



**Jinx and Her Werewolf**

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Strange Hollow

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## **Blurb**

As a jinx, Thora has had to move around a lot. When her car breaks down, stranding her in Strange Hollow, she figures the town is as good a place as any to stay for a while. When she meets Daker, he is just one more reason for her to stay.

A werewolf, Daker knows Thora is his mate, but her being a mortal just adds one more reason to take things slow with her. Not only does he have to find a way to tell her he is a werewolf, and she is his mate, he has to explain that the residents of Strange

Hollow aren't exactly what they seem. After Daker claims Thora as his mate, Thora knows they can never be, not with her curse hanging over her head. She may be cursed to be a jinx for the rest of her life, but she's also destined to kill the man she gives her heart to. Not wanting to be the cause of Daker's death, she has to fight her feelings for him or watch the man she loves die.

## Chapter One

"Come on, come on. Start," Thora muttered when she turned the key in her car's ignition. Nothing happened.

She let her head fall forward until her forehead came to rest on the steering wheel. She should have expected something like this to happen, but she had held onto her hopes that it wouldn't. She'd been driving for a little over six hours and things had seemed to go so well. Of course, it had only been a matter of time before her luck ran out. Not that she had much in the luck department anyway.

Getting out of her year-old blue Chevy Cobalt coupe that was now dead as a doornail, Thora shut the driver's door and looked around. The sun was slowly starting to sink below the horizon. Her car sat on the side of the road on a street just off Main Street in a small town called Strange Hollow. Thora hadn't intentionally come to Strange Hollow, she just happened across it. When things started to get really bad, which they invariably did, she would pack up her car and just drive until she found a new place to live. A place where nobody knew her. At the moment, Strange Hollow, North Carolina, looked to be as good a place as any.

With a sigh, Thora opened the car door and popped the hood. She made her way to the front of the car and lifted it to look at the engine, not that she knew anything about fixing cars. She poked at the spark plugs having no real idea what had caused her car to suddenly stop. Thora leaned in further under the hood and peered at one of the belts.

"Do you need some help?"

The sound of the deep, masculine voice that came from behind her caused Thora to jump. She cursed while she reared back and cracked her head on the raised hood. Slowly backing up, she said, "Damn it, that hurt. Didn't anyone ever tell you not to sneak up on a person like that?"

Rubbing her head, Thora turned to see who stood at her back. Her hand stilled when she looked up at the lightest green eyes she had ever seen on a person. They reminded her of two pieces of jade. Her eyes skimmed over the face that came with them. And what a face it was. The man had a face that would put a male model to shame. Unable to tear her gaze away, Thora took in his straight nose, chiseled cheekbones and square jaw. His lips were firm and made her wonder what they would feel like pressed to hers. His straight hair brushed the tops of his shoulders, and seemed to be a mix of blonde and brown. Her fingers itched to run through it to see if it felt soft as it looked. She licked her lips, taking in the rest of him. He was built. She had to give him that. The tight black jeans and gray T-shirt he wore showed off the large muscles on his arms, chest and legs to perfection. He towered over her, and she was not short by any means at five foot seven. Thora guessed him to be about six foot six.

He stepped closer, breaking the spell she seemed to have fallen under. "Sorry, I didn't mean to sneak up on you. Are you okay?"

Thora let her hand drop to her side and nodded. She cleared her throat before she spoke. "I'm fine. I just bumped my head. I've had worse." She'd lost count of the number of times she'd had to go to a hospital's ER to be patched up because of one of her "accidents."

He glanced over at her car. "Having car trouble?"

"Yeah." Thora forced herself to turn and look at her car. "It just stopped and I can't get it started again."

He brushed past her and stuck his head under the hood. When he bent slightly forward to get a closer look at the engine, Thora bit back a silent moan as she watched the material of his jeans pull tighter across his hard, muscled ass. She bet she could bounce a quarter off it. There didn't seem to be an inch of fat anywhere on him.

Lost in a fantasy of him stretched out across the hood of her car while she licked every inch of him, Thora jerked back to reality when she heard a loud popping sound. She moved around to stand next to the hunky man of her fantasies in time to see a fountain of oil suddenly shoot out of her engine and hit him smack in the face. Knowing she had to be the one who had caused it, Thora automatically started to apologize. "I'm so sorry." She took a step back as he pulled his head out from under the hood and, using the palm of his hand, he tried to wipe off the car oil that dripped down his face.

He shook his head. "Don't apologize. That wasn't your fault." He swiped at his face again. "Though I have to say I've never had a car do that to me before."

Thora gave him a sheepish grin. "Let's just say, around me, lots of weird and unusual things happen."

"Well, it looks as if you won't be going anywhere tonight. The local garage will be closed by now. You'll have to wait to call them in the morning. Do you have a place to stay?"

"No. I only planned on passing through." Thora stared up at him. Her gaze collided with his. She had to swallow when she saw the look of longing in his light green eyes. While she watched, his eyes seemed to glow for a split second before he looked down to her lips. She felt an ache start to build in her pussy and wetness pool between her legs. His nostrils flared when he drew in a deep breath of air. With just one look he brought her to full arousal.

He took a step closer as his eyes flicked down to her pebbled nipples. Her peach-colored short sleeved blouse did nothing to hide their condition before he looked back up at her face. "I would offer to have you over for the night since I just live over there," he pointed to the modest bungalow directly in front of them, "but I don't think that would be a good idea. I'm Daker Sands by the way."

Daker's voice had become deeper and huskier as he spoke. Hearing it caused the flames of her desire to burn even hotter. "I'm Thora Pomeroy," she replied in a breathy voice. She cleared her throat before she continued, not wanting Daker to know how turned on she had become. "If you point me to a place where I can stay the night, I can arrange something for myself."

With his clean hand, Daker reached out and took hold of a lock of her black, waist-length hair and brought it to his nose for a sniff. Thora felt as if she would melt into the asphalt right then and there.

Daker let her hair fall back in place. "I can do better than that. There's a Bed and Breakfast not too far from here. I'm sure Lilin has an opening. Why don't I push your car into my driveway and I'll call her about getting you a room."

Not sure she trusted her voice, Thora nodded instead.

"Good. You can steer while I push."

After Daker closed the hood of her car, Thora got into the driver's side. She put it in

neutral and motioned to Daker she was ready. She wasn't really all that sure Daker would be able to push the car by himself. Thora soon found herself surprised when he moved around to the back and with one hard shove had the car rolling smoothly toward his driveway. She had guessed he would be strong given how muscular he was, but she hadn't expected Daker to be *that* strong.

Letting her car roll to a stop, Thora glanced at Daker in her rearview mirror. She bit her bottom lip. Arousal flared between them when his gaze met hers. She found it hard to believe Daker seemed interested in her, but there was no denying the look of longing he shot her way. Thora sighed. If only things didn't always have to turn into a disaster around her, she would be more than happy to see where things went with her and Daker. But that would never be her reality. Sometimes Thora really hated her life.

\* \* \* \*

Daker led Thora to his living room and told her to take a seat while he phoned Lilin about a room. Even though there was a phone in the living room, he decided to make the phone call from the kitchen. Right now, he needed some space between him and Thora so he could get his head screwed back on straight. Being around her had sent him completely off kilter.

Quickly washing the car oil from his face and hand in the kitchen sink, he tried to take deep calming breaths. They, of course, didn't work. All they did was draw more of Thora's scent into his lungs. His cock grew even harder inside his jeans. The mortal who sat in his living room had no idea what she meant to him. She was his mate. Something about her scent told him she was the one for him. All male werewolves found their mates that way. The mating urge now rode him so hard all he could think about was getting Thora under him. He took another deep breath. Her scent flooded his senses. He closed his eyes when he detected a glimmer of something buried deep within her scent, something that he couldn't quite put his finger on. It almost had the telltale scent of magic. Being a creature of magic himself, Daker swore it could only be that, but Thora smelled completely mortal.

Her scent also roused his wolf. Daker grimaced. Unlike other werewolves, especially male werewolves, his wolf could only be described as *different*. And unlike others of his kind, his wolf only wanted to play. In human form Daker was all alpha male, in wolf form his wolf turned into a great big puppy dog. And while in wolf form, Daker didn't retain most of the control—his wolf did. It felt as if he were standing on the sidelines watching everything the wolf did, but unable get him to heel. Just another thing that made his wolf stand out from others of his kind—and why he no longer lived or associated with his pack.

Even now his wolf pushed at him for control. Instead of wanting to claim Thora for his mate as he should, he only wanted to play with her. Daker pushed him away. Eventually he would have to let his wolf out, but for now he wanted to be the one who got to be around Thora.

Thinking it best to get Thora away from him until he could decide what he wanted to do about her being his mate, Daker picked up the phone and dialed the number to Lilin Love's Bed and Breakfast called Love's Nest. He didn't have long to wait before Lilin picked up on the other end.

"Hey, Lilin, it's Daker. I was wondering if you had a room available for tonight."

"Well hello, Daker, honey. And just why do you need a room at my B and B? Booking a room for the night will not get you any closer to spending the night in my bed."

Daker chuckled. Lilin and he had exchanged sexual innuendos ever since he had first come to live in Strange Hollow. Lilin was a succubus demon who had been disowned by her family because she refused to seduce every man she met just to steal his energy. And unlike the rest of her family who were known to be ugly as sin in their true forms, she had been born beautiful. Lilin only wanted to seduce her soul mate, when she eventually found him. A soul mate that she had somehow determined would be a werewolf. She'd been a bit disappointed when Daker had informed her at their first meeting that she wasn't his mate. But that hadn't stopped them from becoming close friends.

"Ah, Lilin, you know I dream of spending a night in your arms."

She laughed. "Sure you do, honey. But alas, you just aren't the man for me."

"I guess I'll just have to learn to live without experiencing that pleasure."

Lilin laughed again. She then asked, "Really, Daker, why do you need a room?"

He grew serious. "A woman passing through had a bit of car trouble. She broke down in front of my house. She needs a place to stay until the garage can take a look at her car. I can't let her stay here, at least not right now."

Lilin sighed dramatically. "This woman, she's your mate, isn't she?"

"Yes, but she's mortal. I need to put some distance between us. I need to give her time to get to know me a bit better before I do something stupid like jump her and claim her for my own without her knowing what I am."

"Ah. Her being mortal does make things a little more complicated. Sure, bring her over. You know I always have a room available. It's not as if I get many visitors at the B and B. Strange Hollow being what it is."

"Great. Thanks, Lilin. I'll bring Thora over in a few minutes."

Daker hung up the phone and headed back to the living room. Thora's scent hit him harder the closer he came. He really needed to get her to the B and B before he did something he would regret later. His cock jerked in his jeans when his gaze came to rest on her. Thora sat on his couch looking out the big picture window at the darkening sky outside. He skimmed over her waist-length, straight black hair. Daker wanted nothing more than to wrap all that hair around his hand while he kissed her senseless. Or better yet, have it draped over his body when she took his cock into her mouth.

Giving himself a mental kick in the butt, Daker tried to pull his mind out of the gutter. He needed to keep it together. He glanced over the rest of Thora. She was more cute than pretty with her pert nose, kissable lips and brown eyes. He quickly pulled his gaze off her lips before his thoughts got out of hand once again. He could tell Thora was curvy in all the right places from the short sleeved blouse and blue jeans she wore. Slim, but not on the side of being too skinny.

He moved to stand in front of Thora. She smiled at him. "I got a room for you at the B and B. Lilin will be expecting you. I'll walk you down to her place now if you want. The B and B is just down the street and around the corner from here."

"Okay, sure. I need to grab a suitcase out of my car first."

Daker nodded. "Sure. I can carry it for you."

He took a step closer and offered Thora his hand to help her up at the same time she went to stand. Somehow she ended up losing her balance and falling into him. The sound

of his teeth snapping together when she cracked the top of her head under his chin could easily be heard. Even though he damn near bit his tongue off, Daker managed to wrap his arms around Thora and pull her against him to steady them both.

Thora rubbed her head. "Sorry. It's my fault again. How's your chin?" She put her hand on his cheek and got him to tip his head back slightly so she could have a proper look at his chin. Before he realized what she intended, Thora stretched up on her toes and kissed his chin.

They both froze, but having her lips on his skin proved to be too much for Daker to take and do nothing about. With a soft growl, he pulled her closer and brought his lips down to hers. As he moved his mouth across hers, Thora stiffened for a split second before she relaxed against him and returned his kiss. He swept his tongue across the seam of her lips before he pushed it between them.

He twined his tongue with hers, exploring and tasting her mouth. The taste of her on his tongue, with the scent of her arousal swirling around them, caused his cock to grow even harder. He ached to reach down and undo his jeans to free his erection from its tight confines, but he hadn't lost all reason just yet. If he did that there would be no stopping what he had started here. And he knew he would have to end this soon.

Thora's hands came up and fisted in the front of his T-shirt as she increased the pressure of their lips. Another low, animalistic, wolf's growl rose out of him before he could hold it back. Dropping his hands to grab her bottom, Daker hauled her up against his hard cock. He rocked his hips against her while Thora sucked on his tongue.

When she reached up and threaded her fingers through the sides of his hair and started to kiss him for all she was worth, Daker felt his control start to slip. Thora's enthusiastic response just made him ache for her even more. With a groan of regret, he broke their kiss and untangled her fingers from his hair. For good measure, he took a step back so their bodies no longer touched. Thora looked up at him with heavy lidded eyes filled with desire. The scent of her arousal filled the air. He had to fist his hands at his sides to stop himself from pulling her back into his arms.

"I think I should take you to Lilin's now." Daker tried to sound unaffected by what they had just shared, but his voice sounded too husky even to his ears.

Thora blinked as she seemed to come back to herself. She licked her lips that were swollen from his kisses, which made Daker howl inside with unfulfilled lust. "Okay. If that's what you want."

No, damn it, it wasn't what he wanted, but it was either that or take her right there on his living room floor. He didn't want their first time together to be nothing but a quick fuck on the floor. Thora deserved better than that. He would probably come to regret this later knowing the mating urge would keep him in an aroused state almost continually until he claimed her, but Daker knew it was the right thing to do.

Not trusting himself to touch her again, Daker motioned for Thora to follow him out of the house. He hoped having her sleep at the B and B would help, but he had the feeling he would spend the majority of the night awake. With the hard-on he now sported, he figured it would make sleep almost next to impossible.



## Chapter Two

Thora grabbed one of the smaller suitcases inside the trunk of her car. She opened it to make sure there were enough clothes in it to give her a full outfit for the next day. Seeing she would be missing a few pieces of clothing that would make her decent, she opened the largest suitcase and dug around inside it. She could feel Daker standing at her back, waiting.

