

ELLORA'S CAVE TWILIGHT

Miami  
Scorcher

*Power  
Unleashed*

SAVANNAH  
STUART

## **Power Unleashed**

*Savannah Stuart*

*Book 3 in the Miami Scorchers series.*

Paz has a *big* secret that could harm her new pack and give The Council ammunition to kill her. When The Council sends their legendary enforcer to hunt a rogue werewolf, Paz makes a shocking discovery about the one man she's supposed to be avoiding. He's her mate and she's terrified he'll uncover her secret.

As enforcer and one of the oldest living werewolves on the planet, Adam never expected to meet his mate while on the job, but now that he's found her, he won't let her go. Paz denies their connection but can't escape the sizzling heat between them. No matter what it takes, Adam plans to uncover the truth and bond her to him forever.

An Ellora's Cave Romantica Publication



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Power Unleashed

ISBN 9781419927768

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Edited by Jaynie Ritchie

Cover art by Syneca

Electronic book publication July 2010

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# ***POWER UNLEASHED***

**Savannah Stuart**

### *Dedication*

Thank you to Dara and Kari for all your support with this series.

### *Author Note*

*Power Unleashed* begins days after *Worth the Risk* ends. It can be read as a standalone book, but for better reading enjoyment, it is recommended that *Worth the Risk* be read first.

### *Trademarks Acknowledgement*

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## Chapter One

Adam Tucker stared at the palatial guesthouse from the front seat of his rented SUV. The Lazos pack was one of the few who had done incredibly well for themselves over the years. Most packs were well-off, but this family lived in luxury. The fact that they owned a private stretch of beach in Key Biscayne spoke volumes. That was in addition to their other holdings across the country. Not that any of that would matter to The Council if they'd gone against their laws.

When the front door opened and Thomas Lazos stepped out, Adam realized he might have been sitting outside too long. Without pause, he got out and strode over to one of the alphas of the pack. More distinctly, the next-in-line to be *Alpha* of the Lazos pack. "It's been a while, Thomas."

The dark-haired wolf nodded politely and held out a hand. "I wish it was under different circumstances, but welcome to our guest home. My Alpha sends his regards, but—"

Adam grasped his hand and brushed away the apology with a shake of his head. "Your father called. No apology necessary."

"Good then. Do you have many bags?"

He shook his head. "I'll get them later. For now I'd like to get down to business."

Thomas stepped back and held out his arm toward the open front door. They were silent as they strode across the tiled floor and entered the kitchen. That was one of the things he liked about the other wolf. Thomas didn't reek of fear as so many others did in his presence.

Adam understood that as The Council's enforcer, it was only natural that wolves would be wary around him, but it made for a lonesome existence.

Thomas surprised him by grabbing a beer from the refrigerator. "Want one?"

It was instinct to say no to any food or drink offered, but he nodded as he took a seat at the granite top center island. "Sure."

As he popped open the beers, Thomas glanced over his shoulder. "You can start firing away if you're ready."

Adam waited until Thomas slid the beer across to him and took a seat. "It's a formality because the business with the Immortal has already been settled. Asha was on The Council's radar for years and it's officially been ruled that your kill was justified."

Thomas shrugged and took a sip of his Heineken. "I wasn't worried."

Adam hadn't expected him to be. When a crazed Immortal had tried to kidnap Thomas' brother Nick's mate, Thomas had no choice but to kill the Immortal. As a rule, they were a lone bunch and Asha's reputation for abusing human women had been growing. He wasn't going to tell Thomas, but The Council was relieved Asha was dead. Any supernatural beings that couldn't follow the laws of man and nature put *all* of them in danger from the humans. "So what have you learned so far about the rogue werewolf, Preston Morales?"

"He's in Miami. That much we're sure of. He contacted my brother Stephan's new mate yesterday and told her that if she didn't turn herself over to him, he was going to start leaving more presents for her."

"More?"

"He said Antonio Perez was his first gift to her."

The body of Perez, the human who'd tried to genetically alter werewolf DNA to create super-soldiers, had been found bloody and mangled in an abandoned warehouse a few days ago. It was good he was dead, but there was still a missing human who'd been injected with some sort of serum and now had super strength. No one knew where he was. "What about the human?"

Thomas shook his head. "No leads."

“And your brother can’t use his contacts with the DEA?” Stephan, the youngest of the Lazos brothers worked for the DEA and if it hadn’t been for him, they might not have found out about Perez’s plans.

“No. Since Perez’s death Stephan’s boss has him and his entire team on indefinite leave until they figure out if their cover was blown. It’s not as if Stephan can admit he knows who killed Perez so until then, he’s working with us to bring Morales down.”

Adam nodded. “Good.” Thomas wasn’t lying to him. That much was obvious. No doubt the Lazos pack wanted this settled as quickly as The Council. “I’d like to speak to the two she-wolves who were held captive by Perez.”

Thomas’ entire demeanor changed in an instant. His back straightened and his gaze became shuttered. “Tonight is Nick’s birthday. His new mate is having a party at my Alpha’s house at six and everyone will be there, including Shea and Paz. It’s your choice but I thought it might be easier on...everyone if you spoke to them in a relaxed setting. They’re both still adjusting.”

Adam could imagine they’d be “adjusting” for quite a while after what they’d been through. The report on Shea Hart and Paz Cabrera was sketchy at best. The two very different she-wolves came from different parts of the country and were just two of the wolves who had been kidnapped and sold to Antonio Perez for experimentation. Out of all the males and females the madman had kept captive, only these two women survived. “That’s acceptable.”

After draining his beer, Thomas stood. “If there’s anything else you need, you’ve got all our numbers. The house is yours so feel free to choose any bedroom upstairs. Do you want a ride to the party tonight?”

He shook his head and glanced at his watch. He only had a couple hours to get settled in and review his notes on the entire pack. “No. I think I’ll be able to find my way.”

“All right then. I’ll let myself out.”



Adam scrubbed a hand over his face once Thomas was gone. Some days he hated his job more than others. He said a silent prayer that the Lazos pack wasn't hiding anything from him. For the most part he kept his distance from all wolves, but this was one pack he wanted to be above reproach. After all the shit he'd seen over the past few decades, he was getting tired of dealing with liars.

\* \* \* \* \*

Paz glanced at her sister Marisol as the sound of male voices grew closer. "I think we have a visitor," she murmured.

"Do you want to go rest or something?" Marisol asked, concern etched on her pretty face.

It was weird having her little sister constantly checking on her. If Paz hadn't been missing for a year and presumed dead, she might have been annoyed with Marisol's constant concern, but she understood where it was coming from. "I'm not going to fall apart just because we have unexpected company."

Marisol rolled her eyes and threw a dishtowel at her. "I know that. I'm just —"

"Worried. I know. And I appreciate it, but I'm fine." And she was. For the most part anyway. It had only been a few days since she and Shea had been freed. Not a lot of time to actually process everything.

"Okay, I swear I'll stop bugging you...eventually." Marisol placed the knife next to the eggplants she'd sliced and reached for a bottle of wine. "Feel like a drink?"

"Yes, please." Despite saying she was fine, tension prickled the back of her neck. In a few hours she'd be seeing the entire Lazos pack for the first time. Sure, she'd met a bunch of them over the past couple days, but she didn't relish the thought of being in a crowded room.

"Hey, Paz, Marisol." Thomas' voice drew her attention to the archway between the kitchen and hallway. The tall, dark-haired shifter stood halfway in the room but was obviously keeping his distance.

She nodded politely and took the glass her sister handed her. "Hello."

"You got a sec to talk?" he asked.

"Ah—" Marisol interrupted.

"Yes." Paz dropped a kiss on her sister's cheek. "I finished the trifle. I think you can handle the eggplant parmesan by yourself." Without giving her a chance to protest, Paz followed Thomas through the back door onto the lanai.

"So what's up?" She collapsed on one of the wicker armchairs.

He sat next to her on an ottoman and leaned forward. His dark eyes flashed with unease and that surprised her. "Adam Tucker is here."

"I figured as much. So why are you worried?" She narrowed her gaze at him. Paz had been staying with Marisol and her new mate Stephan, and for the past couple days Thomas had been stopping by for obviously made up reasons. Not that she minded the company, just the opposite. But now she wanted to know why he kept making excuses to see her.

He shook his head. "I'm not. As long as we stick to the story, we'll be fine."

She took a sip of her wine and regarded him carefully. They'd been over the story only a hundred times. The Lazos pack had broken into Perez's home and saved her. She hadn't used her "wicked blue-juice" powers, as Marisol liked to call them, to blast everyone away. Or at least that's what they were telling The Council's enforcer. If anyone found out she was half fae, half-werewolf and that it had been she who'd killed Perez's men by herself, they'd sentence her to death simply because of the magic that flowed through her veins. It was a barbaric and antiquated law, but there wasn't much she could do about it. Well, except hide her true heritage and she'd been doing that since birth.

"That's not why you're here. You've been acting weird since yesterday so spill it." The truth was, out of everyone—excluding her sister—she felt more comfortable around Thomas than anyone. Not in an I'd-like-to-get-you-between-the-sheets kind of way but more brotherly.

"I want to ask you something, but it might be too personal."

Her heart skipped a beat. "What?"

"Do you know other...faeries? Or half faes like yourself?"

Her eyebrows pulled down. "Why?"

He cleared his throat, but he held her gaze. "I just wanted to know if you knew anyone by the name of Nissa?"

There weren't many faeries living in the United States, but she had heard of *a* Nissa who lived somewhere in the United Kingdom. She was part of some royal line or something. It was bad, but Paz knew little of that piece of her heritage. Her entire life she'd been so worried about hiding the magic in herself, sometimes it was easy to pretend she was full-blooded werewolf. If she believed it, others would too. "I have heard the name whispered. Why?"

To her surprise, a faint stain of crimson crept up his neck. "No reason."

"Oh. My. *God*. You fell in love with a faerie." It wasn't a question. She could smell the truth roll off him when she said it. And that surprised her. As next in line to be Alpha, he'd have learned to hide his emotions as a pup.

She took a sip of her wine and shook her head. "No wonder you didn't have a problem with me."

"The Council needs to rethink their laws. Those wars were over long before any of us were even born. It's—"

"Archaic. I agree. But don't think you get off that easy. What happened with her?"

Thomas' spine straightened at her question, but surprisingly he answered. "I fucked up."

"How long ago?"

"A century."

"Shit."

His dark eyes flashed briefly with pain, but just as quickly that mask was back in place. "That about sums it up."

Her heart twisted for him. A century was a long time to pine over someone. In the hundred plus years she'd been alive, she'd never met a man or wolf who held her interest for very long. She decided to change the subject. "So tell me who's going to be at this party. Any cute wolves?"

To her surprise, a bark of laughter escaped him. "How the hell am I supposed to answer that?"

"Hey, you've got cousins, right. How old are they?"

He rolled his eyes and stood. "Too young for you. You'd probably eat them alive."

"I've literally been under lockdown for a year, so you're probably right." It felt weird but refreshing to joke about it. When she was around Marisol, it was hard to joke because her little sister had been through her own version of hell the past year.

"I've got to get out of here, but I'll see you tonight."

She nodded and started to follow him inside.

"Paz..." He paused, his hand on the door. "No matter what happens, even if The Council finds out about you, our pack will protect you."

Her throat seized at his words and unexpected tears stung her eyes. Thankfully, he must have sensed her discomfort because he muttered a quick goodbye and was gone before she'd taken two steps into the kitchen.

Marisol looked up from the stove. "Everything okay?"

"Yeah, he just wanted to let me know that Adam Tucker has officially arrived. Hey, does Thomas remind you of anyone?"

A funny smile played across her sister's face. "Dad?"

"Yes! It's weird, right?"

Marisol shook her head and dipped a finger in the top whipped cream layer of the trifle. "Not the way he looks or anything, but yeah, I've thought that since I met him."

Paz grabbed the big bowl and slid it away from her sister. "Hey! I want to make a good impression and that's not going to happen if your paw prints are all over my dessert."

Marisol just grinned and turned back to the stove.

After putting the desert in the refrigerator, Paz made her way to the guestroom. Marisol and Stephan had set up the room as hers and she savored having her own private haven. It had been so long since she'd done anything social, she wasn't sure what to wear. Especially since the enforcer was going to be there. That was such a dumb name too. She was pretty curious what he looked like though. Probably a big, jackass Neanderthal-type werewolf who was alpha to the bone. Sighing, she trudged up the stairs. If she had to deal with the inquisition tonight, she was going to take a bubble bath beforehand.

## **Chapter Two**

Adam parked his rented truck behind an older muscle car near the end of the winding, private driveway. When Thomas said they were having a party Adam hadn't realized he meant the entire pack. And from the looks of it, half of Miami.

As he walked up the stone drive he took in the vehicles. They were all a little older but in good shape. The family obviously didn't like to show off. He started to knock on the intricate – probably custom carved – wood door when it flew open and two younger she-wolves nearly ran him over.

"Sorry!" one of them yelled over her shoulder as they raced toward one of the cars.

Something foreign twinged deep in his chest. He might work for The Council but he didn't consider any of them his family. He had no pack, no real friends, no real home. Not anymore. His life was fucking lonely and something told him that spending time with the Lazos pack would only remind him of what he was missing and would never have again.

Shaking his head, he stepped farther into the foyer. To the right was a giant dining room with a huge spread of food. A cake sat in the middle and there was a smorgasbord of other food surrounding it.

"Hungry?" Thomas asked as he joined him.

"I'm okay for now. Could go for a beer though."

Thomas grabbed his shoulder in a light, almost brotherly grip. "Come on, we'll get you settled." The action was unexpected and it also reminded him that he couldn't get too close to these wolves. He was there to do a job and if anyone had acted against The Council's code, he'd have to turn them over for judgement.

The dining room connected to an even larger kitchen. A sea of mainly dark-haired wolves mingled around in groups of two and three. Only a few stood out. A tall, pretty

redheaded human. From his files, he knew she was Nick Lazos' mate and new wife. And of course Marisol, Stephan's mate. She was a brunette like most of the Lazoses but she was Spanish, not Greek. When he met Shea Hart's gaze, the tall blonde wolf he needed to question, she quickly averted her eyes and said something to the much shorter brunette she-wolf she was talking to.

The petite wolf whipped around and when their gazes locked, his heart stuttered. It was Paz Cabrera. He'd recognize those midnight eyes anywhere. The dossier he had on her didn't do her justice though. He couldn't tear his gaze away from those intoxicating eyes. She was pretty, yes, but it was those damn eyes that drew him in. Dark, exotic and full of passion and life. After what she'd been through, the fire he saw there surprised him.

When she turned away from him, all his senses mourned the loss. It seemed as if he'd been staring an eternity, but in reality only seconds had passed.

"Here ya go." Thomas handed him a beer and nodded toward Paz and Shea who stood by themselves near a glass door that lead to a back patio. "I'm sure you already know, but those are the she-wolves we rescued. I've spoken to them and they're ready to talk to you when you want."

"Now's as good a time as any." The truth was, he could have waited. Would normally have preferred to wait and acclimate to his surroundings, but the wolf inside him was desperate to be alone with and talk to Paz. Hear her voice. Something. Anything. He spoke low enough for only Thomas to hear him as they approached the women. "I'll speak to Paz first."

A burst of primal protectiveness rolled off Thomas and nearly bowled Adam over with its intensity. He had to stop the growl that started in the back of his throat. He had no claim over Paz and even the thought was ludicrous enough that he almost laughed at himself.

"Shea, Paz, this is Adam Tucker," Thomas said.

Both she-wolves nodded politely, but he didn't miss the light sheen of sweat that had formed on the blonde's brow.

He pulled the sliding glass door open and kept his attention on Paz. "If you don't mind, I'd like to ask you a few questions and just get them out of the way now."

She shot a quick, guarded look at Shea before returning his gaze. "Of course."

Adam slid the door shut behind them. He'd never been in Florida in the fall and the weather was mild and perfect. A light breeze pushed up from the Atlantic. The salty smell rolled over him with a subtle freshness and he realized why they'd chosen to settle in Miami.

Before he'd taken two steps, she blurted, "I thought you'd be taller."

He couldn't help himself. A sharp bark of laughter escaped at her words.

Horror immediately covered her pretty face and her very full lips formed a perfect O. "I'm so sorry. I can't believe I said that. I...I haven't been out in public in a year. That's my only excuse."

Grinning, he motioned toward two of the Adirondack chairs near the pool. "It's okay. I think you just said what most people usually think when they meet me." At five foot ten, he was probably the shortest out of all the male wolves in the house, but in a fight, he had no doubt he could take any of them. Thomas and his Alpha included. Size didn't mean shit to him. He was older, faster and stronger than all of them. A reason he'd held his job for so long.

"Still, I'm sorry." She perched on the edge of the elongated chair so he sat across from her. She shifted against her seat. When she did, her yellow dress slid up to reveal smooth, perfectly bronzed skin. She cleared her throat and he realized he was staring. Averting his gaze to her face was worse. He felt as if he was falling when he stared into her dark eyes.

Mentally shaking himself, he got down to business. "For the record, I just need to know what happened with Preston Morales and Antonio Perez. When you were taken, where you were held, any little details you can think of."



Paz stared into the greenest eyes she'd ever seen and tried to concentrate on his words instead of his sinfully sexy voice. There was the slightest trace of an accent, but she couldn't place it. No, Adam Tucker most certainly wasn't a jackass Neanderthal. He was approachable and sexy to boot. And that little dimple that appeared in his left cheek every time he spoke was going to drive her crazy. Not to mention the sleek, muscular lines of his forearms and broad shoulders straining against his shirt. Things she should *not* be noticing. She needed to keep her distance. And more importantly, keep her cool.

"My pack lived in a very tight community, but I'm sure you're already aware of that. Somehow Morales poisoned our water system with silver. Not with copious amounts at first. I think he must have started small to weaken us. I don't really know much after that though. I've been informed that he killed most of the pack and only kidnapped some of us, but that's not from firsthand knowledge. I woke up in a lab with ten other wolves. By the time Perez and his doctor were finished..." She didn't finish because she didn't need to. He knew only two of them walked out of that lab.

"Do you know what he did with the other bodies?"

Swallowing hard, she shook her head. She'd watched too many of her packmates slowly die—writhing in agony from all the injections and experimentation. If she thought about it too long, she knew she'd fall into a pit of depression and she couldn't allow that to happen. Not until Morales was caught. Only then could she grieve.

