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Ménage Amour

PROJECTED *Pleasure*



Jennifer Salaiz

PROJECTED PLEASURE

Sequel to Passion Projected

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MENAGE AMOUR



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With deep gratitude,
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DEDICATION

My dedication is to the fans. I hope you enjoy reading this story as much as I've enjoyed writing it.

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JENNIFER SALAIZ

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Chapter 1

While Cole looked at the beautiful vision before him, he knew it couldn't be real. As much as he wanted to believe Marley was here, she wasn't. Disappointment settled deep within, but he was too selfish to let go of even the smallest piece of his alpha's mate. Even if her lovely body wasn't anything but a dream.

The fact that Cole loved Zachary's wife was no news to his best friend. All three of them had become very close in the months he lived at the estate. But a point had come when his alpha picked up on his resistance to leave and ordered him to look for his companion. Now, back in the familiar atmosphere of the mansion, he conjured dreams of the one woman he wanted but couldn't have, Marley.

Over the months he had been gone, projection was something he kept on the back burner. Rarely did Cole do what his alpha taught him, but now in his dream Marley hovered above him, reaching for him to come to her.

Lifting his hand upward, he felt the pull on his stomach. Just the simplest action and he would be able to leave his sleeping form to be with her. The tingling erupted over his body, and a knock at the door made everything vanish. Cole sat up rubbing his eyes and couldn't help but smile. Finally, it was time.

* * * *

Light rain covered the passenger window as Marley tried to stare out into the thick cluster of trees. The vast forest surrounding them on both sides of the two lane road sent chills down her spine. Ever since the incident almost a year ago, she was left haunted. It had taken countless weeks for her to even walk the gardens. That didn't include the repeated trips down the driveway just for her to chicken out at the last minute and make Zachary bring her back to the house.

After months of the repeated episodes, she finally grew brave enough to let her husband venture with her into the small Virginia town. But no matter how many times they left the estate, her body stayed on constant alert.

She knew Jordan was dead. In horror, she watched Zachary's pack tear him apart. So why couldn't she get over the feeling like everything between her husband and the rival pack was long from being over?

A whimper instinctively made her turn around in the passenger seat of their new Escalade. The increase of her heart rate had Zachary's hand sliding into hers. The light squeeze of reassurance settled the thrumming, but not entirely.

"Everything's all right, Marley. I think Demetri's just getting hungry, that's all," Kylie said from next to the infant carrier in the second row.

Zachary's sister might have been her son's aunt, nanny, and personal body guard, but Marley saw her as so much more than that. Kylie happened to be her best friend and most trusted confidant. Although a blood tie linked her and her husband together, something recently blocked a part of the tie. And it all happened in the last stages of her pregnancy causing their telepathic connection to grow more distant every week that went by.

No longer could Zachary read her mind as clearly as he used to be able to. For that, she was forever grateful. The last thing she wanted

him to know was how unstable her emotions were. A feeling so complex she couldn't comprehend continued to tear at her insides. As much as Marley wanted to believe what Dr. Jacoby said about it being postpartum depression, she knew that wasn't the case. The increased mood swings and raw cravings led her to think it was something more than a hormonal imbalance.

"We're almost home. Everything will be fine." Zachary tightened his grip on her hand.

Nodding, she looked back at the top of her three-month-old son's head. Dark wisps of the beginning of curls bobbed while he fussily gnawed on his tiny fist. A smile couldn't help but stretch across her face.

The blue-green of Kylie's eyes beamed proudly. Zachary, Kylie, Aria, and now her son, Demetri all shared the amazing color. It was the first distinguishable thing Marley noticed about her husband. The fact that the color illuminated in the dark hypnotized her from the beginning.

She opened her mouth to ask a question when she paused. Movement from the corner of her eye flashed so fast she wasn't sure she was seeing things correctly. Both Kylie and Marley's gaze ripped from each other to the monstrous forest outside of her sister-in-law's window. A scream became trapped inside her throat at the ghostly shape that disappeared behind a large trunk of a pine tree.

Visions of Jordan assaulted her mind. Something akin to anger and panic began to boil inside her blood, pushing its way throughout her body in a bundle of incompatible sensations. Almost as if tiny bugs pushed against her skin, things twisted and clawed to get out of her. Marley wasn't sure whether to scream at the uncomfortable feeling or to scratch her nails down her body.

"What the hell was that?" Kylie half screamed. "A ghost? It couldn't have been. I mean, it looked like a ghost, but a ghost?"

The car began to slow down, and Marley felt a surge of panic. “Zachary, don’t you dare stop this car. Our son is here. You can’t stop!”

Conflicted, Zachary’s eyes bore into Marley’s deep green depths. “Did you see it? What was it? It couldn’t have been,” her husband paused, taking a deep breath. “He’s dead, love. No rival pack exists anymore, and no one knows how to project other than...”

“Cole,” Marley finished. “Do you think he came home? Oh, Zachary, could that have been him? Maybe he was seeing how far away we were. Maybe he wanted to check to see if we were all right.”

The Escalade pulled in the long, paved road leading to the estate. Marley’s heart thudded at the possibility that Cole might be back. She hadn’t seen him since her son was born and even before that he’d only been present for half of her pregnancy. The mission he was on was much like the one Zachary had undergone when he found her. Cole was looking for his mate, using techniques her husband taught him, projection. Supposedly, it came naturally to werewolves if they knew exactly what to do. After a little practice, Cole learned the basics and left.

Emptiness filled her that day. To Marley, the three of them were the perfect threesome. Where Zachary left off, Cole picked up and vice-versa. But she understood his need for a mate. She and her husband couldn’t truly satisfy what Cole would ultimately long for, or at least what she assumed every man longed for—a family, a home nestled somewhere for privacy.

Marley hadn’t finished closing her door when Cole appeared not five feet away. A joyful scream escaped her throat while she threw herself at him. His warm laughter filled the hollowness in her chest while he lifted her, spinning her around.

“You look absolutely stunning. I missed you.”

Cole brushed his lips across her cheek. Tingly sensations covered her body at his touch. God, how she had missed him. Just at his nearness she could feel her body react.

Zachary walked around the car, smiling. “How are you? Did you bring home a surprise?” He approached them, slapping Cole on the back. The joy radiating off of Zachary’s face was evident to her. He missed his best friend as much as she did.

Marley’s feet brushed the ground while Cole’s arms held her up against him tightly. “No, I got as far south as Louisiana and for some reason felt the need to come back north. When I got to Virginia, I decided to stop by. You know I had to see my new leader.” She watched as he smiled proudly.

As if on cue, Kylie walked around the car holding the infant carrier. Demetri’s blue-green eyes stared at Cole intently. So much intelligence flashed behind his gaze. It never ceased to amaze Marley how much her son seemed to know things someone his age shouldn’t. He was the calmest baby she’d ever seen, minus meal time.

“There he is,” Cole said, putting her feet back on the ground. He leaned toward her son, sliding his arm from around her shoulders to her waist. Zachary smiled and looked back to Cole and Demetri.

“Wow, he’s grown. What in the world are you feeding him?” He traced his finger along Demetri’s chubby cheek. Quicker than what seemed possible for Marley to comprehend, her son’s mouth tried to latch on to his finger. He jerked it back just in time, laughing.

“Wow, he’s fast. I would expect nothing less from my future alpha.”

“Yes, well, he’s hungry. Let’s get him inside and I’ll feed him. Then we can visit before dinner.” Marley took the carrier from Kylie and led everyone inside.

Making her way upstairs she headed for the nursery. Her best friend was right behind her with a fresh bottle. Unhooking the buckles, Marley picked up her son and began rocking him in the wooden chair by the large opened windows. The sucking sounds he made from eating soothed the growing anxiety building inside her.

The way she reacted in the car when she felt the panic of Zachary stopping refreshed inside her mind. What was happening to her? Her

skin felt like it literally had moved, like she would burst from it at any moment. The need to protect her son had turned automatic. Sure, she was his mother, but it was something so much more than that.

“What are you thinking about?” Kylie stared at her inquisitively. The frown darkening her face made Marley chew her lip. As much as she wanted to lie, she couldn’t, not to Kylie. Lowering her breath barely above a whisper, she tried to make sure her husband wouldn’t overhear.

“When I thought Zachary was going to pull over, I almost lost it. Kylie, it’s getting worse. My skin felt alive, like something was crawling around inside. All I could think about doing was protecting Demetri.” Marley ran her fingers through her hair, nervously. “There’s no telling what I would have done if he would’ve followed his instincts and actually stopped.

“You need to tell Zachary. I know you don’t want to worry him, but, Marley, if it’s getting that bad maybe you should see a doctor.”

“Why, so they can tell me it’s postpartum depression and drug me? No way!” Marley took a breath, trying to control her rising temper. It was also something she was having a problem with lately.

Lifting Demetri to her shoulder, she began to gently pat his back. “Kylie, promise me you’re not going to tell Zachary. I don’t want to concern him. He has so much on his mind lately with the pack. The last thing he needs to worry about is the sanity of his wife.”

“I told you this before, and I’ll tell you again. As long as you’re acting sane in my book, my lips are sealed. If I feel you’re not safe or something is wrong I’m going to my brother, my leader. I shouldn’t be hiding this from him to begin with, but you’re my best friend. I’ll keep your secret as long as I can.”

A ragged breath broke through her lips. “Thank you, Kylie, that’s all I can ask.”

While Marley began feeding her son again the thoughts about what could possibly be happening drifted along the lines of crazy and impossible. Things began to enter her mind that she didn’t even want

to consider. It was bad enough that these new feelings left her questioning her sanity, but if her skin had actually moved, what did that mean?

Soon Demetri drifted to sleep in her arms, and Kylie took him, placing him in the crib. They both tip-toed out of the room, bringing the voice monitor with them.

"I should get ready for dinner." Marley stretched her stiff limbs, feeling them pull. Every inch of her body ached from the tension of their earlier scare.

"Let me take the monitor while you get showered and changed. We'll talk more, later. Zachary has pack business, and we'll have privacy since he makes me stay here with both of you. The house will be empty, so we won't have to worry about someone overhearing."

Marley nodded and handed her the voice monitor. "If he wakes up come and get me."

"Will do, sister dear," Kylie purred, rolling her eyes playfully.

A smile broke across her face while she shook her head and walked in the direction of her and Zachary's room. The moment she found herself alone in the hallway, she felt a sense of mental whiplash. She couldn't help but wonder what was happening. Was she losing her mind? Or was it worse? Over and over, questions poured through until she was sure a headache was on the way. They repeated so fast Marley could hardly process what they were even saying.

The unstableness caused her to tremble in fear. Did she really want to question the truth, or had she known all along? Maybe her mind was just telling her to pay attention and focus on what she sensed was her new reality.

Flashes blinded her while an all too familiar voice echoed in her ears. Chills covered every inch of her body, tightening her flesh and permeating to the bone. If she didn't know better, she'd swear Jordan was standing behind her. No! She couldn't believe that or even think

about the last time she saw him. She'd spent months locking everything away in her mind, and locked they would stay.

Chapter 2

Marley opened her bedroom door and quickly turned, closing it. The need to rest her head against the wood and collect her thoughts was tempting, but she didn't have time. Dinner would be served soon, and all she wanted to do was to get back downstairs around her family and friends. They proved to be the perfect distraction from having to think too much on her condition.

Heading toward the restroom, she almost fell over her feet at the abruptness of her stop. The sight of Cole standing at the foot of the bed, only clad in a towel, caused her heart to beat double time. The smile that edged across his face only made things worse. It had been so long since he had joined her and Zachary in their bed.

"Cole." Marley wasn't sure what to say. What exactly was he doing here? His room wasn't but three doors down from theirs.

"Zachary seemed to think you wanted to see me, privately. Is that the case?"

The huskiness of Cole's voice tightened her stomach, causing havoc to her insides. Not to mention the water that kept catching her eye as it dripped from his blond hair down to his tanned, muscular chest. It took all of her control not to rush over there and lick it off.

"Cole..." Still the words wouldn't come to her mind. She couldn't think with him standing there looking so damn edible.

* * * *

Cole didn't give her a chance to think. Her scent told him enough. She wanted him. With Zachary's permission, this was an opportunity he couldn't pass up.

Marley haunted his dreams. Trying to find a mate proved impossible when all he could think about was his alphas. If he could have her just one more time, he was sure he could at least focus on finding someone else.

"You want me. Don't fight it, Marley." He molded her curves into his body, needing to feel what he had longed for all these months.

Nails gripped into his back. The heaviness of her breathing brushed against his cheek while he leaned down toward her lips. He had to taste her, all of her.

"I do want you, Cole. If you ask me, it's too much. It isn't right. I can't stop thinking about...I'm keeping you from your mate."

The truth settled in his heart. So, she was having the same problem as him. He knew she loved Zachary. It wasn't like she wanted to leave him, but she loved them both.

"You let me worry about my mate. Kiss me, Marley."

Green eyes looked into his, and something passed through them Cole wasn't sure of. Something was different about her, but what? Even her scent held something unfamiliar. It smelled more powerful.

Had Zachary picked up on it, he wondered.

Marley suddenly stiffened in his arms and pulled away. "I can't, Cole. You'll never find a mate if this continues. You deserve to find happiness, and I won't take that away from you."

Sorrow, emptiness, every fear he had took over. Zachary found that moment to walk in. From the look on his leader's face, Cole was sure Zach hadn't miss the devastation Marley's rejection had caused him.

"What's wrong? Zachary asked, closing the door behind him.

He should have never come back. This was going to make things worse. What had he done? Why couldn't he just stay away?

Marley wiped a tear furiously off of her cheek and walked into the restroom, locking the door behind her. Cole looked at his best friend, who was still waiting for an explanation.

“Will you please tell me what’s wrong with my wife?” Zachary’s face began to turn to solid stone before him. He knew that look. His friend was not happy.

Cole dropped his head. “She thinks she’s making things harder on me.”

“Is she?”

Looking up into the distinct eyes of his leader, he couldn’t lie. But she wasn’t entirely to blame. Marley had no control over the way her scent affected him, intoxicated him to the point of madness.

“It’s not her, it’s me. After dinner, I’m leaving. I’m sorry for upsetting your mate.” Cole walked out of the door, not once looking back. If he looked, he’d be compelled to knock on the restroom door until Marley opened it. The need to comfort her, to beg her...no, he couldn’t look back.

* * * *

The red-eyed vision that stared back at Marley only angered her more. She loved her husband, dammit! So, then why was she letting how much she cared for Cole affect her the way it was? The need to see him happy was top on her list. But why did she feel selfish enough to want to keep him away from that? She wanted him back in her and Zachary’s bed, not with another mate, another female.

A knock brought her hands to her face, wiping her eyes. It was Zachary. She already heard Cole leave. Hesitantly, she listened while he walked into his room and threw himself down on the bed. It was the squeaking that made her realize that. The fact that she could hear that far only registered as something she’d think about later.

“Marley, honey, open the door.”

She did, even though she would have preferred to spend more time alone.

“Zachary, I can explain. The last thing I wanted was to upset Cole, but I want him to be happy. He won’t be happy if we continue this.”

“It’s my fault. I sent him here. You’ve been so gloomy lately. I thought you missed him. I was just trying to cheer you up. My mistake. I didn’t think.”

Large arms embraced her, instantly filling her with Zachary’s cologne. The smell was so subtle she could barely sense it. It was always out of reach, from the first moment she met him. Just when she thought she grasped exactly what it smelled like, it was gone.

“Zachary, it’s not your fault. I should have mentioned this before, when Cole left. I like having him around too much, I guess.

“That’s not a bad thing. I like having him around, too. He keeps you occupied while I’m feasting.” Zachary said, whispering it into her ear. “That’s a plus in my book. I could taste you forever.”

Tightening settled again in Marley’s stomach. Her husband always had that effect on her. “Yes, well you know the invitation’s always open whenever you feel the need.”

“As much as I would love to right now, I can’t. The pack is gathering downstairs for dinner, and there’s some things I need to go over before you come down.”

He kissed her gently on the mouth and pulled back, looking into her eyes. “Are you feeling all right? You seem distant lately. Your thoughts, they’re not as clear as before. I’m not sure what to make of it. It doesn’t seem normal. I’ve never heard of anything like this happening before.”

Aching ran through her muscles while Marley’s body once again tensed. “I’m fine, just tired. I know nothing about how the bond works so I’m not sure. You should go. I’m going to jump in the shower and I’ll be down for dinner soon.”

With a kiss, her husband left. The need to drop to the floor in exhaustion hit her like a tidal wave. If she could make it through

dinner she could retire early and get some much needed rest. Whatever was happening to her mind was taking its toll on her body as well.

Chapter 3

While everyone finished up the last of their dinner, the fact that Cole hadn't looked at her once drove Marley crazy. She wanted to apologize. They couldn't leave on these terms. Aggravated from her tiring body and with how she handled things earlier, Marley stood from the long formal dining room table. Twenty people looked up, and every single man stood, which happened to be twelve of them.

"I'm sorry. I need some air. Zachary, I'm going for a walk in the gardens. Please excuse me for interrupting."

Zachary nodded, still standing. "I'll join you soon."

"That's not necessary. I know you have to get ready for the meeting tonight. I'll see you afterward. I won't be gone long."

Cole shifted in his standing position. When he spoke, Marley could tell he whispered, but she had no problem hearing him. "Zachary, may I walk with Marley? There are some things we need to discuss."

Both of the men's eyes came to rest on her. The sensations that took over her body made every pore on her react and come alive.

"Marley, is it all right if Cole accompanies you?" Zachary stared at her intently. The decision was ultimately being left up to her.

"Yes, I would love for him to join me."

She led the way out of the formal dining area. The tingling feeling continued to tickle her skin while she walked through the living room and onto the balcony. Cool night air brushed against her skin, causing her to shiver. The black strapless dress left her shoulders completely bare, and with her dark hair in a French twist, nothing remained to shelter her skin from the chill.

“Here, take my jacket,” Cole said, already draping it over her shoulders. The massive material engulfed her small frame leaving it to end at her knees.

“Thank you.”

They descended the steps leading to the garden area side by side. The scent of roses and gardenias floated against the breeze as Cole wrapped his arm around hers and led her to the gazebo in the middle of the garden.

Darkness weighed heavily outside, but not as heavy as it should have been for her. She couldn’t help but notice how if she wanted to she could count every line of woven wood on the furniture that filled the large resting area.

Cole seated her on the fluffy cushions of the wicker sofa while she looked around at the surrounding area. With no walls to hide them from view, she still couldn’t help but feel as though she sat in an open living room. A glass coffee table rested in front of her followed by a love seat. The gazebo was as big as her old living room in Refugio, Texas, the place she lived before Zachary came and literally swept her off her feet.

“Marley, I want you to know I’m leaving soon. The last thing I wanted to do earlier was upset you. I’m sorry.”

The light blue of Cole’s eyes tugged at her heart. God, she didn’t want him to leave. Why did this have to be so hard?

“You have no reason to be sorry, Cole. I’m the one who should apologize. I had no right to run out on you like that. My emotions have just been out of sorts lately. I’m sorry for upsetting you. Don’t get me wrong, there’s nothing more that I want than for you to stay here. But I can’t keep you from finding a mate. You deserve to be happy.”

Cole’s hands lifted quickly, but he stopped them inches from Marley’s face. Her heart hammered away at the thought that he might touch her. She wanted him to. Her mind and body screamed for her to let him.

"I know this, Marley. It's the reason I'm leaving tonight."

She watched his hands drop, along with her heart. Disappointment ate at her. Would one more time truly hurt?

Imagining Cole kissing another woman, thrusting into her while she moaned in pleasure, sickened Marley. An overpowering reaction to scream and beg him to stay caught her off guard. No, she couldn't think of that. She'd deal with the new woman when the time came. Right now she knew what she wanted. Claiming Cole one more time wouldn't hurt.

Taking a deep breath, Marley bit her lip and reached for him. Her fingers gripped into the white button up shirt and pulled him toward her.

"You can't leave, yet," Marley breathed against his full lips.

The heat from his forehead radiated against hers. He was so close, not an inch away. The need to taste him caused her to grip the shirt tighter. Blue eyes pierced hers.

"Say it, Marley. Tell me what you want."

"Make love to me, Cole, one last time."

The end of the words almost got choked in her throat while it tightened. She held in the emotions that threatened to bring tears. Everything was forgotten the moment Cole's lips crushed into hers. Her fists tightened around his shirt, and she felt the material disintegrate beneath her fingers.

Greedily, she ripped at the remaining cloth like tissue paper until he was completely shirtless. Marley couldn't quit kissing him. His taste overwhelmed her. A surge of greediness swept through her senses leaving her feeling obsessed to sample more.

Large arms pulled her into his wide chest while he lowered her to the cushions, molding his body to hers. The silk material of the dress was pulled to her hips while Cole ran his hand up her inner thigh. With the arm that rested behind her, he arched her back.

The brush of his fingers against the edge of the thin, black lace panties had her moaning into his mouth. With a quick rip, cool air rushed against her pussy, causing her to shiver.

“Are you sure you want to do this?”

The pads of his fingers massaged the outside of her folds, moving right over her clit. Marley’s hips bucked wildly.

“Yes, I’m positive.”

If he stopped now she was sure she would lose it. She felt uncontrollable with lust. A part of her mind turned wild, animalistic with wanting to take control.

* * * *

Cole’s lips trailed down Marley’s throat, taking in the scent of her skin. The overwhelming feeling to sink his teeth into her nearly made him stop. God, he wanted her with everything he had. Why was his brain screaming for him to mark her as his mate? She was already marked. He knew this and yet the wolf in him had conflicting emotions.

If he bit her it would only mean one thing, and he’d never challenge Zachary. As much as he wanted Marley, he’d never hurt his best friend or even stand a chance in a fight against him. Cole knew he could easily take out anyone else in the pack, but Zachary was a prodigy, something all his own. No one could win against him.

Wetness enveloped his fingers while he slid them down against her opening. Marley moaned, moving her stomach against his cock. With a thrust of two of his fingers, he buried them deep inside of her pussy. The pressure from her nails almost brought him to instant release.

Removing his arm from behind her back, he ripped the front of her dress open, exposing her generous breasts. The hard, pink tips caused a growl to pour out of his throat. Dream after dream he’d seen

her just as she lay now, and it didn't even come close to comparing with the beauty of the real thing.

The hardness of his cock throbbed against the material of his black slacks. Slowly, Cole worked his way down to the wetness encasing his fingers. Now that he was right where he wanted to be, he gave an upward push and felt Marley's body rock with spasms. Her scent hit him head on.

It took a moment for Cole to focus. His tongue already probed into her, drinking in her release, but he hadn't remembered getting there. Trying to clear his thoughts, it struck him just how powerful Marley's scent had become. Impossible.

* * * *

The smoothness that thrust inside of her had Marley clutching Cole's blond hair. She still couldn't see straight from her orgasm. Sensitivity covered her whole body causing her to twitch every time Cole brushed against her clit.

Light blue glowed above her while Cole lifted and looked directly at her face. She'd never seen his eyes physically glow before. Zachary's were the only ones she'd had the privilege to see illuminating in the darkness.

"Marley, there's something about your scent."

A surge of fear rushed throughout her body. No, she wouldn't believe anything was wrong with her. She shook her head and reached for him.

"Don't talk, just touch me."

Her fingers gripped the front of his pants. With a quick pull, she felt the button pop off and the zipper come down. The weight of Cole's cock spilled forward, and she instantly wrapped her hand around the width. A groan filled the emptiness of the gazebo, and she felt the moment he lost control.

He pulled off his pants and positioned himself over Marley, entering her in one swift motion. His length pushed inside of her deeply, nearly making her scream. With her legs around his waist, she urged him on, pushing him deeper.

“Fuck, Marley. Your pussy’s so tight and warm. You have no idea how good you feel.”

The hardness of her nipples slid against his chest while he thrust. A need to feel more of him pulled at her, but she wasn’t sure what exactly she needed. She just knew she needed him, all of him.

The thrusts became harder and faster. Tightness in her stomach became torturing while he rubbed against the spot deep inside of her. His arms gathered behind her knees, spreading her wide while he pushed into her. Just as Marley exploded, instinct took over and she did the one thing her mind told her to. She sunk her teeth into Cole’s shoulder.

The taste of his blood filling her mouth had her eyes to rolling back and watering at the same time. Power began to surge through her veins at a rate that made it impossible to control her breathing.

Her lips broke from his skin as he lifted up and pulled his cock out, spilling his cum across her stomach. But she couldn’t focus on the warm liquid coating her skin or even the amount of pleasure that filled Cole’s face. All she could feel was how her body thrummed with unrelenting power. Blackness dotted before her, and she suddenly disappeared from reality.

Chapter 4

Zachary and Cole loomed before her as Marley's eyes fluttered open. Glimpses of her bedroom came into focus while she looked around at her surroundings. The ache in her body made her groan as she tried to quickly sit up.

"Lay down, Marley. You need to rest," Zachary said soothingly.

Reluctantly, she obeyed. "What happened?"

Trying to clear her head, Marley rubbed her eyes. Images of her and Cole flooded her mind, making her smile. Then she remembered the bite.

"It would seem you were worn out." Her husband laughed, brushing the hair away from her face. "I knew you both would make up. So, how are you feeling?"

She turned toward Cole and looked at his concerned face. "I'm better. I feel a little tired, but other than that I'm okay."

"Are you sure?" Cole asked tensely.

