

Midnight Showcase Fiction Presents

**Shifter 7:
Seducing Sasha**

**By
Jaden Sinclair**

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Shifter 7: Seducing Sasha

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Chase Sexton has watched Sasha from afar for years. He has longed to touch and hold her at night and take away all the pain and bad memories from her past. The only problem is that Sasha doesn't trust any man but her brother. How does one man show the one woman who is right for him that all men are not created equal? That in the arms of the right man, his arms, all bad memories can and will disappear. Can he replace them with something special, or will all his longings be for nothing?

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Chapter One

He touched her shoulder, trailed the tips of his fingers up to her neck then back down again. He was so close he could feel her body heat, but didn't touch her with his own body. No, to do that too soon would break the spell and he needed her to relax. Wanted her to need his touch, just as he needed hers.

He moved his fingers to her back, tracing the crescent moon birthmark on her shoulder blade. She shivered at his touch but didn't move, giving him free rein to move further down her back to the curve of her rear.

This time she had a sheet covering, held tightly at her breasts, and hung low down her back. When he reached the top, he flattened his hand and went inside the sheet, cupping her ass, leaning into her back. He closed his eyes, taking in her scent, rubbing his face into her long blond hair.

"Our time is coming," he whispered in her ear, squeezing her ass and wrapping his other arm around her waist. "Very soon I'm going to come home and you'll be mine."

She shook her head. "This is a dream," she breathed out, "Nothing more."

"This is not a dream, Sasha." He moved his other hand from her ass to join the other around his waist. "And real soon, it's going to be everything."

Chase Sexton opened his eyes slowly, took a deep breath and let it out gently, releasing the tension in his body. He was hard as stone, but didn't move a muscle. He just lay on his back, in his bed, staring at the dark ceiling of his room, waiting for the pounding in his chest to ease up.

For five years, he had been away from her, and for the past two

he'd invaded her dreams, seducing her with them. The very first time Chase discovered that she dreamed about him he came all over his sheets. And the bad part about it was that it wasn't anything sexy or erotic. She was just dreaming about the short amount of time they spent together when he surprised his brother, Cole, on his birthday.

Chase didn't expect her to be there. Celine picked her up and brought her to the city for the weekend and it drove him nuts! He wanted nothing more than to go to her, to touch her. Instead, he stayed as far away from her as he could get, without appearing as if he was doing just that. It was damn hard and hiding his erection from the family was worse. But he managed and was able to leave early, thanks to a problem at the shop he worked at with Brandon.

Brandon Michael was a young man who had also been taken by Stan. But his purpose was to breed with Sasha, a thought that Chase worked very hard at ignoring. If he didn't, then he was going to turn feral. It was just that simple. No one was going to touch a hair on her head. No one but him!

Chase rubbed his face and groaned. He was tired, horny, and ready to go home. Five years of being gone was a damned long time to be away from ones family. And if what he saw was true, then she was going to need him now more than ever.

Sasha was still having nasty nightmares; nightmares that she kept hidden from Drake and her brother. Ones that were leaving her with pounding migraines that he helped ease as she slept. Her past crept into her dreams and one nasty one had him showing himself to her. She was remembering being on the table, the men standing around in their surgical gowns inflicting agonizing pain on her. Chase broke into the dream, taking her off the table and away.

After that, he was there each night, saving her from her own dreams, comforting her, watching her grow through her own eyes into a delicate flower.

Chase left when she was fifteen. It was a smart move, but one hell of a hard one to make. But now that she was turning twenty, he didn't feel the guilt of being home around her. It was time. Plain and simple.

With a groan, he rolled over in the bed and got up. The clock on the nightstand said five a.m. With a deep breath, Chase stood up and went into the small bathroom of his rented apartment. He didn't look at himself in the mirror, knew he looked like shit. Chase had let himself go for months, not giving a damn how he looked.

Sure, at the shop he had the girls pretty much throwing

themselves at him as he worked on their cars, but he wasn't interested. And it seemed the more rugged he looked, the more they wanted him, which was strange and funny. Growing up it was Cole that all the girls wanted, and when he started hanging out with Brandon, it was him as well. Only the past year and half did he get the attention of women. But they weren't right for him. Only one was, and he was going home to her.

Chase started the shower, stretched as the water heated up, turned to the sink, and brushed his teeth. He took a long shower, enjoying the heat from the water pounding down on his head. When done, with towel around his waist, he wiped the steam from the mirror and stared at himself.

His hair was longer, a bit past his shoulders, and the beard he let go for a couple weeks didn't look right on him. He rubbed his jaw, frowning at the rough feel. It wasn't going to do, not with the delicate features of Sasha. He didn't want to rub her face raw when the time came for him to kiss her. *Man I can't wait to kiss her!*

He brought his electric razor out and went to work, shaving off just about every hair on his face. On a last thought, since he did like some of it, Chase left a thin goatee around his mouth. He looked different, that's for sure.

He made extra sure that it was soft, cleaned his face, packed everything up in the bathroom in his travel case under the sink, then left. He tossed the bag onto the bed, dropped the towel on it as well, and opened the tiny closet. He dressed in jeans, black t-shirt, put a leather belt around his waist, tossed socks and boots onto the bed, then went to work at packing. Three large size duffle bags held every bit of clothing he had. By seven, he was out of the apartment he rented by the month and heading towards the garage to tell Brandon, and to pick up his tools.

As he was drove, Chase brought out his cell phone and dialed Celine. He wasn't going to tell Cole or Drake. He wanted to surprise them both.

"Hey girl, how's it going?" he asked the moment she answered.

"Chase!" He heard her excitement and smiled. "I was just thinking about you."

"Were you? Anything good?" he chuckled.

"It's always good. So what's up?"

"Does anything have to be up for me to call?"

She laughed, "Yeah. It's like eight in the morning and you're calling me. So spill it. What's wrong?"

“Who said there was anything wrong?” He couldn’t stop smiling. It was fun teasing Celine.

“Chase,” she sighed.

“Okay, okay,” he turned on the street before going on. “This has to stay between us. Got it?”

“Okay.” He could hear the unsure tone in her voice.

“I’m coming home.” It went quiet on the other end, and he feared she might’ve hung up on him. “Celine, you still there?”

“Are you serious?” she whispered. He heard the ding of a bell.

Cole told him that Celine wanted to start a bakery in the town and him a shop. Celine finished college to learn how to run a business, and Carrick helped her with setting up the place. The girls were partners and Celine loved it. She enjoyed baking and did one hell of a job at it. When she sent him some cookies for his birthday Brandon almost ate the whole box until Chase hid them. Cole said that it was thriving. The town folks loved having one and she wasn’t without customers.

Cole started a small construction company. So far, besides his own home, he built another, providing a few jobs to the town. Kane always worked for him, which he seemed to enjoy. He didn’t know what Drake and Jada were up to. Chase was almost afraid to find out.

“Yes, I’m serious.” He chuckled, then he got all serious. “It’s time, Celine. I need to be home.”

“Wow. I don’t think I know what to say.”

“How is she?” Chase turned into the drive of the shop, pulled up right next to the garage door and parked, turning the truck off. “The truth.”

Celine grunted on the other end. It sounded like she was putting thing down or moving them. “Well I heard Kane tell Cole the other day that she’s still having the nightmares and screaming in his head. He’s been getting a few bloody noses from it. Think Drake also woke up with one from her.”

“Shit!” he sighed. He thought he was helping her, going to her in the dreams. But then again, Chase wasn’t doing it every night. “How often?”

“Not sure. Didn’t hear if she had one last night or not.”

No she didn’t. I was there with her. “What’s Drake think?”

“Hasn’t said. But I get this feeling that he’s hoping you will come home and I don’t know, fix things, but I don’t think Kane is on the same page still.” She took a deep breath on the phone. “Kane’s still pretty stern that you won’t be touching her at all and they both refuse

to let her know about you.”

“Yeah, hey!” he rubbed his face, taking a deep breath. “Can you do me a huge favor? It’s going to be pretty late when I get there and I really need someone to stock my place up.”

Celine laughed, “Oh, so you want me to buy your groceries?”

Again, he smiled, then waved at Brandon when the doors of the garage went up. “Come on. Please?”

“Do I get to tell Cole you’re coming home?”

“Nooooo,” he chuckled. “I want to surprise him.”

“Okay, then you have to have dinner with us tomorrow night.”

“That I will gladly do.”

“Great! So what stuff do you want then?”

“Surprise me. Just make sure I have beer and some sodas.” He held his finger up to Brandon. “Oh and get me a deck of cards will ya?”

“Chase Sexton, you have something up your sleeve and you’re not even home yet.”

“Damn straight I do.”

“Care to tell me what?”

“Not really.”

She laughed, then groaned, “Shit, here comes Cole. I’ll see you sometime tomorrow then.”

“I’m looking forward to it.” He hung up, put the phone in his pocket, and got out.

“I know that look.” Brandon grinned, moving his hand in the air towards Chase. “Sasha, right?” He crossed his arms over his chest with a sigh. “Was it a good one?”

“You’re sick, you know that?” Chase slapped him on the back when he walked past him towards his toolbox. “Want to get the ramps for me please?”

“Ah, it’s *that* time them.” Brandon turned and leaned against the wall, watching Chase check over his tools. “Does she even know yet?”

Chase didn’t stop packing up. When he had one box done, he picked it up and went right to his truck, putting it in the back, Brandon following. “I think she suspects.”

He went back for the other one, putting it in the bed of the truck before going to the back for his bike. When he had it pushed outside, Brandon had the ramps up to his truck. Chase muscled it up and Brandon helped him wrench it so it wouldn’t fall. After his first bike was shot up, Chase got himself a nice Harley with high handlebars.

He'd just finished restoring it about a month ago and loved it.

"So you're really going home." Brandon leaned forward on the back of the truck, resting his chin on his arms. "Guess I never thought I'd see you do that."

"Why?"

"Got the impression you were scared of her," he snickered.

"Fuck you," Chase laughed back.

"Naw, man, I understand. I do remember what she looked like and how timid she was." He pushed away with a groan, "Don't envy you there my friend."

"She isn't timid," Chase sighed. "She's just had a very rough life."

"Yeah, I remember," Brandon nodded. "I did spend a day or two with her in the cage, remember?"

"I'm trying not to." Chase grumbled.

"Come on, man," Brandon groaned, "I told you how many times now that nothing happened."

"I know, but it still doesn't mean I need to remember it or like it." And he didn't! Every time Chase was forced to think about Brandon being in a cage with her just pissed him off.

"Hey!" Brandon stuck his hand out. "Good luck. Wish like hell I found mine, man."

Chase shook his hand. "Been fun Brandon. Keep in touch."

"Yeah it has." Chase got into his truck started the engine and leaned out the window. "You know where to find me if you need anything."

Brandon banged on the side and Chase pulled out. He drove out of town, got on highway ninety south, and kept going. Not once did he look back at his former life.

When he was with Natasha, living in Cape Cod, Chase studied business. He was sharp with it— the clean cut all American boy, or shifter. When he met Jada, something inside of him began to change. Something he kept to himself. He loved the carefreeness that Jada had and wanted it. But thinking that he would disappoint Cole, Chase did what he was supposed to. He finished school, then took his life in a new direction.

After helping Jada and Drake, Chase decided on what he wanted. He loved working on cars and other automobiles. Hell, he just loved working with his hands, and found he could fix just about anything.

* * * *

It was after midnight when he turned into his drive. Chase was

both tired and excited about being home. It definitely was time. Off in the distance, lightening lit up the dark sky and he could hear thunder. It was springtime, which also meant lots of rain and storms.

His camper home came into view and Chase smiled. He didn't realize how much he missed it until now. There was a motion light on the front, something that Cole must've installed when he stayed there as he built his own home. Even the driveway up to his small garage at the back was freshly graveled. Almost like Cole was expecting him home.

His Weekend Warrior, Home! Chase pulled up at the side of the camper. It was a unique one, which was why he fell in love with it. At the side was a storage that he'd turned into a garage. It wasn't big enough for his truck or a car, but plenty for his bike, tools, and some other things he wanted to store. Before he left, he turned the back room into a garage door with a code pad to lower the ramp. He had the controller in his truck and with one press the ramp came down.

Chase got out of his truck and went to work unloading everything from the back. With the threat of rain, he didn't want his tools to get ruined or the bike. Even though water wouldn't hurt it, he still wanted it inside. Close to one in the morning he finished, the ramp closed and the rain started. He pulled his boots off next to the sliding door, opened it up, and went inside.

The place was just as he left it. To his left the back door, right the front. Overhead was a loft, below by the front door a zebra print sofa-sleeper bed. Across from it was a built in T.V and chair, or more like a love seat and next to the sofa a table and four chairs that pulled out. Further down and up three steps to the right was the bathroom. It wasn't a small one either, like one might think. He had a full size shower, toilet, sink, and cabinets all around the top and one closet-like pantry for storage. To the back was his bedroom. One queen size bed sat in the middle with cabinets over head. Right across from it was a counter top/dresser, overhead built in T.V., and off to the left a closet.

Chase tossed his keys onto the counter in his bedroom sat down on the bed and began undressing. He was tired. Driving straight through as he did took a lot out of him, especially since he was anxious to get home.

Wearing his boxers, he went to the kitchen opened the fridge and smiled. Celine had stocked it. Checking out the rest of the cabinets, he chuckled and shook his head. He grabbed a beer, twisted the top, and downed about half before going back to the bedroom where he rolled

to the middle, holding the bottle up so he wouldn't spill.

Chase sighed. Damn he was tired, but also excited. He couldn't wait to see her, and knew the moment he did he was going to have one hell of a time keeping his hands to himself.

The rain came. Finishing his beer, placing the bottle on the nightstand, Chase linked his hands together over his stomach. He felt relaxed, back in his home.

With the pelting of water overhead, Chase closed his eyes and drifted off to sleep.

* * * *

They all jumped when Kane smashed against the door of his cage. His snarling and growling caused the tiny hairs on her neck to stand on end. She was afraid of what they might do to him or what he would do to himself. Last month he'd acted the same way. His body rock hard and tense all over, but this month was different. Sasha saw the differences in him, the aggression with the thin lines that formed his lips. Granted, Kane always had that aggression and it usually got worse certain times of the month, but this time was very different. This time he acted like it never left.

* * * *

Sasha sat in her cell, her eyes on her brother, their once a night meal uneaten on the floor, him pacing his cage with his chains clanking behind him. As usual each month he appeared on edge, mean, and looked like he could kill with his bare hands. His eyes were deep red, body tense and hard, and a low violent growl came out of him every few seconds. She also noticed Josh Stan watching Kane too and that made her extra nervous.

She could hear their thoughts; feel the evil in their minds. It gave her the chills and had her hugging herself tighter. She didn't want to be here. Didn't want to see the things that she knew he needed, and was trying to find a way out to get it.

She jumped again when Kane smashed into the door of his cage with his shoulder and growled. She covered her ears with both hands and tried to press back against the bars away from everyone when Kane tried to pull the chains from his wrists and his body began to change.

Jason rushed to grab the dart gun from the table and Josh just stood at the top of the stairs that led to his office, staring down at the scene. Sasha started to cry silently at what was to come. Jason always derived pleasure in showing Kane that he was in charge. He loved to torture him and remind Kane that he was nothing more than an

animal.

Jason took aim and shot Kane three times in the arm and she screamed. Kane howled; then his howl turned into a deep vicious growl. Kane turned toward him and started to grow. His normal six foot ten inches became nine foot. Hair sprouted out all over his body as he started to shift from his human body to wolf form.

“Kane!” Sasha cried. She glanced up and saw the full moon and it all became slightly clear to her. Full moon meant Kane became difficult, but what she saw now was anything but. Now he was dangerous.

Jason loaded the gun again. He took aim and shot Kane another three times. The moment Kane busted the chains from his body, the drugs took effect. Kane went down hard, smashing face first on the cold concrete, his body slowly going back to normal.

“Get me a blood sample now!” Josh yelled from the top of the stairs. “I want to know why this month is different from the last.”

Jason opened the cage. He kept his gun on Kane as he used his foot to turn him over. Kane was breathing hard, sweat covered his body, and his eyes were closed.

“Kane,” she whimpered softly, tears on her cheeks. She hugged herself and started rocking as she watched Jason kick her brother, beating him while he was down.

* * * *

Sasha screamed out loud, opened her eyes, sat up in bed and kept on screaming. She screamed until she went horse. Drake rushed into her room sat down on the bed and shook her a few times before she stopped screaming. Her eyes focused on him, the anxiousness of Drake busted through the haze of the dream.

She took a deep breath, lunging into his arms, wrapping her own around his neck, holding him tightly. And like always, she started to cry like a little girl.

“Shhh,” Drake soothed, rubbing her back. “It’s just another dream.”

“Sasha!” Kane also ran into the room. She glanced at him, resting her head on Drake’s shoulder to look at her brother. He had a bloody nose.

“I’m sorry,” she whispered at him.

Kane knelt down on the floor next to the bed. He touched her hair, concern was all over his face, and she could sense his worry.

“Don’t be sorry, pumpkin,” Kane sighed. Carrick came inside and handed him a cloth. He cleaned the blood from his nose, but

didn't move. "It's not your fault."

"How about a bath?" Carrick smiled with her hand out to her. "Might help you relax some."

Sasha nodded, took her hand and left Drake and Kane in her room, but she could still hear what they were saying to each other. Even as water filled the tub

"This can't keep going on, Kane," Drake sighed. "You heard what my father said."

"She's not ready," Kane grumbled.

"She's dragging now," Drake snapped back. Sasha picked up the concern and anger in him. "Only two nights a week now does she get any real sleep. No one can keep going on with that little."

Two nights a week. That was when she had the dreams, the sweet, comforting, dreams of a man soothing her, touching her, maybe even loving her. Sasha looked forward to those dreams, but she didn't have them that much. She couldn't identify the man, but she did understand one thing about the dreams. When she was in his arms she was wasn't hearing others.

"She's not ready to be claimed yet!" Kane's voice rose, but quickly lowered again. "Look at her now. Would you let him just come in here and take her away? We both know the demands we make on our mates. Sasha is still too fragile to have to deal with it."

"We might not have a choice. I don't want to think about what happens, but I also hate seeing her suffer like this. So we're going to have to come up with something to help her sleep better without the nightmares or let him claim her."

"I think I'm going to go outside for some air," Sasha said to Carrick.

Before Carrick could say a word, Sasha was out of the bathroom. She was saying a silent thank you that Carrick had pulled her out of the room and took her to the guest bathroom instead of her own. If she tried to leave, Kane would stop her.

Out the front door, towards the woods she ran. Fresh tears fell, tears of frustration because she thought of herself as a freak. She wasn't normal. She could see people's thoughts, hear their words, and feel what they were thinking. She also had nightmares about her past. Nightmares that affected Kane because of the way they were linked together.

She stopped running when her side started to hurt. Sasha kept walking, touching the wet leaves of bushes and trees. It rained last night. The air smelled fresh from it. Wiping her face, she stopped at

the edge of the woods, high on a hill and looked down at Cole and Chase's property. Cole built himself a home while Celine finished college. In that time, he lived with Drake and when Celine was home for the weekend, they would stay in a tent on the grounds. Chase put a camper up on his, but soon after he did that, he left.

Sasha frowned when her eyes landed on that camper. In the five years she'd been here the only person she ever saw use the camper was Cole. But it wasn't Cole's truck that was parked at the end right now. Someone was there!

Her curiosity got the best of her. Sasha turned and went down the hill to a path that was made in the woods between the two properties. She walked towards the camper, her heart pounding in her chest. But as she got closer, she also noticed something strange. Something she never thought she'd ever experience before. Peace and quiet! The closer she got to the camper the more the normal whispering in her head disappeared. And by the time she reached it, it was gone. All she could hear was the birds chirping around her.

She got up close, peeking inside the a couple windows as best as she could. At first, Sasha couldn't see a thing. It all looked pretty normal like no one was there. But then she saw a bag on the floor right next to the back sliding doors. She'd been inside once, with Cole and Celine for dinner, so she knew what the inside looked like. Walking around to the other side, she peered in and her eyes widened, he mouth gaped.

A man was coming out of the bathroom, naked and wet. Clearly, he had just finished showering and didn't know that she was there. He walked back to the bedroom, giving her one very nice view of his backside.

Sasha was mesmerized by what she saw. The only other guy she ever saw naked before was Kane, and that was when they were being held in the cages. He wasn't allowed to wear any clothing, and he'd tried his damnest to hide himself from her. Once he started wearing clothes she got use to it and hadn't seen another naked man since. This one fascinated her. He was thick with muscles from the back of his neck all the way down to his feet. His rear bunched when he moved, outlines of more muscles showing clearly. When he turned and reached up she got a very good view of his penis. And if her memory served her right, then he was about as big as Kane was. The sight made her mouth go dry and she felt this strange tingling sensation between her legs.

When he reached up for something, his belly looked like an

antique washboard she saw once in a store. He didn't have hair on his chest, just a small patch starting at his belly going down. He moved with grace, which surprised her since he was so big.

She panicked when he turned. Thinking that he might see her spying on him, Sasha turned and ran back towards the wood as fast as she could. She prayed all the way that he didn't see her watching him.

* * * *

Chase stopped what he was doing, turned to look over his shoulder, got a blur of something blonde and quickly went to the back door to see what it was. He wasn't expecting to see Sasha running away like the gates of hell were on her ass. He frowned, then slowly started to smile.

Sasha saw him just as he got out of the shower, which wasn't how he'd pictured their first meeting to go.

The urge to go after her was strong, but somehow, somehow, Chase fought it off. He stayed put until she had disappeared in the woods, closed the door, and went back into the bedroom. He finished drying off, got dressed, ate something, then made sure his bike would run. It needed a tune up, but it was going to have to wait. He was going to ride it to town, if luck was on his side, and give Sasha a ride. No point in beating around the bushes why he was home. And the sooner they met face to face the better. Brandon was right when he said she was timid. Chase just hoped like hell he could get her over that and soon. He'd hate to go through another full moon alone, and he sure as hell wasn't going to force her into one with him either.

Chase had a full month to seduce and claim Sasha his way. He just hoped it was enough time.

Hitting the button, lowering the ramp, Chase rolled the bike down and out. It was seven in the morning, early enough that he would be able to see the town coming to life. He knew one person he wanted to see was Cole, and couldn't wait to see his face once he learned that Chase was home to stay. Now what were Kane and Drake going to say once he learned he was also going to be laying claim to Sasha? Five years ago he might have ran from that, but not now. No! Chase was looking forward to telling dear ol' brother that little sister was about to become someone's mate. The thought had Chase smiling all the way to town.

Chapter Two

Chase leaned against a light pole, his bike parked across the street in front of Celine's bakery, *Taste That*. He had his arms crossed over his chest, legs crossed, and eyes hidden behind dark sunglasses waiting.

Celine was already in her shop working and Cole was due to show up anytime now. When he saw Cole's truck turn and head down with Kane sitting in the seat next to him, Chase suddenly got nervous. He couldn't pin point if it was because he was going to see Cole and tell him he was home for good, or facing Kane with that information. Chase knew that as soon as Kane knew he was back for good the overbearing brother would come out striking to protect his sister. Always had.

He waited until they were inside and the open sign turned before pushing from the pole and walking over with hands in pockets.

A bell rang when he opened the door, letting them know that someone was there. Chase looked around, impressed with what he saw. There were pictures on the walls of projects they'd done, even Cole's house. It was clean, bright and had a very comfortable feeling.

"Be with you in a second," Cole yelled out from the back.

Chase grinned, moved over to the wall, and looked at the photos. The family wall, he presumed. There was Drake and Carrick working to clean the place up. Another of Celine laughing, Kane behind her. His eyes caught Sasha in another; her head was down, a shy smile on her face as if she was embarrassed that her picture was being taken.

"What can I help you with?"

Chase turned around on the heels of his feet with a smile. Cole was reading over something, his head down. "I'm going to take a guess here and say these are Jada's. She does take kick ass photos."

Cole's head snapped up, his mouth open. Shock mixed maybe with a little surprise was on his face. "Chase!"

Cole rushed up to him, hugging tightly. When Cole stepped back he didn't let Chase go, which didn't surprise him at all.

"When'd you get to town?" Cole asked.

"Very late last night. Thought I'd surprise you." Chase smiled. "You've got one hell of a place here."

"It's building." Cole took another step back, crossing his arms over his chest. "How long you staying this time?"

“Well see, that’s the funny thing,” Chase tried to play it cool and act as if he was just visiting or something. He tapped a finger on his lips, watching Cole closely. Cole already didn’t look happy. “I’m home to stay this time,” he laughed, slapping Cole on the side of the arm. “It’s time.” He got all serious, sliding his hands back into his pockets again.

“Drake know?”

He shook his head. “The only ones that know right now are you and Celine. Wanted to surprise you.”

“Hey Cole, that shipment of wood isn’t going to make it until—” Kane stopped talking and walking when he saw Chase standing there.

Chase got a funny feeling as if he was going to have to duke it out with Kane or something, and really hoped like hell he wasn’t going to. Kane had a huge advantage over him, one being he was mean as hell when he was over protective. Living most of your life in a cage tended to do that.

“Kane,” Chase said, a bit tenderly and with caution.

“Chase,” Kane also said before turning and walking away.

“Well that went better than expected.” Cole sighed.

“Yeah, I thought he might want to kill me when I came home.”

Cole slapped him on the back. “Day’s not out.” Chase gave him a dirty look and Cole just laughed. “Come on. I’ll walk with you to Celine’s place. She’ll kill both of us if she doesn’t get a look at you.”

They left the shop, walked down the street to *Taste That*. Chase commented on how catchy the name was and Cole told him Sasha had a hand in it. He also went on to tell Chase that she was having some bad-ass nightmares, something Chase already knew about. And that it was past time for him to be home.

Celine’s shop was busy as hell. There were people packed inside, ordering morning coffee and pastries. Both girls were busting their asses taking orders, filling cups, and boxing stuff up.

“Is it always like this?” Chase asked, following Cole to a corner table.

“Every morning. You’d think the town never had a bakery before.”

Chase chuckled. “Well, if everything in here tastes as good as the cookies she sent me, I can see why. Brandon almost ate the whole box before I could stash them.” A few minutes went by where Chase just watched people, but he felt Cole’s gaze on him. “Why are you staring at me?”

“I can’t get over that you’re finally going to stay. I half expect

you to tell me any second you've changed your mind and that you'll be leaving in the morning."

Chase opened his mouth, but stopped when Carrick came over with two cups and a coffee pot. "I thought you already had your morning cup." She put the cups on the table and poured. "Who's your friend?"

Chase couldn't help himself and snickered.

"You serious?" Cole asked.

"Guess I did stay away too long, huh?" Chase shrugged.

"Carrick, it's Chase!"

Carrick frowned, looked Chase over, then a slow smile spread across her face. "Well shit." Then she did something he wasn't expecting. She kicked him in the leg. "Bout damn time you got your sorry ass home!" She slammed the pot down on the table and pulled him up to his feet for a tight hug. "Oh shit." She pulled back. "Does Kane know?"

"He saw him," Cole said.

"And you're still alive?" She pushed him back with a snort. "I'm impressed."

"Well he didn't *say* anything." Cole added.

"Damn you two," Chase chuckled. "You act like he's going to beat the crap out of me or something." When they looked at each other, Chase rolled his eyes and sat back down. "I know she's having nightmares, and I know that Kane doesn't want me around her. But I'm the only one that can help her now."

