

One Stormy Night

Written by Paige Warren

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the author, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in reviews.

This is a work of Fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents either are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to any persons, businesses, or places is purely coincidental. The publisher does not assume any authority over the author or third-party websites.

©2009, Paige Warren

Edited by Shannon Perry
Senior Editor J.M. Smith
Cover Art J. Smith

Wild Horse Press

Paige Warren

www.paigewarren.webs.com

Author of Contemporary Romance, Erotic
Romance, & Paranormal Romance

Chapter One

The wind howled and rain beat against the windows. It was a storm unlike any Celeste had seen before. She wrapped the blanket tighter around her body and stared into the inky night, no moon or stars shone in the midnight sky. Stepping away from the window, she curled up in her chair. Lighting flashed across the sky, the jagged streaks illuminating her small living room. It wasn't a fit night for human or animal.

Celeste shivered when a howl rent the air. Wolves. She knew they inhabited the woods nearby, but she'd never seen one. A lone wolf howled again, sounding even closer than before. Getting up, she swiftly walked to the door and made sure it was locked. She shook her head, realizing how silly it was to think a wolf could open the door whether it was locked or not, yet the lock made her feel safer.

Pacing the wood floor, she looked at the clock. Almost midnight. She knew she should try and get some sleep, but sleep had eluded Celeste for months...

ever since Jared had died. They'd been engaged, the wedding only weeks away, until a fatal car accident had taken his life. Now Celeste was alone again. Having been alone most of her life, she should be used to it, but things were harder now that Jared was gone. He'd filled a void in her life.

A scratching noise on her porch made her freeze. The door rattled in its hinges, drawing a startled breath from her. She watched with wide eyes as the knob slowly turned. When the possible intruder couldn't open the door, they banged against it fiercely.

"Is anyone home? I need help!" a deep masculine voice called through the door.

Celeste cautiously approached the door. "What do you need?"

"I was attacked. Please, let me in before they come looking for me."

Celeste slowly unlocked the door and opened it a crack, peering out onto the porch. A naked man was curled on the wooden slats, angry scratches running the length of his back and arms.

Two more howls, even more chilling than the others, came from the nearby woods, spurring her into

action. She knew she had to get the man into her home before the wolves came looking for him.

“Oh! You poor thing,” Celeste said, opening the door further and crouching beside him. “Come on. Let’s get you inside and cleaned up.”

The man looked up at her and Celeste caught her breath. The bluest eyes she’d ever seen stared up at her through thick blond lashes. A golden mane of hair hung around his face in thick wet strands. A strong, square jaw and high cheek bones lent him a ruggedly handsome look.

Helping him to his feet, she led him into the cabin, trying to ignore the naked skin pressed against her. After she closed and locked the door, she led him down the hall to the bathroom.

“Sit here and I’ll get you some clothes,” Celeste said softly.

She scurried out of the bathroom and went up to the loft. Digging in Jared’s old closet, she found a pair of sweatpants and t-shirt that should fit her unexpected guest. As she descended the stairs, she heard the shower running. Slipping into the bathroom

she laid out a fresh towel and placed the clothes on the counter.

“I have some clothes here that I think will fit you,” she said as she backed toward the bathroom door.

“Thank you,” the man said.

“I’ll... I’ll just be in the living room.” Celeste beat a hasty retreat, closing the bathroom door firmly behind her. She pressed her hands to her flushed cheeks, the heat from them warming her hands.

Pushing away from the door, she walked back to the living room. Curling up in her chair again, she couldn’t keep her gaze from straying to the bathroom door. She’d have to have been blind to not notice the well-toned, muscular body that went along with her guest. She didn’t even know his name, yet her body already wanted him. Her heart ached for the loss of her fiancé, but her body was ready for her to move on. She felt guilty wanting the stranger, yet she knew Jared would want her to be happy.

The shower turned off and Celeste braced herself. Staring at the bathroom door with baited breath, she waited.