"Do you know what he was doing with your blood?"

Again she shook her head. As the questions continued she tried to compartmentalize her thoughts. *Where is the human he injected? Were you ever allowed outside? What kind of experiments was he performing?* The questions were never ending and her head was starting to hurt. Memories flooded back in a sickening rush. No, she wasn't allowed outside. She hadn't seen sunlight in over a year and that disgusting

doctor had touched her however and whenever he'd wanted. At least he hadn't raped her. Paz pressed a hand to her stomach.

Frowning, Adam sat up straighter. "Are you okay?"

No. "I'm fine. Do you think we could finish these questions later?"

He paused, nodded and stood. When he did, he held out his hand to her. She stared dumbly at it until she realized what he wanted. For some reason the thought of touching him scared her, but she placed her hand in his. An unexpected electric zing shot through her like lightning. It coursed up her arm and through her body all the way to the knot in her stomach.

She met his gaze and what she saw there startled her. It was lust. Plain and simple. That surprised the hell out of her. Tucker had such a reputation for being scary, but maybe the way he got his information from she-wolves was by seducing them. She yanked her hand away and wrapped her arms around herself. "I think you should wait to question Shea. She had a worse time of it than me and it's too crowded for her right now. Question her tomorrow morning. I'll bring her over to your house." It came out like an order. As she spoke she realized it was stupid to bark orders at him of all wolves, but she couldn't help it. She was worried about her friend and the truth was, Paz had lost a lot of her social skills and couldn't seem to rein in her big mouth.

His eyebrows snapped down as he regarded her, but he nodded. "That's fine. Make it early and maybe we can go for a run in the morning."

The request startled her. "Oh ah...okay."

His gaze softened on her face as he held open the door for her. She couldn't help but wonder what the hell was wrong with him. He was an enforcer. Why was he being so nice?

He cleared his throat and suddenly looked nervous as they stepped inside. "Would you mind introducing me to everyone?"

"I don't exactly know everyone either."

"All right. Want me to refill your drink then?" He plucked her wineglass from her hand without waiting for a response.

She frowned at him. She hated that her insides had turned to mush around him since he was no doubt trying to use her. "I don't know what this nice guy routine is, but I know who you are and why you're here so if you think you can seduce me for whatever reason, you're out of your mind. And you better not think you can try that crap with Shea."

His emerald eyes darkened until they were practically black. He leaned closer until he was inches from her ear. She tried to ignore his earthy scent but found it impossible with his hot breath against her neck. "I do want to fuck you, long and hard, but not for any other reason than I want you. For the record, I haven't been with a woman—wolf or human—in over two decades." He shoved the glass back into her hand before stalking away.

Like a mute, she stood there staring after his very tight backside. *Well, shit.*

Adam raked a hand through his hair as he strode through the house. Ignoring the curious stares, he continued until he was outside. He wanted to kick himself for speaking to her like that. He might be The Council's enforcer but he sucked at talking to women. That much was clear.

He fished his keys out of his pocket and headed toward his truck. All his questions for Shea could wait until tomorrow. Lucas Lazos, the Alpha, wasn't even here so it wasn't as if he needed to stick around to speak to him. Lucas and his mate were on a trip to speak to Shea's pack about allowing her to live with them indefinitely. That was something Adam needed to speak to the blonde about too, but that would just have to—

"Adam! Wait."

He turned to find Paz hurrying toward him. Her heels clacked loudly against the stone driveway. When she reached him, she placed a light hand on his forearm. "I'm

sorry. I swear I'm not usually such an ass, I just... I think I've forgotten how to talk to people, especially people I don't know."

Her apology surprised him. And so did the fact that she wasn't afraid of him. Normally an aura of fear surrounded others when they were around him. But she wasn't afraid. Hell, none of the Lazos pack seemed to be.

He shook his head. "I think I should apologize for the way I spoke to you. Normally I don't lose control like that. I'm not so rude."

Her brow furrowed. "I didn't think you lost control... Did you mean what you said?"

"Ah... About what?"

Her cheeks flushed a bright shade of crimson. "Are you going to make me say it?"

His cock hardened painfully when he realized she wasn't offended by his graceless words. Just the opposite in fact. "I meant everything I said."

She moistened her lips nervously and when she did, all he could picture was that pink tongue running the length of his cock. He had to bite back a groan of frustration.

Slowly, he reached out and cupped her cheek. When she didn't step away, he rubbed his thumb over her skin. It was soft and perfect. Just like the rest of her. Paz's breath hitched when he stepped closer, but she *still* didn't pull back.

He was giving her plenty of time to tell him to stop, but she simply stared at him with those dark, inviting eyes. Leaning forward, he didn't stop until his mouth covered hers. He ordered himself to take it slow, but his body wouldn't listen.

Threading his hands through her hair, he lightly gripped the back of her skull. With his other hand, he grabbed her by the waist until she was flush against him. His body's reaction to her was pressing against her abdomen.

Her tongue rasped against his in a hungry fervor. She tasted sweet and fruity. When he tightened his grip on her ass, she wrapped her arms around his neck and

pressed harder against him. She started grinding against him and it took all his control not to push up her dress and just start fucking her the way he wanted to.

Somehow, he drew his head back. "We've got to stop. Now. Or I'm going to do something stupid."

Looking dazed, she stared up at him. Her fingers dug into his shoulders and she didn't make an attempt to move away from him. "Wow," she murmured.

The man and wolf inside him experienced a surge of primal satisfaction. It had been so long since he'd let his guard down around anyone. After just one kiss, he was ready to bed her. That hadn't happened to him in...ever. His body screamed at him to do something about the dull ache spreading through him. "Do you want to take a walk along the beach?"

Paz opened her mouth but was cut off.

"Paz!" Marisol's voice broke them apart. She hurried across the drive toward them. She looked between them accusingly. "What are you doing?"

Paz looked at Adam then at her sister. "What does it look like?"

Marisol's mouth opened and she stuttered for a second. "Well, whatever you're doing, just stop it and get inside. There's something on the news you both need to see." Without waiting for a response, she turned on her heel and rushed back in.

Paz was a little embarrassed by her wanton behavior. She barely knew Adam and if she wanted to do what was good for her, she'd stay away from him. If he found out she was half fae, he'd probably turn her over to The Council. Hell, if he didn't kill her first. She had no clue what his views on mixed-bloods were. For all she knew, he was just as prejudiced as the majority of werewolves. Taking a step back, she put some distance between them and averted her gaze. "I guess we better get back in," she muttered.

"Paz—"

Whatever he was going to say, she didn't want to hear it. She followed her sister and hurried inside, effectively cutting him off. She was a complete and utter idiot. After a year with no human contact her brain had apparently turned to mush.

## **Chapter Three**

Adam waited until Paz disappeared inside before following. He wanted to give her space and he needed to get his body under control. As he entered through the front door he was immediately hit by the silence. No music, no chatter. Once inside the foyer, he followed the sweet scent of Paz down a short hallway until he found everyone in a spacious living room.

Everyone was packed inside and watching the news on a flat screen television against the wall. He spotted Paz immediately. She leaned against the arm of one of the loveseats where her sister and Shea sat. It was slight, but he didn't miss the imperceptible change in her stance. She was aware that he'd entered the room. He tore his gaze away from her and focused on the screen where a petite Asian woman delivered the news.

*According to police, this is one of the worst animal attacks the city has ever seen. And it's not the first. A few days ago, reputed drug dealer Antonio Perez was found mauled to death in an abandoned warehouse. Police are speculating that whatever killed this couple was the same animal that killed Perez. Until both families are notified, names are not being released.*

A low murmur broke out as they cut to a commercial break. Thomas stood and flipped the television off. "All right, everyone. We know what this means and who this probably is. No one goes anywhere unless they're chaperoned, especially the younger wolves." He looked pointedly at a group of three younger she-wolves. They couldn't have been more than fifteen or sixteen in human and wolf years. "We stick together like we always have. Until your Alpha is back in town, you come to me with any problems. If no one has any questions, go back to the party, enjoy yourselves." When no one spoke up, he nodded at Adam, then looked at his brothers and motioned for them to follow him.

Adam maneuvered around everyone and followed the three brothers through another door into what was likely their Alpha's office. He waited until they all sat then took a seat next to Nick, who he hadn't officially met yet. He knew Nick was married to the redheaded human, that he owned a few auto body shops and that it was his birthday, but that was it.

Nick gave him a brief nod. "I'm Nick, nice to meet you."

He took his outstretched hand. "Likewise."

"Before anyone asks, I left a message with my boss and he still hasn't gotten back to me so I don't know any more about those attacks on the news than you do," Stephan said.

A sharp knock on the door had all four of them turning toward the sound. Before anyone could speak, it flew open and Marisol and Paz stormed in. Actually, Marisol was the one doing the storming. Paz trailed after her but hung back.

"What the hell do you think you're doing excluding us?" Marisol growled at Stephan.

"Damn it, woman!" He started to rise, but Adam took the opportunity to cut him off.

"I think they should be here for this," he said quietly. The rogue wolf they were hunting had personally threatened Marisol. She had a right to hear everything.

Thomas lifted an eyebrow, but he nodded. "I agree. Ladies, have a seat."

Adam refrained from smiling when Marisol didn't sit next to her mate but next to his brother instead. Yeah, someone was in the doghouse tonight.

Thomas took over the floor again. "As far as we know, the couple attacked tonight is not related to us in any way, but once their names go public, we'll know for sure. All the males in our pack are ready to start hunting Morales. As soon as the police clear out of the park, I think we should start there."



Adam cleared his throat. Normally he liked to stand back and handle an investigation by himself, but this was a different situation. They needed to work as a team and while he realized it, it still went against every fiber of his being. "I have a friend who works for the DOJ. I'll call him and see if he can get us access to the traffic cameras around the park and throughout the city. If we can get an idea of where Morales went, we can narrow down where he's living." No doubt Morales was masking his scent. A traitorous bastard like that would have been hiding his true self for years. It would be second nature to him. And Miami was big. They needed to shrink the playing field.

"And I'm getting Marisol the hell out of town," Stephan interrupted.

"I'm not going anywhere!" she shouted.

Adam ignored her outburst and focused on Stephan "I agree. You need to take her and her sister away from here. It'll be easier to hunt him down if they're gone." Despite wanting nothing more than to finish that kiss with Paz, he wanted her safe.

"I'm not leaving," Paz said. Maybe it was because Paz was quiet or maybe it was because she rarely spoke – Adam couldn't know since he'd just met her – but the room went silent at her soft-spoken declaration.

Marisol was the first to break the silence. "If I'm leaving, you're sure as hell leaving."

"I thought you said you weren't going anywhere." Paz's voice was wry.

"I...I..." She turned to Stephan and glared. "This is your fault." She stood and pushed the chair back with startling force before striding from the room.

Stephan muttered a string of curses under his breath before following after her.

"I take it this isn't their first discussion about leaving?" Thomas directed his question to Paz.

She shook her head. "Ever since Morales called Marisol with that taunting message, Stephan has been trying to get her out of town. And I agree with him. She's just too stubborn."

"No, she doesn't want to leave you." Thomas' expression softened when he spoke to Paz and Adam had a very real, very violent urge to lunge across the table and kick his teeth in.

The rage he expelled sent a wave over the room and all three turned to look at him. "I'm ready to catch this bastard," he muttered. The explanation pacified everyone, but he wanted to kick his own ass for letting his emotions get away from him. It rarely happened and certainly not with strangers. He shifted in his seat and caught Paz's gaze. "Why don't you want to go with your sister?"

She darted a quick look at Thomas then back at him. "Thanks to being held captive for a year, I've built up an immunity to silver. I'm stronger now and I'm older than him so if he attacks me one on one, I can hold my own. Plus...I think we can bait him out into the open. Besides her new mate, he knows I'm the one person Marisol will do anything for. We can use that against him."

"No!" Adam surprised himself and everyone else in the room with his outburst, but he didn't care.

Thomas' eyebrows arched for the briefest moment, but he shook his head at Paz. "We're not going to use you as bait."

"I'm just saying it's an option if we can't catch him. I'm more than capable of handling myself." Her head cocked slightly to the side and something passed between her and Thomas. It wasn't a look of lust, or desire but something else. Adam couldn't place his finger on it, but he didn't like it.

"Well, I can't make you leave," Thomas muttered.

Technically he could. Something everyone in the room knew, Adam included. Adam wondered why Thomas wasn't pushing the issue but let it slide. It seemed he

now had more to investigate. Unfortunately, all he was interested in was finishing that kiss with Paz.

Stephan walked back into the room. "Paz, will you *please* talk some sense into your stubborn sister?" he growled before sitting back at the table.

Wordlessly, she nodded and left. Finding Marisol wasn't difficult. She was outside on the back patio, alone and practically spitting fire. As Paz opened the sliding glass door, her sister stopped mid-pace and glared at her. "You're insane if you think I'm leaving you."

"Will you please sit down and listen, little *hermana*?"

Marisol pushed out a long breath and lost most of her steam as she collapsed onto one of the lounge chairs. "I don't want to leave."

Paz sat next to her. "It doesn't matter what you want. Your mate can't think straight if you're in constant danger. If his head isn't on right, then that puts you and his brothers in danger."

"Then why don't you want to come with me?"

"It's not that I don't *want* to. I'm not going to run away from anyone ever again and I want him to pay for what he did to me, Shea, *you*, our entire freaking pack and all those other packs he betrayed."

"But what if something happens to you?" The desperation in her sister's voice pulled at her heartstrings.

She stayed firm. "It won't."

"What if you kill him using your powers and Adam finds out what you are?"

That was something she'd already thought of, but there wasn't anything she could do about the possibility now. "You can 'what if' yourself to death, Marisol. Preston Morales needs to be stopped. If he isn't, the death toll is going to keep rising in Miami, and our existence – your mate's existence – will be threatened."

"I don't understand why you won't come with me."

Paz had her own demons to face and she'd be damned if she ran away when she knew she had the ability to stop a monster like Morales. Thanks to her heritage she was more capable of killing Morales than any of the werewolves in the house, Adam included. They might not all realize the extent of her gifts, but her sister certainly did. The drugs she'd lived with for a year were completely out of her system and while she hadn't tested her powers yet, she planned a little test run tonight once everyone had gone to sleep. "You know why I'm staying, Marisol. I can help. Besides, you *just* bonded with your mate. You deserve some alone time."

"I don't give a shit about that. I don't want to leave you again."

"One week. That's all I'm asking for. It's not long." She scooted closer down the seat and wrapped her arm around Marisol's shoulders then used her most sickly sweet voice she knew would annoy her sister. "Please? Don't make me beg, little *hermana*."

She rolled her eyes. "Ugh. If you stop, I'll say yes."

Chuckling, she dropped her arm and nudged her sister with her elbow. "By tomorrow morning you'll be thanking me for letting your mate whisk you away."

"We'll see." Then Marisol's eyes narrowed. "What on earth were you doing outside with Adam Tucker, *the enforcer*?"

Paz could feel her cheeks flush. "Ah, I'd rather not talk about it."

"Seriously, of all people, why him?"

Paz shrugged. "I like him. He's not a pig and he's not very good at talking to people. Something we have in common."

"Yeah, but, are you still, you know..."

"A virgin? You can say the word, Marisol. And yes, I am." She was probably the world's oldest freaking virgin, but after her year in captivity she planned to make some serious changes. Life was much too short.

Marisol shook her head and stood. "Please be careful with Adam. He's not one of us and you know what could happen if... I better go find Stephan and stop him from sulking."

Paz raked a hand through her hair and leaned back against the lounge chair. The sound of the ocean waves crashing against the shore was incredibly soothing. As she closed her eyes and stretched her legs out, the sound of the sliding glass door and Adam's unmistakable scent greeted her senses.

A second later, he sat on the edge of her seat. Leaning back the way she was, her dress had ridden up against her thighs and was exposing a lot of skin. She wanted to tug it down but didn't want to draw any more attention to herself.

"How'd you get your sister to listen to you?" he asked.

She shrugged. "I'm older. It's not too hard."

"Why aren't you going with her?"

It would be impossible to explain to him why without revealing her true nature. So she changed the subject. "After one kiss you're already looking to get rid of me?"

His green eyes darkened to storm clouds. Wordlessly he leaned forward until their noses were almost touching. "Not on your life," he murmured before closing the rest of the small distance between them.

The porch and the decorative column obstructing them offered a certain amount of privacy from those in the kitchen. And thanks to the angle of the chair and the dim lighting, no one could really make out what they were doing. Kissing him was stupid and it could get her into trouble. It was just so hard to care when he was slipping his tongue inside her mouth.

As Paz opened her mouth to him, Adam placed a hand on her exposed thigh. Underneath his calloused fingers, her leg clenched, but she didn't pull away. Her tongue danced against his, almost shyly and in complete opposition to her personality.

Something told him she hadn't been with many men. Wolf or human. The knowledge pleased him more than he cared to admit.

When he swept his tongue along her teeth, she gripped his shoulders and scooted a few inches closer. His hand automatically slid up her leg. Instead of stopping, as a gentleman would have, he kept going until he covered her mound.

Her head snapped back and her eyes flew open. "What are you doing?" she whispered.

"I want to touch you here." He kept his voice just as low as hers and slid a finger underneath the material of her panties. He could feel her soft thatch of hair and he'd bet anything it was just as dark as the soft espresso-colored curls framing her face.

"I'm not going to have sex with you," she blurted.

Despite every fiber inside him wanting to flip her over and mount her, his human side wanted to learn what made her tick. What her body liked. And he desperately wanted to please her. "That's okay. I just want to touch you."

Her dark eyebrows snapped down in confusion, but when he pushed the flimsy fabric completely to the side, a new expression covered her face. Her lips parted slightly and her breath hitched erratically.

With his middle finger, he rubbed gently against her clit. Each time he did, her hips arched against him. She let out little moans that almost sounded like purring.

Instead of kissing her, he watched her face while he became more intimate with her body. Rubbing lower, he slid his finger inside her pussy and wasn't able to restrain a small groan. She was tight and incredibly wet. And it was all for him.

"Do you like that?"

She nodded and clutched the side of the chair. "This is crazy," she whispered.

As if on cue, the sliding glass door opened and without looking he knew who had stepped outside. *Thomas*. Adam bit back a growl. Paz immediately closed her legs, forcing him to remove his hand. He leaned closer as he pushed up and stood. "Meet me

tonight by my beach house. Eleven o'clock." Without waiting for a response, he nodded once at Thomas before brushing past him.