"Oh honey, it isn't that simple," Carrick sighed. She pulled a chair from another table over to theirs and sat down. "Drake and Kane don't want to think about that claiming stuff with her. I really don't think they are going to let you do what ever it is you want to do."

Chase looked Cole in the eyes and Cole shook his head. "Don't go there." He pointed a finger at him. "You do that, and all shit will hit the fan. You'll have them both wanting to rip you a new asshole!"

"Care to fill me in?" Carrick asked.

Cole looked at Carrick, "Yeah, dipshit here wants to make a claim and take her." He turned his attention to Chase. "That's dirty, man."

Chase picked up his cup, took a sip, keeping his eyes locked with Cole. "Already made my claim. A month ago."

"Oh shit," Cole groaned and lowered his head to his hands.

"Okay, what does that mean again?" Carrick asked.

"You sure did take your sweet ass time!" Celine came up behind

him, wrapping her arms around his neck, hugging Chase tight. She almost knocked him over when she came up upon him. "Okay, what's wrong? You're not leaving after all?" She pushed him, then came around so he could see her face.

"No I'm not leaving again," Chase told her. "I promise I'm home for good this time."

"Then what's wrong with him?" Celine moved over to Cole and tapped him on the shoulder. He sat up and she sat down on his lap.

"Go ahead. Tell her," Cole said. When Chase didn't say anything, Cole went on, "He's already put a claim in on Sasha. A month ago."

Celine's mouth opened in shock. "Are you out of your mind?"

"Will one of you please tell me what that means?" Carrick raised her voice, getting their attention.

Chase extended his hand to Cole to go on. "It means that if the Cabinet has acknowledged it, then he has full rights to her as mate." Cole pushed Celine off his lap and stood up. "He can go to Drake and take her. It's his right." Cole walked away, going out the door.

"Cole!" Chase called out to him, standing up also.

"Are you out of your mind?" Carrick snapped.

Chase ran out the door after Cole. He grabbed his arm, stopping him. "I'm sorry. I should've told you."

"This is your great plan?" Cole put his hands on his hips. The way he was breathing Chase knew without a doubt he was pissed. "Do you have any idea what Drake will do? Do you even care?"

"Do they?" Chase yelled, rubbing his chin and taking a deep breath. "Sorry. Didn't mean to yell at you, but they could've called me months ago. "She's been having migraines, not sleeping and nightmares. They also kept the fact that she's a telepath from me."

"You weren't here," Cole pointed out.

"I could've been!" Again, he raised his voice. "Look, I don't want to fight with you. I need you on my side here."

"What the hell do you think you can do that they can't?"

Chase leaned to one side licked his lips and rubbed the back of his neck. This was not how he wanted his home coming to go. He also didn't think the fact that he had a claim on Sasha known. It was a safe card, one he was really hoping like hell he didn't have to play. The only reason he did that was to make sure that Drake and Kane couldn't keep him from his mate. He knew that last year Drake had Kane and Sasha taken before the Cabinet and were recognized as shifters and part of the Draeger family. It wouldn't take long before Sasha was 'requested' to a gathering. If that happened then Chase

would lose her forever.

“I looked into this. I know that it’s very rare, just like I also know that her mate is the only one to ease her pain. If she’s with me—Cole I’m her off switch. Around me, she’ll not hear others. She’ll get the rest she needs. I’ve already tested some of the stuff I’ve learned.”

“Which is?”

“Things that she’s been in contact with ease her when I’m not around. I’m sure when she wears the necklace I gave her three years ago you notice it helps her.”

“I knew it was you!” Cole wiggled his finger at him.

“Cole, I really would love your help here with Kane and Drake,” Chase sighed. “I can’t get to know her if they’re breathing down our throats all the time.”

“You think Kane is going to let you just ride off with her when ever you feel like it?” Cole snorted. “He’s not going to leave you alone with her. He knows first hand what happens when you’re left alone with your mate. Remember Jada?”

“It’s either that, or I have to pull the claim card and I really don’t want to do that.”

“Tell me how the *hell* did you keep that from Drake by the way?” Cole frowned. “The family’s been notified.”

“Stefan helped me with that one.”

Cole laughed, “You are so dead little brother.”

“Thanks for the support.”

Cole crossed his arms over his chest and smiled. “I’m dying to hear what the game plan is.”

Chase mimicked him. “I really don’t have one right now. My main plan was to keep the whole claim thing to myself, but you fucked that up when you figured it out.”

“Sucks when someone knows you well, huh?”

“Tell me about it.”

“Okay, you want help. Here it is.” Cole grabbed his shoulder and turned Chase around. Down the street, Sasha was getting out of Drake’s truck. She went into a store and Drake parked. “Let Drake know you’re back, and I’ll go keep Kane busy.”

“That’s it?” Chase knew he sounded unsure, but couldn’t help it. Now that he was faced with dad, things just didn’t seem so simple.

“For now.” Cole pushed him. “And I expect you for dinner.”

Chase took a deep breath and walked in the direction that Drake was parked. When he was close, Drake got out of the truck. He looked mean, but then what would one expect when you wake up one

morning and hear that your daughter was about to be claimed? And Chase was pretty sure Kane called him.

"I'm gong to warn you right now," Drake stated. "She's not ready for this."

"Hello, Drake, yes thanks for asking. I'm fine!" Chase snapped at him.

"Don't you try to be a smart ass with me."

"And don't try to tell me what to do when it concerns my mate," he tossed back at him. "I came back for her." Chase turned his back on Drake and went inside the store Sasha had entered.

* * * *

Sasha was looking at a new outfit and stilled. Everything in the store went quiet in her head. There was silence, except for the normal talking. She looked up, then around and her heart began pounding in her chest when her eyes landed on a man that definitely didn't belong. He also wasn't from here, she knew that for sure. *Are you really sure?*

He was as big as Drake. No, that's not right. Cole. Yes! As big as Cole, and just as broad in the shoulders. He was very muscular, legs so thick that it made the jeans he wore appear to be painted on his body. Even his white shirt was stretched tight across his chest.

But what made her breathing difficult was that she knew him from somewhere. Only she couldn't place from where.

He looked around, dark brown eyes landed on her, and Sasha found herself backing away from him. She only managed to get three steps back before she bumped into a rack of clothes.

"I know you," she breathed out when he got close.

He smiled. "I hope so. We met a couple years ago at Stefan and Dedrick's. Chase," he pointed at himself. "Remember?" His smile left and he looked like he was really worried that she didn't know him.

She nodded, swallowed a lump that appeared out of nowhere in the back of her throat. "I remember," she whispered. He made her nervous, and yet there was a calmness being so close to him. She cleared her throat and licked her lips. "You, um, you home to stay?"

"Yeah, I'm home to stay," he said, the beginning of another smile tipped the corner of his mouth and Sasha felt like melting right on the spot. He took a deep breath, rubbing around his mouth. "You look—"

"Has Cole seen you?" she rushed out, feeling her face heat up. She rolled her eyes. "He was thinking about you the other day. Wondering in fact when you might come home."

He crossed his arms over his massive chest and Sasha was hit with the curiosity of how those arms would feel wrapped around her.

The expression on his face was amused as if he was enjoying how flaky she sounded.

"I'm sorry." She hung her head down. "I tend to rattle off when I get nervous."

"I make you nervous?" She looked up at him and that smile of his made her feel at ease.

She shook her head. "No." She said the word so soft and low she thought he didn't hear it.

"Good." He took a deep breath. "Don't want you to be afraid of me."

Sasha frowned. "Why would I be afraid of you?"

"Sasha," Drake's voice had her jumping. Right off, she could feel a bit of tension coming from Chase, but she couldn't hear anything. "We need to go."

"Oh, but I didn't pick anything out yet."

Chase turned around. Right off Sasha was getting this strange vibe from the both of them.

"I'm sorry, honey," Drake said.

"I could bring her home if she needs to do some more shopping," Chase said.

Again, Sasha felt the tension rise in the store, or more between them. "It's okay," she said, hoping to stop whatever it was that was going on between them. "I can come back another time."

She brushed past Chase. The small contact had a jolt of electricity racing up her arm. She frowned, looking at it and then up at Chase. He was also frowning and it had her wondering if he felt it too.

Drake took hold of her arm, pulling her away from Chase. She didn't understand it, and for some strange reason couldn't pick up anything that might help her. It was all quiet.

"I guess I'll see you around," she said to Chase.

"Count on it." He gave her one last bright smile before looking back at Drake with coldness in his eyes.

* * * *

Chase watched her go, pulled away by Drake. He groaned, rubbed the back of his neck, and swore under his breath. This shit is not going to be easy. He knew that he was going to have to deal with Kane, but he wasn't expecting Drake to be another pain in his ass. Damn. He hoped that he wasn't going to have to pull the claiming card. If that happened, then the shit was really going to hit the fan.

He looked down at the clothes that Sasha was looking at when he walked into the store. It was a silk pink summer tank top with thick

straps over the shoulder. He was assuming the thick straps to hide the birthmark.

Chase picked it up, went over the counter and bought it. With the package under his arm, he went back to the bakery. Things had slowed down, but it was still busy. He went up to the counter, whistled, and got Celine's attention.

"So what time for dinner?" he asked with a smile.

"I close shop at five," Celine said. "And Cole gets home after six. So how about you be there around five-thirty?"

"Sounds like a plan to me."

"What's in the box?" she nodded.

"Something Sasha was looking at and Drake hauled her out of the store before she could buy it."

"Ahh," Celine nodded again, wiping her hands on a towel. She came up to the counter, leaning over. "He's just being an overprotective dad. He was just as bad when I was dating."

"Oh I'm pretty sure this isn't over protectiveness. He doesn't want me near her, even though he knows." He frowned, a thoughtful look on his face and scratched the side of his head. "You know, he didn't act like he gave a damn when Kane pulled his shit with Jada. In fact, from what you and Cole told me he pretty much kept her in the fire pit and Kane got to do what the hell he wanted."

Celine nodded. "True. But Kane was a bit more stable than Sasha. I think Drake is afraid that she isn't going to be able to handle a claiming. Not up here," she pointed at her head. "And in the past few weeks, Kane has become a bear with her. Now on a positive note, I did hear Drake tell him once that she might need her mate to help with the mental stuff."

"Yeah, well it didn't look like he was too agreeable at the moment," Chase grumbled.

"Hey I have a bunch of orders I need to get busy on. We'll talk about this later tonight, okay?"

"Sure," he said, slapped the counter, and put down the package. "Will you give this to her?"

He turned and left. Chase walked to his bike, slung his leg over, and started it. Putting his shades back on, he stared down at Cole's shop. It didn't take a genius to figure out that he was being watched. He felt the eyes upon him. Kane!

Revvng the engine, Chase put it in gear and took off, spinning the back tire as he turned the bike, heading out of town. Instead of going home, he just drove. The wind blew in his face and hair, giving

him a sense of freedom and escape. After all, what was he thinking? Did he really think that when he came home he was going to be welcome with open arms? He sure as hell didn't expect this resentment.

He gunned the bike, picking up speed and not giving a damn if he passed a cop. At the moment he needed to do something daring to take away the anger that was starting to boil inside him. And where it was coming from he didn't know. Chase knew it was going to be a battle with Kane. He just didn't think Drake would be so closed minded to it.

In the past Drake was on their side. He pushed Cole to claim Celine, knew that one day Chase would be back for Sasha. But now he was acting like it was the worst thing ever, him being home for his mate. Well fuck them all! He was going to get to know her whether they liked it or not. If they tried to keep him away, then he would for sure play the claiming card. Five years was long enough for him to be alone. As far as Chase was concerned, she was his. It was just a matter of time.

* * * *

"Why do you dislike Chase?" Sasha turned in her seat, facing Drake. Once they were out of town she could hear his thoughts again, and they were filled with this anger towards Chase. Something she didn't understand. "I thought you liked him and wanted him to come home."

"I don't dislike him," Drake sighed.

"Then why do I get this feeling—"

"Its complicated," Drake cut her off.

"I don't understand." She frowned.

The truck slowed down and Drake pulled over. He parked, gripped the steering wheel so tight his knuckles turned white. She picked up that he was trying to block her from his mind, but she still heard one word very clearly.

"You think he's my mate, don't you?" she asked softly. "That's why you and Kane are acting funny."

"I never said that."

"You don't have to. I know how my brother thinks." She turned back around in her seat, turning her head to look at the trees. "Would it be that bad, to be mated?"

"I don't think you're ready for it, if that's what you mean."

"So I don't get the choice though?" She felt a tear form in her eye, one of pure frustration. For the past couple of years since the

nightmares worsened, Drake and Kane had been treating her like she was a small child. She was never that far away from either, and they always knew where she was at all times. At first, she felt safe that way, but now she felt smothered.

"I never said you didn't get a choice in this," he sighed. "It's your life. I'm just worried about your mental state." He touched the back of her head, running his hand down her hair. "Being claimed can be very scary."

Sasha closed her eyes. She knew it could be a scary thing, and the way things happened could be taken out of context. Jada took her claiming the wrong way and Kane wasn't very gentle with her either. But Sasha picked up something different from Chase. Even though she couldn't sense him, she still felt safe when she was close to him. And she also wanted to be around him, even though his size did intimidate her a bit. But she didn't get this feeling that he was going to hurt her, only that he wanted to help her. That was a pure gut feeling, since she couldn't read his mind at all. Which was very strange.

"Drake, I need to stand on my own two feet." She turned back to face him. "I can't keep going to you or Kane when I get scared."

"I understand that."

"Then why do you want me to stay away from him, if by chance he is my mate? *That's* what I don't understand."

"I don't know," he said and leaned back in the seat, resting his head back. "I guess I know what we're like, and don't want you to have to experience that harshness."

"I want to go home." She couldn't help herself from sounding like a child. Sasha crossed her arms over her chest and slumped back in the seat. She picked up that Drake didn't want to talk about this, or listen to anything at the moment. So there wasn't any point in going on.

He nodded, put the truck back in gear, and drove away. She didn't say another word. Not even when he stopped in front of the porch, or when she got out. Like a child, she ran from him into the house and up the stairs to her room, where she slammed the door.

She changed out of her skirt to a pair of shorts, and lose cream-colored top with very short sleeves. Not bothering with the shoes, Sasha left her room and stopped at the top of the stairs. Kane was coming, and he was not only early but upset.

Sasha stepped back around the corner, hiding just as Kane came through the door, slamming it in anger.

"Drake!" Kane yelled. "Where're you at?"

"Couldn't wait until after work?" Drake came out of the kitchen, a beer in his hand. Sasha could feel the tension.

"He's back for her, isn't he?" Kane demanded. "He can't have her!"

"Kane," Drake sighed.

"I mean it!" Sasha didn't think it was possible for her brother's voice to get even louder, but it did. She jumped when he yelled. "I'm not going to let anyone treat her like that."

"Like what?" Drake's voice also rose. "Like you treated Jada?"

"That's not fair."

"No it isn't. That was...different." She peeked down to see Drake pacing the room, one hand on the back of his neck. "We might not have a choice here Kane. When you went in front of the Cabinet to be recognized as a shifter you also agreed to the laws and rules of our kind."

"What the hell does that have to do with anything now?"

"It means that if Chase decides to place a claim on her then we can't do shit to stop him from taking and claiming her. Do you want that to happen?" Drake snapped. "Because I don't want to lose her, and I'm sure as hell positive she doesn't want to lose you or any of us. We both have to stop and think."

"Bullshit," Kane growled, turning and going back to the door.

"And what if we can't help her anymore?" That stopped Kane. "What if Chase is the only one now?"

Kane shook his head. "I'm not going to accept that."

"Kane, she isn't stupid. She already knows that we're having a big problem with Chase being home and asking questions. I'm not that happy either at the moment, but for her sake we might have to back off and let them get to know each other."

"She's not ready," Kane said though his teeth.

"Her or you?" Drake cocked his head to the side. "She isn't a little girl. Hasn't been for a very long time."

"Why are you suddenly changing your mind? I thought we agreed that he isn't right for her."

Drake shrugged. "We don't get to pick who's right for whom. Hell, I'd never in a million years think Jada would be the kind of girl for you. And you know for a fact if she was home, she'd be kicking your ass right now for the way you've been acting." He cocked his head to the other side. "When does she come home again?"

"End of the week, and we're not talking about Jada and me."

“Uh-huh,” Drake nodded. “Hate for Chase to know how you dragged her off, tied her up, and claimed her the hard way.”

“Shhhh!” Kane glanced up the stairs and Sasha moved back into the shadows.

Drake chuckled, but quickly got serious. “Look, let’s just back off a bit and see what happens. I’ll have a talk with Chase about the whole claiming thing. I think once he understands that we want him to give her time to get to know him, he’ll do it all the right way. We have to try, Kane, or it’s going to be a nasty end, and we both don’t want that shit now.”

“I still don’t like it.” Kane sounded like a boy pouting.

“And I’ll make sure Chase understands that clearly. Now go back to work before Cole fires your sorry ass, and then Jada comes home to rip me a new one!”

“You make it sound like she’s something to be afraid of,” Kane grumbled as he headed for the door. “I can handle her.”

“I’ll make sure to tell her that when she comes back.”

Kane stopped at the door, staring at Drake with an open mouth. “You wouldn’t.”

Drake smiled, closing the door on Kane’s face. He laughed, shook his head, and went back to the kitchen. Licking her lips, Sasha slowly went down the stairs, peeked out the window to make sure that Kane was gone, and slipped outside.

Now if anyone could get on her side and get Kane to back off a bit, it was Jada. Only trouble was, Jada was in the city dealing with her photos. She’d been offered a nice gallery deal and she took it. Kane complained then about her leaving, but she somehow managed to go without him. She’d been gone for two weeks now, and was due back by the end of the week. Sasha couldn’t wait. If Kane was going to be overbearing, then she was going to tell Jada and get her to help deal with him. Because if Chase was indeed her mate and could help her with the nightmares, then she was definitely going to get to know him. No matter what!

Chapter Three

“Cole was worried you weren’t going to show.” Celine handed Chase a beer, meeting him on the front porch. “Dinner’s ready.”

Chase followed Celine inside. The house was very different from any other cabins he’d seen in the past. The main floor held a fireplace, built in shelves, wooden walls, and leather furniture. Instead of a normal staircase, there were two sets of spiral wooden stairs, one to the left, and another to the right. Upstairs was a large loft. It was only a two-bedroom cabin and each staircase led directly to a bedroom. Between the two bedrooms was a loft with a big screen T.V and a sectional sofa. Each bedroom had its own bath, and there was another small one on the first floor near the laundry room in the back.

They grilled steak for dinner and Celine brought home a chocolate cake. Chase hadn’t had a home cooked meal like this in a very long time.

After dinner, Chase followed Cole out back. Celine was going to soak in a tub, giving them time to talk alone. They sat down in some wooden chairs, drank their beer, and just stared out at the night.

When some time went by, Cole broke the silence. “So what’ve you been up to for the past few years?”

“Mechanic.”

Cole almost choked on the drink he was taking. “What?”

Chase smiled, then swallowed his drink. “Yeah, went back to school for it. Love taking stuff apart, finding the problem, and putting it back together. Pretty damn good at it too, by the way.”

“You’ve really changed, Chase.” Cole shook his head, took another drink, and sighed.

“For the better I hope,” Chase chuckled.

“Ah...” Cole shrugged his shoulders. Chase nudged him and stood up.

“What’s that?” Chase indicated with his beer bottle hand towards a car covered up by a long sheet.

“That is a lemon,” Cole answered. “Celine wanted it. Fell in love with it in fact, but once we got the damn thing home it refused to start up and she won’t let me sell it or burn it.”

Chase pulled the sheet back and whistled. “This is a sixty-seven convertible mustang. You don’t burn this, you restore it.”

“Good luck with that one.” Cole snorted, leaning against the

hood. "No one around here can do shit with cars. You got a problem, go to the next county."

"I could fix it." He looked inside. The inside was in perfect shape, which meant it was likely an engine problem.

"Really?"

Chase finished his beer, put the bottle on the roof, and leaned into the car, thumping his thumbs on the soft top, and thinking. "Yep. But it'll cost you."

"I figured the parts were going to eat me up."

Chase shook his head. "Not talking about that."

Cole met Chase in the eye, then shook his head. "Oh no. I'm not smoothing shit over between you and Kane. That's a battle you're going to have to fight all your own."

"He'll do it," Celine said. She was on the back porch, shorts, t-shirt, and wet hair. When Cole opened his mouth, she held her hand up. "I want my car working, and you've promised me for over a year now to get it fixed. So, you'll help Chase smooth over things with Kane for my car."

"That's not a fair trade," Cole said. "He has to do this claim on his own."

"Says who?" She crossed her arms over her chest, and Chase couldn't help but chuckle. "Besides, you had help."

"That was different!"

"I'm going to go back and get my truck to haul this baby home," Chase said. "You two work it out while I'm gone." He went up to Celine, and kissed her on the cheek. "Great dinner, by the way."

It took an hour to get the car back to his place. Celine followed behind and Cole drove the Mustang while Chase pulled it with his truck. They put it on blocks, made sure it wasn't going to go anywhere, then Cole and Celine returned home.

Chase was antsy to get started, even had the garage open, and was digging through some tools. But stopped. There was someone in his home.

He put the tool in his hand down in the case, turned and went inside. Closing his eyes, Chase inhaled deep. Sweetness!

He opened his eyes the same moment that Sasha came out of his room. She was dressed differently. Now she had shorts on and a baggy t-shirt, no shoes. Her long blond hair was loose down her back, sides pulled back with barrettes behind her ears.

"Hi." She raised her hand. The shyness came off her in waves. Chase could tell without an ounce of doubt that she was scared and

maybe even a bit unsure about being here.

“Hi.” He closed the sliding glass door, and tried like hell to still the pounding in his chest. He felt like a nervous teen. “Wh—what’re you doing here?” She frowned and looked like she had done something wrong so he added, “What I mean is,” he quickly went on, “It’s very late. Isn’t Drake going to be wondering where you’re at?”

“Maybe,” she shrugged. She walked down the two steps, swaying her arms back and forth, looking around. “I was here once, awhile ago. Cole was staying here because his tent got a hole in it and it was raining.” She smiled at the memory. “Celine was down for the weekend. I think they slept in the loft.” She pointed over his head.

“And you stayed here also?”

She nodded, moving to the sofa. Chase watched her bounce down on it, tucking her legs under her. “Slept right here. I was caught in a storm and Cole didn’t want me walking back home in it so I stayed here. The sofa is quite comfortable.”

“Huh.” He moved away from her, only because he didn’t want the temptation of touching her. Chase went to the fridge and opened it. “Want something to drink?”

“Sure.”

He pulled out two sodas, handed her one, then sank down on the love seat across from her. “Okay, so why you here? I know it isn’t to tell me that you’ve been here before.”

“Did you come back for me?”

Chase stopped his hand with the soda can mere inches from his mouth. He met her in the eye, thinking for a split second about not telling her the truth. But if he did that then he would be keeping things from her like Drake and Kane seemed to be doing.

“Yes.”

She licked her lips, put the can in her hand on the floor, and squirmed some. “Why?”

Chase barely heard the question, but he read her body language. He took a deep breath as well as a drink before sitting forward. “Don’t you know?” She shook her head. “I thought you could read people.”

She frowned. “I can’t read you. It’s so strange. When I’m near you everything around me goes silent. I don’t understand it.” Her hand went up to the necklace. “Did you also give me this?”

Chase nodded. “Yes.”

She smiled shyly. “Thank you. It helps sometimes.”

Now it was his turn to frown at her. “What do you mean?”

"When I first held it in my hand, the loudness in my head became a whisper. So I never take it off, but at night the whispers become louder and the nightmares sneak in." She frowned again, dropping her hand. "I don't sleep much and I'm so tired you know."

"You do know that there is another person somewhat like you," he told her. Her blue eyes came back up, locking with his. "A young lady born of two shifters. She had the same mark as you, and appeared to be all-human. She could read people just like you."

"What happened to her?"

"It was a long time ago, so I imagine she's gone by now. But when I looked into it I found that when she was near her mate it became quiet for her as well. She even told people that when she had stuff that he touched for a long period of time it helped her when he wasn't there."

"Do you think I'm your mate?"

The hope and fear he saw in her eyes bothered him. Drake was right when he said that Sasha was still fragile, but staying away longer to give her even more time wasn't going to work any longer. She was suffering and no one else was able to help her.

Instead of answering her, he stood up and went back to his room. He opened one of the dressers, pulled out a t-shirt of his and went back. "Here." He handed it to her. "Sleep in that tonight and see if that helps you any. Then come back here tomorrow and we'll talk."

She took the shirt, her fingers brushing his. "I'm afraid of going to sleep, Chase. Afraid of the things I see when I close my eyes."

He knelt down in front of her, touching her leg for the first time. Her skin was so smooth, warm. "Don't be afraid. I promise that you won't have one bad dream tonight."

"How can you promise me that?" she whispered.

He felt her shake under his hand. Chase rubbed her leg twice before taking her hand, standing up with her. "Because I can. Now you go home before Drake comes looking for you." *Damn if he didn't hate telling her that.* "We'll talk about all of this more tomorrow."

"You promise?" She stopped at the door, her eyes wide with hope.

He knew that she needed answers badly. Drake and Kane did fine with protecting her five years ago, but somewhere they forgot that she wasn't a child either. Before him stood a young woman, wanting to know what was going on with herself and in the world around her. Instead of them telling her and helping her, they kept sheltering her.

"I promise." He reached out touching her hair, letting a strand run

through his fingers. "I'll tell you what you want to know."

Again, that shy smile of hers spread across her lips. "Thank you." Sasha also did the unexpected. She rose up on her toes, pulled him down, and kissed him on the cheek.

Chase was so speechless that he could only stand there, bent over, staring as she dashed out the door. She ran towards the woods, disappearing into the night and trees.

When she was gone, Chase turned and shut the lights off, heading for the bedroom. He stripped down to his boxer/briefs and flopped down on the bed. He was tired, but couldn't get the feel of Sasha's hair off his fingers or the sweet scent out of his system enough to relax and try to go to sleep.

Somehow, he managed to relax enough and reach out to her. Sasha was sleeping, but not very restfully. She had all the covers kicked off, sweat covered her face, and his shirt was over her body. Pushing just enough, Chase moved into her dream.

She was running in the dark, panic gripped her tightly, making it almost impossible for him to reach out to her. He couldn't see anything, only hear the evil laughter and her cries for help.

Another nightmare.

Chase ran down a hallway, looking into several rooms as he tried to find her. He heard the snap of a whip, and when he turned a corner there she was. And so was Kane.

Kane was chained to a wall, his back towards her, a whip kept cracking down on his back. Sasha was crying, her hands up covering the sobs from slipping past her mouth. There were other men watching, doing nothing.

Chase rushed up to her, skidding to a stop in front of her, blocking the beating. He wrapped his arms around her, pressing her face into his chest and turning her away from the sight. He picked her up, carrying her from the nightmare to a door in the back of the room.

Bright light blinded him as he carried her from one room into another. He kept walking until sunshine touched his face and he felt green grass under his feet. Gently he put Sasha down on her feet, took her hand, and walked her further away.

"What is this place?" she asked softly.

He smiled at her, turned, and walked backwards as she stepped forward. He brushed the tears from her face as he walked. "Our place."

"I don't understand."

"Nightmares can't touch you here. Not when you're with me."

He moved to the side, extending his arm. A beach was before them with golden sand. "I won't allow it," he whispered in her ear.

"But you're not with me all the time." She was staring at the water, a lost expression on her face and in her eyes.