Chapter Two

Connor stepped out of the shower and dried off with the towel *she* had left... the angel with the red hair. He'd followed her scent and found her cabin. It hadn't been easy with the pack at his heels, but he'd managed.

The alpha had attacked him, leaving angry claw marks down his back and arms. Connor assessed the damage in the mirror. It would heal, but it would take a few days. He traced one of the angry welts and winced.

He'd defied the packs orders by trying to find the woman who had dominated his mind and senses for the past several weeks. He'd run across her scent near one of the hiking trails and had known instantly that she belonged to him.

Marcus had plans for Connor, plans that didn't include the angel on the other side of the door. The pack's alpha wanted Connor to mate with a female in the pack – the alpha's sister. While it was an honor, Connor knew he didn't belong with anyone other than

his true mate. His immediate attraction to the red head couldn't be denied.

Toweling off, he put on the clothes his rescuer had laid out for him. The t-shirt hugged his chest and biceps, but the material was soft and comfortable. Taking a breath, he braced himself to face her. He knew without a doubt who she was – not her name, but who she was to *him*. His mate, his life, his soul... and he had precious little time to convince her of that. His very life depended on it, and so did hers. He'd brought danger to her door, but it couldn't be helped.

Opening the door, he stepped into the hall and slowly walked to the living room. His eyes immediately sought her out. She was curled up in a chair, staring at him with the most amazing green eyes. Eyes that were full of curiosity, lust, and a tinge of fear. He couldn't blame her. She was a woman alone out in the woods. She had every right to fear him; he was easily twice her size.

"Thank you," he said softly. "You didn't have to help me."

Celeste nodded. "I'm afraid I don't have an extra bed," she said with a blush, "but you can sleep on the couch if you'd like."

Connor glanced at the couch in question and hoped he didn't wince. It looked comfortable enough – if you were a midget.

Celeste let her eyes travel his body from toe to toe and back again. "Then again, I'll take the couch and you can have the bed. I don't think you'll fit."

He gave her a smirk that said he would certainly fit *somewhere*, and the couch wasn't what he had in mind.

A blush stole across her cheeks. "I meant you wouldn't fit on the couch."

"I'm not going to kick you out of your bed," he answered.

"I don't even know your name," she said quietly.

"Connor. Connor Bleddyn."

"I'm Celeste O'Connell."

He gave her his sexiest grin. "Nice to meet you Celeste, and thanks again for helping me."

"What happened?" she asked, her eyes straying to the scratches down his arms.

“I was attacked by a pack of wolves. They tore my clothes from my body and clawed at me. Two tried to bite me, but I was able to avoid them.”

Her eyes widened and she glanced at the door nervously. “How close are they?”

“Not far.”

She shivered in fear. “I’m not much for wildlife,” she murmured.

Connor chuckled, but didn’t say anything. Little did she realize she had the “wildlife” in her living room at that very moment. He was a werewolf in sheep’s clothing, or rather human clothing. Hopefully he could gain her trust before he had to expose that side of himself.

“They... they can’t get in, can they?” she asked.

Connor started to tell her no, but decided to use the situation to his advantage. “They can actually.”

Just then, the wind blew straight at the little cabin, rattling the windows and door. Celeste jumped nearly a foot, her heart racing in her chest.

“You know, I promise to be a complete gentleman if you’d prefer to stay in the bedroom too.”

Celeste turned her wide eyes to him once more. Could she trust him? Thunder boomed and lightning lit up the sky, settling the matter for her.

“I think I’ll take you up on that offer,” she said as she scrambled out of her chair and moved closer to him. The sheer size and solidness of him gave her comfort.

“Lead the way,” he said, motioning for her to go before him.

Celeste started for the stairs and slowly climbed to the loft where her bed lay. Her room was simply furnished; a bed, dresser, and night side table. The room was painted a soft blue-green, a Navajo rug in cranberry and teal took up most of the floor; a matching comforter was thrown haphazardly across the bed.

Connor took in every detail. He’d noticed there wasn’t a single picture in any of the rooms. Didn’t she have family and friends?