She tried to hurry, but remembering the kiss they had shared distracted her from what she was doing. Boy, the man could kiss. It made her long for more than just his kisses. And it made her wonder what other wicked things he could do with that mouth of his. Her whole body had gone up in flames. Even now her panties were wet, and her pussy ached to be filled. Just thinking about how hot Daker had made her caused more wetness to pool between her legs.

Daker made a sound that suspiciously sounded like a cross between a groan and an animalistic growl. "Are you almost done?"

Thora quickly grabbed a bra and panties out of the large suitcase and crammed them into the smaller one that she planned to take to the B and B. "Just about." She closed both suitcases before she closed the trunk after she hauled the smaller one out. Daker quickly took it. When he started to walk down his driveway toward the sidewalk, Thora fell into step beside him. To her, it seemed as if he made sure he kept enough distance between them so they wouldn't have to come in contact with each other. It made her wonder if she had done something wrong. After all, it had been Daker who had ended their kiss first.

"So," Daker said conversationally, "I noticed you have a lot of stuff in your car. You're not away on holidays, are you?"

"No. It was time to move on from the last place I lived. So I packed up the car and left."

"Just like that? You packed up and drove away?"

"Yeah, that's about it."

"Where are you headed?"

Thora shrugged. "I don't know. I don't really plan where I go, or where I decide to stay when it's time to move on again. With a dead car, I'm starting to think Strange Hollow is as good a place as any."

Daker gave her a look that said he wasn't sure about that. "Strange Hollow isn't exactly for everyone, but if I cl..." His words fell away before he finished his sentence.

"But if you what?"

"Nothing. Forget it. Where was the last place you lived?"

"Charlottesville, Virginia."

Daker's brows rose. "When you move on you really move on."

"What can I say? I like to make sure I start off with a clean slate at each new place." God forbid if anyone recognized or knew her at each new city or town she moved to.

He gave her a half smile. "I know what you mean." Daker stopped walking and turned to point to a charming two-story house.

Thora looked at the green, manicured lawn and the well tended flowerbeds full of red roses and white lilies that lined the front of the house. The house, with its diamond paned

windows and rustic style, reminded her of a quaint cottage one would find deep in the English countryside. She read the artistically hand painted sign that stood near the front of the house. Love's Nest. She turned and looked at Daker. "Love's Nest?"

He smiled. "Lilin's last name is Love and she thinks of her B and B as her nest."

The front door of the B and B opened and a woman stepped out. She smiled and waved at Daker. Thora watched her come down the steps that led to the front porch and make her way over to where she and Daker stood. Thora began to feel what suspiciously felt like jealousy. It lifted its ugly green head when the woman threw herself into Daker's arms and kissed him on the cheek. Lilin, Thora felt pretty sure that was who the woman had to be, could only be described as supermodel beautiful. She had thick, long, wavy blonde hair that fell to the small of her back. Besides being a knockout, Lilin had a body that matched her face. Thora felt positively mousy compared to her. Seeing how friendly Lilin and Daker acted, she had to wonder if Daker had a thing going with Lilin. The two of them would make one hell of a gorgeous couple.

Lilin stepped away from Daker and turned to Thora. "You must be Thora." She stuck out her hand. "I'm Lilin, the owner of Love's Nest."

Thora shook hands with her and gave her a small smile. "Nice to meet you. Thanks for putting me up at the spur of the moment."

"It isn't as if I had the place fully booked anyway. I always have room. Actually, you're my only guest at the moment, but I would have found a way to fit you in since Daker asked me so nicely." Lilin winked at Daker.

Daker chuckled. "Don't let Lilin fool you, Thora. She is a sweetheart and would do anything for anyone around here."

Thora looked from Daker to Lilin. There *had* to be something between them. Lilin practically oozed sex appeal. What man in his right mind would pick her over super sexy Lilin?

Feeling a little irked that Daker had dared to kiss her when he already had a girlfriend, Thora covered her mouth with her hand and forced a yawn. "If it's all right, I'd like to go to my room now. It has been a long day, at least for me. I drove for over six hours before my car broke down."

"I can show you to your room," Lilin said. "It's not that late. I thought once I got you checked in Daker here would take you out for supper at the diner." Lilin gave Daker a pointed look.

"Ah ... yeah," Daker quickly said. "You must be hungry after your long day on the road. Why don't you come eat supper with me?"

Thora shook her head. "Thanks for the offer, but I have to say no." She relieved Daker of her suitcase. "I'll get in touch with the garage tomorrow morning and see about getting my car towed over there. I'm sure you don't want it blocking your driveway. Thanks again for all your help."

She walked around Lilin and headed for the front door of the B and B. She couldn't believe Lilin would actually get her boyfriend to ask her out for supper. Either Lilin absolutely trusted Daker not to fool around, or they had an open relationship where they each agreed to date other people and see each other. Whatever they had, Thora didn't want to go there. But it figured. Here she had found a man she was more than a little attracted to, who also seemed attracted to her, and he ended up being taken. She just wished she hadn't let Daker kiss her.

Thora turned when she reached the front door and saw Lilin whisper something to Daker. Daker's gaze shot over to her and gave her a look of such longing that Thora felt her legs go weak. He then spun on his heel and left. Thora watched his retreating back until he disappeared around the street corner.

"Come on, I'll show you your room." Lilin had come to stand on the porch beside her while she had watched Daker walk away.

The inside of the B and B was just as charming as it was on the outside. The walls were all painted in bright pastel colors and the hardwood floors gleamed. Lilin led Thora past a medium-sized living room that had a couch and chairs that looked as if you would sink into the thick cushions when you sat on them. The whole room had been done in shades of pinks and reds. Moving to the stairs, Lilin led Thora up to the floor above.

Thora held onto the blonde oak banister as she walked up the stairs behind Lilin.

At the top of the stairs, Lilin opened the first door on the right hand side of the short hallway. She waved Thora inside. "I hope this will meet with your approval. It's the second biggest room besides the master bedroom, which is mine. If you don't like it I can always show you one of the others."

Thora stepped into the room and looked around. It more than met with her approval. Three of the walls had been wallpapered in Wedgewood blue toile wallpaper that depicted country life. The fourth wall, the one that the headboard of the queen-sized four-poster bed sat against, had been painted Wedgewood blue to match. The hardwood floor gleamed like the floors downstairs. There was a single dresser done in a rich mahogany wood and matched the color of the wood on the bed. The room just accentuated the whole English cottage feel of the B and B.

She turned back to Lilin. "It's beautiful."

"Good. I'll leave you to get settled. We can register you after that. And don't worry, my rates are reasonable."

Thora waved the last part Lilin said away with her hand. "Don't worry about the rates. I have more than enough on me to cover it, I'm sure. I don't have problems when it comes to money. Though that can't be said about the rest of my life," she said quietly.

Lilin went to leave, but turned back to Thora. "I probably shouldn't be sticking my nose into this, but why didn't you take Daker up on his offer to take you out? From what he said on the phone, I thought you two had something going."

Thora's frowned "You want me to go on a date with your boyfriend?"

Much to Thora's surprise, Lilin started to laugh. "You think Daker and I are a couple?"

"Well, yeah. You seem awfully close. And let's face it you two would make a perfect couple."

"We're just really close friends, Thora. I'm not the one for him, and he's not the one for me. We knew that when we first met. Daker seems quite taken with you, though. He doesn't normally go out of his way to help strangers. How about I give him a call and tell him you changed your mind about supper."

Thora sat down on the bed with a groan. "He probably thinks I led him on. First I kiss him, then I give him the cold shoulder."

Lilin came and sat down on the bed beside her. "You two kissed, huh? Don't beat yourself up about it. A little jealousy doesn't hurt anyone. And I don't think you have to worry about Daker being upset. He seemed a little confused by how you acted, but I have

a feeling he'll be more than happy to overlook it."

"If you don't mind, can you give Daker a call and say I've decided to go after all?"

"I'll go do that now. I'll tell him to come get you in a half hour." Lilin stood. "If you want to wash up, the bathroom is the second door on the right."

After Lilin left her alone, Thora fell back on the bed. She stared up at the ceiling. She really shouldn't be going out with Daker. She had avoided having a relationship with a man for a long time now. The romance inevitably ended up in a shambles. Thora had pretty much given up on them, and with good reason. Any relationship she had seemed doomed to fail right from the start. But when it came to Daker, she wanted to give it another try. Something about him drew her. And it wasn't because she lusted after his body—okay it was part of it, but not all. If things went well, maybe, just maybe, she would be able to hold onto him until she was forced to leave Strange Hollow.

\* \* \* \*

A half hour later, Thora met Daker at the front door of the B and B. He'd changed his T-shirt. He now wore a black one that hugged his chest and arms the same way the gray one had. Thora had only taken the time to wash her face and brush her hair before she had gone downstairs to wait for him to arrive.

"Hi," she said tentatively. "I'm glad your offer for supper was still open."

Daker gave her a crooked grin. "When Lilin called she explained how you thought the two of us were involved."

Thora felt her face turn red. "I wish she hadn't done that."

"I'm glad she did. It explained a lot." Daker leaned in and lightly brushed his lips across hers. "Just for future reference, I would never kiss another woman if I was already involved in a relationship. And I don't cheat on the woman I'm with, either. So you don't have to worry about that."

Thora's breath caught when Daker claimed her lips in a slow, heated kiss before he stepped back again. "Okay. Good to know," she said in a soft voice.

He held out his hand. "Let's go get something to eat. I'm starved."

She placed her hand in his and let Daker lead her over to the new-looking Jeep Liberty 4 x 4 that sat parked in the driveway. He opened the passenger door and waited for her to get in before he closed it. Daker then went around the front of the Jeep and got into the driver's side. He started it and backed out of the driveway.

"The diner isn't too far from here," Daker said while he drove down the street, "but I figured you would rather drive than walk."

"Any other day I wouldn't have minded walking, but the long drive is starting to catch up with me."

"Once you get some food into you, you should feel a bit better. Maude's Diner serves good food and lots of it."

In no time at all Daker was pulling into the parking lot of the diner. Thora got out of the car when Daker came around to meet her. They then went inside. Well past the dinner hour, the diner wasn't overly full. As Daker led her over to one of the empty booths, Thora couldn't help feeling as if she had stepped back in time. The decor made the place look like a diner from the 1950s. A waitress came by and gave them each a menu before she moved back over to the long counter.

Thora opened the menu and found it had all the typical diner-type food. It didn't take

her long to decide that she wanted the burger and fries. She closed her menu and looked up to find Daker watching her. "I'm going to have the burger and fries."

"Nice choice. The burgers are really good."

When the waitress came to take their orders, Daker ordered for them both. "I'm going to have the burger and fries, so will she, but don't cook her burger like mine." The waitress nodded and left them alone once again.

"Obviously you come here a lot if they'll cook your burger the way you want it without having to be told how you want it," Thora said.

"You could say that," Daker said with a grin. "I'm not much of a cook, so when I can't stand my cooking anymore I come here to eat."

"I cook, but I have to be careful I don't set the place on fire. The fire department tends to get a little ticked off when they have to come and put out a kitchen fire a couple times a month."

Daker gaped at her. "A couple times a month? Come on, you can't be that bad of a cook."

Thora shrugged. "I'm a good cook. Like I told you before, things tend to just happen around me."

"I guess if I ever let you into my kitchen I'd better hang around to make sure you don't try to burn my house down."

She doubted she would be doing much cooking anytime soon. She'd learned from past experience that she did much better with microwaved meals. The only thing that happened was she would kill the microwave and have to replace it with a new one. Not as much of a fire risk.

The waitress soon brought them their food. Daker hadn't been kidding when he had told her the diner served large portions. Her burger was so thick she doubted she would be able to get it all into her mouth for a bite. Hand cut french fries filled the rest of her plate. Thora picked up her burger and took as big a bite as she could manage. The burger was juicy and delicious. While she chewed she looked over at Daker. He seemed to be enjoying his food since he'd already eaten just about half of his burger. She also noticed his looked to be almost rare.

Swallowing her mouthful, she said, "I'm glad you told them not to cook my burger like yours. That's just a little too rare."

"I figured it would be. Not everyone likes their burger so rare it almost moos. The rarer the better, I say."

Thora shuddered. "To each his own, I guess."

After they finished their meal, Daker paid the bill, and taking her hand, helped her out of the booth. As they walked toward the door to leave, Daker greeted some of the other patrons he knew, which seemed to be most of them. They all stared at her. Strange Hollow being the small town that it was, Thora figured everyone probably knew everybody else. Being a stranger in town, she stuck out like a sore thumb.

When they were both back in Daker's Jeep, he drove her to the B and B. He pulled into the driveway and shut off the engine. He took off his seatbelt and turned to face her. "If you want, I can call the garage for you tomorrow about getting the repairs done on your car."

Thora turned in her seat as well. "You don't have to do that. You can just give me the number and I can take care of it."

"It's no bother. I want to."

Daker reached across the space between them and picked up a lock of her long hair. He rubbed it between his fingers. Thora felt her heart begin to pound. Her gaze latched onto Daker's face. He gazed down at his hand while he played with her hair. She licked her suddenly dry lips, thinking of how it would feel to have his hand on her body as he stroked and caressed it. Her breasts grew heavy and her nipples tightened as she imagined Daker using his fingers to trace each tight bud through her shirt. Her pussy began to ache, causing her to grow wet while she stared with longing at the gorgeous man who sat next to her. Her breath hitched when Daker raised his eyes and met hers. The look he gave her was so intense and filled with desire she felt her body respond even more.

"Stop it," Daker said in a strained voice. "Whatever you're thinking about, stop it." His nostrils flared as he took a deep breath. "If you keep it up I'll do something I promised myself I wouldn't."

"Like what?" Thora knew she was playing with fire, but it was a fire she wouldn't mind getting singed by.

"Like you on my lap while I shove my tongue down your throat. Or better yet, you on my lap with my aching cock buried deep inside you."

Thora bit back a moan. She squeezed her legs together when wetness leaked from her pussy. "Well, what's stopping you?"

### Chapter Three

The scent of Thora's arousal filled the confines of the Jeep. Daker drew the heady scent into his lungs while he fought the urge to yank her onto his lap just as Thora had dared him to.

"What's stopping me is that we should probably get to know one another a little better before we hop into the sack together."

Thora's gaze left his face and traveled down his body until it came to rest on the front of his jeans. His cock, already fully erect, jerked inside his pants. "Okay, but you do know there are a lot of other ... things ... we can do." She took her bottom lip between her teeth. "And from the look of things, I would say you're more than up for it."

