you. If you can forgive me for not telling you about my...affliction, then I definitely want to be together.”

He kissed me; it was soft and chaste but just right for the moment. We could do crazy, passionate sex later. Right then, I needed him to be my friend, to love me and to assure me that we had a future. He managed to put all of those words into one silent kiss I’ll remember for the rest of my life.

And we lived happily ever after...

What? We did.

About the Author

Dakota lives in Detroit, Michigan. She loves the city at night and the shopping during the day. She loves David Bowie and vampire movies, The Beatles and Dolly Parton. She is partial to pixie sticks and cannot stand nuts...in her food. She will always believe that pizza is the perfect food.

She is as much in love with her partner as she is with herself. And she will be the first to tell you how incredibly witty she is. She doesn't believe in lipstick but won't leave the house without eyeliner. She is fiercely political and can often be found ranting around her house and the internet on any given topic. She still won't admit whether or not she really believes that vampires exist. And if you let her, she can convince you she doesn't know how to ride a bicycle.

For more information about Dakota visit her website at www.dakotarebel.com or her blog at www.dakotarebel.blogspot.com.

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***Just Right* by Bronwyn Green**

When Department of Natural Resources officer, Gwendolyn Locke, hits a black bear on the way home from work one night, her entire view of reality changes. She discovers that shape-shifters exist, and she's just become Goldilocks to three gorgeous, very aroused men who also happen to be werebears. Being snowbound has never been so hot.

***Open Sesame* by Mia Watts**

Alister Baban overheard a business discussion that netted him and his Uncle Cassimer a lot of money. When the Simsim Group stock crashes and declares bankruptcy within weeks, the owners immediately suspect the Babans of playing dirty.

Oz Adamo, one of four brothers who owned Simsim Group, agrees to abduct Alister to obtain information and win back the lost pensions of former employees.

Tied to a bed and lusting after his captor, Alister fights the sexual attraction he has for Oz. They want information and he isn't about to give it. But Oz loves a good challenge, and shrewd, serious, sexy Alister is naked and his—at least for now.

***Heart of Ice* by Brynn Paulin**

Kai is perfectly unhappy with his life. Cast into a role as shop boy and forced into marriage to save his family, he sees nothing good in his future. In fact, his betrothed, Gerda, seems to hate everything he enjoys. Especially winter and his attraction to dominating his partners. His prospects look grim...until the Snow Queen arrives.

Wyn has spent her life alone, living vicariously through those who love winter. When she learns of Kai's predicament, she knows she must save him. If only she could save herself. She craves his dominance, but there's one tiny thing standing in their way. No human can touch her without experiencing chilly agony. And that might bring any relationship to an icy death.

***Check out other great stories written by erotic romance author
Dakota Rebel***

Tropical Hedonism

After a boating accident, Sean Harris wakes up, staring into the eyes of a handsome doctor. Even when he discovers that he is on an island within the Bermuda Triangle, and there is no way for him to get back to his old life, he can't be too disappointed if it means being stuck with the doctor.

Dr. Wesley Carpenter cannot believe that the younger Sean Harris would want anything to do with him. After half-heartedly turning down the advances of his patient, he realizes that resistance is futile.

The men find themselves falling for each other quickly, but ghosts from their pasts and outside influences try to get in the way of their happiness. Sean and Wesley may be on the island forever, but neither is sure if that guarantees they'll be able to continue their *Tropical Hedonism*.

Not All Who Wander

Sara has always been a wanderer, traveling the world in search of her next big adventure. When she ends up on a tropical island, she's afraid of being trapped forever. Even more, she meets two men who both want her in their bed—the same bed— and she couldn't be more confused. While her body screams yes, she's just not sure she wants to tie herself to any relationship, let alone a ménage.

Gabe and Toby know as soon as they find Sara washed up on the shore of Wyspa that she's the answer to their dreams, the woman they both want as the third in their relationship. They know she's their one. They must overcome her doubts and convince her that not all who wander are lost. Sometimes, finding a home is the biggest adventure of all.

Something wicked this way comes...