Chase stopped walking and touched her heart. "Yes I am. All you have to do is think of me, and you'll be in this place."

He moved closer, brushed hair behind her ear, bent and kissed her shoulder. She turned and tilted her head back, invitingly. Chase cupped her chin and teased her lips with his own.

* * * *

Sasha opened her eyes, the dream fading slowly from her mind. It was very early in the morning, but she felt rested. More so than what she had in months. Turning in her bed, she looked at the clock. It was only five in the morning. Carrick would be up, getting ready to go to work.

Swinging her legs over, Sasha got out of bed and went into the bathroom for a fast shower. A plan was forming in her head, one that involved Chase. He had answers to many of her questions—questions that neither Kane nor Drake seemed to want to answer.

She showered, dressed in jean shorts and the pink silk top Chase bought for her. Celine brought it over and Drake wasn't too happy about it. Grabbing hold of her shoes, Sasha cracked her bedroom door open and peeked out. The house was still very quiet. Carrick and Drake were still in their room. Drake was in the shower with Carrick.

Biting her lip, Sasha left her room, rushed down the stairs, and out the front door. She ran on bare feet to the woods, taking the worn trail that led to Kane's place. One light was on, which meant he was up already.

She hid behind a tree, waiting until Kane opened the door and left. He always walked to Cole's place. They had a cup of coffee right before taking off for the shop. She picked up as he left the house that he was upset. He was going to give Cole a piece of his mind, considering Chase and her. Whatever that means.

She waited a few minutes before getting back on the trail and heading towards Chase's place. The closer she got, the more she noticed the humming in her head got quieter and quieter. By the time she reached his home, it was all gone. She couldn't hear or pick up a thing.

The back of the camper was open and lights were on. She didn't see him working on Celine's car or anywhere around. What she did see was his bike.

As silently as she could, Sasha walked up the ramp to the bike. She touched it, on the side, walking up to the front. It was strange touching the bike and picking up nothing from it. A lot of the time when she simply touched something, she would sense things, like where that person had been, or even what they were thinking. With Chase's bike, she got nothing.

"You're up early."

Sasha jumped back and folded her hands behind her back. She stared at him, wide eyed. Chase looked like he just got out of the shower. His hair was wet, jeans still unbuttoned, feet bare, and his shirt in his hands.

"I—I didn't mean to touch it," she said in a rush.

He smiled. "Don't worry about it. Touching never did any harm. Had breakfast?" he asked, then went back inside.

Turning her head so she could watch him walk back to his room, Sasha followed him. "No. I left the house before Carrick and Drake."

"You mean you snuck out?" he yelled from the back.

A watch and sunglasses were on the small island. Sasha picked up the watch. She stared at them, frowning. Still she got nothing. It was so strange.

"You look like you've never seen a watch before."

Again, she jumped, putting it down quickly. "Sorry."

He was dressed, shoes in his hand. Sasha backed away when he came forward, putting his shoes down. "And very jumpy."

"I'm not used to the quiet," she told him, moving away from him. "I always know when Drake or Carrick is about to enter my room. When you're around, it goes away. Why?"

"I sort of figured you would have answered that question by now." He went over to the fridge and opened it. Sasha watched every move he made, noticing how the muscles on his back made the shirt appear tighter. Kane was large, but she never noticed how much larger he was to others but not with Chase. "Want something to eat?"

She walked back to the island, checking him out even more. His jeans looked way too tight, making his rear look way too good. *Where'd that thought come from?* Even his feet looked cute.

"Sasha?" Chase snapped his fingers and she felt her face heat up. "Want something to eat?"

Great! He saw her checking him out like some schoolgirl. "Sure, um, whatever you're fixing."

He put a small jug of orange juice on the island before her, turned for two glasses, and handed them to her. Sasha took them, and the rest

of the stuff he set on the table.

She watched him get a pan out, crack some eggs, and cook. Sasha leaned forward on the counter not missing one thing that Chase did. He made toast, bacon, and scrambled eggs. At the table, he split up the food, sat down across from her, and started to eat.

“So where’d you learn how to cook?” she asked him.

“Living alone I had to learn,” he answered with a shrug. “What about you? You cook?”

“Some.” She wrinkled her nose. “But I’m not that good.”

“Oh, I don’t know.” He wiped his mouth and sat back in the chair. “I heard you bake up a storm.”

“Well that’s easy.”

Chase chuckled, “Guess that depends on who you ask. I can’t bake worth a damn.” He finished eating and she cleared the table with the intent to wash the dishes. “You don’t have to do the dishes. I can take care of that.”

Sasha stiffened when she felt him come up behind her. It was very different for her not to sense when someone was moving around her, like Chase. She turned around slowly, then looked up at him. He was so big, compared to her. Being so close, her heart started to pound in her chest, and breathing became difficult.

“It’s the least I can do.” She even had trouble talking. He smelt good, fresh and clean with a hint of maleness, like a wild animal about to be unleashed.

She thought he was going to touch her, but he didn’t. Instead, he stepped back from her, his eyes darkening. With a nod, Chase went over to the table, cleaned it off and she went back to the dishes. It didn’t take long before it was all cleaned up.

Chase sat down on the sofa with his boots. Sasha sat down on the love seat across from him watched his movements. He had a grace about him, a smoothness that fascinated her. How could someone so large move so easy?

“Are you going to work on Celine’s car today?” she asked.

“Well I was thinking about troubleshooting it to find the problem. He grunted, finished tying one boot, and slammed it down on the floor. “Have something else in mind?” Again, she felt her face heat up. He made her both at ease and terribly shy. “And you blush. You know, that’s twice now you’ve done that.”

“Can I ask something?”

“Sure.”

She licked her lips, tucked her legs under her, and took a deep

breath. Sasha normally was able to get the answer to any question before she spoke it. It made her nervous not knowing what to expect with Chase.

“Can I have a ride?”

“On the bike?”

She nodded. “Never been on one before.”

He opened his mouth, and his cell phone went off. Chase raised his finger up in the air, “Hold that thought.” He stood up and jogged back to his room. “Yeah! Hey Drake. Yes, she’s here. No, she came on her own.”

Sasha stood up and slowly walked into the cabin to Chase’s room. Chase was pacing back and forth, one hand on his hip. She didn’t have to read his mind to know that he was getting upset about something Drake was saying on the phone.

“Excuse me?” Chase snapped. He growled, hung the phone up, and stopped to give her a tight smile. He took a deep breath, let it out quickly, and tossed the phone onto the bed. “Lets go have that ride.”

“He’s upset, isn’t he?” She bit her lower lip, leaning to the side. “I guess I should’ve let him know I was coming over here.”

“Drake will get over it. But just in case he doesn’t, let me get my boot on and we’ll get the hell out of here.” He gave her a big smile. Then he brushed past her, got his other boot on, and was taking hold of her hand before she could think about backing out.

Outside, she watched him back the bike out from the garage. He moved it without one ounce of trouble, as if he was one with the machine. “Get on.”

Sasha moved closer to the bike and stopped. She chewed on her thumbnail this time, looking the bike up and down. “How?”

“Put your foot there on the peg, swing the other over and then hold on.”

She did as he said, sitting down on the back seat. “What do I hold on to?”

“Me.” He started the bike, gunned the engine, and put it in gear.

Sasha placed her hands on his shoulders, unsure where to put them. Chase took her hands and moved them down around his waist then took off.

He drove so fast that Sasha tightened her hold on Chase and smiled. The wind blew in her face, whipping her long hair around. It was a newfound freedom! She couldn’t think of one word to describe how it felt riding on the back of the motorcycle with Chase.

The trees flew by, leaves picking up and scattering around as they

went. It was magical. Sasha rested her head against his back with a smile and closed her eyes. It was so peaceful that she didn't want it to end.

* * * *

"Cole!" Drake stormed into Cole's shop pissed at the world and ready to rip out someone's throat. "Cole!" he yelled again.

"I'm here. You don't have to yell the place down." Cole came out of his office. The calm look on his face just added to Drake's anger. "What's up?"

"You call that brother of yours and tell him to bring her back!" Drake pointed at him. It surprised Drake some that Cole didn't back up.

Cole frowned. "Care to explain that one better?"

"Where's Kane?"

"Why?"

"Because once he finds out he's going to kill your brother."

Cole slid his hands into his jean pockets, swayed back and forth on the balls of his feet, "Have you heard yourself at all?"

"What?"

"You and Kane and wanting to fight a general claim," Cole shrugged. "Why?"

"There is nothing general about this and you know it." Drake couldn't keep the growl from his voice or get his temper under control. "She's too damned fragile for this shit and you know it."

"And yet she went over to Chase's place all on her own," Cole stated. Drake opened his mouth, but Cole went on, "The two of you aren't going to be able to stop this mating. He's waited five years for her, Drake. Five years!" He held up his hand. "Do you really want this to get nasty?"

"She's fragile, Cole." This time Drake growled low and deadly. "I won't stand by and let him hurt her."

"Oh that's just bullshit." Cole turned his back and went back into his office. Drake followed.

Drake slammed the door shut. "She can't handle the demands of a shifter and you know it."

"Drake, she has lived through horrors we could only have nightmares about." Cole sighed. "Stop treating her like she's going to break. She isn't. And she isn't stupid, either. She knows there's something about him. And I bet she even knows that he won't hurt her either. So please give them both the benefit of the doubt."

Drake rubbed his face before sitting down in one of the chairs

across from the desk. He sighed. "She can't know what she's getting herself into."

"Oh, I think she does," Cole said as he sat down. "She's been in all of our heads. She knows what we're like on the full moon. And she knows all about sex by what she was forced to witness in the lab."

"Kane isn't going to let her be touched because of that, either," Drake groaned. "He's going to want to do some major body harm to Chase if he touches her."

"Then call Jada and get her home. She'll control his ass."

Drake shook his head. "You expect me to just sit back and do nothing. To turn a blind eye to whatever it is going on in that damn trailer."

"Camper."

"Whatever the fuck it's called."

"Chase isn't going to force her." Cole cleared his throat. "Unlike what Kane did to Jada. I think he's going to get to know her first, and let her know him. Take things slow and easy until she's ready. But if you and Kane push things then it's going to get very ugly."

"What the hell is that supposed to mean?"

"Chase has changed, Drake. He's not the boy that we all remember him to be."

"That's what worries me," Drake mumbled.

"What I mean is that he's not above staking an official claim on her. And you know damn well what that means." Drake took another deep breath, growling as he let it out. "You need to let her go," Cole finished.

"Could you, if it was your daughter?"

Cole moaned, rubbing his face before standing back up. "Drake, what do you want me to do? Tell my brother to walk away from her because you and Kane don't like it? You pushed me to make my claim to Celine, and now you want to push Chase away from Sasha. You're not making one bit of sense at the moment."

"I don't want her hurt!" Drake shouted.

"What the hell is that supposed to mean?" Cole frowned. "Are you talking about her first sexual experience? Because if that's what you're thinking about, get over it. It's also something very personal between them. Not our business."

"I knew coming here was a big mistake." Drake shook his head, standing up. "You're going to be on his side not matter what the hell he does."

"Damn right I am!" Cole yelled, stopping Drake in the doorway.

“Just like you will always back up Brock. He’s my brother and he’s come home for his mate.” Drake slowly turned around and Cole groaned. “You need to give them a chance, Drake. Pushing isn’t going to get you what you want. I’m betting Sasha is already getting something from Chase that none of us can give her. You try to take it away and it will backfire on you.”

Drake didn’t say anymore. He stormed from the shop pissed even more than when he went there. Everyone was telling him to back off and let Sasha get to know Chase. But Drake knew how they were, she didn’t. Chase could really hurt her without meaning to and he couldn’t let that happen. Not to his daughter!

When he got to his truck, he stopped and thought about the short conversation he had with Uncle Dedrick last night.

“You can’t stop what is meant to be Drake,” Dedrick said. “There was no way in hell I was going to prevent Cole and Celine. You can’t control things between Chase and Sasha.”

“But she isn’t ready, Uncle Dedrick. She’s having worse nightmares than before. She’s not sleeping. How the hell is she going to be able to deal with him and the demands of the heat when she isn’t—”

“You’re assuming too much Drake,” Dedrick sighed. “You don’t know what Chase is going to do. But I will tell you what my gut is telling me. Chase is a good guy. Give him the benefit of the doubt.”

“I don’t like it.”

“None of us do, when we lose one we love to a claiming. But trust me, Drake. You don’t want Chase walking in there with a claim. It will give him more rights than you think.”

Drake hit the side of his truck. “You little son of a bitch!” he said under his breath. “You’ve already staked your motherfucking claim on her. Ohhhh,” he chuckled, yanking the door open. “I’m definitely going to kick your ass.”

Chapter Four

Sasha couldn't stop laughing. Chase would stop suddenly, she would hit his back, then he would gun the bike and she'd lunge backwards. He laughed with her, swaying the bike back and forth before stopping short.

"Don't drop those bags now," he told her again. "That wine is very good."

"Then stop trying to make me," she laughed again.

They'd stopped in town to have lunch and order dinner. Chase paid for the food then told the clerk he'd be back around four to pick up his dinner order. He took Sasha all over town and outside of it. They went to another town miles away where he'd picked up the bottle of wine.

Acting like children, Chase snuck her back to the restaurant, picked up his food, and got her out of town before Cole or Kane even knew they were there. He told her that he had something special in mind, and didn't want anyone disturbing them or trying to ruin it. Sasha thought for a second that she should call Drake and check in, but she was having so much fun with Chase that she forgot about it until now.

Once more, he jerked to a stop, only this time at the back of the camper. She laughed as he parked the bike and took the bag with the wine from her before she got off the bike. She was still smiling when she followed him inside.

"Go wash up, and I'll get everything ready," he told her, taking the other two bags from her hands. Sasha nodded and went to the back of the camper to the bathroom. "Hey," Chase called, "I'll be right back. Looks like its going to rain, so I'm going to get the bike put up."

She looked at herself in the mirror. Her face was flushed and she smiled. She'd had a good time, giving herself up to the thrill of riding behind Chase. Sasha washed her face and hands. She was still smiling when she left the bathroom, then she heard a beeping sound. Following it, she went into his room where his cell phone was on the bed.

Picking it up, she saw that he had five missed called. Pressing the button, she scrolled through the numbers, recognizing that the calls were all from Drake.

“How many times did he call?” Sasha jumped. Chase had snuck up behind her and she didn’t hear or sense him. He reached around her, taking the phone, holding it up. “Five. I’m impressed.”

“Why doesn’t he want me to come over here?” She turned around, watching him turn the phone off and toss it back on the bed.

“He’s afraid I’m going to hurt you. Come on.” He took her hand, and led her out of his room. “Food on the table and I’m starving.” He led her right to the table, pulling the chair out. “Madam.”

She giggled, “You are so silly.” Then her eyes widened on the spread of food on the table. He’d ordered marinated steak, grilled green beans and roasted potato chunks with a garden salad. For dessert there was apple pie. Everything smelled good and her grumbling stomach agreed.

She dug in, cut a large chunk of meat, and put it in her mouth. Sasha closed her eyes and sighed. Man it was good!

“I think I’m going to have to learn how to fix this,” Chase stated.

She opened her eyes, grinning as she chewed. Swallowing, Sasha put her fork down as Chase picked up his wine glass. “So why does Drake think you’re going to hurt me?”

Chase also swallowed, and her eyes followed his throat’s movement. “Might be an over protective dad.”

He took a bite, and she asked her next question. “Does it have to do with sex?” Chase choked. Sasha got up, went over to him and patted him on the back. “I’m sorry.”

He shook his head, coughing. She went to the sink and got him a glass of water. “I’m okay.” His voice strained as he spoke, doing little to assure her that he was.

Sasha went back to her seat, frowning. “I didn’t mean to make you choke.”

“It’s okay.” He still sounded strained. Chase took another drink, this time from his wine. “I wasn’t expecting you to say something like that.”

“They all think I’m this fragile thing,” she went on. “He forgets what I saw in the lab and Kane tries to act like it never happened.”

Chase cleared his throat. “But the nightmares won’t let you forget.”

“No,” she whispered. She lowered her eyes for a second before raising them to meet his. “Can you help me with them?”

“I’m not sure.”

She licked her lips, watched him take another bite of his food and swallow it before she asked the other question that was bugging her.

“Why haven’t you tried to kiss me yet?”

“Do you want me to?”

Butterflies started in her belly and she felt the palms of her hands get all sweaty. His brown eyes seemed to darken and for some strange reason his lips appeared fuller, which was ridiculous. Lips didn’t change unless they were kissed, or so she read. But Sasha did want to feel that thin goatee brush her skin. It looked soft.

To answer him, she nodded. Chase picked up his glass of wine and took a big drink his gaze never leaving hers.

“It’ll happen when the time’s right. Now eat your dinner. I want to show you how to play cards.”

She didn’t realize she was holding her breath until she let it out. Sasha picked up her knife and fork and went back to eating, but she felt like something had changed between them.

They finished dinner, cleaned up, and sat down at the table again. Chase brought over a deck of cards with a pen and some paper. He shuffled and she watched closely.

“So what games do you know how to play?” he asked.

“Um, rummy.”

“Okay, rummy it is, but we’re going to make it a bit interesting.”

“How’s that?”

“Winner of each hand gets something special.”

“Like what?” She liked the sound of this and, deep down, hoped that he might even kiss her. Why she wanted him to, she couldn’t answer. For the longest time she’d watched Drake kiss Carrick and Kane, Jada. It was a special way they kissed each other, not the way they kissed her.

“Well you can ask me something, and I have to answer it.”

“Anything?”

“Sure.”

She licked then bit her lips. “What about other things?”

“I’m listening.” The corner of his lips went up, as if he was trying to hold back a smile.

“What if I want to sit on your lap and touch that hair on your face?” she teased with a light laugh.

“Then I guess you had better win a hand,” he smirked, dealing the cards.

She picked up the cards, looking them over, moving them around. “So what if *you* win the hand?”

“Oh I don’t know, maybe I’ll sit on your lap and touch your hair.” He smiled.

Sasha laughed.

“Okay, I’ve got one.” He drew a card. “If I win this hand, you have to come back tomorrow and bake me some cookies. Chocolate chip.” He discarded.

Sasha nodded, drew a card, and repositioned hers. “For this hand right?”

“For my first going *out* hand,” he stated.

“Well if you want cookies, then why don’t we do it as points per hand?” She moved in the chair, tucking her legs under her. “If you get more points than me this hand, I’ll make you cookies, and then if I win...” She bit her lip again, acting as if she was thinking. A slow smile spread across her lips as an idea formed. “...you have to sit on the floor and rub my feet.”

This time Chase laughed.

They played in silence, both racking up points, but it was Chase who went out. As she counted her points, Chase kept moving the cards, trying to mess her up.

“Okay, whacha got?” he asked.

“Sixty-five.”

Chase smiled big. “Seventy-five.”

“Oh, crap!”

“Oh I can smell those cookies already.” He rubbed his hands together before getting all the cards together and shuffling again. “I tell you what, since I’m such a good guy,” he said, pressing his hand to his chest, “After you bake them, I’ll give you that foot rub.”

“So what’s the next round of bets?” she asked.

“Umm, good question.”

“I still want to touch your beard.”

“It’s a goatee.” Chase nodded. “If you win this second round then.”

“And for you?” She cocked her head to the side.

Chase stopped dealing tapped a finger on his lips, and narrowed his eyes. “How about, this round you have to get under the car with me and work?”

“You want me to get all greasy with you?” She wrinkled her nose.

“Yep.”

“I don’t think so.” She shook her head, taking her cards.

“Okay, then we go on a swimming picnic, and we don’t tell the others.”

“That sounds better.”

“And you have to pack it all.”

“No, the packing is done by the loser on the third round.” She chuckled.

“Okay.”

Once more, they played in silence and Sasha went out with three aces. She smiled as she counted, knowing that she won this one. “Okay, how much?” She couldn’t stop squirming in her seat as she waited for him.

“I have,” he finished counting and chuckled in an evil manner. “Eight.”

“Ha!” she yelled. “Ninety-five.”

“Argh,” he groaned. “Just because you got the aces.”

“I win!” She couldn’t stop the excitement.

Chase pushed back from the table. “Okay, come on.”

Smiling and feeling like a little girl, Sasha sat down on his lap and touched the goatee. It was soft and bristly feeling. It also fascinated her big time.

“It’s soft,” she whispered, running her fingers over it. “I thought it might be rough or something.”

Chase draped one of his arms over her legs and his other arm went around her to grip at her hips. “I take it you like it then.”

She nodded as she touched him, moving his head around as she ran her fingers over it. Then out of the blue, Sasha leaned forward and brushed her face against it. She felt Chase stiffen and suck in his breath.

“Are you okay?” she sat back enough to look down at him.

Chase’s eyes became even darker. Sasha swallowed hard when he lifted his hand from her legs to her face. His touch was gentle and very tender, almost feather like. He brushed his knuckles across her cheek then into her hair, moving to the back of her head. Her heart pounded in excitement in her chest as he pulled her down. *He’s going to kiss me!*

“Just fine,” he whispered before his lips touched hers.

He brushed his lips across hers, teasing. When Sasha sighed, her mouth opening slightly he touched her with the tip of his tongue. She got the chills from the contact and closed her eyes. Chase pressed his lips to hers, his tongue slipped inside her mouth and she was lost.

He kissed her as she’d always dreamed. His lips were gentle, yet demanding and that tongue was just plain wicked! He moved it in her mouth, touching her own, withdrew it, and plunged back into her mouth. Sasha ran her fingers into his hair, fisting her hands and

pressing herself closer to him. The kiss deepened, his one arm around her held her tighter, and she sank into him.

His fingers massaged her head and his mouth moved over her own. Strange sensations began to form inside her. A tingly feeling moved from the pit of her stomach down her legs and gathered in her sex. She started to throb and squirm on his lap.

Chase moaned into her mouth, the hand at the back of her head started to move downward, giving her new feelings, new sensations. But it all came to a crashing end.

Someone banged on the door, scaring Sasha so bad that she jumped off Chase's lap, backing up with her hand over her mouth. She stared at him with her eyes wide, fearing that it was Kane.

"Chase, open up!" Cole banged on the door again and Sasha let a breath of relief slip past her lips.

Chase groaned and stood up. He touched her on the side of the face with a quick smile before going to the door. "It better be good."

"Oh, it is little brother." Cole walked inside, spotting Sasha right off. "She needs to go home right now. The shit is about to hit the fan."

"What's wrong?" Sasha asked, fearing the worst. She knew coming here was going to upset Drake and Kane, she just hoped it didn't cause a fight.

"Well let's put it this way, Celine called Jada a few hours ago. She should be home any minute and Drake is on his way here *with* Kane."

"Oh no," Sasha groaned. "If Jada is on her way home, then it can't be good." She went up to Chase from behind, grabbing his arm, resting her face against his back.

"I don't think she needs to see this," Cole pointed out.

"He's right," Chase said, wrapping his arm around her, pulling her to his side. "You should go home and let me deal with them."

"With Kane?" she squeaked out. "You don't know what he's like."

Chase kissed her on top of her head. "I can handle him." He walked her to the back of the camper and down the ramp. "Run home. I'll pick you up in the morning for our picnic."

Sasha shook her head. "I don't want to leave you when he's angry."

"Trust me, Sasha," he said, brushing some hair behind her ear. "Everything is going to be okay. He's just going to blow off some steam. Once he cools down everything will be okay."

"But Jada's coming home. That isn't good."

Again, he kissed her, but this time on the forehead. “She’s just backup. I really don’t want you to see this. Okay? It’ll just add to the nightmares and we want to get rid of them, not add to them.”

She nodded, licking her lips. Fisting her hands into his shirt, Sasha walked into his arms, sighing when he closed them around her, hugging her tightly. “I feel safe with you, Chase. You take it all away, make it so quiet. I don’t want it to go away, and it will when I go home.”

“You need me. You know where I’m at.” She pulled back enough to look up at him. Chase leaned down, kissing her lightly on the lips. “My door is always open for you.” Sasha nodded. “Now go check in with Carrick and I’ll see you in the morning.”

“Promise?” she whispered.

Chase smiled. “Just try to keep me away now.”

He kissed her once more before she pulled away from his arms and ran towards the woods.

* * * *

Chase hated watching her leave him, but Cole was right. If Drake and Kane were headed this way, he didn’t need her to see what he expected—a confrontation.

“I have to say, I’m impressed.” Cole came up behind him. “I thought she’d run from you the first time she saw you.”

“They’re going to force my hand, Cole. You know that.” Chase didn’t turn to Cole. His eyes were still fixed on where Sasha had disappeared into the woods.

“Yep,” Cole sighed, “Sort of figured they would.”

Chase slapped his hands together, turned on the balls of his feet toward Cole and smiled. “Then let’s do this.” He walked back inside, grabbed two beers from the fridge. Handing one to Cole, he went outside to his truck, jumped up and rested back against the windshield, legs crossed.

“I really do think you have a death wish sometimes,” Cole stated, twisting the top off his beer.

Chase grinned and drank his beer. He was halfway through when headlights came up his drive. He turned, chuckling. Jada beat them, which was a surprise.

“What the hell you do? Speed all the way here?” Chase chuckled as Jada left her car

“Well when I heard that my canine is on your ass, I figured I’d better be here before him, or you might not have any nuts left.” Jada Leonard, or Draeger, depending on her mood with Kane at the time,

slammed her car door. She walked up to Chase, taking his beer just as he was about to take a drink. "So where's he at?"

Jada was a small woman, compared to her mate. But she also didn't take much shit, and Kane never scared or intimidated her. About five years ago, she helped get information on Kane and Sasha for Chase. The result was their freedom, and her mating to Kane. Even then, she fought with everything she had. When Chase discovered the main reason for her being on the run, he was floored. He never thought her home life had been so rough or that she had never been loved. Sort of like Kane.

But now that she had settled into her new life, she seemed to be able to keep Kane in line. Or so Chase hoped.

"On his way," Cole answered. "Drake was going nuts about something. Pissy mood all day. Even came to see me. Demanded I get Chase to back off. He thinks Sasha is too fragile to be claimed."

"But you don't?" Jada asked.

"From what I just saw of her with Chase," Cole snickered. "He's the last person she's afraid of."

"Well we all knew that Kane was going to be a prick when it came to someone claiming her," Jada groaned. "No surprise there."

"Yeah, well I've got one for them," Chase said, "If they want to fuck with me."

"Why do I get this feeling that the shit is about to hit the fan?" Jada asked.

Cole brought his bottle up to his lips and stopped for a second. "Because it is." He took a drink, sighing loudly when he was done.

Kane and Drake came out of the woods at the same time. Drake had his hands in his pockets, where Kane's hands were fisted at his sides. The man looked like he was going to try to rip Chase in two.

Chase wasn't so worried about Drake. Deep down he knew that Drake would do the right thing for Sasha, where he wasn't too sure about Kane. Kane was over protective when it came to his sister and Chase couldn't blame him for it. Hell, he would kill for Sasha if he had to, no question about it.

"It ends right now, Chase!" Kane barked out.

"Is that so?" Chase said.

"When the hell did you get home?" Kane turned his attention to Jada. The pissed off expression on his face should've had her taking a step back. But like always, Jada stood up to Kane.

"I was called home early to deal with your sorry ass," she snapped. "What the hell do you think you're doing? Or are you once

again *not* thinking?"

"Don't start with me," Kane growled. "He's messing around with my sister."