He was dressed casually now. She wondered when he put clothes on. A dark blue shirt molded tightly against his chest enhancing the blue of his eyes. He wore a pair of loose fitted jeans, also a dark color. She looked back into his face.

"I'm positive. It's like Zachary said, you wore me out. It was amazing. You literally took my breath away." The joke didn't seem to relax the rigid stature of Cole's body. He stared at her for endless seconds before he seemed to calm.

"If you're okay then that's all that matters." Cole sat on the bed at her feet. "Zachary, I know everyone's waiting on us. Why don't you

go to the meeting, and I'll watch over Marley until you get back. Then I'll head out."

Her husband nodded and kissed her forehead. "Are you sure you're all right? I can cancel the meeting."

"No, I'm fine. Go. Everyone's waiting. Cole will be here if I need you. Plus, I'm sure Kylie's not far away."

"Yes, she's already fed Demetri and Aria. They're in bed, now. She told me to get her when you woke up. I'll tell her on my way to go ahead and come in."

"Already in bed! How long have I been out?"

"About an hour," Cole said, rubbing her leg through the blanket.

"An hour, shit! Yes, tell her to come in. I need to thank her for watching over Demetri for me."

Zachary laughed. "You couldn't separate her from her nephew for anything in the world. She's very attached to him. But I'll tell her. Get some rest, love. I'll see you in a few hours."

Marley and Cole watched Zachary walk out of the door. Uneasiness settled over her. What happened after she passed out? Did he sense anything when she bit him? She sure had!

"I'm going to use the restroom real quick. I won't be long," he said, standing.

Watching him walk into the adjoining room, she breathed heavily the minute he was out of sight. What in the hell was happening to her? Jesus, the power she felt was amazing, too amazing.

Her bedroom door burst open, and Kylie ran in, shutting it quickly behind her. The look of pure terror masked her features while she rushed toward the bed. Marley opened her mouth to warn her, but she wasn't quick enough.

"Give me one good reason why I shouldn't tell my brother about what's going on with you? Do you know how worried I was? Jesus, Marley! You can't continue to hide your condition from him."

Marley waved her hands around frantically, trying to cut her sister-in-law off, but it was no use. Cole stood at the bathroom door

looking at both of them. With a groan, Marley pulled the covers over her head and said every curse word she knew.

“One of you better tell me what’s going on right this minute.”

Marley pulled back the blanket just in time to see him stalking toward them. She threw an aggravated look at Kylie. The shock registering on her face said she clearly wasn’t aware they weren’t alone.

“I just meant...well, I mean, shit.” Kylie collapsed on the side of the bed.

“Kylie, I outrank you and I order you to tell me. If something is wrong with Marley, I want to know. Don’t even try to hide anything, either.”

“She’s sick,” she said, letting the words burst out.

“What do you mean, sick? Describe.” Cole turned to stare at Marley.

“I’m right here, and I’m not sick, so don’t start this conversation without me in it. The doctor says its postpartum depression, that’s all.”

“Marley, we both know it has to be something more than what that quack says. I don’t even know why you continue to go to him.”

“Cole.” Kylie turned toward him.

“Don’t, Kylie,” Marley warned. The mix of panic and anger began rushing through her. If Cole knew, there was a chance he would tell Zachary, and she didn’t want that.

“I have to. You heard him. He ordered me to tell him what’s wrong with you.”

“I said don’t!” Marley yelled, rising to her knees on the bed. The insect feeling began crawling over her skin as anger took a prominent role. Her whole body started shaking from the rage that began to consume her. Every second that went by made her emotions flare.

“Calm down, Marley. Just lay down and you can tell me yourself. How about that? Will that be all right?” Cole’s calm voice made her anger recede.

Nodding, Marley lay down on the bed and looked up at him. How much could she tell him and get away with? The less he knew the better. If he worried anymore than he needed to then he might not leave to look for a mate. She wasn't about to be the cause of his unhappiness.

"It's only an emotional thing, really. I've been getting upset rather easily."

"And the cravings," Kylie led on.

Marley narrowed her eyes, snapping them in Kylie's direction. Her friend's eyes grew big as she must have realized Marley had some sort of plan.

"What cravings?" Cole asked, looking back between the two women.

"The doctor said my cravings for meat were just an effect left over from pregnancy, nothing more. I told you, Kylie just overreacted. Everything is fine, Cole. I promise."

He remained quiet for so long Marley wasn't sure what to think. Did he believe her? Shit, he better, for all of their sakes.

"You promise if anything happens, you'll call me. I don't care if it is just a craving. I want to know everything."

"I promise on one condition." Marley grabbed his hand, letting it engulf hers.

His eyes narrowed, skeptically. "What condition?"

"You can't tell Zachary. He has so much to worry about. I don't want him to be distracted because his wife has a bad case of the baby blues, all right?"

Cole turned toward Kylie and then back to her. "I promise, but the moment you break yours, I'll break mine. Deal?"

"Deal," Marley sighed in relief.

Although she knew it was best for Zachary not to worry it still didn't stop her from feeling guilty. She hated that not only was she having to hide things from him, but now so were the people closest to him.

Chapter 5

Marley stood watching out of the window in the darkness of her bedroom. The white silk nightgown brushed against her legs while she shifted against the aching in her chest. She wouldn't go down, she couldn't. It was best if everyone remained thinking she was fast asleep.

Zachary stood in the front of the house with Cole outside of one of the SUVs. The two pack members who planned on accompanying him sat inside waiting for the man they swore to protect. At the laughing that came from the two men who were closest to her heart, Marley's hand pressed against the window.

"Don't go, Cole. Just turn around and come back upstairs."

The breath caught in her throat as Cole stopped what he was saying and looked toward the window. It was as though the world stopped spinning. Time stood frozen as their gazes locked. Startled, she ran and jumped in bed praying that he hadn't truly seen her through the dark glass. It wasn't minutes later her door opened.

"Marley, honey, I know you're awake. Cole saw you standing at the window. How are you feeling? He was worried."

Great. So much for hoping. "Fine. I just woke up and wondered what happened to everyone."

Sitting up in bed, Marley watched her husband remove all of his clothing but his boxers. Seeing the muscles flex as he moved, her whole body ignited with a raging heat. An intense need took over her thoughts and body, increasing her temperature with every second. Throwing back the covers, she ran to him, jumping into his arms.

“Whoa, explain to me what I did to deserve this?” Zachary laughed.

Marley fixed the long nightgown to bunch around her hips while she tightened her legs around his waist. “I love you. So, tell me you love me back and make passionate love to me all night long.”

He pulled back, looking at her, concerned. “I’m not sure that’s a good idea after what happened earlier. Don’t you think maybe we should wait until tomorrow, after Dr. Jacoby visits?”

A groan poured out of her mouth. “Please tell me you didn’t call him. Zachary, I’m fine. I promise you, nothing’s wrong with me. Kylie’s right. He’s a quack.”

Her husband walked to the bed, gently laying her down. “Until I hear it from a licensed professional, I think we should take it slow. Quack or not.”

“So, let’s take it slow,” Marley said, pulling at him.

His rich laughter filled the bedroom. “That’s not what I meant, and you know it. You need to relax tonight. We already made love twice this morning. Maybe you just overdid it with Cole. Rest tonight and if you’re better tomorrow, we’ll proceed.”

Letting out another groan, Marley watched him walk toward the restroom. When the sound of the water started, she gave the bed a kick. Her body needed release now, dammit! She wasn’t sure why this was happening lately, but she couldn’t get enough. Nothing about what transpired between her and Cole caused the fainting spell. It was the power from the blood that had done it.

Once blood entered her mind, her body acted automatically. She glided gently out of bed and took off at a full sprint toward the kitchen. The pace was so fast she practically flew down the stairs. Every muscle in her body flexed while she pushed herself harder, and still it wasn’t enough. It took her only a matter of seconds to cover over ten thousand square feet.

Marley didn’t even feel winded as she gracefully stopped in front of one of the many refrigerators. Running actually made her feel

better. She felt jumpy, happy. Her mind processed all the new changes, but what it pointed to she didn't want to even consider.

The steaks were packaged individually, and she grabbed one, opening the paper expertly. This was starting to become an every night routine with her, so she had plenty of experience lately. Her teeth tore into the raw meat as she savored the flavor of the blood. While her brain screamed for more, she tried her hardest not to get any on the white gown, but soon she became lost.

With her fingers gripping into the meat, she ravaged the steak. Without thinking, she grabbed another one, repeating the act. It wasn't until she was on her third one that she noticed the light on. She turned, covered from her mouth to her stomach in blood. The white nightgown stuck to her breasts while she panted for breath.

The look on Zachary's face nearly made her cry. Fear and shock poured over every single one of his features.

"I can explain," she said, dropping the remaining steak at her feet.

"Explain?" She watched the tension ease from his body. "Marley, you told me about this weeks ago, but I didn't know you still had the cravings. The doctor said it was normal to want things afterward. Why didn't you wait for me? I would have joined you."

Taken aback, she watched him walk over and hand her another package. Narrowing his eyes, he looked at her curiously. She followed his lead and unwrapped the paper.

"Zachary, this isn't a normal thing for people crave."

The curiosity left his features and he laughed. "Sure it is. Most humans love their steak rare. You can't get anymore rare than this."

She let his comment go. The last thing he needed to know was it was more the combination of the way the blood tasted while she felt the meat tear between her teeth. As long as he thought it was normal then she would agree.

"You know, I think we should take Demetri down to Texas in the next few months to meet his grandparents. What do you think?"

Marley nearly choked from alarm. Was he serious? Leave the grounds and face the chance of running into danger with their son? He might believe everything was fine, but she wasn't so sure.

"Can't they just come to us? I really don't feel like driving that far with Demetri. I'd feel safer if we stayed here with the pack. At least until he's older."

After a few moments, he nodded. "You're right. I'll buy the tickets first thing in the morning. Now, let's get you in the shower before someone sees you and thinks you've had some sort of accident."

She followed him up the stairs and into their restroom. Letting the bloody nightgown drop to the floor, Marley shivered at the tingling that prickled her skin. It proved impossible to fight the lust raging through her. Watching Zachary's back flex as he turned the nozzles stirred something uncontrollable deep within her. She was directly behind him before she realized how she got there. The action scared her enough to give her pause. It also gave Zachary time to turn around.

"Marley, I didn't hear you. How did you get over here so fast?"

"Touch me, Zachary. Make love to me. We'll go slowly, I promise." She grabbed his hand, bringing it to cup her breast. The pressure of him trying to pull back didn't budge her hold on him. She smiled, raising her eyebrow as he tested her strength.

"You know you want to make love, Zachary. Touch me."

The look of amazement crossed his face. Suddenly, she realized what she was doing. Shocked, she quickly let go, causing him to fall back into the shower from the amount of strength he had been pulling against her.

"Shit, are you okay?" She quickly ran to him.

Water beat over his head while he lay at the bottom of the marble shower staring up at her in awe. The fear she felt left her scrambling for something to say. What had she done? There was no way she

could hide the truth from him now. Why was she acting like this? She didn't even seem like herself anymore.

For what seemed like eternity, she watched her husband's expressions change. She could see him holding some internal battle deep within. Marley wished, more than anything, that she could read Zachary's mind. Slowly, his eyes lifted to hers.

"I knew it all along. From the moment I caught your scent, I knew you smelled of wolf. But you don't shift. You're human. How is that possible?" The water continued to run down his face while he stared at her confused. When his eyes grew big, her heart rate soared. "It has to be in your blood. One of your ancestors had to have carried the disease. It's the only thing that explains what's happening." Slowly, he stood as if in a daze.

Jordan's words pushed back into her head. Should she tell him? It couldn't hurt anything now, but how would it affect pack business? She was completely torn. For so long she kept her secret hidden and with one stupid uncontrollable stunt, her husband knew.

"Zachary, Jordan said I held lycanthropy in my veins. I didn't believe him, but now I'm not so sure. Something is happening, I can feel it." She paused, trying to think of the best way to describe what was occurring. Lying hadn't gotten her anywhere. If anything, she was getting worse, and he'd eventually find out if what she suspected proved to be true.

"When we saw that figure in the forest, I thought you were going to stop. You have no idea what came over me when I thought Demetri might be in danger. It was like bugs crawled on my skin. It felt like things were happening inside of me."

Zachary's head shook back and forth. "No, that doesn't sound right." He remained quiet for a few minutes and then his eyes grew round, again. "Oh, God, Marley, what have I done? Your pregnancy! You and Demetri shared blood, and he carries mine. I did this."

His palm rested against the top of his forehead as he went on. She could tell his mind was racing, trying to process everything. "We

won't be able to have any more children. I refuse to lose you like my father lost my mother. Yes, he got remarried and found another mate to bring Kylie and Henry into our family, but I won't lose you. I can't!"

Marley reached over pulling Zachary's arm until he was close enough to where she could bury her fingers in his hair. She hadn't expected him to blame himself. The fact the he was getting so upset was only making it harder for her to cope with what was happening. Not only was she going to literally change form, but no more children. It was true female wolves had a hard time carrying full term. The toll it took on their body and the baby usually ended up with one or the other not making it, but to never have any more kids? She wasn't sure she liked that. Zachary's head snapping up brought her attention back to him.

"The full moon is days away. Do you feel it?"

Did she feel it? Of course she did! It was probably the reason she was acting so strangely. "Yes," she whispered.

"Fuck! Marley, I'm so sorry." His wet arms engulfed her as he pulled her nude body into his chest. Never would she want to see him react this strongly to anything she told him. It was the main reason why she kept it from him to begin with.

"I'm not sorry. We have Demetri. I don't regret that, Zachary. If he's the reason my lycanthropy was triggered, I wouldn't trade it for the world."

"I don't regret Demetri. That's not what I meant. You're just going to go through so much pain soon, and I wish you didn't have to experience it. Marley, you *will* eventually shift. With everything you've been going through, I can't believe I didn't notice the signs before. I feel completely stupid. But we still should have time. The effects are pretty slow now, aren't they?"

Marley kept quiet and grabbed the shampoo, pouring it into her hair and lathering. The heaviness of their silence could have caused her to drown.

“I’m waiting, Marley. You *will* answer the question. I don’t know if you’ve noticed, but I am your alpha and you’re a werewolf. Don’t make me order you.”

Her jaw dropped while she spun to face him. “Order me! Have you lost your mind? I should kick your ass for that comment. If you must know, this has been going on for a while. You’ve just had so many things on your mind. I didn’t want to worry you.”

“Explain what’s been going on and for how long.”

Damn this was going to be a long night. She kept silent while she rinsed the shampoo out and washed off her body. Only then did she turn her focus back to him.

“I’m getting out, and if you want to listen, we can do it in bed. This is going to take a while.”

He didn’t argue. Silently, he followed her out and they both got dressed. When she got in bed, he finally opened his mouth.

Chapter 6

“Proceed, my dear. I’m dying to find out how long I have until I watch the hardest thing I will ever have to witness you go through.”

The tone of his voice sent chills down her spine. Surely, it couldn’t be worse than child birth with no medication. That had been the most pain she thought anyone could experience. One she didn’t think she wanted to go through so soon, not without an epidural, anyway.

“You know I’ve had the cravings since I was pregnant with Demetri, but they stopped after I had him, until two months ago.”

“Yes, that’s when we took you to the doctor. How often have you been eating the meat since then? Once a week, less than that?”

Heaviness settled into her stomach. Well, this was it. There was no turning back after she opened her mouth. God, she really hoped she wouldn’t come to regret this.

“Every night, sometimes twice a night.”

“No...impossible.” Zachary shook his head, stunned.

“And the mood swings. I don’t think they’re postpartum depression, Zachary. I have so much anger that I feel like I’m going to go crazy with it. It’s not normal. Maybe some of it might have something to do with hormones, but not all of what’s happening. And the twisting I can feel in my body when the anger becomes unbearable feels like it’s going to break me to pieces. I’m constantly aching.”

“Stop, Marley.” Zachary stared down at the comforter. Slowly, he looked back up at her. “I’m not even sure you’ll make it past this full

moon. Jesus,” he whispered. “Why didn’t you tell me? I could have helped you, been there, something.”

“You have been there for me.”

Zachary glared at her. “That’s not what I mean, Marley. I’m your husband. You have to let me be one. If you continue to keep things from me, then how am I supposed to take care of you? That’s what husbands do.”

Seeing him upset, Marley eased her arms around his neck. “I won’t keep anything from you anymore. I promise. But can you tell me one thing?”

“What, love?” He laid her down next to him and cradled her in his arms. She let his smell sweep over her, relaxing her body to fit perfectly against his.

“Why am I so aroused? I almost can’t control it.”

Zachary laughed. “How could I forget? You were about ready to ravage me. It happens before a full moon, but you learn to control the urges. Just to be safe, I think we should satisfy yours, slowly, of course.”

A smile pulled at her lips. “Oh yes, of course. We shall go as slow as you want. Let’s just go, if you know what I mean.”

* * * *

Zachary could feel the impatience in Marley. He was angry at himself for not seeing it before. The lycanthropy was staring him in the face and he wouldn’t let himself believe it. Jordan had even acknowledged it. Jesus! His wife was a werewolf. He never thought he’d see the day.

Marley’s kicked off their covers, and her scent poured over him. His lips instantly found hers in a crushing blow. He’d been fighting it all day, but not anymore. She wasn’t frail, not even close. The force he used to try moving his hand earlier hadn’t even caused her to break a sweat. She was possibly even stronger than him, which was

ridiculous but true. She hadn't even shifted, yet there was no denying how hard he had tried to break her hold.

A moan brought him back to reality. Nails bit into his back while he forced Marley on her back. She put up a small fight, obviously not sure what she wanted. Her body wrapped around him, clinging tightly.

Tracing her folds, wetness greeted him. His fingertips teased her, pushing into her opening only a fraction while he rubbed his thumb across her clit.

"No teasing, Zachary. That's not nice."

He plunged two of his fingers inside of her, hitting her G-spot at the depth. "Is that better? If you wanted it deep, all you had to do was ask."

"Yes," she breathed heavily. "More."

"More, what? Tell me, Marley."

"Go faster."

Zachary slid his arm around her lower back, arching it while he pushed his fingers deep and fast like she wanted. He drank in her moans, which quickly turned into screams inside of his mouth as she tightened around him. Spasms rocked her body, and he quickly moved down to take in her release.

The scent that greeted him nearly knocked him out. Since the morning, the strength had increased, double. It was the strongest aphrodisiac, the most enticing smell he'd ever come across. He growled, burying face into her pussy.

Marley's taste froze his senses, almost making him lose his breath. If she hadn't displayed her strength earlier, then he would have known the moment he tasted her. It was like nothing he'd ever come across before. There were still traces of her, yet they were multiplied. As realization dawned, he could feel his eyes open wide. She tasted of an alpha. The shock hit him square to his toes.

* * * *

The probing of Zachary's tongue was driving her crazy. "Zachary, enough. Make love to me. I can't take it anymore."

His tongue buried farther, making her moan deep in her throat. The insides of her stomach twisted painfully. Another orgasm was coming. She could feel it building.

"Zachary, please."

Slowly, he lifted, revealing blue-green eyes that burned brightly. The color was glowing even in the light. She'd only seen it do that once, and she'd never forget that day. It was the moment he came out of the forest in North Carolina when Jordan fled the car. Cole's eyes had done the same thing after he tasted her, too.

"You want me to make love to you, Marley?"

"Yes," she whispered.

He moved up her body, trailing kisses along her stomach and between her breasts. Heat encased her nipple as he sucked one of them into his mouth. She forgot all about his glowing eyes and drifted into the heavenly sensation.

"Now," she pleaded.

Thickness pushed against her opening while his cock slid inside. Just at the feeling of how completely he filled her, her eyes rolled back in pleasure.

"Is this what you wanted?"

"Yes." She moaned, arching her back to bring him deeper.

The thrusts began to increase in pace once Zachary filled her. He went faster and harder than he'd ever been with her before. Marley could feel her stomach doing weird things as her orgasm approached. The twisting feeling was back and continued to get worse. She needed more control.

With a push from her leg, she flipped her and Zachary over. The shock filling his face only lasted for a moment. When she began to ride his cock, the tense muscles relaxed.

Marley kept a fast but steady rhythm. Over and over, she caressed her G-spot with Zachary's tip until she was sure she was going to explode. Opening her eyes, she looked down into his face. The pleasure lining his features was enough to bring her over the edge into ecstasy. The moment she finished, he lifted her off, shooting his cum all across his stomach.

They both breathed heavily while they fought for air. He stood, staring down at her. "Tomorrow, we test you just like we would any other new werewolf. Your strength is amazing. We'll see just how amazing in the morning." With that said he walked into the restroom. Marley sat staring at the door long after he turned the water on. Tests? Why didn't she have a good feeling about this?

Chapter 7

The dark scenery passed as Cole watched from the back passenger window of the SUV. But he couldn't focus on anything besides Marley. Sighing, he lay down on the seat, staring at the ceiling. Her scent, her taste, everything about her consumed him. Not to mention her being sick worried him to death.

The last thing he wanted to do was leave her, but he'd been ordered to find a mate, and find a mate he would. Even if finding her caused him to settle for someone he originally would not have chosen. All he wanted was to get back to Marley.

The tightness in his shoulder made his eyebrows crease. The shirt stretched easily in his hand while he pulled it over to the side to get a view of Marley's tiny teeth marks. Something about her biting him caused his instant release. With him being a werewolf, he loved to be bitten by lovers, but he hadn't taken Marley for the biting type. She'd never done it in all of the times they'd been together.

Smiling, he ran his fingertip over the indentions. He hadn't really paid attention to it before. Things happened so fast. He had never felt fear grip him so dramatically as it did the second Marley had slipped into unconsciousness. He dressed them both faster than he thought possible and rushed for Zachary. Both of their concerns would have placed Marley in a hospital if not for Kylie convincing them otherwise.

Cole closed his eyes, continuing to caress the bite marks repeatedly. Suddenly, he could feel his body slipping into the stage between unconsciousness and being awake. Zachary taught him to go here whenever he wanted to project. He figured now was the perfect

time to check on Marley. At least he could see if she was all right without her knowing.

Picturing the image of her face, the pull on the middle of his stomach began to lift him upward. He could see his physical body still lying there beneath him. With a smile, he felt himself pulled into her bedroom almost instantly.

The darkness surrounded the room, but he could see perfectly. Her body lay there so peacefully, so beautiful. He loomed above her, brushing his hand along her cheek.

“Do you know I’ve loved you from the moment I saw you step around Zachary at the grocery store? You looked so beautiful when you looked up at me, shocked. You literally took my breath away.”

Her body stirred beneath his touch, although he was positive she couldn’t hear him. Leaning closer to her face, he studied her features. Every curve, every definition, he already knew by heart, but he could look at her forever.

“I was wondering when you would pay me a visit. Although, I expected you would be searching for you mate.”

Cole turned around to see her walking across the room in a red silk nightgown. But the closer he looked he realized she wasn’t walking at all. She floated above the floor, the gown billowing and swaying around her with every move of her hips.

“What are you doing here? How often do you project?” Cole asked, shocked.

“I project almost every time I fall asleep. It’s something I can’t control lately. Zachary is usually here with me, but he was pretty tired tonight, so I don’t think he’ll be joining us.”

“Are you all right? I was worried. I’m sorry I couldn’t stay away. The need to see you drove me crazy. I just had to check to make sure you were okay.”

She floated before him. He looked down into her face, feeling a pull to embrace her in his arms. Her smile was dazzling. The breath completely left him.

"I'm fine, as you can see. Actually, I feel better than fine. I'm outstanding." He watched her smile slowly fade away. "Cole, why aren't you looking for a mate? Would you like me to help you?"

A sigh left his lips. Why was everyone worried about him finding a mate? Couldn't he just stay there with them? Yes, he wanted children, but it wasn't a priority on his list. He still had plenty of time.

"No, Marley. I don't need help."

Her face studied his until he felt his chest ache. The need to leave and to stay tore at him. He wanted to be here with her, but not if all she wanted to do was pawn him off on someone else.

"You seem upset." She wrapped her arms around his waist, and it took everything he had to hold in a groan from her firm breasts pushing against him. His hands hovered midair. Would touching her be his undoing? The control he had over body slipped with every second that passed. Giving in, he felt his fingers grip into the soft flesh of her back.

"I was just worried. I'm not upset. Why don't you try to go back to sleep, Marley. If you want, I'll watch over you tonight."

Her eyes looked up into his, and a smile transformed her face. The hardness of his cock almost made him double over.

"There are better things than sleep. We could continue where we left off."

Cole could feel himself start to shake. Nothing more would make him happier than to pleasure Marley's body, but not if it endangered her.

"You're sick."

"I am not sick! I wish people would stop saying that."

She jerked back and her form began fading. Her connection grew weak with the anger she experienced. Panic left him pausing for words to say.

"All right, you're not sick. Don't leave me, Marley. Please, don't leave."

"No, Cole I'm serious, I'm not sick. I'm..." She trailed off.

“If you say you’re not sick, I believe you. Just come back to me.”

He reached for her, pulling her close. The solidness of her body amazed him. The fading stopped, and she was as human as if they were truly together.

“Let me please you, just one more time.”

Marley laughed. “Didn’t we say that last time? Seriously, I’m not myself right now, Cole. We shouldn’t do this. You need to experience this with your mate. Not with me.”

The words tore at Cole’s heart. Dammit! He wanted *her* as his mate. No one else would do. Why did everything have to be so complicated?