“You have a nice room,” he said, his voice taking on a husky undertone. Seeing the bed made him imagine her lying across it – naked.

“Thank you.”

He watched as she stood nervously beside the bed, her hands fidgeting with the blanket she had wrapped around herself. He wanted to soothe her, tell her she had nothing to fear – but he knew it would be a lie. She had every right to be afraid, just not of him.

He slowly walked around to the other side of the bed. Pulling back the covers, he got into the bed. Watching her, he noticed she wasn't moving.

“Celeste, aren't you coming to bed?”

She nodded and dropped the blanket.

Connor sucked in a breath. She was even more gorgeous than he'd first thought. Her nightgown covered her to mid-thigh, but the scooped neckline gave him a glimpse of firm, gently rounded breasts. The stark white material gave her an ethereal look, confirming that she really was his angel.

Celeste quickly got into the bed and covered herself up to her chin. “Good night, Connor.”

“Good night, Celeste.”

He watched as she turned onto her side, leaving her back to him. Her shoulders were stiff and he knew she was still nervous. He wanted to pull her into his arms and ease her fears, ease the tension in her body.

Fighting his baser urges, he turned off the lamp beside the bed and pulled the covers up to his chest.

Chapter Three

Celeste lay in the bed unable to sleep. She knew it was innocent, yet having a man in her bed made her feel as if she were betraying Jared. Thinking of him brought tears to her eyes. The loss was still too much to bear.

Stifling a sob, she turned her face into her pillow and let the tears fall one after the other. She cried for the loss of what she could have had and she cried because of what her body wanted so desperately from the man lying beside her. She felt completely out of touch with reality. Who wanted to make love with a complete stranger? She'd never been the one night stand kind of woman.

Silent sobs racked her body. She wanted so much to feel alive again. Something told her Connor could make her feel that way again, but she wasn't brave enough to do anything about it.

Connor lay on the opposite side, clenching his fists at his side. He listened as Celeste cried her heart out. He wondered what had happened that brought her so much sorrow.

With a sigh, he gave in. Reaching for her, he gently pulled her into his arms. “Shh. You’re okay.”

She melted against him and buried her face against his t-shirt.

He gently rubbed her back until her crying ceased. She looked up at him with puffy red eyes and he knew he’d lost his inner battle. With a groan, he cupped her cheek with his hand and kissed her.

The moment his lips brushed hers, he felt an inner fire ignite, one he couldn’t ignore. Kissing her fiercely, he wanted to claim her as his own. The urge to bond with his mate couldn’t be ignored any longer.

“Let me love you,” he whispered against her lips.

Not trusting her voice, Celeste nodded. Already her body was on fire from Connor’s kiss, leaving her hyper aware of every caress.

Connor looked into her eyes as his hands skimmed under her nightgown, gliding along her stomach to the

underside of her breasts. Cupping them, he bent his head and kissed her again, gently moving his lips across hers, his tongue tasting her.

Pressing his hips to hers, he rubbed his throbbing cock against her. He wanted desperately to feel her skin against his, but he didn't want to rush her.

When her hands tentatively caressed his chest through his shirt, he groaned. Flicking one of her nipples with his thumb, he thrust against her.

"Do you have any idea what you're doing to me?" he whispered.

"Connor, I ... I want..."

His hand slid to her hip and pulled her snugly against him. "What do you want?"

"I... I... I want you."

"What do you want me to do?" he whispered against her ear.

"Touch me. I need to feel your skin against mine."

Connor sat up. Pulling Celeste to her knees, he lifted the white nightgown over her head. He sucked in a breath as he stared at the perfection of her body. Never had he seen a more beautiful woman, and she was his... whether she knew it or not.

He quickly removed his own clothes. The only thing separating them was the small pair of satin panties she wore. He pulled her body closer, nestling her between his legs. Her breasts pressing against his chest was agony, it only fanned the flames of his desire.

Celeste rubbed herself against Connor, loving the feel of her skin against his. The light sprinkling of hair on his chest gently rasped against her sensitive nipples, making her moan. His hard cock pressed against her belly. Reaching between their bodies, she grasped it, loving the velvety smoothness of his skin.