With the mating urge still riding him there was only so much he could take. Having Thora so close when she basically told him she would take anything he felt willing to give, he couldn't pass it up. He longed to taste her again. He couldn't make love to her, not yet anyway. He had to wait until he gave her a chance to get to know him first, because once they made love she would well and truly be his mate. Their souls would join to become one the first time they had sex. Heavy petting and oral sex wouldn't cause it to happen, but it would make the mating urge ride him even harder. He would have to hold onto his control with an iron fist, but he felt more than able to keep himself from taking Thora.

He lunged across the seat and claimed her lips in a heated kiss while he cupped the back of her head. Thora eagerly opened her mouth when he pushed his tongue inside. He stroked her tongue with his and the taste of her filled his mouth. She moaned as he urged her closer. Sucking her tongue into his mouth, he reached up and cupped her breast through her shirt. The feel of her taut nipple against the palm of his hand made him want to lick and suck it. Knowing he had to keep a tight grip on himself, Daker plucked at her nipple using his thumb and forefinger instead. If he went too fast he was liable to get too excited and lose what control he had.

Oblivious to the struggle that went on inside him, Thora wrapped her arms around the back of his neck and threaded her fingers through his hair. She sucked his bottom lip into her mouth and bit down on it gently. Daker's arousal shot even higher. Unable to stop himself, he grabbed Thora by the waist and hauled her across the seat. He positioned her so she sat straddled across his lap while he continued to kiss her. She settled across his legs with her pussy against his hard cock. Even through the material of his jeans he could feel the heat of her.

The need to feel her bare skin almost grew too great. Leaving her lips to kiss a path along her jaw to the side of her neck, Daker undid the buttons on her short sleeved blouse. Once he had enough undone so he could shove his hand inside, he yanked the material of her bra away from one of her breasts. He kissed his way from her neck, along her collarbone and down to the tops of her breasts. He dragged his tongue across her skin before he bent and circled her nipple. Thora ground her pussy against his throbbing cock as she placed her hands on the top of the back of his seat.

Daker knew his eyes had to be glowing mutedly by now, something he had no control over whenever he became aroused or angry. He didn't want Thora to see, so he

made sure he kept his eyes downcast. He laved her nipple with the flat of his tongue before he sucked it deep inside his mouth. Thora gasped and pressed herself closer.

The scent of Thora's arousal grew stronger. Daker dropped his other hand to the top of her jeans. He worked the button free before he pulled down the zipper. He shoved his hand inside her jeans and cupped her pussy through her panties. He moaned when he felt how damp the material of her panties had become. Needing to see how truly wet she was, he shifted his hand and slipped it down inside the front. With the heel of his hand pressed against the mound of her sex, he pressed his fingers against the opening of her body. He growled softly when his fingers came away soaked with her juices.

He circled her clit with one of his fingers before he shoved it inside her wet pussy. Thora's hips jerked while he moved it in and out. His cock grew even harder, threatening to burst the zipper of his jeans when he felt her inner muscles clamp around his finger. Daker released her nipple and buried his face between her full breasts as he pushed a second finger inside.

Thora rocked her hips against his hand while she rode his fingers. He chanced a look up at her and saw that her eyes were now closed. Her lips were parted slightly as she panted. The sight of Thora with her face flushed with desire, taking her pleasure from him, almost undid him. Daker wanted nothing more than to free his cock from his pants and plunge deep inside her.

His wolf nudged him. If his wolf had been one with him like he should have been, Daker knew all his good intentions would have flown out the window. Instead of wanting to claim Thora for his mate as much as the man did, his wolf practically bounced inside him while he whined to get out. He only wanted Thora to play with him. Mating was the last thing on his mind. He also managed to cool some of Daker's desire enough that he no longer felt as if his control would snap at any minute.

Thankful for once that his wolf was the way he was, Daker circled Thora's clit with his thumb and continued to pump his fingers in and out of her wet passage. Thora's breathy moans filled the Jeep as her body coiled tighter around his fingers. He pumped his hand faster between her legs having a feeling it wouldn't take much to push Thora over the edge into an orgasm. She called out his name as her pussy rhythmically clamped around his fingers while she came. He pressed his face against her breasts. His cock ached for release, but for now it was enough that Thora had found her pleasure.

Thora pushed at his shoulders. "We're moving."

At first, Daker didn't understand what Thora had meant. His arousal still beat at him, making intelligent thought almost impossible. "We're moving where?"

She frantically pushed him away from her chest. "The Jeep is moving!"

He turned his head and looked out the car window. "Oh, shit." He quickly pushed Thora over onto the passenger seat when he realized the Jeep was slowly rolling down the driveway. He managed to put on the emergency brake before they ended up in the middle of the street.

Daker turned to Thora to find her sprawled across the seat with her top and pants still undone. He shook his head as his gaze lingered on her breasts briefly before their eyes met. "The Jeep shouldn't have rolled like that. I'm pretty sure I put it in park, and put the emergency brake on before I turned it off." Sometime between when he had turned off the Jeep and kissed Thora, the brake had been released. And the gearshift had somehow slipped into neutral.



Thora quickly fixed her clothes and sat up straight. She sounded more than a bit anxious as she said, "I'd better go inside. Thanks for taking me out to eat."

Before she could push the passenger door open, Daker grabbed her arm and pulled her close for another kiss. He lifted his head once he felt her relax against him. "Don't feel as if you have to rush away, Thora. You're going to give me a complex. Maybe I would like to watch you come apart in my arms again."

Thora groaned and leaned her forehead against his. "I think I've tempted fate enough already for one night. Even though I would like nothing more than to do to you what you did to me, I'd better not."

He brushed his lips across hers. "Are you sure I can't persuade you to stay a little bit longer?"

"I'm sure. I don't want to take the chance of anything else happening that might be considered bad."

"I'll see you tomorrow. Right?"

She lifted her head and smiled. "Most definitely. You're not going to get rid of me that easily. Have a good sleep, Daker."

Thora gave him a quick, hard kiss, then got out of the Jeep. Daker watched her walk into the B and B before he started up the Jeep and headed back to his place. He knew his sleep wouldn't be good this night, or any night, until he'd claimed Thora as his mate. He sighed. He would spend the night having erotic dreams about her. With his cock already hard and aching, Daker had a feeling it would only get worse before it got better.

\* \* \* \*

Thora tossed and turned on the big four-poster bed. Even though the bed felt comfortable, she just couldn't sleep. What sleep she managed to get was filled with dreams of Daker, of his hands and mouth all over her body bringing her to completion time and time again. She couldn't stop thinking about him.

She flopped onto her back and threw her arm over her eyes. The sun had risen hours ago. Thora had watched the early morning light slowly chase the shadows out of her room while she lay trying to force herself to sleep. It hadn't worked. Thoughts of Daker made it so her brain wouldn't settle enough to make sleep possible. It was as if she had become obsessed with him, which in no way could be considered good. Not good at all.

Thora would have to watch herself. If she were to fall for Daker, and she could easily see herself falling in love with him, it would be bad. Very, very bad. So far she had been lucky. She had never wanted anything permanent from the men she had slept with in the past. Yes, *things* had happened while she had been with them, but nothing compared to what would happen if she ever let herself fall in love. She rolled over onto her side and hugged the extra pillow on the bed to her chest. Thora had known Daker for less than twenty-four hours and already she had a feeling he wouldn't be like the others she had been with.

She had a choice to make. Either she could break things off clean with Daker and refuse to see him again, or she could continue on as they were and take her chances. Thora knew if they continued to see each other they would end up in bed together. The chemistry between them just ran too hot. Plus, she would be crazy to turn Daker down. He was everything she had ever wanted in a man—good-looking, easy to talk to, and most importantly he didn't look at her as if she were a freak. The small "accidents" that

had taken place so far, he had taken in stride. And because he seemed not to be the excitable type, Thora had a feeling he would believe her if she ever got up the nerve to tell him about her little "problem." She'd told a couple of guys she had dated only to have them laugh and call her gullible for believing something that outrageous. But she knew better. Thora knew her "problem" was not a product of her imagination.

Finally giving up on sleep, Thora flipped back the covers and sat up. She had no idea what time it was since there wasn't a clock in the room, but she had a feeling it would be too early to go over to Daker's place. Right now she needed a shower and coffee, in that order.

Since Lilin was the only other person in the house, Thora decided it wouldn't matter if she walked to the bathroom in her pajamas—not that the pink bunny pajama bottoms and matching short sleeved top were revealing. Grabbing the travel case that held her shampoo, conditioner, bar of soap, toothbrush and toothpaste that she had inside her suitcase, she cracked open the bedroom door. Thora smelled the scent of fresh baked bread wafting up from the kitchen below. Obviously Lilin was an early riser.

The hot shower seemed to help get rid of some of the sensation she had of her head being packed with cotton balls, and large quantities of caffeine would take care of the rest. Thora dressed, then followed the smell of freshly brewed coffee to the kitchen.

Lilin stood at the stove cooking breakfast sausages that sizzled in a frying pan. She looked up at Thora when she stepped into the room. "Take a seat at the table. The sausages are almost done. I'll pour you some coffee while you wait. How do you like it?"

Thora sat down at the kitchen table that stood in the middle of the room. "Cream and sugar, please."

"Coming right up."

After Lilin placed a mug of coffee in front of her and returned to the stove, Thora took a sip and sighed in appreciation. Lilin knew how to make a good cup of coffee.

"I hope you enjoy the food as much as you do the coffee," Lilin said as she placed a plate filled with sausages, fluffy scrambled eggs and a thick slab of fresh baked bread slathered in butter in front of her.

Thora chewed a mouthful of the eggs. Once she'd swallowed, she said, "Mmmm, very good, Lilin. You're a great cook. I'm not normally much of a breakfast eater, but I know I'll be able to finish this off no problem."

Lilin chuckled. "In that case, eat up. There's plenty where that came from."

Thora's eyes widened when she looked over at the stove and saw the amount of food Lilin had cooked. "I hope you don't expect me to eat all that. What I have here will be more than enough."

"Hardly," Lilin said with a laugh. "I have a feeling Daker will be around shortly. The man can't cook to save his life. I figured he would appreciate it if I fed him as well."

Just the prospect of Daker showing up at the B and B made Thora long to see him again. She told herself to smarten up while she started to eat. This obsession she seemed to be developing for him wouldn't be healthy for either one of them.

She'd just about finished her food when she heard the sound of a loud howl coming from outside the front of the house. Thora gave Lilin a questioning look. "That sounded like a wolf. Are there wolves around Strange Hollow?"

Lilin shook her head and gave a chuckle. "You could say there are a few of them around here. This one I know rather well. Come on let's go see what he wants."

Thora followed Lilin to the front of the house and out onto the front porch. A large male wolf with a mixture of brown and blondish colored fur stood in the middle of the front yard. He loped up to stand at the bottom of the stairs that led to the porch and looked up at them. Actually, he looked straight at her. Thora stared back as his light green eyes locked onto her.

Afraid to move in case the wolf suddenly decided he would like to take a chunk out of her, Thora whispered to Lilin, "What does he want? And why is he staring at me like that?"

"He came to see you."

Thora's gaze shot over to Lilin. "How do you know that?"

"Well, I know he didn't come to see me. Go on. He's friendly. He's nothing but big old puppy dog. He probably wants to play with you."

"Are you sure he wouldn't rather take chunk out of me instead?"

Lilin laughed. "Honey, that wolf would never hurt a fly. You'll be safe."

Slowly, still not convinced the large wolf that stared up at her wouldn't sink his teeth into her if given half the chance, Thora walked down the porch steps. She stuck her hand out for the wolf to smell. "Nice wolf."

A big pink tongue came out and licked her hand before he tried to shove his nose into her crotch. Thora pushed him away. She scratched behind one of his ears as he stared up at her with his tongue hanging out. She heard Lilin go into the house and then come back out again.

"Here, Thora." Lilin came down the steps to stand beside her. She passed her a ratty-looking tennis ball. "He loves to play catch."

Seeing the ball in Thora's hand, the wolf's tail began to wag so hard his rear end wiggled. "You want this, do you? Well, go get it."

Thora threw the tennis ball across the front yard. The wolf bounded after it. He caught it in his mouth when it bounced on the grass and brought it back to her. He dropped it at her feet and looked up expectantly. She picked up the ball and threw it again.

After a couple more throws, Thora squatted down in front of the wolf and stroked the top of his head. "He's so tame. He can't be a wild wolf."

"He's Daker's wolf."

Thora looked up at Lilin with surprise. "Daker owns a wolf? I didn't see him at Daker's place yesterday evening."

"I wouldn't say Daker owns him. It's more like a partnership. The two of them have a kind of connection. He's not a wild wolf, but he isn't exactly a pet either. Daker tries to keep him out of trouble."

"Okay. I think I get it. He really is a beautiful wolf." The wolf's light green eyes reminded Thora of someone, but she couldn't put her finger on whom exactly.

"He likes you. I have a feeling the two of you are going to become close friends."

As if he understood what Lilin had said, the wolf started to lick Thora's face. He kept it up until he had pushed her over onto the grass. Thora laughed as she tried to escape his wolf kisses. "He is friendly."

Lilin grabbed the wolf by the scruff of the neck and pulled him away from Thora. She shook her finger at him. "Enough of the kisses already. I think it's time for Daker to have a turn with Thora. You can play with her another time."

Much to Thora's surprise, the wolf gave her face one last lick, then took off, running around to the back of the house. She stood and brushed the grass off her pants. "I swear he understood you, but I doubt he'll find Daker back there."

"Oh, he'll find Daker. We might as well wait back inside. Daker will be here shortly."

Thora couldn't help feeling as if she were missing something. She also found it a bit strange that Daker would have a wild wolf that really wasn't a wild wolf, and allow it to run loose all over town. Though she guessed none of the townspeople were in any real danger. Unless you counted being licked to death hazardous to your health. Like Lilin had said, the wolf was nothing but a big old puppy dog. Picking up the tennis ball, Thora followed Lilin back inside the house.

## Chapter Four

Daker made the change as soon as his wolf was out of Thora's sight. Thanks to Lilin's urging, he had finally had been able to wrestle enough control from the wolf to shift back to his human form.

When he went wolf he had to wait to shift back until his wolf had had enough time to do whatever he wanted to do. Last night, unable to sleep without dreaming of Thora, Daker had finally given into his wolf's demands to be let out. The first thing the wolf had done was head to the forest that ran along one of the outlying boundaries of town for a long run, something both Daker and the wolf enjoyed. Once the sun had risen the wolf had headed back into town, and straight for the B and B.

