



The Wolf in the Woods

Holiday themed stories

Marisa Chenery

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<http://lsbooks.com>

Email:

raven@lsbooks.com

Editor

Devin Govaere

Cover Artist

April Martinez

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Blurb

Lost in the woods when on a Canada Day camping trip with her grandmother at Algonquin Park, Red finds herself chased by a large male wolf. Shocked when the wolf shape-shifts into a gorgeous man, she is unable to tell him no when he takes her into his arms and kisses her senseless.

Rutgar knew Red was his mate from the first whiff of her scent. Out on his daily evening run through the woods in his wolf form, he can't resist the pull she has over him. The mating urge rides him to claim her as his mate.

Not pleased to find herself bound to Rutgar without her consent, Red soon learns another werewolf forms a greater danger than an unexpected mating ever could.

Dedication

To my fellow Canadians who will be celebrating Canada Day along with me.

Chapter One

Now she'd gone and done it. Red Stanwood knew without a doubt that she'd gotten herself lost. She cursed under her breath as she turned in a circle. All the trees looked the same. Just great. Her grandmother was going to kill her, if she didn't worry herself to death first.

Red looked up at the sky high above the tops of the trees. The sun had already started its downward descent. How could she have screwed up so badly on the first day of her camping trip with her grandmother?

As she started to walk once more, Red muttered under her breath, "What do you expect? You're not exactly an outdoorsy girl, now are you?" Busy talking to herself, she didn't pay attention to where she stepped. Red hissed as she turned her ankle. "Terrific. Why don't I break an ankle while I'm at it?"

She called herself every bad name in the book as she shook out her ankle and then continued on. A week camping at Algonquin Park, during the Canada Day weekend, had sounded like a great idea at the time when her grandmother had invited her to go. Red thought of it as a chance to get away from her mundane job as a librarian, to experience the great outdoors. The park was three and a half hours away from Toronto, where she lived, and offered her a chance to really get away from the hustle and bustle of the city. Now Red wished she'd told her grandmother no.

Red stopped walking as she spotted a boulder that looked suspiciously like one she'd just past not too long before. Great. She'd started to walk in circles. She turned around to try the other direction, but came to a standstill when she saw the large wolf that stood a few feet away. The thing was huge. It had to be a male. She leaned to one side and took a look between its back legs. Yup, the wolf was most definitely a male. His ice blue eyes locked with hers as he cocked his head in her direction. Red's heart skipped a beat as the wolf took a step closer. She had no idea what to do. The wolf didn't look as if he were ready to go on the attack. None of his light brown almost blond fur stood up on end around his neck. And so far he hadn't snarled at her, but that could change very quickly.

Starting to panic, Red did what had to be the dumbest move for a person in her situation to do--she turned her back on the wolf and took off at a run. She could hear the wolf keeping pace behind her as she ran blindly through the trees. Branches slapped across her face and pulled at her long hair. Red took a quick glance behind her, which turned out to be her undoing because her foot caught on an exposed root. With a grunt, she landed on her stomach on the forest floor.

The feel of a cold nose pressed against the bare skin of her thigh just below the hem of her shorts had Red up and crawling to the large tree in front of her. She scrambled onto her feet and pressed her back against the trunk. The wolf stood less than a foot away.

With her heart in her throat, Red did the first thing that came to mind--she took up what she hoped looked like a karate stance. Her hands held in front of her with the side of her palms toward the wolf, she said, "You better watch it. I'm an expert at karate. I'll kick your butt to next Tuesday if you're not careful." That was *all* she could come up with? She was so full of shit Red had to wonder if her green eyes had suddenly turned brown. As if karate would do

anything to stop a full grown wolf from attacking her. And she sure as hell wasn't a karate expert.

Red stiffened as the wolf lifted his head and sniffed the air around them. Her hands slowly dropped as the wolf's body started to shimmer and blur. She blinked in disbelief as the wolf's body changed from that of a wolf's to a man's. And not just any man. The man that had taken the wolf's place could only be described as drop-dead gorgeous. He had the kind of face that would put a male model to shame. The kind of face that made a woman want to thread her fingers through his longish light blond hair, yank his lips down to hers and then fuck him until neither one of them could move. By no means a prude, Red felt her face heat as her body went up in flames. Running her gaze down his clothed large, muscular body, she couldn't help but notice the impressive hard-on he had in his snug-fitting blue jeans. She felt her pussy start to ache with arousal as she dragged her gaze up his hard abs, well muscled chest and broad shoulders to his face. The tight black t-shirt he wore showcased his upper body to perfection.

He closed the distance between them as his ice blue eyes, which seemed to glow, locked with hers. Red felt wetness pool between her legs at the appreciative way he ran his gaze over her breasts. Her nipples grew taut beneath her t-shirt. They tightened even more when he reached out and circled one of her nipples with his finger. She gasped as he wrapped his other hand around the back of her neck and pulled her lips to his.

Even though she should be screaming with fear, she felt the world fall away until only the two of them existed as he moved his mouth over hers. Had he cast some sort of spell over her? Red groaned when his tongue pushed past her lips. He tasted like pure sin. Her body burned hotter as he shoved his hand up her t-shirt and pushed her sports bra out of the way. He plucked at her nipple with his thumb and index finger, sending shockwaves of pleasure all the way down to her pussy.

More turned on than she had ever been just from being kissed, and unable to find the strength or willpower to push him away, Red arched her back against the trunk of the tree as she pushed her breast closer. Lost in a sexual haze that he'd created, she sucked on his tongue and kissed him back passionately. He cupped her breast as he pulled away and stared down at her. Red panted as she craned her neck to look him in his strangely glowing eyes. He dwarfed her five foot six. He had to be at least six foot seven. She had a weakness for tall men.

Running her hands up his chest, she placed them on his shoulders. The man didn't have an inch of fat on him anywhere that she could feel. She took her bottom lip between her teeth as she looked up at him beneath her lashes. With a real wolf-like growl, he bent and took her lips once again. Red dug her fingers into his shoulders as he pressed forward to grind his hard cock against her pussy. Wetness leaked down the inside of her thighs as she thought of how good that big cock of his would feel deep inside her.

He pulled away from her mouth. As he licked and kissed a path along her jaw to the side of her neck, he said in a deep, rough voice, "The smell of your arousal is driving me crazy."

Unable to speak past the pounding need that thrummed through her body, Red could only moan as she rocked her hips against his erection. She soon gasped as he lifted her shirt out of the way and bent his head to circle his tongue around her nipple before he sucked it deep

inside his mouth. Red felt her pussy contract as more of her wetness leaked out to soak her panties.

He moved to her other breast and gave it the same attention until Red felt her legs go weak. He put his hands on her hips as he slowly made his way down her body until he was on his knees in front of her. Her stomach quivered as he dragged his tongue across it and down to the top of her shorts. He undid the drawstring and pulled her shorts down past her hips so they pooled at her feet. Using his teeth, he yanked her panties down so they too ended up around her ankles. He ran his hand down one of her calves, then urged her to step out of her panties and shorts, leaving them pooled around her other leg.

The sharp bark of the tree dug into her bare backside as he spread her legs apart. Red soon didn't notice the discomfort when with a growl/moan he spread the lips of her sex and licked her from bottom to top. She dug her fingers into the bark of the tree as he laved her pussy with the flat of his tongue. He continued to growl deep in his throat as he ate her out. His wicked tongue swirled around her clit before he sucked it between his lips. Red cried out as an intense wave of pleasure shot through her body. Her hips bucked against his mouth as the need to come built inside her pussy.

As if he sensed that she was very near to falling over the edge into ecstasy, he pushed two fingers inside her core as he continued to lick and suck her clit. Red's head fell back against the tree at her back with a loud moan. With his fingers plunging in and out of her sex while his mouth sucked on the center of her pleasure, it was enough to send her flying over the edge. A keening moan left her lips as her inner walls spasmed around his fingers. Her orgasm seemed to go on forever.

When the last wave receded, Red looked down at the man who had given her the best oral sex of her life to find he had gone very still. He had his head cocked as if he were listening to something. Red couldn't hear a thing except for the sound of her racing heartbeat.

He quickly stood up. Red tried to reach for him, to cup the large bulge in his pants, but he took hold of her wrists in each of his hands and held them above her head. He then bent his head and took her mouth in a hard kiss before he walked away. Red watched him shape shift back into a wolf and disappear through the trees.