She stroked him, gently at first then with more confidence. Leaning into him, she brushed her lips against his, her tongue flicking out to trace his lower lip. When he opened his mouth, she delved inside, her tongue gliding along his. His taste and scent surrounded her, wrapping around her like a warm blanket.

Pulling back she looked into his eyes. The intensity of his gaze was almost too much to bear; she closed her

eyes and nuzzled his neck. Celeste wrapped her arms around him.

“Make love to me, Connor,” she murmured.

Connor tugged on her panties. “Have to get rid of these first.”

Celeste slipped her panties off. Sitting on her knees in front of him, she paused uncertainly. Did he want her to take charge? Or did he want to be on top?

“Come here,” he said, his voice husky with desire.

She inched closer.

Connor grasped her waist and lifted her. “Wrap your legs around my waist.”

Celeste did as he said, gasping when she felt the head of his cock pressing against her wet pussy. She tried to slide down and take him inside of her, but he held her still.

“Easy angel, we have time,” he whispered, as he slid his hands under her.

He teased her, skimming his fingers along her moist lips. Parting the lips of her pussy, he thrust the head of his cock into her, stopping when he was barely inside of her.

Holding her ass with one hand, he reached between their bodies and teased her swollen clit. Gently circling it with his thumb, he felt a tremor run through her. She tried to thrust against him, but he held her still, not allowing his hard cock to slide any further into her.

His finger slipped between the cheeks of her ass and gently massaged her. His cock was throbbing, demanding to fuck her, but he held back. Somehow he knew she needed this, needed all of the attention he could give her.

Celeste threw her head back and thrust her breasts against him, her nipples grazing his chest, the tightened peaks wanting attention.

“Touch yourself,” he murmured. “Touch your nipples.”

Her eyes snapped open and she looked at him, uncertainty written across face, but she did as he commanded. Reaching for her breasts, she gently pinched her nipples, gasping in pleasure.

Connor clenched his teeth. She was so amazing. He wanted to fuck her more than anything. Easing his finger into her ass, he was surprised when she groaned

and pushed back against him. He massaged her, stretching her.

Stroking her clit faster, he felt the walls of her pussy clench his cock. Her panting told him she was close to her orgasm.

“I love watching you,” he said. “Watching you play with your nipples while my cock is in your pussy makes me want to fuck you hard and fast.”

Celeste gasped and arched her back, thrusting her breasts closer to him and her ass further back against his hand. She’d never felt anything like this and she didn’t want the sensations to stop. Never had she allowed a man to touch her the way Connor was, but it felt so right. She wondered what it would feel like to have his cock in her ass. The idea turned her on even more.

Connor removed his finger from her ass only to have her cry out in dismay. Grinning down at her, he slowly slid two fingers inside of her.

“I want you to come for me, angel. I want to feel you clenching down on my fingers and my cock.”

His words were enough to send her over the edge, her orgasm shot through her like the lightning flashing

outside. Throwing back her head, she called out his name.

While her pussy was clenching down on his cock, he thrust into her hard and fast. Feeling her wet heat surround him was almost enough to make him come. With a growl, he slipped free of her. Removing his fingers from her ass, he turned her around.

“I want you on your hands and knees,” he growled in her ear.

Celeste fell forward onto her hands.

“Spread your legs.”

She slid her legs apart, giving him access to anything he wanted.

Connor gripped her hips and thrust into her pussy. Ramming into her over and over, he knew he was going to come in a matter of minutes.

“Yes, oh yes,” she cried. “Connor, I want...”

“What do you want?”

“I want you to do what you did before.”

He slid a finger along the slit of her ass. “You mean you want my fingers in you?”

“Yes,” she panted.

Parting her ass, he slid a finger inside of her. “Like this?”

“More,” she whimpered.

Thrusting his cock in and out of her, he slid two fingers in her ass again. “Is this what you wanted?”

“Yes, oh God yes!”

As he thrust in and out of her hot, wet pussy with his cock, he fucked her ass with his fingers.