“One more time, Marley, and I swear I’ll really look for someone.”

As he studied her face, he noticed her eyes narrowed at him. “All right. One more time and then you look for a mate,” she whispered.

Cole’s lips lowered to hers, kissing her passionately. The taste that filled his mouth swamped his senses. He originally planned on taking things slow, but something inside of him broke, pulling all of his emotions to the surface.

Their mouths grew more desperate with a need neither one of them seemed to be able to control. Marley ripped his clothes off easily beneath her fingers. Shocked, he paused, looking down at her. The vibrant green of her eyes was glowing. Something told him he should stop, but he couldn’t. He wanted her more than ever.

Pulling at the silk of her gown, he felt it fall apart in his hand. His lips connected with her nipple, causing her to cry out. Biting down gently, he pulled it between his teeth. A moan accompanying her hand gripping into his hair only encouraged him and drove him faster.

His fingers buried deep inside of her pussy, exploring and caressing every inch he could touch. Spasms rocked her body, throwing off waves of her scent. Floored, Cole went crazy. Every thought vanished from his mind except the smell of her essence.

* * * *

The wild tendencies running through Marley ruled her actions. She could feel herself tightening around Cole's fingers and heard him growl just as he buried himself between her thighs. His eyes had already been glowing when he lowered himself. The meaning of why the men's eyes illuminated baffled her. It only seemed to happen when their emotions peaked.

Cole's tongue buried deep inside of her while his hands pinned her wrists from moving. Arching her back against the weightless air, Marley let him feast, basking in the bliss. The grip tightened around her wrists as Cole came up panting heavily.

"Marley, I'm telling you, something is going on with your scent. The power."

Cutting him off, Marley grabbed around the back of his neck, pulling him up and crushing her lips to his. If they began speaking, their moment would be ruined. Too much new information had been discovered since she last saw him.

The length of Cole's cock entered her swiftly, causing her to scream into his mouth. The thrusts were just as fast. He pounded into her mercilessly, so unlike what she was used to with him. He always made it clear to her on how fragile he viewed her. Now, it was like he wasn't even the same person, but she couldn't help but love the way he wasn't holding back.

"That's right, Cole. Show me how much you want me."

He groaned, pushing his lips back into hers. The taste of their blood washed over Marley's tongue, and she knew it wasn't hers that ignited her adrenaline. She'd already tasted Cole's blood before, and, now, with the tease she just sampled, she wanted more.

Grabbing his hair, she pulled his head back, exposing his neck, but it wasn't the neck she wanted. The need to feel meat beneath her teeth ruled her. Spotting the junction between his neck and shoulder,

she watched his muscles flex. Without thought, she buried her teeth into him.

Blood flooded her mouth, bringing them into instant orgasm. She could feel the warmth of his cum covering her stomach and knew she should stop, but it almost proved impossible. It took everything she had to break the suction of her mouth.

Breathing heavily, she pulled back, feeling the blood trailing down her chin. Damn, she bit him deep this time.

“Cole, I’m sorry. Did I hurt you?”

He laughed huskily. “Are you kidding me? That was amazing. You sure left me with something to remember you by, didn’t you?”

The effects of the blood thrummed through her body. She needed to wake up and try running or else she felt sure she’d combust. Power screamed inside of her, searching desperately for release.

“Cole, I have to go.”

She didn’t wait for an answer as she began to fade. It was only a matter of time before he found out what she was, anyway. What would he think? How would he react?

The snap vibrated through her body while she entered her true form. Marley didn’t waste any time or even bother changing. She was halfway through the hallway before thoughts would even catalog to her brain. She noticed at the speed at which she moved that her body didn’t register in the mirror she passed at the bottom of the stairs.

With ease, she paused long enough to make it through the front door without breaking it to pieces and then headed straight for what she feared the most—the forest.

Chapter 8

The light barely broke over the surface of the horizon when the outline of trees stood before her. The woods completely surrounding their estate loomed ahead, and she ignored the prickling feeling that covered her body. Turning to look back toward the house, she decided what she needed to do. She would run completely around the circle. That way, she'd have a view of the estate at all times.

Tearing the long, red silk nightgown off at her knees she gave herself room to maneuver. She wasn't ready to see if wiping out across the grass going lord-knew-how-fast would cause her a critical injury. Best play it safe for now.

Marley felt her muscles flex in her legs while she crouched down, preparing to run. The air settled into her lungs, feeding her adrenaline, and without hesitation, she surged into the damp morning air.

Seconds later, she was at the back of the estate, flying so fast her eyes burned when she saw it. A ghostly apparition walked through the trees away from the estate. Stunned from the sudden appearance, she skidded to a stop.

"Cole," Marley called, walking toward the figure as it began to disappear through the trees. She was really going to have to have a talk with Cole about watching over her. This was becoming ridiculous.

"Cole, wait up."

Marley edged through the trees cautiously. She wasn't stupid enough to go bursting through there, right into the arms of some fellow follower of Jordan's. Zachary might believe no one remained, but she wasn't so sure.

“Cole, dammit, if you don’t stop, you’re going to piss me off. This is as far as I’m going, so either come out or you can stay in there by yourself!”

Seconds flew by and nothing happened. The moment she started to leave movement caught her attention out of the corner of her eye. Without hesitation, Marley dropped to the ground. After Jordan plowed into her from the side so long ago, she wasn’t making the same mistake again.

A dark red wolf growled not two feet away. Slowly, she edged back, trying not to make any sudden movements. The task was proving impossible due to her own body’s reactions. The need to protect the estate pushed every fear from her mind.

Pains began shooting through her, enhancing the twisting feeling in her stomach. The red wolf took a step closer, and Marley pressed her palm against her abdomen, taking a step to the side also. Slowly, they began to circle each other, and she had no doubt she’d probably end up dying. She could run, but that would lead the wolf right to the estate.

The apparition appeared at the corner of her vision almost distracting her, but she refused to look in that direction. If she did, it would be over. The wolf would rip her apart before she got a chance to move.

A crippling pain brought Marley to her knees. The scream was automatic. She waited for an attack, but one never came. Looking up, the wolf was gone. Screams came back to back while the pain twisted insufferably.

While she dug her fingers deep into the dirt, Marley tried to think of a distraction. She began hitting the ground as hard as she could, welcoming the small pain. Compared to what her body was going through, it didn’t even faze her. Fire poured through every inch of every limb.

“Zachary!”

She needed help. She needed anything besides the urge to rip her own skin apart. Her husband was right. The pain went beyond anything she'd ever felt before. "Zachary!" Marley repeatedly screamed.

Not three minutes had gone by, but Marley was sure two eternities already passed. Her body collapsed to the ground pulling itself into a fetal position. The sound of one of her ribs cracking allowed her to let out the most piecing, agonizing scream she could manage. Then her world went black.

* * * *

Zachary awoke covered in sweat. Something was wrong, he could feel it. Aches covered every muscle in his body, and it wasn't sickness. Werewolves didn't get sick.

"Marley?"

Confused, he got out of bed. He ran, bursting through the door to Demetri's room. Kylie was feeding the baby, looking at him in alarm.

"Zachary, what's wrong? You can't just burst in here. Do you know how bad you scared me? Where's Marley?"

Tightening collected in his chest. "You mean you haven't seen her this morning?"

"No, Zachary. I heard the baby crying and made him a bottle. I figured she was still sleeping."

A scream so faint he could barely hear it had his head snapping toward Demetri's window. He knew beyond a doubt it was Marley's voice.

"Call my men. Tell them Marley's somewhere behind the house. You do not leave Demetri for a second. That's an order, Kylie."

Zachary didn't even bother to go downstairs. He opened Demetri's second story window and dropped down to the ground. Silence eerily greeted him. He began running to the forest aligning the back of the house.

Marley's scent crashed into him, and he took off, running faster to find it. Something moved out of the corner of his eye, and he stopped abruptly. The apparition he heard so much about danced along the edge of the trees. As hard as he could, he focused on Marley's scent, trying to ignore the translucent figure. He wasn't going to count on it being Cole. It was in the opposite direction Marley's scent was taking him.

A small color of red caught his attention on the ground just on the outskirts of the trees. Feeling his heart drop, he took off toward the color. The smell of his pack in the distance hardly registered as Marley's tiny, curled body came directly into view. Fear penetrated his mind while he bent down toward her.

"Marley, love." The sound of his voice breaking made the tears in his eyes cloud more of his vision.

"Marley, what happened to you?"

Zachary slid his arms under her head and knees and prepared to lift her, but he didn't even get her off the ground. Her screams echoed through the trees. His whole body froze in terror at what might be wrong with her.

"Don't move me!" she sobbed.

"Honey, talk to me. Are you hurt? What's wrong? Why are you out here in the forest?" A million thoughts were going through his mind. He was popping out questions—too many questions. The quickness of his heart rate decreased as he tried to calm himself.

A shuddering breath left her lips while she clawed at the ground with her nails. "I was running. I saw...ghost, but it's not Cole."

Another scream came from her mouth while she kicked her legs out only to curl them back into a ball.

"A red wolf...I had to protect Demetri, but the pain."

"Pain?" He took a good look at her body. She was completely covered in sweat, but he didn't smell blood. Knowing she wasn't physically harmed, the realization dawned on him. "Shit, you're changing already?"

Zachary ran his hands down her body. As his fingers traced over her ribs, she screamed, causing him to flinch. A handful of wolves and men stood waiting for his commands.

“I want every inch of these woods searched. It seems we’re not alone. We’re looking for a red wolf and an apparition that looks like a ghost. The apparition you won’t be able to touch, but bring the wolf to me.” Zachary looked at all of them, making sure they knew he meant business.

“Marley, this is going to hurt worse than anything you’ve ever felt, but I’m going to have to lift you to carry you inside.”

A growl actually burst past Marley’s lips. Zachary watched in horror as her green eyes began to glow brightly. Every hope he harbored, that maybe his wife had more time, vanished with her appearance. She wasn’t any more human than he. All that was left for her to do was shift, and that would be here sooner than he wanted to think about.

“I will not be carried yet.” The sound of her voice was so much stronger than her previous state. “I think it’s going away. Just give me time.”

Another cry passed from her throat while her nails formed into claws. The snapping sound of the bones in her fingers made Zachary wince.

“Fuck!” Marley screamed, pushing herself to her feet. She clutched desperately to her ribcage while she began to walk toward the estate. Zachary stared at her, amazed. With her eyes glowing and her hands protruding razor sharp claws, she looked unnerving.

Like a flash of lightening, she was gone. The quickness with which she took off made him trip over his own feet. Even he couldn’t run that fast. What in the hell was his wife turning into?

Chapter 9

Nausea threatened Marley as she crawled into the shower. Her whole body felt contorted. It took everything she had to make it inside. The first thing she did was check on Demetri. She would never forget the expression Kylie gave her. Pure horror filled her face while she clutched to Demetri and Aria almost as if Marley was a threat.

The warm water soothed the tightness covering her. Zachary barreled through the door, running to the shower.

“Marley, dammit, why didn’t you let me help you? Did you know sometimes you can be so damn stubborn? Here, let me take off your wet nightgown.”

“Seriously, Zachary? Just tear the damn thing off. I would, but I’d probably take out of chunk of my skin with these claws. It’s going away. The pain has already subsided increasingly.”

The red silk tore away from her body gently. He was trying to be careful. At the pop inside of her, Marley sucked in a deep breath. Her rib fixing itself left her laughing.

“What the hell was that?” Zachary held his hands completely still over her, looking almost afraid to move.

“That would be my ribs popping back into place.”

Marley shifted slightly to test the pain and then pulled herself to her feet. She felt fine now. Like nothing had ever happened to begin with. Trying to focus on the events with the wolf, she pushed the memories of the pain from her mind. She didn’t want to think about the way her hands had just looked or the excruciating way her insides turned in her stomach. Thank God she projected most of the night

instead of sleeping. She would have nightmares for sure if that was the case.

“As I was saying in the forest, I saw the apparition, but I don’t think its Cole. This figure was trying to lure me to go in. Like I’m stupid enough to do that,” Marley snorted. “Anyway, I started telling it I wasn’t going any farther. That’s when a damn red wolf tried to knock me down, but I wasn’t falling for that trick again. I ducked and it sailed right over me. We were circling each other,”

“Wait, you what?” He stood there looking astounded. The slight part of his full lips made her proceed cautiously. The last thing she wanted to do was upset him further.

“We were circling each other. I couldn’t let it get to the house, Zachary.”

“Wait, wait, wait. You’re telling me you were going to try to take on a wolf. Marley, have you lost your mind? It would have slaughtered you! Tell me again, what in the hell you were doing outside at the crack of dawn?”

Twisting her mouth at his rising temper, Marley lathered her body with soap. “I was running. I awoke in a ball of energy. What can I say? Plus, I could have possibly kicked that wolf’s ass. If it wouldn’t have been for my own wolf trying to come out then it might have been possible. I guess now we’ll never know.”

A laugh made her look up. Zachary stood there shaking his head. “You cannot be serious, Marley. Jesus! You know what? We’re going to find out just how powerful you are. Hurry up, get out and get dressed. I’m going to show you first hand that you can’t beat a wolf in human form. It’s impossible.”

Marley smiled. “Great! I need all the practice I can get. Who do I fight? Nikolas, Mark, oh, I know, Magnus.”

“No, Marley. You’re fighting me.”

The smile melted off of her face. “Well, shit.” Making sure all of the soap was gone, she turned the water off. “You’re not going to be a

sorry loser if you get beat by a girl, right? Because if that's the case, then I'm calling it off right now. I don't want to argue with you."

Fuck, she was so getting her ass whipped!

* * * *

"Cole, I hope you know what you're doing. We've been to three different places this morning, and now we're in the same town we live in, again! Do you have any idea how pissed Zach is going to be?"

Gilbert's voice barely broke through Cole's thoughts. "Probably extremely pissed, but I can't help it. I don't want to waste our time traveling around when I feel no need to look for a mate."

"What about her?" Gilbert asked, pointing to a petite blonde walking along the main street.

Cole rolled his eyes and fought not to grind his teeth. "Pull the car over," he snapped.

Not even caring about what the girl generally looked like, he got out, approaching her. Curiously, she looked up at him with big brown eyes. Her heart-shaped face was decent enough, Cole thought as he fought the need to get back in the car.

"Hello, I'm Cole. I'm sorry to stop you like this, but would you like to get dinner sometime? I know you don't know me, but I figured it wouldn't hurt to ask."

The blonde genuinely smiled at him, outstretching her hand. "I'm Josephine, Josie for short. I'd love to have dinner with you."

Cole's felt like he was going to be sick. He did not want to do this. Why couldn't she have just said no? "Great, are you free tonight? My family always has big dinners. We could kill two birds with one stone."

Her laugh grated his ears. It wasn't anything like Marley's.

"Sounds great, Cole. Here, let me give you my number. You can call me when you've chosen a time to pick me up."

Forcing a smile, he tried to look into her eyes and see the person inside. He got absolutely nothing. "Dinner's always at seven, so let's say I pick you up a little after six. I'll call to get the address later."

He left her with an extra bounce in her step. She was cute, but typically not his type. Of course, he couldn't remember what his type was anymore. Since he'd first laid eyes on Marley, every idea image of a mate went right out of the window.

"See, was that so bad? Now that the hard part is over with, we can go home," Gilbert said from the front seat.

"Yes, home." Cole smiled. There was no faking that one. Now, he could go back home where he belonged. Things were looking up.

The cell phone ringing caught him off guard. His alpha's name appeared on the outside almost as if he knew what Cole was doing.

"What's up, Zach?"

"You need to come home. Marley was attacked this morning, and I need you here."

The mix between rage and fear caused his free hand to grip to the seat for control. He had to fight not to shift into werewolf form. "What do you mean Marley was attacked? Is she okay? Who attacked her?"

"Yes, she's fine. We're not sure who it was. A red wolf was followed by someone projecting much like Jordan used to do. We thought at first it was you. Was it? I completely forgot to ask while you were here."

"Wasn't me. I don't know how to project in that form. The only time I projected was last night when I came to Marley. I left before the sun even came up."

"Ah, that makes sense. Marley said she was a ball of energy this morning. I take it things got steamy without me. Shit, if I wouldn't have been so tired, I would have joined you both. Maybe then this wouldn't have happened."

"Don't blame yourself because you felt tired." Cole took a deep breath and prepared to mention the one question he felt needed to be

asked. He didn't want to for fear of getting the wrong answer, but his loyalty made him. "Zachary, are you sure what Marley and I have is all right with you? If you want me to stop, I will. You were my best friend before you were ever my leader."

"No worries. I trust you won't challenge to take her away from me. Plus, you make Marley happy when she and I aren't together. It really doesn't bother me."

Relief filled every crevice of Cole's body. The reaction left him short of breath. Hell, he'd probably stopped breathing while awaiting Zach's response. "All right, thank you. Oh, by the way, I potentially found my mate. She's coming over to dinner tonight."

"That's great, Cole. Where are you? I figured you'd be in New York by now."

He wiped the sweat off of his brow. Zachary would be so pissed if he knew he planned on taking the easy way out. The fact that he was about to lie only made the guilt eat at him even more, but he couldn't tell his friend he didn't want to look for a mate because Cole wanted his.

"I told you she was close to home. All's good."

"Great! I'll see you soon then."

Cole sat looking at the phone for endless minutes. Fuck, what was he going to do? Things were never supposed to happen this way. Why would fate make him love a woman he couldn't have? It was so unfair. Worse, even, than taking candy from a child. The child would always have the opportunity to receive more candy, but love, this kind of love, never came around twice. Never.

Looking up, the trees surrounding the estate broke away to the long drive of the mansion. Dread and excitement both filled him. First, he'd see the woman who'd stolen his heart, and then he'd worry about dinner and the girl he would need to portray as his mate. Just thinking about her put a bad taste in his mouth, a taste he knew he'd have to get used to.

Chapter 10

Marley walked into the large gym with Zachary and abruptly stopped when she noticed it was completely full. The pack had obviously heard about the incident and wanted to see for themselves.

Shit! This wasn't good.

"All right, Marley," Zachary said while they stepped into the middle of the court. "All I'm going to do is pin you. I won't hurt you, but I don't want you to hold back on me, either. Give me everything you got. Just imagine Demetri is in danger and you need to protect him."

She nodded, thinking about Zachary stopping the car on the road and the red wolf she felt threatened by earlier. Instinctively, Marley crouched down in a defensive position. Her husband morphed so quickly it looked like he exploded in front of her. Before she could get over the awe of his wolf form, he lunged at her.

The adrenaline began to thrum through her body while she pivoted out of his way. She concentrated on imagining him as the red wolf. The harder she focused, the more Zachary's black and white coat turned to all black and she saw Jordan.

He stalked around her in a circle, growling viciously. Fear mirroring her moments in the woods so long ago began to consume every rational part of her brain. Jordan stood so clearly in front of her, his eyes glowing a bright yellow. And he wanted her son. The thought and his words echoed in her mind.

"It belongs with me! I want it to lead my pack. I will have that baby, Marley. With the lycanthropy in your veins mixed with

Zachary's, I will rule the north! You can die once the baby is born for all I care."

She could not let him have Demetri!

"No!" She screamed, lunging to meet Zachary in midair.

They both hit the gym floor hard, but Marley never felt a thing. Her body began to contort inside, and she let it, embracing the pain as it took over. Heat rushed through her limbs at a pace so fast she could barely process the feeling. A weird pulling sensation jerked at her insides, and Marley felt herself burst into what felt like a million pieces. Suddenly, there was no pain, just a rage so overpowering she jumped up on her white paws. Everything was clouded and uncertain. She couldn't think straight as her instincts took over.

A growl reverberated through her throat while she felt all the hair on her new body stand up. Zachary and Cole standing before her was the only thing that made her stop from lunging forward. When had her husband changed back to a human? How long had it taken her to get control on her wolf form? So many questions and concerns entered her fuzzy mind.

If Zachary would have been a wolf, she would have killed him without a second thought. The fear at the notion shook her to the core.

Her body morphed easily back into human form, and she stood staring at the two stunned men she loved. She wasn't sure how she just changed, but a part of her felt more complete now that she finally had. Fear still made her uneasy, but Cole being there helped to calm her a small amount.

"How did you do that? You shouldn't have been able to change before the full moon."

"What the hell is going on? Since when has Marley been a wolf?" Cole exploded.

"I don't know how I changed. I thought you were Jordan. Demetri needed to stay safe," Marley whispered.

“Well, so much for training the human in you.” Zachary walked over to her, wrapping his arms around her, comforting her shaking body.

“Is someone going to tell me when the hell Marley started carrying lycanthropy?” Cole asked, angrily.

They both turned to him. “I’ve carried it all along. I just never believed what Jordan told me.”

“It’s true. I can’t believe I didn’t notice it before. Why?” Zachary asked.

Cole took a deep breath, sliding his fingers through his blond hair. Marley watched him shift his feet, confused by his reaction. Was he mad at her? There was something definitely going on in that head of his.

“Because I think Marley marked me. Twice,” Cole whispered so no one else would hear him.

Zachary stepped back as if he had been slapped. Slowly, he turned and looked deep into her eyes. Her heart began to race. She’d never considered her actions before. Why hadn’t the thought ever crossed her mind? It was so obvious now that he mentioned it.

“Is it true? Did you mark Cole?”

The visions of her biting him rushed into her mind. The essence of his blood flooded her thoughts to the point where she could almost taste the heavenly flavor on her tongue. It took everything she had not to go to Cole, to take him in her arms and make love to him so she could experience the wonderful act again.

“Yes. I think I did. What does that mean? What is going to happen?”

Everyone began piling out of the gym through the side doors. It was lunch time, so no doubt they were walking back to the main dining room. When everyone was gone Zachary finally took a ragged breath. His features were drawn tight while his body remained tense.

“It means we have to figure out what kind of mark you put on him. Did you mark him as your mate or is it a blood tie? Or both.” He

breathed heavily. “Don’t get me wrong, Cole. I wouldn’t mind Marley marking you as her mate. It’s pretty clear you both kind of already are, but Marley’s my mate, and since she’s also now a werewolf, I refuse to let her have any more children. Your line will die with you because I won’t lose her. Do you understand me, Cole?”

“She’s not to get pregnant. I understand clearly.”

“Now wait one damn minute! I think I have a right to decide if I want to have more children. At the moment I don’t, but who’s to say in a few years I won’t change my mind. No one is making that decision for me. And that means you, Zachary Zevgolis.”

Marley stalked out of the gym and right into some blonde-haired girl exactly her height. Their bodies collided, and she had to catch the blonde to keep her from flying backwards. Wearing four-inch spiked stilettos probably wasn’t the smartest thing for the girl to have on.

Since Marley had never seen her before, her eyes narrowed suspiciously. There was something she didn’t like about her. It could have possibly been the skimpy, short skirt she was wearing. Bringing someone like that around a young pack of werewolves was asking for trouble.

“May I help you?”

Marley studied her perplexed face. She was gorgeous, no denying that. But there was something in the eyes she couldn’t place her finger on.

“I’m looking for Cole. I ran into a friend in town, and he said they lived here together. Since we had a dinner date, I thought I’d save him the trip from picking me up.”

“You have a dinner date...here, at *my* house, with *my* Cole?” Marley slowly advanced toward the young girl. Every ounce of anger she held pushed to get out. She wanted nothing more than to attack this person.

The girl’s face dropped as she glared not inches away from her brown eyes. Suddenly, she realized how she was acting. Being rude to strangers was not like her, and she felt horrible.

“It’s a joke, of course,” Marley laughed uneasily, stepping back.

“Oh,” the blonde laughed back, tossing her hair. “You had me going there for a minute.”

Zachary and Cole picked that time to walk out. Marley felt her heart drop. Cole had a date? This *girl* was going to be his new mate? She would have to spend the rest of her life watching this bimbo talk about designer fashions and how her day was at the tanning salon. Fucking great!

* * * *

Cole groaned internally at his date’s presence. How in the hell did she find out where he lived? He hadn’t left her more than thirty minutes ago and here she was. Zachary’s presence made him put on his most charming smile. This was going to take some major acting.

“Oh, hey.” *Fuck, how could I have already forgotten her name? Wait!* “Josie,” he said, proud of himself. “How did you find out where I lived?”

“Colt is a friend of mine. When I saw him in town he said both of you live here. I thought it might be easier to catch a ride with him and save you from the trip to pick me up.”

He was going to kill Colt. “Really? Wow, dinner’s still not for another, what, seven hours? You must like to get an early start.”

Oh, yes, he was going to kill Colt. Now he’d have to spend the rest of the day entertaining the poster girl for club wear instead of talking with Marley. The questions he needed to ask her were endless, and now he would have to wait. Shit! How old was this girl anyway? She definitely was on the borderline of legal. That he was sure.

Marley stalked off without a word. It took every bit of his control not to run after her. The anger concerning his situation temporarily vanished while Zachary’s words cut through his thoughts.

“Please excuse my wife. We have a three-month-old son. She’s wanted to check on him for a while now.”

“She does, wow. How did she get her figure back so quickly? She’s lucky. I bet your wife has outstanding genes. I, for one, have great genes, so I plan to have as many rascals I can.”

“Yes, my wife’s genes are something else. Someday it might surprise you. It’s outstanding you’re so positive about wanting kids. Not many people so young even think that far ahead. How old *are* you?”

“Twenty-four,” she said smiling.

“No way,” Cole spit out before he could think to keep quiet.

“Like I said, great genes,” she said, winking at him.