Lost in a daze, she had to wonder if he had been real. Could a man who could shape shift into a wolf be real, or had her overactive imagination made him up? But the way her body still thrummed with pleasure, Red felt as if it had been real. And if it had been real, why hadn't she run screaming from him instead of letting him have his way with her? God, she couldn't be that hard up.

At first she didn't hear the voices calling her name. A cool breeze brushed her lower body. She suddenly realized she stood with her shorts and panties around one ankle with her t-shirt and sports bra shoved up to her chin. The calls were definitely coming closer. With a yelp, Red quickly pulled her panties and shorts back up, then shoved her boobs into her sports bra before she pulled her t-shirt back down.

Now properly dressed, she called, "I'm over here."

A group of four park rangers stepped into view as she came around to stand on the other side of the tree. One spoke into a radio as they closed in on her. Red looked behind her in the direction the man, wolf, shape shifter, or whatever he was had disappeared. She couldn't see a trace of him anywhere. She told herself not to be disappointed. Yes, he had given her an intense orgasm, but that didn't mean anything. Instead of being worried as to *what* he was, Red couldn't stop thinking of how good it had felt to be in his arms, to have his mouth on her body. She must have totally lost her mind, because that couldn't be considered a normal reaction by any standards. As the first park ranger reached her and asked her if she was all right, she glanced behind her once again. She had a feeling the hunky wolf-man would not stray too far from her thoughts no matter how hard she tried to forget what had happened between them.

Chapter Two

Rutgar Holden ran in his wolf form until he'd gotten well out of sight of the park rangers and the woman. But he didn't go so far that his sensitive ears wouldn't be able to hear what was being said. He planned to wait until they started moving then he would follow them. He needed to see where the woman camped.

He lifted his nose and sniffed the air. Even from this distance he could smell the woman's scent. It caused his body to become painfully aroused in both his wolf and human form. One whiff of her scent and he had known she was his mate. It had also caused the mating urge to ride him, something that happened to every male werewolf when he found his mate. It wouldn't let up until he claimed her as his own. And oral sex didn't count. If anything, it intensified his need to have her.

Out on a run through the park in wolf form, something he did every evening since he lived not too far from the park, Rutgar just happened to stumble across the woman's scent trail. The first whiff had pole axed him. Knowing what that had meant, he had sniffed her scent until he had it burned inside his head, never to be forgotten. He'd then followed the scent trail to the woman herself.

Already more than a little aroused just from her scent filling his head, Rutgar had felt his mating urge kick in to high gear when she came into view. He'd silently followed her at a discreet distance. It hadn't taken him long to realize she'd become lost. If he had been in human form, he would have smiled as he listened to her swear at herself.

No longer able to keep his distance, Rutgar had stepped out in the open behind her just as she had turned around. His need to have her cranked up another notch. Looking up at her face, he found her more than attractive. Unlike his kind where both males and females were known for their extreme good looks, his mate could best be described as pretty. Not that he found that to be a knock against her. Her looks appealed to him. Besides having a pert nose, full lips he wanted to kiss, and beautiful green eyes, his mate had long thick light auburn hair that fell in waves down to the middle of her back. He'd run his gaze over her body as he'd taken note of her full breasts, curved in waist and long legs that he ached to have wrapped around his waist as he pounded into her.

Rutgar cocked an ear in the direction he had come as he listened to the park rangers ask the woman if she was all right. He waited to see if she would say anything about her encounter with a strange wolf, but she made no mention of the wolf. She just seemed more interested in getting back to her campsite.

As the park rangers started to lead the woman away, Rutgar loped through the trees behind them. He didn't need to have the small group in sight to be able to follow them. The scent of his mate was like a beacon. Her scent combined with the scent of her desire, which still clung to her skin, kept his body coiled tight with arousal.

When they finally reached the woman's campsite, Rutgar watched an older lady rush out of the tent camper and wrap his mate in her arms. He listened as the older woman took a step back and spoke to his mate.

“Oh, Red, you had me so worried.”

Rutgar shook his lupine head. Red. His mate’s name was Red. With all that red hair of hers it certainly suited her.

“I’m fine, Grandma. I just got a little turned around is all,” Red said before she turned to face the park rangers. “Thanks for bringing me back to my campsite. I promise this will be the first and last time you’ll have to rescue me.”

The park rangers then said their goodbyes and left the two women alone. Rutgar watched them go inside the tent camper. Now that he knew where to find Red, he took off at a run through the trees. As he ran back to his home, he knew he would have a long uncomfortable night ahead of him. The mating urge would guarantee he would have erotic dreams about Red all night long. Knowing Red was mortal, and obviously would not know a thing about werewolves, Rutgar knew he would have to step carefully with her. Yes, she had responded to him this time, but once she had time to really think about what had happened between them, that could very well change. He in no way wanted to give his mate cause to fear him.

* * * *

Red tossed and turned on her small bed in the tent camper as her grandmother peacefully slept across from her on her own. Red wished she slept so well, but every time she closed her eyes and drifted off to sleep she dreamed of him--her wolf-man. And they weren’t the run-of-the-mill dreams either. They were dreams filled with hot, sweaty, mind-blowing sex.

And because of those dreams she was now so horny she couldn’t sleep. Her pussy ached to be filled and her breasts felt sensitive against the material of the sleeveless undershirt she’d worn to bed. Even now, hours after, Red could remember how it felt to have his tongue on her sex as he brought her to orgasm.

Frustrated and overtired, she rolled onto her side to face the side of the tent. She had to stop thinking and dreaming about the wolf-man. It didn’t do her any favors, and it couldn’t be natural, but it didn’t stop her from aching for more of him. What really bothered her the most about her newfound obsession with the wolf-man was how calm she felt about the whole thing. Instead of feeling freaked about his ability to shape shift from a wolf to a man, which shouldn’t even be possible, Red just wanted to see him again so she could fuck his brains out. If she ever saw him again, that is. Thoughts such as those were so unlike her. She groaned to herself. What had happened to the level-headed librarian she’d once been? Red didn’t know.

She closed her eyes and squeezed her legs together as she tried to relieve some of the ache in her pussy. It only increased the arousal she felt. Her hand strayed down to the crotch of the boxer pajama bottoms she wore. If she had been alone she would have had no problem taking care of the ache herself, but she wasn’t about to masturbate with her grandmother lying asleep a foot away from her.

Giving up on sleep, Red quietly unzipped the window flap wider in front of her to let more fresh air in. She propped herself up on her elbow and looked out through the fine mesh screen. She looked up at the sky to see it had already started to lighten. Dawn wouldn’t be too far off. She thought of going outside to see if that would help cool her body, but Red knew bears and other wildlife she didn’t want to run into could be moving about already. With her

luck she would get lost again and get eaten by a bear or a real wolf. And not eaten in the way her wolf-man had eaten her either.

Before she let the window flap fall back into place, Red heard a wolf's howl way off in the distance. *Is it him?* Red couldn't help but feel it was. The howl came again, this time sounding more plaintive than the first. The thought that he may ache for her as she ached for him brought a smile to her lips. Maybe, just maybe, she would see him again after all. With a groan at her own wayward thoughts, Red flopped back down onto her bed. She really needed to get a grip on herself.

* * * *

Once her grandmother woke up, Red offered to cook them some breakfast. After she put the small propane camping stove and a frying pan on top of the picnic table outside, she collected the eggs and bacon from the electric cooler inside the tent camper. Not bothering to change out of her pajamas, she headed back outside to cook.

Her grandmother came out to the picnic table to join her shortly after that. Red noticed she'd already dressed and looked as fresh as a daisy. Not like herself. She was in a desperate need of a shower. Thankfully Algonquin Park's Parkway Corridor camping facilities offered running toilets and showers, as well as Wi-Fi internet access. Not that her grandmother had allowed her to bring her laptop with her on their camping trip. There was roughing it, and then there was *roughing* it. Red didn't mind sleeping in a tent, but she couldn't forgo her morning showers. Usually during the night her wavy hair turned into a rat's nest that only a shower could fix.

After she dished up the eggs and bacon she'd cooked, Red and her grandmother sat down at the picnic table to eat. As they ate, her grandmother asked, "So what do you have on today's agenda?"