Buried deep inside the wolf, Daker had felt his joy at seeing Thora. Daker knew Thora thought his wolf was like any other wolf. Not familiar with his kind, she wouldn't have known that his wolf, being much larger than his wild counterparts, marked him as a werewolf. She just thought he was a big, over friendly fur ball. In some ways, Thora having no knowledge of werewolves would work out more for his benefit. With no preconceived notions of his kind, she wouldn't have higher expectations of his wolf. She would probably be more accepting of him as a tamed wolf than what he truly should have been.

Daker made his way back to the front of the house and knocked on the front door before he stepped inside. Knowing he would have to act as if he didn't already know both Lilin and Thora were already awake, he called, "Lilin? Thora?"

Lilin answered from the back of the house. "We're in the kitchen, Daker."

He heard his stomach growl when he smelled the delicious scent of eggs, sausage and fresh baked bread. After a long run in wolf form, he felt more than famished. When he arrived in the kitchen Lilin motioned for him to take a seat next to Thora at the kitchen table. She'd already set a place for him.

Daker sat down beside Thora and gave her a quick kiss. "Did you sleep all right?"

Thora shot a quick glance over at Lilin, before she said quietly, "Not really, but don't say anything to Lilin. It didn't have anything to do with the bed. I just couldn't get my brain to shut off enough to really sleep."

He bit back a satisfied smile. With Thora being mortal, he wasn't sure if she would feel the connection that was starting to form between them. Obviously she did. It made him wonder if it had been dreams of him that had kept her awake, just as dreams of her had him. "Sleeping in a strange bed can do that."

"I guess. You would think after all the times I've moved I would have gotten used to it by now," Thora said with distaste.

Lilin placed a heaped plate of food down in front of Daker. "If you don't like moving, why do it?"

Daker watched Thora while she took her time in answering Lilin's question. A look of unease quickly flashed across her face. "Sometimes I don't have much choice in the matter. People try to avoid me after a while as if I were a freak or something. When that starts to happen, I move on to the next place."

"Why would they do that?" Daker asked. "Is it because of the "things" that always

seemed to happen around you?"

Thora nodded. "Yeah, you could say that. It tends to make someone jumpy around me when they feel as if they constantly have to make sure nothing will suddenly drop out of sky on top their heads."

"You're jinxed," Lilin stated.

Thora looked down at her clasped hands on her lap. "That's one way of putting it."

Daker and Lilin exchanged glances. She smiled and nodded. If Thora was truly jinxed as Lilin said, it would pave the way for her to be accepted as a resident of Strange Hollow. The townspeople might appear to be just like everybody else, but that was the furthest thing from the truth. The residents of Strange Hollow were all outcasts—from witches who had no powers to vampires who refused to drink blood. All had found refuge and normalcy in this town that sat at the base of Mt. Mitchell. Strange Hollow had been founded by Jacinda Fergus, a fairy, who herself had been betrayed by her family. All outcasts were welcome to call Strange Hollow home, Lilin and himself included.

"It must be tough starting off fresh each time you move," Daker said. "Having to find a new job and an apartment must be hard. And it has to be costly since you don't seem to be hauling any furniture around with you."

Thora looked up and gave him a half smile. "Moving is hard, but financially I'm pretty well set. My trust fund is big enough that I don't need to worry about working, and I have more than enough to get new furnishings."

"So you're rich."

"Only because my grandmother left me more money when she died than I could ever use in a lifetime."

Lilin nudged Daker's plate, reminding him that his meal had started to get cold. Daker dug into the food when Lilin asked Thora, "So you come from old money. What do your parents think of all this moving around you do?"

Thora flinched. "I haven't a clue, and I don't think they care. I haven't spoken to or seen them in years. They kind of disowned me after I refused to marry the man they had picked out for me. Catching the man I was to marry screwing one of my friends who was to be one of my bridesmaids, pretty much ended it for me."

Daker in no way liked to hear that Thora, his mate, had almost married another. "Did you love him?"

She snorted. "God, no. At that time I was all for doing what would make my parents happy. My father took my calling off the wedding the hardest. He lost more than one lucrative deal with my ex-fiance's family when I ended our engagement. He became furious with me."

"And your ex-fiance? How did he take the news?"

Thora stiffened. "He and his family didn't take the news very well at all. I really don't want to talk about it anymore." She quickly changed the subject. "Once you're finished eating we should call the garage about my car."

Getting the feeling Thora had put an end to that particular subject for some reason, Daker hurriedly finished the food in front of him. He wanted nothing more than to have Thora all to himself. Having to call the garage about her car would be an excellent excuse to get her over to his place. Once he'd finished eating, he pushed back his chair and pulled Thora to her feet. He winked at Lilin. "Don't expect Thora back any time soon."

Lilin smiled. "I had a feeling you would steal her away."

Daker waited for Thora to get her purse before he hurried her out of the B and B. Linking his hand with hers, he walked down the sidewalk at a fast clip. He knew if he didn't get a taste of her again soon it would be the death of him. His wolf had had his time to play with Thora, now he wanted his turn.

\* \* \* \*

Thora had to practically run to keep up with Daker's long strides. She either had to do that or let him drag her behind him. "You do realize your legs are a hell of a lot longer than mine." She puffed while she tried her best to keep up.

Daker didn't break stride when he half turned, scooped her up and slung her over his shoulder so she hung down his back. "Is this better? The view is a lot better." He reached up and pinched her behind.

With a squawk, she tried to lever herself up, but he bounced her on his shoulder until she stopped her struggles. "What are your neighbors going to think? And if you keep digging your shoulder into my stomach I'll more than likely throw up all over your back. Remember, I just ate not too long ago."

"In answer to your question, my neighbors have seen worse. As for you being sick, we're already at my house."

Thora lifted her head to see that indeed Daker had been correct. He walked up his driveway toward the front door of his house. The man could walk faster than anybody she knew. She hung there while he fished in the front pocket of his jeans for his keys, then unlocked the door and stepped inside. Not putting her down, he turned and shut the door behind them.

"You can put me down any time now, Daker. I think all the blood in my body has now rushed to my head."

He finally let her slowly slide down his front until her feet hit the floor. Thora's heart started to race when she encountered the hard evidence of Daker's desire that bulged at the front of his jeans. After all the hot, erotic dreams she'd had of them naked while they got down and dirty, she instantly became aroused. Her purse dropped out of her hand to land on the floor with a thud. As Daker's heavy lidded stare locked with hers, she stood up on tiptoe and met his lips halfway when he lowered his mouth.

She sighed deeply as he took her mouth in a demanding kiss. He kissed her like a starved man, as if he couldn't get enough of her. Her pussy grew wet when she rubbed herself up against Daker's hard body. She felt his engorged cock jerk inside his jeans when she pressed even closer.

Remembering that Daker had been left out the night before, Thora trailed her hand down his wide chest to the front of his jeans. She cupped him in the palm of her hand. Daker was a big man even down there. With his mouth angled more firmly over her lips, she reached for the button on his jeans and quickly undid it along with the zipper. His thick cock sprang free as soon as she parted the material.

Thora wrapped her hand around Daker's shaft and pumped it up and down. An animalistic growl rumbled out of his chest as he pressed his hips into her hand. She pulled away from his mouth and pressed her lips to base of his throat while she used her other hand to push up his T-shirt. Daker grabbed the back of his shirt and yanked it over his head.

Her gaze skimmed over his wide, thickly muscled chest. She leaned forward and

dragged her tongue across all the bronzed, male flesh bared to her view. Thora slowly worked her way down to his washboard abs, and further still until she ended up on her knees before Daker. Their gazes locked when she released his cock and slowly pulled his jeans down past his hips. She thought his eyes glowed mutedly, but he closed them before she could study them more closely.

His chest rapidly rose and fell while she circled his cock once again with her hand. Thora looked down to what she held. Daker's erection was thick and long. She licked her lips and slowly leaned forward, licking the bead of pre-cum that sat on the very tip. He growled deep inside his chest when she licked him again.

Thora used her other hand to reach around and grabbed his hard, muscled ass to urge him closer. Once she had him where she wanted, she swirled her tongue around the tip of his cock, making a point to sweep it across the sensitive spot just under its flared head. Daker's hand came up and tunneled through her hair and pressed his erection against her lips. Getting more turned on by the minute, Thora opened her mouth and took as much of him as she could handle deep inside.

She felt a rush of wetness between her legs while she sucked on his cock. The sound of Daker's moans of pleasure filled her ears. He pumped his shaft in and out of her mouth when she alternated between sucking and swirling her tongue around the head. He grew even harder as she squeezed the base of his shaft and sucked.

Wet and needy, Thora wanted Daker's hard cock buried deep inside her. When she pulled away and tried to stand, he pressed her back down on her knees. "No. This way. I want you to take me this way."

At his husky demand, Thora once again took his cock inside her mouth. She stroked it with her tongue while he rocked his hips against her. She pumped his shaft as she pleased him with her mouth. His cock grew even harder, his movements becoming jerky. Then with a loud moan that sounded almost like a growl, she felt his cock pulse when he started to come.

His climax had barely finished before Daker picked her up and put her on his living room couch facing him. He went down on his knees in front of her before he tore off her jeans and panties. Once he had her free of them, he put her legs over his shoulders and buried his head between them.

At the first swipe of his tongue along her pussy, Thora let out a ragged moan. Daker grabbed her hips and pulled her closer so she ended up laying half on and half off the couch. She clutched at the couch cushion under her when he circled her clit with his tongue. It usually took a lot of oral sex to get her to come, but as Daker licked and sucked at her clit she had a feeling that this time wouldn't be the case. The man knew how to use that talented tongue of his.

Her eyes fell shut so she could better center on the pleasure that shot through her body, Thora gasped when two fingers pushed inside her pussy. She arched her back as they plunged in and out of her. Her body coiled tighter, her orgasm inching closer. She squeezed her inner muscles around Daker's fingers as he drew her clit into his mouth and sucked. The sounds of her whimpered moans filled the room when her climax tore through her. It seemed to go on and on as Daker replaced his fingers with his tongue.

Daker let her legs fall to the floor when he rose between them and put his head on her stomach. Thora ran her fingers through his hair while she tried to catch her breath. She felt the hard length of his cock nestled against her as he lay panting on top of her.



"You're hard again. I'm all for continuing this in your bed. But having actual sex might just do me in. I don't think I can move right now." He circled his tongue inside her bellybutton before he got to his feet. A little disappointed, she watched him pull up his jeans, stuff his still hard cock inside them and do them up.

"I'll have you in my bed soon, but not right now."

Thora lifted herself up on her elbows. "If you still think we need to get to know one another better before we sleep together, I would say we have gone way past that stage."

Daker looked down at the naked half of her body with longing in his eyes, but he made no move to continue what they had started. He shook his head. "No. No matter how tempting you look like that, I'm going to wait."

"Are you sure?" Thora used a finger to circle one of her nipples through her shirt. "I can't think of a better way to spend the day than spending it in bed with you."

He groaned and slowly backed away. "You're killing me here, but my answer is still no. When I take you to my bed I want everything to be perfect. I want you to know exactly what you'll be getting into if you sleep with me."

Thora smiled. "Oh, I think I already know what I'll be getting myself into—a night of very hot sex."

Daker's heated gaze held a promise of unforgettable sex. "Lots of very hot sex." Then the rat turned his back on her and started to walk away. He turned his head to look over his shoulder. "Get dressed. I'm going to call the garage now."

Just a bit frustrated that she couldn't convince Daker to take her to his bedroom and screw her brains out, Thora punched the couch cushion next to her with the flat of her fist. She would have to work on him. Maybe if she pushed him hard enough she could make him break. He was a guy after all. Weren't guys supposed to have sex on the brain all the time? Thora let a small smile play along her lips while she got dressed. She would batter down his defenses until he could no longer resist her. That should make for some pretty explosive sex. She couldn't wait.

## Chapter Five

A half hour after Daker called the garage a tow truck showed up. Thora let Daker handle it since he seemed determined to come up with any excuse not to get too close to her. Thora decided to let him have his way, for now.

Once the tow truck took her car away, Daker came back inside the house. He joined her on the couch, but made sure to put the length of it between them. "They're not sure how long it will take for the repairs until they take a look at it."

"I'm in no hurry."

A silence stretched between them. Thora used the opportunity to run her gaze over Daker's hard body. He'd put his T-shirt back on, much to her disappointment. She preferred him with his shirt off. That way she could explore that well muscled chest of his with her tongue any time she wished. A picture of Daker shirtless, wearing only his jeans, with the button undone, in bare feet, formed inside her head. That mental image got her heart pumping.

"Stop looking at me like that," Daker growled.

"Like what?" she asked innocently.

"You know what. As if you want to eat me."

Thora ran her gaze over his body. "I already had a taste of you once, but I think I'm hungry again."

"Stop. It."

She inched closer. "Well? Aren't you going to feed me?"

He pinned her with a hard stare. "Stay on your own side of the couch. And no, I'm not going to feed you."

"Why not?"

He blew out an exasperated sigh. "Because you won't just find yourself half naked sprawled on my couch. I'll have you under me, naked, with my cock in you so deep you won't be able to tell where you end and I begin."

Thora waved a hand in front of her face. "I think it suddenly got too hot in here. As for ending up in that condition, that would be no hardship."

Daker ran a hand through his hair. "You aren't helping."

"Helping with what?"

"Never mind. How about we talk about something else? Something that isn't quite so provocative."

She bit back a smile. She definitely was getting to Daker. It would only be a matter of time before he caved in and gave them both what they needed. "Okay. Let's talk about your wolf."

If anything, the mention of his wolf seemed to make Daker even more uncomfortable. He shifted on the couch while he ran both hands through his hair this time. "What about him?"

"How did you end up with a not-so-wild wolf?"

Daker shrugged. "It's not as if we chose each other. It was just sort of meant to be, I guess."

"Well, I think he's adorable. Where is he? Since you won't play with me maybe he

will."

"No, he will not play with you now," Daker said through gritted teeth as if he were fighting something inside himself. "Forget my wolf. At times, he can be a royal pain in the butt."

"I don't know about that. I thought he was a big softie when I played with him earlier. I've never been that close to a wild animal before, especially one that would let me pet and hug him all day."

"I bet he would let you too," Daker said under his breath.

"What did you say?"

"Nothing. I'm going to take a shower. Make yourself at home. Later we can go to the diner and have some lunch."

Thora shifted closer to Daker until her thigh brushed up against his. "Lunch at the diner sounds good." She put her hand on his thigh and gave it a squeeze. "How about I join you in the shower? I can wash your back."

Daker brushed her hand away and shot to his feet. "No, you're going to stay right here. I'm going to lock the bathroom door for good measure. So don't go getting any ideas about coming in after I'm in the shower."

She chuckled and watched Daker just about sprint away. Since his house was a bungalow, with everything on the same floor, Thora heard the shower turn on after Daker had slammed the bathroom door shut. This definitely would be a fun day.