"Don't start with you?" Jada sounded taken back, but didn't look that way. "Oh, I haven't even *started* with you!" she yelled. "And what the fuck you mean, messing around with your sister? He's her damn mate. Why the hell shouldn't he?"

"Oh, you're taking his damn side over mine now?" Kane yelled back at her.

Chase glanced at Cole who had his eyebrows up. Amusement was all over his face at the scene before him. It wasn't often one got to see Jada and Kane go at it.

"When it comes to this stupid shit, yes I am." She crossed her arms over her chest, her chin going up.

"You know I think we should've popped some popcorn," Chase mumbled to Cole.

"Shh!" Cole hissed back.

"Okay!" Chase yelled, stopping Kane and Jada's arguing. He slid from the hood of his truck, getting their attention. "The fact is this Kane. Sasha is my mate. I've stayed away for five years. I'm home, I'm claiming her. End of story." He shrugged.

"No, that isn't the end of the story," Kane growled, taking a threatening step towards him.

Jada put herself in front of Kane and, pushed against his chest. "Calm down for Christ sakes!"

"You just going to stand there?" Cole asked Drake.

"How far are you going to take this?" Drake said to Chase.

Chase kept his eyes locked with Kane. "How far do you want me to?" he tossed back to Drake.

"What the hell is going on?" Kane demanded.

"Chase . . ."

Chase ignored Cole's warning. At the moment, he was having a stand off with Kane. "I'm prepared to go all the way, Drake. *If* I have to."

"You can't have her," Kane growled, turning away from Chase, heading back to the wood.

"I already do!" Chase yelled, stopping him.

"You bastard," Drake hissed under his breath.

Kane turned and charged at Chase so fast no one had a chance to stop him. He tackled Chase, knocking him to the ground. They rolled, Kane punching Chase in the side. Chase countered with an elbow hit

to Kane's jaw. They rolled until Kane got Chase on the bottom. Then he rose up and hit Chase in the face so hard Chase saw stars pop behind his eyes. When Kane pulled his fist back for another hit, Chase swung and hit him in the nose.

Blood splattered over Chase's face, but it didn't slow either one of them down. He rolled Kane onto his back and started punching at his face and sides. Kane grunted loudly.

"Stop it!" Jada screamed.

Chase reared back to hit Kane again, but Cole grabbed his arm and stopped him. Cole wrapped his arms around Chase's waist, picking him up and backing further away while Drake grabbed a hold of Kane the moment he got to his feet.

"That's enough," Cole said.

"Fuck," Jada said. "Talk about a bunch of animals."

"Calm down," Drake told Kane.

"You can *never* have her!" Kane pointed his finger at Chase.

Chase tried to shrug Cole off him. He spit on the ground, glaring at Kane. "She's mine!"

Kane lunged for him again but Drake held him back. Chase also lunged, but Cole stopped him from getting close.

"Come on!" Chase yelled. "I'm not afraid of you."

"This isn't going to solve anything!" Jada yelled.

"She's right," Drake snapped to get Kane's attention. He pushed Kane away before turning to Chase.

"I don't give a fuck what you say," Kane huffed. "My sister will never be your mate. She'll *never* belong to anyone!"

"And you agreed to the laws of the Shifter!" Chase reminded him.

"What the hell is that supposed to mean?" Kane frowned. He was breathing hard, pacing side to side, wanting a second chance to go after Chase.

"I have the right to my mate, just like you did with Jada," Chase snarled. He was also breathing hard, ready to go another round with Kane if he had to. "We didn't stand in your way when you marked *and* fucked her!"

"Now I know you're out of your damn mind." Jada hit Chase in the arm. She turned to Kane and pointed her finger at him. "And you need to get over this baby sister crap. She *isn't* a baby, Kane."

Again, Kane lunged for Chase and Drake was right there to stop him. "Knock it off." Drake shoved Kane back. "Jada's right. Fighting isn't going to do shit at the moment. We all need to come to terms

with this shit.”

“Oh I’ve come to terms,” Chase snarled as he paced. He glared at Kane, his anger coming to a boiling point. “You all can go straight to hell for all I care.” He skimmed one hand in his hair and spit again. There was blood in his mouth from Kane’s beating.

“Be careful what you say,” Cole warned.

“I stayed the hell away for five fucking years for you,” he said to Kane. Chase shook his head. “I’m not leave again, and I’m not giving her up.”

“You already did it, didn’t you?” Drake accused.

Chase took a deep breath, eyes narrowed on Kane and Drake.

“Chase, please,” again Cole warned.

“I’m staking my claim on Sasha right now,” Chase said. Kane stopped pacing. “As my mate. And I’ve already filed it with the Cabinet. She’s mine, and I’m going to bring her home with me in two days.”

“You little motherfucker!” Kane again lunged for Chase, but stopped when Jada stepped in front of him.

“Don’t,” she said.

Drake hung his head and shook it. “Why? Why did you have to go behind our backs like this?”

“Because I knew it would come to this.” Chase was pissed. He also knew that if he stayed put he was going to start fighting again.

“He can’t do this!” Kane yelled.

“Yes, he can.” Drake sounded to calm when he spoke.

“Drake?” Kane said.

“He has every right, according to our laws.”

“Just like I have the right to walk away right now.” Chase turned his back on them and went back to his camper, slamming the door closed.

* * * *

“Well that went great,” Jada stated.

“Drake, what the hell does that mean?” Kane demanded.

Drake rubbed his face and groaned. He knew that this could happen. If he was in Chase’s shoes and his mate was like Sasha, he might just cover his ass the same way. He would stake his claim before he came home, just to be safe.

“It means that Chase put his claim in for Sasha before he came home,” Cole answered.

Drake looked at Cole. “You knew about it though, didn’t you?”

“I figured it out the day he came home.” Cole sighed. “Just like

you both suspected.”

“I didn’t suspect shit!” Kane growled. “I just wanted him to stay away from her.”

“You wanted everyone to stay away from her,” Cole pointed out. “That’s why she appears so damn fragile. Don’t you both see that?”

“No.” Kane shook his head.

“Kane,” Drake sighed, “I don’t think he’s going to hurt her. Not like you think.” Kane looked at him and frowned. Drake rolled his eyes. “We’re not all like that. I think Chase has the control that is needed to be gentle with her.”

“Are you saying that you’re going along with this shit?”

Drake was tired, and felt too damned old for this fighting shit. With Stan gone for five years the fighting was supposed to be over, not a new battle forming in his back yard.

“I’m trying to tell you that we don’t have a choice.” Drake kept his voice even. He wanted Kane to calm down and listen to reason. “When you both agreed to follow the laws of the Shifter it also included claiming. He has to prove to them that she is his mate. If he has done that, and they approved it, then there isn’t anything we can do.”

“I can’t accept that.” Kane shook his head again. “I don’t even want to think about him touching her and...and...argh!”

“Come on,” Jada sighed, tugging on Kane’s arm. “Let’s go home so you can cool off.”

Chapter Five

“You’re up early.”

Sasha’s hand stalled over the sandwich she was making. She got up at five in the morning with a new plan, thanks to what she was picking up from Drake. He was upset over Chase and her—mostly Chase. Chase put a claim on her, something she didn’t completely understand. The only thing about a claim she did know was that it had something to do with living together, or being together. So it didn’t make sense that Chase had a claim on her, if she was still living with Drake. She also knew that her brother was—what was the word? Pissed off? Kane didn’t want Chase touching her. So what would he think if he knew she kissed Chase?

“Whatcha fixing?”

“Sandwiches,” Sasha answered, finishing the last one. Placing it in a container, she put it in the cooler with the other sodas before turning around to face Drake. “I’m planning a picnic with Chase.”

She saw Drake’s face change from relaxed to tense. “Sasha,” he sighed.

“I like being around him, Drake.” She leaned back on the counter. “Everything goes quiet around him. I don’t hear his thoughts like I do yours. Yours are screaming to me how much you don’t like me going around him and how you don’t trust him. But I don’t understand why.”

“Because I don’t think you’re ready for this.”

“And what if you’re wrong?” She didn’t wait for an answer. Sasha pushed away from the counter took hold of the cooler and walked away. “I’m going to change.”

“Sasha.” She stopped and turned around. “I trust you. I know you’ll make the right choice for you. But it doesn’t mean that I have to like it. I know we didn’t get the life together like we should’ve, but that doesn’t mean I don’t care. You’re my daughter and I love you. I only want what’s best for you and to keep you safe.”

She went up to him, and pulled him down, hugging him tightly. She kissed him on the cheek. “I know.”

“Now convincing Kane is a completely different thing,” Drake sighed again.

Sasha giggled, pulling back. “I’ll handle him,” she said and shrugged. With Jada’s help.”

“Good luck there.” Drake snorted.

"I'll talk to him tonight. Promise."

"Oh, you're going to have to do a lot more than talk to get Kane to understand any of this. He's the worst when it comes to you."

She smiled and turned around to go back upstairs to change her clothes. "I know."

Sasha picked out a thin pink spaghetti strap sundress that reached her knees. It was loose fitting from the waist down and tight from the waist up. It pushed her breasts up, offering a tantalizing view of cleavage. She grabbed a scrunchie and pulled it around her long hair back at her neck, picked up her shoes and left.

At Kane's place she stopped. His cabin was also in the middle of the two properties, and she felt like she had to sneak past him to get to Chase's place. Normally Kane would be getting ready to leave for work, but not now. Nope, now she could not only feel his anger, but hear it as well as she hesitated going inside.

"I don't give a shit what you think. Chase isn't going to have her!" Kane yelled.

"Yeah and that worked so damn well when someone told you to stay away from me!" Jada yelled back. "You wanted to be accepted in this family and in that world you have to follow the rules."

"Fuck the rules."

"You can't have it both ways."

"No, I'm going to have it my way!"

"Listen to yourself." Again, Jada yelled. "The fucking animal is back in bloom. You growl and we're all supposed to listen? Well you know what? I'm not going to listen to it."

Sasha ducked behind a tree when Jada came out the front door, slamming it in Kane's face when he was about to come out after her.

"Jada!" Kane snarled.

Jada turned around and scowled at Kane, but she didn't say a thing. He strode up to her, bent down, slung her over his shoulder, and carried her kicking and hitting back into the house. Sasha picked up from Jada that she was making a point—one that Kane would surely understand and would help cool things off with him.

Shaking her head, Sasha pushed away from the tree and quickly made her way to the trail that lead to Chase's place. She thought she'd surprise him, coming over this early, but seeing lights in his trailer she knew better. He was up before her.

The ramp was down, Celine's car hood up and a radio playing music softly. She walked towards it, looking around for Chase. Putting the cooler down next to the front left tire, Sasha peeked inside

the hood.

“Pretty dress.”

Sasha jumped and swung around. “I didn’t hear you.” She frowned, covered her mouth with her hand, and started at him. “What happened?” He had a bruise on his right eye and another on his right cheek.

Chase touched his eye and smiled. “Misunderstanding with your brother.”

She went up to him, reaching out to touch his cheek. “You fought with him?”

“Well I sort of expected it.” He took hold of her arm, kissed her wrist before moving around her to the car. “So what brings you over so early in the morning, dressed to kill?”

“Dressed to kill?” She frowned, not understanding.

“It’s an expression. Means you look very good.”

“Oh.” She looked down at herself and he chuckled. He bent over the side of the car, looking in and she went to the other side, bending over as well. “So whatcha you doing?”

Chase met her gaze then slid down to her chest. Sasha also peeked down. Her cleavage was showing and the way he was staring made her uncomfortable. She stood back up and took a deep breath.

“Well,” he said and cleared his throat. “I’m going to have to either rebuild this whole engine, or find another for Celine. So I’m going to start working to take this one out.”

“Does it have to be today?”

Chase leaned on his arms, staring at her. “Got something else up your sleeve?”

She smiled, bent over, and picked up the cooler, putting it on the side of the car. “I packed the picnic lunch, since you won that is. Thought I’d show you this really neat place where I’ve gone swimming before. Sort of my quiet place, until you came that is.”

Chase looked up at the sky. “I don’t think its going to be a swimming day.”

She also glanced up. “Well I don’t have my suit. I just thought it’d be nice to get away.” He just stared at her and from the look on his face, Sasha had second thoughts. Since he wasn’t saying anything she shrugged and pushed away from the car. “It’s okay. You have work to do. Maybe another time.”

She started to walk away, but stopped when he spoke. “I didn’t say a, so where’re you going?” She turned around and he smiled with a nod to his truck. “Get in.”

Sasha couldn't stop the big smile from spreading across her face or the bounce she did as she rushed to his truck. Chase chuckled again and strolled to the driver's side. He started it, put it in gear, and peeled out.

"How about some directions?" he asked.

She rubbed her hands together before pointing straight ahead. "Okay, first dirt road on the left you see, take it."

"Yes, ma'am."

"Oh, deep into the woods there's this brush path." Chase turned on the dirt road she told him about and instantly she was bouncing around in her seat. "You want to turn right. It's not really a road, more like a path, but it leads to this really great clearing."

They drove and Sasha enjoyed the quiet. Only when she was with Chase did she experience it. She felt drawn to him, enjoyed being around him. There was something calming about Chase. She felt safe with him.

The clearing came into view at the same time rain started falling on them. The high she felt crashed when he parked, and the light rain turned torrential.

"This was not what I had planed," she sighed, slumping back in the seat.

Chase put the truck in gear and turned it off. He put one arm on the back of the seat, lounged back with legs parted, eyes looking straight ahead. "Well the spot is nice."

"We can forget it," she murmured. "Can you take me home?"

"Naw!" He slid to the middle of the seat and picked up the cooler. "You went to all this trouble. Just because it's raining doesn't mean we can't have an inside picnic."

She watched him dig inside the cooler and bring out a soda as well as one of the sandwiches she made. Sasha turned in the seat so she could face him, waiting as he opened the can and took a drink.

"Can I ask you something?" Sasha said. Chase took a drink and nodded before taking another. "What's sex feel like?"

Chase spit out his drink. The soda spewed all over the dash and windshield. "Girl, you have got to wait to ask me those questions when I don't have a mouth full."

"I'm...I'm sorry," she quickly looked around for something to clean up the mess, but couldn't seem to find a thing.

Chase laughed. "It's alright. I wasn't expecting that kind of question is all." Sasha moved fast and kissed him quickly. "Or that," he murmured.

"I'm sorry." she lowered her face in her hands. Nothing what she had planned was going as she wanted. "I don't know—"

Chase took hold of her chin, silencing her when he pressed a finger to her lips. "What's wrong?"

"I don't understand any of this," she whispered.

"Any of what?"

"Why Kane is so upset over you doing this claiming thing."

"Ahh," he sighed, "You know about that."

"Only because I saw it in Drake's mind," she rushed out. "I don't think he wants me to know and I don't understand why."

"That all?" She shook her head and tried to lower her eyes, but he held her head up with that finger under her chin. "Sasha?"

"I like it when you kissed me the other day," she whispered. "And the touching and holding." She lowered her eyes, feeling her face heat up because of her small confession.

"I'm glad." His hand moved from under her chin, his knuckles brushing across her cheek to the back of her head. She looked up at him when she felt the tug off her scrunchie. "Because I like touching and kissing you." Her heart pounded in her chest. "Now as to your other question—"

Sasha lunged at him, kissing Chase a bit hard, but he didn't seem to mind it. In fact, his arms went around her and his mouth opened to hers. His tongue thrust into her mouth, teasing her own. She felt like she needed to get closer to him, but didn't know how. So Sasha went on pure instinct and slid herself onto his lap.

Chase moaned. He also pulled back and ended the kiss. "Slow down," he breathed out. "I need to maintain some control here."

"Why?" She played with his thin goatee, enjoying how soft it felt under her fingers.

"Because the first time we come together shouldn't be in the truck." She frowned, still not understanding what he meant. Chase sighed, took hold of her hips and held her close, pressing something very hard against her belly. "You feel that?" She nodded. "It's my desire for you, but I really don't want our time to be here."

She looked down between them. Sure enough, his penis was pressing against his jeans. Penis—wasn't it called something else?

Not giving it much thought, she moved her hand down and touched him. Chase hissed, and pulled her hand away.

"Something wrong?" she asked.

He turned her wrist over and rubbed it with his thumb. A chill went down her spine to pool between her legs.

“What’d you feel?” he asked so softly that it gave her even more chills. “Close your eyes,” he said and then brushed the tips of his fingers over her eyes, closing them. “Tell me what you feel.” The tip of a finger brushed across her lips, moved down her chin to her throat. It crossed her chest, over to the left shoulder and up and down the strap. “Do you trust me?”

She licked her lips and nodded. “I do.”

Her breath caught in her throat when the strap moved down her arm. Like feathers grazing her skin, those fingers moved over to the other, pushing it down as well. But the top half of her dress didn’t go down. Her breasts stayed covered.

“What’d you feel?”

She jumped when his warm breath touched her ear. “Feathers.” She breathed out. “Your fingers feel like feathers touching me.”

“And?”

This time the back of his hand touched her bare chest above her breasts, moved down between the valley of her breasts to her legs. She shivered when he rubbed up and down her legs, under the skirt. A gasp slipped past her lips when he touched her throat with the tip of his tongue.

“It throbs.” She panted, fisting her hands into his shirt.

“What does?”

His hands went up her legs, around her rear and inside her panties. Sasha sucked as much air into her lungs as she could when he squeezed her ass.

“Down there.” Talking was hard to do, but somehow she managed it.

“Open your eyes.”

Sasha obeyed and locked her gaze on him.

“What you’re feeling is the first stage of arousal.” Chase was also breathing hard. “Do you know what that means?”

She shook her head and couldn’t help herself from pressing her body closer, against his hardness. *God, it feels good having him touch me!* The throbbing turned into a pounding and all Sasha could do was rest her head on his shoulder.

“It means that your body is waking up.” He reached up, moving hair from her face that slipped over her shoulder when she rested her head under his chin. “But you don’t want it to overtake you now. A truck isn’t the place to get lost in it.”

“I feel like I want to hold onto you and never let go,” she breathed out, snuggling closer. “Why is that? We barely know each

other.”

“Our souls know each other.” He kissed the side of her forehead, brushed hair behind her ear, and slid his hand down her back, hugging her tight.

Sasha relaxed against him and sighed. She was so comfortable, so at ease being in his arms that she couldn’t stop her eyes from closing. She felt warm, safe, and everything around her was quiet. Sleep began to grip her, and she didn’t fight it off.

* * * *

Chase knew the moment she fell asleep on his lap. He smiled, hugged her, and slumped back, resting his head against the back of the seat. The rain had stopped, but that didn’t mean that another storm wasn’t heading in. Up here in the woods, it rained often. The whole month of June it rained, which was Cole’s only complaint.

It didn’t really bother him that much. Rain beating over head was soothing and could put just about anyone to sleep. He grinned again when he thought about how little work he was going to get done. Between the rains and Sasha, he might never get Celine’s car up and working. But something told him that Celine wasn’t going to mind too much. He looked out the window. Off in the distance he could see the dark gray clouds coming in. He even heard the faint sound of thunder. Yep, tonight was going to be one hell of a storm.

His cell vibrated on his hip. With a frown, he reached for it keeping Sasha snuggled on his chest. Flipping it open he rolled his eyes at the message he had from Cole. *Kane is pissed again. Drake told him that Sasha went to your place with a picnic. Watch your ass.*

Kane! What the hell was he going to do about him? Chase couldn’t blame the man for being overprotective of his sister. Shit, if Chase had to endure what he did then yeah, he wouldn’t want anyone touching her either. But the man was too damn stubborn to see that she needed Chase also. He was there to give her the peace she needed. Even now, his gut told him that she hadn’t been able to rest like she was doing now.

Sure, it bothered the hell out of him. He had a raging hard-on and was dying inside to touch her, kiss her, and mark her for his own. But even he wasn’t that stupid! He knew Sasha was going to need time to adjust to all of this. He couldn’t expect her to drop her clothes and jump into bed with him. They needed to get to know each other. Granted a few minutes ago he was wondering how far his control would go. But he didn’t want to rush her into the mating. He wanted it to come naturally.

A boom that sounded too close jolted Sasha in his arms. She jumped, sat up, and looked scared.

"It's just thunder," he soothed, moving hair from her face again. "A bigger storm is coming in."

He watched her rub her face and slide from his lap to the seat. "I hate thunder storms," she whispered.

"Never hate mother nature," he purred in her ear before kissing her cheek. "I better get you back before Kane comes looking for us."

She nodded. "I think I'm going to have to talk to him."

Chase nodded while he scooted back behind the wheel. "Might not be a bad idea. Let him know how you feel about things."

She turned and smiled at him. "Since you two can't seem to talk."

Chase shook his head and put the truck in gear. "Not without our fists at the moment."

They rode back to Drake's in silence. Lightening mixed with the thunder, and Sasha seemed to tremble in the seat. The rain hadn't come down yet when he pulled up to the front door. He parked, shut the engine off, and just sat forward, resting his arms over the wheel and his chin on his arms.

"I told Drake I'd come to get you in a couple days," he said, turning his head on the wheel to look at her.

"I know," she breathed out.

"It frightens you though, doesn't it?" She turned her head, looked him in the eye. "I can see it in your eyes. If you want more time, all you have to do is tell me and I'll wait, as long as you need."

She licked her lips. The gesture went right down between his legs and his damn dick pressed up against the zipper painfully. "I don't know what I want," she whispered. "When I'm with you it all goes so quiet and I can think. I know Drake cares about me and Kane thinks I'm too weak and fragile."

"Do you know the demands that can be made on a mate with the full moon?" At her nod, he added, "I can go away that night, Sasha. I can have Cole take me far away on those nights until you're ready."

She half chuckled. "Is anyone really ready for it?"

He reached her hand, brought it up to his lips, and kissed her knuckles. "I do whatever you want me to do. All you have to do is ask."

She nodded then looked up through the windshield. "It's going to be a bad one tonight."

"Yep. Lots of lighting and thunder."

"I better go." Chase turned to see Drake standing in the doorway.

“Don’t want you to get into another fight.”

Chase chuckled, waved at Drake before turning to Sasha. Still holding her hand, he stopped her from leaving. “Remember. You need me for anything you come to me. Okay?”

She nodded and smiled. “Okay.”

He kissed her hand again before letting her go. With the cooler in hand, Sasha walked up the steps and around Drake into the house. The door closed and Chase blew out a heavy sigh.

* * * *

Sasha dropped the cooler at the foot of the stairs and quickly ran up. Kane was waiting for her in her room and she wanted to get this whole thing taken care of.

Taking a deep breath, Sasha opened her bedroom door. Kane was pacing back and forth. Tension came off him in waves. She felt it, heard it screaming in her head. He did *not* want her around Chase. He was afraid that Chase was going to hurt her. Become the same kind of animal Kane did when he first took Jada.

She could sense the worry in her brother. So much was coming off him that she felt the start of a headache. Not since they were in the lab did she feel what she was feeling now coming from Kane.

He was on edge, tense, anger, and worry, all mixed into one. She picked up that he still thought of her as the mouse in the cage. So fragile that one touch and she would break into a million pieces.

“I’m not that girl anymore,” she said though her teeth.

He stopped pacing and frowned. “What?”

“I’m not that girl in the cage.” She closed the door and crossed her arms over her chest. “Stop treating me like I’m going to break any moment.”

“You’re not strong enough for this,” he told her. Sasha saw the worry written all over his face. Lines even formed around his eyes. “You might think you are, but you’re not.”

“How do you know what I’m ready for?” She couldn’t keep the whine from her voice, “You and Drake never give me a chance to discover anything for myself.”

“We only—”

“I know!” she snapped, cutting him off. “You only worry about me. I have to do things for myself. Don’t you see that?” She rubbed her forehead, praying that the headache would go away. “I like being around him, Kane. I don’t understand fully why, since I don’t know Chase that well. I just know I like it when I’m over there with him. Can’t you understand that?”

Kane growled, fisted his hands into his hair, and turned his back on her. Sasha smiled. She had him. She knew she got through to him, and Kane didn't want to admit it. She walked up to him, wrapped her arms around his waist, and hugged him, pressing her face into his back.

He rubbed her arms with a sigh. "I still don't like it. I know what the demands are and what they can do to someone like you."

"And what if I can handle it?"

He turned around in her arms, cupped her face, and stared down at her. "I can't let you go," he sighed.

Sasha growled low at the back of her throat and pulled away from him. "Do you even hear yourself?" She went over to her bed, sat down on the edge hard. "I can't do this anymore Kane. It hurts too much."

He came over to her, knelt down at her feet. "Then let me help you."

She shook her head. "You can't this time. Don't you see that?" It was his turn to growl and pull away from her. "Kane, this isn't like it was when we were in the lab. You can't make it go quiet in my head anymore."

"And Chase can?" he snorted.

"Yes!" He glanced at her from over his shoulder, his golden hair brushing his face. "It all goes so quiet and I can think. I get to know what it's like to be normal for a change."

"You are normal," he growled low.

"No, I'm not." She shook her head, looked down at her feet, the pounding getting louder. "I hear and feel everyone's frustrations. I know what you think, how you feel all the time. I want to be surprised once in a while and can't." When she looked up at him, a tear fell free. "I don't even sleep the way I need to because of everything around me," she finished with a whisper.

"I can't let you go," he said again, ambled back to her and sank to his knees beside her. "You're my other half."

Sasha reached out touched his face and smiled. "Who said you were losing me?" She grabbed onto a hank of his hair like she use to when she was younger and had been allowed to spend time with him. "Just sharing me is all."

Kane wrinkled his nose. "And I know what the shit will do once he gets his hands on you." Sasha could see some of the things that Kane was talking about. When she blushed, he only frowned more. "Stop that!"

"Please, Kane," she pleaded.

He rolled his eyes at her, groaned, and fell back on the floor, hands over his eyes, "Don't do that to me," he moaned.

She smiled and dropped to the floor with him, lying on top of him. "Don't make this hard on me. I love you too much to have to pick."

He moved his hands, his head reared up to her and shock spread across his face. "You wouldn't pick him over me. Would you?"

She raised both eyebrows up, trying her best to look innocent at him. "I don't know. Guess it would depend on the position you put me in."

"Sasha," he growled.

"Would you pick Jada over me?"

"That's not fair," he snapped.

"It's what you want me to do."

Kane picked her up and got back on his feet. He put her down and moved over to the window. "I don't know what you want me to do here." He sounded defeated. In fact, he felt like he was defeated.

Once more she went up to him, wrapping her arms around his waist. "Don't be such a bear for starters." He chuckled. "Please just give it a chance. It's all I'm asking for. He isn't going to hurt me."

"You don't know that."

She picked up on his worry—about the sex thing, she noticed. Kane was worried about her having sex with Chase—worried about how rough Chase could be with her. He even questioned in his head if Chase would be brutal, as Kane had been with Jada.

"I read that the first time hurts no matter what the male does," she said.

"Sasha!" Kane whined, slapping her hands. "I don't need to hear that. It doesn't help here."

"Then what would?"

He turned around again, crossed his arms over his chest, and leaned back against the wall. "For starters, tell him to take back his demand that you go to him—to his damned camper in a couple days."

"If he does, you'll be nice?"

"I won't rip his nuts off and try to feed them to him," he said with an evil smile. When she crossed her arms across her chest and glared at him, he raised his hands up and shrugged. "Hey, it's a start."

"What if I want to go?"

Kane shook his head. "No deal."

"Kane!"

“Sorry.”

She put on what she hoped was her stern face also. Arms still crossed over her chest she went up close to her brother. If she was the same height, she might even touch his nose with her own.

“And what if I let him finish his claim?”

“You wouldn’t?”