Red swallowed a mouthful of eggs before she answered. "I don't have anything really planned. I thought maybe I would go for a walk." When she saw her grandmother's brows draw together, she quickly added, "I won't be going too far from the campsite this time. I have no intentions of having a repeat performance of yesterday."

"I should hope not or I'll have to seriously rethink whether or not I should ask you to come on next year's Canada Day camping trip."

She shook her head. Her grandparents had been camping one week out of the year, always during the Canada Day long weekend, at Algonquin Park for years. Even after her grandfather had died ten years before, her grandmother continued to come to the park. This year had been the first year her grandmother had asked her to come with her.

Now finished with her meal, Red stood up. "I'm going to pretend you never said that, Grandma. If you'll excuse me, I'm going to take a shower before I scare away the other campers."

Her grandmother chuckled. "Go ahead. Since you cooked I'll clean up the dishes."

Red went back into the tent camper and collected all the things she needed for a shower and a clean set of clothes. She only took the time to pull on her dirty clothes from the day before then headed for the shower area.

She took her time in the shower. Red shaved her legs even though she had shaved them the other day. She knew she was totally primping just in case she saw her wolf-man again. Shaking her head, she stuck her head under the spray of water. She was doing it again. For some reason, she just couldn't stop thinking about him. She had to be obsessed, which was pretty pathetic considering she didn't even know his name, and considering what he was. But Red couldn't think of any other reason why she couldn't get him off her mind. Maybe she had totally lost her mind while wandering around in the woods lost the day before.

After she finished her shower, she dried off her body and towel dried her hair. Red would have blow-dried her hair if she had remembered to bring her hair drier with her from home. Combing out the snarls, she figured that was the best she could do. She then dressed in the pair of grey shorts and pink tank top she'd brought with her.

When she neared the campsite, Red could hear her grandmother talking to someone. The voice that answered her grandmother sent a wave of pleasure through her body and caused her to slow. Even though she had only heard him speak that one sentence the day before, *the smell of your arousal is driving me crazy*, Red would recognize that deep timbered male voice anywhere.

As she entered the campsite, Red looked from her grandmother to her wolf-man. Both of them stood near the picnic table as they talked. Her wolf-man was the first to notice her arrival. His head turned in her direction, and his nostrils flared as he took a deep breath. Red felt her bones melt as their gazes met. As she made her way over to them, she noticed the BMW Enduro motorcycle parked near the tent camper.

Her grandmother gave her a smile when Red came to stand next to her. "There you are, dear. Why didn't you tell me you met Rutgar here yesterday while on your walk, before you got lost?"

The way her grandmother kept flashing smiles at her wolf-man, Rutgar, Red could tell she was already taken with him. Not that she could blame her grandmother. The man looked sexy as all hell in his snug-fitting black jeans and equally snug dark grey t-shirt. Just the sight of him made Red want to throw herself in his arms and rub herself all over him.

"It ... it must have slipped my mind after I got lost."

Her grandmother gave her a wink. "I find that hard to believe, dear. I would think Rutgar would have left a more lasting impression on you. I know if I were your age I would find it hard to forget him."

Before Red could reply to that statement, Rutgar said, "Your grandmother has kindly allowed me to steal you away for the day."

"She has?" Red asked distractedly. The longer she stared at Rutgar the more her body became aroused. Her blood surged through her veins as her pussy started to get wet. She started to

breathe faster as her gaze locked with Rutgar's. His ice blue eyes glowed for a split second as he dragged a deep breath into his lungs. Had she fallen under his spell again?

"Yes," Rutgar replied in a deep voice.

Her grandmother chuckled as she took the bundle of things out of Red's arms. "Here, I'll take those into the tent for you, dear. You run along now and enjoy yourself. I think Rutgar is exactly what you need, if you know what I mean."

Hearing her seventy-year-old grandmother make sexual innuendos in front of a man Red wanted to screw until they both couldn't move, caused her to blush like a fourteen-year-old. At twenty-four, she should have been way past that stage, considering where Rutgar had had his mouth the day before.

When her grandmother gave her a little push in Rutgar's direction, he took her by the arm and led her over to the motorcycle. Not bothering to ask where they would be going, because she didn't really care so long as she was with him, Red put the motorcycle helmet on that he handed her. She then jumped onto the back of his bike. When he got on so he sat in front of her and wrapped her arms around his waist, Red knew she would be lucky if she could keep her hands to herself. Hopefully wherever he took her wouldn't be too far away.

Chapter Three

It had been one hell of a night for him. Rutgar had spent most of it painfully aroused, longing to have Red under him. The erotic dreams he'd had when he had finally fallen asleep hadn't helped his condition. Close to dawn he'd finally given up all pretenses of sleep and had gone wolf to run through the woods again. He'd ended up right back at the tree where he and Red had been. Even though her scent had been stale, it had been enough to send the wolf in him howling for his mate.

Knowing he wouldn't be able to stay away from Red for very much longer, he'd forced himself to wait until at least mid-morning before he headed over to her campsite. After what had taken place between them the day before, he knew he would have some explaining to do to Red. Since she was his mate he needed her to understand exactly what he was--a werewolf. He also had to explain what it meant to be his mate. Unlike mortals, when werewolves found their mates, their souls bonded during their first mating. Once bound, one couldn't stand to be away from the other for long periods of time. And once mated, there would be no going back.

As he drove his motorcycle to his home, he felt Red's hands drift from his waist to his lower abdomen so the sides of her hands came to rest on the head of his cock inside his jeans. Having been in an almost perpetual state of arousal since he'd met Red, that small touch was more than enough to give him a full-fledged hard-on. His cock jerked inside his pants. Red pressed herself closer so her pussy fitted tighter against his ass. Rutgar bit back a growl of need. She may be a mortal, but it was obvious she wasn't completely immune to their being mates.

Just before they reached the long drive that led to his house, Red shifted one of her hands lower and cupped his erection through the front of his jeans. She then rubbed her hand up and down his full length. Rutgar forced himself to concentrate on driving and not on what Red did, even though he wanted to howl with pleasure. Once the house came into view, he pulled up to the front and shut off his motorcycle. He yanked off his helmet, got off then back on the seat so he faced Red and tore the helmet she wore off her head. He then pulled her closer and took her lips in a passionate kiss.

Red moaned into his mouth as he plunged his tongue past her lips to sweep the inside of hers. He placed her legs on top his spread thighs as he urged her closer so she sat half on the seat of his motorcycle and half on his lap. When her pussy came in contact with the bulge in his pants, he cupped her bottom and held her to him as he ground his aching cock against her. It would be so easy to strip Red of her shorts and take her right there on his motorcycle. It wasn't as if he had any close neighbors to see what they did. He lived on fifteen acres of land with most of it bush. But then the part of him that remembered Red was mortal and that he needed to talk to her before this went any further kicked in.

Pulling away from her lips, he said, "We need to talk, Red."

Red whimpered as she pressed closer against his erection. She started to nibble her way along his jaw to his ear. "No talking. Just fucking."

Rutgar couldn't hold back the low growl that pushed past his lips. He tried to push her away, but Red wrapped her legs around his waist and tenaciously held on. He managed to get off

the motorcycle with her clinging to him like a second skin as she shoved her tongue into his ear. “No, Red, we *really* need to talk. There are some things about me I have to explain.”

“I already know what you are. You’re a wolf-man. For reasons beyond my understanding, I’m fine with it.”

“It’s a little more complicated than that.”

“I don’t care. Now shut up and take me to bed.”

She licked and bit a path from his ear down the side of his neck. He stiffened with anticipation as she dragged her tongue over his skin where his neck and shoulder met. His whole body shook as she nipped him there. Unable to stop himself, he cupped the back of her head and pushed her mouth closer. His breath came in shallow pants as Red dragged her teeth over the spot then bit him, hard.

The bite was enough to have the wolf inside him roar to life. One bite there, where the shoulder and neck met, from a female werewolf on a male werewolf’s neck would arouse the male more than any aphrodisiac ever could. Somehow Red had known where to bite him. With the wolf howling for him to take her, to claim his mate, Rutgar stopped thinking and just acted.

Taking her lips as he growled deep inside his throat, Rutgar bounded to the front door with Red still in his arms. He pushed the door open so hard it banged off the wall as it hit and slammed shut behind them. Moving faster than any mortal could, he bounded up the stairs to his bedroom. Once inside his room, he took Red down onto the bed. Her hands painfully gripped his hair as she angled her mouth over his. She sucked on his tongue as she whimpered with need.