\* \* \* \*

After they'd had lunch at the diner, they walked down Main Street. Thora looked in the front windows of the small shops that lined the street. Strange Hollow's Main Street looked like any other main street in a small town, lined with shops and dead ending at the Town Hall. Thora had never lived in a small town before. She tried to avoid places where everyone knew everybody else. Being the town freak wasn't top on her list of things to accomplish in her life. She wasn't sure how it would work living in Strange Hollow, but she had one pretty good reason to stick it out—Daker.

Thora had a feeling she was driving him crazy. After he'd come out of the shower, she'd launched her attack on his defenses. She used every opportunity she could to touch him in some way. Be it a slight brush of her hand against his, she made sure she came in contact with him and invaded his personal space. Even now, while they stood just outside the grocery store, Thora shifted on her feet and let her shoulder touch Daker's arm.

He took a quick intake of breath before he moved out of reach. "We already ate at the diner once today, how about I cook dinner tonight?"

Before she could answer, Daker opened the door to the grocery store and stepped inside. Thora smelled victory. She followed Daker in and trailed behind him as he walked purposefully through the store. At the aisle where the alcohol could be found, he grabbed two magnums of white wine and shoved the large bottles into her hands.

"Those should be enough for the two of us tonight," he said before he moved off in the direction of the freezer aisle.

"Holy crap, how much do you drink?" Thora juggled the large bottles in her arms so she wouldn't drop them. "I won't even be able to put a dent in one of these and you want two of them."

As he looked through the glass doors of the freezers, Daker said, "I don't have a

drinking problem if that is what you're insinuating. I just metabolize alcohol differently than most people. The amount it would take to get me drunk would send the average person to the hospital with alcohol poisoning."

"Then I guess there isn't any chance of me getting you drunk tonight so I can take advantage of you?"

"Not even a slight chance."

Daker opened a freezer door and started to pull out microwave dinners—four to be exact. Once he let the door slam shut, he headed back to the front of the store where the cash registers were.

"You're going to make us frozen microwave dinners? That's your idea of cooking?" Thora watched him shift the frozen packages around in his hands.

"I should have gotten a cart first. These are damn cold on the hands. And yes, this is my idea of cooking. You really don't want to eat anything I cook from scratch. These frozen microwave dinners are expensive entrees compared to what I can cook."

Thora thought of saying she would cook them some real food instead, but she held her tongue. Burning down Daker's kitchen wouldn't endear her to him. As long as she stayed away from his microwave and let him heat them up, everything should be fine.

Daker paid for the groceries and carried them to his car while she walked beside him. The girl at the cash register hadn't batted an eye when Thora had plunked down the two magnums of wine. Nor did she when Daker decided two wouldn't be enough and ran back for a third bottle. Obviously Daker's ability to consume large quantities of alcohol was nothing new to the girl.

When they were back at Daker's place, he called the garage after he put their frozen microwave meals in the freezer and the bottles of wine in the fridge. Given the grim look on Daker's face after he hung up the phone, Thora guessed he wouldn't have anything good to say. "The verdict isn't good, is it?"

"Afraid not. The mechanic said the engine is completely shot. He said he'd never seen an engine that new just fall apart. Not only did it seize up, parts are falling off in his hands for no apparent reason."

"Of course they are. After all it's my car. So I guess that means I have to get a new one."

"Either that or you pay to have a new engine put in the one you have now. The mechanic said he could do it, but he would need at least a few weeks to work on it."

"I might as well let him replace the engine. It will be easier than going through the hassle of buying a new car. While it's getting worked on I should start looking for a place to live."

"Don't feel as if you have to rush into it. I'm sure Lilin will let you stay at the B and B for as long as you want." A thoughtful look passed across Daker's face. "I'll have to take you to see Jacinda soon. She likes to meet every new resident in town."

Thora's brows drew together. "All right. Who is Jacinda? Strange Hollow's welcoming committee?"

"You could say that. She basically rules the town. She'll want to go over the town laws with you."

"So she's the mayor?"

"No. Bernard Smythe is the mayor of Strange Hollow. Jacinda is one step up from him. It's hard to explain."

Thora really didn't understand, but if she had to meet with Jacinda to become a resident of Strange Hollow, she would do it. She just hoped nothing would go wrong during that particular meeting. Thora didn't want to start off on the wrong foot with the woman who ruled the town. At least she wouldn't find herself kicked out of Strange Hollow for at least a few weeks. Her broken down car made sure of that.

\* \* \* \*

After Thora had consumed one of the frozen microwave dinners—Daker ate the other three—both she and Daker sat in the living room watching TV and sipping on the wine. They also talked. Thora found out Daker was to have followed in his father's footsteps in "the family business", as he had put it. And how he'd had to make the hard decision to break away from his family and ended up here in Strange Hollow.

The more they talked the closer Thora felt to Daker. He really wasn't like any of the other men she had been interested in. She found him easy to talk to. He pretty much said whatever was on his mind, and came across as upfront with nothing to hide. Unlike her. Even though she felt herself drawn to Daker, she didn't feel ready to tell him about her deep, dark secret, and wondered if she ever would be.

As the evening wore on, Thora started to feel pretty good after her third glass of wine. After her fourth she felt even better. She put her empty wine glass on the coffee table only to have Daker fill it once again. Thora looked at the bottles of wine that sat on the table next to her glass. Between the two of them they had polished off one whole magnum with the second almost empty. Daker hadn't been kidding when he'd told her he could drink more than the average person. He'd downed glass after glass of wine and he didn't appear even remotely drunk. She, on the other hand, couldn't say the same thing about herself.

Thora didn't drink very often for one very good reason—getting drunk tended to make her horny as hell. She'd known the wine would have this very effect on her when she had let Daker fill her wine glass more than once. Peering over at his strong profile while he watched television, Thora licked her lips in anticipation. Tonight they were going to make love—go all the way. The oral sex was great, but she wanted that big cock of his buried deep inside her before the night ended, hopefully more than once.

Feeling determined to have her way with Daker, Thora picked up her wine glass and downed half of it in one gulp. She slammed it down on the coffee table before she dove for him. She straddled his lap, threaded her fingers through his hair and claimed his mouth in a demanding kiss. Thora vaguely heard Daker's wine glass hit the floor as he kissed her back. Pushing her tongue past his lips, she thoroughly explored his mouth. She rubbed her aching breasts against his hard chest. Thora moaned into his mouth when she settled her pussy on top the hard bulge in his jeans. She felt wetness pool in her sex and rubbed it against his erection.

All too soon, Daker pulled his mouth away. "Not that I'm complaining, but what brought this on?"

"There was one thing I forgot to tell you about me—when I get drunk, which I am just a little, I get really, really horny." Thora sat up straight, pulled her shirt over her head and dropped it to the floor. Her bra quickly followed. She cupped her breasts and pushed them up. "So I've decided that I've had enough of the foreplay and I want the rest."

Daker's pupils dilated with arousal while he stared at her breasts. He licked his lips.

"I can't, Thora. For now, you'll have to make do with what I've been giving you."

She fell forward against his chest, forcing his head back so his neck arched against the back of the couch. "What are you, a tease? Are you going to keep stringing me along with mind-blowing oral sex, then dump me?" Thora swirled her tongue inside his ear, gently nipping his earlobe.

Daker shuddered. His arms came up and wrapped around her. "Believe me, holding back is just as hard on me as it is you. Harder even. I just need more time."

Thora licked and sucked on his neck while she undid the front of his jeans. She reached inside and wrapped her hand around his erect cock. "I don't want to wait anymore." Using her teeth, she nipped a trail down the side of his neck. Daker crushed her to him and stiffened. "Hmmm, I think you like that."

Deciding to see how much Daker liked her biting him, Thora continued to use her lips and teeth further down his neck until she came to where it and his shoulder met. Daker grew stiffer. His chest rapidly rose and fell with each breath. He moaned when she dragged her tongue across that sensitive spot where his neck and shoulder joined. Oh, he liked it all right.

Thora licked once more what had to be an erogenous zone for Daker. Hoping what she did next would shatter his good intentions, she bit him. Daker's reaction was everything she wanted and more.

## Chapter Six

That one bite, where his shoulder and neck met, had lust pounding through his body with a need so great he couldn't hold it back. Like other male werewolves, he wasn't immune to the primal need that particular bite engendered. His blood pounded in his ears. His cock so hard he ached, Daker kept his arms around her waist, crushing her against him. He surged to his feet he, taking her mouth in a hard kiss.

He shoved his tongue inside Thora's mouth as he carried her toward his bedroom. A low growl rose out of his throat when she wrapped her legs around his waist and locked her ankles at the small of his back. It became a close call as to whether or not he would make it the bedroom when Thora gripped his shoulders and rubbed her pussy against his erection. He ached so bad to be inside her he had to force himself to keep walking instead of taking her against the wall.

Inside his bedroom, Daker crossed the room to his bed and lowered Thora on top of it. He followed her down so he lay cradled between her legs. Unable to stop himself, he ground his cock against her pussy. The need burning through his body ratcheted up another notch. Beyond the ability to pull back and actually think about what they were about to do, he stripped Thora's jeans and panties off. She yanked his shirt over his head while he worked on freeing himself of his jeans.

Now naked, Daker settled back on top of Thora. The scent of her arousal filled his head, drugging him. He had to taste her. He ignored her whimper of need and shifted down her body. At her breasts, he swirled his tongue around one taut nipple before he sucked it inside.

Thora clutched at his shoulders and panted. "Daker. Please. I want you inside me so bad I could scream."

He released her nipple and licked the other. "I'll be inside you when you scream. Don't worry about that. I want to taste you first. You smell too good."

Daker shifted lower until he reached her pussy. It glistened with her juices. With a low growl of need, he dipped his head between Thora's thighs and dragged his tongue along her sex. The taste of her arousal made his cock harden even more. Thora's whimpers filled his ears when he spread the lips of her pussy and licked. Stiffening his tongue, he shoved it into her wet passage over and over again. Her hips bucked beneath him.

Once he'd had his fill, Daker rose between her legs. He rested his weight on one elbow and fisted the base of his cock with his other hand. He led it to her wet pussy and rubbed the head against her clit. Thora squirmed, trying to get him to enter her. He continued to stroke her this way until her nails dug into the tops of his shoulders.

With his cock harder than he could ever remember it being, Daker pressed the head of it against Thora's slick opening. She was so wet that the slight touch bathed his cock in her juices. A rumbling growl built inside his chest when he pushed himself home.

The feel of Thora's inner walls closing around his shaft made Daker grit his teeth. He fought against the urge to come right then and there. He pulled back before he pushed back inside. He buried his face in the crook of her neck, pumping his hips between her legs. She fitted his length like a glove. Her inner muscles clamped around his shaft,

increasing the pleasure that shot through his cock to his balls. He rode her faster causing Thora to moan.

As he pushed them both closer to release, it was then Daker felt it start to happen. A part of his soul reached for Thora. He rode her faster. At the first slight brush of her soul against his, he moaned. When he reached for her fully, his wolf joined with him, something that had never happened before. Now one, he wrapped his soul around Thora's, joining them together.

When their souls merged, Daker felt his orgasm rush up to meet him. He pounded into Thora, her pussy clutching at his cock, squeezing him in a tight fist. Thora moaned while her body climaxed around his. Daker lifted himself on his hands and rammed into her once, twice. As he came, his cock pulsed deep inside her. Daker threw back his head and howled.

He collapsed on top of Thora while he tried to catch his breath. His still hard cock kept their bodies joined. It took a lot more than one orgasm to cause him to go soft. A gift all male werewolves had.

Daker nuzzled the side of Thora's neck and stroked his back. He knew he would have a lot of explaining to do. She was now his mate. She had to have felt the joining of their souls. He just hoped Thora would accept what he told her. To most mortals, werewolves were only creatures in horror movies.

He lifted his head and opened his mouth to ease into the explanations he had to give when the bed groaned ominously. Thora's eyes snapped open. The bed groaned again before it literally fell apart, the sound of wood splitting too loud to ignore. The mattress hit the floor with a thud.

\*

Thora felt the air rush out of her lungs in a whoosh when Daker's much heavier weight bore down on her and the mattress collapsed beneath them. She looked up to find an expression that said "what the fuck" on his face. If she hadn't been drunk, Thora knew she wouldn't have found any humor in what had happened. But since she was, she burst out laughing. This had been a new one for her. She'd never broken a man's bed after she'd had the best mind-blowing sex of her life.

"I'm glad you find this funny," Daker said. "Now we'll have to spend the rest of the night sleeping on the floor."

She brought her laughter down to a chuckle and squirmed beneath him. "Not on this mattress, we won't. If I'm not mistaken, one of the springs is digging into my back. I think the mattress is shot as well."

Daker pulled out of her. Thora had to wonder how he had managed to keep his hard-on even after the bed had fallen apart. The sight of his erection jutting out from his body made her horny all over again. It also made her want to see if he could make her come as explosively as he had the first time. Even though her mind was a bit fuzzy from the wine, Thora had felt something pass between Daker and her during sex that she hadn't ever felt with another man. Whatever had happened, it could only be described as intense. It felt almost as if he'd touched a part of her soul, which had to be due to the fact that she'd had way too much wine to drink. That notion was just plain ridiculous. Even her ears had played tricks on her. She could have sworn she had heard Daker howl like a wolf.

He shifted so he lay on his side next her and ran his hand under her back along the surface of the mattress. Daker scowled while he checked out the other side of the



mattress. "Damn. There are at least four springs sticking out. I haven't even had this for a year."

Thora sat up, but quickly put her head in her hands when a wave of dizziness hit. "Whoa. Can you make the room stop spinning?"

"I can see I'll be carrying you."

She lifted her head. "And where exactly would you be carrying me?" Her words sounded slurred even to her ears.

Daker shook his head. "Well, my bed is not fit to be slept in, and I don't have another bed in the house for us to use. So we're going to the B and B for the rest of the night."

"Oh. Good plan." Thora gave Daker a seductive smile. "I'm still drunk, so you know what that means." She waggled her eyebrows in his direction.

Daker sat up and gave her a kiss that promised there would be more hot sex in store for her this night. "I'm not one for wasting an opportunity."

Thora watched Daker dress. The muscles in his backside flexed when he dragged his jeans up his legs. The sight made her fingers itch to squeeze his ass, or sink her teeth into it. No, she wasn't going to waste what was left of the night. Sleeping would be one of the last things she did tonight.

\* \* \* \*

The next morning, Daker woke up feeling better than he had for a very long time. He looked down at the woman who slept snuggled in his arms, knowing she was the reason behind it.