WICKED

Resplendence Publishing's Modern Fairy Tales, Fables, and Folklore for Adults

***Sins of the Father* by Janet Eaves**

Aurora was born to wealth and privilege but was spirited away as an infant to a place of safety after viscous threats to her life. Raised with an alias, and practically a prisoner of the three little old ladies who raised her, Aurora, at twenty, feels like Sleeping Beauty, just waiting for her life to start.

When she meets a gorgeous “struggling” artist, she seizes the opportunity to take her life into her own hands and have a little fun. But once she ends up in his hands, the evil that has hunted for her all her life, finds her, and seeks to destroy her.

***Red: A Seduction Tale* by Maddie James**

Garnet Boudreaux is going home. Not back to her nice little apartment in New York City, but to her childhood home in the bayou. She doesn't want to go, and isn't certain what will be waiting for her when she arrives. But standing there in the voodoo shop on Bourbon Street, in the middle of one helluva party, she's told by Madame Madeleine Dupuis that she has no choice. She presses two pouches into Garnet's hands, wraps a red cape around her, and tells her she must go—and go now—to see to her grandmother.

Max LeBlanc spies the lovely red-head across the street and knows in a heartbeat she is the one. A rougarou always knows when he's met his mate. Some may call him a lycanthrope, a werewolf if you will, but in Cajun bayou lands he's known simply as The Rougarou. He's waited several hundred years for this moment, and for her. There is nothing left for him to do but mark her and claim her as his mate. Soon.

***Fiery Ember* by Celia Kyle**

Ember Ellason is a darned good secretary. True, she'd like to be more, but since her father's passing, her step-mother has taken over as CEO of Ellason Advertising, and Clementine Ellason feels Ember is only good enough to fetch coffee...barely. But when Clementine and her horrid daughters fail to show up for the meeting with the biggest client they could ever land, Ember saves the day by impersonating her step-mother.

Paul Ashe needs a new ad campaign and he's found the perfect company with the perfect proposal in Ellason Advertising. Too bad his body is a little too interested in the voluptuous CEO with her fiery red hair and blazing green eyes. Then he can't seem to find the elusive woman after their first intimate tryst, and is left with only a pair of panties to remember her by.

Will this Cinderella tale end in happily ever after? Or will Ember be separated from her panties—and her prince—for ever more?

***Aliya Baban and the Cave of Pleasure* by Melinda Barron**

Advertising agent Aliya Baban is beautiful with a capital B. Unfortunately, she's also a witch with a capital B. In her twenty-eight years of life, she's managed to offend almost every woman she has ever met.

But she doesn't care, really. That's just the way life is.

When her boss tells her to get the *Cave of Pleasure* account, or else get a new job, Aliya takes her party invitation—and the strange lamp she's received—and attends the nightclub's grand opening, ready to do battle for her livelihood.

Matuse is more than just the owner of the *Cave of Pleasure*... He's a pleasure Djinni. And Aliya has rubbed his lamp. For the next thirty days, she belongs to him. Though he intends to bring intense pleasure to her body, it's also his job to make sure his "she-devil" changes her wicked ways.

Will Matuse be able to help Aliya overcome her painful past? Or will Aliya fail to make the five heartfelt apologies she needs to make to the five women she has hurt the most.

***Oriana and the Three Werebears* by Tia Fanning**

Oriana Ricci has taken over the family business—flying cargo and rich tourists around Alaska's barely inhabited Kodiak Archipelago. When her plane malfunctions and she's forced to make an emergency landing, she finds herself stranded in the middle of a National Wildlife Refuge. With no civilization for miles and no hope of rescue, she thinks all is lost...

Until she stumbles upon the entrance to an underground bunker.

Jack, Jordan, and Jonathan McMathan own and operate a secret intelligence firm contracted by the US Government. Hidden away in an old Cold War spy station located the middle of the Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge, the brothers are not only able to do their top secret jobs safely without fear of discovery, but are better to protect their other, more personal secret: They have the ability to shift into Kodiak bears.

Like a fairy tale gone bad, the brothers return home to find their lunch tasted—or eaten, their

computer chairs adjusted—or broken, and a beautiful blonde sleeping in one of their beds. This situation poses a big problem for the brothers...

Their location is now compromised. But more importantly, what are they to do with the lady?

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