Rutgar shoved his hand up her top and cupped her breast as he brushed his thumb across her taut nipple. Releasing her mouth, he only pulled back far enough so he could pull her tank top over her head. Red took hold of the bottom of his shirt and yanked it off. She lifted her upper body off the mattress and ran her tongue across his chest. Rutgar’s eyes closed briefly as a wave of pleasure surged through him as she tongued his nipples.

He pushed her back down as he undid the front clasp on her white lace bra. As soon as he had her breasts bared to his view, he flicked one of her nipples with the tip of his tongue. Red moaned and arched her back as he pushed her bra straps down her arms. Rutgar circled the tight peak with his tongue before he sucked it deep inside his mouth. His hand drifted down her body to the top of her shorts. He undid the button and zipper, then pushed them down past her hips to her legs. Red kicked them the rest of the way off.

His cock throbbed as he looked down at Red dressed only in her white lace panties. The scent of her arousal filled his head, making him ache to be inside her. But he wanted the taste of her on his tongue before he took her. Rutgar sucked on each of her nipples before he inched down her body. He licked and kissed every inch of her bared skin until he reached the top of her panties. Hooking the waistband with his fingers as he pressed a kiss to her pussy through the lacey material, he pulled Red’s panties down and off.

Settling between her spread thighs, Rutgar spread the lips of her sex and dragged his tongue against it. She tasted stronger than the headiest wine. He continued to lap at her pussy as Red buried her fingers in his hair and held him to her. She moaned as she rocked her hips against him. With a low growl, he stiffened his tongue and jabbed it into her core. He stroked her clit with a finger as he mimicked the sex act with his tongue. As Red's pants filled the room, he pushed two fingers inside her pussy as he sucked on her clit. The smell and taste of her caused his cock to harden even more.

Soon Red yanked on his hair as she tried to pull him back up her body. Rutgar left her pussy and came to lie on the bed at her side. He undid the button and zipper of his jeans and said as his cock sprang free, "Touch me, Red. I need you to touch me."

She rolled to her side and wrapped her hand around his thick cock as she nuzzled the side of his neck. Red pumped her hand up and down his full length, eliciting a loud moan from him. Joined with the wolf, Rutgar knew he couldn't wait much longer to have her. He pushed his jeans down past his hips and kicked them away. He then pulled Red's hand away as he pushed her onto her back.

He moved on top of her and wedged his hips between her legs. Resting his weight on his elbows and forearms, Rutgar probed her slick entrance with the head of his cock. Red lifted her hips as he surged forward and sheathed himself to the hilt. He forced himself to wait a few seconds for Red's body to become accustomed to his filling her, then he pulled back and surged back inside. The feel of her pussy wrapped around his cock, squeezing, made him want to throw back his head and howl.

As he pumped between her legs, Rutgar felt his cock grow harder, thicker. Red's strong inner muscles clamped around his shaft as he rode her. A keening moan pushed past her lips as she wrapped her legs around his waist. Unable to hold back, he pounded into her. She dug her nails into his shoulders and rocked her hips as she met each of his strokes. He increased his pace as he felt a part of his soul reach out to hers. As a part of hers reached out to meet his, Rutgar rode her harder. Red moaned as their two souls twined together and became one. She then cried out as her orgasm overtook her, and her pussy squeezed his shaft in a tight fist. Rutgar pounded into her once, twice, then threw back his head on a loud howl as he emptied his cock deep inside her.

He looked down at Red as he fought to catch his breath. She stared up at him with wonderment. "You came, and your cock is still hard. And what just happened? It felt like more than just the earth moving."

Rutgar couldn't answer her. The wolf was howling inside him. The wolf wanted to take Red as his mate as well. He took her mouth in a heated kiss until Red once again whimpered with need. He pulled out of her and rolled her over onto her stomach. He then urged her up on her hands and knees. Taking hold of her hips, he positioned himself behind her. He rubbed the length of his cock along her wet pussy and clit. Red pushed back as she tried to impale herself on his cock. Rutgar growled as he held her still.

Bending forward, he dragged his tongue up her spine. He tightened his grip on her hips then entered her from behind. The man and the wolf, now one, pulled back only to ram back into her. Rutgar's balls slapped against her as he pistoned between her legs. Needing her fast and hard, he reached around her and found her clit with his fingers. He stroked it as he continued

to ram into her. Feeling the first ripple of her release along the length of his shaft, he pounded into her faster. Red moaned loudly as her pussy rhythmically clutched at his cock, milking him until he too found his release.

Still hard, Rutgar kept his cock buried deep inside Red as he wrapped an arm around her waist and brought her down to her side with her back to his chest. When their breathing slowed, Rutgar felt Red relax in his arms as her breathing evened out. He let his eyes drift shut. He would let her sleep then they would have the conversation they should have had before making love.

Chapter Four

The first thing Red noticed when she came awake was the very warm body spooned against her back and legs. The second was the heavy weight of Rutgar's arm, which he had thrown over her waist. She tried to move out from under it, but her movement only caused him to tighten his hold. Feeling a tiny bit trapped, Red tried to wiggle her way free. She then sucked in a breath when her ass brushed up against his cock, which was hard and erect. She took her bottom lip between her teeth as her pussy clenched. The man was a sex machine. She didn't know how he did it, but he somehow managed to keep his hard-on even after he had come twice.

Thinking of their lovemaking made Red think of something else that had happened. Something she couldn't easily explain. She could have sworn that just before they had reached their first orgasms a part of her had reached out to Rutgar and joined with him.

Rutgar stirred behind her. His arm lifted from around her waist. He propped himself up on his elbow as he rolled her onto her back. He searched her face with his ice blue eyes. "How do you feel?"

Red smiled. "Pretty good." She looked down at his erection. "From the look of you, I would say you're up and ready to go for round two."

He grinned. "I'm still up and ready from round one."

She shook her head. "How is that possible? Did you take some kind of pill that lets you keep a perpetual erection?"

Rutgar's expression grew serious. "No pill. All werewolf males are able to keep an erection for hours even after reaching multiple orgasms."

Red leaned up on her bent arms as her gaze locked with his. "Werewolf?"

"Yes, werewolf. That's what I am."

"You're a werewolf, huh? I guess that would explain your being able to shape shift into a wolf. But I thought werewolves could only shift during the night of a full moon."

She then yelped as Rutgar shifted into his wolf form and shoved his cold nose into the crook of her neck. Red pushed his head away as she said, "Stop it. That tickles." She looked into the wolf's eyes, the same ice blue eyes Rutgar had in human form. Intelligence lurked behind those eyes. She ran her hand through his light brown fur along his neck. "You can still understand me, can't you?" The wolf's head bobbed up and down. "Good to know. Can you please shift back?" It wasn't as if she feared Rutgar in his wolf form, it was just Red had a lot of questions she needed answered, and as a wolf, he couldn't provide her with any of them.

Rutgar gave her a small smile. "You aren't afraid of me when I go wolf."

"No. I know I should be running from you. For some illogical reason I'm not. I know you're still inside there somewhere. Just count yourself lucky that I'm not allergic to dogs."

He threw back his head and laughed. "You're taking the news of me being a werewolf very well I must say. Most mortals find it hard to accept."

Red scowled. "Mortals? As in I'm mortal and you are not?"

Rutgar grabbed her and flopped onto his back as he pulled her on top of him. "This is the conversation I wanted to have before things got out of hand. But given how calm you seem to be about the whole werewolf thing maybe you'll be just as accepting when I tell you about the other thing."

"What other thing?"

Rutgar put a finger against her lips. "I'll get to that. First things first. As you saw, I do not need a full moon to make the change. My ability to shape shift isn't governed by the moon. I carry a spark of magic inside me. I draw on that when I make the shift. All werewolves are born with the magic inside them."

"So you weren't turned by being bitten by another werewolf?"

"No. I was born a werewolf, just like every other werewolf. You're either born a werewolf or you're not. No werewolf can turn a mortal by biting them."

"There you go using that word mortal again."

"We aren't exactly immortal, nor are we fully mortal either. We just live for a very, very long time compared to mortals."

"Just exactly how long is a very, very long time?" Red asked.

"Let's just say my kind can live to be three thousand years old."

"You're kidding, right?"

Rutgar shook his head. "No. Werewolves live for that long. We also have the ability to heal faster and easier than mortals do."