He genuinely smiled. Maybe she wasn’t so bad after all. Well, she might be all right to hold a two minute conversation with, but she wasn’t Marley. End of story.

“Let’s go eat,” Zachary said, patting Cole on the back.

“Yes, we’ll just change our date over from dinner to lunch.” Cole smiled, hoping she caught the hint.

“No need to rush things. She can stay for dinner, too. It’ll be great. Marley will get a chance to know her. I think it’s imperative they get along. Don’t you, Cole?”

“Yeah, sure, if you think Marley can handle it. She isn’t herself lately, Zachary, you know that. No offense, Josie, it’s just Marley has postpartum depression, and she gets upset rather easily.”

“No offense taken. I’ve already seen her wrath, or maybe she *was* joking. But I didn’t get that impression at first.”

“What do you mean?” Zachary stopped them just short of the door.

“Well, I don’t want to start trouble, but when I told her I was here to see Cole because we planned a dinner date, she snapped. I thought she was going to take my head off. She said ‘my house’ and ‘my Cole’ like I was invading her territory or something. But then she said she was joking, so I don’t know. It just felt so real at first. If I wouldn’t have drunk a margarita earlier, I would say her eyes started glowing, but I think I was just imagining that.”

“Really,” Zachary laughed uneasily, “no, that’s perfectly normal. She jokes like that all the time. It’s nothing to worry about, Josie. Do you usually drink this early?”

“When I feel the need,” she laughed.

They walked inside, and Cole let Zachary lead Josie away. Quickly, he went looking for the one person besides Marley he wanted to see. Colt. He was going to wring that kid’s neck. Jesus! He couldn’t put up with that for the rest of the day. But he had to admit her information made him smile. It was good to know Marley reacted that way.

Chapter 11

Marley tossed and turned in bed. Dinner replayed in her mind repeatedly. It was a complete disaster. Little blonde twit! Cole was practically drooling at the table. Normally, Marley was the most unselfish person in the room, but when it came to her men, jealousy had her claws coming out, literally. She knew Cole needed a mate, but shit, not that one! Josephine was all wrong for him.

Hitting her pillow, Marley turned over in the bed facing Zachary. “She’s all wrong for him, you know. They are completely incompatible. I don’t even know why I let her sit at the same table. I should have placed her at the table with the kids. It would have been perfect. And if I have to hear tips from her on what merchandise I should buy for my store one more time, I’m kicking her out.”

Her husband laughed. “Marley, it wasn’t that bad. She just was trying to give some helpful advice. I really don’t see why you’re so upset. Your online store is thriving so don’t pay it any attention.”

She took a deep breath trying to calm her temper. “And what was she wearing? Doesn’t she know we all saw her pink thong whenever she purposely bent over to retrieve the fork she *accidentally* dropped? There wasn’t even a need to get out of her chair! Why she decided to flash the whole table is beyond me.”

“Marley, Cole wants her. We have to accept who he’s chosen.”

“Bullshit. I’m not accepting her and that’s final.” Marley hit her pillow again, trying to flatten it out. The damn thing just wasn’t comfortable for her tonight. “And what about...”

“Marley, for crying out loud! Hold on.” Zachary reached for his cell phone off of the bedside table. The light blue of the light lit up his face in the dark bedroom.

“Wait, what are you doing?”

“Just hold on while I make a call.”

The ringing of the phone only increased the beating of her heart. Who was her husband calling at this time of the night? She feared at who her mind came up with. Surely, her husband wouldn’t call him.

“Cole, come to my room please.”

Marley’s heart seemed to stop for a moment. “What did you do that for? Great! What am I supposed to tell him?” She hated being right.

Silence made her ears ring until, seconds later, a knock sounded at the door just as Cole walked in. “You wanted to see me?”

“Yeah, turn on the light,” Zachary said, sitting up.

Marley sat up, too, feeling herself blush under the strain of what her husband might end up telling Cole. It truly was none of her business. She knew this day was coming, yet she hadn’t expected what walked through the door. Well, if she wanted to be truthful with herself, she was hoping no one would take her place.

“Please put my wife at ease. She’s freaking out about your mate. I keep telling her things will work themselves out, and yet she continues to worry. I’m going to bed. You two have at it.”

“Zachary! You can’t do that. You are as much of this conversation as I am. It’s your pack. Aren’t you worried about starting a riot between your wolves?”

“Cole, talk to my wife,” he said, gesturing toward her.

The other love of her life smiled at her, sitting on the bed. She could feel her mouth pout as his features softened. “You know I need a mate, right?”

Marley groaned. “Does it have to be her? I’ll take you out. We’ll find you a real mate. Not some *girl*.” It took everything she had not to say something meaner. She couldn’t believe the words she’d really

wanted to say. This wasn't like her. "Please, Cole, not her. I beg you. She's so," Marley paused. "Young."

Both Cole and Zachary's laughter filled the bedroom. "She's twenty-four, Marley, hardly young. But no worries, I've already had a talk with her, and she's promised to tone it down, so maybe things will go more smoothly tomorrow."

"Tomorrow!" Marley bolted up to a standing position in the bed. "No way, I won't be ready that fast. Tell her to come back in four years. Then, I might give her a chance. There's something about her I don't like. I'm sorry, Cole, but it's not going to work!"

He stood from the bed, staring up at her. "Zachary, I don't think there's any getting through to your wife."

"I could have told you that. Once Marley gets something in her head that's the end of everything."

"And kids! Did you hear her go on and on about wanting to have kids soon?" Marley dropped back down to the bed. "That's not something you tell someone on the first date. Get serious, you guys. She's a fucking quack. I don't like her. If she's handing out invitations to get knocked up, I would have sent her to the dog's breeding grounds. I mean shit, *that...is...not...normal*. Do I need to spell it out for you two?"

"It was kind of strange," Zachary said, rolling back to face them.

"Thank you." Marley sighed.

"But maybe she's just tired of short-term relationships," her husband pointed out.

Marley groaned. "That's it! I'm done explaining to you two. Keep her away from me and my son. That's all I'm going to say. I don't like her, nor do I trust her."

"That's unfair," Cole whispered. "Don't make this harder on me than it already is. You have no idea what this is putting me through."

Zachary sat up in bed. "What do you mean? If she's your mate it shouldn't be hard. You should be obsessed with her. You would know

from the moment you see her. It's not something you can *make* happen."

"Yeah, well, if that's the case, then we were meant to be mated to the same person because I've already told you once how I feel about your wife. From the moment I saw her, I loved her."

The room fell eerily silent. Marley was almost afraid to breathe. Should she say something? Damn, this was all her fault. But she couldn't help the way she felt for these two men.

"Cole, I don't blame you for loving Marley. How can I? I love her, too. But I don't feel like you've look around enough to know you were meant for her. It took me a year to find my mate. You haven't even really tried, have you? Not even when you were gone for all those months."

She watched Cole begin to pace back and forth. "No, and truthfully I don't feel the need to. Marley's my mate. She marked *me*! I belong to her."

Oh, shit! Marley was lost at what to say. Dammit! She had to think of something before a fight broke out. Zachary could only take so much before he snapped.

"Are you so sure she marked you? If I recall correctly you told me you loved her before Demetri was even born. She hadn't marked you then. You had no reason not to look for a mate when you were gone all that time," Zachary growled.

"All right, enough. Nothing is going to get accomplished this way. I do not want you two fighting. All this was supposed to be about was Josephine, that's it."

"With Zachary's permission I'd like to continue to see her. Maybe if I try to put effort into making it work I can break this *obsession* with you."

Marley's heart crumbled. Obsession? What happened to him loving her? She loved him. What she had was so much more than obsession.

“Fine, work on it. But I want you to still project and search that way, too. You don’t even have to leave the house. I have a feeling *she’ll* come to you.”

They both looked at Marley. “What? Who, me? Very funny, Zachary,” she said, hitting him with her pillow. “Just because you say I came to you first doesn’t mean anything. And if I do go to Cole, would you be angry? You never have been before.”

“You know I wouldn’t be angry. There’s too good of a chance you truly marked him. I’m alpha. You can’t mark me. Not unless you outrank me, and as of a few days ago, you didn’t.”

“What do you mean, didn’t? Are you saying I outrank you now?” Marley asked, confused.

“That’s remained to be seen. Marley, there’s something about your line of lycanthropy. It should be weaker than everyone’s, but it not. You’re too strong. If I didn’t know better, I’d say your blood is as pure as it gets or mixed with something else entirely. Everyone’s strand is diluted. No one is pure of lycanthropy, not even me, and both my parents held the strand. But even one of both their parents was human. It’s like yours aren’t.”

What did this mean? Her parents weren’t werewolves. Were they? No, of course not. She would know.

“I don’t want to be an alpha. Can’t I just go back to being your wife? You know, Marley the team mom that rushes out and gives Gatorade to the pack after a long night of the full moon.”

Zachary laughed, pulling her in his arms. “No one said you have to take my position in the pack. But you can’t be team mom anymore. You’ll be joining us, remember?”

“Demetri,” Marley gasped. “Who’s going to take care of him? Oh God, Zachary I’ve always been the one to watch over him and Aria whenever everyone left.”

“We’ll find someone, love. I can always call back Claire. I’m sure she wouldn’t mind. She took really good care of Aria before you arrived.”

“What about Josie? Couldn’t she watch them?”

Marley spun her gaze to Cole, piercing him with her eyes. “Over my dead body.”

“Come on, Marley. I thought you were going to make this easier on me. Please let me talk to Josie. I need to try something, and if I have her around maybe breaking the obsession will work.”

There was that damn word again. It wasn’t an obsession! Why couldn’t he see he loved her just as much as she loved him?

“I never said I’d make things easier on you, but because I, too, seem to be *obsessed* with you, I will. I just hope you know what you’re asking me. It goes against everything my body and my mind are screaming. You’re placing the future of my son and our pack in the hands of a dimwit.”

“Marley!” Zachary laughed. “That is enough. “I really don’t think there’s a reason for you to be calling Cole’s potential mate a dimwit.”

“Oh, please, Zachary. She is and we all know it. When we all stop pretending, we’ll be having a grown up conversation. Until then, you both can stay in denial. Cole, I’ll allow you to talk to her, but make it clear that if there is so much as a scratch on my son, I’ll rip her throat out without any guilt.”

“Marley!” They both yelled.

She shrugged her shoulders and lay back down. “Well, now that I’ve made myself clear, I’m going to bed. If either of you are interested, you can both join me. If not, I’ll see you in the morning.”

“Cole? It’s up to you. I could use your help punishing my wife for her blunt mouth.”

She looked up as Cole pulled off his shirt. The muscles flexed while he stalked to the bed. Her whole body engulfed with heat while Zachary pulled his shirt off next to her.

“Oh yes, I’ll help punish her. She’s going to learn to be nice. Even if it means we make her beg repeatedly. Tonight, Marley’s going to get a lesson in obedience.

Chapter 12

Zachary pinned Marley's wrists over her head before she got the chance to even consider what they might have in mind to do with her. The rhythm in her chest deepened with anticipation as Cole crawled onto the bed. His face came to rest inches from hers while he stared into her eyes.

"I'm going to enjoy this, Marley."

Cole brushed his lips against hers gently. When she tried to kiss him back, he pulled away. The rip of her gown sent shock waves throughout her body and caused her nipples to harden instantly.

Warmth from Cole's tongue ran over the tip, teasing it in circular motions. The need to run her fingers through his silky hair, to bury his face more in her breasts became unbearable while he sucked and nibbled.

"Let me feel him, Zachary. I need..."

Zachary's lips covered hers, cutting off her words. His grip became tighter while he pulled her hands higher over her head. A moan came from deep in her throat at his taste. She could feel Cole working his way down her stomach, searing a trail of fire right to where she wanted him.

"What you need to do is learn to behave yourself," Zachary said against her lips. "We can keep this up all night long. It would be my pleasure to torture your pussy for hours on end. I want to feel your cum explode over my tongue while I have it buried inside of you."

A loud knock on their door had them all pausing and looking in the general direction of the interruption. Her husband was instantly off the bed, wearing only his black silk pajama bottoms. Cole slid his

shirt on while Marley ran and shakily grabbed her robe. When everyone was dressed Zachary opened the door.

"I'm sorry to disturb you, but I'm looking for Cole. Someone said I might find him here," a voice whispered through the small crack he allowed.

Marley peered around him and caught site of Josephine's face. The blood in her body began to boil at the way the twit was looking at her husband's body. Her eyes shot to Cole. "Go tell your *mate* to quick ogling my husband, and then get her the hell out of our house. I swear, Cole, you better be right about her."

"What do you mean? I already took her home." He peered off to the side, looking around Zachary.

"Well, she's back!" Marley growled lowly.

The door shut as her husband turned to them. "Cole, Josie wants to talk to you. It would seem she got in a fight with her aunt, and she was kicked out. She has nowhere to go. I told her we wouldn't mind her staying a few nights here until she gets on her feet."

"What! Wait, you told her what! She's twenty-four and she still lives at home? I told you something wasn't right." Marley stalked toward the window to hold in the scream of frustration trying to claw its way out of her throat.

"It's just a few nights, Marley. She has nowhere to go."

Just as she turned, Cole disappeared through the door. Dammit! Now what in the hell was she supposed to do? She had been really looking forward to the three of them picking up on where they had left off so long ago.

"Zachary, I'm sure she has friends or family. Why come here? You can't make me believe she has no one else. That's ridiculous. I need some air. I'm going to the garden."

"But it's dark outside. After what happened this afternoon, I'm not so sure I want you out there alone. I'll go with you."

Angrily, Marley led the way out of their room and through the house. Cole and Josephine were nowhere in sight. The moment she

stepped into the darkness of the night, her eyes focused amazingly. Every little detail came into view.

The heat of Zachary's arm wrapping around her felt comforting. She leaned into his warmth, encircling her arms around his small waist. The smell of the pack weighed heavily in the air as they entered the gardens.

"Are they pulling patrol tonight?" Marley looked into the distance for a view of someone walking around.

"Yes, we'll continue to until I feel we're safe. I want this person caught. Just the thought that something could have happened to you today..." He paused, turning toward her to make eye contact. "There's no way I can live without you. You and Demetri are my life. If I lost either one of you, I'm not sure what I would do."

Lightly placing his lips against hers, Zachary kissed her tenderly. When he pulled back, he bowed and gestured for her to lead the way forward. A giggle passed through her lips at his actions. He always knew how to make her smile.

She walked into the gazebo and stopped in her tracks. Josephine's body lay half way on top of Cole's on the same sofa they had made love on not days ago. The rage that began to rush through her pushed all of her breath away. Zachary gripped around her arms powerfully from behind. The shock of someone touching her almost made the anger worse, but she couldn't tear her gaze away long enough to think much of anything.

"Cole, do you think you could break it up long enough to take the make-out session somewhere else. You know this is Marley's favorite spot."

Her husband's tense voice only put her on edge even more. Cole looked up dazed, his eyes connecting with hers. He stood up so fast Josephine fell to the sofa.

"Marley, it's not what you think."

Two steps were all Marley had taken before she noticed Zachary's grip tightened incredibly stronger. Somehow, she dragged him

without even realizing it. Closing her eyes, she took a deep breath, trying to calm down. She'd never been this hostile before. Cole needed a mate. She had to accept that this *bimbo* might be it.

"Just don't bring her to my spot anymore, Cole. I thought you would have more respect than that." Marley's hand raised, stopping Cole before he ever had a chance to speak. "Just go before I *do* lose my temper."

"Come on, Josie," Cole said quietly, leaving them.

She couldn't watch them go. If she had to look at the girl's face just one more time Marley would explode, and probably into a werewolf.

"Are you all right?" Zachary walked around to face her.

"No," Marley said, eyeing her sofa, close to tears. "You know he's buying me a new couch, right? I will not get back on the thing now that she's tainted it. Truthfully, I'm not even sure I want to be out here anymore." Pausing, she heard the words pouring out of her mouth and felt terrible. "Zachary, why do I dislike her so much? I've never been this bitter toward any particular person before."

"Let's go for a walk through the gardens." He held her against him while they drifted between two hedges trimming the walkway. "I think with your change you're very territorial. It's natural for an alpha to react that way. You feel the need to fight and prove to everyone or one particular person that something belongs to you. In your case, it's Cole. To you, he's yours. Possibly because you marked him, or it might just be because he's been a big part of your life."

"It makes sense, I guess. But how do I stop feeling this way?"

"You don't. Your instincts are what's going to make you a good leader. Maybe not as full leader of the pack, but I think we should work together with running it. You're an alpha, Marley, which means you're strong and your intuition is going to be supreme."

"Then why doesn't anyone believe me about Josephine?"

Zachary sighed, pulling her closer. "It's not that I don't believe you. I just think your feelings toward Cole are interfering with your

better judgment. It's too early for you to be able to tell the difference."

His words were abruptly cut off. A howl sent chills down Marley's back. At the pitch, she could tell it was a distressed call. Someone was in trouble. Her mind reacted on impulse. She felt herself practically flying out of the garden and across the expanse of land between the estate and the forest. She was positive her husband was right behind her.

Insects began crawling over her skin, and her body acted automatically. The back of her calves flexed, and Marley sprung through the air, morphing and exploding into her wolf form. No pain, no broken bones, just the acceptance of what she felt inside for the first time since Jordan told her what flowed through her blood.

Chapter 13

Zachary joined her in wolf form just as she burst through the trees. His presence put her at ease, but she could hear the howling growing louder while she weaved her way through the thick foliage.

Two wolves moved in behind them as they pushed forward into the darkness. Surprisingly, Marley saw perfectly clear through her wolf eyes. White paws kicked themselves forward while she looked down toward the ground. The fact that her legs were white only registered for a split second before she heard the high pitched yelp. All the hair on her body stood on end.

“Marley, stay by me,” Zachary’s words pushed into her thoughts.

Momentarily startled, she nearly stumbled. “You could have warned me you communicated like this,” she snapped in her mind. His voice had scared the shit out of her.

“Sorry, love. Come this way.”

He cut off to the left, and she and the other two wolves followed. They all skidded to a stop, Marley skidding into human form, at the sight of Colt’s dead body sprawled across the leaves and pine needles.

The debris cut into her skin along the right side. She hadn’t meant to turn back human, but the shock of the dead body triggered her shift. The warmth of fresh blood covered the side of her leg and robe. It still amazed her that the clothes never got ruined in their shifts.

Slowly, she crawled toward Colt’s lifeless body. His throat was completely missing, and she had to swallow the bile that tried to work its way out.

“Colt, oh, Colt, what happen to you,” Marley cried, burying her face in the barely-twenty-year-old’s shirt. She had just seen him

earlier at dinner. How could someone go from laughing to dead in such a short amount of time?

Zachary nuzzled his nose into her neck. She knew she needed to stay alert, but knowing one of the pack risked their life and died to protect everything they stood for caused a mix of emotions to run through her. Knowing someone so close to her had been harmed in such a violent manner and was left to lie out here in the dark forest saddened yet enraged her.

Marley stood angrily and picked up Colt's body like it weighed nothing. "I'm taking him *home* where he belongs. One of you watch my back. Zachary, go find whoever did this to one of our family and make them pay."

Zachary rubbed his head against her leg and then disappeared into the trees. She could feel the tears streaming down her face while she ran with Colt back to the estate. Concerned for the well-being of the body, she didn't push herself.

The pack that wasn't on patrol met her outside the mansion. They must have heard the howling or yelp. Regardless, they were on alert, which she was thankful for.

"Where's Cole?" The sound of power behind her usually soft voice momentarily startled her. The alpha inside was intent on making itself known.

"I think he's inside with Josie," Gilbert said quietly.

"Keep her distracted and tell Cole to meet me in the living room. *Do not* let her downstairs. I don't care what she tells you or insists she needs. She's to stay confined. Is that clear, Gilbert?"

"Yes, ma'am," he said running off.

"I need water, towels, whatever you can find to get him cleaned up. He died for all of us, and he deserves every bit of respect we can show him. Zachary is currently looking for the wolf that did this. When he finds whoever is responsible, they *will* pay." She made sure to look them all in the eyes. Their trust in her was vital. They needed

to know there was no way she or her husband would stop until someone paid for their actions.

Silent nods settled around her. Satisfied with everyone's reactions, she carried Colt inside catching her bloody reflection in the mirror. Everything looked so surreal. Here she was, five foot three, one hundred and twenty pounds, carrying a man who was at least six feet and over two hundred pounds, and both of them were covered in blood. The image burned itself into her brain.

Movement caught the corner of her eye as Cole rushed downstairs at impressive speed toward her. "Marley, what happened?"

Tears began to collect in her eyes once again. "They killed Colt," she said shakily. "Zachary is out there, he needs you."

"Are you all right? Is any of that blood yours?" Cole stood before her, lifting Colt's body from her arms. Gently, he laid him down on the leather sofa and turned back to her. "Are you injured? Answer me!"

"I'm fine, Cole. Go to Zachary. I don't want him out there without his second in command. He needs you."

She watched him look back at Colt's body and then into her face. His mouth opened briefly while he outstretched his hand toward her face. He looked about ready to say something, but he turned away and rushed outside. Sickness swamped Marley's stomach. The two men she loved were in possible danger and there was nothing she could do about it.

Noticing the towels being handed to her, she took them and started cleaning up Colt's body. Tears ran down her cheeks, and she observed she wasn't the only one crying. Everyone here was so close, closer than she had ever been with her own mother or father. They were truly her family now, and she drew the line where family was concerned. She'd decide who would cross it and who wouldn't.

* * * *

Cole broke through the trees in wolf form. The scent of blood hung heavily in the air, causing him to gag. Normally, blood would have the opposite effect, but not when he could smell it was from the pack.

He let out a loud howl, feeling the anger pour through him. The muscles in his legs tightened while he pushed himself faster, harder to get to his leader. His job was protecting Zachary, and if he wouldn't have been upstairs trying his best to slow Josie down from her sexual advances then he would have been with them from the beginning.

Just the thought of seeing Marley covered in blood like that nearly made his heart stop. If anything would have happened to her, he literally would have gone crazy. Life wasn't worth living if Marley wasn't in it.

Zachary's scent hit his senses like a Mac track. He cut to the right, past two motionless pack members. The urge to make sure they weren't dead gripped him, but he couldn't stop. His job was to guard his best friend and leader.

"Zach!" Cole screamed in his thoughts.

"About damn time."

Relief rushed through him. Suddenly, he came right into a circle of the remaining pack and Zachary. More than half of the twenty people patrolling the grounds were missing. They needed more men out here if the rest of them were going to remain from getting ambushed. With their numbers pushing over a hundred people, it was time to start making calls.

"I think it's quite obvious to everyone we're under attack. We've been through these woods already and no one remains, but we have their scent. Tonight we collect the bodies of our brothers and sisters and we mourn them. In the morning, the house will be flooded with people arriving. We start the search and put up posts then. They've declared war, and I guarantee you all they won't win."

Zachary morphed into human form and the rest followed suit. "Let's find the remaining bodies and bring them home. No one leaves

the estate and no one besides the pack gets on. Henry should be back tomorrow from his trip to L.A. When he arrives, I want someone to notify me. You all know what to do. Cole, follow me.”

Everyone split up in groups. Zachary and Cole remained quiet until they reached the two bodies Cole passed earlier. They both were recently new to the pack, having put in three years at the most. Gerald and Rodney were both younger than him—early twenties. He couldn’t believe the events that took place. It felt like a nightmare. All along Marley tried to tell them, and both he and Zachary hadn’t believed her. Guilt weighed heavily on his shoulders.

“It’s all my fault,” Zachary said, mirroring his thoughts.

“I didn’t want to believe it, either.” Reaching down Cole picked up and cradled the limp, bloody body. The darkness of the color almost made him unrecognizable. Narrowing his eyes, he peered closer into the features of the motionless face, wishing there was some way to view the past. Suddenly, Gerald stiffened in his arms.

“Oh, Jesus!” Shocked, Cole jumped slightly, holding Gerald’s body firmer. “Zach, he’s alive. Hurry, I have to get him to the house. He might know who’s responsible.”

Cole didn’t wait. He took off running as fast as he could while holding the body as still as possible. If there was a chance Gerald knew anything, he wasn’t going to miss his opportunity to find out. The trees disappeared behind him as he broke into the clearing. Within moments, he burst through the front door.

Marley had just finished cleaning Colt. She looked up at him, startled.

“He’s alive,” was all he could manage to get out.

Two of the females who happened to be nurses were still in their scrubs from just getting off of work. They ran forward holding a bag, already prepared, while Cole rushed Gerald to the first downstairs bedroom available.

“Marley, shut the door behind you.”

Cole laid the unresponsive body down on the bed. He looked up into her pale face and prayed for the strength to tell her about the pack. She was so emotionally connected to every single individual that made up their large family. It was so different than what he let himself feel. Growing up around wolves, he accepted people would die, that he shouldn't get attached to a particular person, but not Marley. She was still so innocent.

"How bad is it?" She closed the door and advanced to the bed. Cole noticed she nervously pulled at the bloody robe. Rushing things wouldn't be good.

He watched the nurses work on Gerald, checking his vitals and cutting off his clothes. Finally, after a few minutes, he took a deep breath and gathered her in his arms to whisper the news to her.

"Marley, there were at least twenty people out there on patrol. Over half are dead or injured."