It was definitely time for him to leave the party. He spotted Marisol and Stephan arguing in one corner of the kitchen and Nick and his human mate, Carly, kissing by the minibar. No one else paid him much attention as he exited the house. While he wanted nothing more than to stay and talk to Paz, he knew it would be impossible with so many people around.

Her sister didn't like him talking to her—that much was obvious. And something was going on with her and Thomas. He didn't think it was physical because Paz didn't seem like the kind of woman to stray, but he planned to find out what secrets she was keeping from him.

\* \* \* \* \*

Despite the cool breeze blowing in from the Atlantic, fire burned through Paz's system as she stripped her dress and panties off. She felt guilty lying to her sister about wanting to go for a run alone, but she brushed those feelings away. It was embarrassing how much she wanted to see and talk to Adam again. And she wasn't quite sure why she was so interested. He wasn't suave or even very charming like so many of the wolves who'd tried to get into her pants before. And, more importantly, he didn't know what she was. The wolves from her old pack had known she was half fae. The ones who'd tried to bed her had made her feel as if they were doing *her* a favor by wanting to sleep with her. She snorted at the thought.

Adam was different. He wanted her for her. She wasn't certain that she was going to sleep with him, but he didn't seem to care about that. Taking a calming breath, she prepared herself to change form. Even though she was half fae, shifting into her wolf form still hurt just like any other full-blooded werewolf.

As her bones broke, shifted and realigned, a rush of adrenaline pumped through her with lightning speed. It had been a couple days since she'd stretched her legs and

the sensation was refreshing. She was smaller than most shifters, maybe because of her faerie heritage, she couldn't be sure.

Bounding across the sand, she let the salty essence of the ocean rush over her. Running over the softer surface forced her to exert her muscles more. As she headed toward the beach house where Adam was staying, she slowed her pace when she scented him. The closer she got to the house, the stronger his scent grew, but she couldn't see him. For a brief second, a trickle of fear raced down her back until he jumped out from behind a sand dune.

She paused and took him in. He was a perfect snowy white. She'd never seen an all-white wolf before, and he was beautiful. Unlike so many shifters who took on various canine forms, he was truly a wolf. Her sister was an Alaskan Malamute and she was a fairly small, brown Cocker Spaniel. Not exactly terrifying or even majestic.

He kicked up some sand in her direction and motioned for her to follow. She did, but when she got closer, she nipped his side playfully. They didn't know each other well and she knew she was taking a chance, but she wanted to feel out his personality. It was easiest for her to do that in her shifted form. Not being able to talk was always easier for her. It meant she couldn't say something stupid. When she nipped him, he rolled on his back and bared his neck for her.

The way he made himself so vulnerable touched something deep inside her. She jumped at him but didn't show her teeth as she attempted to tackle him. When he playfully growled she pushed off him and ran toward his place.

She jerked to a halt when she spotted a blanket spread out on the sand just in front of the patio by the pool entrance. He continued past her and before she realized what he intended, he shifted. She glanced away even though it was obvious he didn't care about a little nudity. Out of the corner of her eye she watched him pull on a pair of pants then sit on the blanket.

"Aren't you going to change?" he asked.



She crouched down on her stomach and stared at him. She didn't even like it when her sister watched her shift. It was such a personal thing and she completely understood why so many werewolves didn't care, but she was different than most. And she wasn't going to apologize for embracing her human side.

"Ah, I see." He turned his back to her.

When he didn't attempt to peek, she changed. He had to have known she'd shifted form but he still didn't turn around. As she neared the edge of the blanket she scooped up his T-shirt and slipped it over her head. His earthy scent immediately enveloped her like a cocoon.

"You can turn around now," she said as she sat a couple feet away.

She sucked in a deep breath when he faced her. His chest and abs were sleek, muscular lines of perfection. He was a lot leaner than the men of the Lazos pack. Where they were bulkier, he was trim and completely ripped. What surprised her most were the scars covering his chest. It took a lot to scar a werewolf, but it was apparent someone or many "someones" had tried to kill him.

"You look good in my shirt," he murmured.

The quiet words drew her gaze back to his face. "Then why do you look disappointed?"

His shoulders lifted slightly. "I was hoping you'd be wearing nothing."

She could feel her cheeks heat up, but she held his gaze. At least the man was honest. Under the moonlight, his green eyes were darker, smokier. Almost midnight black. "Did you ask me here so you could drill me with more questions about my captivity?"

He shook his head. "No."

One-word answer. *Okay*. Getting him to talk was going to be interesting. "Is this your first time in Miami?"

"No."

Sighing, she stretched out next to him and propped up on one elbow as she faced him. When she did, the shirt rode up dangerously high. "Are you going to keep giving me one-word answers?"

The corners of his mouth quirked up slightly in what she assumed was his version of a smile. "No."

She rolled her eyes and lay on her back. The glittering stars scattered across the sky seemed to be winking at her. "Fine. When you want to talk, I'm here."

The blanket shifted as he moved closer. Her stomach flip-flopped when he stretched out beside her. Supporting himself on one elbow, he stared down at her and all she could think about was his very kissable lips. From what she'd seen of him, he rarely smiled and definitely didn't laugh, but when he'd kissed her before, she'd felt it straight to her toes.

"Is something going on with you and Thomas Lazos?" he growled.

The unexpected question jerked her out of her thoughts. "What? *No*. Lord, no. Not that he's not attractive, but...no." She bit her bottom lip to keep from rambling and frowned at him. "Why?"

"I just wanted to make sure you weren't taken." His deep voice rolled over her like warm honey. Smooth and sensuous, it stirred and heated her blood.

"Well, I'm not." The words were barely a whisper.

"Good." His neck muscles corded tightly and she knew he was restraining himself from kissing her.

"Would you have invited me here if I was?" She didn't know why she asked.

"Yes." His answer was immediate.

When he moved closer, she pressed a hand against his chest. Underneath her fingertips, his muscles clenched and tensed. "Can I ask you a question?"

He nodded, as if talking were too difficult.

"Has it really been...two decades for you?"

“Yeah.” His voice was hoarse and scratchy, but he didn’t hesitate.

Something strange fluttered in her stomach. If it had been that long for him, it meant he valued sex as much as she did. The knowledge went a long way in pacifying her nerves. Before she’d come to meet him she hadn’t been sure what her own intentions were, but now she had no doubt. By the time the night was over, she was going to sleep with Adam.

## Chapter Four

Adam stared down at Paz and hated the way his entire body ached for her. It had been over a century since he'd allowed himself to get close to any woman. He was in Miami on a mission. Find the rogue werewolf, the escaped human and destroy them both if necessary. Getting tangled up with a sexy she-wolf wasn't part of his plan. If anything, it was one of the dumbest things he'd done in a long time.

Something about Paz drew him in though. He should be more wary considering he knew so little about her. There wasn't the scent of another man on her and all he could focus on was making sure his scent *was*. He wanted everyone to know she belonged to him. The truth was, if she'd been with someone else, he didn't think that it would have stopped him. And that scared him. The animal inside him craved her desperately.

By nature he was possessive and protective, but he'd never felt such a dominating need to claim a woman. To mark her as his own.

As her vanilla scent tickled his nose, his canines extended. When she placed a hand on his chest, the action immediately soothed him. That shocked the hell out of him.

Before he could react, she pushed up on her elbows and met him halfway. Without pause he closed the distance and covered her parted lips with his own. Tasting her once hadn't been enough. He wasn't sure that tasting her now would be enough either. The way his body burned, he was certain the fire humming through him would never be quenched. But he was going to give it a try.

Her taste was sweet and it was hers alone. As he ran his tongue across hers, he sucked her bottom lip between his teeth and tugged. When he did, she arched her back against him and he nearly lost it. He wanted to taste more of her. All of her.

After he settled between her legs, he skimmed his hands over the hem of the shirt she wore. He pushed it up to her waist and her eyes flew open.

"I want to see you," he murmured against her mouth. Her only response was an increase in her heartbeat so he continued sliding the shirt up until her breasts were bared. "Can I take it off?"

Jerkily, she nodded. He quickly pulled it over her head. Under the moonlight and stars, her silky skin seemed to glow. He almost forgot to breathe as he drank in her naked body. She was perfection. Her slim waist flared into surprisingly curvy hips. Hips he'd like to hold onto as she rode him. His stomach clenched at the thought. She squirmed under his gaze so he forced himself to focus on her face. "Are you cold?"

"No. Just..."

"Just what?" he pushed.

She shook her head and her dark hair swished against the blanket. "Nothing."

"Are you nervous?"

"A little." Paz was beautiful and confident so her quiet confession surprised him.

Wordlessly he dipped his head to her neck and grazed his teeth along her jawline. The last thing he wanted was for her to feel insecure. He planned to worship her body the way it deserved.

As he spread kisses down to her neck and shoulders, she moved her hips against his. His cock ached between his legs. Thick and swollen, it felt like a heavy club, but right now wasn't about him. The woman beneath him was all that mattered. He was still trying to wrap his mind around why she'd suddenly become so important to him when a potent wave of awareness rippled through him.

Mate.

The word sounded loud and clear in his head. Pausing above her left breast, he looked at her to see if she'd felt it too.

Her eyes flew open. "What's wrong?"

A jagged twinge of disappointment struck him that she hadn't experienced the same realization as him, but he brushed it aside. "Not a damn thing," he murmured

before clasping her already hard nipple gently between his teeth. When he tugged, she moaned and he restrained himself from flipping her on her knees and taking her the way his body demanded.

Her fingers threaded through his hair as she gripped his scalp. "That feels so good." The words were barely a whisper on her lips.

He continued licking her pebbled nipple and tweaked the other between his finger and thumb. When he squeezed, a barely perceptible tremor raced through her and her grip on his head tightened.

He'd lived centuries longer than most werewolves and he'd never scented anything as intoxicating as the heat and desire rolling off her. It made his head spin. Trailing a moist path around her light brown areola, he savored covering every inch of her soft skin.

Unable to control himself any longer, he reached between their bodies and slid a finger across her pussy lips. Her folds were hot and inviting. He inserted one finger and shuddered when she clamped down on him.

Damn, the woman was tight and wet. Lowering himself, he raked his teeth over her soft mound and her hips jerked upward, inviting him to bury his head between her legs. He pressed her thighs open wider and sucked in a deep breath at her glistening folds.

Waves crashing behind him and the unsteady beat of his heart were the only sounds he was aware of as he stared at the perfection before him.

"Are you going to taste me?" There was such a mixture of curiosity, innocence and arousal in her voice. It touched something inside him he'd forgotten existed.

Spread out before him, she was so trusting. He wasn't sure what he'd done to deserve her. Over the years he'd made so many enemies and though he had little regrets from the battlefield, he'd always thought maybe he didn't deserve a mate. To find her after so long seemed impossible. Their first time together was more important than anything he'd done in his life. He tilted his head down and nipped her inner thigh.

She trembled under his touch and the scent of her desire was unmistakable. Inching even closer, he dipped his tongue between her pussy lips.

“Ahh.” Her hips jolted slightly but she scooted down closer to his face.

Biting back a smile, he stroked between her folds again, then centered on her clit. The pink nub peeked out from beneath her swollen lips, begging to be kissed.

He circled her clit with his tongue over and over. With each teasing motion, he earned a heated cry from Paz. Her body trembled beneath him and her moans filled the quiet night. Although he didn’t know her well, he knew she was close to coming. She was that reactive to him.

But he wanted to extend their time together. Wanted her to writhe beneath him as long as possible. His cock ached for release but the desire to keep her with him overrode those feelings. He didn’t want this moment to end.

As he teased her clit, he slowly slid one finger inside her hot sheath. She was tight but much wetter now. Her juices coated his finger so he glided another finger inside. When he did, her hips moved against him. He didn’t need more encouragement.

Slowly at first, he dragged his fingers out of her then pushed them back in. Her pussy clenched around him so he continued the action and increased his movements. The faster he moved, the tighter her inner walls clasped around him. He wanted her to come at least once before his cock was inside her.

Her hips raised up again and she fisted the blanket beneath her. “Oh my...”

Though he was loath to stop watching her, he tilted his head forward and sucked her clit into his mouth. The sharp tugging action pushed her over the edge.

Foreign but fabulous sensations zinged through Paz’s entire body. She’d masturbated before but nothing compared to what Adam was doing to her. She felt as if she could actually burst from the pleasure.

Each time he pushed his fingers into her, she wanted him to go deeper, wanted to take more of him. She wanted his cock. Even thinking it sent tingles skittering across her skin. Her fingers tightened against the blanket. After waiting so long for this moment, she couldn't understand why she wasn't more tense. Part of her wondered why everything about being with him felt so natural. So right. She barely knew him and by all standards she should be avoiding him, but her mind and body were drawn to him with a surprising intensity.

As he took her clit between his teeth then lashed his tongue over the sensitive bundle of nerves once more, the building need inside her exploded. She wanted to restrain herself, but it was too much. The tightness in her belly loosened and she let go as her pussy spasmed out of control.

She clutched the blanket beneath her as the climax pulsed through her. The tiny shots of pleasure overwhelming her body seemed to shoot to every direction. They hit all her nerve endings in an explosive, erotic sweep.

Adam slowly withdrew his fingers and looked up to meet her gaze. The look on his handsome face was one of primal satisfaction. Not that she blamed him. He should be proud. She just hoped she could make him feel as good.

She started to sit up when, lightning fast, he moved on top of her and stole the breath from her. She wanted to keep her head on straight around him, but when his strong chest covered hers, all coherent thought fled.

There was a light thatch of blond hair covering his chest and it tickled her hardened nipples. Involuntarily, she arched her back against him. Her body needed to feel more of him. More skin on skin. She wrapped her arms around him and smoothed her palms down his back. His muscles rippled underneath her touch.

It was as if a hunger had taken over her. She wanted more of Adam. "That was amazing," she whispered against his cheek when he bent to nip her ear.

"We're just getting started, sweetheart." His voice was just as low, but there was an underlying bit of dominance in it that turned her brain to mush.



After a year of captivity, being dominated was the last thing she should be thinking about, but her mind and body told her that Adam wouldn't abuse her. She might not trust him with her secrets, but she knew he wouldn't hurt her body. The man could quickly become like a drug to her.

Inhaling his addictive scent, she slowly raked her teeth along his stubbled jaw. Everything about him was so clean-cut and put together. She liked the scruffy bit of hair covering his face.

"I don't have condoms. Are you...protected?" He murmured close to her ear.

She understood his question. Shifters normally didn't need protection such as condoms because they couldn't get STDs and therefore they couldn't give them. But there were two times during the year a female could get pregnant. Luckily, now wasn't one of those times. "My cycle doesn't start for another month."

He reclaimed her mouth in a fervent, hungry kiss. Her lips parted willingly as she drank in all he had to offer. She guessed the foreign, sweeter taste from him was her. The realization created a burning low in her belly. She wanted to taste him too, but knew there wasn't time for that now.

He was ready to fuck. Probably had been since they'd started kissing. Despite the cool breeze, his body was hot to the touch. As his tongue made erotic little sweeping motions inside her mouth, she slipped a hand between them and under his pants.

She clasped his cock in her hand and squeezed. He immediately stilled and pulled his head back.

Her eyes flew open. "What?"

"I don't want to come in your hand." His voice was hoarse and strangled.

"Wh...oh." His admission surprised her. Something told her Adam could last for hours, but right now he was as on fire as she was. Feeling very powerful, she removed her hand and raked her fingers down his perfectly honed chest. "Why don't you come in *me* then?"

The seductive question surprised the hell out of Paz, but Adam didn't need to be asked twice. She was already wet and primed for him. A tiny part of her brain wondered if she would be able to take him. Shifters were more endowed than humans and her body was made to allow for that, but the muscles in her stomach clenched involuntarily as he sat up and shimmied out of his pants.

After he kicked them away, he sat on his knees and settled between her spread legs. She swallowed once as she stared at his pulsing cock. It was definitely big. Bigger than she'd expected. Not the length so much as how thick it was. That tiny trickle of fear turned into a river, but her worries were doused when Adam leaned forward and covered her body once again.

He used his elbows to support his weight as he stared down at her. His cock rested between her legs, but he didn't make a move to start fucking. Their faces were inches apart. "Let's just get used to feeling each other. There's no rush, sweetheart."

*Sweetheart.* No one had ever called her that. Something warm and unexpected blossomed in her chest. He was nothing like she'd expected and she was very thankful for that.

As he moved between her thighs she automatically wrapped her legs around him. The muscles in his back tightened underneath her and his eyes immediately darkened. He might have said there was no rush, but her pussy ached for more than just his fingers.

She sought out his mouth as she ground her hips against his. More than anything, she wanted him inside her. Wanted to feel what he had to offer. After so long without any real human contact, she needed this.

He shifted slightly and in one fluid motion, he pushed deep into her, completely filling her. All the air whooshed from her lungs, but just as quickly she caught her breath. The stretching sensation was foreign but welcome. She unhooked her legs from around his back and planted her feet on the quilt underneath them.

Adam was motionless inside her, letting her get accustomed to him. When he gently squeezed one of her breasts, she managed to relax.

All the tendons in his neck were pulled tight and his expression was strained so she knew he was holding back. At that moment, she was happy she'd waited for someone like Adam. He had to be in agony but it was obvious he didn't care and that he'd rather put her needs first.

She could barely explain it to herself, but her skin felt too tight for her body. She needed a bigger release than she'd gotten before. When she started moving her hips, he pushed up higher on his elbows and started driving into her with barely controlled thrusts.

If Adam died tonight, he'd definitely die happy. The thought scared the shit out of him, but he was so far beyond caring about anything but Paz's pleasure. She was an odd mix of sensuality and innocence and he wanted to lose himself in her.

Her pussy wrapped around him like a tight, hot, glove. He was so close to coming but refused to embarrass himself. She was going to climax again before they were finished.

Balancing on his elbows, he continued thrusting. Her inner walls were milking him tighter and tighter. Her dark eyes were slightly glazed over and the muscles in her body were all drawn tight. It was simply a matter of time before she came again.

She was spread out before him under the moonlight and he didn't think he'd ever seen anything so beautiful. Her dark hair feathered around her like a soft curtain and those dark eyes were practically shooting fire.

"Adam," she groaned his name and he nearly lost it.