Now Red started to feel a bit weirded out again. She didn't know if she really wanted to know, but she knew she had to ask. "So if you'll live to be three thousand years old, how old are you now?"

"I'm a thousand."

Reeling from the fact that she'd slept with a man who had seen the end of the Dark Ages, she said, "Okaaaay. You are so way too old for me."

He chuckled. "The age difference doesn't bother me. It isn't as if I look my age."

She had to give him that. He didn't look a day over thirty. "So is that the other thing you thought I'd be able to accept?" He shook his head. When Rutgar brought his arms up and

wrapped them around her waist so she couldn't move off him even if she had wanted to, Red had a feeling it might not be something she wanted to hear after all.

"No, it isn't my age that has me worried. We really should have discussed this before we ended up in my bed. But then you bit my neck when we were outside, and I lost my ability to think except for getting you under me."

Red's gaze skidded across the bite mark she'd left on his skin where his shoulder and neck met. When Rutgar's body had shaken when she'd dragged her teeth against that spot, she had known it would turn him on. She hadn't known just how much until she found herself on her back on his bed. Feeling a little bit worried by what Rutgar would say, Red took a deep breath. "So out with it. You know what they say. It hurts less to rip off the bandage than it does to take it off slowly."

Rutgar locked gazes with her. "You are my mate, Red."

She felt herself relax. "Is that all? So you think we could have a serious relationship, though I don't know how you could already think that way when we still hardly know each other."

"You don't understand. You are my mate. We mated."

Red rolled her eyes. "I already know that. We did have sex."

Rutgar made an animalistic growl under his breath. "That is not what I meant. You are my mate, and I am yours. When werewolves take a mate their souls join with their mate's. Ours joined while we made love. I knew that would happen when I joined my body to yours. I knew you were my mate from the first whiff of your scent."

Red stiffened. "You *knew* that would happen and still you made love to me anyway?" She tried to slide off him, but Rutgar easily held her in place. "Let go. I need a little space right now." Once he released her, she moved to sit on the bed next to him. She took a couple of deep, calming breaths. She wasn't going to start freaking out until she got all the info about this mate business. "So we're mates now. It isn't as if we're married or anything."

Rutgar sat up next to her and took her hands in his. "Actually, the bond between a mated werewolf pair is far more permanent than a mortal marriage. We won't be able to stand to be separated from each other for long periods of time without feeling extremely uncomfortable. We'll miss each other, thinking the worst possible thoughts. If we are apart, when we are together once again the need to make love will be one we won't be able to ignore. Actually sex will pretty much be on our minds most of the time even if we aren't separated."

Red yanked her hands out of his. She didn't want him touching her right now. She felt a panic attack coming on. For some stupid reason, she could handle his glowing eyes, his ability to shape shift into a wolf, and the fact he was a werewolf, but the thought of his being her mate, tied to her permanently, made her want to run screaming out of the room. How crazy was that?

"Let me get this straight," she said in a strained voice. "We're basically married with there being no option for divorce. Even though I'm not a werewolf, I'm now tied to one who is a

thousand years old, which makes my twenty-four years seem laughable.” Rutgar tried to take her hands again, but she slapped them away.

He sighed. “I’ve really messed this up. I shouldn’t have kissed you outside before I had a chance to explain all this. With the mating urge riding me, and then when you bit me, all my good intentions flew out of my head.”

Red gave Rutgar a hard stare. “Shoulda, woulda, coulda. Hindsight is a beautiful thing, but that doesn’t make this any better.” She scooted off the bed and gathered up her clothes off the floor and started to get dressed.

“What are you doing?” Rutgar asked as he came to stand beside her.

“I’m leaving. I can’t be with you right now.” She pulled her tank top over her head.

“Didn’t you listen when I told you we won’t be able to stand to be apart?”

“Well, we’re just going to have to get used to it. If you have forgotten, I don’t live around here. I live in Toronto. I have a life there that doesn’t include you.”

Rutgar’s face grew thunderous as he curled his upper lip in a snarl and growled loudly. “You have another man in Toronto?”

Red felt her quick temper soar to life. She wasn’t called Red only because of the color of her hair. Her temper burned red hot once she became riled, which Rutgar had just done. She poked a finger in the middle of his chest. “How dare you think I would hop into the sack with you while I have a boyfriend back home waiting for me. I’m not some kind of slut who sleeps around with anything that has a dick between his legs.” She poked him again. “That you would even suggest that I would fool around if I were already in a relationship just makes me want to ... to ... I don’t know.”

Now dressed, Red stomped out of the room and practically ran down the stairs. She’d just reached for the doorknob on the front door when Rutgar suddenly came up behind her and spun her around. She’d had no idea he could move so fast. His eyes glowed as he stared down at her. His upper lip curled slightly as he growled deep inside his chest. Starting to feel some real fear of what he was, Red reacted on gut instinct. Before Rutgar knew what she intended to do, Red lifted her leg so her knee connected with the soft flesh between his legs. As Rutgar went down groaning with his hands cupped over his balls, she yanked open the door and took off running.

* * * *

Once he could breathe pain free, Rutgar got to his feet. Red was long gone. Damn she had been quick. He hadn’t expected her to pull a dirty trick like that. If he had, he probably wouldn’t have come downstairs naked. Not that his jeans would have offered his poor manhood any better protection.

He ran his hands through his hair. He’d definitely fucked things up in a massive way. Rutgar had seen the look of real fear in Red’s eyes just before she had nailed him one. The wolf hadn’t liked that she’d run from him. Their mating was too new. The wolf didn’t want Red

far from him, nor did the man. Rutgar debated whether or not he should go after Red, but in the end, he figured maybe the long walk back to her campsite, as well as some time away from him, would help Red understand exactly what it meant to be mates.

Rutgar forced himself to go back upstairs to get dressed. Already he missed Red. He would give her until that evening then he would go to her. Hopefully, they would be able to keep their hands off each other long enough that they wouldn't give her grandmother an eyeful.

Chapter Five

Red set a fast pace as she walked down the road toward the park. Every once in a while, she looked over her shoulder to make sure Rutgar wasn't roaring up behind her on his motorcycle to take her back to his place. But each time she looked, he was nowhere in sight.

The farther she walked the more she started to miss Rutgar. It felt as if she hadn't seen him for days. She shook her head. She had to snap out of it. No way would she go back after what she had done to him. He was probably pissed as hell at her. Not that she could blame him. It had been a pretty low blow on her part. If he hadn't snarled at her the way he had, she wouldn't have done it. She would have just turned her back on him and walked out.

By the time she reached the campsite, Red felt sweaty and out of sorts. Her mind continued to play tricks on her. She couldn't help but feel something had happened to Rutgar. As she walked up to her grandmother who sat out on a lounge chair reading, she dug her fingernails into her palms to stop herself from turning around and going back the way she had come.

Her grandmother looked up from her book when Red came to stand next to her. "What are you doing back so early? I thought you were spending the day with Rutgar. You two didn't have a fight, did you?"

Red went and sat down at the picnic table across from her grandmother. She ran her hands through her sweaty hair and pulled on it. "Grandma, do you believe that there is that special someone you were destined to be with? And that when you meet you'll know right from the start that you two were meant to be?"

Her grandmother's gaze searched her face. "Of course I do. That's how I felt when I first met your grandfather. Once I met him, I knew there wouldn't be another man for me. Is that how you feel about Rutgar?"

Red yanked on her hair. "Yes. No. I don't know." She felt as if she were losing her mind with missing him. It had barely been an hour since she left his place, and she desperately wanted to see him again.

"Is that why you aren't with Rutgar? Because you think he may be the one?"

She let go of her hair and put her hands in her lap. "Maybe. I hardly know the man. I just don't want to rush into things and end up getting hurt in the end." In her last relationship, Red had ended up getting burned badly. She'd thought she had loved Oliver, had even agreed to marry him, but that soon ended when she came home early from work one day and found him in bed with another woman.

Her grandmother gave her a level stare. "I don't think Rutgar is anything like Oliver."

That was an understatement. Oliver had been no taller than her, was brainy and lifted books rather than weights, which had made his cheating on her something she totally wouldn't have expected of him. Rutgar, on the other hand, was all male. She practically could smell the testosterone wafting off him when around him. He also had a face that would allow him to have any woman he wanted wherever he wanted. But he had willingly tied himself to her.