He slammed into her over and over, sweat glistening on his skin. With a growl he thrust into her and felt himself come. He nipped the side of her neck as his hot semen shot into her while he fucked her, branding her as his mate.

With a cry, Celeste let herself go. Her orgasm crashed over her as she thrust back against him. When she would have moved away from Connor, he held onto her.

Pulling her up, Connor fixed her legs so that she straddled him, her back flush against his chest. His cock still buried in her, he wrapped his arms around her and reached for her breasts.

“Connor, what are you doing?”

“I’m going to make you come again.”

“I... I can’t. I’ve never...”

“You’ve never what?”

“I’ve never had more than one orgasm and you’ve already given me two.”

He grinned against her hair. “Then prepare to discover new territory because you’re definitely going to come again.”

He pinched and rolled her nipples, her gasp of pleasure making him hard again. Nipping her neck, he continued to pleasure her breasts as his cock grew and filled her again.

Celeste braced her weight on her knees and slightly lifted her body only to slide back down on his cock again.

“God baby, that feels good,” he groaned.

Bracing her hands on his legs, she rode him, making herself mindless with pleasure.

“Rub your clit.”

Reaching between her legs, she rubbed her clit, riding him hard. As she came, she slammed herself down on his cock, taking him all the way inside of her. When she started to remove her hand from between her legs, his voice stopped her.

“Keep rubbing it.”

She whimpered, but did as he said, grinding down on him. Suddenly, she withdrew.

As his cock slid free of her, he wondered what she was up to. Before he could ask, he felt her ass pushing down on his cock.

Leaving her breasts alone, his hands palmed her ass cheeks apart, allowing her to slide down. As his cock slid into the snug passage of her ass, he stifled a groan. He helped guide her down until he was all the way inside of her.

Celeste wiggled her hips, drawing a hiss from Connor. Reaching around, she grasped his hands. She brought them around her waist and down between her legs.

Connor pinched her clit while he slid two fingers inside of her pussy.

Celeste ground against his cock. Lifting herself slightly, she slid back down hard and fast. Reaching back, she wrapped her hand around his neck, her head rested on his chest.

While Connor fucked her pussy with his fingers, she rode his cock, her ass slamming down on him over and

over. Using her free hand, she reached between her legs and caressed his hands, feeling her juices on his skin.

Connor grabbed her hand and pressed her fingers down on her clit.

She fluttered her fingers over her clit, pumping against him over and over. Just when she thought she couldn't feel more pleasure, he cupped one of her breasts and played with her nipple. The sensitive peak shot spirals of pleasure down to her pussy. With a cry, she came hard.

Slipping his fingers from her pussy, he gripped her waist and pushed her forward onto her knees. Holding her ass cheeks apart, he watched as his cock slid in and out of her.

He thrust faster and harder until he couldn't hold on any longer. As he fucked her hard, he came in her ass. Thrusting into her all the way, he ground himself against her, his cock still throbbing.

Connor had never met anyone like Celeste before. He couldn't have been more pleased that she was his destined mate.

Chapter Four

Spent, they collapsed to the bed. Connor pulled Celeste into his arms and pressed her head against his chest.

“That was ... I don’t even think there’s a word to describe it,” she murmured.

Connor tightened his arms around her. “I know what you mean. That was the most incredible thing I’ve ever experienced.”

Celeste lifted her head and looked at him uncertainly. “Just so you know I don’t normally sleep with men I just met.”

He grinned at her. “I already figured that out.”

She looked away. “Truth is there have only been a few men in my life.”

Connor knew his heart was thumping loud enough for her to hear it. He wasn’t sure he wanted to hear about the men she’d had in life, but at the same time he did. Morbid curiosity he figured.

“The last man was my fiancé.”

Connor looked down at her in surprise. “Fiancé?”

Celeste nodded. “He... he was killed in a car crash about four months ago.”

Connor kissed the top of her head. “So that’s why you were crying.”

“I was crying not just for him but because I felt guilty.”