Weight pushed against his arms as her body went limp and a gasp broke through her throat. Zachary opened the door, bringing both of their attention to him. Giving Cole a look, he shook his head *no*, once. Marley fell apart. Sobs echoed off the walls while she shook her head back and forth. Never before could he ever remember feeling so helpless.

"Cole, take her to my room and get her cleaned up. We'll handle things down here. There's really not much left we can do, anyway. I don't want her seeing anymore of this. I'll stay with Gerald and see if he wakes up."

Marley broke away from Cole's arms. Her eyes began glowing brightly while she retreated to the far corner of the room. A sense of dread surfaced while he looked at her small frame poised down like a startled animal. He suddenly had a really bad feeling things were about to get out of control.

Chapter 14

The walls felt like they were closing in. Marley couldn't even identify what emotion she was feeling. Everything between rage, hate, and fear collided inside, leaving her grasping for a way to react. Was this even really happening?

"Marley, honey, come to me," Zachary said soothingly. "I'm sorry for this. I really am. We all should have listened to you. It's my fault. Please come here."

Feeling the wall press firmer against her back, she realized there was nowhere else to go. "Zachary, tell me they're not all dead because if they are..." She had no idea what she would do or think of it was confirmed.

"I'm sorry, Marley. Eleven died tonight."

She let out a ragged breath. "Impossible. That would mean our woods would have been overrun with them. Our wolves are the best." Marley sobbed, confused.

"Yes, we picked up a lot of different scents. There were at least thirty of them."

Only one person came to her mind, and with it, an intense rage. Her body began to shake uncontrollably while she fought the wolf trying to take over. It made sense, and if her instincts were correct, she had been right about the twit from the beginning.

"*She's* behind it," Marley said, pointing her finger at the ceiling. "It makes perfect sense. I'm going to kill her." She quickly advanced toward the door.

"Whoa, Marley, hold on. Talk to me," Zachary said, stepping in her path. Cole quickly joined him.

“From the first day Josephine arrived, things have been happening. She said Colt was her friend. Maybe he knew something she didn’t want us to know. It could be possible. With her came trouble. I can feel something is not right with her story!”

“I thought we talked about this,” Zachary said, reaching for her. She quickly used her new senses and side stepped him, glaring into his eyes. “Are you saying you don’t believe me? If you’re taking her side, Zachary, then everything you told me about trust was a complete lie.”

Seconds turned into minutes while Zachary and Marley stared each other down. Marley wouldn’t break, she couldn’t. Everything she was doing was for the pack. She knew that now. It had nothing to do with Cole and everything to do with making sure no one else died.

“If I didn’t know better I’d think you were challenging me to be alpha.”

Marley was shocked by his words, but she couldn’t give up. “If that’s what it takes to make sure no one else ends up dead, I will. You told me earlier tonight that this was meant to be a partnership. We were both supposed to work together. I’m telling you what I feel to be fact, and you’re saying you don’t believe me.”

“No one is challenging anyone. I’ll get rid of Josie,” Cole said quietly.

“She’s not going anywhere until I get to speak with her first,” Marley snapped at him.

“Marley, you know I always trust your judgment, but I don’t want to overreact without proof.”

Zachary reached for her, but she was too fast. Marley burst through the door and ran as fast as she could up the stairs. The sound of the men advanced quickly behind her, but she pushed herself faster until Cole’s door came into view, and she slipped inside.

Gilbert jumped up from the chair, startled. Marley didn’t even look at him. She had Josie by the neck against the wall, just as the men came through.

“You did this, didn’t you? You killed my family, didn’t you!”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about!” she screamed.

“You’re lying. Do you know what?” Marley laughed. “I can sense your lies!”

“What is wrong with you? I don’t know what you’re talking about!” Josephine squeezed from her throat.

Marley wasn’t sure what she smelled, but something was radiating off of the girl, and it wasn’t fear. Her instincts told her it was lies, so she went with it. To her, it made sense. The deeper Marley stared into Josephine’s eyes the more something triggered. She knew those eyes. The tugging got worse just as she was grabbed from behind.

“Let go of me, dammit!” Marley screamed. “If you don’t let go of me I swear to you you’ll be sorry. They’ll kill us all!”

“Marley, it’s okay. No one else is going to die. I promise you I won’t let that happen. Cole, let’s take her to the room. We need to get her to calm down,” Zachary whispered quietly. “Josephine, I’m so sorry. My wife has just received some terrible news. I’m afraid she’s not herself right now.”

Looking behind herself at Zachary and Cole, she couldn’t believe how they didn’t trust her. An unfamiliar scent teased her senses for only a moment, and she felt herself grow cold. Her eyes flashed to Josephine.

“I know you’re behind this. Watch yourself, because the moment you slip, I’m going to rip out your throat, wolf,” Marley spit out.

A smile flashed across Josephine’s face but vanished as quickly as it appeared. “Whatever are you talking about, Marley?” Josephine asked sweetly.

Just the tone of that bitch enraged her. She was right, she knew she was! “Let me go, Zachary. Can’t you smell her? She’s a wolf, dammit! Cole, you can smell her, right?” Marley asked, trying to see them better from her awkward angle.

“I’m sorry, Marley.”

“What in the world is all this talk about wolves? Has she really lost it? I mean, no sane person walks around talking about wolves as people. That’s ridiculous.”

“Please excuse us,” Zachary said angrily.

Marley was pulled out of Cole’s room and into theirs. As soon as her husband slammed the door shut her anger only intensified. She looked at Cole, and he quickly let go of her. Without thought, she advanced forward.

“I can’t believe you’re not going to believe me. You’re my husband, Zachary!”

He ran his fingers through his hair, frustrated. “Listen to yourself, Marley. Josephine is not a wolf. I can’t believe you accused her of it. You could have blown our cover. You’re in shock from the events you witnessed. I think you need to take a shower and try to calm down.”

“I fucking smelled her. How she’s containing her smell, I don’t know,” Marley growled, “but the moment she lied to me, I knew it. I could sense her lies. Her skin let off some kind of odd scent. I’m telling you the truth. I may be in shock, but I am thinking clearer than I ever have.”

“Zachary, I think we should listen to her. She was right about before, and I believe her. Josephine smiled when she was called a wolf. You were looking at Marley at the time so I know you didn’t see it, but I did, and I don’t trust her.”

Quickly, Marley spun around to look at him. “You saw that,” she whispered. “Oh, God, Cole, I thought I was the only one. Thank you for believing me.” She ran into his arms, placing her cheek against his chest.

“I can’t think,” Zachary said, sliding down the door, resting his head in his hands. “Marley, maybe you should take over the pack for now. I...”

Quickly, she rushed to her husband’s side. “Look at me. You are not handing your responsibilities over to me. We just have to work as

a team like you said before. We need a plan. If Josephine is a wolf like I believe she is then we have to find out who she's working for. We have to beat them at their own game."

"How do we even know she's working for anyone," Cole asked. "I approached her on the street and asked her for a date. It had nothing to do with her hunting me down."

"I don't know, but I'm telling you she's a wolf. Good genes, remember. She kept repeating that. Of course werewolves have good genes."

"Shit. We can't let her leave," Zachary said quietly. "I'm going to make this right. Marley, I'm sorry for not listening to you. Sometimes I think if I can't see or smell something then it isn't there, but I should have known your senses are already stronger than mine. Please forgive me."

He pulled her into his arms, cradling her to him. "Of course I forgive you. I love you."

They smiled at each other, and some of the anger settled. Multiple expressions passed over her husband's face while he thought, but the moment he smiled, she knew he figured out something genius.

"All right, this is what we're going to go do."

Chapter 15

Now that they had a plan and her husband made it up to her deliciously before they went to bed, Marley felt so much more at ease.

The moon shone brightly across the clear, dark sky from her bedroom window. It would be full in a couple of more days, and she could feel the pull throughout her body even though she wasn't in it. Being in projection proved to be the only way she could truly watch over the surroundings even when she wasn't awake.

Everything remained quiet outside. Guards patrolled around the estate but steered clear of the edge of woods. She knew the rival pack was through for tonight, but she'd make sure she put a stop to it if anything happened again.

"You know, I don't think it's healthy to always be in projection. How does your mind get any rest?" Cole asked from behind her.

Marley continued to look out of the window. "My mind is fine, Cole. What are you doing here? I thought you would be with Josephine."

Large hands gripped around her waist pulling her back against his body. The hardness nearly made her moan. God, he felt so good. His warmth sent a blazing heat throughout her.

"I don't want to be with her. I want to be with you."

Slowly, his hands ran upward until they rested just below her breasts. Heaviness settled in Marley's stomach. She could feel her pussy become wet at his words.

"You know how much I love you, don't you?" Cole said, nibbling on her neck.

A shiver ran down her body. "I thought I was an obsession." Turning around, she looked into his eyes. "That's what you said."

Cole's arms gripped around her tighter, molding the front of her body to his. She arched her back, leaning away, to get a better look into his face. The motion only brought his body leaning down toward hers.

"Obsession, love, addiction, I feel all of those for you, Marley. Nothing I do or try can get you out of my head. You stalk my thoughts and my dreams. Every waking moment, you're on my mind. I'm going to talk to Zachary. That's what I wanted to tell you. It's the reason I came. I've been thinking about it for a while now, and it's the only thing that makes sense."

One of Cole's hands slid up her back while the other one supported her arching body. Fingers wrapped into Marley's hair, pulling her face to his. The taste of his mouth sucked her into a world of lust, and all she could think about was his blood. She had to taste him.

"No," she said, pulling back. "Cole, you have to stop. I can't control myself with you."

"What are you talking about? Marley, don't stop, please. You don't have to control yourself with me."

"You don't understand. I want your blood." She hesitated on the last word. Her body nearly went into spasms just thinking about what Cole's essence did to her.

He stared into her eyes for a long time and then smiled. "Finish the blood tie, Marley. I want you to."

"Blood tie? But I can't read your thoughts, Cole." Confused, she tried wiggling out of his arms. If she didn't get away fast, she would submit, and having his permission was only making things a million times harder.

"Marley, with werewolves the third mark seals the deal. I guarantee if you bite me again, you'll hear almost everything that runs through my mind. With the tie complete, we can hear each other. Our

bond will be so much stronger than human and werewolf. I want you to bite me. Share this with me. Join us and make us one. Make me your mate, truly.”

Cole’s lips eased down on hers, applying the smallest amount of pressure. “Taste me, Marley.” Just at his touch, his flavor, she lost it. Wrapping her arms around his neck, she ravished his lips. At her urgency, she felt him lose control. His hands frantically began to roam all over her body.

“Are you sure you want me to do this?” Marley asked between kisses.

“Yes, I’ve never wanted anyone but you.”

They ripped each other’s clothes off greedily. The feel of hard muscle beneath her hands drove her madness to another level. Breaking her mouth from his, she ran her tongue along his throat down to the hard plains of muscle covering his body.

For the first time she recognized his scent, the part that made Cole himself. She never smelled anything more hypnotizing. Well, maybe Zachary’s cologne, which she noticed had gotten stronger lately. The moment she thought it, she realized it wasn’t cologne at all. She’d always been able to smell Zachary’s scent. She took one last deep breath and descended to her intended spot.

The fact they were several inches off of the ground didn’t affect Marley’s balance. This was second nature to her now. She floated down, kissing his defined abs. Fingers buried in her hair while his breathing deepened.

The length of Cole’s cock brushed against the inside of her breast, causing him to tighten his grip of her hair. Looking up, she grabbed around his width and watched while he shut his eyes. The moment her tongue ran across his tip, he inhaled deeply.

“Marley, you have no idea how much I love you.”

She took a small fraction of his length into her mouth, caressing him with her tongue. The sweet yet salty taste urged her on. She began to take in more, suctioning so she could get any pre-cum inside

of her that she could. Tightening her lips slightly, she gauged his features for responses in his expressions.

The need to see his usual reserved personality unhinged drove her to bring him to the brink of pleasure. Little by little, his features tightened. The heavy lids of his eyes remained closed longer, no matter how much he tried to look at her. His breathing went from deep to inhaling through his mouth. He was so close she could taste it.

Cole pulled her up, and she let him. His lips connected with hers while his fingers traced her wet folds. The direct contact with her clit caused her whole body to convulse. Marley didn't want to wait any longer. Her legs wrapped around his waist, pulling his lower body closer.

* * * *

The heat of Marley's pussy burned into his stomach. It teased him, taunted him to enter her. He could already imagine her wet heat enveloping him. If he didn't penetrate her soon he wasn't sure what he would do. Her mouth preformed miracles. He had to have her now.

Cole reached around her thigh and traced her wet folds with his tip, teasing her clit. The breath disappeared from him completely as Marley locked her legs tighter around his waist and plunged down, taking his cock inside of her entirely. She went into an instant orgasm around him, tightening to the point of pain.

"Fuck," Cole groaned, plunging into her hard.

Marley moaned while he began to thrust a fast, steady rhythm. The taste of her mouth combined with her overpowering scent kept him under a spell. She was his, his true mate, the love of his life, and if Zachary agreed, she'd be both of their mates. That, of course, might pose a problem. Alphas didn't share mates. Just because Marley marked him didn't mean Zachary had to let them continue. He could still make Cole look for a mate to mark himself.

Nails dug into his back while he sucked Marley's nipple into his mouth. A cry poured through the room as she began to tighten again. The need to shoot his come deep inside of her was almost unbearable, but he knew he couldn't. Zachary would surely kill him. It was true they were in projection, but Marley had become pregnant while she projected with Zachary, so he wasn't taking any chances.

"Bite me, Marley. Taste me and make us one."

It took everything Cole had to hold off his release. Marley's teeth sunk deeply into his skin, and he pulled out just in time to shoot all over her stomach. Every time she bit him things never felt more right. This was supposed to happen. They were meant for each other. If Zachary kept them apart, he wasn't sure what he was going to do.

Chapter 16

The sound of her son cooing through the voice monitor woke up Marley. Looking at the clock, it was close to seven in the morning. She smiled, getting out of bed. Zachary was already gone, probably to make the bottle. He was good about that. The eeriness of when he knew their son awoke was still a mystery to her.

Slipping on a fresh robe, she walked to Demetri's room. Her beautiful son looked up at her, smiling and waving his arms around. She let out a giggle and quickly changed him. Warmth from arms wrapping around her waist made everything perfect. She knew exactly who it was. The scent was unmistakable.

"How are the two loves of my life this morning?" Zachary asked, nuzzling her neck.

"It seems we both woke up in a good mood." Marley picked up their son, cradling him in her arms.

She took the bottle Zachary handed to her and sat down in the rocking chair. Demetri went right to eating while she looked at him lovingly. Light poured into the room while her husband opened the curtains. Her perfect morning was ruined when Josephine walked into the room.

"Cole told me what happened. I came to apologize about last night. You had every right to be upset, and I wanted to make amends."

Marley's mind screamed for her to take Josephine out. But she had to remember their plan. Cuddling Demetri closer to her body, she smiled at the blonde as best she could without it looking forced.

“You’re not to blame for anything. Like Zachary said last night, I received some very upsetting news and needed to take it out on someone. I’m sorry it had to be you. Please accept my apology. It was wrong of me to do.”

“Of course. I hope you and I can be really good friends.”

A smile broke across Marley’s face. But this time it was genuine. Just the thought of what they had planned for *Josie* cheered her up considerably. “I’m sure we will be. I have the best idea! How about you and I spend the day together?”

The girl actually smiled back. “I would love that. We’ll be like sisters! I always wanted a sister. Maybe someday we will be. Not biologically of course, but in other ways.”

“Sure. You never know.”

Throbbing already began to make itself known in Marley’s head. Jesus, this was going to be a long day. Could she even make it halfway through without losing it? She would have to if they were ever going to get to put an end to whatever was going on. *Sisters*. This girl couldn’t be serious!

Testing, testing. One, two, three. Marley, can you hear me? If so, come join me in bed. I’m not ready to get up, and I need you to keep me warm. Marley, helloooo.”

She started laughing, shocked at Cole’s voice echoing in her head. So it had really worked. She almost hadn’t believed it. Last night all she heard were her own thoughts. Zachary cleared his throat, looking at her concerned. Realizing they couldn’t hear Cole, she wiped the smile off of her face and looked down at Demetri.

Cole, I can hear you. Give me some time. You’re distracting me.

Hurry! I want you to come cuddle with me.

“Why don’t you go have breakfast and then have one of the maids go through my clothes to find you something to wear. I need to speak with my husband and spend some time with my son. I’ll meet up with you soon,” Marley said, looking back up at Zachary.

“All right, I can’t wait. I’m going to go wake Cole up and tell him. He’s going to be so excited!”

“I just bet he is.”

Josephine walked out of the door, and Zachary came forward, kneeling before her as she lifted Demetri up to her shoulder. She began to pat his back lightly while she looked at her husband.

“You saw Cole again last night. I know you were laughing about him, but I don’t know why. Marley, I think your change is erasing our marks completely.”

Startled, she sat forward. “So remark me. Can you do that?”

“Absolutely. Do you really want me to? Your mark as my mate is still intact. It’s just the blood tie that grows weak. I’m not sure anyone’s had to redo one before. Why were you laughing earlier?”

Should she feel guilty? She wasn’t sure. Oddly, though, she didn’t. The only thing that worried her was that Zachary wasn’t going to take the news too well.

“To answer your earlier question, yes, I saw Cole last night. I was laughing because I could hear his thoughts.”

“You bit him again?” Zachary asked quietly.

The look on his face was unreadable. “Yes, I’ve completed the blood tie.”

“I see. But this is your third time biting him. Am I correct?”

She watched him stand and walk to the window. Her heart began to ache. Why was her heart aching? She wanted to cry. Was she feeling what Zachary felt, or was she somehow deep down conflicted with these new emotions for two loves?

“Yes, I’ve bitten him three times. The first marked him as my mate and started the tie.”

“I figured as much. So let me get this straight. You’re my mate, and he’s yours because you’re truly an Alpha. Great. Just great.” Zachary sighed. “Well, I suppose you had to pick someone, and since you couldn’t pick me, I’m glad at least it’s Cole and not some stranger.”

“Are you angry, though?” Marley asked hesitantly.

“I’m not...angry. It’s just something I need to think on. The pack will have a hard time digesting this. I seriously don’t know what to do. Marley, this isn’t the way things are supposed to be. If we lived in old times, I’d either have to challenge you or kill you for taking another mate. But Cole was never a problem. You knew that from the beginning. Shit, I encouraged it! But the status of lover and mate are two totally different things.”

Marley finished feeding Demetri and carried him over to the window by Zachary. Cole’s thoughts about Josephine burst through her mind, making her forget what she was about to say. Every word of their conversation was as clear as if she were standing in the room with them.

“Cole, Marley’s going to spend the day with me. Isn’t that wonderful?”

The groan almost made her smile. “Yeah, I bet she’s going to love that.”

She’s going to hate every minute of it. Poor Marley. How she ever agreed to do something like that is beyond me. I can barely stand being around the girl, myself. She’s way too happy all the time. It just doesn’t seem normal.

Josephine’s voice broke through Cole’s thoughts. Marley listened curiously. “What do you think we’ll do? She’s even going to let me borrow some of her clothes.”

“I have no idea what she has planned, but I’m sure you’ll have fun. Marley is the most wonderful person I’ve ever known.” *And the most beautiful, caring, considerate...Where is she? I wonder what she’s doing right now.*

Marley couldn’t see what they were doing, but she could hear Josie’s voice growing closer to her new mate. “I can be wonderful, too, Cole.”

No, don’t get in the bed! Dammit! “I’m sure you can be. Right now, I need to get dressed and take care of some things. Have you

eaten breakfast yet? There's a really good buffet they have every morning downstairs."

Marley held in her laughter and focused back on her husband. "Zachary, Cole mentioned wanting to talk to you. What are you going to tell him?"

Her husband turned away from the window and looked from her to their son. Zachary reached for Demetri, and she watched him cuddle the baby.

"I'm not sure. I'm probably going to end up telling him the same thing I told you. I need to think over the situation."

She nodded, accepting his answer. If Zachary didn't let her keep Cole as a mate, she would ultimately obey. She loved them both, but Zachary was her husband, and she loved him dearly. He had trusted that her and Cole's relationship would remain on a certain status, and they had exceeded it.

"Go get dressed and head down to breakfast, Marley. I'll follow shortly with Demetri. I think we need some father-son time."

She smiled, kissing both of them before leaving the room. Giggling interrupted her thoughts, and she let Cole and Josephine's conversation break through.

"We'll be really quiet," Josephine whispered and giggled at the same time.

Marley, dammit, come and rescue me. Shit! I don't know how you both expect me to do this. I can flirt all day long, but foreplay with the possible enemy is not what I signed up for. Marley!

Hearing the distress in Cole's voice gave Marley an uneasy feeling. She didn't like him being uncomfortable. Protectiveness took over and she increased her pace.

"We could be quiet, but you forget people are awake and they'll be looking for me soon. I'm supposed to..."

Marley thought of something quickly. With a light knock, she barged right into Cole's room, watching the startled Josephine nearly fall off the bed.

“Oh, I’m sorry, was I interrupting? Cole promised he would fix my...shower, and since I would like to take one I was hoping he’d look at it now.”

“Shower? Don’t you have a handy man around this mansion?” Josephine asked a little irritated.

Took you long enough! “I’ll get right on that.”

Cole jumped out of bed and threw on a pair of sweat pants over his boxers. He was out of the door before Marley could break her stare from his body.

“I’ll see you at breakfast,” Marley said, quickly walking out of the room. She was not about to be trapped into another conversation with that girl before she had caffeine in her system. It was way too damn early for that.

Chapter 17

People poured in all morning from their pack. News about the incident traveled fast. Already, the house was beginning to become clustered. Bedrooms were being assigned, and people arrived with suitcases of clothing that surely would last them a good few weeks.

Marley tore at the bacon viciously while she watched Cole and Josephine flirt from across the table. Their plan was going to be so much harder than she originally thought. Turning her attention to Zachary and her son, she tried to give a reassuring smile. The way he looked over at her was full of concern and caution.

“So what do you ladies have planned today?” Cole asked, looking over at her.

How about swimming? It could be fun. Think about it. Me, you, and sex in the water. It doesn't get much better than that. Of course, we'll have to find a way to ditch...what did you call her, a dimwit? Yes, we'll have to ditch the dimwit.

Cole's mischievous grin caused her to smile at him. “I thought she could help me pick out merchandise for my store. Then, maybe we can go for a swim.”

“That sounds like fun!” Josephine leaned over the table toward Marley. “You know, I know the perfect little water hole back in the woods. It could be exciting. We should all go. You can even bring Demetri. I'm sure he'd love to get out of the house.”

The anger tightened Marley's muscles, but she kept it under control. “Demetri isn't allowed in the woods. You never know what could be lurking around out there.” She leaned closer toward Josephine, staring directly into her eyes. “There's things filling the

forest that can maul you beyond recognizable. I don't think it would be very safe. What do you think?"

The girl shuttered. "Well, now that you put it that way maybe it wasn't the best plan. Did anyone ever tell you your personality is a bit gruesome?" She leaned back against her chair to provide distance between them.

"Marley just has a very overactive imagination. But I love her for it," Zachary said, kissing her cheek.

She beamed a smile at him and turned her attention back to her food before she snapped at Josephine worse than she already had.

Take her son in the woods. Ha! That had been a little forward for someone who knew she was suspected. But maybe she doesn't have a choice, Marley thought.

"You know, Josie, I realized you haven't mentioned anything about your family. Why don't you tell us about them?"

For the first time, she watched the girl crumble. Repeatedly, Josephine began to fidget. Bingo. She was definitely hiding something about her family.

"Well, my mom and dad are dead, so I lived with an aunt. Who, by the way, is a complete bitch. My brothers...they're gone." The girl got quiet as her bottom lip quivered. "I can't find them. They just disappeared," Josephine said, starting to cry.

Marley immediately jumped to her feet. Fuck, her instincts told her the girl wasn't lying. What in the hell was going on here?

"I can't do this anymore! I'm a horrible liar," Josephine sobbed. "I'm so sorry, Marley. You were right all along. I am hiding something, but you all have to help me."

Stepping up beside her, Marley could smell the wolf in her flowing off in waves. Jesus! "Josie, talk to me. What do you need me to do? As long as you're truthful with me, I will help you. But if I find out you're lying, I quit being nice. Deal?"

Red, swollen eyes greeted hers. "Deal," she said, wiping her face on a napkin. "You said I was a wolf, and you're right. I belong to no

pack at the moment. My brothers were supposed to come back to get me and they didn't. My older brother, Damon, or Demon as we like to refer to him, didn't say where he was going, but my twin, Jordan, told me he was coming here, and I haven't heard from him since.

"Where is he?" She sobbed. "I thought you all killed him, but I can tell no one here would do that. The way you reacted to an attack last night proved to me you take care of your pack. I know you all wouldn't let something happen to him."

Marley felt like she had been punched in the gut. Her whole body began to shake while she looked into Jordan's brown eyes. How had she not made the connection before? Slowly, Marley backed away from Josephine, her whole body trembling uncontrollably.

"Jordan was your brother?" she whispered shakily.

"Yes, you know him! I can tell. Where is he? Marley, please tell me. I'll do anything, please!"

Zachary's arm eased around her, stopping her escape. "Marley take Demetri upstairs to Kylie. Then, if you want to come back down, you can. Josephine and I need to talk."

Giving the desperate girl one last look, Marley grabbed her baby as quickly as she could and ran out of the dining room. Being anywhere near someone who was linked to the man who marked her and wanted to kidnap her and her son flooded her with terror.