Red knew she was no beauty queen. She still found it hard to believe a man with Rutgar's looks could possibly want her as his mate.

She sighed. Even though she couldn't tell her grandmother everything that had happened between Rutgar and her, Red asked, "I'm really confused, Grandma. What should I do? I think you're right about Rutgar, but I'm now kind of gun-shy when it comes to men."

Her grandmother got up and came to sit next to Red. "What is your heart telling you? Do you love him?"

Red rolled her eyes. "I just met him, Grandma. I can't possibly know that yet."

"Your heart knows, dear, even if your head doesn't. And your heart will never lie about something like that. If Rutgar is the one, you'll know." Her grandmother got up and moved to sit back on her lounge chair. "I suggest you think about it, preferably while you take another shower."

Red gaped at her grandmother. "Are you saying I stink?"

"Well, you are on the sweaty side. Let's just say you can use some freshening up."

She smiled and shook her head. Feeling a little bit better for having talked to her grandmother, Red went into the tent camper and collected the things she would need to take her second shower of the day. As she walked toward the showers, Red's thoughts strayed to Rutgar once more. God, how she wanted to be with him. Still not totally sure what she wanted to do about this whole being mated business, she took a cool shower hoping it would help clear her head. By the time she returned to the campsite, Red missed Rutgar so much she felt ready to climb walls. But her pride wouldn't let her go back to him. He'd been the one to pull this on her without her consent, so he would have to be the one to come to her, preferably on his knees.

* * * *

As the day wore on, Red felt more and more out of sorts. Rutgar hadn't been kidding when he had told her the separation would be uncomfortable. She'd barely managed to stop herself from snapping at her grandmother for no reason on several occasions. To be honest, she felt as if she were losing her mind, and not in a good way.

Now early evening, Red sat outside in front of the small bonfire she'd built. Her uneaten supper sat on the picnic table. She'd lost her appetite, well, her appetite for food that is. She hungered for Rutgar's body. Thoughts of sweaty, naked sex with Rutgar taking her in every position imaginable had stoked a fire inside her body that only seemed to grow hotter as time went by. She was so horny she doubted she would be able to sleep tonight, for the second night in a row.

At the sound of a motorcycle headed toward their campsite, Red jumped to her feet. Rutgar. It had to be him. A part of her wanted to throw herself in his arms, but another part of her wanted to run from him.

When her grandmother stuck her head out of the tent camper, Red quickly shouted, "Tell him I'm not here." She took off at a run and headed into the trees before her grandmother could say anything to stop her.

Unable to see very well in the dark, Red kept walking until she could no longer see the campsite. The rumble of the motorcycle's engine cut off, then a second later, the sound of Rutgar bellowing her name echoed through the trees. Red sped up. Maybe if she got deep enough into the bush Rutgar wouldn't be able to find her.

One minute she was crashing through the forest and the next strong arms picked her up and crushed her to a very hard male body. Red bit back a whimper of need when she felt the hard length of Rutgar's cock pressed against her backside.

He turned her in his arms and slowly let her slide down his hard body before he backed her up against the nearest tree. His eyes glowed eerily as he stared down at her. Rutgar crowded her with his big body as he caged her in against the tree, his hands on either side of her head.

"Why did you run from me again, Red? All day I've felt as if I was slowly losing my mind because I couldn't be with you. I let you see how bad it can be when mates aren't together, but I won't let you do this to me again. You're mine. I keep what is mine."

Rutgar's lips came down on hers as he took her lips in a hard kiss. He pushed his tongue inside her mouth as he yanked her shorts down. He lifted her off her feet so they fell in a pile under her. The sound of her panties being shredded as he ripped them off her sounded in the night. At this point, Red was beyond thinking. Need unlike any she had felt before pounded through her. If she didn't have Rutgar inside her she felt as if she would die.

He pulled away only long enough to yank his shirt over his head and drop it on top her shorts. Rutgar took her lips once again and sucked her tongue into his mouth as he undid his jeans before he roughly shoved them down past his hips. He wrapped his arm around her waist and held her to him as he spun around then sat down on the pile of their clothing.

Red straddled Rutgar's thighs but instead of positioning herself above his fully erect cock, she took hold of it at the base and swirled her tongue around the tip. Rutgar's hips bucked beneath her. She wanted him inside her, but she wanted to taste him as he had tasted her. With the flat of her tongue, she licked him from base to tip before she opened her mouth and took as much as she could manage inside. He half growled, half groaned as she sucked.

Rutgar cupped the back of her head as he pumped his cock inside her mouth. "Yes. Suck on me hard. Just like that."

Red felt his cock harden even more. Her pussy clenched as wetness leaked between her legs. The sounds Rutgar made--wolf-sounding growls and deep moans--pushed her arousal higher. She tightened her grip on the base of his shaft as she continued to suck on his cock. Then he was coming. She didn't pull away, but took everything he had to give.

She released him once his cock stopped pulsing. Red licked her lips as she moved to kneel above his still-erect shaft. "I love that you stay hard even after you have come."

With her hands on the tops of his shoulders for support, Red pushed down as she impaled herself on his thick length. Everything about Rutgar was big, right down to his big cock, which filled her to capacity. Red rocked her hips against his as she started to ride his shaft. He felt so good. She rode him faster as she clamped her inner muscles around his cock. Her orgasm inched ever closer. Rutgar pushed up into her as she pushed down. His finger found her clit and then she was there. She let her head fall back and moaned as her pussy milked his cock. Wave after wave of pleasure shot through her. When the last wave hit her, Rutgar took hold of her hips and rammed up into her until he reached his release. His growls filled the night as he arched up and filled her with his cum.

Red collapsed on his chest. His still-hard cock stayed buried to the hilt inside her. "I'm sorry. I freaked," she said softly.

He took her face in his hands and forced her to look at him. "I'm mostly to blame for that. I should have given you the choice."

Even though her eyes had adjusted to the darkness, Red still couldn't see Rutgar's face all that well. His eyes had dimmed, but they still continued to glow. "Your eyes. Why do they glow like that?"

Rutgar chuckled. "They only do that when I'm either angry or horny."

Red smiled. "Well, that's good to know."

He brushed a lock of hair out of her eyes. "I want you to come back to my place, Red. I don't want to be apart from you. Plus we need to figure out how we are going to make this work."

Rutgar suddenly stiffened as he sniffed the air. "What is it?" Red asked warily.

He quickly pushed her off him and stood up. He pushed her shorts into her hands, then yanked his jeans into place as he did them up. "Get dressed. Now. We're about to have company."

Red had just pulled her shorts up when a wolf's howl drifted through the trees toward them. Rutgar pulled her under his arm protectively just as a large grey wolf stepped out behind one of the trees and moved to stand before them.

Chapter Six

Rutgar felt his upper lip curl back in a snarl as he watched the wolf shift into a man that had the same grey-colored hair as the wolf's fur had been. His brown eyes flicked from Rutgar to Red and back again. Rutgar had recognized the newcomer's scent immediately. "What are you doing here, Alex? You know this is my territory."

Alex tsked. "That's a fine greeting. I happened to be in the area so I thought I'd come by and say hello. When you weren't at your place I followed your scent here." Alex sniffed the air. "Hmm, I can see you were a little busy with the mortal. How about you share her with me?"

Rutgar growled and snapped his teeth at Alex as a warning. "You'll stay away from my mate."

"Your mate?" Alex started to laugh. "Oh, how the mighty have fallen. You were once the leader of your pack. Now look at you. You're a lone wolf with a mortal female as your mate. Can you sink any lower, Rutgar?"

Even though Alex and he were matched in height, Rutgar was the stronger of the two, and Alex knew it. "I would watch what you say to me unless you want to find your neck between my teeth," he said with a growl.

Alex held up his hands in surrender. "My bad. Aren't you at least going to introduce me to your ... mate?" He looked Red suggestively up and down.

At that moment, the beam of a flashlight landed on the small group. Alex's attention was drawn to Red's grandmother as she moved to stand with them. She smiled. "When you and Red didn't come back, Rutgar, I thought I'd come look for you. It's awfully dark out here." She pointed the flashlight at Alex. "Oh, who would this be?"

"It's no one, Grandma," Red quickly answered. "It's just someone Rutgar is acquainted with. Why don't you go back to the tent camper and we'll meet up with you there shortly."