Gritting his teeth, he slowed his pace to make it last for her, but she locked her ankles around his back and gripped him.

"Faster," she murmured.

He did as she commanded and reached between them. When he tweaked her clit, she arched her back and her cream rushed over him. Her climax was more intense this time. Her back bowed and her mouth opened in a silent O as her sheath tightened around him. Only when her vagina spasmed out of control, did he allow himself to let go.

A jarring, pulsing climax ripped through him as he poured himself inside her. Crying out her name he thrust into her again and again until the explosive eruption subsided into calmer waves of ecstasy.

Her mouth was parted and she didn't break his gaze as he settled on top of her. He knew he'd eventually have to move, but buried deep inside her was the only place he wanted to be.

The soft smile playing across Paz's swollen lips sent an unexpected jolt straight to his cock. When it stirred inside her, her eyebrows rose. "I'm not ready for another —"

"I know." His words were practically a growl as he dropped a kiss on her forehead.

When her breathing became faintly labored, he groaned and moved off her.

Paz stared at the sparkling sky above her as her heart rate returned to normal. She felt stretched, sore and absolutely wonderful. Sex had been a lot better than she'd expected. She wasn't sorry she'd waited so long to experience it though. In her heart she knew that if she'd slept with someone from her old pack, it wouldn't have been like this. Adam was completely giving.

"Paz?" His deep voice sent shivers spiraling over her skin.

She rolled on her side to face him. He was lying on his back with his head propped up underneath his arms and looking completely at ease.

"What?" she asked.

*There's something I need to tell you.*

When his lips didn't move, she realized he was projecting with his mind. Which likely meant he could read her thoughts. Her throat seized and her elation transformed to terror. Not caring that she was naked, she scrambled away until she was standing in the sand a few feet away from him. "You've been able to read my mind this whole time?" she whispered. *Oh god, oh god, oh god!* Did he know what she was? Had he simply been using her? Nausea swirled in her gut.

He jumped to his feet with surprising agility. "No!" He took a step toward her, but when she backed away, he held up his hands in a defensive gesture and stilled. "No, I swear. I think...I think we're mates. Try projecting your thoughts."

"No!" she shrieked. Was he insane? She wasn't going to project anything! Her body temperature started to rise and she knew she was working herself up, but she couldn't stop. "We are *not* mates. We're not! That's the most ridiculous thing I've ever heard."

She took another step back. Something pricked the back of her mind. If he could link telepathically with her, it was probably true they were mates. It would certainly explain her drugging need to be near him. If he discovered what she was... A shudder snaked down her body at the thought, but she shoved it out of her mind. She couldn't let him find out.

He kept his hands up but took another step closer. "I didn't mean to scare you. We're mates, Paz."

"No, we're not!"

"Why? You're too good for me?" he ground out. Hurt glinted in his emerald eyes and her first instinct was to wipe that pain away, but she stopped herself.

She needed to get away from him. *Fast*. The Lazos pack had protected her. She couldn't endanger them. Taking another step back, she pushed aside her insecurities and let the change overcome her. The adrenaline pumping through her overrode most of the pain as her bones twisted and broke. Without waiting to see his response, she sprinted back toward her sister's home. If she could just make it back, she'd be fine.

And safe.

Her heart pounded wildly as she kicked up sand and it didn't settle when she skidded to a stop on the stone steps of her sister's back patio. After she changed into her human form, she slipped her dress over her head. As she did, she saw Adam in wolf form on the beach barely ten yards away.

He just stood there, watching. It felt as if a fist was squeezing her heart. She wanted to talk to him, give him an explanation, but she couldn't. She was too afraid. If she admitted what she was, he'd have no choice but to turn her in to The Council. They might be mates, but they hadn't officially bonded and they didn't know each other that well.

When she bent to grab her panties, he started trotting toward her. Even though she knew she was being a total chickenshit, she stumbled back and raced for the back door. Paz had no doubt her sister was still awake and probably waiting to ream her out, but she'd rather face Marisol than an angry Adam.

\* \* \* \* \*

Adam stared helplessly at Paz's retreating figure. Anger and humiliation hummed through him. They were mates. He knew it and no doubt, she did too. Whether she wanted to admit it or not. He loped up the stone steps to see what she'd left behind. When he saw the scrap of black lace material that definitely belonged to her, he grabbed it in his mouth before running back to his beach house.

After he'd shifted and settled back into his house, he was still angry as hell. As he went through what had just happened in his mind, nothing made sense. He'd said they were mates and she'd run like a scared rabbit. Sure, he was feared and respected as The Council's enforcer, but apparently his position in the hierarchy wasn't good enough for her.

Maybe she'd just been interested in a fling? No. He quickly brushed that thought away. She hadn't admitted it, but he was fairly certain she'd been a virgin. At the most,

she had little experience with the opposite sex. He wasn't even sure how he knew that. Everything had just seemed too fresh to her.

That left one thing. She just didn't *want* him to be her mate. Whatever the reason, it didn't matter.

Grabbing a beer from the fridge, he frowned when he saw the time. It was after midnight, but it wouldn't be that late on the West Coast. He grabbed his cell and scrolled through the list of names until he landed on the one he wanted. Jacob Freeman.

After four rings Adam was about to hang up when his old friend answered. "Adam Tucker, holy shit. How are ya, brother?"

Despite his foul mood, he smiled. Freeman was one of the few wolves he actually trusted. Relatively speaking, he was a newer Alpha of his own pack, but he was wise for barely being a century old. "Can't complain. How about yourself?"

"I'm in the fucking desert right now freezing my nuts off."

Adam frowned. "I thought you were living in Washington."

"I was...I am. Currently, I'm hunting someone," he growled.

"Everything all right?" He hadn't heard that the Freeman pack had any problems lately.

"It will be. Shit man, this isn't Council business if that's what you're worried about. I'm trying to track down my stubborn-ass mate."

"What?"

He sighed. "She's...you know what, don't worry about it. It's under control. I know you didn't call me to bullshit so tell me what's on your mind."

At least he wasn't the only one with mate problems. The thought was somewhat comforting. "You still got that contact at the Florida Department of Transportation?"

"Yeah. Got one in New York and in Illinois too."

"I need access to some traffic cameras in the greater Miami area."

"Tell me exactly what you want and I'll see what I can do."

Adam quickly ran through the dates and times of the attacks in addition to requesting video feeds of all the surrounding areas.

"This sounds like heavy shit. You need any help?" Jacob asked when Adam was finished.

It shouldn't have, but the offer surprised him. "No, but thanks. I'll call you if I need anything else."

After they disconnected, his mind was still racing. He wouldn't get the information he wanted until at least tomorrow. While he could scour the city at night randomly looking for Morales, the chance of finding him in a place this size was minimal. Until he knew if there was a pattern to his attacks, or could at least narrow down his hunting ground, trying to track him would be pointless.

At the moment, that didn't matter as much to him as talking to his mate. He slammed his beer down on the center island and cursed under his breath. If Paz thought she could run away from him, she was out of her damn mind. There was no way he could rest until they'd at least talked. And if he couldn't sleep, she didn't get to either.

As he started for the back door, his cell rang. When he saw the number, his heart rate tripled. It was the number to Stephan Lazos' house. "Yeah?"

"Uh, Adam? It's me." Paz cleared her throat nervously.

"What the hell were you thinking—"

"Marisol got another call from Preston. He told her that he left another present for her but wouldn't say where. Stephan is packing the both of them up and they're planning to leave soon. She wants me to go with her and I think maybe she's right. I know what I said before, but—"

"I'll be there in a few minutes." He disconnected, and without bothering to shift into his wolf form, he simply locked up and jogged down the beach. Something foreign—fear maybe—spiked through him. He couldn't let Paz out of his sight.



He didn't scent any other wolves except those he knew as he neared the back door to Stephan's house, but his body was on alert and ready for battle. All the muscles in his legs were tight in anticipation. If he had to change at a moment's notice, he would.

As expected, the back door was locked and fortified with extra security. He rapped on it once. A few seconds later it swung open. Paz stood before him wearing loose jogging pants and a hoodie sweater with the Miami Dolphins logo on the front. She bit her bottom lip and eyed him warily.

Sighing, he stepped in and shut the door behind them. For now, the mate discussion would have to wait. "Where's your sister?"

"Upstairs with Stephan. They're packing."

Without a backward glance, he strode through the Tuscan-themed kitchen and found the stairs. As he bounded up them, he announced himself. "Stephan, Marisol, I hope you're both decent."

The first door on the left was open, but by the scent he knew it was Paz's room. He found the second door open also. And it was occupied.

"Stephan, what's going on?" He knocked on the open door as he stepped inside.

Stephan looked up from his suitcase. "I was going to call you once we'd packed up." He nodded in the direction of a closed door, probably a connecting bathroom. "Preston called Marisol and told her he was coming for her. I have no doubt of my abilities to protect my mate, but I don't know what kind of firepower he has or what he's planning. I want her out of this house as soon as possible. She's a sitting duck here."

Adam nodded. "I agree. What else did he say?"

"He told her he left her a 'present'. After the news last night I can only imagine what that means. Marisol did say she could hear the ocean in the background when he called. She said she could distinctly hear water crashing against something."

Adam started to respond when the bathroom door swung open and Marisol walked out carrying a small bag. She narrowed her dark gaze at him. "I don't care what she says, my sister is coming with us." Her words were a growl, as if she was challenging him to defy her.

He would show respect for his mate's family, but Paz belonged with him. Whether she wanted to be with him or not was another matter. "I would have agreed with you a few hours ago, but Paz is staying with me. Under my roof and under my protection." He'd planned to give her some space but after this development, he didn't give a shit if she wanted to stay with him or not. She was *his* to protect.

"That's crazy! She's —"

"She's my mate." His quiet declaration stilled the room.

Stephan's hand hovered over the open suitcase and Marisol's eyes widened in...horror. That was the only word Adam could think to describe it. *Shit, was he that bad of a catch?* He'd never thought about it before. He'd just assumed that if he found his mate, she'd want him as much as he wanted her. Something tightened around his chest, but he pushed past it. Emotional bullshit could get him killed. He needed to start thinking with his head. "That's right. And she's not leaving my sight."

Marisol's gaze strayed past him and without turning he knew Paz had stepped into the doorway. "Is this true, *hermana?*"

He didn't turn because he couldn't bear to see her embarrassment.

"It's true." Paz's voice was quiet, remote.

Stephan cleared his throat as he zipped up his suitcase. "Adam will have no problem taking care of your sister, Marisol. We are leaving in five minutes so make sure you pack everything you need."

"But —"

"No buts. I would fight anyone to the death to protect you. Do you think it will be any different for him? Pack. Your. Stuff." Stephan plucked his luggage off the bed and

skirted past his angry mate. Adam turned and watched as Stephan linked his arm through Paz's. He practically dragged her from the room.

Frowning, he waited a moment before trailing after them. They were at the end of the hallway.

"If you're truly mates, give him a chance before condemning him," Stephan murmured.

Adam knew he wasn't meant to overhear, but like so many of his kind, his hearing was exceptional.

"I want to, but what if..." Paz trailed off as she met his gaze. Just as quickly she turned and hurried away from Stephan and into her bedroom. The door shut behind her with a resounding thud.

*What the hell was going on?* Before he could voice anything, Stephan motioned to him. "Will you speak with me in private?"

Gritting his teeth, he nodded and followed the other wolf down the stairs.

Stephan was silent until they entered his office and shut the door behind them. He turned to Adam immediately. "Give Paz time to adjust to the fact that you're mates."

"Excuse me?"

Stephan lifted a dark eyebrow in amusement. "She wasn't very receptive to the fact that you're mates, was she?"

His jaw clenched, but he didn't answer.

"I didn't think so. I know you didn't ask, but my mate is cut from the same cloth as yours so I'm giving this advice for free. Paz had a rough year. A year that would have likely broken most wolves. She's just figuring out who she is again and then she meets you, *the enforcer*. She has a right to be wary of you. If—when—she puts her trust in you, don't break that trust. If you do, I don't care who you are, you'll have to deal with the entire Lazos pack."

He wasn't exactly sure what Stephan was getting at, but this was the kind of conversation friends had and he couldn't afford that type of relationship. Adam digested what Stephan said but veered the conversation in another direction. "Do you know where you're taking your mate?"

Stephan's gaze narrowed for a fraction of a second before he nodded. "Yes. And I'm not telling anyone where, including you. I've already contacted my brothers and my Alpha so they're aware of the situation."

"Good. Leave both your phones." He might have use for Marisol's phone. If he could bait Morales out into the open with it, he would, but he didn't voice that.

Stephan reached into his pocket then handed both phones to Adam.

"Call as soon as you get settled in. I'm sure Paz will want updates from her sister." Even though he was hurt by his mate, he still wanted her happy. For the second time that night, the knowledge scared the shit out of him.

## **Chapter Five**

Paz risked a glance at Adam as they strode up to the front walk of the beach house. He hadn't said more than a few words to her since she'd said goodbye to her sister and packed up what few clothes she had.

His jaw was clenched tightly as he held open the front door for her. She nearly jumped when he secured it behind them. The lock clicking into place sounded so ominous, but she fought off a shiver. She understood why he was angry, but it still sucked, especially now that they were going to be stuck under the same roof.

"I'm not sure how long you'll have to stay here so tomorrow morning we'll go back and grab more of your clothing," he said as he strode toward the carpeted staircase. Even though he was angry with her, he still carried her bag. The action wasn't lost on her.

"I don't own any more clothes." Considering she'd been in captivity for a year, did he really expect her to have much? Her little suitcase was sad, but hell, she'd only been free less than a week. Extensive shopping hadn't been high on her list of things to do and even though her sister had given her money she wanted to save it.

He paused at the foot of the stairs and turned. His eyebrows rose as he lifted her bag. "*This* is all you have?"

She could feel her cheeks heat up, but she nodded and averted her gaze.

"Come on. I'll show you to your room."

She trudged up the stairs after him, feeling as if she was headed to her execution. She needed to clear the air but was unsure what to say. He opened the second door on the right and motioned for her to enter. She tried to ignore his scent as she passed him but failed miserably. The spicy richness of sandalwood would forever be seared into her brain as part of him.

As he dropped her bag at the foot of the four-poster queen-sized bed, she grabbed his forearm. "I'm sorry about earlier. I acted like a total freak and I don't know what else to say other than I'm really *really* sorry."

"Why'd you run?" His arm tensed under her fingers so she dropped her hand.

"I..." She bit her bottom lip and decided to plunge ahead. "I don't want you reading my thoughts. I don't care if we're mates, you have no business in my head. Okay?"

"Okay."

She frowned. "That's it?"

"You want me to argue with you and tell you I'm going to hijack your thoughts?" His voice was wry and his expression unreadable.

"Well, no." She crossed her arms over her chest and took another step back from him. She didn't like this cold side of Adam. At least when he'd been awkward before, he'd been endearing and approachable. Having him give her the cold shoulder hurt more than she could have imagined.

"Just because we're linked doesn't mean I can jump into your head anytime I want. I can project my thoughts, yes, but I don't think I can read your mind unless you allow me to."

"You're sure?"

He shrugged. "As sure as I can be without trying. Once—if—we bond, we'll likely link completely, but that's neither here nor there."

Crap. She hadn't even thought about bonding. If they were mates, of course he'd want to bond. But then he'd definitely be able to read her thoughts whenever he wanted. Or at least that's how it was for her sister and her mate. An icy shiver rolled over her. She couldn't have him in her head digging around her innermost secrets. "Okay then." She stood there feeling incredibly awkward, but she wasn't sure what else to say. It was late, she was tired, she'd lost her virginity to the mate she couldn't be

with, and she already missed her sister desperately. With the exception of the mind-blowing sex, this night sucked.

“Maybe not tomorrow or even this week, but later I’ll take you shopping.”

She frowned at the sudden change of subject. “What? Why?”

He stared at her as if she’d grown two heads. “Because I take care of what’s mine.”

Subconsciously she smoothed her hands over her pants. When he shut the door behind him, she let out a long breath she hadn’t realized she’d been holding. The house was a lot warmer than her sister’s so she changed into a slim-fitting T-shirt and matching navy shorts. Then she slid under the silky sheet and plush comforter. With high ceilings and custom crown molding, the guestroom was devoid of personal decorations, but everything was crisp and clean. There was even a spacious sitting area near one of the windows complete with a chaise lounge and a small bookshelf full of recent fiction releases. She felt like she was in a bed and breakfast or a really nice hotel.

As she closed her eyes, she tried to force sleep to come, but it was annoyingly elusive. She kept picturing Adam’s face, and each time, she felt guilty as hell. Not to mention, lonely. After what they’d shared together, she’d hoped to at least cuddle with him for a while, but then she’d freaked out like some sort of maniac. There was no question she could have handled things better and now she was worried she’d done irreparable damage. What if he got curious about why she was so insistent he stay out of her head and started digging deeper into her past?

When an hour had passed and she still couldn’t sleep, she punched her pillow once more for good measure and slipped from her bed. Peeking out into the hallway, she found it empty. She listened for a moment and when she didn’t hear any noise, she hurried toward the stairs, which were also empty. At the bottom stair, she realized she hadn’t asked Adam where anything was but figured she’d find what she wanted. She walked across the foyer and through an archway that led into an expansive kitchen. Everything was state-of-the-art stainless steel and spotless. Most of the appliances looked new.

There was enough moonlight streaming in through the skylights so she didn't bother with the overhead lights. Not to mention she had supernatural night vision. The refrigerator creaked open, but before she'd pulled it out all the way, she was aware of another presence. She spun around to find Adam standing in the archway wearing boxers and a grim expression.

Her throat seized as she stared at his ripped stomach and chest muscles. She quickly shut the door. "Hi..."

"I heard you get up and wanted to make sure everything was okay." He turned to leave, and even though everything inside her told her to shut up, she called out to him.

"Wait."

He paused but stayed turned away from her. Yeah, he was pissed and she didn't blame him. Smooth lines and tight muscles accentuated his back and calves. His body was drool-worthy and her mouth instinctively watered as her gaze narrowed on his ass. If only he didn't have those boxers on.

"Are you going to stay mad at me forever?" she asked.

At her question, he turned. It wasn't anger she saw there but confusion and desire. He let out a short sigh. "I'm not mad, Paz. I...shit...I don't even know what to say. You find out we're mates and you run away." His jaw clenched tightly as he abruptly stopped talking.