“Guilty? About what?”

“Wanting you.”

He wanted to tell her she didn’t have anything to feel guilty about, but it was still too soon to tell her she belonged to him. He looked down at the mark he’d left on her neck. The slightly red crescent moon marked her as his.

“Connor?”

“Hmm?”

“Would you take a shower with me?”

He grinned. “Sure baby, I’d love to take a shower with you.”

Celeste untangled herself from his embrace and rolled out of the bed. Walking slowly to the bathroom, she turned on the light. When she didn’t feel Connor behind her, she looked over her shoulder. He was lying in the bed watching her.

“Aren’t you coming?”

“I was just enjoying the view,” he said softly.

A blush stained her cheeks and she ducked into the bathroom. Turning on the shower, she held her hand under the spray to test the water. When it was warm enough, she stepped under the water.

The water sluiced over her body, washing away the sweat from her round of love-making with Connor.

Celeste paused. *Love-making? Was it more than just sex?*

Before she could think about it any further, Connor stepped into the shower and joined her. He ran his hands through her long hair and down her arms. Grasping her hands in his, he brought them up to his lips and gently kissed the backs of her fingers.

“Have I told you how amazing you are?” he asked.

She blushed and ducked her head. “Am I?”

He tipped her chin up and looked down into her eyes. “Yes, you are.” He pressed a quick kiss to her lips. “You know, I don’t usually just jump into bed with someone either.”

“You don’t?”

He grinned. “No, I don’t. For me, it has to mean something.”

“Oh?” she asked a little breathlessly.

“Yeah.”

“And it meant something? With me?”

He caressed her cheek. “It especially meant something with you.”

“But you don’t even know me.”

“I know enough. I know you’re a generous lover, have a kind soul, and that you’re the most beautiful woman I’ve ever seen.”

“But that isn’t enough to...”

“Yes, Celeste, it is. Didn’t you feel it?”

“Feel what?” she asked softly.

“That we belong together?”

Her eyes widened and she tried to pull away.

Connor gripped her hand tighter. “Celeste, I don’t want to scare you, I just want to be honest.”

“You can’t feel that way about me. You just met me!”

“Don’t you believe in love at first sight?”

She shook her head. “That only happens in fairy tales.”

“And you don’t believe in fairy tales?”

“Not anymore,” she whispered.

Connor’s chest felt like it was being crushed. He had arrived too late. He’d marked her, but she wasn’t truly his. She still lived in the past, with her beloved fiancé. How could he compete with a dead man?

“Turn around and I’ll wash your back,” he said, feeling defeated.

Celeste gave him a long look before turning and giving him her back. She didn’t know what to make of him. Could he be serious? Did he really think he’d fallen in love with her so quickly?

She bit her lip as his hands massaged her neck and shoulders. Then again, she *had* just been contemplating whether or not they’d had sex or made love. Maybe he wasn’t so crazy after all. Or if he was, she was just as crazy.

Deciding not to think of it anymore, she gave herself up to the wonderful sensation of Connor’s hands massaging her body.

“I’m sorry if what I said bothered you,” he said softly in her ear.

She shook her head. “You don’t have anything to be sorry for.”

“Yes, I do. I scared you.”

She turned and lifted her hands to his shoulders. “No, not really. I mean, maybe a little, but you were only saying what I had been thinking before you got in the shower.”

“You were thinking you loved me?”

She bit her lip and stared at his chest. Her eyes flicked back up to his. “I was thinking that what we had shared was more than sex, that it was making love.”

He cupped her cheek in his hand. “It was definitely more than just sex.”

“I don’t understand any of it though. I’ve never felt this way before.”

He studied her a moment. “You’re my soul mate. I knew it the moment I saw you.”

“How could you be so sure?”

“If I show you something, will you promise to keep an open mind? Promise not to freak out?”

She looked at him hesitantly. What could he possibly show her?

Finally, she nodded.

Stepping back from Celeste, Connor shifted. In a cloud of mist, he changed from human to wolf. He watched as her eyes went wide, her mouth opened as if to scream. The mist formed around his body again as he shifted back into his human form.