"All right. Just give me a shout if you need some light to find your way out of here."

"We will."

Once Red's grandmother was out of sight, Rutgar leveled a hard stare on Alex. "Leave before you push me too far. I don't want anything to do with you or your pack of thugs. I told you that the last time you came to me. I would rather stay lone wolf than join up with the likes of you."

Alex growled low in the back of his throat in a flash of anger before he pulled himself together. "We shall see."

After that cryptic remark, Alex turned and walked away. Rutgar stayed on guard for a few minutes longer before he let himself relax.

"What was that all about?" Red asked.

“Alex comes by every few years to see if he can somehow convince me to become part of his pack. He approached me shortly after I went lone wolf thinking since I no longer had a pack I would be more than happy to join up with his. He just won’t let it go.”

Red looked up at him. “Were you really the leader of your pack?”

He pulled Red closer as he turned her around and started to walk toward her campsite. “Yes.”

“Why did you go lone wolf?”

“All my family was gone. My pack’s numbers had dwindled down to less than a handful, something that has happened to a number of packs. The few who remained in my pack wanted to join up with some larger packs, safety in numbers and all that, so I went lone wolf so they could.”

“I take it from the tone Alex used that being a lone wolf isn’t considered a good thing?”

“For some it isn’t. When some males go lone wolf, particularly unmated males, they tend to be a threat to other males in other packs. Most go lone wolf because they are either kicked out of their packs for bad behavior, or they chose to because they don’t have to answer to a pack leader.”

Red squeezed his waist. “Well, I guess you aren’t so alone now. You have me.”

Rutgar didn’t say anything even though it did him good to hear Red say that. Maybe things would work out between them after all.

* * * *

Red spent the night with Rutgar at his place. Her grandmother had shooed them off shortly after they returned to the campsite. She’d been more than pleased to see that Red and Rutgar had worked out their differences.

Now the next morning, dressed in the clothes she’d brought with her from the tent camper, Red sat in Rutgar’s kitchen drinking coffee. He’d gone wolf to do a perimeter check around his property to make sure Alex hadn’t decided to lurk around. Red looked out the sliding glass doors that led to the deck and smiled when she saw Rutgar run across his large backyard still in wolf form.

Her smile broadened. She didn’t think she would ever get sick of seeing him as a wolf. She loved the wolf as much as she loved the man. Red slowly put her coffee cup down on the table as she realized what she had just admitted to herself. She loved Rutgar. Deep down inside her heart, just as her grandmother had said, she knew without a doubt she loved him. During the night, as he’d made love to her so many times she’d lost count, Red had felt their bond grow closer, stronger. As she watched Rutgar come up on the deck and shift to his human form, Red knew at some point she would have to screw up enough courage to tell him that she loved him, but she wasn’t ready to do it just yet.

Rutgar poured himself a cup of coffee and sat down at the kitchen table next to Red. “Are you sure you don’t want me to come with you?”

Red nodded. "I'm sure. Not that I expect my grandmother to be upset when I tell her I'm moving in with you. It's just we have always been pretty close. We see each other at least a couple times a week, but with me living here and her living in Toronto, we won't have that anymore."

"I told you I would be willing to move to Toronto with you. I have more than enough money to buy a second home there."

To say Rutgar was loaded was an understatement. The man had millions. She guessed when someone lived as long as he had they tended to accumulate a fair amount of money over the years. "No. You love it here. You have lots of land to go wolf and run. I would never make you give that up. And it isn't as if I will miss being a librarian."

Rutgar pulled her to him and kissed her until her toes curled. "Well, let's get this over with then so I can get you back into bed."

He drove her on his motorcycle back to the park. As they reached the campsites, Rutgar let her off so she could walk the rest of the way. After he told her he would give her fifteen minutes alone with her grandmother before he joined them, he drove away.

Expecting her grandmother to be outside reading, or at least moving around, Red was surprised to find the campsite empty. Her grandmother usually didn't sleep this late. It was already past ten in the morning. Red began to wonder if everything was all right with her grandmother as she crossed to the tent camper and went inside.

"Grandma?" Red's heart skipped a beat as her gaze landed on the huddled form of her grandmother lying in bed. She lay on her side away from Red with the covers pulled over her head. "Grandma?"

Red went and put her hand on her grandmother's shoulder and gave her a little shake. She then let out a shriek as the mound under the covers rolled her way and a male hand clamped around her wrist. Alex threw back the covers and gave her an evil looking smile. "Well, if it isn't Little Red Riding Hood. Aren't you going to tell me what big teeth I have?" Alex snarled and snapped his teeth.

She tried to pull free, but Alex yanked on her arm and pulled her down onto the bed. He rolled on top of her to hold her in place. Red tried to pull his hair, but he manacled her other wrist with his hand and pressed both of them onto the bed above her head. Panting with a combination of anger and fear, Red asked, "Where is my grandmother?"

"Don't worry about her. I tucked her away some place safe. It was you I wanted." Alex kept his grip on her wrists as he rolled off Red and got up. He roughly yanked her to her feet and dragged her out of the tent camper. He sat down at the picnic table and forced her to sit on his lap. "Now all we have to do is wait for your mate to arrive. With you as leverage, I'm sure he'll be more than willing to join my pack."

Worried about what Alex had done with her grandmother, Red hoped Rutgar wouldn't wait the entire fifteen minutes he had given her before he showed up. She frantically searched the surrounding area for any sign of her grandmother, but she couldn't see anything. If the bastard had harmed her, Red knew she would take it out on his hide when she got free.

The fifteen minutes went by. No sound of Rutgar's motorcycle reached Red's ears. God, she hoped he hadn't decided to give her and her grandmother some extra time to be alone together. Red knew Rutgar was the only one who could take Alex out. She'd seen them both in their wolf forms, and Rutgar was by far the larger of the two.

Alex started to play with the ends of her hair. Red smacked his hand away. He chuckled. "You are a feisty one. I can see why Rutgar would lower his standards to claim you as his mate."

"Who says he lowered his standards?"

He chuckled again. "You're mortal. That puts us werewolves far about your kind. In some ways, I think Rutgar watching you grow old and die while he stays young is fit punishment for not joining my pack for all these years."

Red felt herself blanch. She hadn't thought out past the point of Rutgar and her accepting each other as mates. Rutgar still had another two thousand years to live at least. The sixty or so years she would have left were just a drop in the bucket. Not wanting to show Alex how his words had affected her, she said, "I doubt Rutgar will think it a punishment."

"Then he is an idiot if he thinks otherwise."

Red tried to jab Alex in the ribs with her elbow, but he easily blocked it. "The only idiot I see here is you. You do realize Rutgar is going to kick your ass."

"He can try, but he won't find me so easy to put down."

Then it all seemed to happen at once. Rutgar charged out of the trees in his wolf form and ran straight for Alex and Red. Alex shoved her off his lap onto the ground as he went wolf and met Rutgar head-on. Red quickly scooted back from the snarling wolves as they bit and clawed each other. As the wolves fought, Red rushed back into the tent camper to see if she could find some clue as to what Alex had done with her grandmother.

The sound of a muffled cry had Red rushing back over to her grandmother's bed. She pulled off the mattress to reveal the top of the storage box under it. Flipping open the wooden lid, she sank to her knees and yanked the gag from her grandmother's mouth. Alex had gagged her and tied her hands and feet before he'd shoved her inside the storage box.

"I'll have you out of there in a minute, Grandma, as soon as I get these ropes untied."

Once she had her grandmother free, Red helped her out of the storage box. The sound of a wolf yelping in pain had her looking toward the open flap of the tent camper. She needed to go outside to make sure Rutgar was holding his own against Alex, but she didn't want to leave her grandmother alone.

Her grandmother gave her a worried look as the wolves' snarls grew louder. "The man you and Rutgar spoke with in the woods last night... I don't think he's human. He changed into a wolf and cornered me here in the tent."

"It's going to be okay, Grandma. Rutgar will take care of him."

Her grandmother rushed to the open window and looked out. "There are two of them now?"

Red came to stand next to her as she watched the wolves tear into each other. Rutgar seemed to have the upper hand. "The wolf with the light brown fur is Rutgar, Grandma." When her grandmother turned eyes rounded with shock on her, Red said, "They're werewolves. Alex just happens to be one of the bad ones."