She cocked her head to the side and a big smile spread across her face. “Try me.”

“Sasha...” There was a warning tone in his voice. “I will lock you up in your room if I have to.”

“And I’ll tell Jada how mean you’re being about this. Hmm, I’m guessing she probably already knows and would be furious with you.”

Kane pointed a finger at her. “Don’t you bring Jada into this.”

“Don’t make me.”

He narrowed his eyes on her. They seemed to have come to a standoff. “Where the hell did you learn to be such a hard ass?”

“Have you met my brother? His name’s Kane Draeger.”

“Smart ass.” Again, they had a stare off before Kane finally backed down. “Okay!” he raised his voice. “This is what I’ll give for now. He backs off about you moving in, and I won’t stop you from going over there.” His voice got softer, so soft she wasn’t sure she heard him. “But!” he raised his voice again, one finger going up. “You have to come home each night, and stop by my place to let me know you’re heading home.”

“Isn’t that a bit extreme?”

“It’s all I can give right now.” He frowned again, and fire lit his eyes. “I don’t trust Chase. Not as far as I can throw the shit.”

“Okay, but until the end of the week. Then you have to—”

“No!” he snapped. “Don’t say it. I don’t want to hear it. Now I’m going home and try to get the mental picture of you and Chase out of my head.”

Sasha knew when to keep her mouth shut. Kane kissed her on the forehead before he left her room. She sighed, feeling the tension drain from her body and the headache moving full force. She rolled her shoulder and neck, turned toward the bathroom, and decided she was going to take a nice hot soak before having dinner. She was tired—very tired, and the short snap on Chase’s lap hadn’t helped at all. She felt like a walking zombie, and needed about a week’s worth of sleep.

Chapter Six

Chase stood in the camper doorway, a beer in hand, shirt off, the cool breeze of the upcoming storm hitting his heated flesh. His jeans were undone, the swelling of his cock taking the zipper down some.

He hated to admit it, but the sexual frustration of not taking Sasha was starting to get to him. He wanted to give her time. Lord knew he wanted that. He just didn't think it was going to be so damned hard to do. The need to get laid hadn't been this strong since before he first saw her. After Chase laid eyes on Sasha years ago, no other woman would do. Sure, he'd had a few one night stands, but the lingering need was still there—always there. Like an itch that couldn't seem to be scratched the right way. And now he was suffering.

Finishing his beer, Chase tossed the empty bottle onto the ground where the others were starting to pile up. In the morning, he'd get rid of them. He turned, went right to the fridge, and grabbed another. Twisting the cap, he tipped the bottle back, drinking deeply.

"Only when we're on edge do we drink beer like it's water." Drake stood in the door, hands on the outside wall leaning in. "And from the looks of things you're about ready to fall over."

"What do you want, Drake?" Chase glared at him.

"A beer would be nice." Drake pushed away from the doorway and went back outside.

Chase put his on the counter, fixed his jeans, then grabbed his beer, and one for Drake, and followed him outside. Drake was leaning against Chase's truck, arms crossed over his chest. He took the beer and swallowed a long drink.

"Storm's coming in," Drake stated, looking out in the distances. "Going to be a loud one I bet."

"I'm sure you coming over here has nothing to do with the impending storm," Chase stated.

Drake took another drink, but didn't turn to him. He shook his head and sighed. "We need to come to a suitable agreement concerning Sasha."

Chase crossed his arms over his bare chest, beer still in hand. "You mean you want to try to tell me how things should go. To please you."

Drake turned his head toward Chase, his brows drawing together into a deeper frown. "She's my daughter. I'm going to do what I need

to in order to make sure she stays safe.”

“Drake, she isn’t a little girl.”

“In a way she is,” Drake sighed. He rubbed his face before turning on his side, leaning still on the truck. “I didn’t come over here to fight with you. I came here to talk.”

“You know, I knew it was going to be hard to do this shit,” Chase stated, “Knew I was going to have to fight some in order to spend time with her. I just thought you were going to be the reasonable one here.” He finished his beer quickly then threw the bottle over with the rest, walking back to the door.

“I had planned on being reasonable,” Drake called out to him. Chase didn’t stop walking. “Until the nightmares became too much for her—until she only got two good nights of sleep in a week.”

Chase stopped at the door and turned around. He glared at Drake, his anger at this whole conversation surfacing. “And why the hell do you think she gets those two nights?” he snapped. He waited until what he said sank into Drake’s head. “Yeah, that’s right. I’ve been doing what I can from miles away for her. Doing what you and Kane can’t do.”

“That doesn’t change the fact that her state of mind—”

“Oh, give me a fucking break here!” Chase growled. “And give me some damn credit please. Stop thinking that Sasha is a little girl that needs to be sheltered by her brother and father. She’s seen things that we could never imagine. And yes, she should be scared because of it, to a point that being around *anyone* should scare her. But, see, with me she isn’t scared and you and Kane refuse to see that.” He pointed to the woods in Kane’s direction. “Do you really think that I don’t have any honor when it comes to her?”

“I don’t know what you have,” Drake’s voice rose. “That’s why I’m here now.”

Chase took a deep breath and let it out in a rush.

“Chase we’ve all been there. We all get out of some kind of control when it comes to our mates. Hell, look how Kane started out with Jada. He was damned near brutal with her. Can’t speak for him, but I’ll bet a shitload of money that’s in the back of his mind all the time and he fears you’re going to do the same thing to Sasha.”

“Drake if I really wanted to put the claim on her I could’ve done it twice now,” he informed Drake in a low voice. “She fell asleep in my arms in the truck. Could’ve done what the hell I wanted with her then. But I didn’t. I’m not stupid. I know she isn’t ready for that yet.”

“I don’t think I am,” Drake groaned, moving again, facing the

truck, and hanging his head down on the hood.

“She needs me, Drake,” Chase sighed. “No matter what you or Kane might think or want when it comes to this, the bottom line is that she needs me. And I need her.” Drake looked up at him. “Never really needed much since your grandmother took us in, but do need her.”

Drake didn’t say anything. He nodded, finished his beer, and tossed the bottle over with the rest. “Thanks for the beer.”

Chase watched him leave, confused. It wasn’t like Drake to just walk away from something, especially when that something as his daughter. A bit of hope filled Chase when Drake did just that—walked away. Chase finally thought that he was getting through to at least one of them, and that was something.

He cleaned up the empty bottles, took a long hot shower, brushed his teeth and dressed in a pair of boxers to sleep in. not that he was going to get much sleep.

* * * *

“You know, I recall this conversation you had with me about how nothing will keep a mated man away from his mate.” Jada was waiting for Drake when he came back from Chase’s. It was late; she was sitting on his steps, a shitty grin on her face.

“Not now, Jada,” he growled.

She quickly stood up and blocked him from going into the house. “You can’t have it both ways, Drake.” He stopped in front of her and sighed. “You can’t tell Kane to go on instinct and expect Chase to not do the same.”

“This isn’t the same.”

“The hell it isn’t!” she raised her voice and glared at him. “He’s the same as you, and she is human, like I was and Carrick. You both took without giving a damn what we thought or wanted. Chase is not taking Sasha, Drake, he’s seducing her his way.”

“Why is it you only want to see this shit when it suits you?” he grumbled.

“Why is it you only want to follow the rules when it suits *you*?” she tossed back.

He growled. Having a mind game with Jada was like getting an infected tooth pulled without pain killers. And at the moment she was making him achy all over.

“What’s the great plan on the full moon?” Jada asked with a hint of sweetness to her voice that had Drake cringing. “I mean, we all know what a mated guy does.”

Drake pointed his finger at her. "He hasn't mated or marked her, so that shit isn't going to happen."

She snorted and rolled her eyes. "Yeah and that worked so well in the past."

"Why the hell do you care anyway?" he snapped, glaring at her. "If my memory serves me right, you didn't want to have dick to do with Kane or any of us. So why the hell do you give a shit now?"

"Maybe I like Sasha," she smarted back. "She seems to be about the only normal one around here in my eyes. The rest of you guys are just plain nuts."

"Go home, Jada," he sighed again. "I'm tired and don't feel like dealing with your shit tonight."

"Ahh, that's really too bad now, isn't it?" Again, she had a sweet tone to her voice, but Drake wasn't picking up sweetness from her. "See, the way I look at things," she tapped a finger on her lips as she spoke, "Sasha needs someone in her corner. At the moment you and Kane are bent on keeping her away from the one guy she does want to be around." She shrugged. "So I'm going to help her out all I can."

Drake didn't like the sound of that. Not one bit.

He kept his mouth shut, watched Jada smile and walk down the steps, brushing past him as she headed for the woods, towards her home. Nope! He didn't like the sound of it at all. She was up to something, and Drake knew without a doubt it wasn't anything good. Not by a long shot.

* * * *

Sasha tossed and turned in her bed, her head pounding, matching the rumbling she heard outside her window. She pressed her face into the pillow, hoping to drown out the noise along with the pain.

It wasn't working.

The closer the storm got the worse the pounding in her head. A loud, too close for comfort bang landed right outside her window. Sasha jumped, ready to scream, but managed to hold it in.

She picked up on Drake's anger, but with the headache she couldn't make out the why. She had hoped to be asleep before the storm hit, but once more the migraine that came on prevented her from doing that. Her mind tortured her each time a storm came.

Giving up on even trying to get some sleep until the storm passed, Sasha sat up in the middle of the bed, drew her legs up to her chest and thought she'd wait it out. She closed her eyes, trying to block out the thunder and the rain that banged on her window from the wind. It was hard, and she just couldn't do it, not with the

headache.

Opening her eyes, she glanced at her clock. It was one in the morning and the storm was in full bloom. Lightning flashed bright and often, like a strobe light. The wind picked up tree limbs banged against her window, then one of the loudest booms ever seemed to shake the window glass.

Sasha lost it!

She jumped from her bed, rushed to the door, threw it open, and tore out of her room. She couldn't stop the panic from gripping her or shake the urgent feeling that she needed to get to Chase. Chase could make it all go away.

Sasha didn't even bother with getting dressed. She was in her long knee length shirt with boxer shorts underneath. With no shoes, she ran down the stairs and out the front door.

Strong gusts of wind pushed her around, rain beat down on her head and into her face. By the time she reached the woods she was drenched, but the desperate need to reach him had grown stronger. It grew with the pounding in her head.

Another powerful boom of thunder and this time she screamed and fell, face down. Sasha stayed on the wet ground, crying into the mud and wet leaves. She stayed like that, sobbing uncontrollably, her backside getting soaked before another crash of thunder had her up and running again.

She didn't even see Kane's home. Sasha came out of the clearing and gave a half laugh, half sigh of relief at seeing the camper. All the lights were out except for one in the back that was moving. A TV on maybe?

She ran until her side was burning. Soaked, cold and her head pounding, Sasha reached the camper and cried out again with the thunder. She banged on the door, holding her breath some as she waited. When it seemed like he wasn't coming, or couldn't hear her, Sasha tried again.

"Chase!" she yelled, "Please," she lost it and stumbled to the ground. Her head felt like it was going to explode any second. "Please open up," she moaned.

She was going to pass out. She could feel it. The darkness mixed with her exhaustion and migraine. There wasn't anything she could do to stop it. Sure, the screaming in her head was gone, but the pain was still there.

"Sasha!"

Sasha didn't even realize she had closed her eyes, until she

opened them up. Chase was standing over her. No that wasn't right. He was scooping her up in his arms, taking her out of the rain beating down on her cold body.

She flinched when the door slammed shut, and when he tried to set her down she wrapped her arms around his neck, pressing into him.

"Jesus, you're freezing," he gasped.

He gently pulled her arms from his neck, and left her. Sasha couldn't get her eyes to focus, the pain was too bad in her head. She pressed her hands into her face, the pads of her hand into her eyes to still the pain.

"What are you doing out in this shit?"

She couldn't answer him. She wanted to. Wanted to tell him that she couldn't bare the storm with the migraine. It was too much—too over powering.

He rubbed something into her hair, draped a blanket over her shoulders, and massaged her arms. "Sasha, look at me." She raised her head, forced her eyes open, and winced at the pain from the light. "Jesus," he gasped. "Your nose is bleeding."

Again, he left her and quickly returned with a warm washrag. He held it up to her nose and she leaned into his arms.

"The light," she managed to rasp out.

"Okay." Again, he left her for a split second. "You can open your eyes now."

She did and this time it wasn't as blinding as before. "I'm sorry," she whispered. "I shouldn't have bothered you."

"You're not bothering me." He gave her a smile and pulled the rag away from your nose. "Looks like that's done. You get them often?"

She shook her head and winced. "Usually Kane does."

She watched him stand up and go to the kitchen. He brought out a glass, filled it with water. Sasha would've blushed at the lack of clothing he was wearing, if she felt up to it. When he came back, he knelt down, handing her the glass.

"Take this. It'll help with the migraine." She nodded and put the pills into her mouth, then took a drink. "I'm going to go out on a limb here and say you're getting them because you're not sleeping worth a damn."

"I'm tired, Chase," she whispered on a sigh. "I don't know how much longer I can keep going like this."

He rubbed her shoulders again, with a smile. "Then how about

tonight you get some of that much needed sleep?" She jumped again with another loud boom and drew as close to him as she could get. "It's okay," he soothed, holding her tight. "It's just a storm. Won't hurt you."

"I hate storms," she said against his shoulder, looking toward the window, watching the rain coming down. "Reminds me of the lab and how I was all alone during it."

"Well you're not alone tonight." He stood up and this time he took her with him.

He walked her to the bathroom where he sat her down on the toilet seat. She watched him turn the water on in the shower, then leave. When he came back, he had some clothes in his hand.

"Those are a pair of sweats with a tie, might be too big and a very large shirt of mine." He put them on the counter. "I want you to take a hot shower and warm up. You can change into this, and just leave your clothes in the sink. I'll take care of them in the morning."

She nodded and he left her to take care of herself. Sasha stripped, putting her wet clothes in the sink. The hot water was heaven. She closed her eyes, relaxed and let the water pelting down relax her. She washed, stood under the spray until her skin turned pink.

His shirt reached well past her knees. Sasha held up the sweat pants and shook her head. There was no way they were going to stay up on her, even with the tie, so she left the bathroom without putting them on.

When she came out of the bathroom, Chase was getting ready to pull out the sofa bed. He had some blankets and a pillow ready for her. He stopped when she came out and nodded to the small island.

"Made you a cup of lemon tea. Should help you sleep some."

"What are you doing?" she asked, picking up the cup and taking a sip.

"Trying to figure out how to pull this damn thing out."

"Why?"

He stopped and looked at her. The intent in his eyes had her mouth going dry. "You want to sleep in the loft instead?"

Sasha shook her head. She was about to answer him when another crack of thunder hit followed by lightening. She closed her eyes and cringed, hating how childish and weak she felt whenever a strong storm hit.

"Can I sleep with you?" she rushed out before opening her eyes. When she did and looked at Chase, he appeared shocked. "Please? I just don't want to be alone tonight."

Chase cleared his throat. “Sasha, I, um, I’m not sure if that would be a good idea.”

She lowered her head and nodded.

“Don’t mistake me now,” he went on quickly. “I just don’t think I can trust myself that close to you is all.”

“It’s okay,” she whispered. “You don’t have to bother pulling the bed out. I’ll just lie on it as is.”

She went over to the pillow, picking it up. Chase took hold of her wrist. She looked up at him, not knowing what he was about to do or say next. Telling her no the way he had felt like he was crushing something deep down within her.

“It’s okay,” he sighed softly. “You need some sleep, and I can do this.”

He pulled the pillow from her hand, linked his fingers with hers, and took her to the back of the camper, up the steps to his room. He walked to the right side, pulled the covers back, and helped her into the bed. Another bang and she was flinching again. When Chase left the room, she feared he was going to sleep out on the sofa.

The bathroom light went on, door closed, she could hear things moving around, then he came out and everything went dark. He was in the doorway, lightening lit up the room, and Sasha’s heart began to pound in her chest.

Chase said nothing. He walked to the other side of the bed, pulled the covers back, and slipped in. They both lay on their backs saying nothing. Sasha couldn’t read him or feel him like she did the others, but she was able to pick up that he was stiff beside her. She’d bet he was just about as nervous as she was.

Another loud bang and she was jumping into his arms, pressing her face into his shoulder, shaking. She couldn’t help it. Storms like this scared the death out of her.

His arm went around her, holding her tight. “There’s nothing to be scared of.”

He was warm, soothing for her nerves. Right off, being in his arms she felt herself start to relax. Sasha took a deep breath let it out slowly and almost smiled at the tension that was leaving her body.

Her eyes began to get heavy. The pounding in her head started to lessen, and before she could say or do anything, she sighed once more and just let sleep take her away.

* * * *

Chase knew the moment she fell asleep in his arms. He also knew that he wasn’t going to get much sleep tonight if this was how she

was going to stay. She was curled up on her side, him facing her. One arm he draped over her, holding her tight. Her even breathing brushed across his bare chest and his damn dick wouldn't go down. It felt like it had a mind of its own and was demanding attention.

Tough! He wasn't going to give in to that. She wasn't ready. Maybe after the full moon he would put the final claim on her. But as for now, and he hated to do this, he had to agree with Drake. Sasha wasn't ready for that kind of demand. Fuck, he didn't even know if he was ready for it.

He knew what he went through and needed on moon night. Heard from Cole what to expect once he mated— what kind of demands he would make of his mate once the heat came.

Chase rubbed his face, the rain pounded overhead and his cock throbbed. Yep, it was going to be one long ass night.

Sasha made a noise snuggled closer and moved one leg over his. He bit his lip. *I'm not going to be able to do this!* Higher that leg of hers went, brushing his erection, stopping at his waistline. Oh, the urge to reach under the covers and touch her was strong. Very strong! But Chase fought it. She needed the sleep. Needed to rest and if that meant he was going to have to hold her all night and endure the sweetest fucking torture he ever had in his life, then so be it. He would do what had to in order for her to get the sleep she'd been lacking.

Somehow, some way, Chase was able to close his eyes and fall asleep. But it wasn't much. He knew it was after one in the morning when she came to him, and the clock told him fifteen till six when he opened his eyes again. He might've gotten three hours of sleep if he was lucky.

Turning his head, he glanced at Sasha. She was sleeping deeply on her stomach, blond hair fanned out on the pillow. Her hands were tucked under the pillow, the covers down to her knees and his shirt barely covering her rear. He tried not to look, but couldn't. He saw just the underside of her ass and groaned inwardly. *Damn I want to touch her!*

But he didn't. Instead, he slipped from the bed quietly and pulled the covers up over her body, tucking her in. Grabbing some clothes, he made his way into the bathroom, brushed his teeth, used the toilet, and dressed. Cole was coming over to help him take out the engine from Celine's car and he didn't want him in the camper. He didn't want anyone to wake her up, now that she was sleeping.

He had the hood up, tools that he needed in a box sitting on the

side, a large engine hoist waiting, and thick mats on the ground on which to toss engine pieces. He was sitting on the side feet on the engine working to twist off a bolt when Cole came arrived.

“Damn! I thought I’d be here before you got up,” Cole chuckled.

“Nope,” Chase grunted as he tried to turn the bolt. “Been up most of the night.” He hissed when it gave, twisting it quickly before tossing it over to the mat.

“Okay, what’s she doing heading over here?” Cole sighed.

Chase stopped what he was doing and looked over the hood. Jada was heading toward them with a backpack in her hand. Chase had a pretty good idea what she was doing and a gut feeling that the day wasn’t going to start out as well as he had hoped.

“How’d he find out already?” Chase asked her when she got closer.

Jada shrugged. “They’re still linked I guess. But he isn’t as mad as he is disappointed. Guess she always comes to him during storms like the one we had last night.”

Chase sighed, shook his head, and went back to fighting with another bolt.

“Okay I’m lost here,” Cole stated. “Care to fill me in?”

“Sasha’s over here,” Jada said. “Guess she came over late last night during the storm. Drake called Kane to check to see if she was with us.”

Chase looked back up at her quickly. “They both knew and didn’t come over here?”

“Sasha had a talk with Kane last night before it hit, and I sort of met up with Drake.” she smiled.

“You know, just when I about get her figured out, she does something like this to me.” Cole shook his head and moved to the other side of the car, and leaned in.

“So when do I get to expect to see Kane over here again?” Chase asked.

“Well that’s sort of the thing.” She frowned and looked around. The way she was acting Chase almost expected Kane to come running towards him again and having it out once more. “He’s with Drake right now. I snuck out the back with some clothes for her. Figured if anything did happen between you two then it would go over better if she was dressed when they came to get her.”

Chase went back to the bolt. “She’s still sleeping.”

“Really?” Jada sounded surprised.

“Yeah,” he grunted when the bolt came free. “And I’d like to

keep her that way until she wakes up on her own.” He glanced at her before handing the tool to Cole. “You get the rest of them undone.”

Chase hopped off the car grabbed a rag and wiped his hands before taking the bag from Jada. He gave her a nod, turned and went into the camper. In the bedroom, he checked in on Sasha. She was still sleeping in the same position. With a smile, Chase put the backpack on the counter and left.

When he went back outside, he groaned inwardly. Kane was indeed heading his way. Chase didn’t feel ready to deal with him yet. The last time they came face to face, they ended up taking swings at each other. Hell his lip still hurt from Kane’s fist.

“Where is she, Chase?” Kane barked out once he got close.

Chase held his hand up. “Sleeping, so keep your damn voice and bark down.”

Kane stopped and frowned. “Sleeping? She never sleeps this late.”

“She is now,” Jada stated. “And I think you should let her keep on sleeping.”

Kane glanced down at her, the frown still in place. “I don’t want her sleeping here! She needs to be home in her bed.”

“Well she’s in mine,” Chase stated.

Kane made to move towards him, but Jada put herself in front of him, hands on his chest. “Don’t start,” she told him.

“She doesn’t belong here,” Kane snapped. “She doesn’t belong to you!” He pointed at Chase.

“What am I going to have to do?” Chase asked the question through his teeth. Cole came around from the car and also stood in front of him, making sure he didn’t get any closer to Kane. “Put my mark on her shoulder just so you can get it through that thick head of yours that she’s my mate?”

Once more, that anger he had over Kane and Drake telling him he needed to stay away from her surfaced. He was getting damn tired of everyone telling him how fragile she was and how wrong he was for her.

“Guys, can we keep this civil?” Cole asked.

“Kane, back off!” Jada snapped, giving him a push. Kane did take a step back, but it wasn’t without a very pissed off look at both Chase and Jada. “You both need to come to grips with this. Sasha has a mate. You knew that it could happen,” she said to Kane then looked at Chase. “And you could handle all of this a hell of a lot better than what you’re doing now.” She ran her hand through her hair and

sighed. "For Christ sakes look at you both, acting like kids!"

"Kane, you need to look at it from a different angle," Cole said. "If it was another shifter, they could put in the claim, it could be acknowledged and then that guy could walk in here and just take her away from all of us." Kane snarled at Cole. "I'm not saying that to take Chase's side here. I'm stating a fact. By our laws the male can still take the female from her home no matter if her family is willing to let her go or not. It's something that Dedrick has been fighting to change for years."

Kane fisted both hands into his own hair and pulled with a low rumbling growl. He turned his back on them, took a few steps away before tuning and coming back. "You don't know what she saw. The hell she had to witness each damn day of our lives," he said to Chase.

"I have an idea," Chase told him. "I've seen her dreams, her nightmares. I know she isn't ready for the claiming, Kane. But I also know that since I've had her in my arms I can't let her go back to Drake's."

"Did you also know that Jason brought her out once to see real close what sex was like?" Pain filled Kane's eyes and voice. "They brought this girl in for me to breed with, and it so happened she was a virgin. Jason whispered shit—I have no clue what into Sasha's ear—and I saw how white she got, how scared she looked as she watched me have sex with that girl. I promised her Chase. I *swore* on my life that she would never have to go through that."

"But what if she wants to know?" Chase asked. He was desperate now to have Kane understand him. "Look how much you've changed now. Didn't you say it wasn't until Jada came into your life that things like that changed also? Didn't you admit that you wanted to touch someone else for the first time?"

"It isn't the same thing," Kane snapped.

"The hell it isn't!" Jada butted in. "Five years ago, sure, Sasha couldn't handle someone like Chase coming up to her. But open your damn eyes you stupid animal and see what's right in front of you." She went up to Kane, took hold of his face, and brought him down to her level. "She's comes to him. She's ready."

Chase held his breath, waiting for Kane to go off again. Cole told him that Jada was about the only one that ever got away with calling Kane names like that. He didn't believe it until now.

Kane closed his eyes, gave a short nod, and Chase was letting his breath out in a rush. A weight lifted from his shoulders.

"Okay, I'm going to take wolf boy here home." Jada let go of

Kane's face and he straightened up. "You two get back to work, and when Sasha wakes up have her come by so she can see him before he tears something up."

Chase shook his head, watching as Jada tugged Kane away. He couldn't get over it. How the hell was she able to handle him when so many others couldn't.

"How did she do that?" Chase asked Cole.

"No clue, but she does it very well." Cole slapped him on the back. "Come on. Let's get this damned thing out so I can go home and have my Saturday with my mate."

"Got that right. Ready to get rid of you already," Chase mumbled, going back to the engine.

Chapter Seven

Sasha rolled over to her back, stretched, opened her eyes, and sat up in the strange bed. She felt panic start to hit, but controlled herself. Looking around she breathed a sigh of relief when she remembered that she came over to Chase's place last night. The storm had scared her, and she had a migraine that only grew worse.

She rubbed the sleep from her face, tossed back the covers, and got out of bed. She could smell food cooking and her stomach rumbled. She wasn't sure what to expect when she walked out of the bedroom, and Chase cooking wasn't it.

He was in a pair of jeans that fit nice and tight. They hugged the roundness of his rear, making her almost wish she had the nerve to walk up to him and cup his butt. Just to see if it felt as solid as it looked in those jeans. He had no shoes on, no shirt, and his hair was wet as if he'd just showered.

"What time is it?" she asked, tugging at his shirt she wore.

Chase turned and smiled at her. "After noon."

Sasha's jaw dropped. "Are you serious?" He nodded. "Man, Drake must be going nuts wondering where I'm at."

"They know."

"They?" she said and frowned.

"Kane came over here a few hours ago."

"And you two didn't fight?"

Chase winked at her, turned around, and put some food on a plate. He picked it up and moved over to the table, and set it down. Sasha was surprised by how industrious he'd been. He'd set the table with dishes, silverware, napkins, orange juice, toast, and fruit.

"Have a seat," he told her.

She stared at the food as she sat down. Again, her belly grumbled and her mouth watered. He made a huge omelet filled with cheese, ham, and bacon.

"I thought you couldn't cook," she said, picking up her fork and placing the napkin in her lap.

"Breakfast I can do." He smiled and popped a grape in his mouth, and shrugged. "Other stuff, so-so."

She smiled, shook her head, and started to eat. He went back to the kitchen, cleaning up the mess he made.

"Thanks for last night," she said, reaching for her juice. "I didn't

mean to bother you.”

“Wasn’t a bother.”

“I think it was.” He stopped what he was doing and turned. Leaning back on the counter Sasha could see the dark patches under his eyes. “You didn’t get any sleep last night. Did you?”

“One night of sleeping only a couple hours isn’t going to kill me.” He nodded to her plate. “Finish up. Need to make sure you’re eating and sleeping like you should be or you’re going to end up a walking zombie.”

She smiled at him and mumbled, “Already am.”

Chase finished eating and, with his back to her as he loaded the dishwasher, said, “Jada also came by. She brought you some clothes.”