*Did he think she'd run because she didn't want him?* Maybe if she let him think that, it would be easier to keep her distance. Staring into his green eyes, she could feel herself losing the battle in her head. She needed to stay away from him, but there was an inexplicable pull every time she was near him. Separation physically hurt. Okay, so maybe it wasn't that crazy. Her sister had told her that's what it was like when she'd found her mate. It was supposedly just biology but the deep ache was low in her belly and it pulsed throughout her entire body. She *needed* to be near him. Needed to feel his hands on her again. "I'm not embarrassed you're my mate if that's what you think. The opposite in fact."



His gaze narrowed as he assessed her face, but some foreign energy rolled off him and nearly bowled her over. *Hope?* She couldn't put her finger on it. Before she could change her mind she walked toward him until they were barely inches apart. "Can I sleep in your room tonight?"

At her question, mercurial storm clouds swirled in his eyes, but he nodded. When he didn't make a move, she brushed past him and was surprised when he placed his hand on the small of her back. She was even more surprised that he left it there as they ascended the stairs all the way to his room. It was almost as if he was making a statement, but she wasn't exactly sure what it was yet.

She knew she'd been the one who had screwed up so it would be up to her to get him talking again. The lights were off, but the curtains on the broad window were drawn back, giving them plenty of illumination. She frowned when she realized the bed wasn't even rumpled.

"Have you gone to sleep yet?" She looked at him as he shut the door behind them.

"No." He shook his head and nodded at the small desk by the window. A laptop was on and papers were fanned out.

A sudden wave of apprehension threatened to sway her, but she forced her legs to move toward the bed. "What side of the bed do you like?"

"Doesn't matter." Short, curt and to the point.

A knot formed in her belly as she pulled back the chocolate-colored comforter and equally dark silky sheet. She slid under the covers and turned on her side as he shut down his computer. When he got in next to her, she reached out to touch him, but he tensed so she pulled her hand back. It was obvious he didn't want to talk so she rolled onto her other side and stared at the huge curio cabinet against the wall. Asking to sleep in the same room as him was a dumb idea. She was wound up and now she'd never be able to sleep.

The bed moved suddenly and before she realized it, he'd slipped his arm around her waist and pulled her back flush against his chest. "You want to start over?" he murmured against her ear. His hot breath sent shivers to her toes.

She nodded and shifted so that she was on her back instead of facing away from him. "I'm sorry —"

He placed a gentle finger over her lips. "No more apologies. We're starting over."

His expression was still unreadable, but his eyes filled with undeniable lust. He might be mad at her, but he still wanted her.

"So we really are mates, huh?" she whispered.

"Afraid so." He pressed a soft kiss to her forehead and lay back against the pillow but still stayed turned toward her. And he kept that hand across her stomach.

Her shirt was pushed up and she was very aware of the bare skin his fingers idly caressed. She had no clue what the future held for them or if they'd ever bond, but if he was her mate she wanted to know more about him. Stephan was right. Before she condemned Adam, she needed to find out what kind of man he was. "So how did you get the job as The Council's enforcer?"

His fingers stilled and tightened against her. He was silent for so long she doubted he'd answer, so he surprised her when he spoke. "Centuries ago when The Council formed I handled a few skirmishes between packs and since I don't have a pack to speak of, the job fell to me."

The sadness that rolled off him sent a dagger through her chest. Maybe it was because they were mates or maybe it was because she'd never fit in well anywhere. Whatever the reason, she ached for him. "Do you like what you do?"

He shrugged. "It's my job."

Not exactly an answer, but she let it slide. For now. She decided to ask something else that had been weighing on her mind. "Exactly how old are you?"

His lips pursed. Under the moonlight streaming in, his face was all harsh lines and angles. "Roughly five hundred."

She gasped. He barely looked forty years old. And that was stretching it. "How is that possible?"

He shrugged again, but this time he didn't answer at all.

"Does anyone else know?"

"The members of The Council."

"Shit." She had more questions, like what had happened to his pack, but suddenly nothing else seemed that important. *How the hell was he that old?*

"I'd appreciate it if you didn't tell anyone my age. It's not a secret exactly, but I don't spread it around."

She nodded and stared at the ceiling. She was barely a hundred, but she'd thought werewolves only lived to be four or five hundred years old. Since she'd never actually seen one that old, she'd assumed they'd look older. Adam looked younger than Lucas Lazos, the Alpha of the Lazos pack, and she was pretty sure Lucas was only two hundred years old. It didn't make sense. Unless Adam had different magic running through his blood. Just like her. *Interesting.*

"I can see those wheels turning in your head. Shut your eyes and get some sleep. We'll talk in the morning," he murmured.

Technically it was already morning, but she didn't comment. When he lay on his back, she shifted and stretched out across his chest. His heartbeat was steady and true. She could also see his cock was hard as a rock underneath the sheet, but he didn't make a move to touch her other than wrapping his arm snugly around her.

For the first time in over a year, she felt safe. Ironical that it was in his arms, but she didn't care. As she listened to the thump of his heart, she allowed the blackness of sleep to engulf her.

\* \* \* \* \*

Adam opened his eyes as the increasing sunlight crept up over the sheets through the window. Paz still lay across his chest and every so often, a soft cry erupted from her. He knew she was battling something in her sleep and needed to get it out. Despite the wet tears on his chest and the protective need that nearly overwhelmed him, he refrained from waking her. If she could fight her demons while asleep, it would be good therapy.

"No—" She jerked up and met his gaze. Her hand was still on his chest. She looked at it, then him. Her eyebrows snapped down in confusion. "Was I dreaming?"

"Yeah." He tried to catch his breath as he stared at her. Her dark hair was mussed around her face. He rubbed his thumb across her cheek, swiping away some of the wetness. "Are you okay?"

She nodded, but she didn't look okay. Those dark eyes were haunted and full of so much sadness. His belly ached as he looked at her. No matter what had gone down between them yesterday, he couldn't stand to see her in pain.

Sliding his hand through the curtain of her hair, he cupped the back of her head. "Come here." He wanted to give her a chance to say no.

Her lips parted slightly as she realized what he wanted. Without pause she leaned forward and pressed her mouth to his.

He'd gone to sleep with a hard-on and he'd woken up with one. And it was all for her. For centuries he'd had complete control of his body. He loved sex as much as the next wolf, but his fist would do just fine. Hell, it had been all he'd had over the past couple decades. Now he couldn't imagine using his rough hand when he had her sweet body.

As he teased her lips open, his hands strayed to her waist. He shifted so that he was half sitting and he pulled her so she straddled him. Jerking his hips, he rubbed his bare cock over her covered pussy. Without wasting time, he tugged on the hem of her tiny top and drew it over her head.

When her breasts were bared he had to restrain himself from burying his head against them. She was still coming down from the memories of whatever nightmare she'd been having and he wanted to take things slow.

She clutched his shoulders and he could tell she was nervous. Maybe it was because it was daylight.

"Can I ask you something?" he asked, never averting his gaze from her eyes.

"Yes." Her voice was breathy and seductive and sent a jolt straight to his dick.

"Was last night your first time?"

Her cheeks tinged pink, but she nodded. "Yes."

He wanted to ask why she'd chosen him, but he wasn't sure he wanted the answer. All he knew was that even though she'd run from him, she'd still chosen him as her first. *Him*. The knowledge sent a primal surge of satisfaction through him. That had to mean something. Now that he'd had her, he planned to make sure he was the first and last man she ever slept with.

Wordlessly he ran his palms over her breasts. An almost imperceptible shudder rolled over her as he rubbed his thumbs over her hardening nipples. She moistened her lips and her eyes glazed over in undeniable desire.

He reclaimed her mouth as he teased her breasts. Every so often she made little moans and he worried he'd come on the spot from those noises alone. Barely moving his hips, he started rubbing his cock against her covered folds. The skimpy shorts she wore offered little barrier to him. Even if he couldn't smell her heady desire, he could feel how soaked she was.

Though he hated to stop kissing her, he wanted to taste her more. Pulling his head back slightly, he dropped a kiss on her cheek then forehead. "Your shorts need to go," he murmured.

Jerkily, she nodded and pushed up on her knees. He grasped the waistband and helped her shimmy out of them. Now nothing was between them. She settled back on him, but he didn't make a move to penetrate her.

As she slid her soft, wet folds over him, a shudder weaved through him. His cock jutted up between them. She had a soft thatch of neatly trimmed dark hair between her legs and no tan lines anywhere. Her skin was a perfect caramel and an erotic contrast to his. Where he was tanned from the sun and rougher from spending time outdoors, she was soft and all his.

Leaning forward, she wrapped her hands around his neck before pressing her body against him. The feel of her rock-hard nipples against his chest made the muscles in his stomach bunch.

He gripped her hips and warred with himself. It would be so easy to shift and plunge deep inside her. Bury himself in her warmth. His cock demanded it, but he wanted to give her more. If he wanted to keep her in his bed, he couldn't fuck her like an animal every time he got near her. Even if that's what his body wanted.

Keeping his hands securely around her hips, he scooted down so that he was flat on his back and she was on top of him. When he moved, her eyes flew open and she drew her head back a fraction.

"What are you doing?" she whispered.

He wasn't sure why she was whispering, but he kept his voice just as low. "I want to taste you."

Her eyebrows pulled together in confusion for a split second until she understood his meaning.

"Just hold on to the headboard and kneel over me. If you don't like what I'm doing, we'll stop." No matter that he wanted to take her from behind, give her his mark and completely dominate her, he wanted her to take back some control in her life. Stephan's earlier advice had given him a lot to think about. After a year in captivity, she was

handling herself remarkably well, and although it went against his nature, he wanted her to be on top. Just this once.

Her cheeks were flushed, but she pushed up on her knees and shimmied up his body until she straddled his face.

As she moved over him, he delved his tongue into her wet folds and groaned against her wetness. She was sweet and like nothing he'd ever tasted. Just like her scent, there was something about Paz that was special and belonged solely to her.

"Ahh." The headboard shook slightly under her touch and her thighs quivered when he probed deeper with his tongue.

Reaching up, he grasped her ass from underneath and held onto her as he stroked her pussy. With the exception of last night, it had been so long since he'd tasted a woman and even longer since taking a woman this way. Despite his need for dominance, he loved the position and the angle. And he loved her sweet taste.

Taking his time, he circled his tongue around her clit. When he did she jerked above him but maintained a fairly steady stance. He licked her from her clit to as far back as he could go. When he ventured into other territory, she tensed so he returned his focus to her swollen nub. There would be time enough later for anal play when she was more comfortable.

Touching and kissing her was all that mattered. As he swirled his tongue around her entrance, her entire body trembled and he could practically feel her orgasm coming on.

"Adam?" His name on her lips was breathy and sexy.

Somehow he stopped himself from what he was doing. "Hmm?"

"I want you inside me." There was no trepidation in her words. Just longing and need.

Blunt and to the point. His kind of woman. More to the point, *his woman*. And there was no way in hell he could argue with her request. Since the moment he woke up, his

cock had been aching with the need to feel her sweet cunt wrap around him again. Sliding down the bed, he sat up and turned around so he was facing her back. When she started to move, he pressed his chest against her back and placed his hands over hers.

Wordlessly, she leaned forward a fraction and pressed her backside against him. The small submissive gesture did more to turn him on than anything else she could have done. Smoothing his hands down her waist and hips, he clutched onto her as he grounded himself. He almost felt as if he needed to prepare himself before entering her. Last night it had been like sticking his cock in an electric socket.

He kept one hand on her hip and slid the other over her ass and between her legs from behind. Her pussy immediately clenched around his finger like a vise, but she was wet and ready for him.

After withdrawing his finger, he brushed her hair to the side and kissed her neck and shoulder. She shuddered as he raked his teeth over her delicate skin and it took all his self-control not to mark her. The wolf inside him might want to brand her for the world to see, but his human side won out. If he did it without her permission, it would cause irreparable damage between them.

When they bonded, it would be for life and he wanted to know her better when they did bond. Possibly love her. Most mates eventually fell in love and despite the fact that he'd been alone for so long, he found himself longing to have that connection with someone. Well, not just anyone. With her. Maybe then he could quit his job and start a life with her.

Paz trembled under Adam's kisses. Her skin felt oversensitized as he covered her exposed shoulder with kisses. The experience of his tongue licking her pussy had been amazing but she wanted to feel his cock inside her again. She already missed the pleasure of being completely filled.



She might have run from him the night before, but what they'd shared was seared into her brain and she desperately craved more. She could barely explain it, even to herself, but she *needed* him inside her.

Clutching onto the headboard, she bit back a moan. She wanted to demand he start fucking her, but it had taken all her courage to ask him to stop what he was doing moments before. So far he'd been incredibly giving, but he was also unreadable. Every so often she'd sense something from him or she'd be able to read his expression, but the man was a mystery.

"Please." The word tore from her lips before she could stop herself.

"Please what, sweetheart?" He tugged her earlobe between his teeth.

"Do *something*."

The chuckle in her ear was positively wicked. He was intentionally torturing her. Before she had time to prepare, he grasped her hips again and thrust, long and hard. The action was abrupt but welcome. Her inner walls expanded and clenched as she adjusted.

When he didn't move, she tried to, but he snaked an arm around her waist and held her fast. Her pussy pulsed and spasmed, begging for relief. If he would let her move, just a little, she'd push over the edge. She was so close. Had been close when he'd simply been licking her. But she'd wanted to feel him inside her when she came.

"Don't move," he whispered into her ear as he removed his hand.

Her body listened to his command even though nothing was stopping her from moving. One of his hands slid up her side and over her rib cage until he cupped her breast. She sucked in a sharp breath and he flicked her hardened bud before lightly pinching it between his fingers.

The erotic action had her involuntarily jerking against him. When she did, he slid another hand over her stomach and down between her legs. He didn't waste any time finding her clit.

His fingers expertly and playfully strummed her aching bundle of nerves. He knew the right pressure, the right tempo. It was simultaneously torture and heaven. The faster he tweaked her, the tighter her pussy contracted.

A pulsating wave of pleasure started deep in her belly. Finally she couldn't take it anymore. She moved forward then back. And he didn't try to stop her. Just the opposite.

His hand dropped from her breast and he pounded into her with a fierce rhythm. In and out. He slammed his cock into her with no restraint. "You like that?" The question was little more than a guttural growl.

But she couldn't answer. The feel of his cock moving in her was too much. Her climax hit with shocking intensity. Her inner walls spasmed out of control as he slammed into her again and again.

She grabbed onto the headboard for support, but Adam's arm was once again underneath her stomach, giving her balance. He held her through her racking orgasm. Her toes and fingers felt numb as she came down from her high.

Behind her, a loud shout exploded from Adam as he plunged deep into her with one final thrust. As he emptied himself inside her, he growled her name and reality wiggled its way into her brain. She couldn't have sex and keep herself separate from her emotions. The more they did this, the closer she felt to him. And the more likely it was they'd bond and finalize that they were truly mated. He hadn't mentioned anything about bonding, but he was biding his time. She sensed it straight to her core.

She shoved those thoughts from her mind as he collapsed onto the bed and pulled her on top of him. Stretched over him, she couldn't fight the giggle that erupted when his cock began to harden again. "You're some sort of machine," she murmured when he swept kisses across her jaw and over her cheek.

"Only for you, sweetheart." His deep voice enveloped every part of her.

Even though she tried to keep thoughts of the future out of her head, she realized that before they bonded she'd have to be honest with Adam about what she was.

Maybe she should give him the benefit of the doubt before assuming he'd discard her once he knew the truth, but certain prejudices ran deep. If he rejected her, she didn't think she could bear it. With that rejection would come betrayal because he'd no doubt turn her over to The Council. She wouldn't go willingly and she knew the Lazos pack would never let him take her without a fight. There would be bloodshed and she couldn't stand the thought of that hovering on her conscience either.

## **Chapter Six**

Adam stared out the expansive window as he tried to figure out what was going on in Paz's head. She'd enjoyed herself in bed, of that he was sure, but when they were finished, she'd emotionally withdrawn from him again. And he had no idea why.

The sound of running water stopped and he realized she must be done with her shower. He'd contemplated joining her, but she'd seemed as if she needed time alone. Even though he wanted to try linking with her telepathically and delving into her thoughts, he couldn't break that trust. He'd promised to stay out of her head and he had to do just that. If—when—they bonded, he doubted he'd be able to stay out though. According to most shifters, once the bonding was official, mates linked telepathically and permanently.

As he turned from the window, something near one of the sand dunes caught his eye. "What the hell..."

"What's going on?" Paz asked.

He turned to find her wrapped in a towel looking good enough to eat. She'd twisted her wet hair up into an oversized clip and without any makeup on she practically glowed. He mentally shook himself. "Stay here and keep the doors locked."

Without waiting for a response, he headed downstairs. He didn't bother with any weapons because he was faster and more powerful than most werewolves realized. The Council knew some of his secrets, but not all of them.

The salty air accosted him the second he stepped outside. He didn't waste time hiding or trying to stalk the werewolf on the beach. The man had been visible from the window and it was obvious he wasn't trying to hide. Or if he was, he was doing a shitty job.

The sand shifted between his toes as he stalked across it. "What the hell are you doing?" he demanded when he spotted the naked human curled up next to a small sand hill.

The dark-haired man focused on Adam for a split second before writhing in agony. "Fuck, this hurts! Help me, please." He started to shift. His bones cracked but only halfway realigned before he reverted back to his human form.

"Adam!" He turned at Paz's voice. Wearing jeans and a T-shirt—and no bra—she hurried across the patio and down the short wooden steps.

"I thought I told you to stay inside," he growled. Didn't the fact that he was known as the enforcer carry any weight with the stubborn woman?

She rolled her eyes and tried to brush past him, but instinct kicked in and he blocked her.

"Don't go near him."

"This is the human that doctor injected. I recognize him from Perez's video scans. They didn't tell the subjects what they were giving them. I swear I've seen him before."

Doctor Reed, the monster experimenting on his kind, along with Antonio Perez had been killed in the explosion that saved Paz's life. It would stand to reason Paz recognized him. "You're sure?"

"Yes." She glanced at the man still writhing, then back at Adam. She placed a gentle hand on his forearm. "He's just another victim. We need to help him."

Sighing, Adam turned and crouched next to the man. "I'm going to help you inside. If you try to attack this woman, you'll regret it. Do you understand?"

All the muscles in the man's body were pulled taut, but he nodded. "Yes," he gasped out.