Once he'd helped Thora pull on her clothes, he'd carried her back to the B and B. She'd been in no condition to walk. Not that he'd complained about having to carry her. She'd spent the time it took for him to walk from his place to Lilin's to drive him wild with lust. Thora had licked, kissed and nibbled on his skin until he couldn't think past the arousal that pounded through his body. He had just managed to get them both inside Thora's room before they started to tear at each other's clothes. In seconds, he had her under him and sank his cock deep inside her.

Pretty sure Thora hadn't gotten much sleep during the night, Daker eased himself away from her and out of the bed. He pulled on his jeans before he slipped out of the room without waking her.

Downstairs, he found Lilin in the kitchen. The smell of fresh baked muffins filled the air. He didn't refuse the one Lilin held out to him. "Thanks, I'm starved."

Lilin smiled. "I'm not surprised. I guess Thora accepted the news of you being a werewolf rather well since I didn't hear her screaming, at least not with screams of fear."

Daker pulled out a chair and sat down at the table. "Ah, not exactly."

"What do you mean?" Lilin sat down beside him. "She had to have taken it well if she took the next step and let you claim her for your mate. The two of you weren't playing charades for most of the night. I'm a succubus. I know when people are having sex."

To stall answering, Daker took a big bite of the muffin, taking his time to chew it really well before he swallowed. "Well, you see, I didn't get a chance to explain any of my being a werewolf and our being mates to Thora before we slept together."

Lilin put her hand on her forehead and shook her head. "Oh, Daker, you didn't."

"Oh, but I did."

"So the two of you are mated, unable to be apart from each other for very long without feeling extremely uncomfortable, and you haven't told Thora any of this? And how do you expect to handle it if and when she decides she wants to spend some time away from you and finds herself practically out of her mind missing you for no apparent reason?"

"I'm not going to keep it a secret. I had planned to tell Thora eventually that I'm a werewolf and explain what it means for her to be my mate. Things just got a bit out of hand last night. And then the bed broke..." Daker scowled at Lilin when she started to laugh. "It's not that funny."

"Yes, it is," Lilin said between gales of laughter. "Just what exactly were the two of you doing that caused your bed to break?"

He crossed his arms over his chest. "Nothing out of the ordinary. The damn thing just broke under us."

Lilin laughed again. When she got herself back under control, she said, "I'm sorry. I really am. I promise I won't laugh anymore." After a deep breath, she said, "I told you, Thora is a jinx."

"I don't know about that."

"Really? Okay, how many times have things "happened" to you while you've been around Thora?"

"Let's see. The day we met her car's engine shot oil in my face while I was under the hood. She cracked her head a good one under my chin when I helped her off the couch. I almost bit my tongue off. Then after I brought her back from the diner while we were ... otherwise occupied, my Jeep rolled down your driveway and almost out onto the street. Somehow the emergency brake had come off and it slipped out of park. Of course, you know about my bed falling apart."

Lilin nodded. "Yup, Thora is a jinx. Let's face it, stuff like that doesn't usually happen in such a short period of time. And nothing like that has happened to you before Thora arrived."

"Fine. Thora is a jinx. So what? It just means Jacinda won't have any cause to deny her residency here in Strange Hollow."

"Hey, I never said Thora's being a jinx was a bad thing. She'll just be another oddball just like the rest of us. But you had better be prepared for a lot of things to break and accidents to happen."

"That, I can handle. I'm a little more worried about how Thora will take the news of our mating."

Lilin patted his hand. "As long as you don't just drop it on her, I'm sure she'll take it in her stride."

"I hope so, because there's no undoing it now." He cocked his head when he heard the sound of Thora getting out of bed upstairs. "It sounds as if Thora is finally awake."

Lilin stood up. "I can't hear anything, but since you have werewolf hearing and I don't, I'm not surprised. Go upstairs and tell your mate that I'll have her breakfast ready in five minutes."

Daker left the kitchen and headed for the stairs to see his mate. He smiled. He liked the sound of that—his mate. At one time he had thought he would never have one. The knowledge that no female werewolf would accept him for her mate because of his wolf, he'd pretty much given up hope. The thought that his mate would be a mortal had never

occurred to him. Matings between werewolves and mortals were rare. At least with Thora his wolf would never be an issue between them. Tackling the stairs two at a time, a large grin spread across his face. He intended to get a proper good morning kiss from Thora before she went down for breakfast. Hopefully Lilin would keep their food warm because he had a feeling the kiss would last a lot longer than five minutes.

## Chapter Seven

Thora had awoken with a pounding headache. Something she got whenever she drank too much wine. She also ached in the most delicate of places. Not that it bothered her considering how she had gotten those aches. Daker had made love to her so many times during the night that near the end she hadn't been able to move. The sex had been just as mind-blowing as the first time.

Even though she didn't experience the soul touching that she had during the first round, she found herself more connected to Daker each time they made love. It was as if he had well and truly become a part of her. She could easily see herself falling in love with him, which she could not let happen. With a curse hanging over her head, she couldn't allow herself to love any man.

She was saddened that eventually she would have to leave Daker. Thora had just gotten out of bed when he had burst into the room. He had given her a sexy-as-sin smile and closed the door behind him. Thora had instantly gotten wet when she watched Daker yank off his jeans before he pulled her against him. He then spent the next half hour seeing how many times he could make her come.

When they had finally emerged from her room, Lilin had just given them a knowing smile while she served them their breakfast. Thora was grateful that the other woman didn't make a big deal about what she and Daker had been up to in her room. Thora felt pretty sure Lilin knew. Daker and she hadn't been all that quiet.

After they'd eaten, Daker brought her back to his house. He had said he wanted to talk to her about something. Thora didn't think after one night in her bed that he would go down on bended knee and ask her to marry him, but she had to wonder what he wanted to talk about. Instead of going into the living room to talk, the first thing Daker did when they arrived was go to his bedroom. Thora trailed behind him.

She cringed when she got a look at the demolished bed. She'd done a real number on it. The heavy wooden frame had broken in not one place but three. Thora had a feeling it would be beyond repair. At first glance, the mattress looked to be in not bad shape, but with a closer look she could see lumps where springs tried to poke through. She definitely owed Daker a new bed.

"I'll pay for a new one," she said when he put his hands on his hips and shook his head in disgust.

He waved what she said away with a flick of his hand. "Don't worry about it. You may be rich and everything, but I do have money of my own. I'm not poor by any means. The only problem is today is Sunday. All the shops are closed. I'll have to wait until tomorrow to pick up a new bed." Daker put his arm around her waist and drew her under his arm. "That just means we'll be sleeping in your bed again tonight."

Deciding to have a little fun with him, Thora said, "Who says I'll let you in my bed? What if I want to sleep alone tonight?"

Daker turned to face her and slowly crowded her up against the wall. He put his hands on the wall on either side of her head to cage her in. He claimed her lips in a hard kiss and pushed his tongue between them. Daker sucked her bottom lip into his mouth and gently bit down. When he lifted his head he looked her right in the eyes. "Are you

still sure you want to sleep alone tonight?"

Thora couldn't pull her gaze away from his eyes. They were glowing mutedly. This time Daker let her study them until she became positive that her eyes weren't playing tricks on her. She swallowed. "Your eyes are glowing."

"I know."

"Is there a reason why they're glowing?" Thora applauded herself on how calm she sounded. On the inside, her heart started to race. If his glowing eyes were real, then the wolf howls Daker had made were not figments of her imagination either. A feeling of unease shot down her spine.

Daker brushed his nose against hers. "I can hear your heart beating faster, Thora. I also can smell a tinge of fear in your scent. You don't need to be afraid of me. I would never hurt you."

"Is there a reason why I should fear you?" She put her hands on his chest and tried to push him away. Daker didn't budge.

He shook his head. "No, there isn't, but I'm not sure you're going to think that way after we have our talk."

Daker stepped back and took her hand in his. He led her out of the bedroom and into the living room. Thora sat down on the couch as a feeling of dread went through her. The serious expression on Daker's face wasn't doing anything to reassure her. "So, let's talk."

"I want you to keep an open mind about what I'm about to tell you. Can you promise me that?"

Thora nodded. She, of all people, would be able to accept what most people couldn't.

"Okay, you see I'm not like the other men you've known."

She snorted. "I don't need you to tell me that, Daker. You're not exactly like some of the losers I've dated."

He gave her a half smile. "Thanks. That makes me feel good, but that isn't what I meant." Daker ran a hand through his hair. "I'm finding this to be a lot harder than I thought. So I'm just going to say it and hope for the best. Thora, I'm a werewolf and you are my mate."

Thora felt the tension in her body disappear. He had to be pulling her leg. Even though she believed in curses, it did not mean she believed werewolves and other things that go bump in the night existed. "You're a werewolf?"

"Yes."

She chuckled. "Okaaay. Let's say I believe you, how would you know we're mates?"

"I knew you were my mate the first time I smelled your scent." When she started to giggle, Daker grew stern. "You don't believe me."

She couldn't hold back the giggles that came out of her. "I'm sorry, I don't. Come on, Daker? Do you realize how ridiculous that sounds? You got one good whiff of me and then, whamo, you knew I was your mate."

"It's true. All male werewolves are able to recognize their mates when they first smell their scent. I would prove it to you that I'm truly a werewolf by going wolf, but he probably wouldn't let me shift back right away."

"Uh ha, I see. So you don't need a full moon to be able to shift. And why would you talk about your wolf as if he were separate from you? Aren't you supposed to be one and the same?"

"We're supposed to be, but we aren't. My wolf is *different* to an average werewolf."

"What do you mean by different?"

Daker blew out a puff of air. "He acts more like a puppy dog than he does a wolf. While I'm in wolf form he pretty much takes control. He won't fight or defend his territory like a wolf should. He would rather play all the time."

Thora bit back a smile. "So your wolf is mentally challenged."

"No! No, he's not mentally challenged," Daker said with a scowl. "He just never grew up, okay? It was because of my wolf that I was forced to leave my family and my pack."

Realizing they had hit on a touchy subject for Daker, Thora shifted the conversation back to the second thing he had told her. "Okay, so you knew I was your mate the first time you smelled my scent. What exactly does that mean for a werewolf? Not that I'm buying any of this, mind you."

"It means the first time we made love our souls joined and became one. You are a part of me as I am a part of you. Now that they have joined, we won't be able to bear to be apart from each other for very long. We'll become anxious about the other. The need to be with one another will be so strong that it will increasingly become an unpleasant feeling the longer we are separated."

Thora stiffened. She remembered how she thought it felt as if their souls had joined the first time they had sex. It couldn't be true. People's souls did not join while having sex. They just didn't do that. Starting to become irritated, she said, "Enough, Daker. You've had your fun. It's time to move on. I'm not going to believe you're a werewolf, nor anything else about this whole mating business."

Daker growled, sounding like the animal he proclaimed himself to be. "Crap. I'm going to have to shift to prove to you that I'm telling you the truth. And for your information, you've already met my wolf. You just didn't know it was me in there as well."

Thora started to put two and two together when Daker said she had already become acquainted with his wolf. She shook her head in denial, but soon froze in place when Daker's body started to blur and shimmer. In a matter of seconds Daker was gone and the wolf she had played catch with sat on the couch next to her. His tail thumped the cushions when he wagged it.

She shot to her feet and backed away. The wolf hopped off the couch to stand next to her. He shoved his wet nose against her hand and licked it. Thora jumped out of reach. She slowly backed toward the front door and shook her head.

"No. No. No." Now that she knew Daker had been telling her the truth about being a werewolf, and about them being mates, Thora shook her head harder. "We can't be mates. We just can't. *I* can't have a mate. Not ever."

With her heart galloping in terror, Thora ran the rest of the way to the front door and yanked it open. She slammed it shut behind her. She had no idea if the wolf had followed her to the door before she shut it. All she cared about was putting some much needed distance between Daker and herself.

Hoping he couldn't open doorknobs while in wolf form and that he would stay wolf for a while, Thora raced toward the B and B. She didn't stop running until she was inside her room with the door locked.

She paced the floor, her body breaking out in a cold sweat. This couldn't be happening. She'd been so careful. Thora had come to accept the fact that she would never

be able to have a close, meaningful relationship with a man. And that she could never give her heart to one. For her to fall in love with a man would be signing his death warrant.

Thora jumped when Lilin knocked on her door. "Thora? What's the matter? Where's Daker?"

She stopped pacing and started to wring her hands together instead. "I need to be alone right now, Lilin."

"You sound upset. Was it something Daker said?"

"Please, Lilin, I just want to be left alone."

"All right, I'll leave you alone, but when you start to feel ... uncomfortable ... I'll be right downstairs." Lilin fell silent for a second before she said, "I know what Daker is, Thora. I know it must be a bit of a shock. Maybe it will help if you talk to me instead of Daker about it."

"I'll think about it."

Thora went and sat down on the bed after she heard Lilin walk away. She had no idea what she was going to do. With her car out of commission she couldn't very well pack up her things and leave Strange Hollow, which she needed to do since she couldn't be with Daker anymore. She didn't love him yet, at least she didn't think she did, and she had to make sure she kept it that way. But if their souls had joined like Daker had said, Thora had a feeling it would only be a matter of time before she fell for him.

As the minutes passed, Thora started to feel more uncomfortable. She couldn't control the anxious thoughts about Daker that swirled inside her head. She started to miss him. The very real need to be with him again clawed at her insides. Only fifteen minutes had passed since she'd run from him and she missed him as if she hadn't seen him for a month.

Thora couldn't decide whether to scream or cry over the unfairness of it all. She had finally found the one man her soul recognized as the one for her and she couldn't keep him. Somehow she would have to break this bond of theirs.

Fifteen more minutes went by and Thora felt as if she wanted to start climbing the walls. Knowing being with Daker would put her out of her misery, Thora had to fight the urge to go to him. Finally, unable to stay trapped in her room for a minute more, she decided to go downstairs and talk to Lilin.

She found Lilin in the living room reading a romance novel, of all things. Lilin took one look at Thora, put her book down and patted the empty space on the couch next to her. "Are you ready to talk about it now?"

Thora sat down beside Lilin. "Yes. I feel as if I'm losing my mind."

"It's the mating bond. That's the only drawback to being mated to a werewolf—separation is a killer. I take it you're having a hard time accepting Daker for what he is?"

"That's not the problem. And can I ask how you found out?"

Lilin gave her a small smile. "Since you now know about Daker, I might as well tell you what I am. I'm a succubus demon, so I'm well acquainted with all things supernatural."

Thora's eyes widened. "A succubus? Like a succubus who seduces mortal men to steal their energy until they are dead or almost dead?" She looked Lilin up and down. "No offense, but legend has it that a succubus is ugly and only takes on the form of a beautiful woman when she wants to seduce men."