She looked down at Demetri's eyes and held him closer to her chest while she rushed up the stairs. Kylie was in the hall and opened her mouth to say something when she must have caught Marley's anxiety.

"What's happened?"

"You have to take Demetri and just...hold him, watch over him. Jesus, I'm so freaked right now. Josephine just announced she's Jordan twin, and she's looking for him."

"Oh, shit. Is Zachary with her?"

"Yes, I'm going back down. I'll tell you everything soon. Just, please, watch over him."

“You know I will. Marley, be careful,” Kylie said, already walking with Demetri into his room.

The sound of a scream made her whole body go rigid. Her feet felt like lead. They refused to walk forward, but she had to go and face this girl. The whole reason Jordan died was because he wanted her and her son. She couldn’t become a coward now.

Running back down the stairs, Marley paused just outside the dining room and walked in slowly. Cole was trying to comfort Josephine whose head rested against the table, crying. Zachary held a hand out to Marley for her not to move, but it was too late, the girl already heard her.

“He’s dead because of you! You said I was responsible last night for killing your family, but you killed mine, for real. I had nothing to do with the attack. You killed my other half,” Josephine sobbed, resting her head back on the table.

Nausea threatened. She had been so sure Josephine was somehow responsible. Now she wasn’t so sure. The girl lied last night, but possibly only concerning the whereabouts of her brother. What were they supposed to do now? They were right back to square one.

“It wasn’t my fault. He wanted me and my son. Josephine, your brother was rival pack. You, of all people, should know what happens when a pack tries to dominate the other. He came here trying to take over. What were we supposed to do, let him? Zachary’s family was here first.”

“Jordan wasn’t bad!” Josephine said, flying out of the chair. Marley watched the wood splinter as the blonde’s tiny fist slammed into the table. All that was left was a massive hole.

“Now wait one minute,” Marley said, stepping forward. “That was Zachary’s mother’s table. If you want to destroy anything you can take your ass outside.”

Zachary grabbed her arm, pulling her closer to him. She looked up at him, and he quickly removed his hand.

“What, are you going to make me?” Josephine snarled at her.

Her fist knocked another hole through the table, and Marley was over the wooden divider before she realized it. She easily lifted the girl by the shoulders, glaring into her eyes.

“I think I told you to keep your hands off of the furniture. Don’t make me teach you respect. If you didn’t buy it, then don’t break it, is that clear? I don’t want to have to hurt you, Josephine, but you’re making it extremely difficult. I’m sorry this happened, but it couldn’t be stopped.”

The blonde laughed in her face and was suddenly gone. The pain that exploded against Marley’s face was unexpected. She could feel herself flying through the air. The contact she made with Zachary’s mothers china cabinet wasn’t even felt compared to the rage that exploded in her body the moment she heard broken glass.

Pushing herself off of the ground, she sprung and hit Josephine full force, causing both of them to fly through the glass window and land on the grass outside.

“I can’t believe you did that!” Marley screamed at her. “Do you know how long that’s been in the family!”

They continued rolling around the grass, hitting each other. Nothing was getting accomplished except a rising amount of blood. Pain kept coming, and Marley kept delivering it right back.

Twigs from the hedge were stuck in her hair, and her arm was throbbing painfully. She had no doubt she cut it from the window. Josephine proved impossibly powerful. It almost felt like the moment she gained ground, the girl made her push against a brick wall.

“Truce!” Josephine yelled, panting.

“I thought you’d never say so,” Marley said, sprawling out on the grass, breathing heavily.

“Wow, you’re strong.” The blonde rolled onto her stomach to look at Marley. “Why don’t I know you? We share the same bloodline.”

Marley's eyes darted to the Josephine's bloody face. "What do you mean we share the same bloodline? I'm not related to you. I'm not even from here. I came from Texas."

"I didn't say we were sisters. Sharing the same bloodline doesn't mean that, exactly. It simply means we share the same original maker, but yours is so pure, I would think he bit you himself. How long have you been a wolf? It's taken me my whole life to build up this much strength."

Josephine wrinkled her nose. "And what's up with your scent? It doesn't make sense to me."

The guys were staring at Josephine just as shocked as Marley was. How they had even gotten out here, she hadn't noticed. Momentarily speechless, she tried to think of which question to answer.

"Not long, only a few days. Who is the 'he' you're referring to?"

"Only a few days!" Josephine looked toward the guys. They shook their heads, telling her Marley spoke the truth. She looked back at Marley. "Shit, I don't know who 'he' is. Demon or Jordan never mentioned his name. He's a god, an ancient wolf. Supposedly, he was a great, great, great, distant relative or something of ours. Like I said, they were so secretive around me. They never told me anything."

"You said your other brother Demon left when Jordan did. Do you think he's responsible for the recent attacks on our pack?" Marley asked hesitantly.

Josephine looked down. "I'm not sure. Demon was always the bad one. He continually made Jordan do things he didn't want to do. If my twin was in this rival pack you speak of, then, yes, I believe Demon is behind it.

"But I'm not sure Demon will be their Alpha. He didn't have it in him. That's why Jordan was always getting pulled into his schemes. He was the more powerful of the two. Demon might be stronger now. They were both still young when they left me with my aunt. It's been over four years since I've seen either one of my brothers"

“For what it’s worth, I’m really sorry about Jordan. I don’t think he was all bad. I wish I could tell you why he happened to do the things he did,” Marley said quietly. Just talking about Jordan was making her extremely uncomfortable, but she wanted to put Josephine at ease. She knew it had to be painful for her to have lost her twin, and Marley might not like Jordan, but she was gaining a whole new respect for the twit. The girl could definitely deliver a punch.

Chapter 18

Cole couldn't believe the information about Josie. And the fight was even worse. His instincts pulled at him to defend Marley, even though she didn't need it. He and Zachary couldn't help but gape in utter disbelief at the strength and quickness she had displayed. If this was just the beginning for her, how powerful would she become? The thought struck him with fear.

Once someone in a surrounding pack heard of her power, would they come to test it? Zachary was once considered a prodigy, and plenty of times other packs wanted to dominate them just for boasting rights, but with Marley would it be the same? He didn't like the feeling that twisted in his stomach.

Werewolves were all about proving themselves. It was almost certain some cocky new alpha would want to come to test the theory. Could he or Zachary sit around and let them challenge her? No. A war would ensue for sure.

Cole shook his head, trying to block the majority of his thoughts from Marley. She seemed occupied with Josie on the computer so hopefully she wasn't paying attention. The last thing he wanted to do was worry her. But he did need to talk to Zach.

He looked over in his best friend's direction and smiled. Demetri stared intently into Zachary's face while it seemed his alpha carried on a conversation with the nonverbal child. Cooing sounds came from the baby as he swung his fists around in the air, obviously in a very happy mood.

It suddenly dawned on Cole how different his friend had ultimately become in the months he wasn't here. Zachary used to be

so focused and serious all the time. Now he was smiling and talking gibberish to a baby that probably didn't know what in the hell its father ranted on about. The transformation made him smile.

So this was the family love his mother always talked to him about. She always said when he found his mate and they started their own family he wouldn't be so crazy anymore. Now that he thought about it, since he met Marley, he hadn't done anything he would usually be doing.

He couldn't even remember the last time he went out to a bar and tried to meet someone. The need no longer felt necessary. But as for family and kids, he'd probably never know the feeling. Surprisingly, if he had Marley it didn't matter so much.

"Outside, you say. Well, if you insist then I won't deny you. You know, I can't deny your mother anything, either. What have you both done to me?" Zachary asked Demetri, laughing.

Cole saw his opportunity and took it. "I'll walk out there with you. I need some fresh air anyway."

Marley looked up from the computer long enough to smile at all three of them and then went back to pointing at clothes and talking with Josie.

Cole followed Zachary out into the hallway and into the brightly lit living area. When they approached the back doors, his alpha stopped and looked directly at him. Zachary's gaze pierced his very soul. There was no more babbling father. It was pure business.

"Shut off your thoughts." Zachary waited a few seconds and then proceeded. "Marley may not have been listening to you. But I did catch pieces of what ran through her head. You're worried about her strength."

Cole let out a sigh and opened the door. They walked into the garden area, coming to a stop under the large gazebo. "Yes, I think she'll be challenged in the future. Maybe not too soon since we'll try to keep her a secret, but eventually people will know. You, of all

people, should remember how it is to be a prodigy. Arrogant jackasses think they have something to prove if they beat the strongest.”

“Yes, I’ve worried about it myself. But Marley’s not to know. She has so many things she’s already worried about.”

“Agreed. We keep it to ourselves. So, what about Josie? That news came as a shocker, wouldn’t you say?”

Zachary rolled his eyes and adjusted Demetri in his arms. “Yeah. I sure as hell wasn’t expecting it. How Marley could sense it is beyond me. Cole, I’m almost afraid to admit that I have no idea what exactly my wife is. She’s wolf, but she grows claws in half form. I can’t do half form, and no one else I’ve ever met can, either. Maybe wolves that were purer of blood could, but that would have been hundreds of years ago. I don’t know what to do.”

Cole took a deep breath and shook his head. “I don’t know what to do, either. You’re the strongest wolf I know. Shit, that anyone knows. Is there a call you can make to get some answers?”

“I’m afraid the man that held the answers in long in the ground. My father would have known more of our history, but he never shared it with me, and he sure as hell didn’t write it down anywhere. Of course, I did send off the tickets for Marley’s parents. They have to be the source, or at least know of it.”

“Yes, you may be right. But how are you going to ask them? What if they’re human and have no idea she held lycanthropy? It’s not a question you can come right out and ask.”

“You’re right. Josie holds somewhat of the same strand, but it’s disappointing she doesn’t know anything about her history. Wait...I know what we need to do.”

Cole looked at Zachary confused. “Well, tell me.”

A smile broke across his face as his blue-green eyes began to sparkle with excitement. “Since we might have killed one of the only ones who knows anything, we find Demon. If anyone is definitely going to have information, it’ll be him. There are just some things I don’t understand.”

“Like what?” Cole couldn’t seem to keep up. Marley’s thoughts about clothing kept pushing into his head. He was not interested at the moment. He wanted to know how to help her. Not fill her store full of new merchandise. Quickly, he shut off his thoughts as best as he could.

“When Marley was attacked, why didn’t they take her or kill her. She was curled into a ball. She was the easiest target, yet this red wolf didn’t even try. And what about the apparition? Cole, we both know Jordan was the only one who projected that way. Do you think it’s possible he taught his brother before he died?”

Cole shook his head, thinking. “How, when he was on the road with us for a year? We always stayed together. Even if he did disappear for a few minutes it wouldn’t have been long enough for him to give a lesson on projection, even if he did do it over the phone. I don’t know what is going on with the see-through figure. I wish I knew.”

* * * *

Marley could feel the tension rolling through her body, tightening her muscles. Josephine and she may have been temporarily on good terms, but a part of her still couldn’t get over the fact that she was Jordan’s twin. Gluing her eyes to the computer so she didn’t have to look at the girl caused the throbbing in her head to worsen. She needed a break, something to take her mind off of the past.

“Why don’t we go for a walk? I think I need some fresh air.”

“Would you mind if I got some clothes from you and took a shower? I really need to just clear my head. I’m sorry, Marley, but this thing with my brothers is really eating at me. It’s just really hard for me to understand.”

“I don’t mind, really. Why don’t you follow me and I’ll get you some clothes.”

Marley stood and led the girl into her and Zachary's room. Josephine, head down, followed her to the closet quietly. The confusion whether she should say something tugged at her conscience. Should she be comforting the possible enemy? Would Josie turn on them all if she was put in a situation that made her choose?

"You wouldn't happen to have an old pair of sweats, would you? I really don't feel like dressing up right now."

"My specialty," Marley whispered. "If you ask me, you can never have too many."

She took out a pair of new undergarments, a navy blue pair of sweats and an oversized AC/DC shirt. A laughed bubbled out of the blonde as she grabbed them and instantly wrapped her arms around the shocked Marley.

"I was telling the truth when I said I wanted to be your friend. I know it's going to be hard for us to get used to being around each other because of the circumstances, but I'm willing to try if you are. My parents had high hopes for this pack. I believed them and trusted them. If they wanted to be a part of this, then so do I."

Speechless, Marley nodded her head. She watched Josephine walk away quietly. Rooted to the ground, she was more confused than ever. The girl hadn't lied, she could tell. She really did want to become her friend. And the information about the trust her parents held for the pack left tears clouding her vision.

Yes, I want to talk to Gerald as soon as Marley gets done with what she's doing.

The thoughts plowed through her head almost making her scream. It just occurred to her this was the first time she could recall really hearing them. Surely, Cole hadn't been sleeping. She saw him leave with Zachary and the baby. Now they were having a conversation and she just now began picking up on it.

Cole, I want to go. Tell Zachary I'll meet you two downstairs. Josie's in the shower, so I think it's the perfect time.

Yes, Zachary thinks it best if you talked to Gerald instead of him. There's something I need to take care of, but I'll tell Zach you'll meet him there.

Thanks, Cole.

Marley jogged out of her room and headed for the stairs, praying Gerald held new information for them. If they could get some answers then maybe they weren't back to square one after all.

Chapter 19

Easing into the room, she watched Zachary follow her in. Gerald looked so lifeless lying against the white sheets. He lingered so close to death's door, Marley feared for what she was about to do. The pale boy with charcoal hair possibly held information to questions they needed answered.

Slowly, she approached the bed. The labored breathing caused her heart to ache. Was he going to make it? She wasn't so sure. If his health were better, he could possibly go into wolf form and heal faster, but he wouldn't even have the strength for that.

Zachary walked up next to her, wrapping his arm around her waist. "Remember what I told you," he whispered. "He'll feel more comfortable talking to you. He really likes you. If I question him, he might get scared. Are you sure you can do this?"

"Yes, I can do it. Is he going to be all right?"

"I don't think so. They really did a number on him."

She leaned down to the bed, inches away from Gerald's face. The closer she got, the heavier his breathing became. She could feel her own heart accelerate at his anxiousness.

"Gerald, it's Marley. Can you wake up?"

The light fluttering of his eyelids caused hope to surge through her, but he didn't open them. "Gerald, I need to ask you some questions. Will that be all right?"

His lungs sucked in air raggedly while he nodded his head. Marley knew she didn't have time to waste. "Did you see who attacked us?"

The quick nod of his head yes had excitement making her toes tingle. “Are they the rival pack we fought with last year?”

He nodded his head yes again, and she looked toward Zachary. His fist rested against his mouth while he studied the pale boy.

“Is Demon their Alpha?”

Dark purple eyelids flashed open to reveal sapphire eyes filled with fear. He shook his head no while his breathing increased rapidly. Scared for his life, Marley tried to calm him. The intake of air was too much. He was going to hyperventilate if he didn’t slow down.

“Shh, it’s okay, Gerald. We won’t let anyone hurt you.” Marley lowered herself, trying to sooth him.

While she leaned over him brushing the hair back from his face, pale hands gripped her shoulders with surprising force, pulling her chest down to his face. Teeth broke through her skin while she screamed for him to stop. She could feel the blood start to leave her body. What in the hell was Gerald doing, trying to kill her? Seconds went by and still she couldn’t break his death grip.

Cole burst through the door, knocking it off its hinges, and helped Zachary try to pry her and Gerald apart. But the longer he drank her blood the stronger he became. Black dots danced around her vision while she fought from sinking into unconsciousness. Finally, a large intake of breath was followed by her release.

Gerald blurrily came into focus after she blinked a few times. She could feel Zachary pushing cloth into her chest, but she only could hear one thing.

“Jordan! Jordan’s the Alpha. He’s not dead,” Gerald screamed. “He tried to kill me. God help me, I’m the traitor! I betrayed the pack to get Jordan out last time. Don’t you all see? It’s Marley’s blood that kept him from being killed. It’s one of the reasons he wants her.

“He said she’d grow into one of the most powerful werewolves and he’s right! Even dismembered, Jordan healed in two days. You didn’t remove his head or heart. You didn’t even burn him!” he screamed, hysterically.

“What in the hell are you talking about, Gerald?” Cole growled at him.

The frustrated sigh that escaped the bloody mouth turned into a powerful growl at the end. “Marley’s line is from Helix, the purest werewolf there is. Jordan has done nothing but obsess on how Demetri and Marley are going to be the foundation of his pack. Her and Jordan are marked and every day she gets stronger, so does he.

“His powers are terrifying. He’s nothing like he used to be. Now he’s ten times stronger. Once he gets her with a child and they start their own line, he wants to eventually merge the two together.”

Marley couldn’t hear anymore. She was going to be sick. The nightmares that haunted her, that kept her reclusive here in this mansion for so many months, were coming back, crippling her with fear. She needed to leave, to take Demetri and flee.

“You will not leave,” Zachary boomed down at her. “I won’t let him get to you or our son. I will die protecting you and so will everyone here in this pack.”

“He’s right,” Cole said, stepping forward. “We won’t let him get to either one of you. I promise you that.”

“I’ll protect you, too, Marley. I didn’t know what Jordan had become. I’m sorry. This is so unlike him, but I see he’s not the same person anymore. If you and your husband will allow me, I’d like to join your pack.” Josephine walked through the door, water still dripping from her hair. Marley assumed she must have heard the commotion.

Zachary removed the cloth that was pushed against Marley’s chest. The wound, amazingly, was already almost healed. Gerald gasped in amazement.

“I told you! Look at her!” he said excitedly in the background.

“We’d love you to join the pack, Josephine,” Zachary said, glaring at Gerald and helping Marley to stand.

She looked at an almost perfectly healthy person in front of her. How had her blood done that? And who was this person Helix? She had so many questions.

“So what happens to me,” Gerald asked nervously from the bed.

His words tore her from the questions running through her mind while Cole’s thoughts pushed their way through. She knew the punishment for betraying pack. He caused the deaths of eleven other members who were innocent in all of this. The laws for shifters were the same everywhere—betrayal equals their own demise.

“You die,” Marley said, advancing toward him. “You are responsible for eleven deaths, the safety of my son, and you’ve betrayed your Alpha. There’s no living through all of that. You know the rules.”

“You can’t kill me! I told you about Jordan. It’s the reason they wanted me dead. I knew too much.”

Zachary grabbed her before she reached the bed. “Marley, it’s not your responsibility to take care of my dirty work. Let me handle him. You go let everyone know the news. Until Jordan is found, this house and the remaining pack will continue to be under lockdown.”

Pausing, she looked at Gerald. “The first time I met you, Zachary was trying to persuade me to go outside, but I was afraid. Do you remember what you said to me?”

Gerald’s eyes clouded with tears. “I told you there was nothing to fear. I told you I would die before I let anyone hurt you,” he breathed out ruggedly.

“Yes, you tried to convince me how the pack always protected what they considered theirs. I took you for the poster boy of what we stood for. Gerald, I’m so disappointed in you,” Marley said, feeling herself tear up at how much he truly betrayed and hurt her.

“I’m so sorry. Please forgive me.”

“I’ll forgive you when Jordan is no longer a threat.”

Marley walked out of the room, Josephine following closely at her side. She needed to check on Demetri. Her son was top priority. If Jordan was indeed still alive, then she wasn't taking any chances.

"Josephine, I have to tell you up front. I'm not so sure I trust you. You were just devastated over Jordan's death. Now you want to join our pack. Why? It doesn't make sense to me."

A strong grip stopped Marley as she reached the top of the stairs. Her eyes went to Josephine's hard gaze. Just the look she was giving her made the possibility of Jordan being alive a reality.

"I join your pack because loyalty was the one thing my brother taught me before he left. Loyalty, honor, and truth were the three things drilled into us by our parents before they died. We moved here in hopes of joining Zachary's families pack, but my parents died before we got the chance. I still remember my mother being excited at finding a line of Alphas who had the three things they cherished most.

"Truthfully, I don't know what happened when my brothers left, but I'm telling you, Jordan was nothing like what you all talk about. I blame Demon. It had to be him who ruined my twin. Jordan was my heart, and my heart has ached since he left me. It's like I knew all along he wasn't the same person."

Marley looked into her eyes trying to get a grasp on the person Jordan used to be. She remembered the good side of him. He was an amazing lover up until the moment he marked her. He was funny, witty, and very charming. The morning they ate breakfast together she had seen that side of him. But she also could remember the evil smiles and the way he lost it when she told him Demetri was meant to be with Zachary's pack.

Clearing her thoughts, she proceeded down the hall. "I'm glad to have you on our side." Marley laughed, opening Demetri's door. A gust of wind brushed against her face. At the all-too-familiar smell, her world tilted. She wasn't sure how she knew, but there was no denying what her mind screamed. Jordan. Josephine tensed, probably picked it up just as fast.

“Oh, God!” Josephine screamed, running to Kylie’s unconscious body. Marley couldn’t do anything but stare at the open window. Demetri was gone. Jordan had succeeded in breaching their estate line and getting her son. How was that even possible?

She didn’t think. She couldn’t. She just ran. The air felt light as she dove out of the two-story window. Shutting her eyes, she didn’t even think. She morphed. She hit the ground in her wolf form so smoothly the height change hadn’t made the smallest difference.

“Marley! Don’t go, it’s a trap! Marley, come back!” Josephine screamed down at her.

Running faster than what she thought possible, she didn’t stop, even when she breached the woods. Jordan’s scent pulled at her, and she followed it. But it was different than what she remembered so long ago. She’d always mistaken their smells for cologne, but they weren’t. He smelled almost like her now, sweeter. An inferno of heat nearly crippled her body. She knew she was getting stronger from being in wolf form, but so was Jordan, and she assumed Zachary and Cole were, too.

Chapter 20

The sounds of screaming had Cole running up the stairs with Zachary trailing right behind him. Something was wrong. He knew the moment Marley's emotions went crazy. If they wouldn't have been taking care of Gerald then he would've left the moment she became upset. But Gerald had been so tough it took Zachary longer than he thought to take him down. And Cole couldn't chance leaving Zachary alone with a werewolf who was as strong as three put together.

They both broke through Demetri's room, and he knew instantly what happened. Kylie sat up on the floor while Josephine was holding something to her head. Marley was nowhere to be seen.

"You tell me everything that happened right now!" Zachary voice roared through the room.

"I don't know," Kylie sobbed. "I was looking over the crib at Demetri and everything went black. There was no scent, nothing, Zachary, I promise."

"Where's my wife and son!"

"Marley dove out of the window the moment she realized Demetri was gone. She turned into a wolf in midair and ran toward the forest. I've never seen anyone run that fast," Josephine whispered toward the end.

"Fuck!" Zachary screamed, slamming his fist through the wall. "I told her I would protect our son. She was so scared when she knew Jordan was back. How did he even get inside!"

Cole watched everyone jump at the rage Zachary displayed. “Zach, calm down. I can talk to her. Let me try to convince her to come back.”

“Yes, tell her to come back.” He watched his alpha pace and then freeze, mid-step. “Oh God, Cole. She has to come back. Marley’s never been through a full moon before. I thought both of us could get her through it, but if Jordan and his pack have her, can you imagine what will happen? Think about it, Cole. Once she tastes the blood of her first kill, she’ll want to have sex, and she won’t care who it’ll be with.”

“Let me try,” Cole whispered. Just the thought of what could happen to Marley in the hands of Jordan and his men had his stomach turning. He closed his eyes and concentrated on their connection.

Marley, I know you just heard how Zachary reacted and what he said. Please come home. Let us help bring Demetri back. You can’t do it by yourself. We’ll all leave right away. You just have to come back. Please, Marley! I beg you. Don’t give Jordan the satisfaction of having you, too.

Over and over, Cole repeated his pleas to her, but she refused to communicate with him. He just prayed she would listen. He could feel her emotions still all over the place. Focusing on one in particular proved to be extremely hard. She was afraid, yet angry. A part of her even felt a pull for bloodlust. She would kill anyone in her path, and since she was already in wolf form and the moon was almost full, her sex drive would become uncontrollable.

“I begged her to come back. I’ll get everyone we can ready and pray she gets back in time to start the search.”

“Yes, you do that. I’m going to be in my room. Maybe I can project to see where she is at the moment. If I can locate her, we might be able to get to her before they do. Or before she gets to them. I hope for all of our sakes she doesn’t reach them first.”

Cole watched Zachary leave the room. Josephine helped Kylie to her feet while they stood there quietly awaiting instructions. Taking a

deep breath, Cole cleared his head and led the women downstairs. The moment he got to the bottom, he let out a howl that brought everyone scrambling toward him. From wall to wall it was crowded with pack.

“Jordan lives and he’s taken Demetri, our next leader. Zachary is trying to locate Marley at the moment. She ran after them before we could stop her. We’ll start a search as soon as he arrives.”

Nervous murmurs echoed throughout the room. Cole watched as someone walked forward.

“Cole, I helped tear him apart myself. How does he live? It’s impossible.”

This was exactly what he didn’t want. They probably had so many questions, and he wasn’t alpha. He could answer them, but he wasn’t sure how much Zachary wanted them to know. He tried to think of a way not to explain too much.

“Marley’s blood is very powerful. Jordan marked her not long before he was dismembered. Her blood kept him alive long enough for one of our own members to betray us and get Jordan to safety.”

Gasps exploded in the room. Cole quieted everyone down by raising his hand. “Zachary should be down shortly. I need everyone to shift and wait for us outside. It is imperative we find Marley as soon as possible. Be on guard while you wait. We don’t know how many the rival pack has.”