“You’re... you’re... you’re...” she babbled.

“A werewolf,” he supplied.

She shook her head, her eyes still large as saucers in her face. “That’s not possible.”

“I’m afraid it is.”

“But...werewolves don’t exist.”

He laughed harshly. “I’m afraid they do, and I’m not the only one.”

Her breath caught in her throat. “The howling in the woods...”

He nodded. “My pack.”

“Pack?” she squeaked. “But... you were hurt!”

“They attacked me.”

“Why?”

“For disobeying the alpha. He wanted me to mate with his sister. I told him no.”

“Why would you do that?”

“Because of you. I caught your scent a few days ago. I’ve been tracking you ever since.”

She squeaked again. She seemed incapable of speech. Her mouth opened, but she couldn’t get a single word out.

“I wanted to find you because I knew you were my destined mate. You were meant for me,” he said softly.

“I don’t understand.”

“We mate for life.”

“You mean like a marriage?” she asked hesitantly, the shock starting to wear off. *Werewolves actually existed!*

“Something like that.”

“And you and I are meant to be together?” she asked.

He took a step closer to her, encouraged when she didn’t back away or flinch. “Yes.”

“Is that why...” she blushed.

“Why what?”

“Why it was so wonderful between us? Why I didn’t hesitate to let you do things no one has ever done to me before?”

He grinned. “Yeah, that’s why.”

She took a breath and held it a moment. Her mind was spinning! There was just too much to take in, too much to dissect.

“I think I need a minute,” she said.

He nodded. “I can understand that, but there’s something you should know.”

“What?” she asked, her eyes going back to his.

“My pack... they’ll be looking for me. Even worse, they’ll be looking for you. The alpha thinks if you’re out of the picture then I’ll get back in line.”

A shudder racked her body. “What will they do to me?”

“I’m not going to let them do anything to you. Hopefully he’ll see you’re marked as mine and he’ll back down.”

“Marked?”

He caressed the small crescent shape on her neck.

“You marked me?” she asked, her going wide.

“I didn’t have a choice. I would have preferred to take my time getting to know you and eventually have asked your permission, but I know they’re on their way here.”

“What exactly does the mark mean?”

“It means you’re my mate. It means you’re off limits to all other werewolves. And most importantly, it means I’m not available to mate with anyone else.”

Celeste found it hard to breathe. She had a werewolf pack after her and she’d been marked as Connor’s mate without him even asking. She was furious and frightened at the same time. Even worse, she wasn’t sure she was angry for the right reasons. It didn’t bother her to be tied to Connor. It only bothered her that he had taken matters into his hands without giving her an option.

Chapter Five

After their shower, Celeste wandered down to the kitchen. She needed some space. Putting the kettle on to boil, she decided a cup of tea would help settle her nerves.

Before the water could boil, she heard a noise on the front porch. Tightening her robe around her, she hesitantly tiptoed into the living room. She paused near the door and listened. There was definitely someone, or something, on her front porch.

Celeste backed toward the stairs. If she could get to Connor, maybe she would be safe. Her foot had just touched the bottom step when the door flew open. A wolf larger than any she had seen charged into the room, heading straight for her.

She screamed and tried to scramble up the stairs, but the beast grabbed the bottom of her robe and jerked her down the stairs. She landed at the bottom with a thud, the air knocked from her lungs.

As she gasped for breath, the wolf stalked toward her. Growling, saliva dripped from his massive jaws.

As he neared, she stared into his eyes. His eyes were flat, the eyes of a killer.

Celeste quaked with fear, knowing that she was going to die. Still trying to catch her breath, she wasn't able to call for help. Just when she thought it was over, she heard a noise from the top of the stairs.

Connor charged down the stairs and launched himself at the alpha wolf. His jaws snapped down on the alpha's neck as he pulled him away from Celeste.

Celeste rolled to her side and watched the fight with terror in her eyes. Her heart hammered in her chest as she watched Connor fight for both of their lives. Cowering at the bottom of the stairs, she was too petrified to move.