"Generally speaking, everything you said is true about my kind, but I don't fit the typical succubus description. I was born beautiful, and much to my mother's shame, I don't seduce men to steal their energy. Unlike the rest of my race, I'm waiting to find my soul mate. And if I have anything to say about it, he'll be a werewolf. Now, enough about me. If Daker being a werewolf isn't what upset you, then what did?"

Learning Lilin was a succubus, another being Thora thought didn't truly exist, made her almost want to start laughing hysterically. But she managed to rein it back. Since Lilin was obviously part of the supernatural world, Thora figured what she had hanging over her head wouldn't be that big of a deal to the other woman.

Thora took a deep calming breath. Of course it did nothing to calm her when her whole being yearned to be with Daker. "Surprisingly, the werewolf thing I can handle. It's us being mated that I have a hard time coming to grips with."

"Why? There can be no greater bond than a werewolf mating. You don't ever have to worry about Daker leaving you, or cheating on you for that matter. He already loves you or the mating bond wouldn't have formed. And the same goes for you. You had to have fallen in—"

Thora cut Lilin off before she could finish that last sentence. "Don't even say it. I can't fall in love with Daker."

Lilin's brows drew together. "I don't understand. If it wasn't possible he wouldn't be your mate right now."

"I'm cursed."

"So that's why you're a jinx. Don't worry about that, Thora. Daker would never hold that against you. It just means you'll fit in perfectly here at Strange Hollow. You see, every resident is a supernatural outcast in some way. For example me, who is a succubus but neither looks nor acts like one. And Daker, a werewolf who's wolf doesn't act like a wolf should. We've all found our way to Strange Hollow where we can be accepted for who and what we are."

If only Thora had found out about Strange Hollow earlier maybe she wouldn't have had to move around so much. But that was neither here nor there. She had a much greater problem. "It isn't just that I'm a jinx. That was only part of the curse. There's a much deadlier aspect to it. Any man I fall in love with, I will be the cause of his death."

Lilin let out a low whistle. "You really must have pissed off the person who cursed you."

Thora grimaced. "You could say that. But now can you see why I can't fall in love with Daker."

"Yeah. Though I have to tell you it takes an awful lot to kill a werewolf. They can survive a lot of injuries that would kill a mortal. Even though their life spans can be around three thousand years, they still can die."

"If Daker can be killed in some way, he's still at risk." Thora then shook her head. "Three thousand years old? How old is Daker?"

Lilin smiled. "He's eight hundred. He looks in pretty good shape for a guy his age, doesn't he?"

That Daker would live for over another two thousand years was just another reason why Thora had to find a way to end their mating. Her short life would be a flash in the pan to him. And in no way did Thora want to grow old and ugly with Daker at her side while he stayed young and good-looking as he was today. "Is there a way I can break the



mating bond?"

Lilin grew serious. "Not that I know of." The sound of a wolf howling loudly at the front door broke into their conversation. Lilin stood up. "You should discuss this with Daker. Tell him what you told me about your curse. I'm going for a walk so the two of you can be alone."

Thora wanted to tell Lilin not to let the wolf in when she went to the front door, but Thora couldn't get the words out. Every particle in her body ached to be with Daker again. With him so close, she couldn't ignore it any longer. Feeling as if she was putting one more nail in Daker's coffin, she sat on the couch to wait.

## Chapter Eight

The sound of the wolf's claws clicking on the hardwood floor reached Thora's ears before he came bounding into the living room. She fell back on the couch when he jumped up on her lap and started to lick her face.

She tried to hold him away, but he wouldn't be put off. Once he got in a few more licks, Thora grabbed him by the scruff of his neck and pulled his head back far enough so she could look into his eyes. The wolf's eyes were the same light green color Daker had. That was why his eyes looked so familiar to her when she had first seen the wolf.

Thora scratched behind the wolf's ears. Seeing the wolf had taken away some of the uncomfortable feelings she had, but she needed Daker in his human form. Knowing he was in there somewhere, her body started to react to his nearness. God help her, but she wanted him just one more time before she had to tell him goodbye.

She lifted the wolf's head until he looked her straight in the eyes. "I need to be with Daker now."

The wolf's body blurred and shimmered. Thora watched Daker shift to his human form. He ended up sprawled on top of her with not a stitch of clothing on. With a low growl his lips descended to hers. He kissed her hungrily, angling her body more fully under him. Thora moaned at the feel of his hard length pressed against her hip.

Neither one of them said anything when Daker pulled at her clothes, practically tearing them off. Desperate to have him inside her, Thora wrapped her hand around his thick cock and led it to the entrance of her body. Her pussy already wet for him, Daker easily sheathed himself to the hilt inside with one stroke.

Thora clawed at Daker's back while he pounded inside her. This would be no gentle loving. It would be hard and fast. Just the way Thora needed it. She wrapped her legs around his waist and held on.

Daker made a sound between a growl and a groan as she sucked on his tongue. She squeezed her inner muscles around his shaft. He pumped his hips between her thighs. Thora wanted this, their last time to be together, to last longer, but she felt her orgasm racing up to meet her. When Daker gripped her bottom, angling her hips so he rubbed her clit as he pounded into her, Thora felt her pussy grip his cock in a tight fist when she fell over the edge. Her moans of pleasure mixed with his as he rammed into her once more and came deep inside her.

Thora held tightly onto Daker while she fought to catch her breath. She had to let him go. With their bodies still joined, she could feel herself teetering on the edge of indecision. Making love to Daker seemed to only strengthen the bond between them. If she let this happen again Thora had a feeling she wouldn't be able to guard her heart against him. Even now her soul cried out for his. She wanted to burrow her way inside Daker and never come out.

Daker lifted his head. His light green eyes glowed mutedly. Thora opened her mouth to tell him that this had to end, but he didn't give her the chance. He gave her a curt shake of his head and pulled his cock out of her. Lifting her as if she weighed nothing, he positioned her on the couch so her chest rested on the cushion while she knelt on the floor in front of it. Daker moved behind her and nudged her legs wider apart with a muscular

thigh.

As he took hold of her hips and probed her slick opening with the head of his cock, Thora tried to move out of reach. "No, Daker. I can't."

He easily held her in place. "You can and you will," he said in a husky voice. He surged forward and impaled her on his hard shaft.

Even though she tried to fight against it, Thora felt herself becoming aroused once again. Having Daker take her this way, she was able to take more of him. Her inner walls clamped tightly around his length while he surged in and out of her. She pushed back on him, matching his strokes, unable to hold still any longer. Working his cock inside her pussy, Thora felt her body coil tighter, her climax edged nearer. Daker trailed one hand around her hip and reached between her legs for her clit when he leaned over her back and bit the top of her shoulder. He increased his pace, continuing to hold onto her with his teeth, and rubbed her clit. Thora whimpered with pleasure as she started to come. Daker followed her with his own climax a second later. Their moans filled the room.

Spent, knowing that she doomed him each time they made love, Thora buried her face in the cushion. A sense of defeat washed over her. As long as the mating bond remained between them she didn't think Daker would let her go. That only left her one option—she had to steel her heart against him. They could stay together, but they couldn't have sex again. No matter how much she craved him, she had to keep Daker at arm's length.

Daker slowly pulled out of her. He stroked up and down her back. With concern heavy in his voice, he said, "Thora? Talk to me. Tell me what's wrong."

She moved away from him and slowly dressed. "We can't be together anymore, Daker."

The clothes he'd worn earlier appeared on his body. "What do mean? We have to stay together. You felt what happened when you ran from me."

Thora blinked back the tears that threatened to fall as she thought of all she would have to give up. "We have to break the mating bond."

Daker stiffened. "Is it because I'm a werewolf? Now that you know what I am you don't want me anymore?"

"No! No. Your being a werewolf has nothing to do with it. Lilin explained the werewolf thing to me, and what it means to be your mate. It's me." Thora felt a lone tear slip down her cheek.

Daker cupped her face in his hands and wiped the tear away with a thumb. "What is it, Thora?"

"I'm cursed. That's why I'm a jinx, but that isn't all of it. I'm cursed to be the death of the man I fall in love with." Thora had to swallow past the thickness in her throat before she could continue. "I won't be the death of you."

"I'm not going to die, Thora. I'm pretty damn close to being immortal. Short of cutting my head off, I can survive just about anything. Are you sure that part of the curse is even real? We're mated and I'm still alive and well."

She pulled away from Daker. "That's only because I haven't let myself fall in love with you."

"You already love me. You just haven't admitted it to yourself yet." Daker took her by the arm and settled her on his lap after he sat down on the couch. He put his arms around her waist to keep her from getting up. "Now tell me about this curse of yours."

Who cursed you and why?"

"Remember how I told you I caught my ex-fiance screwing one of my bridesmaids?"

"Yes."

"Well, it was the night of our rehearsal party that I caught him. I knew right then and there that I wouldn't be marrying him the next day. So I marched into the room where all our family was, and once I had everybody's attention, I told them the marriage was off. I also told them the reason why—that I caught Gordon, my ex, fucking one of my so-called best friends. That's exactly how I worded it too."

Daker smiled crookedly. "Let me guess, your bluntness caused a huge uproar."

"On hindsight, I probably should have waited for my anger to cool down before I did it. And I should have probably waited to do it when Gordon and I were alone instead of in front of both our families, but I wasn't exactly thinking straight. I can remember my father bellowing at me that I had ruined everything. While everyone was yelling and shouting at each other, Gordon's grandmother confronted me. I usually had a hard time understanding her, she and her husband had originally come from somewhere in Eastern Europe. This time I understood every word she said. She was the one who cursed me."

"And it worked? She just wasn't an upset old lady who wanted to scare you for dumping her grandson?"

"Believe me, it worked. After the last word left her mouth it felt as if I had been hit with a bolt of lightning. I thought for sure the others in the room would have felt the surge of power, but when I looked around they were still arguing."

Daker pulled her head down until their foreheads touched. "We'll just have to find a way to break this curse of yours. I have no intention of ever letting you go, Thora. I keep what is mine. I never thought I would find a mate. No self-respecting female werewolf would allow herself to be mated to me with my wolf the way he is. She would be too afraid I would pass it on to our children. But with you being a mortal, that isn't a problem."

"Maybe not, but my being a mortal does have other drawbacks. I'm thirty years old, Daker. I'll have another forty years to live, if I'm lucky. You have another two thousand."

Daker cupped the back of her head and gave her a hard kiss. "Let's not worry about that right now. Let's focus on the curse instead. Do you remember exactly what your ex's grandmother said when she cursed you?"

"Of course. I doubt I'll ever forget. She said since I was the one who broke the engagement she jinxed me for the rest of my life. She also said I would bring pain and suffering to any man that would have me. And the man who I gave my heart to would not only have the pain and suffering, but would die too. The last part I have never been able to figure out. She said that once I was deemed worthy through a selfless act, I would be bound to my fate."

"Okay, you have me with that one. I have no idea what the last part means either. But what I do know is that I'm willing to take the risk."

"And I'm not. How can we break the mating bond?"

Daker growled. "I told you I don't give up what is mine. And there is no way to break the bond. Not even death will separate us."

Thora closed her eyes for a second while she fought back a wave of panic. "In that case, we can't make love anymore. If we can't be away from each other, I'll stay, but that is all I can give you."

"That isn't going to work, Thora. As well as the need to be with each other, we're going to crave the closeness of making love. Our bodies will demand it. The longer we fight it the harder it will be to ignore."

She slipped off Daker's lap to stand in front of him. "The more we make love the closer we become. If we don't stop I will fall in love with you."

"That's how the mating bond works. We're supposed to become closer."

Thora wrapped her arms around her waist. "Then we've made love for the last time."

Needing what little space their bond would allow her, Thora raced up the stairs and locked herself inside her room. No longer with Daker, she let out all the tears she'd bottled up. Her life had gone from bad to a living hell. She wasn't sure she could survive living with Daker and not be able to make love to him. But it was either that or watch him die. Thora curled up on the bed and hugged a pillow to her chest. She would just have to be strong for the two of them. It might kill her in the end, but she found the alternative to be unacceptable.

\* \* \* \*

Daker was in hell. A week had passed since Thora had told him about her curse. And true to her word, she hadn't let him make love to her since that day at the B and B. The hunger to have her under him wasn't nearly as bad as it had been before he had claimed her, but as the days wore on it grew more intense.

For the first couple of days, he didn't push her. He busied himself with helping Thora move her things, which they had collected from her car at the garage, into his house. He bought a new bed, hoping now that they lived together Thora would at least sleep beside him. She refused. Same as she had while they had stayed at the B and B. She had asked Lilin if she could sleep in one of the other rooms. Now at his house, she let him have the bed while she slept on the couch. He had tried to give her the bed, but Thora had refused on the grounds that she didn't want to break it.

Now Daker spent most of the day walking around with a painful hard-on. Being near Thora, her scent filling the house and his head, and not able to touch her was driving him crazy. Even his wolf had become agitated, which was unusual for him since he was normally calm and even-tempered. Daker had gone wolf a few times in the hopes that Thora would at least touch him through his wolf, but she'd even held his wolf at arm's length. Luckily for Daker his wolf seemed content enough to follow Thora around even though she basically ignored him. Not so for Daker. After his wolf allowed him to shift back to human form he ached for Thora even more.

On this particular day, Daker had gone past irritable to downright grumpy. He felt like growling and snapping his teeth at everyone and everything. So when that afternoon Thora asked if he had called the garage to see how things were going with her car, his grumpiness came through. "I don't need you harping at me to call the garage. I'll call in a little while," he snapped. "What's the hurry anyway? Do you plan to leave me once you get it back?"

"No. Since we're stuck with each other I can't very well pack up and leave, now can I? And I must say you're in a fine mood today," she snapped back.

"Well, I wonder whose fault that is. Huh? I didn't choose to be so horny that I'm sure I'm going to end up with blue balls any day."

Thora narrowed her eyes. "Would you rather be dead instead of being hard up?"

Daker knew his anger at Thora was unreasonable, but he couldn't hold it back. "At least I would die a happy man!" he shouted. "It would be better than what I have now. You sometimes act as if I don't even exist. Christ, you pay more attention to my wolf than you do me. Maybe you would like it better if I stayed wolf more often."

"If I have to put up with your bad moods, then yes, I would. At least your wolf doesn't shout at me for absolutely no reason."

"Fine. If you like him so much more than me, you can have him."

Daker shifted to his wolf form. Happy to be with Thora again, his wolf jumped up and tried to lick her face. She pushed him away. She grabbed the scruff of his neck and pulled him through the kitchen to the backdoor. He realized his mistake as soon as she opened it and the screen door before shoving his wolf outside.