Even though the man was taller and heavier than him, Adam lifted him up with ease and strode past Paz. All his protective instincts told him to kill this human or get him far away from his mate, but he knew he had to act rationally. They needed to find

out who he was and who else knew about him. Adam could sense that he was a shifter, yet somehow different. It was an intriguing, foreign scent.

Paz hurried past him and opened the door to the kitchen. Once inside, he stretched the man out on the center island. He didn't care about nudity and Adam seriously doubted the other man did either, but Paz grabbed a towel and threw it over his lap.

Before he could move, Paz elbowed past him and took the man's face in her hands. "Can you hear me?" she asked.

"Yeah," he rasped out.

"What's your name?"

"Ethan Connell." His voice was slightly stronger this time, as if Paz's presence had a calming effect on him.

"How did you find us?" Adam interjected.

"I could feel you." Ethan looked at Paz when he answered.

She glanced back at Adam, then back at him. "What do you mean?"

"I don't know...they put something in my blood...told me it would make me stronger, not turn me into a fucking animal." He howled in pain and curled up in a fetal position.

Paz brushed his shaggy hair back from his forehead. "Listen to me, Ethan. Take a deep breath and relax."

Adam was surprised when the man did. His legs and arms went slack at her words.

"Take another breath and close your eyes. Now go to sleep. You want to shut your eyes and go to sleep. You'll feel better when you wake up." Her voice was like a lullaby.

And Ethan did exactly as she said.

There was more to Paz than met the eye. Adam was now convinced she was keeping something from him. "How did you do that?"

She stepped away from the island and turned toward him. "I didn't do anything. He's tired and stressed. He just needed to ground himself. I'm going to call Caro and have her come over to check him out."

Adam frowned as he racked his brain. "Caro?"

"Oh, Caro Angel. She's Alisha Lazos' sister. She was at Nick's birthday party before you arrived, but she got called to the hospital. "

"Right." He'd read Caro's file. She was a pediatrician at one of the hospitals in Miami, specifically in the oncology department. When Paz said the she-wolf's name, her voice softened. It was a small thing, but he guessed they were likely close.

"She should be home by now. Would you mind carrying him to one of the bedrooms so he's more comfortable?"

Adam nodded as Paz hurried from the room. Now he was more than intrigued. Once again she was all business. The only time Paz let her guard down was during sex so if he had to use that to get close to her, so be it.

\* \* \* \* \*

Paz waited until she was upstairs to let out the breath she'd been holding. As she'd been calming that man down, she'd forgotten about Adam's presence. Well, not completely but enough that she let her defenses slip. And that couldn't happen again.

As a half fae, she had the ability to influence people. Not all people, of course, and usually not supernatural beings, but the man downstairs had been near his breaking point. His subconscious had been begging for help. He'd wanted to listen to her. And Adam had seen her use her abilities. Of course she could deny it, but he'd still seen her in action.

She shook her head. That was something she'd just have to worry about later. When she found her cell, she dialed Caro.

Thankfully, she answered on the second ring. "Hello, dear."

She didn't bother with niceties. "Caro? I need your help. We found that human the doctor injected. From what I can see he's having a hard time controlling his ability to shift, but I got him to go to sleep."

"Did you use your *influence*?" Caro was one of the few people who knew about most of her abilities.

"Yes. I don't think Adam realized though." She whispered the last part.

"I'll be right over."

"Thanks." As soon as they disconnected, Paz slid her phone back into her bag and collapsed on the bed.

She was still a little nervous being alone with Adam so she was thankful Caro was coming over. When Paz had awakened directly after her year-long nightmare, Caro had been one of the first people to help her. She'd gone shopping with her and had told her to stop by the house anytime she wanted to talk. Hell, she'd treated her normal, not like some victim. Although she was one hundred and ninety, Caro was still unmated. In human years, it meant she looked like she was in her thirties, but for a shifter, it was a long time to be single.

Not that Paz blamed her for not settling. It would be horrible to mate, then to find out your true mate was still out there. Hell, she was still shocked she'd found her mate and even more shocked by who he was. Growing up she'd heard rumors about the enforcer and how badass he was, but she'd been more terrified of him than anything else. He represented The Council and they represented death for her.

A sharp knock on her open door jerked her gaze up. Damn! She hadn't even scented him coming up the stairs. She needed to get a grip on herself.

Adam stared at her for a long moment then spoke. "I put him on the couch in the living room. Is Caro on her way?"

She nodded and stood.



“Good. Thomas and Nick will be here soon too. Once they arrive, I’ve got something to do, but you’ll be in safe hands.”

She started to ask where he was going but stopped. If she didn’t know what he was doing, she wouldn’t worry. At least that’s what she told herself. “Okay, I’ll wait downstairs.”

\* \* \* \* \*

Adam gritted his teeth as he drove away from the beach house. He hated leaving Paz alone, but his DOJ contact had called while she’d been upstairs and he now had a meeting he couldn’t break. Leaving her with Thomas and Nick should ease his mind, but it just pissed him off. He hated how at ease she was with Thomas.

He actually liked Thomas and under different circumstances, might even throw back a couple beers with him, but as it stood, until he and Paz bonded, he didn’t want her around him. His human side knew his attitude was archaic. His other side didn’t give a shit.

Once he reached the local transportation department, he parked in the main lot as he’d been instructed, then waited. After a few minutes, he spotted a middle-aged man wearing a white dress shirt and dark slacks weaving through the various vehicles. And he looked agitated.

Adam got out of the SUV and shut the door. He waited to be approached.

“Are you Adam?” He stood back a couple feet and Adam could scent his nervousness.

“Yeah. And you are?” Adam knew the man’s name, he just wanted to be sure.

“I’m Frank. You ready?” Despite the cool breeze, he wiped his hands against his slacks.

“When you are.” Adam fell into step with him and didn’t bother making small talk. Since the Department of Justice was a virtual umbrella over so many agencies, his

contact with them was technically this guy's boss. But Adam understood his friend was doing him a huge favor by allowing him unlimited access to the traffic videos.

After using his keycard to open a side door to the two-story building, Frank glanced at him as they headed down a hallway. "I've already got the videos set up for the day you requested, but you have only ten minutes, so make sure you get everything you need because I can't let you in again." As they came to stand in front of a plain, blue door, Frank used his keycard again. "I'll be back in eleven minutes and I expect you to be gone."

"Will do. Thanks." Adam nodded as he ducked into the room. There were four oversized monitors displayed in front of a desk and each screen was paused. It would take more than ten minutes to get what he wanted, so he pulled out two flash drives and inserted them into the two computer towers. He was fairly good with computers, and his contact had told him exactly how to upload all the files he'd need to view later.

Once he finished he glanced at his cell phone. Five minutes to spare. He tucked the flash drives into his pocket and left the way he'd come. When he had time and privacy, he was going to dissect every part of the video feed. Then the hunt was officially on.

## **Chapter Seven**

Paz grabbed a bottle of water from the refrigerator, but paused after she shut the door. She couldn't be sure, but she sensed Adam was back. The sound of the front door opening then shutting confirmed it. She waited a moment, and when he didn't enter the kitchen, she headed back to the living room.

Nick Lazos had already left, but Thomas and Caro were still there watching over Ethan with her. As she passed the stairs, she caught Adam descending them. She'd assumed he'd already be in the living room with the others. "Hey, how long have you been here?"

"Just got here. Had to put some stuff upstairs."

"Okay, well Ethan is probably going to be knocked out for a couple hours, but he woke up for a while."

"What did he say?" Adam asked as he reached the bottom step.

"He told us his name again. Supposedly he's ex-military and he's done a lot of contract work since he got out two years ago. He heard through the grapevine—I'm assuming an illegal one—that Antonio Perez was working on something to create super-strength or some crap like that. He signed up for a clinical study and he was the only one who survived the treatments. At first, he really did just have above average strength, but then he started changing."

"Changing?"

"Like us. He can't control it, but he's able to shift into a wolf. And he's just as strong as werewolves."

"What else did he say?" Adam asked.

"That's it." Thomas answered before she could.

She glanced up to find Thomas walking down the hallway toward them. When Adam immediately put his arm around her shoulder, she bit back a smile. Not very subtle but she doubted he cared.

His grip on her tightened and he pulled her a few inches closer to his side. Her instinct to keep her mate happy kicked in. She stepped into his embrace and wrapped her arm around his waist. The sensation was foreign, but she found she liked it. More than she wanted to admit. She'd never been touchy-feely with anyone other than her family, but especially not with a male. Touching Adam this way brought up all sorts of feelings she wasn't sure she was prepared to handle. Sex she could deal with, but the public displays of affection were weird if not nice.

"I took his fingerprints once he finally fell asleep again. I'm going to have one of Stephan's contacts run them and see if his story checks out. In the meantime, in case he's unstable, I think it's best if I keep him at my house where I can keep an eye on him. Unless you want him here...around your mate?" Thomas lifted a dark eyebrow.

Paz refrained from rolling her eyes. She wasn't sure why Thomas was practically goading Adam, but it was childish. If Adam wanted to keep Ethan under his supervision, it was his right as the enforcer. She knew it wasn't jealousy on Thomas' part though. Maybe it was just a stupid thing alpha males did to one another.

Adam's grip on her tightened a fraction. "That's fine. As soon as he's awake, call me. I want to talk to him."

"How did your meeting go?" Thomas asked.

"Good. I got the video feeds I needed. Now I just need to view them."

Paz wasn't sure what he meant, but it was obvious Thomas did.

Thomas nodded once. "All right. Caro and I are about to head out with Ethan. I'll call as soon as I get a hit on the fingerprints or when he wakes up. Whichever happens first."

Next to her, she could feel Adam relax. "We'll be here."

Thomas disappeared down the short hallway and into the living room. Paz turned toward Adam but kept her arm around him. Surprising herself, she found she wanted to maintain their contact. "I'm going to say goodbye to Caro, okay?"

"I'll be in my room if you need me." He dropped a quick kiss on her forehead and headed back up the stairs.

She felt the loss of touching him as soon as he'd gone and couldn't help but wonder if that was something mates naturally experienced or if it was just because she missed him.

After saying goodbye to Thomas and Caro, she locked the front door and set the alarm. They'd be able to scent someone coming into the house, but everyone was being extra careful. No one knew exactly how devious Morales was and if he found a weakness he'd exploit it, no matter how small.

When she opened the door to her bedroom, she froze. Shopping bags covered her bed. Most were from stores she didn't recognize, but two large bags were emblazoned with the very recognizable Victoria's Secret logo. She couldn't even pretend not to be interested. After shutting the door, she dug into the first pink bag.

Then she just dumped everything onto the bed. Her eyes widened as she took in everything Adam must have bought for her. It wasn't just lingerie. There was a plush robe, a few dozen panties, bras—she wondered how he'd figured out her size—pajamas and a whole mess of other stuff.

She swallowed when it hit her how much he must have spent. With shaking hands, she peeked into the other bags and found stacks of jeans, sweaters, sexy tops, summer dresses and even a couple bathing suits. When she spotted one of the receipts, her eyes widened. He'd spent almost a grand. *At one store.*

Leaving everything on the bed, she headed to Adam's room. She knocked on the half-open door as she entered. He wore a pair of jeans—with the top button undone—and nothing else. She lost her train of thought as her gaze followed the dark thatch of hair that disappeared under his pants.

He immediately stood and took a step toward her. "Is everything okay?"

"What? Yes. I, uh, just saw my bed."

"Oh. Is everything okay? I left the receipts in there in case something didn't fit."

"How did you manage to get all that stuff so quickly?"

He shrugged and she didn't miss the way his neck slightly reddened. "I told the saleswomen your size and told them to pick stuff they thought a woman would like."

"Thank you doesn't seem to cover it. I can't believe how much...I mean, it feels weird talking about money with you, but are you sure you didn't get too much? My sister and I have some money from before our pack was... Anyway, once I get a job I can pay you back."

He snorted and muttered something under his breath before meeting her gaze. "You're *not* paying me back. You're my mate and I wanted to do something nice for you."

"We haven't even bonded yet though." The words just slipped out and she immediately wanted to kick herself. She'd been hoping to avoid this conversation for at least another week and then she went and brought it up. *Way to go!*

Adam took a few steps closer and immediately she was hit with the intensity of the desire he was putting off. Instinctively, she wrapped her arms around herself as she waited for him to respond.

"Do you want to bond with me?" And there it was. Right out in the open.

Her throat closed off for a second and she wondered if she deprived her brain of oxygen long enough, maybe she'd pass out and wouldn't have to answer the question. She'd already hurt him by running away after the first time they made love. How the hell was she supposed to answer this?

She cleared her throat. "We don't really know much about each other yet." *Okay, that was a safe answer and one he couldn't argue with.*

His gaze narrowed for a fraction of a second, but then he surprised her by sitting on the end of the bed and patted the area next to him. "What do you want to know?"

She could listen to that deep voice of his and never get tired. It was liquid sin rolling over her. Somehow she ordered her feet forward. Instead of answering his question, she decided to take the plunge and ask something that had been weighing on her mind. "Do *you* want to bond with me?"

"Yes." The answer was strong and immediate.

Well, damn. "But...*why*? You barely know me."

"We'll get to know each other with time." He reached out and traced a gentle finger down her cheek. The small action sent a shiver to her toes.

She didn't understand how he could be so sure. "But what if I have a deep dark secret that you can't live with? Wouldn't you want to know before we bonded?"

"I want to know anything you want to tell me."

"That's not an answer!" She knew she shouldn't get angry, but she could feel a bubble of annoyance pushing to the surface. Why wasn't he more concerned about this? When mates bonded, it was forever. He should want to ask her a million questions. Lord knew she wanted to know everything about his past.

He sighed. The sound was long and heavy. "Listen, Paz. I don't care what you've done in the past. It can't be any worse than the things I've done. I've...I've been alone for a long time and I like you. *A lot*. I'm not going to change my mind about bonding, but take all the time you need to make a decision."

She bit her bottom lip and eyed him suspiciously. "Fine. How is it that you're five hundred years old but you look younger than those half your age?"

His jaw clenched once. "My father was an Immortal."

A gasp escaped before she could stop herself. "You're a mixed-blood?" His eyes darkened and she immediately realized her mistake. Before he could respond, she grabbed his hand. "I didn't mean that as an insult, I swear. You just surprised me."

Tension still hummed through him, but he didn't pull away. "No one else knows."

"I thought Immortals needed sex to stay strong. Or is that a myth?" Immortals had always fascinated her. And if she was really honest, they'd also terrified her a little too. Compared to the other supernatural beings on the planet, so little was known about them.

"It's a combination of both. Immortals don't need sex, but it does make them stronger. I'm...different."

"What do you mean?" If anyone understood being different, she did.

"It doesn't matter. Just know that I don't need sex to survive or to keep up my strength."

"Well what about my life span if we bond? And what element do you control?" As far as she knew, Immortals controlled one of the four elements and when they died, they reverted back to whatever power they'd possessed when they'd been alive. Adam scrubbed a hand over his face and she wondered if she should have held back some of her questions. "You don't have to answer me if—"

He shook his head and let out another breath. "It's fine. I should have expected this. I'd rather not talk about my abilities...yet. If we do bond, you'll age at the same pace as me. I guess that's something I probably should have told you sooner."

She swallowed hard at his words. "How do you know I'll become like you?"

"My mother was a full-blooded werewolf and when she became pregnant with me, her aging process changed to match my father's. Besides, I wouldn't be the first mixed-blood to mate. Nature has a way of working things out."

The inflection in his voice when he mentioned his parents told her they were likely dead. Even though she wanted to ask, for once she made herself bite her tongue. If he wanted to talk about them, he would. She was still holding his hand so she linked her fingers through his and scooted a few inches closer.



Maybe if she opened up to him now it would be easier later to tell him the truth about what she was. As a mixed-blood, he wouldn't have the prejudices so many others did. Or she hoped he wouldn't. "So why do you work for The Council when they denounce so many different supernatural beings?"

He frowned at her words. "What are you talking about?"

"Their laws are archaic."

The lines around his mouth and eyes deepened. "Which laws in particular are you referring to?"

A cold sweat blossomed across her forehead, but she forced herself to answer. "The law that says any werewolf with other magic in their blood will be put to death."

"That hasn't been implemented in centuries. And it was only put in place for those who had mated with faeries, not Immortals."

"And you don't see a problem with that?" Anger more than fear started to boil inside her as she waited for his answer.

"I've never met a faerie who didn't deserve to die." His words were laced with loathing.

Feeling as though she'd been burned, she dropped his hand and stood. "Well, it's nice to find this out about you now." Without waiting for a response, she strode from the room and slammed her bedroom door with startling force. The frames on the walls shook dangerously, but nothing fell. She knew she should have contained her anger better, but it was as if someone had embedded a knife in her chest. Tears stung her eyes, but she angrily brushed them away. She thought he'd be different.

Her door flew open as she was pushing the bags of clothes off her bed.

"What the hell was that about?" He stood in the doorway, hands balled at his sides, and his eyes were shooting fire.

"Get out of my room," she said through clenched teeth.

“Not until you answer my question. What could I have possibly done to set you off?”

“Other than supporting The Council’s antiquated laws and judging an entire group of people based on nothing more than their heritage?” Her hands shook so she shoved them into her pockets.

“You’re too young, but I was there during the end of the Great War. I saw firsthand exactly how devious those faeries are. They came under the guise of peace and killed my parents right in front of me. And they didn’t do it quickly either. So yeah, I fucking hate them.” His words were a low growl that sent shivers snaking throughout her entire body.

More tears burned her eyes so she turned away from him and reached into one of the bags to keep her hands busy. “Please leave my room.”

Maybe it was the please that did it, but a few seconds later, she heard the door click shut behind him. Letting her tears fall, she collapsed onto the bed. The fact that faeries had killed Adam’s parents left little room for debate. Some faeries were definitely evil. But so were some werewolves. As the crazy werewolf they were hunting right now proved. Once they caught Morales, she was leaving Adam. Hell, she had no choice. She couldn’t mate with him knowing he hated her kind and she couldn’t hide who she was for the rest of her life.

## Chapter Eight

Stephan watched his mate through the sliding glass door that led to the porch of their rental house. Marisol stared out at the beach but he knew she was aware of his presence. She was just ignoring him.

He understood her need to protect her sister, but Paz needed room to breathe and figure things out for herself. Something Marisol couldn't understand. He did though. Paz was strong and more than anything, she deserved to get to know her mate without her little sister interfering or trying to coddle her.