As the wolves rolled and crashed around the living room, she found herself biting her nails. Tremors racked her body and she fought back a cry when the alpha pinned Connor.

Knowing she couldn't let the alpha win, she looked around frantically for something heavy. Spotting her small copper tub in the corner, she picked it up. She crept up behind the alpha and brought the tub down on his head – hard.

The wolf stumbled to the side, releasing Connor.

Knowing the alpha was stunned, Connor used the time to attack. Lunging at the other wolf, he went for the kill. Biting into the soft flesh of the alpha's throat, he tore the flesh.

The alpha's eyes went wide as he slumped to the floor. Blood pooled around him as the light faded from his eyes.

Connor looked to Celeste. Blood dripped from his snout and he hoped she wouldn't be scared of him. His eyes scanned her, looking for any sign of injury. Satisfied that his mate was unharmed, he walked to the front door and nudged it shut.

Looking at Celeste, he lumbered up the stairs to the loft. When he reached the top, he changed back to his human shape and went into the bathroom to clean up. Once he was free of blood, he went back to his mate.

He found her sitting on her knees at the foot of the stairs. She was shaking violently and staring at her hands.

"Celeste?" He reached down and gently touched her shoulder.

She tensed and looked up at him. "Connor?"

“It’s okay, honey. He can’t hurt you anymore.”

She reached for him with trembling hands.

He lifted her into his arms and cuddled her to his chest. Carrying her upstairs, he sat her on the bed.

“Stay here. I’m going to clean up downstairs.”

She nodded, but didn’t say a word.

Connor left her and went back to the living room. Opening the front door, he hauled the alpha’s body outside. Carrying the massive wolf, he disposed of him in the woods where scavengers would take care of the body.

When he returned to the cabin, he went to the kitchen to get cleaning supplies. After the blood was gone and the living room looked as it had before, he returned to Celeste’s side.

She was still sitting on the bed where he’d left her, staring but not really seeing.

Connor knelt at her feet and took her hands.

“I’m sorry. I’m so sorry,” he said.

“You saved me,” she said softly.

He shook his head. “If it weren’t for me, you never would have been in trouble.”

“Maybe, but if it weren’t for you I would still feel lonely.”

“And you don’t now?”

She shook her head. “When I saw you attack the other wolf, I realized something. I realized that I’m glad I’m your mate. I don’t want to be alone anymore.”

Connor pulled her into his arms. “I promise you won’t be alone, Celeste. You’re my mate and I love you.”

“I think I love you too,” she whispered.

Epilogue

A year later

Celeste stood in the kitchen sipping a cup of tea. Connor had been gone for hours and she was anxious for him to return. He'd barely left her side for weeks after the incident. It had taken her forever to convince him she would be okay on her own.

Rubbing her rounding stomach, she stared out of the kitchen window. The full moon shone brightly in the night sky. Millions of stars winked at her.

The front door opened and closed.

"Celeste?"

"In the kitchen," she called.

Connor walked in and wrapped his arms around her, kissing her gently. "I'm sorry I'm late."

"Is everything okay?"

He nodded. "The pack seems to be back to normal."

"That's good."

"They decided to keep me as alpha."

She looked at him in surprise. "Did you accept?"

He nodded. “It was the only way to ensure you’re safety and the baby’s.”

Smiling, she rubbed her stomach. “It’s probably a good thing. If you’re the alpha, won’t the baby be in line for the position if he can change into a wolf?”

Connor smiled and cupped his hands around her stomach. “Yes. I wasn’t sure if you would be happy about that though.”

“Connor, being able to shift into a wolf is part of who you are. I would be delighted for our child to be like you.”

Connor kissed her, his tongue tracing her lips.

Parting her lips, she welcomed his kiss. Liquid fire raced through her. It amazed her that after a year he could still turn her on with just a kiss.

Celeste broke the kiss and looked up at him with teary eyes.

“I love you,” she whispered.

“And I love you, more than life itself.”

Smiling, she lost herself in his embrace.