“When did they know I was gone?” She was almost afraid of the answer.

“Guess sometime late last night. Maybe Drake went to check on you, saw you were gone and called Kane.”

Sasha put her fork down and groaned. The last thing she needed after she got Kane to some kind of point of understanding was to blow it by him finding out that she was sleeping over here.

“He’s never going to let me come back here,” she moaned, resting her head in her hands.

“Don’t worry about it,” Chase said, picking up her plate. “I think we’ve come to an understanding.”

She glanced up at him quickly. “What kind of understanding?”

Chase rinsed off her plate put it in the dishwasher before tuning and coming back to the table. He took the rest of the dishes, loading them as well. She bit her lip, waiting for him to finish up, and answer her question.

When he started to wipe the countertop, she lost it. “Chase!”

He turned around, crossed his arms over his chest. No smile or grin crossed his lips, but the memory of what those lips felt like on hers did cross her mind. Man, how she wanted him to kiss her again, or hold her like he did last night. She loved how safe she felt in his arms, and for the longest time she thought she’d never feel safe in anyone but Kane and Drake’s arms.

“Do you want to stay here?” he asked her.

Sasha’s mouth went dry. Chase had informed Drake and Kane that she was coming to stay with him in two days. Well today was the second day and Chase was asking her if she wanted to stay.

“I’m confused,” she whispered, swallowing hard. “I thought you told Drake that you were bringing me here anyway.”

Chase licked his lips and she felt her face heat up. *Didn't Jada like it when Kane licked hers? Even Carrick enjoyed it. What can he do with a tongue?*

"You're blushing," he stated. "Why?"

Sasha quickly turned her face away. She scooted from the table, avoiding looking at him. "I'm going to take a shower."

She thought she was going to get away from him so she wouldn't have to answer the question but wasn't so lucky. Chase caught her around the waist. He pulled her back to his heated body and man the heat that came off his chest that seeped through the shirt had her shivering.

"Do I scare you?" He breathed the question in her ear, his breath sending chills down her spine.

Sasha couldn't answer him. She shook her head, licking her lips nervously.

"You know that I would never intentionally hurt you." She nodded to the statement, still unable to speak. "I want you to stay with me. But if you don't want to, I'm not going to force you."

"What about what you said to Drake?" she whispered.

"Not if *you* don't want to," he said again. "I'm not going to force you."

She closed her eyes, took a deep breath, and turned in his arms, facing him. Willpower was what she used to open them and look up at him. His dark brown eyes held what she thought was apprehension. Was he afraid that she would say no? That she would turn her back on him and go home?

"I don't know what to say or do," she whispered again. "I'm so confused."

"What do you feel?" he asked, walking backwards, taking her with him. He moved to the sofa, sitting down with her standing between his legs. "Go with what you feel is right. No one is going to hold that against you."

"I don't want to hurt anyone," she stated, resting her hands on her bare shoulders.

"You won't hurt anyone."

"The not knowing has me scared," she murmured. "I don't know what to do here."

"I only ask that you do what you feel is right, nothing more."

She nodded. "Can I think about it?"

Something flickered in his eyes. Hurt maybe? She wasn't sure.

"Sure."

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Sasha gave him a short smile, stepped back and headed for the bathroom, picking up her bag along the way. She took her shower, dressed in the clothes that Jada sent over. A pair of shorts, her sneakers, and a plain blue t-shirt. When she got out, Chase was gone.

Disappointment hit her and the first thing she thought of was that he left her, until she found the note on the counter.

Engine for the car came in and had to run to town fast to sign for it. Be back in a couple hours. Chase.

Sasha put the note down and left the camper. She walked into the woods towards Kane's place, not really knowing what she was going to say or do once she got there.

It was Saturday, so he was off work, but when she got to the small cabin he wasn't there. Feeling alone, she decided to take a walk in the woods to clear her head.

What are you going to do, girl? It was a question that she just couldn't seem to find an answer to. What was she going to do? She didn't know what the next step was. Had no clue what to do. Okay, so the one thing she did know was when she was with Chase she felt normal. He made her smile, made her feel things she just didn't understand. And no one seemed to want to explain to her what it was she was feeling.

She stopped at one of her favorite spots in the woods. It was a hill, looking down at the valley. She could see the town below and everything was so quiet; the perfect place for her to think and try to understand it all.

"So how long are you going to hide in the bushes?" Sasha asked Kane after a few minutes went by.

"Until you said something," Kane murmured as he came out of the brush. He was dressed in his normal jeans and t-shirt with boots, hair loose. "Got a lot on your mind, pumpkin?"

She didn't turn to him. "Don't I always?"

Kane sat down behind her. Like always, she leaned back against him. "Wish I could help you like I use to, but I think we both know that that time has passed."

"I don't want to hurt anyone," she sighed.

Kane touched the back of her head and brushed his fingers through her locks. It was comforting, but not the same as when Chase did it. No, definitely something was different.

"Why would you think you'd ever hurt anyone?" Kane breathed out softly.

"If I stay with him, then I hurt you. And if I don't, then I hurt

him.” She lowered her head, shaking it. “It’s not fair.”

“Sasha,” Kane breathed out her name as if it hurt him. In fact, that’s what she felt—his pain. “I’m not going to lie to you and say I’m happy about it. I’m not. I’m not ready to see you mated to anyone. It has nothing to do with Chase, it’s just me.” He pressed his head against the back of hers. “I guess I’m just not ready to see you grown up. It’s always been up to me to protect you and now Chase wants to do it. Guess I don’t let go too easily.”

She smiled at that. “No, you don’t. Think Jada can vouch for that one.”

Kane chuckled, pushed her hair over her left shoulder, and rested his chin on her right. “Are you happy when you’re with him?”

“Yes,” she whispered. “He makes me feel normal.”

“Are you afraid of anything with him?”

That had her turning to look him in the eye. *Sex!* The word screamed at her from him and it sounded like panic. “You think I should be afraid of the sex.”

Kane took a deep breath and straightened up. Worry, fear, anger. It all came off him in waves along with the faint memory of them in the lab.

Sasha could see it clearly, as if she was standing there again. Jason held her tight. He whispered nasty things in her ear—things that she never understood. He told her to watch what Kane did to the girl they’d brought in for him to breed with. To watch where he put his penis and how he forced her to take it.

But with Jada, Sasha could feel the love that each one of them had for the other and how Kane always seemed to look forward to the next time they were together.

“I think this is one of those times I wish Carrick was here instead of visiting Heather,” he groaned, rubbing his face.

“I want to understand this Kane, I really do.” She couldn’t keep the whine from her voice or the desperation. “Do you think that it will be like it was in the lab for me? That I’ll hate it or something.”

Kane shook his head. “It’s not that.”

“Then what?” She grabbed his face, forcing him to look at her. “I need to know. Please.”

“You saw everything that I had to do. Heard it, felt how much I hated it. Sasha, it took me so long to *want* to touch someone for pleasure.”

She cocked her head to the side. “You’re afraid for me,” she whispered, reading some of what he was thinking. “You don’t think I

can handle Chase's demands on me at the full moon. Because you feel guilt each month at how you take Jada."

Kane growled, "I wish you wouldn't do that."

"How else am I to understand what you refuse to tell me?" Tears of frustration formed in her eyes.

"Men." Both looked up at the same time. Jada was standing there, her camera around her neck. "You guys sure do know how to fuck things up. Come on girl. It's way past time we had one of those girl to girl talks."

"Jada," Kane warned.

"Stuff it," Jada snapped. "You and Drake both had your chance. Now it's time she had the real talk." He held her hand out to Sasha, and Sasha stood up, going to her. "Go do something. I'll call you when we're done."

Jada took her hand, leading her back to the cabin. Sasha could pick up just a few things or feelings from Jada. It seemed that she was a bit upset over how Drake and Kane were handling things.

"He sure did have one thing right thought." Jada opened the cabin door, stepped back and let Sasha in first before closing it. "Could definitely use Carrick's help."

Sasha watched her take the camera from her neck as she walked to the back. In the five years since she'd been living or mated with Kane they redid the cabin. The one bedroom was now the kitchen and a separate bedroom had been added. It gave them more room, which they seemed to need.

"Have a seat at the table." Jada called out.

Sasha walked to the kitchen took a seat at the table and waited. When Jada came back, she had a book in her hand and tossed it to the table. Sasha turned it and read the title. *The Joy of Sex!*

"Your brother read that book before I came into the picture. Now I'm not going to have you read it, but thought it might help you to understand a few things. You can also ask me anything you want, including about the full moon night."

Sasha nodded, opened the book, and started flipping through the pages. She read a few passages about positions and orgasms, but her attention was fixed on the oral sex page. She looked hard at one pose where a man was licking the woman between her legs. *So that's what they do with a tongue!* Just looking at the pictures, she felt this tingling sensation between her legs.

Turning the page, she saw another one that had her full attention. This time the woman was down on her knees and she was taking the

man's thing into her mouth.

"Now that I never saw before," she mumbled under her breath.

"First thing you need to do is get the terms straight," Jada stated. "That," she pointed to the man, "Is called a dick or cock. Don't use the term penis. It just sounds corny. Men like it when we call ours," again she pointed at a picture, "A pussy. If you want to get really dirty, use cunt."

Sasha felt her face heat up. "I can't say that."

"Sure you can. And just for the record, men go nuts when you give them head. You can get just about anything you want out of them if you go down on them."

"Give head?" Sasha frowned, glancing up at her.

Jada once more pointed at a picture. "This one of the girl taking the man into her mouth. That's called giving head, or a blow job."

"Why does someone do that?"

Jada shrugged. "Gives the guy pleasure and lets you be in complete control. Just like when he goes down on a girl, he's in control. You want to have the upper hand, go down on him. Now take positions." She turned the book, showing her a page where the girl was sitting on a guy's lap. His head was back, mouth open. To Sasha he looked like he was in pain.

"Doesn't this hurt?" she had to ask the question. Needed to know, because at the moment, from what she was looking at, Sasha didn't know if she would be able to do any of this.

"The very first time any one of us girls have sex it hurts. Losing that virginity is somewhat painful, but if the guy does it right then I think it shouldn't hurt that much."

"But it did for you?"

Jada met her gaze. "Your brother wasn't too nice about my first time. But that also doesn't mean I didn't get an orgasm out of it."

"What's an orgasm feel like?"

Jada bit her lip and looked up for a few seconds. "This intense build up inside you that just explodes. It felt damn good and for some strange reason has you always going back for more." She smiled. "Call it a natural high."

"But this pain you talk about, it only hurts once?"

"Is that what worries you the most?" Sasha nodded. "Okay, here's the deal. I don't know what happened to you in the lab or what you had to see Kane doing. That Jason guy was a bastard. He got off on giving you two a lot of pain and watching you both suffer. The best way I see it to get even with that fuck is to live your life. Enjoy

yourself. Chase is a good guy. You can trust him, and I'm guessing he'll go easy with you the first time."

"So what happens then on the full moon?" Sasha had a hard time getting the question out. She didn't know if she really wanted to know the answer or not.

"First off, I've found that each one of them is very different. So what to expect with Chase I can't tell you. I only know what I get with your brother."

"So what's he like?" She barely got the words out, fear hitting her. She was so scared that Kane was the animal he had been in the cage.

"I think Mother Nature knows what she's doing. I say that now before answering your question just so you know that each one of us are paired up perfectly with them. We can handle anything they need from us. So know that first." Sasha nodded, holding her breath. "Your brother is a bit rough and demanding. He wants a few different positions and tends to climax twice. One thing I have found that they all do is this." She flipped the pages of the book to one more picture, and Sasha just knew her face drained of color.

Anal sex. *No way!* "You do that?" she squeaked out.

"It's the domination of their heat, honey," Jada stated. "I'm pretty sure all of the shifters do it with their mates."

"Jada, I don't think I can do any of this," she whispered, shaking as she turned the pages of the book again. "It doesn't look anything like what you're telling me."

Jada took hold of her hand. Sasha looked up at her. "Do you enjoy him holding you?" Sasha nodded. "Kissing?" Another nod. "Then the marking and sex is the final step. I've never asked you to trust me before now, but trust me when I say that after the first time it's great, even the heated sex. And girl you know me. You know how I am, so when I tell you this, you make sure and keep it to yourself, but I do love it when your brother gets all animal on me. Everything he demands, I give. I think you can do the same for Chase."

Sasha lowered her eyes and Jada quickly added, "How about this? Tell him you're willing to take the next step but he needs to do it in baby steps for you. Chase will go at your pace, not his."

Again, Sasha nodded, mostly because she didn't know what else to do. The pictures she was seeing showed something completely different for her than what Jada was telling her. But then her eyes did land on the oral sex page. That was definitely one thing she wouldn't mind experiencing. But which one? Him doing it to her, or her to

him?

“Do him first,” Jada whispered. “It’ll break the ice between you. And don’t be afraid of touching him. And I mean, touch him where ever the hell you want, girl.”

Sasha left and headed not for home but back to the camper. She was just about there when Chase pulled up with this crate in the back of his truck. His face seemed to light up when he saw her and he waved. Sasha smiled and ran the rest of the way there. On impulse, she jumped into his arms when he got out of the truck, hugging him tightly.

“Hey!” he chuckled, “Where’d this come from?”

Sasha wrapped not only her arms but her legs around him as well, knocking him back a step. “I missed you.” She smiled.

“So I see.”

“So what you want to do for dinner tonight?”

Chase surprised her by not putting her down. Instead, he walked to the front door, holding her all the way inside. When he put her down, Sasha made sure to slide down his body slowly. She watched his brown eyes get darker and he ended up clearing his throat.

“So what has you in such a good mood?” he asked, going over to the fridge.

“Oh nothing,” she shrugged, kicking off her shoes and putting them over by the door. “I talked to Kane and Jada today.”

Chase made a hissing sound. “Bad or good?”

“I think Kane and I have come to an agreement of sorts.”

“And Jada?”

She looked at him and smiled. “She gave me some advice.”

Chase groaned, rolling his eyes. “I got this strong feeling that I should be very worried here.”

“Worried about what?”

“If Jada is giving you advice, then I might need to watch my nuts.”

Sasha held her finger up and frowned. “Okay that’s one she didn’t tell me. What’s your nuts?”

Chase stared at her open mouthed for what felt like the longest time. “Huh?”

“I don’t understand,” she said. “You have nuts. How can you have nuts?”

“It’s an expression,” he muttered, his face turning pink. “Another use for the term...balls.” When she still didn’t say anything he rolled his eyes again. “They’re, um...” He pointed between his legs. “Down

there.”

Then it hit her. “Oh!” she sighed. “The sack under your penis—I mean dick.” She waved her hand quickly. “Jada said that penis sounds strange and I should call it either a dick or cock.”

“Yep, that sounds like Jada,” he mumbled.

“Want to know what else she told me?”

“I think I’m afraid to hear this.”

She licked her lips and smiled. “She said that you guys love oral sex.”

Chase held up his hand, stopping her. “Okay. No more talking sex with Jada.”

“She even showed me a book that explains how,” she added, swaying back and forth on the heels of her feet. “Now I will say that did look interesting. I had wondered why Carrick and her liked the tongue so much, until I saw that book.”

“Does,” he cleared his throat. “Does Kane know you looked at a sex book?”

“Should he?”

“Probably not.” Chase turned back around, digging into the fridge.

Sasha walked up to him, stopping right at his back. “Did I say something wrong?”

Chase closed the fridge and once more turned. “Why would you think you said anything wrong?”

“Chase, I can’t read you like I can the others but I can still see that something is wrong. Is it the sex thing?”

He took hold of her arms, rubbing up and down. “There isn’t anything wrong. I guess I just forget sometimes how innocent you really are.”

“I wish I wasn’t,” she sighed, running a hand through her hair. “I don’t know what to do here. I really don’t.”

He gave her a smile. “Don’t worry about it so much. When the time comes, it’ll come.”

She bit her lower lip, thinking about how she was going to ask the one question that was on the tip of her tongue.

“I know that look though.” He grinned. “What’s on that mind of yours?”

Sasha brought her thumb up to her mouth and chewed on a nail. “What’s it like to make out?”

His eyes widened. “Uh…”

“Can you show me?” she asked, nearly laughing aloud at his

stunned expression.

Chase's mouth dropped open. Embarrassment hit her and Sasha covered her face with her hands. "Sorry. That just came out. I'm going to hide now."

Before he could grab a hold of her, she turned and rushed back to the bedroom, flopping face first on the bed, hiding her face in a pillow.

She felt the bed sag, knew that he was sitting on it. She groaned when he touched her back, rubbing up and down. The embarrassment was too much to bear at the moment. She didn't even know if she was going to be able to face him.

"Okay, what's wrong? Where's all this coming from?"

Sasha couldn't answer him. She shook her head and Chase rolled her over. She took the pillow with her, holding it over her face. She struggled to keep it there, but Chase was persistent in taking it away.

"You want to know what making out is?" he asked. She nodded. He took a deep breath and touched the side of her face with the back of his hand. "We made out already the first time a little bit when you sat on my lap and I kissed you after you touched my goatee. The second time was in my truck when I touched you and kissed you again. All making out is, is when you kiss and touch each other. Sometimes you touch under the clothes and sometimes you don't."

"Why haven't you tried it again?" she asked softly. "I see it in your eyes that you want to."

"I want to."

"Then why haven't you?"

"Because I don't trust myself," he answered her just as softly, moving his hand to the bed to brace himself over her. "I have this feeling that if I started to kiss and touch you again then I won't be able to stop."

"And that would be a bad thing?"

"Do you think you're ready for that?"

She swallowed hard and shrugged. "I don't know. But I do know I liked it when you touched and kissed me. I want you to do that again."

"And I want to do it again, but I also want it to just happen. Don't want to force it, Sasha, or it won't feel as good as when it just happens."

"When it happens again will you not stop?" She spoke so low that she feared he might not have heard her."

"If you don't want me to, then I won't. This ball is all in your

court. You have the control on how far things will go.”

“Does that mean whatever I ask, you’ll do?”

Chase smiled big. He also chuckled and shook his head. “Can’t believe that I’m going to say this, but yes. I’ll do whatever it is you ask of me.”

She quickly moved up to her knees before him. Butterflies started in her belly as she thought about testing him. “Will you take your shirt off?”

Chase was still smiling, but he frowned at the same time. “You want my shirt off?”

“Yes,” she breathed out, excitement racing through her veins.

“Okay.” He moved on the bed so that he was also sitting up on his knees. He pulled his shirt out from the waist, tugged it up over his head, and pulled it off.

Sasha didn’t even bother asking if she could touch him. She reached out and flattened her hand on his chest. He didn’t have any hair on him but for a patch that started below his belly button and traveled down to his jeans.

“I like your muscles,” she breathed out. “You feel strong under my hand.”

She moved her hand lower, to the snap of his jeans and followed it with her eyes. When she touched the snap, she glanced up at him. His mouth was closed tight, nose flaring as if he was doing that control thing again. Sasha bit her lip again and pulled at the snap, freeing it, sliding the zipper down. She didn’t know how far he was going to let her go and wondered when he was going to stop her.

“Can I touch you?” The words once more came out so soft she wasn’t sure if he heard the question or not.

Chase didn’t say a word but nodded his head. She saw that he was fisting and unfisting his hands, but didn’t stop her when she slid her hand into his jeans and beneath his boxers.

She felt the hair that was hidden. A coarse, bristle yet soft patch that seemed to get thicker the further down she went. She touched him and he jumped a bit and hissed. Sasha quickly looked up at him. Chase had his eyes closed, head resting back on his shoulders and was breathing fast. His cock felt like silk and steal. It had a hardness to it, one that was definitely more than the width of her hand. Farther down she moved into his jeans until she cupped the nuts he mentioned. They felt like two balls with skin around them. Moving her fingers, Chase once more hissed and sucked in his breath.

Sasha went back to his cock. She wrapped her fingers around it

as best she could inside his jeans and just rubbed him. She wanted to see it, and was about to pull him out when his hand closed around her wrist.

“I think you’d better stop for now.” He was breathing hard, his eyes looked glazed over.

“Why?”

Chase pulled her hand from his jeans and fixed his clothes. “Because if you don’t, I’m going to make one hell of a mess in my pants and on your hand.” He lowered down, kissing her on the lips. “Let’s fix some dinner.”

“Then after can I see more?”

He took her hand, pulling her from the bed, walking back to the kitchen. “We’ll see.”

“Will you get down to your boxers?”

Chase groaned again. “You’re going to be the death of me, you know that.”

“Please?”

He leaned back on the counter, arms crossing over his chest. “How about this? After dinner, we both get down to what we’re going to sleep in tonight and we both get to explore each other.”

Excitement hit her and she couldn’t stop the big smile from spreading across her lips. “And I can touch you how ever I want? And you’ll touch me also?”

“As much as you want.”

“Then I can hardly wait!” She turned and started back to the bedroom.

“Where are you going now?”

“To take my shower,” she answered. “I don’t want to waste any time.”

Chapter Eight

Chase fixed pizza for dinner and Sasha helped. It was very hard for him to cook anything when she was walking around in his shirt and nothing else. And the only reason he knew that was because he went in after her for a shower and all of her clothes were still in the bag.

Hell, he couldn't get the feel of her hand around his cock out of his mind, or the questions that she was asking him. She wanted to touch him tonight. Where would that lead? *Between the sheets, you dumb ass!*

His gut was screaming at him that this wasn't going to end with them just sleeping peacefully next to each other. If Chase gave her what she wanted, let her touch him and look at him, then he would end up marking her tonight. Once that happened then all the rules changed.

They didn't talk as they ate. Chase did notice that Sasha was eating quickly, then she rose from the table and started cleaning up the cooking mess he made. He was not looking forward to going back to the room and getting in that bed. Only because he didn't know how he was going to handle things. He also had no clue as to what Jada might've told her. Lord only knows what that might've been.

When everything was cleaned up Chase went into the bathroom to splash some cold water on his face and tried to get himself under control. He needed control. Some major fucking control right now to get through what he promised her.

"Why did I agree to this?" he groaned at himself in the mirror. *Because she needs to know that sex can be enjoyable and you're dying for her to touch you.*

He splashed water on his face, dried it, then stripped down to his boxers. Taking a deep breath, he opened the bathroom door and stalled for a second. Sasha had every light in the camper turned off but one faint one coming from the bedroom. She was definitely ready for what ever.

Nice and slow, nice and slow, he kept telling himself over and over. He needed to go slow. Let her set the pace. Go where she led. It was the only way it was going to happen tonight.

Sasha was sitting on her knees in the middle of the bed, excitement written all over her face. He saw her excitement in the

flush cheeks and the sparkle in her eyes.

Chase had to clear his throat. She looked like an angel, her blonde hair flowing down her back, blue eyes alive. For as long as he lived, he would never forget this sight of his mate.

“You do know that if things happen tonight by doing this, we can never go back,” he said, crawling onto the foot of the bed, stretching across it. “What I mean is, if I end up marking you, then there isn’t any backing out or going back to Drake’s. You’ll be my mate for real.”

Sasha licked her lips, her eyes going to his chest, “I know,” she breathed out.

“And you still want to do this?”

She moved to him, her hands on his shoulders, pushing him down to his back. Chase went willingly, curious as to how far she would go with him. “Yes,” she stated right before she crawled on top of him. She took hold of his wrists, placing both over his head. “I don’t want you to move.” Her eyes locked with his. “I want you to keep your hands right here.”

“You mean you don’t want me to touch you?” He was confused now. Before dinner, she’d stated very clearly that she wanted him to kiss and touch her.

“Not right now. I want to try something first.”

His mouth went dry. “And what might that be?” He could barely get the question out.

She blushed, her hands grazing down his arms to his chest. “You’ll see.”

Chase did his absolute best at staying still for her. Her nails raked his chest, his nipples harder. When she leaned down and her lips touched one nipple, he sucked his breath in sharply. In an instant, his cock turned to stone between his legs. The damn briefs he had on did nothing to hide that fact either.

Her tongue on his chest was heaven. The light kisses torture, and the way she rubbed her body over his had Chase fisting both hands into the bed sheet. Agony. Pleasure. It was all mixed together so that he really couldn’t tell which was which.

She kissed his chest everywhere, even sucked on his nipples. It was one of the sweetest, most torturous things he ever experienced in his life. Chase wanted it to end, but also wanted it to keep going. His cock pounded with his heart and breathing seemed to be a bit difficult since she was moving lower down his body.

“I don’t know if I’m going to be able to do this or not,” Chase

panted, closing his eyes. He took deep breaths, hoping like hell he could calm the animal inside him that was threatening to come out.

"You have to," she purred, her hot breath on his belly had his eye opening up fast and looking down at her. "You promised."

Now he for sure couldn't breathe worth a damn. Sasha had a hold of his briefs and he knew without a doubt that she was going to pull them down.

"Sasha," he could barely say her name. "What...what're you going to do?"

She glanced up at him for only a second before she pulled his boxer/briefs down his legs. Chase closed his eyes and groaned. His cock sprang up, touching his belly. *I'm fucked!*

He couldn't even look at her. All his concentration and willpower went into breathing normal and keeping his animal self in check. Her hand closed around the base of his cock and he jumped. He had to bite his lip when that hand of hers moved up and down.

"You're so soft and hard at the same time." Wonder filled her voice when she spoke.

Chase opened his eyes gulped and stared up at the ceiling. He couldn't speak. Why the hell hadn't Cole told him that he was going to feel on edge once she started to touch him? Was it going to be like this every time?

Hot breath touched the head of his dick, and time stood still for him. With mouth open, Chase once more looked down at her.

"Sasha, I really don't think—oh my God!" he moaned when her lips closed around the head.

She sucked him into her mouth and he knew he was dying. Pleasure unlike anything he ever imagined was possible gripped him and refused to let him go. Of all the things that he thought would happen tonight, that was definitely not one of them. In fact, it was the last thing he ever believed would happen.

She moved up and down on him, her tongue flicking back and forth on the underside a few times before she popped him out of her mouth, her hand stroking him.

"I like how you taste," she said.

Chase could barely focus his eyes on her. "This might not be such a good idea after all," he panted.

"You didn't like it?" A pout formed on her lips and her eyes just about broke his heart.

"Baby, I love it, but I swear if you keep doing this, I'm going to come real quick and end up taking you."

She cocked her head to the side and took a lick at him. He hissed at the contact, “Would that be a bad thing?”

“Sasha please,” he begged. “I need some kind of control here and you sucking my dick right now is taking it all away.”

She kept her eyes fixed on him, sucked the head back into her mouth and pulled hard. Chase moaned loudly, pressing his fists into his eyes. Deeper she took him in until he felt the back of her throat.

“Oh fuck,” he groaned, breathing hard. “I’m going to lose it. Son of a bitch!” He bit down hard on his lips, trying like hell to hold back the orgasm that was quickly approaching.

It was building. Chase felt it start at his spine and move down to gather in his balls. His climax was close and he was powerless to stop her. He moved his hand, looked down, and watched her take as much of him as she could. He pumped into her mouth, his mouth open as he tried to control his breathing.

His orgasm hit him, Chase sat up, leaning back on his hands and came into her mouth. It embarrassed and excited him at the same time. The one thing he didn’t want to happen their first time together was for him to come into her mouth. Oral sex he thought was to happen later on, not the first thing they did.

Hanging his head back, he pumped his hips up with each spurt that shot from him. Sasha drank it all. He was shocked that she wasn’t disgusted or repulsed by this.

“That wasn’t supposed to happen until much later,” he told her while he tried to get his body under control.