* * * *

The pull on the inside of Zachary’s stomach had him leaving his body. All of his focus went to Marley. He still hadn’t gotten the chance to redo the blood tie with her and their connection remained weak, but since she changed into a wolf, he could feel his overall power gaining strength. The projection hadn’t taken more than a few seconds of concentration, and he was free.

Trees loomed out before him. Quickly, his body pulled down into the massive pine and oak forest. In seconds, he saw white flash ahead so fast it was nothing but a blur.

“Marley!” Zachary called to the all white wolf. He knew it was her. She was the only one he had ever seen before. The beauty of her form amazed him. Gracefully, she wove in and out of the trees with such speed any wolf wouldn’t be able to catch up. She already reached the middle of the forest.

“Marley!” Zachary growled again.

Movement from all sides erupted from every angle he could see. Suddenly, Marley stopped, skidding to a stop. Fear consumed him while he watched his wife turn back into human form. The wolves began surrounding her and she just stood there.

“Oh, God, don’t do this, Marley! Let me help you. Please!” Zachary screamed down at her.

To his shock, she looked right at him, even though he was sure she couldn’t see him. “I love you, Zachary,” she whispered.

“No!” Zachary’s whole body exploded with panic. He couldn’t let her hand herself over to them. He dove down trying to grab her, but without her being in projection his hand went right through her body.

“Jordan,” Marley said, stepping forward.

Zachary’s eyes darted up, and his heart stopped at the confirmation. Jordan walked toward them, smiling. His body was so much more built and bigger since the last time Zachary saw him. The length of his brown hair reached just past his ears, so different than its usually short appearance.

“I knew you’d come back to me,” Jordan said, walking up to her. His hand caressed her face while he looked into her eyes. Zachary wished more than ever he could tear the traitor apart.

“I forgive you for what you did so long ago. Now we can pick up where we left off. I’ve missed you so much. You’ll see, Marley, everything’s going to be great just like I said before.”

"Where's my son?" Marley snapped, pulling her face away from his hand.

Jordan glared down at her, and Zachary knew this wasn't going to be good. He seemed calm when he thought Marley had come willingly, but now he looked vicious and angry.

"Our son is safe. You'll see him soon enough."

"He is not your son! He's Zachary's son and always will be!" The sight of Marley screaming into Jordan's face made Zachary's breath cease.

The fist Jordan slammed across her cheek left Marley flying through the air. Bile and rage rose in Zachary's throat. He watched as she lay on the ground not moving. The need to rip Jordan apart was uncontrollable. Zachary swung and grabbed at him and still nothing happened. The sound of Jordan's laugh caught him off guard.

"Zachary, don't tell me you seriously think you can hurt me while you're in projection. Come on, I can sense you. I know you're here. Just so you know, if you bring your pack up against mine, you'll lose. With Marley and me sharing such a close connection to the same type of blood, I'm supreme. You'll never beat me now.

"But, no worries," he laughed. I'll eventually tell your son about you when he's older. After, of course, he gives me what I need for my pack. With the son Marley's given you and the one she's going to give me, we'll dominate.

Anyway," Jordan said, shaking his head, "He'll know what a loyal and brave man his father was. I'll tell him right before I kill him. There's no need for him once he's mated and brings in a new line."

Zachary couldn't process the fury going through him. Taking one last look at Marley, he felt the snap that connected him back with his body. The need to destroy everything in his path rocked him. Jumping to his feet, Zachary swung the door open and headed down the hallway to the stairs.

He was going to enjoy killing Jordan. This time he would succeed. Nothing would be left of him to be put back together. Zachary

reached the bottom of the stairs where Cole waited for him. The look of concern radiated off of his friend's face.

"What happened? I can't feel Marley anymore. She's hurt."

"Jordan has her, but he knocked her unconscious. She wouldn't play by his game, and he didn't like what she had to say. They're still in the woods. But they're pretty deep back. Depending on how fast we go, we might be able to catch them."

"The man has lost his mind, Cole. He knew I was there, and he told me what he has planned. He wants a son and he's determined to get one. We have to hurry. The moon gets fuller with every second we wait here."

Cole tensed at his words. "The pack is all outside waiting. Some still haven't arrived, but we have a good sixty wolves here. Did you happen to see how many Jordan had with him?"

Zachary shook his head trying to think back. He'd been so focused on Marley he hadn't thought to take count. "I'm guessing around forty or so from what I saw. That's not saying he doesn't have more wherever he's held up."

"Let's hurry. There's no time to waste. She's still out, but barely."

The guys walked outside, and Zachary looked at the pack. "Thank you all for coming. The majority of you know Marley and Demetri well. For the ones who haven't had the opportunity to meet my mate or your future leader, I promise you you've sorely missed out on two of the most amazing people I've ever met. You're going to love them."

"As for Jordan, he lives. I saw him myself. He has taken my wife and my son. They're still in the woods, but we have to hurry before they leave. There are a large number of them, and they're all strong and prepared to fight. If you're with me, then follow. If not, then you're allowed to stay here however long you need. I don't blame you for not wanting to risk your life."

"Josephine and Gary, I want you to stay here with Kylie and Aria. I'm leaving you both in charge to make sure nothing happens to my

sister or my niece. Now, for whoever's with me, let's go get my family. I do not want one single wolf to live. Is that clear!"

Howls echoed off of the large mansion. Zachary and Cole howled back and exploded into wolf form. Every single wolf rushed for the woods with the intensity of what the wolves in them craved—justice, blood, and the need to feel the meat tear between their razor sharp teeth.

Chapter 21

The sounds of yells began to push through the fuzziness in Marley's head. She recalled Jordan and being hit. The image of her son's bright eyes made her snap her own open. Demetri's scent was still here. Now she just had to find him.

She pushed off of the dirt, wiping her hands on her jeans. Jordan noticed her standing and laughed, walking back toward her.

"Damn, you bounce back quickly. That hit would have killed a human. Good girl. I knew you would be fine. So, have you warmed up to my plan, or am I going to have to put you on your back again? And, no, I'm not talking about hitting you. I'm talking about what we once experienced together so long ago."

Jordan walked up to her, grabbing her behind the neck and pulling her body against his. "You remember don't you, Marley? I bet you even dream about it sometimes, too, right?"

"You were a great lover, Jordan. I never said you weren't. You just fell off the deep end at some point. Let Demetri go back to Zachary, and I'll stay with you. I'll give you your son."

Fingers moved up from the back of her neck into her hair. With a sudden jerk, Jordan pulled her head back so she was looking right into his eyes. "Bargaining is for the weak, Marley. I won't be given an ultimatum. You will have my son, and I will have Demetri, and that's final."

Feeling the rage build back up, she screamed at the top of her lungs for release of the overpowering energy pushing through her body. What felt like fire burned her eyes, making heat spill out of

them while she glared at Jordan. For the briefest instant, she watched a worried expression shadow his face.

He's afraid of me. He's actually fucking scared. Good. He needs to be.

Remembering the evil smile Jordan gave her a year ago, she duplicated it and watched his face tense angrily. "Your eyes glowing doesn't scare me, Marley. You may be powerful, but you're not strong enough to overtake me. If you even attempt it, you won't be able to walk for a week."

"Are you threatening me, Jordan? You know that's not nice," Marley said, ripping his shirt open.

"You always were feisty. I loved that about you," Jordan said, crushing his lips to hers.

It took everything Marley had to not to bite his tongue out. Her nails sunk into his back, pulling him closer. She would have to play the part if she wanted to get him out of a defensive mode.

"It's a trap, Jordan. Don't fall for her tricks." A deep voice from behind them made her want to attack.

She turned to see a man who was almost as tall as Jordan—a good three inches over six feet. His hair was a light brown, and his eyes were as black as the darkest night. Marley suppressed a shudder as he raked his gaze over her body.

"You must be Demon. Josephine told me all about you."

"Josephine!" they both yelled.

Marley smiled. "Oh, yes, you didn't know? After she found out what you both had done, she joined our pack." Marley turned to look at Jordan. "She said you always stood for three things, loyalty, honor, and truth. Does that ring a bell, Jordan? You know, she was devastated when she found out what you turned into. What you did."

She was pushed back so fast she didn't have time to brace herself for the connection she made against the tree. Stars danced before her eyes at the lightheadedness. She was tired of this already. Their pack had to be close, and she'd take out as many as she could before they

were forced to kill her. Faith made her believe Zachary and Cole would rescue her son if she helped them out now. Marley found the wolf inside of her and morphed quicker than what anyone prepared for.

A growl poured out of her throat while she looked at Jordan. Demon shifted into a red wolf and stalked toward her slowly.

So, you're the red wolf, Marley thought as she watched him begin to move past Jordan.

"Demon, don't. She's too close of a match to you," he said quietly, studying her.

Oh, come on Demon, are you going to let your brother tell you what to do? I thought you were the one who gave the orders. Don't wimp out now.

The red wolf started growling, and she couldn't help but smile and bare her teeth. Oh yes, she wanted his blood, wanted to feel it flow inside of her mouth, fueling her strength.

Come on, Demon. You know you want to. Come to me. Show me what a real man is capable of. Put me on my back and make me submit to you.

"Demon!" Jordan yelled at him. "If you kill her, I'll kill you myself. Don't ruin everything we've work for."

What you worked for! Marley screamed at him. It was your idea, remember? You made him what he is, and here you are taking orders from him. I thought you were tougher than that. She laughed in her head.

I should have killed you when I had the chance, but no, Jordan said you weren't ready. You're ready now though, aren't you?"

Oh, I'm ready. Come and get me, Demon. Or are you too big of a pussy to take me on?

Fuck you, Marley.

You wish, don't you? But the only pussy you're going to get is the one that's inside of you.

She saw him lunge before he was probably aware of what he was doing. She met him in the air, tearing at his face with her teeth. This is what her wolf wanted, what it thrived for. The fight fueled everything inside of her. Instincts took over and the red of Demon's fur grew closer.

A sharp pain exploded in Marley's shoulder, but she didn't stop snapping at him. She already tasted his blood. The rich, sweet flavor consumed every fiber of her being. It brought out a roaring beast that was intent on making itself known. She was an alpha, and she was about to prove that to them. Sinking her teeth into his throat, she tore the flesh out with one rip.

Jordan screaming broke through her clouded bloodlust only for a fraction of a second. She wanted more, needed to taste more blood and flesh. Seeing a wolf not far away, she attacked with a speed so fast the wolf never saw her coming.

More screaming erupted, and she watched as some wolves never moved while other ones rushed toward her. This was what she wanted. If she was going to go down, she wanted to be giving it everything she had.

* * * *

The sight of his brother getting his throat ripped out did nothing but excite Jordan. Demon tried to convince him Marley wasn't anywhere near as strong as he made her out to be. Demetri was the only one he thought they needed. Well, he got to see firsthand just how powerful she really was. His only concern was the rest of his pack.

Sure, Marley could take them down easily, but if they ganged up on her, she wouldn't be able to do much. This wasn't how he expected things to go. Zachary would be here soon, and he had every intention of finally taking him out, but not here and not now.

“Pack, you will not kill her! She is the foundation of our future! Get her pinned and I will take care of her.”

Jordan looked over at the carrier he had Demetri in, nestled behind a thick tree. The child’s eyes held so much intelligence it was hard for Jordan to even look at him. All he saw was Zachary staring back at him with those eyes. An instant hate gripped him.

Marley slaughtered through his pack while he shifted into wolf form and rushed toward her. Hitting her full force, they slid across the ground. Viciously, she snapped at him. It took everything he had just to hold her down.

You will stop this and turn to human form right this minute, or I order my pack to tear your son apart. Am I clear?

Marley turned human underneath him, crying hysterically. She let out a scream of frustration that sent chills down his spine. Jordan changed form still pinning her down. He studied her face while she began to breathe heavily. The moment her eyes connected with his he knew what was wrong. Her scent took over his senses, leaving him dizzy, but he couldn’t help but smile.

“I forgot these are your first kills. Tell me, Marley, sweetheart, how are you feeling?” Jordan pushed his cock against her pussy.

“I’ll die before I fuck you again,” she said, glaring at him.

“No, you just think you will. I have a feeling in the next few minutes you’re going to be begging me to fuck you. That’s the beauty of us wolves. When we’re in bloodlust, we’ll fuck anyone to make the aching inside of us stop. Ask Kylie. I’ve heard the story of her first kill.”

Marley moaned underneath him, twisting her head back and forth. Jordan knew he’d be fucking her a lot sooner than he expected. That was if he got out of here. Too much time continued to go by, and he needed to make their escape now. When they reached their home, she’d be begging him for sure.

Chapter 22

Zachary rushed through the trees. Cole was off to his side with everyone trailing behind them both. It seemed they ran for miles, and still Marley and Demetri were nowhere in sight. He knew they hadn't passed them. Scent of rival pack still hung heavily in the air. It couldn't be long now.

A scream echoed throughout the air, making every hair on his body stand up. Everyone seemed to push faster at how close it sounded. Soon they'd find his wife and his son, and he prayed they would make it in time to rescue them.

Pack, when we approach the rivals, half of you sweep to one side with Cole, and the other half follow me. We'll approach from the opposite side. We'll force our way to the middle. Is that clear to everyone?

They understood, and were already taking sides behind Zachary and Cole. Their scent grew stronger as they covered more ground. Not a few minutes later, another one of Marley's screams tore at his heart. What in the hell were they doing to her?

Cole, what can you pick up from Marley?

Cole looked at him, his eyes glowing so bright blue they almost made Zachary pause. What in the hell? The moment he thought it, fire rushed through his body, feeding him so much power he wasn't sure what to do with it. All he could do was make himself run faster.

She's consumed so much blood. Zachary, she's killing them! We have to hurry.

More of the forest went by while they rushed through, but still nothing except a growing scent. Just when Zachary thought they

would appear at any moment it just kept lingering on. One last scream penetrated the air just as he saw the rival pack turning toward them.

Now! Zachary screamed while he broke off to the left and Cole broke to the right. Everyone split down the middle, and he began to tear through the wolves that got in his way. Growling erupted everywhere around him. Viciously, he tore at them with his teeth. Adrenaline raced through his body on top of the power his wife fed to him. No matter how many he took out, it wasn't enough.

Pushing his way through, he caught his first glimpse of Marley. Jordan was lying on top of her while she writhed beneath him. Consuming rage took over at the sight of his wife under that monster. Jordan looked up at him and smiled. Then Zachary's world wavered. Marley pulled Jordan's face to hers and began kissing him.

* * * *

Cole broke through the rival pack using his sharp teeth to rip the thick flesh. The sounds of yelping surrounded him while their side of the pack massacred everything in their way. Marley kissing Jordan had Cole screaming and tearing his way to her. He could hear her thoughts, feel the unbearable aching for release.

Marley, stop. Hold on. We're here. Don't do this with him. You'll hate yourself. Think of Demetri. He needs you! Stop!

Relief poured over him as she broke her mouth from Jordan's and screamed. She began to become violent, hitting and scratching at him. Cole watched while Jordan ripped her up by her hair and pulled her deeper into the forest.

His alpha made just as much progress as he. They pushed through, gaining more of the area, but still, rival pack kept coming. One of them could possibly push through but not both. Cole knew what needed to happen if they were going to get to her before they disappeared.

Zach, you need to get to Marley. Nikolas, Stephen, Mark, and I will take over where you leave off. Hurry, before they all get away.

* * * *

The moment everyone was positioned, Zachary burst through the line right for Jordan, Marley, and...Henry, holding Demetri's carrier. Just at the thought of his half-brother betraying him, he saw red. He ran faster, right at the bastard.

Jordan quickly grabbed the carrier while Henry morphed to protect himself.

Traitor! It was you from the beginning, wasn't it? You started this rival pack, collecting people to come against me. Why!

Zachary lunged at Henry before he had a chance to say anything. Brutally, they tore at each other. He and his brother were always a close match, but he had something Henry didn't have. Marley's blood.

Teeth tore at his neck, but he pulled back before his brother could get his jaw locked in a good enough position. Zachary backed up, circling him. The blood began to wet his coat, but he felt no pain. He was too angry to feel anything.

You never deserved to be alpha. You're too good, Zachary. An alpha has to be ruthless, go after what he wants. You could have taken out the New York pack and yet you don't. Peace is too important to you. Jordan sees the bigger picture. He'll be an alpha that makes a pack proud. Not one that someday will be taken over because he's too weak to fight for more.

You stupid fuck! Zachary growled. How do you think people get killed? It's because of greed. Real alphas don't have to fight to prove a point. But you want ruthless, and I'm about to show you ruthless. Tonight you die, and where you land, you'll stay and rot. It's one thing to cross me, but you involve my mate and my child, you die.

Henry exposed the tips of his canines as he took a step forward. *Let's go then, brother. Show me just how strong you are. You may have Marley's blood, but I'm not stupid. I have Jordan's and he has both his and Marley's.*

Zachary smiled, baring his teeth. *We'll see who the better fighter is. Let's go, brother dearest. Your move first. I'll allow you that since this will be the last time you'll ever fight in your life.*

Henry sprung, but the moment he did Marley screamed. It was enough to make him lose concentration. Zachary hit the ground hard. The sight of Jordan sinking his teeth into Marley's shoulder made him jump back on his feet before his brother could even make it back to him.

He charged at Henry, knowing everything needed to end now. Jordan had to be stopped before he grew anymore powerful. They both hit the earth, but he had the upper hand. His wolf form landed on top. With quick reflexes, his teeth sunk into Henry's neck, ending his life. Zachary didn't even look back as he jumped from his brother in human form.

Pulling off his blood-soaked shirt, he stalked toward Jordan. Warmth was running down his mouth and chest from Henry, but he didn't wipe it off. The taste of his kill rushed through his own blood, giving him strength and adrenaline.

"And so we meet again," Jordan said, smiling. "It's been a while. The last time I saw you, I was fucking your wife. I'm so glad she's going to be mine now. She would have been wasted staying with you. At least here she'll be starting a royal line."

"Marley isn't starting shit with you, boy. I suggest you put her and my grandson down before you really get hurt."

Zachary turned to see a man and woman he'd never seen before. Shocked by the interruption Zachary narrowed his eyes, confused.

"Daddy? What are you doing here?" Marley yelled.

“Your husband sent us tickets, remember?” He smiled toward her. “I had a feeling I needed to get here quickly. I’m glad I listened to my instincts. Seem to me you’re in a shit-load of trouble, baby girl.”

“You’re Helix?” Jordan asked, cautiously.

Zachary looked around at everyone, taking in their confused faces. He totally forgot he sent the tickets to Marley’s parents. Dammit, he never thought they would come so soon. Maybe it hadn’t been such a bad idea after all. If he was going to learn more about Marley, he had a feeling her father was the perfect person to ask. How else had her parents found them way out here in the middle of the vast forest?

Chapter 23

Marley looked at her parents, shocked. What were they supposed to do now? She knew they weren't wolves. They couldn't be. She would know if they were, right? Suddenly, reality just didn't make sense to her.

"No, I'm not Helix. Are you serious? Do you know how old that would make me? Damn, kid, research your history before you go around accusing people of being older than time itself. Yes, we're of his line, but do you know how thinned out that line is? It's damn near extinct, even in us. Shit, I don't even shift, but my father did. Doesn't mean I don't know what I am. You're doing this for nothing. Marley's about as human as me and her mama are."

"Oh, no, not anywhere near it, I'm afraid." Jordan smiled. "You haven't seen your daughter lately, have you? You see, she and Zachary's blood may have triggered the lycanthropy to come out of hiding, but my bite brought her blood back to life. When I bit her, the DNA in my saliva was such a close match to her own, everything clicked perfectly. Slowly, but surely, the disease is taking over. Soon, Marley will be so strong she'll be able to wipe any territory out. And I want her to do that for me."

Their words became blurred together. So her dad knew what they carried? Why wasn't she ever told? Was it because they thought she'd never need to know? It made sense, but she had the right to the truth. A ripple effect flushed through her body, making her lose train of thought.

She was getting stronger. She could feel it. Marley looked up at the moon, feeling it call to her. The glowing orb made her body pulse

while she fought the overpowering aching. Her parents being here wasn't a good idea. They may have stalled things, but she couldn't hold out much longer. Jordan already took more of her blood. Defeating him would pose a problem.

"Jordan, let my mother take Demetri, and I will leave with you. Just you and me." Marley pressed herself against him trying to change his mind. She needed her son out of his hands if she was going to try to kill him.

Once again, her body vibrated with need, sending fire rushing through her veins. Her eyes fought from rolling back with pleasure. She desperately held in a moan. When she opened them, she heard her mother gasp.

"Now, Jordan, leave with me." She moved in closer, whispering to him. "You fucked me so good before. I want you to fuck me again. Give Demetri to my mother and let's go start making our own son."

She felt him shift his feet while he remained quiet. Her words must have tempted him. Cole walked up next to Zachary covered in blood. His gaze bore into hers, and she felt something pass between them. Knowing they all grew stronger, she prayed her link grew stronger so not only Cole could hear her, but Zachary could as well.

Zachary, Cole, get Demetri back to the estate while I take care of Jordan. Please! I beg you, do not interfere.

She watched while both of their eyes narrowed at her. They obviously had both heard her. She just prayed they listened.

"Let's go, Jordan," she said, tugging on his arm. "Just hand the carrier over to my mother so we can go. I can't wait much longer. I'm begging you."

Jordan took in what remained of Zachary's pack. "Fine, we don't need Demetri anyway. We'll start our own line. We can worry about mixing the two in the future."

Marley's mother ran forward, grabbing the carrier away from him. Before she could get away, Jordan gripped her arm and inhaled deeply. With a laugh, he let go. Marley wasn't sure what he found so

funny, but she didn't care at the moment. All she knew was that they needed to leave, and fast. As soon as her mother was far enough away, Marley felt Jordan grip her hand as he began to pull them into the darkness.

"You made the right decision, Marley. You'll see. We're going to be so strong, no one will ever mess with us."

Shuddering went through her body at his words. Jordan pulled her harder, making her run faster than she felt she could. Over and over, her clit responded to the movement of her legs. The friction from the jeans made tears come to her eyes. They'd been running nonstop now for minutes and surely he knew she couldn't last any longer.

Collecting her courage, she broke the contact he had on her arm. They both skidded to a halt.

"Jordan, I can't wait anymore. I need you to fuck me now." Marley pulled her shirt over her head, showing him she was serious. She had no intention of going a step farther.

Nervously, he looked around. "I don't live that far away. If we hurry, we can be there in minutes. I have more pack there to take care of anyone who tries to find us. I don't think we should chance your mates or imposter parents coming to find us."

Taken aback by his words, she tried not to show him how they affected her. *Imposter?* "I can't wait. It has to be now." Quickly, she removed the rest of her clothing.

The way Jordan stared at her body, she knew he would submit. He was crushing her lips with his before she could take a breath. Marley's back hit the ground hard. All the fear subsided as she felt the hate she harbored for him fill her every limb. Tearing at his shirt, she felt it disappear beneath her hands.

"No, let me on top." With such ease, she pushed him to the ground. Jordan stared at her, his expression shocked. She laughed looking up toward the moon, feeling her eyes burn from their glowing. In quick pulses, her body convulsed, making her shudder and dig her nails into his chest.

A moan came from Jordan as he pulled down her pussy against the hardness of his cock through his jeans. "You've been holding out on me haven't you, Marley? Helix is going to be so proud of you. He's you're father, not that man in the forest. Just wait until he comes back and sees you." Jordan moaned as his eyes began to glow. "Fuck. I can feel you strengthening my body."

Lowering her breasts against his chest, she began to kiss him cruelly. Jordan was more disturbed than she had originally thought, and that said a lot. He couldn't truly believe, this person, Helix was her true father. Trying to focus on what she needed to do, Marley pushed questions away. "Me being strong turns you on, doesn't it?"

"God, yes," he moaned into her mouth.

"Want to see how strong I am?"

"Show me," he breathed heavily.

"If you insist." Her hands cupped the sides of his face while she pushed her lips into his one last time. With a quick jerk, she felt him go motionless. Marley stood up on wobbly legs, staggering only a few feet before she became violently ill. Knowing she had just broken his neck caused her to become sick all over again.

Zachary and Cole burst through the trees just as she was walking back to his body to finish him off. The wideness of their eyes made her pause to rush to them. She wanted to scream against the conflicting emotions inside of her.

"I was afraid we wouldn't get to you fast enough. How could you think we'd let you leave by yourself? If you weren't so damn fast or stubborn you wouldn't have had to do this. Are you all right?"

Zachary walked forward, crushing her in his arms while Cole gathered her clothing. "Yes, I'm okay. More relieved that it's finally over. But we have to finish this or even with a broken neck, he'll mend himself."

Marley let the tears run down her face. She'd only cry now, and never again for what she did. Jordan needed to die. She continually

repeated the phrase inside her head, using it to calm herself down and make it justifiable.

Turning, she saw Cole do everything Gerald suggested in their earlier conversation. She covered her ears against the sounds that threatened to make her gag, but she couldn't tear her eyes from Jordan's gruesome body. When she was sure his heart would beat no more, she collapsed into her husband's arms. The fact that her rival would never live again pulled the weight off of her shoulders, leaving such lightness it felt strangely invigorating against the guilt.

Demetri would never have to worry about his future. Never would the threat of Jordan lurking in the shadows ever frighten her again. Marley looked up, staring at the moon that lit up the sky above her. There was no denying its power. The glowing sphere held her body immobile, entrancing her senses and mind. Suddenly, peace took over.