At the sound of a wolf yelping in pain, Red turned to look outside once again. Alex had somehow managed to get one of Rutgar's back legs between his powerful jaws. He yanked Rutgar to the middle of the campsite as he continued to bite on his leg. With a cry of denial, Red raced out of the tent.

Not thinking about the fact that she was about to walk into the middle of a battle taking place between two very large wolves, she snatched up one of the bigger pieces of wood near the fire pit and slammed it down onto Alex's muzzle. She kept hitting him until he let go of Rutgar. When he turned and snapped his teeth at her, Red swung at him again. This time Alex expected it. He managed to catch the wood between his strong jaws and yanked it out of her hands. Now weaponless, Red slowly started to back away. Alex dropped the wood, then growled as he bunched his back legs under him to leap.

As Alex leapt, Rutgar slammed into him and took him down to the ground. He quickly took the back of Alex's neck in his jaws and bit down until Alex whimpered. Rutgar growled then slowly released his hold. Defeated, Alex rolled onto his back with his tail between his legs and whimpered at Rutgar who stood over him.

Both men shifted back to their human form. Clothes appeared on their bodies a split second later. Rutgar kicked Alex in the ribs. "If you ever set one foot, or paw, inside my territory again, I'll take you out permanently."

Alex kept his head bent low as he got up and slowly backed away. When he reached the trees, he went wolf and raced away.

Red threw herself in Rutgar's arms. "Are you okay?"

Rutgar tucked her head under his chin as he held her tight. "I'm fine. I heal fast." He then tipped her head back as he took her lips in a heated kiss. When he pulled away, they both were breathing hard. "You may not be a werewolf, Red, but you are just as fearless as any female werewolf I know. I'm proud to have you as my mate. I love you."

"I love you too."

Red yanked Rutgar's head down for another kiss. They pulled apart as her grandmother stepped out of the tent. From the look on her grandmother's face Red knew she and Rutgar would have a lot to explaining to do.

"Grandma, I think you need to sit down." Red helped her to sit at the picnic table. "I know this is a lot to take in, but I can explain everything."

Her grandmother flashed a worried glance at Rutgar. "I don't know if my old heart can take any more excitement."

Red took her grandmother's hand in hers. "I'll try to put this as simply as I can. Rutgar is a werewolf. I know it's hard to believe, but you saw him shift from his wolf form to his human one."

"And the other man is a werewolf as well?"

"Yes. He won't come back though. Rutgar took care of him." She looked over at Rutgar who gave her a nod.

Her grandmother searched her face. "And you're fine with Rutgar being what he is?"

Red sent Rutgar a smile that showed all the love she had for him before she looked back at her grandmother. "Yes. I'll admit I never thought I would ever fall for a werewolf, but I have. I love him, Grandma."

"Well, I can't say I can accept the whole werewolf thing, but I'll try for your sake. I can see you two love each other. As they say, love does conquer all."

Red kissed her grandmother's cheek. "You're taking this a lot better than I thought you would, especially after what happened."

"I guess I take after my granddaughter that way." Her grandmother squeezed Red's hand then stood up. "I think I'll leave the two of you alone. After all the excitement this morning, I need some time to myself."

"Are you sure you're okay, Grandma?"

"Yes, but I think the camping trip is over."

"No, Grandma. You can't leave yet. Canada Day isn't for another two days. You yourself told me that the highlight of this camping trip was watching the fireworks on Canada Day. Don't let Alex spoil it for you, especially since you have watched the fireworks here for years."

Her grandmother gave her a small smile. "I did promise you the Canada Day fireworks, didn't I?"

"Yes, and I'm not letting you out of that promise."

"All right, but if another bad thing happens, I'm holding you responsible. I don't think I can take any more shocks."

Red watched her grandmother go inside the tent camper. She couldn't blame her grandmother for at first wanting to leave. Red figured she would give her the time alone that she wanted then tell her about her decision to live with Rutgar. Her grandmother didn't need any more bombs dropped on her at the moment.

Allowing Rutgar to pull her to his side, Red knew she'd found the one man meant for her. It didn't matter that he was a werewolf. All that mattered was she had found her soul mate, her

other half. Resting her head against his broad shoulder, Red didn't think her life could get much better than that.

Epilogue

Red watched as her grandmother and Rutgar cleaned up the remains of their Canada Day barbeque they'd had. Her grandmother had barbequed burgers over her charcoal hibachi while Red had cooked the hot dogs over the fire in the pit. Much to her and her grandmother's wonder, Rutgar had eaten more food than they had both thought possible. He'd also eaten his burgers practically raw, which had been a bit of a stomach turner at first.

Red explained she and Rutgar were mates and they planned to live together in his home. Her grandmother had taken it all rather well. She had even thought it was awfully romantic that Rutgar had been able to tell Red was the one for him, for life, the instant they had met. The only thing her grandmother had seemingly wanted to avoid was the part about him being a werewolf and his great age. If denial helped her grandmother to better accept who and what Rutgar was, then Red had no complaints.

Red's gaze followed Rutgar around the campsite as he set about extinguishing the camp fire. It would be dusk soon, and they had decided to head out to the Algonquin Lakeside Inn, near Oxtongue Lake where they traditionally held a community fireworks display every Canada Day. Knowing there would be a fair-sized crowd to watch them, they had decided to leave before it got dark so they could pick out a good spot to sit. The fireworks would be set off on the opposite beach across from the inn at the neighboring Blue Spruce Resort. Her grandmother and Rutgar had assured her the fireworks would be a spectacular display.

As her grandmother and Rutgar flitted about the campsite, Red went into the tent camper to grab a sweater and slap on some mosquito repellent. The little buggers loved her blood for some reason and usually attacked her in droves. Lucky Rutgar didn't have to worry about being bitten. Apparently mosquitoes disliked werewolf blood.

She came back out of the tent camper to find her grandmother and Rutgar waiting. Rutgar held out his hand, then led her over to his copper Mitsubishi Eclipse. Red offered to let her grandmother sit in the front with Rutgar, but she refused and got into the backseat before Red could argue about it.

Once they reached the inn, Red helped Rutgar take out the three lawn chairs he had put inside his trunk. They made their way over to the beach and found a not-too-crowded spot to set up their chairs.

Rutgar sat beside Red and threaded his fingers through hers. She gave him a small smile. He leaned over and said quietly, "You've been awfully quiet lately. I hope you aren't having second thoughts about us."

It wasn't second thoughts that bothered Red. She shook her head, then looked over at her grandmother. "Grandma, Rutgar and I are going to go for a little walk before the fireworks start."

"Go ahead, but don't be too long. It's getting darker."

With Rutgar's hand in hers, Red led him away to a secluded spot away from the other people who had come to watch the fireworks display. She turned to face him. "I'm not having second thoughts. I'm happy I'm your mate. I love you."

"But?"

"I'm mortal."

"So?"

"I'm going to get old, Rutgar. Old and wrinkly while you stay as you are now. I'm afraid you won't want me then."

He cupped her face in his hands and bent down so he could look her in the eyes. "I'll want you then just as much as I want you now. That will never change. I didn't just fall in love with the person you are on the outside. I fell in love with the whole package."

Red closed her eyes briefly as she took a deep breath. "And when I eventually die? What then?"

Rutgar pulled her into his arms and held her against his chest. "That isn't for a long way away."

"No, it isn't. Not for you. You're going to outlive me by a couple thousand years. I know it's stupid, but the idea of you finding another mate after I'm gone really pisses me off."

He chuckled and kissed the top of her head. "There will only be one mate for me. Where you go, I follow."

Red lifted her head off his chest and looked up at him. "What do you mean?"

"It means I'll choose to follow you even in death, and not two thousand years after I lost you." She went up on her tiptoes and kissed Rutgar until they both started to breathe heavier. Rutgar pulled away first. "Now enough of this morbid talk. Your grandmother is waiting for us, and the fireworks are about to begin."

While they had talked, darkness had fallen. The first of the fireworks went off, filling the night sky with bright colors just as they rejoined her grandmother. With her lawn chair pulled close so she could snuggle against Rutgar's side, Red lifted her face and oohed and ahhed like everyone else as the fireworks lit the night sky. She knew this would be one Canada Day she would never forget.

The End

About the Author:

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

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

Marisa lives in Ontario, Canada with her husband and four children. Check out Marisa's website at www.marisachenery.com-she would love to hear from you, so drop her an email while you're there.

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