“You didn’t like it?”

He opened his eyes and smiled at her. “I loved it.”

She smiled back and slid up his body, lying on top of him. “Now I understand why Carrick likes to do that to Drake.”

Chase laughed and wrapped his arms tightly around her. “You have got to stay out of their heads, especially when it comes to that stuff.”

“She also likes it when he does the same thing to her.” Her cheeks became red again and her fingers started to play with his hair. “Jada does too. Even when she was showing me the book I was picking up how she was thinking about doing it when Kane came back.”

“Talking like that can kill the mood, honey.”

She frowned. “What do you mean?”

“I mean...” he flipped them over, her under him with his weight braced on his arms under her back. Without hesitation, she parted her

legs for his hips. "Talking about it or hearing about your father or brother's sex life isn't a big turn on for me."

"So is it your turn now?"

She had such an innocent tone when she asked the question. Chase was taken aback for a few moments, wondering how to answer it. Lord only knows how much he wanted to touch her, to explore her body like he did in the dreams. But that inner voice of his still wondered if she was ready for it yet or now.

"Do you want it to be?"

He almost held his breath, waiting for her answer. Sasha raised her arms up over her head. "Whatever you want."

His cock jolted with excitement. He could've sworn right there that the damn thing had a mind all its own.

Chase sat up on his knees between her legs. He licked his lips. The thrill he felt right now reminded him of his first time. He was scared, excited, and so ready to touch her that he just didn't know what to do first.

And it must've showed.

Sasha sat up grabbed the bottom of the shirt and pulled it up over her head. She tossed it aside and lay back down with her arms over head.

She was a vision, one he would take to his grave when the time came. Her blonde hair fanned out around her shoulders and head like a goddess. Her chest moved up and down, strawberry pink nipples stood erect. His hand itched to cup her breasts, to feel the weight of them and the silkiness. Her stomach was flat, hips the perfect width, legs long enough to go around his waist and a small patch of blond curls covered her sex.

Chase knew without a doubt right then that he would mark her this night. He was going to take his mate and come morning neither Drake nor Kane would be able to undo it.

Sasha was offering herself to him and Chase would gladly take the gift. There was no way in hell he had the power to get off this bed and walk away from her.

He lowered himself back down to her and kissed her deep. He thrust his tongue into her mouth and rubbed his body against her. She was silk against him. Pure, innocent silk.

He took hold of a leg, pulled it up to his waist then skimmed his hand down to her hip where he moved it between her legs. The first touch from him and she was sucking in her breath as he kissed her. She also jumped, but didn't stop him.

He rubbed her pussy. Moaned into her mouth at the pleasure he felt. She was hot and wet, and the more he messed with her the hotter and wetter she became. Testing his boundaries, Chase touched her clit with the tip of his finger. Sasha broke the kiss and arched into his hand. He trailed kisses down her throat to her chest and further still until he came to one breast.

He licked at the nipple that stood at attention. Teased it with the tip and lapped at it as he would a lollypop. Instead of taking it into his mouth, he kissed around the nipple, nipping at the mound all around before coming right back to it. Sasha squirmed beneath him, trying to press herself to his mouth. Chase didn't think she knew just what she was doing but going on instinct.

She gasped when he sucked the nipple into his mouth. He watched her face, saw the confusion and excitement building inside her. He flickered his tongue around it, grazed it with his teeth, then pulled on it with a deep hard suck. Sasha was panting hard by the time he left it and went to the other, sucking it just as hard into his mouth.

Further down he traveled, kissing her body. When he reached where his hand played, Chase stopped to look up at her. Sasha had her eyes closed, hands fisted into the sheets, her breathing was coming fast and hard. Her nipples were red from the harsh treatment he gave them, and he would bet if he touched them right now they would be hypersensitive.

He opened her up, looked his full at her flesh before placing a kiss on her pussy. Her scent reminded him of a fresh rain storm and the small taste he got on his lips went straight to his hand and down to his dick.

Yep. There was no denying it now. They were not leaving this room tonight until they mated.

"You ready for this?" he asked, kissing her pussy again. "I need to hear you say you are, Sasha. I need to hear the okay come from you, because I swear that right now I can't walk away willingly. If you want me to stop, now is the only chance you get."

"I—I—I don't want you to stop," she rushed out.

Chase wasn't going to ask again. He licked her, pushed his tongue into her pussy, and drank her excitement like a starved man. From rear to clit, he moved his tongue, stopping only a few seconds to slurp and drink her sweet cream.

Oh she tasted heavenly! There was no fucking way he was going to walk away from this. Her taste was in his system now, just as she was in his heart. She belonged to him, just as he belonged to her.

As he closed his lips around her clit, he pushed one finger into her. That one move had her shattering around him. The scream that came from her lips almost had him spilling on the blanket. It was exotic, and the feel of her contracting around his finger had him hardly waiting until it was his cock inside her. To feel her pleasure was the ultimate, he thought.

Chase kept lapping at her clit. He joined another finger with the first and moved it in and out of her. She bucked under him and panted. Her hands left the edge of the bed and fisted into his hair, pulling at the locks.

"It's happening again," she panted. "Oh, man!"

Sasha was fire under him. And he was more than ready to be burned.

Another pull and she was once more shattering around his fingers. Chase pumped them into her quickly and moved up her body, licking and kissing as he went. When he was level with her, he slipped from her pussy and grabbed hold of his dick. He rubbed the head up and down her slit, coating his cock with her juices.

As easy and as gently as he could, he pushed forward, stopping when the head met resistance. Fuck if she wasn't tight! So damn tight, he began to doubt if this would work. Maybe he needed to give her more time, and stretch her more. But shit if he couldn't pull out now.

He played with her clit, rolled it, rubbed it quickly as he pushed into her. He felt the unused muscles refusing him entrance.

"Relax, Sasha," he rushed out. "God you need to relax, baby."

"I'm trying." She sounded like she was about to cry. "I don't know if I can do this, Chase."

He stopped. Not even halfway inside her he stilled. "Look at me." She opened her eyes and a tear slipped free, sliding down her cheek. "If you think you're doing something wrong here, you're not. It's always hard the first time, and the pain or discomfort you're feeling right now only happens this one time." He kissed her. "Tell me what you feel. What you like."

"I liked how you made me feel when you were kissing me down there."

"Do you like it when I touch you like this?" He rolled her clit and her eyes went up into the back of her head. She arched into him, taking more of his cock inside.

"Yes," she sighed.

"Does it make you feel good?" He could feel her vagina muscles relaxing and pushed even more into her until he felt her virginity.

Halfway in he stopped again, but didn't stop playing with her clit.

"Yes," the word rushed from her lips and her nails dug into his shoulders.

He kept playing with it, watching her face. The nails dug deeper, her breathing became shorter and just when she climaxed again he thrust the rest of the way into her body.

She cried out, her eyes opening wide. Chase didn't move at all. He stayed right where he was, giving her time to get use to him being inside her.

"Hold on to me," he soothed. "It'll be over in a few seconds."

She pressed her face into his chest and cried. Of all the things he half expected for her to do, crying on his shoulder wasn't one of them. The guilt that hit him almost had Chase pulling out of her body, but he stayed put. Already he could feel the muscles that gripped him loosening up some, but not much. He had a gut feeling that no matter what she was always going to be tight for him.

"You okay?" he asked, holding her tight.

Sasha nodded, but said nothing.

"Ready for me to move yet?"

She sniffed and pulled away from his chest. "Is it going to hurt again?"

Chase smiled and brushed her hair away from her face. God she was beautiful. And he couldn't get over how fast he was falling in love with her either.

"The only thing you will feel is that pleasure, like when I kissed you down there, only it will be about ten times better."

He slowly pulled out, leaving the head in place, then just as slowly he slid back in. Sasha's eyes once more got huge, as if she was in shock that there wasn't any pain to go with it.

Chase moved steadily. He didn't go fast or hard, and damn if he didn't *want* to go faster. He wanted to take her hard, to thrust into her the way all shifter males did. He wanted her to take the man and the animal at the same time.

But he held it back. Chase fought with the animal, kept him at bay, and loved Sasha gently her first time. He kissed her deep, thrusting his tongue into her mouth to match the tempo his body made with hers.

Once more, her nails dug into him, but this time they weren't on his shoulders or back. This time Sasha dug into his ass. When he broke the kiss and licked down her throat to her shoulder, she moaned and grunted to his thrusts.

He picked up speed. The tempo he set for them grew faster and she was soon grinding back against him. He sucked on her shoulder, on the spot that he was going to mark. God, just thinking about her having his mark had him surging faster.

“Chase, oh God, Chase!” she cried out, nails drawing blood.

Chase felt her orgasm. She clamped down so hard around him that he feared he might hurt her, as he kept moving. He closed his eyes, fisted his hands into the side of the bed, and tried like hell to push it back. But he couldn’t. His cock erupted again, filling her up with his seed, and she milked every last drop he had.

He arched, going deeper. His moan of pleasure sounded like a moan of pain to his own ears. Right before it was over he closed his mouth over her shoulder, biting down, leaving his mark right above her birthmark.

She cried out again, bucking under him. He felt another orgasm wash through her. Tiny tremors ricocheted around his cock, causing him to whimper. He was sensitive, too damned sensitive to move an inch. And any movement from her added to the sensation.

Releasing her shoulder, he rested his forehead on it, taking gulps of air into his lungs. Sasha went limp under him, but her breathing matched his.

“I...can’t...move,” he panted. She moved and he whimpered and chuckled at the same time, “Please don’t move yet.”

“So was that what you meant when you said things might get out of control?”

Chase forced his arms to hold him up so he could look her in the eye. “God you’re beautiful,” he whispered. She blushed and he smiled. “Love it when you blush.” Lowering his head, he kissed her, lingering on her lips. “Just like I love you,” he said against her lips.

“Do you really?” Her eyes were closed, as if she was savoring this moment.

Chase gently pulled from her body and rolled over to his back, taking her with him. She didn’t rest her head on his shoulder, but leaned on his chest, looking down at him this time.

“I think I’ve loved you from the first moment I saw you,” he told her, taking a lock of her hair and twisting a finger into it. “No other woman ever stood up to what my heart already wanted—you.”

“So what happens now?” She sighed and then put her head on his chest.

“What would you like to happen?”

“I don’t know.” She ran her finger around a nipple, giving him

the chills. "Can you do that again?"

Chase was about to say no, but his damn dick answered the question for him. He was instantly hard again.

"Oh, I think I have one quickie in me."

She looked up at him and frowned. "Quickie?"

Chase moved quickly. He had her on her back, legs spread wide with him holding her by the ankles. "Watch me enter you."

She looked down and so did he. He slowly pushed his way back into her body, hissing as her tight muscles once more parted for his width. "Man you're so tight," he groaned, rotating his hips. With one powerful surge, he thrust the rest of the way into her and Sasha gasped.

He held her apart like that and moved. This time he took her the way he wanted, fast and hard. He slapped into her rapidly, his balls hitting her ass. Chase watched himself. It was a blur almost with how fast he moved inside her. When he glanced up at her, Sasha was holding onto a pillow, or more like had it over her mouth. Her face was red, veins at her neck straining. It appeared that she was screaming into the pillow, and Chase suddenly thought he was hurting her.

"You alright?" he asked, slowing down.

She shook her head, picked the pillow up and swallowed. "Don't stop."

Chase smiled and started back up. "Yes ma'am."

Once more, he watched himself enter her body. Mouth open, pleasure unlike anything he could ever explain raced through his system. His body and senses were in overdrive. He fucked with his body, but his heart was making love to her. She took what he gave without complaint, and seemed to hunger for it in the same manner he did.

He heard her muffled scream. Felt her pussy tighten brutally around his cock and lost his own battle. He swelled inside her and exploded. Chase shook with the release, his seed shot out of him, making him feel weak with each spurt.

He let go of her legs, bent forward, and rested his head on her belly. Even after everything he had spilled from him, his cock was still contracting, still trying to shoot more out. But he had no more to give.

"I can't—I can't move." He panted again.

"Me either." She matched his exhausted voice. "I'm so sore."

"I'm sorry," he apologized and licked his lips, slipped from her

with a whimper and flopped onto his back. “I shouldn’t have been that rough.”

Sasha rolled over to her side, snuggling up to him. “I wasn’t complaining.” He turned his head, looking at her and she smiled. “It’s strange, but I don’t mind the soreness.”

He kissed her forehead before dropping down again. “I don’t think I’ve ever felt this drained before.” He held his finger up when he heard her take in a deep breath. Something told him that she was going to ask him again. “And before you ask, no, twice your first time is enough.”

“I was only going to ask you if you wanted to join me for a shower.” She sat up and nipped his chest. “But if you don’t, it’s your loss.”

Chase stayed where he was. He watched Sasha get off the bed and walk naked into the bathroom. The door didn’t close. He heard the water turn on, a few seconds later the door opened, and he heard splashing.

“You’re going to be the death of me.” He jumped from the bed, and dashed into the bathroom.

Sasha screamed when he came into her shower. They started tickling and splashing water into each other’s faces. After some fun, Chase turned her and began to wash her off. He wasn’t going to make love to her again. She said she was sore, and he knew she needed a bit of time before they had sex again.

Once done, they changed the bedding, and Sasha put the t-shirt back on. Chase stayed naked. She blushed, got into the bed with him, and snuggling up in his arms went to sleep.

Chase stayed awake a bit longer. His mind wouldn’t stop going over what happened. Touching was planned tonight. But like he was always told, the greatest things in life happen when you least expect them. Tonight was a great example of it.

Now how the hell was he going to tell Drake and Kane that he just mated with her?

Chapter Nine

Sasha woke up early. She slipped from the bed and Chase's arms, tugged on a loose fitting dress, left a note and rushed to Drake's place to pack her things. She was *very* sore and each move she made reminded her of everything she and Chase did last night. But she wasn't complaining. She felt great. Complete. The only thing that could bring her down was wondering what her brother and father would say.

She reached the house before anyone was up. Quietly she made her way up to her room and started packing. Halfway done Drake came into her room.

"I had this feeling that you'd be leaving us."

She stopped, took a deep breath, and faced him. "Are you upset?"

"I think you know the answer to that." He grinned.

Sasha knew the answer. He wasn't at all upset over it, only worried that she would be able to handle things with Chase.

She smiled and went up to him, hugging him tight. "He does make me happy."

Drake held her and sighed. "Then that's all I really care about." She pulled out of his arms and went back to her packing. "But as your father now, I'm going to have to bitch about something. So that something is going to be the trailer. I think he should at least get you a real home."

"I like the camper."

"Not enough room."

She closed her bag with a smile. Yep. Leave it to Drake to argue about something, just so he was arguing. "Does Carrick know?"

"Oh I called her last night. She's bitching that I should come up since you're well taken care of." Sasha grinned at him and he put both of his hands up in the air. "Her words, not mine."

"I think you should. Been a long time since you went anywhere."

"Yeah, yeah, yeah." Drake picked up two of her bags. "Might as well help you with this stuff. Lord only knows I can't stop you."

She couldn't stop smiling. Out of her room, down the stairs and into his truck they went. Sasha got into the passenger side and Drake grumped while he slid behind the steering wheel.

"So you really okay with this?" she asked.

"Nope." Drake turned the engine put it in gear and pulled out of

the drive. "But I'm told that's what a father is supposed to think and feel, according to my Uncle."

"Did Dedrick have a hard time letting Celine go?"

Drake nodded. "Was pissed off. Decker Cole even."

"You're not going to do that to Chase. Are you?"

A smile spread across Drake's face. "Now there's an idea."

"Drake!"

He took a shortcut that he made a year ago to get to Cole and Chase's place. It was bumpy, and it hurt Sasha, bouncing in the seat, but she kept her pain to herself. Drake was teasing her. She picked it up. He was slowly coming around to this, which made her feel good.

They pulled up behind Chase's truck just as the ramp was coming down. Chase walked out, dressed in old jeans with holes in the knees, boots and a black t-shirt. He even had a cap on his head.

He looked yummy to her and sighed. He was all hers.

"Drake," Chase nodded.

"She packed her stuff," Drake said, and stepped out of the truck. "Has a lot of shit here and more back at the house. I suggest you get a real house put on this place."

"I might be able to do that."

Drake nodded, handed one of her bags to Chase. Chase reached for it, but before Sasha could warn Chase, Drake punched him. Chase went down on his ass, holding his jaw.

"It's sort of a family tradition," Drake huffed, rubbing his knuckles. "We all deck the guy who claims one of our girls." Drake held his hand out to Chase. "Call it your welcome to the family."

"Drake!" Sasha yelled.

Chase took his hand and Drake yanked him to his feet. "Everyone?"

"Heard my father did it to Uncle Adrian, and saw Uncle Dedrick do it to your brother." Drake shrugged. "So, yeah. Why not."

"You're all heart, Drake."

"I can't believe you did that," Sasha huffed, going to Chase. She touched his jaw wincing when he did.

"He's fine," Drake stated.

"Yeah, I'm good," Chase said.

"So, anyway..." Drake took a deep breath, slid his hands into his pockets, and sighed. "Guess I'm going to head up with Carrick for a bit. See Brock and Heather. Might do me some good to get out of here. Do you good for me to not be around, either."

"Trust me now?" Chase asked.

"Hell no," Drake snorted. "But I trust her and that's all that matters. And it also means you're on your own with Kane," he finished with a big smile.

"Yep, all heart." Chase rubbed his jaw again, putting his arm around Sasha. She hugged him back, looking at Drake. "So, just like that, we're okay?"

Something in Drake's eyes changed. They became softer when they met hers and some kind of understanding seemed to pass between them.

"We're okay," Drake remarked softly. "You call if you need me."

"I will."

Drake nodded and went back to his truck. She watched him leave and a sense of peace washed over her. This was now her home. With Chase.

"I don't know who hits the hardest. Him or your brother."

She laughed, pulled out of his arms, and took two of her bags into the camper. Chase followed with the other two and when they got to the bedroom, they only stood there staring.

"Okay so I think Drake has a point," Chase stated. "We might need to build a house after all."

"Where am I going to put my stuff?"

Chase tossed the bags onto the bed took hold of her hand and pulled her out of the room and headed outside. He went right up to the truck, opened the door for her, closed it, and then quickly got into the driver seat.

"Where're we going?" she asked.

"To talk to Cole about a house." He started it up, put in gear, and spun the tires, doing a U-turn.

"But I like the camper," she whined.

"Okay, well then maybe we'll just add to it or something," he shrugged. "But we need to do something. We don't have room for your stuff."

Sasha scooted to the middle put her hand in his lap and kissed his neck when he put his arm around her. "After we talk to him can we go parking?"

Chase turned his head fast enough that he could've gotten whiplash. "Aren't you pretty sore from last night?"

She moved her hand to cup his cock and Chase jumped. "If you don't want to all you have to say is no."

"Now I didn't say that at all," he said, then hissed when she rubbed over his erection. "But I am going to request that you hold off

until after we get done talking to my brother. If your brother sees me like this, he might want to ripe my dick off and leave you with nothing.”

Sasha bit her lip and moved back. “You have a point there.”

They reached the shop, and she did her best to keep her hands to herself. It wasn’t easy, but she managed.

The shop wasn’t too busy, at least it didn’t appear to be from the outside. Inside was a whole other issue. Guys stood everywhere waiting for their chance to get to talk to Cole about something. Some had blueprints in hand, others pictures of homes or decks. To Sasha it looked like a mad house.

“Come on.” Chase tugged her hand. “We can talk to him later tonight.”

“Maybe we can have dinner with them?” she stated. “All we have to do is go down to the bakery and ask Celine.”

Chase nodded and they left the shop. Leaving his truck parked, they walked down to the bakery. It was also just as packed and Celine looked like she was in over her head without Carrick there.

“Need a hand?” Sasha asked when Celine dashed by.

“Would love one,” Celine smiled.

“Have a seat.” She pushed Chase down into one of the empty chairs. “We go parking after this.” She smiled as she went behind the counter.

There was a stack of orders waiting to be boxed up. Sasha went to work at it. She knew the layout of the shop, only because she worked it when either Celine or Carrick was sick. Reading the first order, she went to work at locating the pie and cake, then on to the pastries.

“Why didn’t you call me this morning?” she asked when Celine took two apple pies she’d just boxed up.

“Because you were busy with Chase and the claim,” Celine answered. “Didn’t want to bother you.”

“Not a bother.” She reached for the donuts. “Who’s paid and who hasn’t?”

“Left side paid and waiting. Just call out the order number.”

Sasha nodded, finished three boxes before turning and going up to the counter. “Order one thirty, two ten, and one nineteen.” She handed each person their order smiled and said, “Have a nice day,” before turning and going back to the rest.

It took over two hours to help Celine get caught up. By the time she had the last order in, everything in the racks was bare but for two

coffee cakes. Plating them, then pouring a cup of coffee and a glass of milk, she went out back out to Chase who was reading the paper. She place the coffee in front of him, he folded the paper, looked down at it then closed the paper up and picked the cup up. She watched him take a sip as she tore into one of the cakes.

“You were pretty good back there,” he stated.

She shrugged. “I love it really.”

“So why don’t you ask Celine to work here in the mornings. Sure they could use your help.”

“I’ve been trying to get her to work for me since I opened and you saw how busy I am,” Celine said as she sat down next to Chase with a sigh. “Today they’ve cleaned me out.”

“Kane really didn’t want me to work,” Sasha stated. “Guess he was afraid of the guys coming in here and looking at me or something.”

“Well, girlfriend, the offer still stands,” Celine said. “With Carrick taking off because Heather needs her I’m short handed.”

“And I can get you your own car,” Chase remarked, picking the cup up. “Damn, Celine, this is good.”

“Thanks. Special blend I order.”

“I can’t drive.” Sasha told him.

“Driving is easy.” Chase took a piece of her cake and popped it into his mouth.

“Speaking of driving, how’s my car coming?” Celine asked, leaning on his shoulder. “I’m dying to drive it.”

“Well see, that’s one thing I do need to discuss with you two.” Chase smiled, giving Sasha a wink. “But it’s going to have to cost you dinner again.”

Celine snorted and pushed him. “Just like your brother. Always thinking with your stomach.”

“Am I like my brother?” Sasha asked. She’d heard that term before and never understood really what it meant.

Chase shook his head. “Nope. He’s mean, you’re not.”

“But she could end up with the sexual hunger,” Celine teased, winking at Sasha. “I heard Jada tell me once that he could go all—”

“It’s time for us to leave.” Chase stood up, taking hold of Sasha’s arm, pulling her along.

Celine laughed. “See you tonight then?” she called out.

“We’ll be there!” Chase waved.

They walked back to the truck, hand in hand. Instead of opening the passenger side, Chase let her in from the driver’s side. Excitement

raced through her body. The thrill of going parking with him had her panties getting wet and her clit throbbing.

“Oh, baby, I can smell that,” Chase growled.

“Smell what?”

He wrapped his arm around her shoulders, worked at her strap until it fell down and slid his hand inside her dress, cupping one breast. Sasha sucked in air at the pleasure and pushed herself harder into his hand. Her nipple hardened and he played with it.

“I can smell you getting wet,” he purred. “And I love it. Makes me want to eat it all up.”

The way he talked excited her. Sasha couldn’t get over the change she felt in herself and how she was starting to take the things she wanted. When she first saw Chase, she was a bit fearful of him. Only because he was so different from what she was used to. She was attracted to him, like bees to honey. The first time she got a feel of what normal was, she became hooked. She couldn’t stay away from him, no matter what her brother or Drake said. And now she was happy about it.

“Yeah, well, I want to taste *you* again,” she said back to him, her face heating up at her boldness. “In fact, I’m not sure if I can wait until you find a place.”

She unzipped his jeans, tugged at the snap, and freed his hard cock for her attention. Chase hissed when she moved her hand up and down the base of him. Her mouth watered when she saw a tiny drop come out of the slit.

Not giving anything much thought except what she wanted, Sasha turned in her seat, got up on her knees, opened her mouth and took him in, sucking until he touched the back of her throat. She moaned and he growled.

“Oh fuck,” Chase sighed.

The truck turned and bounced. This helped her to take even more of his length down her throat, gagging her a little. Sasha didn’t mind though. She pulled on his flesh, teased the underside, her hand cupping his balls.

He parked, turned the truck off, and then she felt cool air touch her backside. Shivers tore through her then when she realized he’d pulled up her dress. His hands went inside her panties, fingers slid between the globes of her rear and one began to rub and tease the entrance to her backside.

At first, the contact had her wanting to pull back, but the more he did it the more she seemed to not only relax, but enjoy it.

With a popping sound, Sasha released his flesh from her mouth, rose up, and kissed him deep. She thrust her tongue into his mouth as he had done her. She acted on pure instinct. Grabbing hold of his shirt, she tugged him to the middle of the seat. Then she climbed onto his lap, straddling him.

“I don’t know why I feel like this,” she panted, tugging his shirt from his jeans. Chase had to help her get it out, then she had it up over his head and on the floorboard.

She kissed him again, and he went to work at pulling her dress down, exposing her breasts. Both hands closed around them, squeezing and pulling at the nipples until Sasha felt on the verge of insanity. She fisted her hands into his hair, pulled his head back, and kissed his neck. She licked, sucked, and even bit him once.

“Maybe you’re feeling something like a cycle,” he panted, squeezing her breasts once more before moving down her body and under the skirt. He slid both of his big hands into her panties, squeezing the cheeks of her ass. “After all, the full moon is in a couple days.”

She moved her lips back up his throat and licked his lips. “But I don’t have anything shifter in me.”

“Sure you do.” He tugged her panties from her body so fast she jumped from the force, not expecting it. “You have something shifter in you, or you wouldn’t be you.”

“Love me again,” she begged and kissed him, one hand going down his chest, between his legs. She wrapped her hand around his cock again and positioned it just where she wanted it.

Chase stopped her, took both of her hands, and placed them on the roof of the truck, “Use it for leverage.”

He placed his hands at her hips, bunched the skirt up, picked her up, and slowly lowered her back down on him. She moaned aloud—couldn’t help it. He was so thick that even though it wasn’t their first time he still stretched her to a burning point.

“Ah,” she moaned aloud again, when he filled her to the max. She rested her face on her arm, grinding her hips.

“Move when you want,” he breathed out, moving her skirt to the back of her. “Just fuck me hard, baby.”

His lips closed over one nipple, sucking, and pulling at it. Sasha was in bliss. She couldn’t move yet. She enjoyed the pounding sensation she felt as he shoved deep inside her and from the pulling on her breasts.

When she did move, she knew right off that it was going to be

fast for her. Whatever it was that was coming over her was burning her from the inside out. She had heard about this cycle thing but never went through it. Since all the tests performed on her showed she wasn't a shifter, there was no reason for her to know what to expect. But for some reason she was picking up from herself that what she was going through was a shifter female cycle.

"God, Chase, I'm burning," she moaned, grinding down on him. "I feel like I'm about to—I don't know what."

Chase once more took hold of her hips and began moving her up and down. "Move just like that."

Sasha nodded and did as he asked. She was in heaven. The burning didn't feel as intense, but it was still there. She moved fast, bounced on him as hard as she could.

She still felt stretched to a burning point, but it was nothing like this burning need she had racing in her system. She felt on fire, as if she couldn't move hard enough or fast enough on him. The truck moved along with her motion, adding to the friction.

She could no longer keep her hands up on the roof. She moved them to his hair, pulling and tugging at the locks as she kissed him deep. Chase took it without complaint just moaned when she pulled on his hair and helped her move her hips.