Sounds began to echo in the distance, but she was too captured by the world's essence to even turn her head. Tingling erupted all over, and the ache was almost unbearable. Slowly, her hands came up to satisfy her need to be touched. Even though she was in physical pain, she noticed it diminished at the first caress of her fingertips.

Chapter 24

Zachary looked at the horrible scene that lay before him. Jordan was dead for sure this time, and Marley was in a world of her own in his arms. Her hands caressed her body so erotically that he fought to hold himself together.

Cole cleared his throat beside him, bringing his attention back to what they should be doing. He wasn't taking any more chances. Gently, he laid Marley on the ground and collected wood to make a big bonfire. Cole stood beside him while they watched the flames rise high in the sky. Quickly, he disposed of Jordan's limbs into the orange glow.

When he was sure all was safe, he turned to Marley and knelt down beside her. Cole walked up across from her, mirroring him. The glow of Marley's eyes was so bright it hurt to look at them.

"Love, talk to me. How are you feeling?" He watched her face for any expressions. The crackle of the wood broke the silence. "Marley, honey, look at me."

Easily, so not to make any sudden movement and startle her, he rubbed the hair back from her face. Turning her head in slow motion, she gave him a dazzling smile. "Zachary, can you feel it? The moon, it's amazing, isn't it?"

Confused, he looked at Cole, and then back to her. "Yes, it is. But right now we need to take you home to clean you up. Do you think you can stand?"

"Of course." Marley jumped to her feet. "I've never felt better."

“Cole, go and tell the remaining pack to watch over this fire and then to meet us at the house. I want Stephen here to make sure no one messes with anything.”

He nodded and ran off. The look on Marley’s face while she continued to stare into the sky turned his blood to liquid fire. She was beautiful and enchanting. The paleness of her skin glowed brightly against the illuminating green of her eyes.

“Are you ready? Cole will catch up.”

“Yes, let’s go home.”

Zachary helped her dress and wrapped his arm around her. They headed away from the light of the fire and into the darkness of the forest. A soft sound of someone approaching had them stopping so he could hear better.

“Don’t worry, it’s just Josie. I think she’s crying.”

He looked down to his wife. “Do you think she’ll be all right?”

“It’ll take a while, but I think time will heal her wounds. She just lost her brother all over again. I’m sure she’s trying her best to deal with that.”

More footsteps sounded in the distance, but he knew who this was. The soft smell of Cole’s scent drifted around them. Seconds later, Cole caught up and stood on Marley’s other side.

“Everything is being taken care of. Josie wants to stay with the pack at the fire. She didn’t say much, but I think she’ll be all right. Kylie and Marley’s parents have met. Josie doesn’t think Kylie likes them too much, but so far everything is peaceful at the house.”

“Great,” Marley groaned. “I forgot how my mom can be sometimes. Let’s just get to the house.”

“Oh, Josie said Kylie put them in a downstairs bedroom. They’re already retiring for the night. But you’re right, let’s get home.”

They all morphed into wolves and ran back toward the estate. Zachary watched while Marley led them, so much faster than he could have imagined. It was one thing to watch her from above while he

projected, but to see it first hand as he ran to keep up with her was amazing.

At the edge of the forest, he watched her turn back into human form. Slowly, she turned toward him. He quickly caught up to her, and Cole joined them not seconds later.

“Are you sure you’re okay? Is there anything you need me to do?” Zachary asked, caressing her face while he made direct eye contact with her.

“I told you, I feel great.”

“All right, if you say so. I’m going to grab you some clothes that aren’t so,” he looked at the gaping holes she must have made when she took them off, “revealing. Cole, take her to the back entrance, and I’ll meet you both there.”

* * * *

Cole watched Zachary sprint toward the mansion. His attention was drawn to Marley while fragments of her thoughts broke through his mind.

“I know you said you feel fine, and I’m sure mentally you do, but how about physically?”

He watched her hand press against her stomach. “It hurts a little, but I think I’ll be okay for now. I need to check on Demetri. After that, we’re really going to have to take care of this. Is everyone from the pack all right? Did anyone get hurt? I tried taking out as many of them as I could.”

“Everyone’s fine. They’re just worried about you. What were you thinking? You could have been killed. Do you know how worried Zachary and I were? If something would have happened...”

“But it didn’t. I did what I had to do. I knew you both would get to Demetri. The fewer wolves you had to fight, the quicker he would be safe.”

Cole shifted his feet and looked toward the lights of the mansion. "Something happened tonight. I can't explain it, but I have a feeling things might work out between the three of us, but I could be completely wrong." Cupping her face in his hands, he leaned his forehead against hers. "I don't want to lose you. I love you."

"I love you, too, Cole."

The softness of her lips brushed against his with such tenderness his fingers slid back into her hair, pulling her deeper into the kiss. The taste from the tip of her tongue ignited inside of his mouth. He'd never stop craving her distinct flavor.

"We should go," Marley whispered, pulling back. He watched as she doubled over holding her stomach tighter.

"I'm sorry. Here, let me carry you."

Cole swept her light frame into his arms and started running for the back entrance. Just feeling her soft skin against his hands had his cock throbbing. Knowing her pain was because she wanted him buried inside of her only made the pulsing ache even worse.

They arrived at the back door where Zachary was waiting with Marley's robe. His eyes were big while he looked at them.

"Is she all right? She'd never voluntarily let you carry her."

"I'm fine," Marley whispered, cutting off Cole's response. "How's Demetri?"

"He's good. Kylie already put him to sleep. Aria won't leave his side, so they're both sleeping in his room tonight. My sister, of all people, understands what you're going through. That's how she got pregnant with Aria. She said she'll see you in the morning and not to worry about Demetri. She made Mark stay with them to guard the room."

Cole watched Marley nod and felt her shudder in his arms. A soft moan broke through her lips. Quickly, Zachary covered her with the robe, tucking it around her body.

“Let’s go. We need to get her showered fast. I don’t like to see my wife in pain. We’re going to have a long night, and we still have plenty to discuss.”

Zachary took Marley from Cole and gave him a quick glance. “Tell everyone we’re not to be disturbed and then come back to the room so we can talk.”

Cole stood motionless as his best friend and alpha left. Tonight would determine his fate. If he couldn’t have Marley, he didn’t want anyone else.

Quietly, Cole shut the door behind him and headed to the large living area where most of the pack lay resting. Eyes focused on him while he walked into the room. Silence settled throughout the crowded space as they waited for a report. He knew what he was supposed to be telling him, but his mind wouldn’t work.

“How’s Marley?”

Cole looked over at Nikolas. “She’s all right, but you all know how it is when you get your first kill. Her count was very high tonight, and she’s in a lot of pain. Zachary has given strict orders that we’re not to be disturbed.”

“We’re? So you’re going to join them?” Nikolas stared at him questionably.

“Yes, he is,” Zachary’s voice broke through the room. “Marley has chosen him as her mate. Since my wolf has chosen her and her wolf clearly couldn’t choose me, she’s chosen Cole. If anyone has a problem with this arrangement, speak now.”

“Marley’s an Alpha?” Nikolas asked, standing from the leather recliner.

“Yes, she is,” Zachary stated.

A groan broke through Marley’s throat as she shifted higher in his arms. “Does anyone have a problem with the arrangement? I really must know. I couldn’t leave Cole to explain the privacy we all needed without knowing everyone was all right with the situation.”

Cole couldn't believe what he was seeing and hearing. What he thought was going to be a private conversation was being brought up before the pack before they even got the chance to discuss anything themselves.

"It's okay with me," Nikolas said, smiling at Marley. "If you're ever looking for a replacement let me know."

Cole growled while some people laughed it off. No one seemed to have a problem with it once the new third in command gave his approval. Marley nodded and looked toward Cole. Her green eyes shined brightly with tears, yet she was smiling.

"Everyone help yourselves to whatever you want. Nikolas, you're in charge for tonight. We'll all see you in the morning." Zachary rushed out of the room and up the stairs. Cole didn't waste any time. He followed right behind him.

It was almost too good to be true. He couldn't believe how everyone was so accepting of their relationship. The fact that Zachary accepted meant more to him than he realized it would. His heart beat throbbed against his chest as they entered the hallway. He could hear Marley insisting something with his alpha but figured out what it entailed when he saw them quietly peek in on Demetri and then head for their room.

Soon, they would be able to pick up where they had left off all those months ago. Back then it had felt so right, and now it was. Together, they'd all reach the climax of pleasure they were meant to with each other.

Chapter 25

The warm water did nothing to calm Marley's cravings. With every drop that fell against her skin, continual electric currents coursed through her body. A need so gripping clutched at the insides of her stomach as she watched Zachary stand at the glass door of the marble shower.

It took everything she had not to pull him in there with her. But with Cole waiting in the room she held back. She felt incomplete without her other mate. Quickly, she washed herself and got out. She was anxious to feel both of their hands all over her body. Just the thought made her body spasm.

Cole paced the floor at the foot of the bed and stopped the moment he saw them walk out. "Everything's okay?" Slowly, he walked toward her, eyeing Zachary.

"Come find out," Marley said huskily, dropping the towel and leaning back against her husband's hard chest. His hands instantly trailed up her ribs, caressing her breasts as she watched her other mate advance. A low moan came from her mouth while she fought to stand.

Cole stopped before her and stared directly into her eyes. The color had deepened from his original light sky blue to a deep sapphire. He looked from her up to Zachary once again. She watched, confused, while he hesitated before them.

"So it's official? I'm truly Marley's mate. I'll never have to leave to find another one?"

Her husband's hands stilled over her breasts. "As long as Marley wants you, you're hers. You know how the mate process works, Cole. I never had a personal problem with the situation. The pack is what I

was worried about, and they took to the arrangement a lot better than I thought they would.”

Cole’s lips found hers hungrily. He lifted her up, pinning her between their two bodies. Zachary’s hard cock pressed against her back, through his jeans, while she could feel Cole’s hardness against her stomach.

Greedily, she wrapped her arms around his neck, pulling his body impossibly closer. Hands made their way from her breasts, down her sides of her hips. Her husband’s lips trailed down her neck while she continued to kiss Cole more passionately as he slowed himself down to a more leisurely pace.

Marley completely surrendered herself to both of the men she loved. Every brush of their fingertips exploded across her body in a deliciously charged sensation. The feel of her feet touching the ground and the sound of clothing being removed brought her eyes open.

Provocatively, she swayed her hips out from between them and walked over to the bed, lying down. Both of them standing there completely nude nearly took her breath away. Their bodies were perfectly sculptured. Their muscles flexed with every step they made toward her.

Wetness established itself abundantly the closer they got. Need for their contact caused her body to shake almost violently. Zachary walked forward while Cole walked around to the other side of the bed. Both lowered themselves down in sync, almost as if they were reflecting each other’s actions.

The warmth emanating from their nearness enveloped either side of Marley’s body. Cole’s rugged breath brushed against the side of her cheek as he scooted closer.

“I’ve missed this. I think this is the way it was meant to be,” Zachary said, sliding his fingertips between her breasts.

“Yes,” she whispered, turning toward her husband. “Kiss me, Zachary.”

The all too familiar taste filled her senses as their tongues caressed each other's slowly. Pressure to the inside of her inner thigh had her separating them to allow whoever's hand access to touch her. She shivered while the touch inched its way up torturing her with the nearly nonexistent contact.

"I want to try something we've never tried before," Zachary whispered against her lips. "We don't have to if you don't want, but I thought maybe you might like it."

Opening her eyes felt impossible, but interested in hearing what he had to say, she managed. "What do you have in mind? I can't possibly think of anything else we can try unless you're planning on hanging me upside down"

A laugh came from beside her and she turned to look at Cole. He looked at Zachary and then back to her. Confused, Marley continued to glance back and forth between their two faces.

"You two obviously know something I don't. Just tell me."

Marley could barely get the sentence past a whisper. The color of both of their eyes darkened at just the mention of what they secretly were thinking. She tried to read Cole's thoughts but oddly enough he had them blocked. Heat filled her body and she suddenly didn't care what they wanted to do with her. She wanted both of them, now.

"I think it would be better to show you instead," Cole said, wrapping his arm around her stomach and pulling the back of her body against his. Zachary immediately filled her front, sandwiching her between them as they all lay on their sides.

* * * *

Zachary trailed his hand down Marley's stomach until he came to her wet folds. She moaned, shifting her hips forward placing him over her clit. He kissed her deeply applying pressure and rotating his fingers in a counterclockwise motion. The feel of nails gripped his shoulder, urging him on.

Painful throbbing raced through his cock as he became harder. Her scent, her taste, it was all too much to take in. An overpowering feeling of impatience overcame him. Something about the three of them together always made Zachary feel complete. Cole was more than his best friend; he was like himself in so many ways. They were almost the same person, loved the same person, and strived for the same things for the pack. He could never imagine keeping Cole out of their lives.

The smoothness of Marley's leg settled over his hip while her bottom hand went to his cock. He could feel her reaching back. Heavily, his eyes opened in time to see her place her hand on Cole's outer thigh. They were all so close together, their faces not inches apart. While Zachary kissed Marley, Cole kissed her neck and shoulders.

Pleasure filled every feature of her face. With her mouth slightly parted, Zachary sucked in her bottom lip, running his tongue over the smooth fullness. The tightening of her hand around his cock caused him to groan into her mouth.

"More, touch me more."

Zachary and Cole looked at each other, not sure exactly who she was talking to. He slid his finger over her opening and realized Cole's finger lingered over the same spot. Both of them grinned and slowly they both slid their finger into Marley's pussy.

"Yes, Oh, God."

Drawing out each thrust, they took their time discovering how and what exactly turned her on the most. Closely, he listened to his wife's breathing, watching her breasts heave while she sucked in breath. He thought her most beautiful at moments like this. The fascination he held for her would never end.

"Cole."

There was no reason to say more. In the past, they had done this so many times he knew his best friend would catch on to what he wanted, what he craved more than anything.

Marley rolled to her back as Cole edged up on the bed. Removing his finger from her tight opening, Zachary placed it in his mouth sucking off her wetness. The powerful taste of her scent had him locking his jaw so the alpha in him wouldn't try to claim her, already. His cock throbbed agonizingly at wanting to fill her. It was torment to move down when all he wanted to do was climb on top of her and spread her thighs wide, so he could watch himself entering her pussy.

"Cole, come to me," Marley whispered, reaching for his cock and bringing it to her mouth.

Zachary settled down between her and closed his eyes, inhaling deeply. Heat seared his closed lids as fire ran through his veins. He hadn't even tasted her, yet her scent affected the wolf in him to degrees he'd never experienced before. If he opened his eyes, he knew they would glow with the vast power surging in every limb he possessed.

Slowly, he lowered himself to Marley's folds, continuing to let his senses guide him in the blindness. He traced his tongue over her slit, clutching to the comforter desperately for control. The urge to bury his face was almost unmanageable.

Using his finger he separated her, repeatedly circling her clit. A muffled moan had him opening his eyes to watch her reactions. Gradually, he moved back to her opening, sliding his tongue inside of her. Cole groaned while Zachary watched her take more of his cock into her mouth, moaning against him.

Swirling his tongue around, he felt her back arch allowing him deeper access. She moved her hips to his thrusts, burying her fingers from her available hand into his hair. Tightening began to establish itself around him, and he plunged into her faster.

The more her pussy tightened, the more her fingers pulled. At that moment, he couldn't have been happier. Now he was right where he wanted to be, buried deep against her.

Zachary knew the exact moment she was about to cum. Her thoughts screamed it into his. Cole had obviously heard her too, he

quickly withdrew from her mouth and covered her lips with his, drinking in her screams.

A wave of her essence slammed into him making him become lightheaded with exhilaration. She had the most amazing taste he ever experienced. And he knew it would never be enough.

* * * *

Cole walked a thin line when it came to pacing himself. Marley's mouth around his cock was nearly his undoing. If Zachary would have prolonged any longer then she would have surely finished him off. The suction she used when she reached her peak was unbelievable.

Crawling back down to lay parallel with her, he watched Zachary get off the bed and reach into their bedside drawer. He threw Cole a bottle of lube and Marley looked back and forth between them nervously.

"We'll go slow and easy, work our way to the act. If you don't like it, we'll stop. Do you think we can try?" Zachary asked her, lying down facing toward them.

"I won't hurt you, Marley. You know I would never do anything to cause you pain."

"I know, Cole. I trust you."

Zachary pulled Marley's leg back over his hip and began kissing her slowly. He could tell by the thoughts running through her mind that she was more relaxed on the idea. The fact that she accepted and trusted him made the tension drain from his body.

Taking in her curves, Cole stared fascinated. He ran his hand over the silkiness of her hip toward her swollen breasts with a gripping need to touch her.

"You are so beautiful," he whispered into her ear.

He squeezed and pulled gently at her nipple. The weight collecting in his palm from her breast made him push his body against

hers to be closer. His cock throbbed to be inside of her. Remembering the lube, he opened the bottle, pouring a generous amount across his fingers.

“I’m just going to rub this across you, all right?”

Marley nodded her head while she continued to kiss Zachary. He rubbed his fingers over the opening of her pussy and her ass, feeling her move to meet the pressure encouragingly.

The feeling of a hand caused him to look up to meet his best friend unique eyes. He could feel fingers slide inside Marley’s pussy and he massaged the outside of her folds, feeling the wetness seep out from the arousal Zach was causing.

Applying more lube, Cole traced the opening of her ass. “I’m going to touch you. Stop me if you don’t like it.”

Tenderly, Cole eased his fingertip inside the tight entrance. “Does that hurt?”

“No, more.”

She turned back, pulling his lips to hers. The bed moved while Zachary’s fingers thrust faster into her, causing his finger to move halfway in. He heard her intake of breath and froze. He didn’t have time to assess if he’d hurt her before he felt her grip on his cock. The unexpected touch had him groaning with pleasure.

“More, Cole. Use two fingers. Zachary does this sometimes. It’s not the first time. Don’t worry, you’re not going to hurt me. I like it. Just go slow, okay?”

Surprised, Cole nodded and slowly eased another finger inside her. Every little move her body made caused him to pause. “Like this?” He said, beginning to gently thrust his fingers against the progressing rhythm of Zachary’s.

“Oh, yes, like that. Cole, pour lube on my hand. I want to touch you.”

Dispensing a generous amount in her palm, he watched while she wrapped her small hand around his cock. He had to bite his lip at the ease of her first stroke. The grip with which she held him was

perfect—not too tight, but tight enough. When she began to moan and her stroking became faster, so did his.

“Marley,” Zachary said in a tense voice.

Cole could see her embracing him with her other hand. He knew exactly how his friend felt. They all wanted each other so badly it was hard to stay in control. Everybody on the bed shook with anticipation—him, most of all.

“Now,” Marley whispered.

* * * *

The phenomenal sensations Marley was undergoing made her want to scream from pleasure until her voice was completely gone. Finally, she would have both of them again, and in a way they had never experienced before.

They both positioned themselves closer, rubbing both of her openings with the tip of their cocks. Zachary hooked her leg around his arm, pulling it higher to give them better access.

Slowly, her husband entered the wetness of her pussy. She could feel herself stretching around him to accommodate his large size. Delightful sensations shot to the core of her stomach while she felt Cole start to ease inside of the opening of her ass. After only entering a small portion, he stopped.

“Are you okay? Does it hurt?”

“No,” Marley could barely get out.

“Are you sure? We can stop. For some reason I can’t read your mind. Everything is going so fast.”

“No, don’t stop. It feels good. Just go slow.”

Zachary continued to thrust into her at a leisurely pace while Cole inched his way in gradually. The feeling of having both of them inside of her at the same time was so new and enjoyable that her mind wasn’t sure what to think. The pain had been there at first, but now,

the more he moved the better it felt. Processing the euphoria pouring through her made her head spin.

On numerous occasions her husband inserted his fingers inside of her ass. But this reached a whole another level. Cole wasn't small, and every inch he slid in rubbed her insides, triggering the pleasure Zachary was igniting in her pussy. Everything seemed more sensitive, larger. The fullness she felt was beyond anything she could remember experiencing.

Clutching on to the back of Zachary's shoulders, Marley could feel her nails begin to sink into his skin. She was already tightening around his cock, and their slow penetration gave her the feeling like it wasn't enough. She needed more or at least a faster pace.

Cole's hand ran from her hip, over her stomach, coming to a rest over the beginning of her folds. Shifting his hand, she felt the pressure applied to her clit. In a circular motion, he teased her. She leaned back against his chest, resting her face on the junction of his neck and shoulder.

"Zachary, replace the bond you and Marley have."

She looked toward her husband, but Cole reached underneath her head and held her face so his lips came down on hers. Shifting, they both moved deeper inside of her, triggering the most powerful orgasm she ever felt. The slight pain of teeth sinking into her shoulder combined with the pleasure of her release prolonged her orgasm until she moved at her own velocity against them. As soon as she thought she was done, she was blindsided again.

Opening her heavy eyes, she looked at glow emanating from her husband. He was breathing heavily, trying to catch his breath. With one last deep thrust from him and Cole they pulled out of her, shooting their warm cum across her back and stomach.

Marley couldn't think, couldn't even see straight. Her teeth were literally vibrating, and she couldn't swallow. But overall, she knew she never remembered feeling more blissful in all of her life.

She barely noticed Cole picking her up and carrying her to the shower. Nestling deeper into his chest, she laughed at her husband tickling her foot from behind them.

“Are you happy?” Zachary asked, stepping into the large marble shower with them.

“Can you read my mind any better?”

He smiled down brightly at them while Cole cradled her in his arms from the small bench resting in the shower.

“I can, and you are. I don’t think happy even describes the way you’re feeling. It feels very comforting to have you back with me. So what now, Mrs. Zevgolis?”

Marley laughed. “Now we live happily ever after and find someone for Kylie.” The smile left his face. Even Cole tensed behind her. “What? Why can’t we find your sister a mate?”

“It’s a long story. One that would probably take all night. Just know that she won’t do it. She’ll not look for a mate. I’ve already tried, trust me.”

“Well, we have all night, and I want to hear. You may have given up, but I’ve just started. I’ll find Kylie a mate, even if I have to project and look myself.”

The guys laughed at her and shook their heads. “God help us, Zach. The woman never gives up once she gets something in her head. Your sister doesn’t stand a chance.”

“You may be right. Leave it up to our Marley to complicate things the moment they start running smoothly.”

Her eyes grew wide, and she didn’t hesitate. She grabbed the washrag Cole grabbed for them on the way in and threw it at his chest. “I resent that statement, Zachary. You take it back.”

The deep tone of his laugh echoed through the enclosed area. “Oh, I’ll take it back all right. Come here.”

He swiftly picked her up out of Cole’s arms and held her while he started tickling her. Marley tried to scream past the laughter, but with the way she was being cradled in his arms she couldn’t get down.

“Take it back!” She yelled, laughing. Her body was sliding in his arms, but he was too quick. She couldn’t wiggle her way out of his grasp. It seemed ingesting her blood had made him a lot more powerful than his previous state.

“I told you I would. Hell, what do you think I’m doing?”

“Cole, you better help me.”

He laughed and raised his hands in the air, surrendering. “I’d love to, dear, but what he’s doing looks so much more fun.”

“Traitor!” Marley said in a burst of giggles. “Enough tickling. Truce until we get back to the bed.”

“Oh yeah,” Zachary said, pausing his hand to look at her.

She watched him look from her to Cole. Following his gaze, she noticed their playful mood was quickly taking a turn.

“Now I like that idea a lot better,” Cole said, huskily.

Heat ignited her body at the thought of what they had all just done. It felt amazing and completely different than what she was used to with them. Suddenly, she wanted more. She wanted them again.

No one hesitated. They quickly washed and got out. The moment they all emerged from the bathroom a knock sounded at the door.

“Marley, is Cole in here?”

Her jaw slightly parted. “Josephine can’t be serious. That twit has the worst timing,” she hissed under her breath.

“I think we already talked about manners. Are we going to have to punish you after all?” Zachary asked, raising his eyebrow at her.

Walking to the door in her towel, Marley stopped and smiled at him. “Bring it on if you think you can handle me.”

She watched as they both grinned at her mischievously, crossing their large arms over their chests. “Oh, we can handle you, my dear. But can you handle us?” Cole asked, dropping his towel to the floor.

Marley couldn’t swallow against the dryness that reestablished itself in her mouth. Forgetting about the door, she walked slowly toward them, captivated. They were hers, forever. She said the only thing that would register in her foggy mind.

“Let’s find out.”

THE END

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

I live in a small Texas town along the Gulf of Mexico. Family is everything to me. My mother always encouraged my reading growing up. Looking back, my earliest memories revolve around my grandmother, who was always glued to a book. Her passion for mystery is probably the reason I'm so comfortable around a police scanner. Hers was on twenty-four hours a day.

When I'm not writing, cooking, or brainstorming new ideas, you'll see me with a book in my hand. Briefly before I started writing, I was devouring a romance novel every day. For some reason, I couldn't get enough. My husband asked me the question that ultimately changed my life forever. "Why don't you try writing a book?"

At first, I laughed. Write a book? Who, me? Never written a story in my life, I was intimidated. To satisfy my husband and to sate the curiosity that began to fester inside of me, I did. My first story was my husband's favorite. There was something that ultimately bothered me about it, though. I couldn't write a love scene to save my life. Not one that would fit inside of a "romance" book, anyway. It was way too graphic.

After doing research I came across the erotica genre and knew this is where I belonged. Details are important and with my books, the more details during their "coupling", the better.

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