Sighing, he opened the door and stepped outside. The beach in Saint Augustine looked pretty much like the beach in Miami. Instead of heading too far up the eastern seaboard, they'd stopped in north Florida. In case the pack needed them, they wouldn't have too far to travel back home. "Still mad at me?" he asked as he sat at the foot of her lounge chair.

Scowling at him, she moved her feet so they wouldn't touch him. "What do you think?"

"I think you need to get over yourself."

Her eyes widened. "Why you —"

"*Kardia mou*, don't say something you'll regret."

Her mouth snapped shut, but at least she was silent.

"I have brothers so I know what you're going through. You can be a bit of a bulldozer sometimes." When her eyes darkened, he quickly continued. "A very sexy bulldozer. Listen, Paz is strong. You know that."

"We left her with that Adam guy." Guilt and anger threaded her words.

"That Adam guy is her mate."

She crossed her arms over her chest. "I don't care. What if he finds out what she is?"

"It won't matter. He'll die protecting her."

"How do you know that? What if he hates faeries? We don't know anything about him." She leaned forward and grabbed his hand.

Now that she was touching him, he knew he was almost out of the doghouse. "Even if he does hate them, he won't harm her. I sensed how much he cares for her. He might not even realize it yet, but that wolf is over the moon for your sister. Remember how much you loathed me when we first met?" When they'd first met, she hadn't known he was an undercover DEA agent. She'd thought he was a bottom-dwelling arms dealer.

"Yes." She sniffed in that haughty manner of hers that made his cock stand at attention.

"You still protected me when I almost lost control in that club. It's what real mates do. I know the lengths I'd go to save you and it's true with every mated male in my family. It's biology, baby. He will *not* hurt her. And right now, my only concern is keeping you safe."

She pushed up from her chair and sauntered toward the rail lining the porch. He bit back a groan as he watched the soft sway of her hips. With her back to him, she leaned forward on the railing, but he could tell he was almost forgiven.

He crept behind her and slid his arms around her waist. She didn't fight him so he pulled her tighter against his chest. His erection pressed insistently against her backside, but he doubted she was surprised.

When she didn't say anything, he brushed her hair to one side and nibbled at her earlobe. Her sweet scent nearly bowled him over. Sometimes he couldn't believe he'd finally found his mate. And she was a constant fireball of passion.

As he started to spread kisses across her neck, she twisted to face him. "I shouldn't let you off the hook so easily," she murmured.

The scent of her desire was unmistakable. "You want me as bad as I want you."

She bit her bottom lip and he could tell she was fighting a smile. Instead of responding, she grabbed the bottom of his shirt and started tugging upward.

His entire body tensed with anticipation. Didn't matter how many times he'd had her, she was an addiction. After he finished shrugging out of his shirt, he gripped her hips and lifted her onto the railing. The rental properties on either side of them were empty and he couldn't scent anyone else along the deserted stretch of beach. She let out a little squeal when he pushed her short summer dress up to her waist.

"I thought I told you to stop wearing panties." He frowned at the red material covering her pussy.

"It does you good to work for it a little." She grinned as she grappled with his belt.

Today was going to be fast and hard. He could feel it. Pent-up energy buzzed through both of them. They'd barely said two words to each other on the drive up and he was tired of fighting with her.

As she worked on his pants, he plucked the tie at the back of her neck and let gravity do its job with the straps to her halter. He loved it when she wore the sexy halter-style dresses. Easier access for him and she knew it.

The muscles in his stomach tensed as he stared at her. He stepped out of his pants as they fell, but all his attention was on her perfect light brown nipples. He'd kissed and licked them so many times, he had all her curves memorized. And seeing any part of her bared got him hot every time.

"You gonna stand there staring all day?" Her question jerked him into action.

Her sweet, exotic scent surrounded him as he leaned down and captured one of her already hardened buds between his teeth.

Teasingly, he painted the underside of her breast with his tongue then swirled around her areola before centering on her nipple. When he gently raked his teeth over

the hardened point, she let out a tiny moan and arched her back, pushing herself farther into his mouth.

She clasped onto one of his shoulders for support and reached between them with her other hand. Fisting his cock at the base, she slowly stroked upward once, twice—it was too much. Panting, he lifted his head. He needed to be inside her now.

Through a lust-induced haze, Marisol stared into Stephan's eyes. She loved it when he got all hot and bothered like this. His eyes were like storm clouds. Dark and intense. All she had to do was lightly touch him and he was ready to go.

Having that kind of power over a man was a strong aphrodisiac, especially when he had the same control over her. His hands, which had been on her hips, suddenly grasped the slim strap of her panties and snapped the material apart.

"You owe me another pair," she gasped.

"Stop wearing them and it won't be a problem." His words were a low growl that sent shivers skittering over her.

Cool air rushed over her bared pussy, but only for a moment. He quickly covered her mound and pushed one of his thick fingers inside her without giving her warning. Not that she needed it. She was soaking wet for him. And had been for quite a while.

As he worked his finger into her, he feathered kisses along her neck and jaw. She wrapped her legs around his waist, trying to entice him to use his cock instead of his finger, but he refused.

She'd been hot for him their entire drive and that had just pissed her off more. Even when she was mad at him, she wanted him. Now she desperately needed relief and he was the only one who could give it to her.

He pushed into her again, knuckle-deep, and slowly pulled out, dragging his finger against her inner walls with practiced precision. Then he added another finger and

thrust into her. Instead of moving, he stayed inside her and strummed her clit with his thumb. Gently and much too slowly.

He was torturing her for giving him the silent treatment. She had no doubt in her mind. The man knew what kind of rhythm she needed.

"I don't want your fingers," she gasped out.

"Too bad," he murmured against her neck. "I've been wanting to do this for hours."

Jerking against his fingers, she met him with insistency, forcing him to give her what she wanted.

Chuckling against her skin, he pulled his head back. "You have no patience."

Her entire body was pulled as taut as a hunting bow. Her leg and stomach muscles tightened in anticipation as she waited for him. She held onto his shoulders and finally, her stubborn mate dragged his fingers from her and drove his cock into her.

She sucked in a deep breath as he stretched and filled her. As her body adjusted to him, he came at her fast, invading her mouth with his tongue. He kissed her deep and hard, flicking his tongue against hers in tantalizing strokes.

His cock pulsed inside her, yet he barely moved. Just rocked his hips slightly against hers. Still, she was about to come. Usually they fucked hard and fast, but this was different. He was eating at her mouth with hunger, but everything else was so subdued. So gentle. It surprised her.

The points of her nipples ached painfully. Luckily Stephan could literally read her mind. Cupping one of her breasts, he covered it and stroked the throbbing bud. Each caress brought her closer and closer to climax.

It was as if the pleasure points in her nipples were connected to the growing heat between her thighs with invisible wire. He fondled the other breast and paid it just as much attention. The pads of his thumbs rolled leisurely over the hard buds, drawing more moans from her.

If he would just move a little, she'd come. Her body and mind screamed. Just a little —

*No patience whatsoever, kardia mou*, he projected with his mind.

She locked her ankles around his waist and held on tight as he pulled out of her, then slammed his cock back into her.

The sharp action was exactly what she needed. She savored the feel of the cool air rushing over their bodies as they joined together. Stephan fastened onto her hips as he drove into her with wild, uneven thrusts.

Her inner walls tightened around him with each stroke. She clamped onto his shoulders but he didn't seem to notice how hard she dug in. "Ah." She could barely think let alone speak any coherent words.

In and out.

Harder and faster.

Her legs gripped his waist as tight as her pussy fisted his cock. She arched her back as the explosion rippled through her. Her legs already felt weak as she released control and let her erotic hunger dominate her. Tiny shocks of pleasure swelled like waves across her entire body, sending zings to all her nerve endings. The pleasure that was becoming so familiar was almost too much to bear.

As she allowed her legs to fall from around him, Stephan pounded into her with one final thrust and a loud shout. If they'd had neighbors nearby, there would have been no doubt what they were doing.

Panting, he reached behind her back and tugged the zipper on her dress the rest of the way down.

"I think we're a little late for that, sweetie," she murmured.

He grunted something before tugging it over her head. The cool breeze chilled her bare body.

"What —"



But he didn't let her finish. Gripping her behind, he hoisted her up in one swoop. As he strode across the long porch she realized he was heading toward the hot tub. She might be able to handle the elements better than humans, but jumping in a freezing tub wasn't her idea of fun, even if she could stand it. "I think it's too cold."

"I turned on the heat when we got here." He didn't break stride as he descended into the water.

The steam hit her before she actually touched the water. Without letting go of her, he sat on the step then stretched back and flipped on the powerful jets.

Bubbles and heat surrounded them. She shifted so that she was stretched out across his lap instead of straddling him. Then she laid her head against his shoulder. "Thank you," she said against his neck.

"For what?"

"For putting up with me."

He chuckled against the top of her head. "As if I could live without you."

\* \* \* \* \*

Adam stared at the ceiling, trying to contain his annoyance and confusion. He still wasn't quite sure what had happened between him and Paz but he knew he'd fucked up. Big-time.

It wasn't that much of a shock considering he sucked at talking to most people. He'd simply been honest about what he felt, but maybe he *had* been a little harsh. The truth was he hadn't actually seen a faerie since the Great War. They mostly lived in the United Kingdom and some were scattered throughout Australia now.

Thinking about what had happened to his parents, much less talking about it, had brought back too many memories. Memories that needed to stay buried. Hearing his father's roar of anguish when they'd found his mother's broken body was a sound he'd never forget. And seeing his mother with a giant hole in her chest was something else he'd never scrub from his memory. His father had managed to kill most of the faeries

that night before someone had gotten in a lucky shot and taken off his head. Adam had been a boy then, barely in control of his powers and he hadn't been able to help. He shook his head, ridding himself of the bloody visions.

No matter what was in his past, he needed to make this right. He pushed up out of the bed and headed for Paz's room when a bright orange ball of fire exploded in his line of sight through the second story window.

He crept toward the window but stayed in the shadows. Glass was shattered across the patio near the pool and a few pockets of fire dimly burned against the cement. It looked as if someone had thrown a couple Molotov cocktails. A dark shadow darted down the beach in the direction of Stephan's place. Looked like a wolf.

If it was Morales, he'd only done it to get their attention. By now he must realize that Marisol was gone. Maybe he thought she was staying here. Or hell, maybe he wanted to hurt Paz as a way to get to Marisol. That was more likely.

Morales was already at the top of Adam's shitlist but now it was personal. He moved away from the window as Paz rushed into his room. She jerked to a halt just inside the doorway.

"What's going on?" Her eyes were wide. Not with fear exactly, but she looked panicked.

"It looks like someone threw Molotov cocktails on our back porch."

"*Morales*," she growled.

In that moment he was proud of her anger. He wanted a mate who wasn't afraid to take care of herself. He nodded and pursed his lips together. Adam had spent hours reviewing those security tapes and he had a fairly decent idea which area of the city Morales was staying in. He'd managed to track him to the warehouse district. Which made sense. If he wanted to avoid the police and everyone else, he'd just hole up in an abandoned warehouse or dilapidated home.

"Will you call Thomas and spread the word what happened here?" he asked.

“Uh, sure.” Her eyebrows shot up in surprise.

It was obvious she wondered why he wasn’t making the calls, so he answered her unspoken question. “I need to check outside and make a couple calls myself.”

She hovered by the door for a moment before darting from the room. When she did, he couldn’t help but watch the way her ass swayed. His cock stirred as he watched her and he wondered if the burning need inside him would ever subside. Scrubbing a hand over his face, he sighed. It was time to get down to work.

After checking outside and dousing the rest of the smoldering embers, he scouted the beach in both directions. It was easy to ascertain which way Morales had left. There were faint traces of his scent, but he was definitely gone.

Tonight he’d made his first mistake. He was getting desperate. Showing up and revealing himself in this way meant he was coming unhinged. The rogue werewolf wasn’t thinking clearly. Once he was sure Morales was truly gone, he hurried back inside.

Upstairs in his room, he found Paz sitting on the edge of his bed. “Everyone is accounted for.”

“What about your sister?”

Her cheeks flushed pink. “What do you mean?”

“I know she wouldn’t have left without giving you a way to contact her.”

Her cheeks darkened even more, but she nodded. “I called. She and Stephan are both fine.”

“Good.” He pulled a small, prepacked bag from underneath his bed and hoisted it over his shoulder. If he could help it, this was going to end tonight.

She stood and placed her hands on her hips. “What are you doing?”

“I’m going after Morales.”

“By yourself?” Despite their earlier fight, there was concern in her voice.

His throat tightened. That had to mean something. "I've been doing this a long time, Paz. There's no guarantee I catch him tonight, but I can't pass up this opportunity to track him."

"Call Thomas, or take me with you."

He snorted. It wasn't that he didn't think she was capable, but he didn't know what tricks Morales would have up his sleeve and Adam could never knowingly put his mate in danger. Morales had poisoned and killed packs all over the country and Adam would never underestimate an opponent like that. "I'll be back soon. Keep your phone on."

She muttered something inaudible as he strode from the room. Once he took care of this problem, he was going to figure out a way to get back into Paz's good graces. Then he was going to bond with her. His body and mind demanded it.

Whatever differences they had could be worked out. He was certain of it.

\* \* \* \* \*

Paz shifted from foot to foot as she waited for Thomas to pick her up. When she spotted the high beams of his SUV, she raced across the driveway before he'd made it halfway up the drive.

After he stopped, he leaned over and opened the door before she could. With nerves racing like wild horses, she jumped in. "Go!"

He hit the gas and the vehicle jerked to life once again. "How are you certain where he's gone?"

"I looked over some of his notes and...I can feel him."

Thomas spared her a glance. "What does that mean?"

"I don't know. I just can. Maybe it's because he's put himself in a dangerous situation, but I know where he's going."

"You two haven't bonded, though," Thomas said.

Thomas and every other wolf within a hundred-mile radius would have been able to scent that they were officially mated. "I know that. It doesn't seem to matter. For whatever reason, Mother Nature has a screwed-up sense of humor and I can sense him as sure as I can see you right now."

For the next fifteen minutes Thomas followed her directives without saying much. Neither of them felt the need to fill the silence and for that she was grateful. No matter what had passed between them earlier, Adam was her mate and something deep inside her called to her to save him. Biology or whatever it was burned a hole in her gut at the thought that he might be in harm's way.

"Stop here," she ordered as they passed an abandoned building on the outskirts of the warehouse district.

Thomas pulled up to the curb and parked. As they stepped out of the vehicle she noticed a group of three young men loitering near a flickering streetlight. She could sense an aura of danger around them, but they wouldn't be able to harm her. Without bothering to tell Thomas what she intended, she strode toward them.

The dark-haired one with two gold chains and a few gold teeth straightened when he saw her. She rolled her eyes when he grabbed his crotch and made an obscene gesture. "Hey, mama, watcha doing in this part of town?"

"My friend and I are here to take care of some business. You *want* to watch our vehicle and make sure nothing happens to it, don't you?" She lowered her voice and used a small reserve of her power as she projected her influence over them.

Mutely they all nodded.

"Thank you. We will back soon and pay you for your time." She hated exerting her influence over humans, but she felt it was necessary. It wasn't as if she were harming them. And the subtle command she'd used wouldn't last forever. In about an hour it would wear off and if she and Thomas weren't back, they'd likely strip the vehicle and sell the parts. Or they'd just steal it.

"I forgot you could do that," Thomas murmured as they headed down the nearly deserted sidewalk.

Trash littered the street and there were a few homeless people loitering down some of the darkened alleys they passed, but the area was otherwise empty. She and Thomas were in no real danger. Not yet anyway. She wasn't sure how powerful Morales was. Even though she'd tested her powers, she wasn't at full capacity yet.

As they came to the end of the block, she grabbed Thomas' arm and tugged him against the wall. Peering around the corner, she pointed toward an oversized warehouse right on the bay. "They're in there."

"You're sure?"

She nodded. Her mate was definitely inside that building.

"Let's go then." He stepped in front of her and led the way.

As they crossed the street, she inhaled something sickly and sweet. Blood. Her mate's blood. Instinct kicked in. Without thinking, she raced across the street then the abandoned parking lot. Behind her she could hear Thomas shift, but she stayed in her human form. Her feet pounded against the pavement and she cursed when Thomas' dark form flew past her. He was a big wolf and incredibly fast. A few moments later she joined him by the wall of the metal building.

She crouched down and pointed at the broken window. He couldn't respond but she knew he understood what she meant. Standing, she peered through the opening. In the middle of the abandoned warehouse, two wolves circled one another.

Adam's beautiful white coat had a streak of red smeared against his side, yet the black and brown wolf in front of him was unscathed. Before she could stop herself, she grabbed the edge of the window. Jagged glass shards that still stuck into the pane of the window dug into her palms, but the pain barely fazed her. She hoisted herself up and over.

When her boots hit the concrete floor, both wolves turned. Adam reared back and Morales took the opportunity to strike.

He went for her mate's neck and a flash of rage lapped through her like a wildfire. Not caring about the consequences, she drew on the life force of everything in a half-mile radius. All the energy would be replenished and she wasn't hurting anyone.

Her palms tingled and burned as energy formed there. She pulled her arm back and threw a ball of crackling blue fire toward Morales. When she grazed his back, he yelped and rolled to the floor but just as quickly jumped to all fours. She cursed herself. A year ago she wouldn't have missed.

Adam still stood near him. Too close for her comfort. "Back away, Adam!"

He didn't listen. He bared his teeth at Morales and growled.

The black and brown wolf snapped his teeth when she took another step closer. She was powerful, but in her human and still-weakened form, if he got close enough, he could hurt her. It was unlikely he'd kill her, but she didn't relish getting mauled. Unfortunately she was out of practice with her aim and she desperately needed to make this shot count.

She narrowed her gaze on Morales and forced herself to block out her mate's existence. She needed to taunt Morales, needed to make him lunge at her. If he bared his underside, she could strike him hard and fast in the heart and this would finally be over. If she blew a hole through his chest, it would destroy his heart and that's what she needed to kill him. "My sister is with her mate right now. Can you guess what they're doing?"

Morales growled again. The deep and eerie sound bounced off the metal walls.

"You're the last thing on her mind you piece of shit. Why she ever talked to you in the first place, I'll never know. You're nothing but a pathetic mongrel. She's probably fucking her mate right now."