Thora closed the screen door and waved at his wolf. "Go on. Go for a run or something. I know Daker is in there somewhere. Since he's in such a foul mood and not fit to be around, you can go have your fun. Take as long as you want. Right now I don't care how bad the separation gets." She slammed the backdoor closed.

Knowing how much his wolf loved to run in the forest, Daker knew he would be trapped inside him for hours. His wolf might not feel the separation from Thora, but *he* sure as hell would. By the time his wolf let him shift back to human form Daker would be in worse shape than he was now. Thora might not know it, but she'd just made sure they would be making love when he returned. As his wolf took off at a run, Daker knew not even Thora would be strong enough to resist the need to join her body to his.

## Chapter Nine

For three hours Daker remained trapped inside his wolf while he had a long run through the forest. The separation he'd felt when Thora had run from him was nothing compared to what Daker felt now. After the first hour had gone by, he'd started yelling at his wolf to let him have the control back. Of course, that didn't work. If anything, it made his wolf run even deeper into the woods. By the time his wolf had finally turned and headed back home, Daker felt as if he'd lost his mind.

The need and hunger to be with Thora, to sink his aching cock into her until she screamed with pleasure, overrode everything else. It beat at him, dug sharp claws into his gut until that became his sole focus. Thora's curse didn't matter. The relief from his clawing hunger that only she could provide was more important.

When his wolf finally arrived at the backdoor of his house, Daker grasped control and shifted to his human form. He purposely didn't will any clothes on his body. There would be no need for them since he planned to get Thora under him the minute he saw her.

Inside the house, Daker sniffed the air. He followed Thora's scent to the bathroom. Taking hold of the doorknob he tried to open the door, but found it locked. Not to be put off, he wrenched on the doorknob until he broke the tumblers inside the lock. He pushed open the door and went after his quarry.

Thora sat in the bathtub with her knees drawn to her chest while she slowly rocked herself. She gave him a look of intense need when she looked up, but it quickly disappeared when she started to shake her head. "We can't, Daker."

"Yes, we can." His voice sounded rough and he had to bite back a growl. "It's what we both need."

Before she could protest, Daker got into the bathtub with Thora. He sank his hand in her hair and slammed his mouth onto hers. There was nothing gentle about his kiss. He angled his lips against hers, forcing Thora to respond. She tried to hold herself back, but when he licked and sucked at her mouth she soon gave up the fight.

As Thora's arms came up and wrapped around his neck, Daker crushed her to him and pushed his tongue past her lips. After being denied for so many days, the taste of her went straight to his head. He twined his tongue with hers, taking her mouth like a man starved. His cock, already erect, throbbed against her belly as he held her tightly.

Daker sat down on the bottom of the tub and shifted Thora so she straddled his lap. He leaned forward and dragged his tongue across one of her taut nipples. Thora arched against him and moaned, brushing the tight peak across his lips. With a wolf growl, he opened his mouth and sucked it inside. Sucking, he put his hand between her thighs. He pushed a finger inside her pussy and moaned at how ready he found her.

Switching to her other breast, Daker brought Thora's hand down to his cock. He groaned when she wrapped it around his shaft, pumping up and down his length. He lifted his head and met Thora's heated stare. "Put me where you want me."

She rose on her knees at the same time he lifted his hips out of the water. She angled him into place before she slowly slid down on his cock. They both moaned once she had taken him to the hilt. The water sloshed inside the tub when Thora started to ride him. To

be inside her and feel her moist heat wrapped around his shaft, had Daker fighting to hold back his orgasm.

Thora rode him faster. She bent forward and licked where his shoulder and neck met. Daker shuddered in anticipation, but he fisted a hand in her hair and pulled her head away. He held her there until they locked gazes. "You can say it, Thora. You already know I love you. I need you to say it."

She panted and shook her head. Her movements stilled. "No. I won't."

Daker held Thora to him and surged out of the water. He put her back against the tiled wall. His gaze never left hers as he reared back only to slam inside her. She wrapped her legs around his waist while he took her hard and fast. "Say it." He growled.

"No."

When her inner walls clutched at his cock, Daker grew still, not giving Thora what she needed to find her release. She rocked against him and whimpered with need, but he didn't move. "I want to hear you say it. Just because you have never told me doesn't mean you don't feel it." He drew back until his cock was almost free of her body before slowly pushing back inside. "Please, Thora."

A look of anguish crossed Thora's face. She reached up and cupped his jaw. "I love you, Daker. I love you so much it hurts. God help you," she said with emotion thick in her voice.

With a howl of triumph, Daker started to move inside her once again. He rammed into her, pushing them both toward release. Just as Thora's pussy began to spasm around his cock, she leaned forward and bit him where his shoulder and neck met. He came the instant her teeth sank into his skin. Growling in pleasure, he held her to him, filling her with his cum.

He slowly let Thora down on her feet. Daker kissed her tenderly. When he lifted his head, he said, "See, nothing happened. Lightning didn't strike me down."

Thora shook in his arms. "I guess it didn't."

"It's going to all right, Thora."

She smiled through the tears that glistened in her eyes. "I want to think it will be okay, but I can't shake the feeling that I've just doomed you."

Daker kissed the tip of her nose. "It's going to take a lot more than a curse to do me in." They both jumped when three tiles fell off the wall to land on the bottom of the tub. Daker chuckled. "Falling tiles isn't one of them."

Thora clung to him as Daker pulled the plug in the tub and lifted her out. He towed them both dry, then carried her to the bedroom. Placing her in the center of the new bed, he came down on top her. Taking her lips passionately, Daker had a feeling he would have to prove to Thora that nothing bad would happen to him now she had declared her love for him. He knew of no other way than to make love to her until they both couldn't move.

\* \* \* \*

Thora walked around waiting for the inevitable to happen. Even though three days had gone by since she had told Daker she loved him and nothing bad had happened, she knew it would only be a matter of time. She couldn't see the last part of the curse not being fulfilled when the first part had worked. She was a jinx, and would always be a jinx.



She tried to hide her doubts from Daker, but he always seemed to know. When she started to get worried, he would scoop her up in his arms and make love to her until she couldn't think let alone worry.

Daker made her happy. She didn't think she could love him any more than she already did, but each day proved that she could. Thora knew she couldn't leave him, no matter how much of a danger she was to him. Her life before Daker seemed to be a distant memory. It felt as if she'd known him forever. The bond she had once thought to break grew stronger with each day that passed.

Lilin turned out to be one of the closest friends she'd ever had. Since Lilin was a succubus demon, Thora didn't have to watch what she said around her. She could talk about her curse with Lilin and have her take her seriously. Having a werewolf for a mate, and a succubus for a friend, didn't make Thora feel as if she were the town freak anymore.

On a warm, sunny afternoon, Thora and Lilin walked in the forest while Daker ran in front of them in wolf form. At Thora's urging, Daker let his wolf out more than he had been before. In doing so, his wolf now allowed him to have more of the control while in wolf form. It made sense. Thora knew if she had been in the wolf's place and only allowed her freedom once in a while, she too would fight to keep hold of it for as long as she could.

As they walked along, Daker's wolf ran up to Thora with a stick in his mouth. He dropped it at her feet and bounced around until she threw it. Lilin and Thora laughed when he raced away to catch it before it hit the ground.

"It doesn't take much to make Daker's wolf happy," Lilin said with a laugh.

Thora returned her laugh. "No, it doesn't. I've come to love him as much as I do Daker."

"As it should be, considering they are one and the same." Lilin grew serious. "Have the two of you figured out the last part of your curse yet?"

"No. I get the selfless act part, but being bound to my fate, I haven't got a clue. Other than being cursed to be a jinx for the rest of my life, I have no idea what my fate will be. I keep thinking it can't be anything good."

"Yeah, that one is a toughie. I wonder who decided curses had to be worded in such a way as to confuse the hell out of the person who is cursed."

"Maybe it's supposed to be part of the punishment. Curse the person and have them go nuts trying to figure it out."

Lilin chuckled. "You never know."

Daker's wolf dropped the stick at Thora's feet. "I guess he wants me to throw it again." She picked it up and threw it as hard as she could. The wolf ran off while Thora and Lilin kept walking. The wolf picked the stick up in his mouth. This time he stayed where he was, turned, and waited for them to catch up.

A loud cracking, crashing sound suddenly filled the peacefulness of the forest. To Thora's horror, she watched as a large tree started to fall—right where the wolf stood. Thora screamed for the wolf to look out, but he only stood where he was and wagged his tail, as if he thought Thora played a new game. Thora ran toward him while pictures of Daker's wolf lying crushed under the huge tree that continued to fall played inside her head. Leaving Lilin behind, she prayed she made it in time.

Fear gave Thora the speed she needed. She slammed into the wolf, pushing him out

of range just when the tree hit the ground. She didn't turn out to be so lucky. Thora wrapped her arms over her head as very large, thick branch fell on top of her. Collapsing under it, she screamed.

Thora must have blacked out, because she woke up to find Daker back in human form and yelling at her to wake up. He growled and used his werewolf strength to lift the heavy fallen branch off her body. Thora moaned in pain. It felt as if every bone in her body had been broken. She coughed, tasting blood in her mouth.

Once Daker had pushed the branch away, he gently cradled Thora in his arms. "Don't you dare die on me. Why did you do it?"

"Had to save you," Thora said weakly.

Daker growled. "You should have let the tree fall on me. It wouldn't have killed me. It would have hurt like hell, but once I shifted back the worst of it would have healed."

Thora tried to reach up to touch Daker's face, but she found she didn't have the strength. Daker picked up her hand and placed it on his cheek for her. "I didn't want to take the chance. It's my fault. I would rather die than let you."

She felt the world start to go black. Thora could hear Lilin crying next to her. Daker screamed at her to stay with him. Thora didn't want to leave him, but she knew she would never survive her injuries. Content with the fact she had saved Daker's life, she let the darkness sweep over her.

A surge of power, like a bolt of lightning, hit Thora. She screamed as it sizzled through her body. When it subsided, she found she didn't hurt nearly as much as she had. She blinked while her strength slowly returned.

Thora looked up at Daker. "What happened?"

His light green eyes shone with tears. "I thought I lost you. Your heart stopped beating."

She reached up and wiped a tear off Daker's jaw. "A lightning bolt hit me. It was the same rush of power I had when I became cursed."

Lilin sucked in a deep breath, drawing both Daker and Thora's attention. "I understand now. I understand the last part of your curse, Thora. Your fate was Daker. Saving Daker from the falling tree was the selfless act needed to bind you to your fate. The curse bound you to Daker."

"The mating bond already bound us," Daker said.

"Yes, but that's not the bond I'm talking about. I can sense the life energy in not only men, but women too. Thora's has changed. She's no longer mortal. Her life energy is now bound to yours, Daker. As long as you live, Thora lives. She even has the power to heal like a werewolf, without being an actual werewolf."

Daker lifted Thora's shirt and ran his hands over her ribs. "They aren't broken anymore."

Thora pushed his hand away. "They may not be broken, but they still hurt." With a whoop, Daker gathered Thora close and squeezed her to him. She smacked him in the arm. "Take it easy, would ya?"

He released her and helped her to stand. "Sorry. In a day or two you'll be as good as new."

Thora cupped the back of Daker's head and brought his lips down to hers while what had happened sank in. Not caring Lilin stood nearby, she kissed him with all the love she felt for him. He was safe, and she no longer had to worry about growing old while he

stayed young. They were true mates now.

Blinking back tears of happiness, Thora said, "I guess you're stuck with me. For better or for worse, and believe me there is going to be worse. I'm still a jinx."

Daker picked her up gently until they were at eye level. "You can bring the whole house down around us. I don't care. I'll fix or replace whatever decides to break. As long as I have you, I'm happy."

Thora looked down at her mate, the man who had become the other half of her soul. If she could redo the night of her engagement party, she knew she wouldn't change a thing. So long as the jinx got to keep her werewolf.

## Epilogue

Thora couldn't help but feel nervous. This was her first meeting with Jacinda Fergus, the founder of Strange Hollow. Daker had reassured Thora that she had nothing to be nervous about, but that hadn't stopped her from feeling this way.

Jacinda had arrived a short while ago at what was now Daker and Thora's house. All three of them sat in the living room. Thora took a sip of tea that Daker had made, trying to calm herself down. This meeting had to go perfectly. It was an interview of sorts. Jacinda alone decided who would be allowed to take up residency in Strange Hollow.

Thora watched Jacinda sip her tea, still finding it hard to believe that the woman next to her was a fairy, and part of the Fae royalty to boot. Jacinda had violet eyes and long brown hair. She was three inches shorter than Thora's five foot seven. Pleasantly plump came to mind when you thought of the fairy.

Jacinda put her teacup down on the coffee table and smiled at Thora. "I won't stay long. Since you are new here at Strange Hollow I thought I would drop by and introduce myself, and tell you about the town laws. They aren't many, but they are important nonetheless."

"So I can stay at Strange Hollow?" Thora blurted out.

"Of course you can. You're Daker's mate. I would hardly force a werewolf to give up his mate. That would be a cruel and unjust punishment when Daker has done nothing wrong." Jacinda winked at Thora. "Besides, a jinx will be a nice addition to the town. As I was saying, there are a few laws that must be strictly followed."

Thora nodded. "Okay."

"First, murder is punishable by death. Second, rape is punishable by death. And third, outcasts are welcome, but elitists will be eaten on sight. I don't consider that murder, by the way. I like to call it natural selection."

"Well, I don't think you have to worry about me breaking any of those laws. I may break other things, but not those."

Jacinda chuckled. "Good. Then I would like to officially welcome you to Strange Hollow." She stood. "I'll be leaving now. I look forward to seeing you around town, Thora."

After Thora and Daker had walked Jacinda out, Thora turned to Daker. "I guess I worried over nothing."

Daker put his arms around her waist and pulled her close. "See? I told you it would be fine. Jacinda may be a little reserved, but she is friendly. How about we celebrate?"

Thora gave him a seductive smile. "What do you have in mind?"

"Oh, I can think of a number of things that include a bed and your mouth all over my body."

"Mmm, I think I could go for that so long as you do to me what I do to you."

Daker picked Thora up and swung her over his shoulder. He bit her bottom as he walked toward their bedroom. "Let's see if we can break the bed again."

Thora laughed. "With me around, you never know."

## **The End**

### **About the Author:**

Marisa Chenery was always a lover of books, but after reading her first historical romance novel she found herself hooked. Having inherited a love for the written word, she soon started writing her own novels.

After trying her hand at writing historicals, she now also writes paranormals.

Marisa lives in Ontario, Canada, with her husband and four children. Check out Marisa's website at [www.marisachenery.com](http://www.marisachenery.com). She would love to hear from you, so drop her an email while you're there.

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