That's all it took. He threw all caution and common sense to the wind as he launched himself at her. But she was ready.

Hauling back her arm, she started to unleash another blast of energy when a white blur of fur hurled through the air. With a giant, angry snap, Adam ripped Morales' head from his body.

The sound of flesh tearing and a surprised yelp tore through the air. She managed to stop herself from blasting Adam and sent her aim wild toward the roof. Metal ripped apart and a chunk of the ceiling collapsed a few yards away.

Unable to speak, she stared at the gory scene before her. She couldn't believe how quickly Adam had taken him down. Morales' head lay in a pool of blood a few feet from his lifeless body.

And Adam stared at her with blood dripping from his mouth.

Fear spiked through her. She took a few steps back when reality set in. He knew what she was. And he hated her kind. Turning away from him, she brushed past Thomas. She did the only thing she knew to keep herself safe.

She ran.



## **Chapter Nine**

### *Two Days Later*

Adam tossed his phone onto his bed when what he really wanted to do was throw it against the wall and watch it smash into a tiny thousand bits. But if he did that, he might miss a call from Paz.

Not that she was eager to contact him. That much was clear. For the past two days he'd been going crazy trying to hunt her down, but she'd covered her trail. Occasionally he thought he scented her along the beach but knew his mind was playing tricks on him. She was long gone. And now he'd likely have to scour the country trying to find her. When he'd realized what she was, her earlier anger at him had made sense.

And he wanted to kick his own ass for not seeing that sooner. The faeries he'd dealt with in the past were evil, but she sure as hell wasn't. She was one of the bravest she-wolves he'd ever met and he couldn't believe she was his mate. When she'd shown up at that warehouse, he felt as if he'd lost a hundred years of his life. He'd been baiting Morales, making him think he could win before he killed him.

Then she'd shown up. He had no doubt she could have killed Morales, but Adam hadn't wanted her to deliver the killing blow. She'd been through hell over the past year and he knew the burden it sometimes cost to take another life. Not that he was sorry the crazy wolf was dead. He simply didn't want Paz to carry that burden.

When the doorbell rang, he nearly jumped out of his skin. The sexy vixen had him all sorts of twisted up and if he didn't find her soon, someone was going to pay. Disappointment coursed through him before he swung the door open because he knew who would be on the other side.

"Have you found Paz?" he growled at Thomas. The other wolf had been avoiding his questions the past two days.

Ignoring him, Thomas brushed past him. "My father just got a call from The Council. Seems that everything here is settled, but they want to call an emergency meeting. All Alphas must attend. *Apparently*, there's going to be a vote on some new laws regarding mixed-bloods and other supernatural beings."

Adam shrugged as he shut the door. "Tell me something I don't know." He was in a foul mood and the last thing he wanted to do was talk to this son of a bitch who no doubt knew where his mate was yet refused to tell him.

"Oh I know a lot you don't." Thomas smirked as he stepped farther into the foyer.

He refused to take the bait. "Why are you here?"

Thomas' eyes narrowed. "I want to know if you had something to do with this emergency meeting."

"I might have said something to The Council."

Thomas snorted. "I refuse to believe it's a coincidence that in the past five hundred years they haven't seen fit to reexamine their laws and now all of a sudden, they're calling an emergency meeting."

"I don't give a shit what you believe. Tell me where my mate is or get the hell out of here."

"Technically you're still in my family's beach house and your mission is over. I should be telling you to get out." Thomas crossed his arms over his chest and that annoying smirk of his grew even wider.

Lightning fast, Adam crossed the distance between them and wrapped his fingers around Thomas' neck. Not hard, but he put enough pressure to show his intent. The other wolf's eyes widened, but he didn't struggle.

"Where. Is. She?"

"Give me one good reason why I should tell you." Thomas' words were strained as he gasped for air.

Adam let his hand fall. "I love her." The words came out before he could stop himself. His head told him it was too soon, but his heart knew it. They were kindred spirits. His wolf side had recognized it before his human side had. Now both sides were on the same page and they wanted the missing piece of their soul back.

Thomas stared at him for a moment with a curious expression. Finally he spoke. "She's at her sister's house. If you hurt her... Shit, I'll just send her sister after you." Then he turned and left.

Adam stared at the door after he'd long closed it. Paz was a few houses away from him. *This whole time.*

He'd scented her along the beach but had assumed he'd been going crazy. Without wasting any more time, he hurried out the back door and jogged down the short stretch of sand. He opted not to shift because he didn't want to scare her. The last time she'd seen him, she'd looked terrified and he couldn't blame her. He'd just killed another wolf and had been covered in blood.

As he raced up the steps to the back porch of Marisol and Stephan's house, he jerked to a halt when he saw Paz lounging in a bikini on one of the chairs by the pool. He'd been going insane scouring the entire city trying to find her and she was tanning? He slammed the small gate behind him and stalked toward her stretched out figure.

"What the hell are you doing?" he shouted, then immediately cringed at his brash manner. He was supposed to be making things right between them.

She lifted a hand to block out the sun as she looked up at him. "Baking cookies."

His mouth snapped open. She sounded pissed. *At him.* He'd been trying to track her down the past couple of days and apologize. "You're mad at me. *You've* been hiding from me, and you're mad." He collapsed onto the lounge chair next to her and scooted it closer.

"Does it look like I'm hiding?" she muttered as she turned her face away from him.

No, she definitely wasn't. Her entire body was practically exposed to anyone who wanted to see. Werewolves were usually unabashed about their nudity. Hell, he usually

was. Now he wanted to cover his woman up so no one could get a peek at her smooth, tanned skin. The tiny blue triangles covering her breasts and the small scrap of material covering her pussy were practically nonexistent. His cock hardened at the sight.

"I've been trying to find you for the past two days."

"Why?" She still didn't look at him.

"Because you're my mate."

Now she turned toward him and her gaze burned. "I'm half fae, did you forget that?"

"I'm sorry about what I said to you. More than you'll ever know. I didn't realize what you were." His apology sounded stilted and lame but he didn't know how to tell her how truly sorry he was. Maybe when she found out that he'd talked to The Council it would make a difference.

"Thank you for the apology, but it doesn't matter. You can't change the way you feel and I can't change what I am. If you're going to turn me into The Council, I won't go easy." She abruptly sat up and reached for the towel she'd draped across the chair he was sitting on.

He snatched it and held it away from her. Frowning, she lunged for it and he snaked his hand around her waist. Before she had a chance to react, he hauled her up and onto his lap. "I *can* change the way I feel. I love you, Paz. And if you think I'd turn you over to anyone, you're out of your pretty little mind."

All the fight left her body. Her eyes widened as she stared at him. "What?"

His gut twisted when she didn't return his sentiments but what could he expect? At least she didn't try to run away from him. "Nothing's official yet but I've spoken to The Council and there's going to be a major overhaul of all our laws. They've called an emergency meeting. You don't have to hide who you are anymore and I wouldn't want you to."

"Oh." She squirmed in his lap and his grip on her tightened.

The feel of her skin beneath his fingers made him itch to take the rest of her skimpy clothes off. "Is that all you have to say?" He'd assumed she'd be ecstatic.

"I've spent the past two days mad at you. It feels wrong to let go of all that pent-up anger now." The corners of her mouth pulled into a small smile.

"And I've spent the past two days going crazy." His heart still beat an erratic tattoo at the thought of losing her.

"So...what does this mean? You *like* faeries now?" She eyed him warily and he didn't miss the not-so-subtle sarcasm in her voice.

He racked his brain, trying to think of the right words. It didn't help that his tongue naturally got twisted in her presence. He really didn't want to fuck this up. "After meeting you, I realize there's a lot I don't know about your kind. I'm not too proud to admit I was wrong. More than anything I'm sorry by how much I upset you the other night. I was angry thinking about my parents, but...I was wrong."

He still hated those who'd killed his family but Paz was right, he couldn't lump everyone into the same group. If he did, he'd lose his only chance at happiness. Holding onto that kind of hatred wasn't worth it if he lived without Paz.

"So what does this mean for us? You're the enforcer and you live in Chicago. I just want to be a high-school teacher again and live without fear."

"I'm not the enforcer anymore." He'd told The Council to start looking for his replacement immediately. Whether they found one soon or not wasn't going to be his problem. He'd put in his time with them and they owed him. Something they knew, which explained why they'd agreed almost immediately when he'd told them they needed to change their laws. In truth, he hadn't expected them to be so acquiescent but stranger things had happened. Now it was just a matter of getting the rest of the packs on board with the new laws.

He could sense her nervousness, but she didn't say anything. She just shifted on his lap and over his erection. Having her sit on him with so little clothing was worse than torture.

"I'm scared," she whispered.

"Of me?" His gut clenched at the thought.

"No! Of the future, of us, of everything."

"Shit, sweetheart. I'm scared too, but we're meant to be together." More than anything, he was afraid of losing her.

"How can you be so sure?"

He shrugged. There was no answer. He simply knew how he felt about her and that wasn't going to change.

"Are you going to move here?"

"If this is where you want to live. I'll move anywhere you want." He had a few homes dotted around the country but he'd wait to tell her that another time. She'd seemed freaked out when he'd bought her all those clothes. He didn't want to admit how much money he had just yet.

She paused as she digested his words. Then she spoke. "You want to help me grab the rest of my stuff? I'll head back to the beach house with you and we can talk some more if you want."

He nodded because he didn't trust his voice as he stood with her. She walked ahead of him and he wanted to howl in frustration. She wore one of those Brazilian-type bikinis that didn't cover the bottom half of her ass. He wanted to reach out and run his palms over that tight skin but restrained himself.

She'd only said she wanted to come back to the house with him. He couldn't jump her bones just yet. Convincing her to take up permanent residence in his bed was likely going to take some time.

Paz felt as if her insides were shaking as she led Adam inside. She couldn't believe he loved her. She loved him too but was scared to say the words. After the past couple days without him, she'd been miserable. Even though she'd been hurt and angry as

hell, she'd still missed him. That had been the most maddening part of all. She thought he hadn't wanted her and had been avoiding her. She'd run from him, but she hadn't been hiding. She'd just assumed he knew where she was staying. And she'd thought he hadn't wanted her anymore.

His heated gaze on her as they walked toward her room was scorching. Without even seeing him, she knew what he was focusing on. She'd taken most of her belongings to the guesthouse and she definitely didn't need his help bringing her things over. That wasn't why she'd asked him to her room at all.

Thankfully they had the house all to themselves. Her sister was still gone and would be for a few more days.

As they entered her room, she turned to face him.

His gaze raked over her body from head to foot with a heat she'd come to love seeing in his eyes. "What stuff do you want to bring with you?" The question came out scratchy and uneven.

She reached behind her back and pulled the ties of her bikini top loose. His eyes widened as she let it fall to the ground. Understanding quickly dawned in his eyes and was quickly followed by full-blown lust.

Her nipples peaked under his scrutiny. He started to move toward her but she held up a hand. "Wait," she whispered.

She shoved her bathing suit bottom over her hips and let gravity do its job. After it pooled at her feet, she covered the distance between them and wrapped her arms around his neck. She didn't want any more barriers or secrets between them. "I want to bond with you." It was the only way she could show him she loved him. While she'd been busy cursing his name, he'd been making more progress with The Council than anyone else had in hundreds of years. And he'd done it all for her.

His hands settled on her hips and he tugged her flush against him. She could feel his cock pressing through his pants, begging to be unleashed. But there was a question in his emerald eyes. "Are you sure?"

"I want this more than anything." And she also wanted something else. He'd tasted her – all of her – and she wanted to return the favor.

Glancing down, she freed the button to his pants, then slowly pulled the zipper down. She sucked in a deep breath as his cock sprang free. Her stomach muscles clenched as she stared at him. Something possessive stirred inside her. He was thick and perfect and all hers.

She ran her tongue over her lips but glanced up when he groaned. "What?"

"Are you trying to torture me?" he gasped out.

Grinning, she dropped to her knees. "Maybe I am."

He shoved at his pants and quickly stepped out of them. As she fisted his cock, she was aware that he stripped out of his shirt, but she didn't take her eyes off his hard length.

Holding him firm, she bent forward and licked the underside of his dick, all the way to the crown. She took her time circling the head before stroking her tongue back down his length, then up again. His legs jerked once and she inwardly smiled.

"Oh yeah." His voice was tight and she knew he was barely holding onto his control.

She sucked his head into her mouth then took him as far as she could go. Until this moment she'd never understood why so many women loved this act. She'd never felt more powerful than she did right then. Even though she was on her knees, she held all the power. And it was an incredible turn-on. Heat pooled between her legs as she tasted him.

As his fingers threaded through her hair, she moaned against him and kept sucking. Up and down, she took him deep. He pulsed in her hand and under her mouth, so she knew he was close.

With a low moan, he pulled away from her. She frowned and kept her hand snug at the base of his cock. "What's wrong?"



"I want to come in you."

His deep voice and words sent ribbons of desire curling through her. She wanted the same thing.

Before she could stand, he hooked his hands under her arms and lifted her to her feet. Slanting his mouth over hers, he probed with little restraint. His tongue danced with hers in an erotic mating.

The heat coming off him was dangerous and hot. She was ready to feel his cock slide into her and felt she might combust on the spot if he didn't do something about it. What she'd learned about him was that he had a lot of patience, whereas she had very little. Her hands slid around his waist and she latched onto his backside. The firm muscles beneath her clenched. As she loosened her grip and slid her hands up his back, he covered one of her breasts with his hand.

She couldn't believe how much she'd missed touching him and having him touch her. They'd only been intimate a couple times but she felt such a strong connection to him and she'd ached without him. It had been the worst kind of torture. She'd been shown the most exquisite pleasure only to have it taken away from her.

Lifting one of her legs, she wrapped it around his back and ground against him. Her pussy was soaking wet and she needed to be filled. Needed that release. And she could only get it from him. She'd tried masturbating over the past couple days but her actions had been fruitless and frustrating.

He continued strumming her nipple in a perfect rhythm. Each time he tweaked her, it sent a jolt of heat straight between her legs. His cock rested against her lower abdomen and she was too short to impale herself on him the way she wanted.

Breathing hard, he lifted his head back. "You're sure you want to bond?"

"Yes." *Oh yes.* Very much so.

So much so, it scared her. She'd always felt a little out of place in the world, even in her own pack. With Adam, she belonged. In their own way they were both outsiders.

Now she knew someone would always have her back. He'd already gone to great lengths to prove that already.

He gripped her hips and turned her so that she was facing the foot of the bed. Without bothering to move the cover, she crawled onto the plush red comforter and stayed on all fours. The cool material underneath did nothing to quench the heat burning through her. Her inner walls clenched with anticipation.

The bed dipped when he moved behind her but instead of plunging deep into her as she knew he wanted to, he kissed her backside. The soft, feathering action surprised her so much, she jumped.

"What are you doing?" she whispered.

"You looked so fucking sexy in that suit, this was all I could think about," he growled against her skin. Continuing his assault, he licked her, raked his teeth over her and continued the moist trail up to her back. She shuddered with pleasure under his gentle exploration.

Just seeing Paz in such a submissive position had Adam close to coming without much stimulation. But there was no way he was going to fuck up their bonding. All supernatural beings were superstitious, but werewolves were doubly so when it came to the mating ritual. If he screwed this up, he'd never forgive himself.

She was his and they both deserved to be happy. Holding onto her hips, he hovered behind her. He paused, giving her another chance to back out, but she just scooted back farther, pushing that hot ass of hers against him.

As he slid his cock into her, he didn't bother hiding his moan. She was so tight and wet. The woman was practically dripping. All for him. For the past two days all he'd done was think about her. And this moment.

He hadn't realized she'd want to bond so soon. While he'd known his feelings for her were real, he'd thought he'd have to work up to this. Use what little charm he had to convince her to be his forever. Something nagged at the back of his head that this was

all a dream and he'd wake up with his fist around his cock instead of her tight sheath. But it wasn't. Paz was real and she was all his.

His chest squeezed painfully as he thrust into her again. She was putting so much trust in him, it touched him more than he wanted to admit. Prejudices among wolves ran deep and he'd shown his ass the first chance he'd got. The fact that she believed his intentions and his apology said more about her feelings for him than she could probably ever voice aloud.

Keeping one hand flat against her back, he used his other to reach around and stroke her clit. He'd learned that she loved the extra stimulation. When he rubbed over the swollen bud, she jerked and let out a tiny little mewling sound. It was music to his ears. He loved how responsive she was to his caresses.

He continued teasing her and each time he did, her inner walls contracted around him like a vise. Increasing his thrusts and his tweaks, he found a rhythm that had her panting and saying his name like a mantra.

When he lightly pinched her clit between his fingers and tugged, she let out a strangled cry and surged into orgasm. This was it. What he'd been waiting for.

As she rode through the waves of her climax, he leaned over her quivering body. Wrapping one hand underneath her, he supported her and dug his canines into her shoulder. Just enough to break the skin and to mark her for life. *She was his*. Now everyone would know.

Something foreign and moist burned the back of his eyes as it hit him they would have forever together. His life hadn't started until this moment. He was sure of it. She was exactly what he'd been waiting for. There was so much they didn't know about one another, but they had all the time they wanted.

Pushing back up, he thrust once more and her pussy clenched around him tighter than before. With a shout, he let go and let her drag a toe-numbing climax from him. He emptied himself completely inside her until his knees were numb and his hips were blindly jerking against her. His cock just didn't want to stop.

Somehow he managed to steady himself and pull out of her. When he did, she fell against the bed and rolled over to face him. A slight sheen of moisture dotted her forehead and her entire face glowed. Naked and stretched out, she looked like a goddess. A wide smile broke across her face. "In case you don't already realize it, I love you too."

Panting, he collapsed next to her. The tight vise around his chest snapped free, but he didn't trust his voice so he sidled up closer to her and wrapped his arm around her shoulder. She lay against him and splayed her hand against his chest. There was no other feeling in the world like having her next to him.

For the first time in his life, he felt like he was home.

## About the Author

Savannah Stuart has been reading romance for as long as she can remember. When she discovered erotic romance, she knew she'd found her niche. Most of her stories have a touch of intrigue or suspense, but the one thing she always includes is a Happily Ever After. In addition to writing (and reading, of course!), she loves traveling with her husband.

Savannah welcomes comments from readers. You can find her website and email address on her [author bio page](#) at [www.ellorascave.com](http://www.ellorascave.com).

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