With his help, she slapped onto his cock. They were both grunting, breathing hard. When her orgasm hit, Sasha ended up doing what she thought was the unthinkable.

She bit down hard on Chase's shoulder.

He yelled, swelled up inside her and she could actually feel his release. His arms went around her tight, hugging her, jerking against her. The orgasm felt as if it would never end.

It was so powerful, that when Sasha released his flesh she broke down crying. Tension flowed out of her with the tears, making her think that it was never going to end.

Chase rubbed her back. He soothed her and she just held on.

"What's wrong with me?" she sniffed, trying to stop the tears from coming.

"Nothing's wrong with you."

"Then why am I crying?"

Gently he took hold of her chin pulling back so she would look at him. "Because you had one hell of an orgasm. Trust me. It's a great thing."

It took some time before she was ready to pull away from him. Chase helped her fix her dress, slide back behind the wheel and

started back for home again. She was still tingling between her legs and she started burning again.

"I think you're right," she sighed, resting her head back on the seat.

"About what?"

"I think I am having this cycle thing. But what I don't understand is why now. Why didn't I have it before?"

Chase shook his head. "No idea."

"Will you take a shower with me?"

He smiled at her just as he turned into the drive. "Try to keep me out."

He parked and she was out before him. She did have to wait for him to lower the ramp and when he did, he looked up at the sky.

"Looks like another storm."

She also looked up and muttered, "I hate storms."

"Not tonight you won't." He gave her a wicked smile. "Tonight you're going to love them."

He gave her a swat on the ass right before she walked inside. Sasha opened her mouth to say something smart, but closed her mouth without a word. So she did what she knew would drive him nuts. She undressed right in front of him, letting her dress fall to the floor and walked to the bathroom naked.

She heard him growl behind her and couldn't stop the excited squeal from slipping past her lips. She ran into the bathroom, slammed the door closed and turned on the water. Sasha was only in the shower for about two minutes before Chase walked into the bathroom.

He yanked the door open. She pressed her back up against the wall, reached for him, and welcomed the deep kiss he gave her.

Chase picked her up, her legs went over his arms and he pressed into her. His mouth kissed a fiery trail down her throat to the mark he left on her shoulder.

"I'm burning again, Chase," she sighed when he sucked on her shoulder. "Make the burning stop."

He entered her in one powerful thrust, filling and stretching her to the max. Sasha cried out in bliss and pushed back against him. Chase seemed to know just what she needed. He slammed into her hard and fast. Each stroke took part of the burn away. Sasha moaned as quivers of delight at his exquisite taking tore through her. She dug into his shoulders, cried out and let the pleasure overtake her.

"Yes, yes, yes, yes," she cried out with each stroke. "Don't stop."

It's coming!"

She screamed and bit down once more on his shoulder.

Chase yelled, his cock contracted inside her. It was heaven, it was hell all wrapped up together tightly. Pleasure mixed with pain to turn again into mind-blowing pleasure. And just like her, his mouth and teeth sank into her shoulder as the aftershocks of their climax dwindled.

"I don't know if I like that or not," she whispered against his shoulder. A whimper left her lips when he pulled out, but he didn't let her down.

"Come on." He shut the water off and carried her out of the shower. "Let's take a nap before heading over to Cole's for dinner."

"Okay," she sighed, relaxing against him as he carried her to the bedroom.

They slept for a couple hours before the ringing of his cell phone woke him. Chase groaned, reached over her, and answered it.

"Yeah. Shit, no we took a nap. Be there in fifteen." Sasha didn't open her eyes. She just rolled to her side, snuggling into the blanket. "Come on. Celine is waiting for us."

"I don't want to," Sasha protested. A sharp stinging slap to her rear had her sitting up in the bed. "What was that for?"

"Get up. They're waiting for us."

Sasha gave him a dirty look, but got out of bed. Her limbs felt as if they could barely hold her up, but she managed to get dressed in a pair of shorts and a tank top. When they went outside the sky was dark, and in the distance, thunder rumbled. Sasha shivered as she got into the truck, dreading the storm that was coming.

Celine had made a big pan of lasagna for dinner with homemade rolls, salad, and a chocolate cake for desert. It smelled heavenly after the day she had with Chase. Sex twice within an hour or two left her feeling famished.

"So Celine said you wanted to talk about the car," Cole said, filling his plate.

"Well I looked at the engine I *thought* was going to work," Chase remarked, putting salad into his bowl. "Nada. Need to get another. Think Brandon might have one."

"What's that going to cost me?" Cole asked.

"Few more meals like this." Chase smiled.

Sasha watched the play between them and smiled. Inside she could still feel that burning need, but it wasn't as strong as before.

"So when you going to call him?" Celine asked.

“Maybe after dinner.” Chase was teasing. Sasha could hear it in his voice.

“So how’s Kane been?” Sasha asked Cole after some time passed.

“Growling,” Cole answered her with a tight smile. “Think Jada is bringing him around.”

She stabbed at her food, feeling like she’d done something wrong.

“Don’t worry about him so much,” Celine remarked. “They all are bears when it comes to any of us mating.”

Sasha nodded and took a bite of her food. Halfway through the meal Chase’s phone went off. He excused himself from the table and answered it. When he came back, he was smiling.

“Well you’re in luck. Brandon has one and is willing to do a trade with me for the one I’ve got.”

“Why do I have this nagging feeling a ‘but’ is about to come,” Cole stated.

“Because there is.” Chase smiled. “I have to go pick it up right now.”

“Right now?” Sasha asked.

“Sorry.” He looked at her apologetically. “I have to leave right now. Brandon has one and is willing to meet me halfway, so I’ll only be on the road half the time and come home late. Can she stay with you?”

“Of course,” Celine said and smiled.

Sasha stood up and walked with him to the front door. She grabbed his hand, holding it tight. “Chase I have a bad feeling about this,” she whispered.

“Hey, nothing’s wrong here.” He reached up, brushing his knuckles across her face. “I’m just heading to the city. Nothing to worry about.”

“I feel like something bad will happen.” She lowered her eyes, took a step, and pressed her face into his chest. “Please don’t go.”

He wrapped his arms around her and squeezed. “Hey when I get back we’ll do anything you want.” Taking a deep breath, she pulled back and nodded. He leaned down and kissed her. “I should be back after midnight. Stay up for me and we’ll go parking again.”

Again, she nodded, “Okay.”

One more kiss and he was out the door, into his truck and pulling away. That feeling she had didn’t go with him. It stayed with her all through the rest of dinner and even as they watched a movie.

Around eleven Cole and Celine were about to head up for bed. Sasha already decided she was going to stay up and wait for Chase to come home. They were halfway up the stairs when the phone rang.

That sound sent chills down her spine and fear gripped her hard. Tears came to her eyes as she watched Cole come back down and reach for the phone.

“Hello,” Cole answered. “Hey Stefan, kind of late isn’t it? What? What?!” Cole’s voice rose and her fear heightened. “Yes, we’ll be right there. I’m on my way.” He hung up, looked right at Sasha. “Cole’s been hit by a drunk driver. He’s in the hospital.”

Sasha broke down and started crying, wishing she’d convinced Chase to stay with her.

Chapter Ten

Sasha ran into the emergency entrance of the hospital. She wasn't looking where she was going because she was in a hurry to get to Chase, and her tears blinded her.

Jada dropped her, Cole, Celine, and Kane off together. Sasha ran for the doors, leaving the others behind. She went up to the desk, breathing hard.

"Chase...Chase Sexton!" she managed to get out. "Where is he?"

The nurse opened her mouth to answer but it was Stefan's voice she heard. "Sasha."

Sasha turned and ran to him, almost knocking him down. "Where is he?" she demanded.

"Back there," he said gently. Sasha tugged out of his arms and started in the direction in which he pointed. "Sasha wait!" Stefan yelled.

She saw Chase on a narrow bed, a sheet covering his lap, people standing around him and blood on his body. She covered her mouth in shock. More tears formed in her eyes at the sight of his motionless body.

"No," she mumbled behind her hand. "No, no, no, no, no." She went up to him, reached out for him, but hard hands grabbed her. "Let me go!" she screamed, twisting in the arms that restrained her. "Chase!"

"Shhhh." It was Kane holding her. "You don't need to see him like this."

Kane turned her away from Chase, and pressed her face against his chest. Sasha struck him then and fell at the same time. But the strong arms that held her wouldn't let her go. Kane picked her up and backed away so that she couldn't see Chase.

"No!" she cried into his chest. "I need to see him."

"Not like that, pumpkin." Kane told her.

"We need to move him. He's crashing!"

Sasha heard the words and screamed into Kane's chest. He carried her out of the emergency area and back to the waiting room.

Time felt like it was standing still for her. Sasha fisted her hands into Kane's shirt as her screams and cries rent the silence in the room. No longer was her world quiet. Chase was badly hurt and his pain was hers.

Her leg hurt, her hip, stomach, and chest. She felt as if she couldn't breathe, then nausea struck and she pushed out of Kane's arms and ran into the bathroom. She barely made it to the toilet before she was sick.

Dry heaves gripped her, kept her hunched over, until Jada took hold of her arms pulling her back.

"Sasha you need to calm down." Something cold touched her face.

"I can feel his pain," she moaned, opening her eyes, looking up at the ceiling. "His body is broken and his mind is lost," she finished with a whisper.

Jada touched her face when more tears fell. "I can't begin to understand what you're feeling right now. But I can tell you that getting yourself all upset and sick isn't going to help Chase at all." Sasha looked at Jada. "He's strong, girl. I mean, he lived through being shot with that copper shit, so know for a fact he's going to pull through this."

Sasha nodded and took her hand. Jada guided her over to the sink, helped wash and dry her face. Sasha had to take a couple deep breaths before walking out of the bathroom back to the family that was waiting for news.

A lady in a white coat was standing next to Stefan. When she turned to Sasha, she smiled and Stefan held out his hand to her.

"This is Doctor Sager," Stefan said. "The Doc is one of us and her team is working on Chase." He looked from Sasha to the doctor. "Sasha is Chase's mate."

Her smile was kind and Sasha got good vibes from her. Her brown eyes held warmth in them, easing Sasha.

"As I was saying to Stefan, Chase is going into surgery. His truck flipped several times and landed upside down. He has a cracked rib, collapsed lung and his hip on the right side is broken in many different places, almost to the point of being crushed. Lucky, though, no legs or arms are broken, but that hip has me worried."

"Why?" Stefan asked.

"Nerve damaged," Sager sighed. "But I won't know too much more until I get in there and start working on him. A few minutes ago I was told about some internal bleeding, but I wanted to come out here personally and let you know what's going on." She touched Sasha's shoulder. "I'll take very good care of him."

Sasha nodded and turned into Stefan's arm. She fisted her hands into his shirt and Stefan squeezed her tightly.

“So what the hell happened?” Jada demanded once the doctor went back through the double doors.”

“Drunk driver,” Stefan answered. “Hit Chase a fraction off from a head on.”

“Fucker,” Jada snapped. “And I bet that son of a bitch just walks away.”

Stefan shook his head. “His car caught on fire. By the time the police and ambulance got there he was dead.”

“Come on, honey.” Celine pulled Sasha from Stefan’s arms, walked her to a seat, and sat down with her.

Sasha felt like she was in another world. This wasn’t happening to her; not when she finally had her life under control. She was happy. Chase made her happy, made her feel safe, blocked it all out so she was normal. But it wasn’t happening now. She could hear it all, the sounds loud in her head. The thoughts, the worry, the pain. It all hit her with such force that she fisted her hands, pressed them at the sides of her head, and bent over.

“We need to get her out of here,” she heard Kane say.

“No!” Sasha snapped. “I’m not leaving him.”

Kane knelt down in front of her, took hold of her face, and had her looking at him. “It’s too much for you in here. I can see it and even feel *your* pain. You’re picking up everything from everyone right now.”

She shook her head. “I’m not leaving him.” This time she spoke slow with her own hint of anger.

Kane nodded and moved away from her.

“Where’s Dedrick?” Cole asked.

“He took Jaclyn out of town. Sidney’s at the house trying to get a hold of him. She’s also going to call Drake and Brock to let them know,” Stefan answered.

“This is a fucking nightmare,” Cole groaned.

Time seemed to stall. Fifteen minutes felt like fifteen hours. Another migraine started for Sasha, but she was able to ignore the pain. All of her energy was focused on Chase and what was going on with him.

He wasn’t hurting right now. But what she did pick up from him was that he was drifting away from her and everyone. She couldn’t make sense out of it either.

One hour, then two slipped by and somewhere in that time someone placed a glass of water then soda into her hand. She drank it, but never tasted a drop. She was also going numb with the wait,

feeling as helpless as the time she spent in the lab in her cage.

After three hours of waiting, the doctor came out. She looked tired, ragged. Her salt and pepper hair in the bun had strands standing up.

“The hip is what gave us the most trouble,” Sager sighed. “Bone fragments have been pressing on a lot of his nerves. It was delicate work.” She rubbed the back of her neck.

“What’s wrong?” Cole asked.

Sager took a deep breath. “He lost a lot of blood, and I’m worried about the unconscious state he’s in now. He could slip into a coma.”

Sasha could only sit in the chair and stare with horror at the doctor. Her brain registered what she said like this. *Coma: a state of prolonged unconsciousness, including a lack of response to stimuli, from which it is impossible to rouse a person.*

She put her cup down, stood up, and walked back through the double doors as the others talked with Doctor Sager. No one tried to stop her or ask her what she was doing back there. Sasha went right to the back, to the recovery area to find Chase.

He was on a narrow bed, but this time he wasn’t bloody. He had a tube coming out of his mouth, another sticking out from the left side of his chest. The sheet went up to his waist, and his chest was bare. She saw the bandage over the right side of his stomach, an I.V in his arm and a pulse reader on his finger.

Silent tears fell from her eyes when she took the first step towards him. He felt lost to her. She couldn’t feel him and he wasn’t there to block the noises from her head.

She went up to the bed, sat down on a stool next to the bed, picked up his hand and held it to her face.

“Don’t leave me,” she whispered, closing her eyes. “Please.”

* * * *

“Where’s Sasha?” Kane turned around, looking for her. He was about to panic when Jada grabbed his arm.

“Where do you think she’s at?”

He frowned, turned, and went through the doors. He found her sitting next to Chase, holding his hand, crying silently. He walked up to her, put both hands on her shoulders, and squeezed gently.

“I love him, Kane,” she said softly.

“I know, pumpkin,” he sighed.

“I never told him,” she sniffed. “He never heard me say it yet.”

“He will.”

She turned in the chair and he went down so that he was face to

face with her. "I don't feel him. He's lost."

"Just for a little bit, I bet." He tried to grin, but he couldn't. Sasha knew that Kane was trying to be strong for her. "He'll come back to you." Finally, he smiled, but it was shaky. "He's too damn stubborn to stay away."

"What if he can't come back?" Her lips trembled when she asked the question, fearing the answer.

Kane looked up at Chase. His face was bruised and cut. He looked like a man beaten down. But Kane also knew the hell that Chase went through to save Jada. He'd taken a shot for her, saving her ass. Kane owed him and he felt like shit that he hadn't seen things that way.

Chase was a good man—one who deserved his sister as his mate. Why hadn't he seen it before? Why couldn't he get over his own selfish pride and see that Chase was the perfect man for Sasha.

He saw it now and he was going to do everything he could to make sure Chase came back to Sasha.

Kane stood back up. He put his hands on her shoulders and turned her so she was facing him. "He'll come back, even if I have to get nasty."

Kane left Sasha sitting by Chase and went back into the waiting room. He went right up to Cole. "Call that Brandon guy. The one that Chase left with." He moved his hand around quickly as he spoke. "He was locked with Sasha in the cage. Get him here!"

"Okay," Cole frowned, "Why?"

"Because if I have to I'm going to use him to wake Chase up."

"You going to play the jealous card?" Jada asked. She cocked her head to the side, a grin tugged at the corner of her lip. "And here I thought you didn't give a damn."

"Chase was going to meet up with Brandon," Celine said. "You should call him anyway to let him know what's happened."

Cole met Kane in the eye and started to smile himself. "You might have something Kane. The doc did say that Chase staying in a coma too long wouldn't be very good for him."

"Then get his ass here," Kane snapped, pointed his finger to the ground. "My sister isn't going to suffer because of your brother a second longer if I can help it."

"Thought you didn't want him to claim her," Cole stated, pulling his cell phone from his pocket.

"That was before I found out she loves the prick," Kane growled, turning and walking back through the double doors."

Sasha!

Sasha jolted awake. She looked up at Chase's face before raising herself up. She didn't even realize she'd fallen asleep. She rubbed her eyes, stood up and stretched. A clock on the wall read it was six in the morning. How long had she been asleep?

"Hey."

She jumped, turned, and stared at a man she knew she recognized. "I know you," she whispered.

He smiled and nodded. "Brandon. How is he?" He nodded toward Chase.

Brandon Michael was just as large as the others. He was tall, built strong, had the dark hair, dark complexion, and muscles. Any girl would want to be wrapped up in his arms during a stormy night. He had kind, dark brown eyes, dark long eyelashes, and full lips. He was dressed in faded blue jeans, white t-shirt, brown leather jacket, and boots.

"He won't wake up." She could barely get the words out. "They think he might slip into a coma or something. Guess his truck flipped over," she murmured and shrugged. "I don't know."

"Chase's been through worse. He'll pull out of this."

She lowered her head before turning to Chase. He looked so pale, so bruised, and broken. She feared that there was no way he would be going to come out of this the man he was before.

"I'm sorry, Sasha," Brandon sighed. "It's my fault he's in here and not with you."

"He wanted to go," she said softly, staring at Chase's face. "He wanted to help Celine with her car. It wasn't anyone's fault."

She kissed his hand, stood up and walked away from Brandon. Fresh tears were forming in her eyes again and she hid her face, not wanting him to see her cry.

With head down, Sasha walked through the double doors and right into Sidney's arms. She was the first person she saw and she welcomed her comforting embrace. She cried and Sidney held her tightly.

"Come on," Sidney sighed, "You need to get a change of clothes and something to eat."

Stefan took them to his house. Kane went with them and Jada stayed at the hospital with the rest of them. Sasha felt like the world around her was a blur. Everything seemed unreal to her. She couldn't focus, couldn't speak, and surprisingly the numbness she felt blocked

all of the sounds around her.

Sidney took her into the house, up some stairs and into a room. She heard bathwater running, felt her clothes coming off, gentle hands helping her, and warm, soothing water. Comforting hands washed her hair, back and legs then dried her body and tucked her into a warm nightgown.

She didn't protest at all when someone helped her into a bed, pulled the covers up to her chin. Sidney's gentle hand brushed over her forehead and Sasha closed her eyes with a sigh.

"Get some rest," Sidney whispered. "When you wake up and eat, I'll take you back to be with Chase."

Sasha nodded and Sidney kissed her forehead.

* * * *

Sidney followed Jaclyn out of the bedroom, closing the door softly. Kane was leaning against the wall waiting for them. Worry filled his eyes.

"How is she?" he asked.

Sidney glanced at Jaclyn before wrapping her arm through his, pulling him away from the door. "Worn out. Sleeping will help her."

"I don't know what to do for her," he stated. "I can feel her pain, but she isn't reaching out to me."

"I don't think she's going to reach out to anyone," Jaclyn remarked.

"The only thing that is going to snap her out of this is Chase waking up," Sidney added.

Sidney took Kane into the kitchen where Stefan was. He was on the phone talking and pacing.

"Yeah, your mother just brought her here," Stefan said into the phone. He handed Kane a beer. "No, Kane's with her. Drake, we have it under control. Stop acting as if you're being split here. Heather needs to stay calm and so does Brock. Besides right now there isn't much you can do. Yes," he sighed. "I'll call you if we need you or if anything changes." He hung up and shook his head. "Man he's going to drive me nuts."

"He isn't coming?" Kane asked.

"I'm making him stay there," Stefan answered.

"Why?" Jaclyn asked.

"Because the reason Carrick wanted him there in the first place is because Heather is pregnant." Stefan said.

Sidney sucked in her breath sharply, hand going over her mouth.

"And her doctor is worried about her," Stefan added. "She's only

a couple months but it isn't going well at all and Brock is going nuts—freaking out nuts.”

“Oh, no,” Sidney moaned.

“Well this just keeps getting better,” Jaclyn added.

“Yeah, Brock's afraid Heather's going to lose the baby, so Carrick needs Drake there to help with him. Heather's *very* emotional right now, so Carrick has her hands full keeping her stress down.”

“And Drake feels torn,” Jaclyn finished with a wave of her hand.

“Just a bit.” Stefan took a big drink from his own beer. “How's Sasha?”

“Well if I'd have to take a guess, I'm going to say broken,” Sidney breathed out. “I put her to bed.”

“She's distant.” Kane remarked. “I've been trying to reach out to her, but it's like she isn't there.”

“That happens with males,” Stefan told him. “If our female is hurt or gone, we tend to shut down.”

“I don't like this, Stefan,” Kane said. “She's suffered too damned much in her life. She deserves happiness.”

“I agree,” Stefan nodded. “But it inst going to happen through you.” He pointed a finger at Kane. “Sasha's heart belongs to Chase. He's the one that can hurt her or make her life golden.”

Kane growled, “This isn't fucking fair!”

“So what's your plan with Brandon?” Jaclyn asked. She shrugged when Kane glared at her. “Know you have something up your sleeve. What is it?” When Kane said nothing Jaclyn grinned with a silent O. “That's dirty.”

“What is?” Stefan asked.

Sidney also smiled. “The good old jealousy angle. Smart.”

“And they said you were a dirty dumb animal.” Jaclyn patted him on the shoulder as she left the kitchen. “Very smart.”

“Who said that?” Kane turned and followed her out.

“Why am I lost?” Stefan asked.

“Because you're always lost.” Sidney rolled her eyes.

“Are you going to have Brandon make Chase think he's going to take his place with Sasha?”

Sidney also left the kitchen and Stefan followed her out. He grabbed hold of her arm, stopping her in the dining room. “Sidney, that's not going to work.”

“Why?”

Stefan sighed. “Because being in a coma he's lost. What he needs is one of us trying to delve inside his head and help him find his way

home. We don't do comas, and for one of our kind to be in one is a big deal."

"I swear you only tell me this shit as needed."

Stefan smiled at her. "I want Chase to come out of his just as much as the rest of you, but I think we need to focus on keeping Sasha sane and calm. Chase isn't here to help with it at the moment, so it's all on our shoulders."

"Its breaking her heart," Sidney whispered, tears coming to her eyes.

"I know," Stefan sighed.

* * * *

Kane took Sasha back to the hospital early in the morning. He stayed in the waiting room and she went in to sit with Chase. He looked different to her. Pale, lifeless. She wanted to cry, but held it back. She needed to be strong for him. He needed her this time and she was going to be there for him.

She felt drained emotionally. Yeah she got some sleep, but it wasn't what she needed really. Her body felt okay, but her heart was breaking.

Sasha watched as a nurse changed IVs which provided him medicine, tubes and vitals checked. She was starting to get that feeling again that something was wrong, but she didn't know what. He was getting the best care, so there shouldn't be anything wrong. Yet she couldn't get that feeling out of her system.

Kane pulled her out to take her down for something to eat. She wasn't hungry, but ate anyway. Brandon left with Cole to take a shower and get a nap. Back at Chase's side, she lowered her head to Chase's chest, right over his heart, and took some comfort in listening and feeling its beating. The thud had her drifting asleep while she held onto his hand and she didn't fight it. She wanted to sleep touching him—needed it.

She was nowhere. Normally when she dreamed she was in a place, or with Chase. But in this dream she stood in nothing. No color, no flowers, no life.

She started walking and as she stepped forward, a river started to form, but it wasn't a normal river. Like the place she was in, this river had no color. The water was white, to match everything else. Sasha looked down and gasped at the reflection she saw staring back at her.

Chase!

She looked up and there he stood on the other side of the river. He said nothing to her didn't reach out to her or move. He was a

statue standing motionless on the other side. When she stood up to go to him, the river widened, preventing her from reaching him.

“Chase!” she called out, reaching for him.

“I’m sorry, Sasha,” he whispered back.

The high pitch alarm jolted Sasha from her nap. She looked up at one of the monitors and her heart dropped.

“We have a code blue!”

The horrific words registered inside her just as hard hands yanked her from her seat and pushed her out of the room as nurses and the doctor rushed into Chase’s room.

“We have a bleeder!” the doctor said. “Take him down to the OR stat!”

Sasha stood there watching helplessly as his bed was shoved out of the room and down the hall. Tears fell, but she didn’t feel a thing. Only when the tears blinded her did she turn and go out to Kane.

“Sasha?” Kane rushed up to her, catching her before she fell to the floor.

She grabbed onto his shirt, fisting her hands into the fabric and screaming her pain against his chest. Kane held her tight and she welcomed his strength.

She didn’t know how long it was before the doctor came back out. Sasha sat next to Kane, her head on his shoulder as he held her close. The second she saw the woman she rushed over to her.

Dr. Sager took hold of her arms, rubbing them. “I have him stable again. There was another bleeder that we missed, but I got it.”

“What’s this mean?” Sasha frowned.

“It means he’s still critical,” Sager sighed. “He’s also running a small fever, so I’m going to have to keep you out of his room for now. Until he stabilizes.”

Sasha started to cry into Kane’s chest, and whispered, “I’m going to lose him.”

Kane squeezed her, “No you’re not.” He sighed, rubbing her back. “Never going to lose him.”

Chapter Eleven

Two weeks. It had been two weeks since Chase's accident and Jada watched not only Kane start to drag, but Sasha was like a walking zombie. Each day she came to the hospital and sat with Chase until Kane dragged her away. She wasn't sleeping or eating worth a damn, and Jada had just about enough of the shit.

It was late. Very late, like three in the morning when she snuck from the Draeger house to the hospital. It took some of her cunning to slip past the security guard that was watching everyone who came in. Since it was way past the visiting hours, and Chase was considered now in bad to fair condition, well she just thought it was past time she came to see him.

She waited until the nurse left Chase's room to continue her rounds. Then Jada snuck inside. Chase looked like he was sleeping in the bed. The tube that was down his throat the first time she saw him was gone. Sasha told them all last week that he was breathing on his own, which gave her hope that he was going to wake up.

He didn't.

"Well, well, well, well." Jada didn't bother with turning a light on. She strolled up to the bed, touched his foot under the sheet, and squeezed. "Sleeping beauty hasn't woken up yet. Don't you think it's time?" She looked up at the heart monitor. Nothing. It was steady.

Jada frowned, moved to the side of the bed, and tried to think of what might work. Something that Chase wouldn't approve. *Hum, well that could be just about anything now.*

She picked up the sheet and yanked it off his body. She whistled and shook her head. "Damn, Chase. I knew you had one hell of a body, but shit. Never knew you were carrying a package like that!"

This time the heart monitor went up and she smiled. Chase was shy, at least in the past he was. When he was shot, and she'd helped him, he'd been a bit reluctant at stripping in front of her.

"Well I'm not going to cover you back up." She turned, went back to the foot of the bed, and swung back around. She reached out, touching his foot. "I'm going to keep you like this just because I really don't mind looking at you." Again, his heart rate jumped.

She moved her hand up his legs, stopping close to his groin. She glanced up, smiling again. His heart was really beating—racing. Higher she moved her hand, to his waist, over his belly, and chest.

“I swear I never do get tired of looking at you guys,” she sighed. “Those chest muscles are enough to have anyone wanting to touch just to see if they’re real.”

When she planted her hand flat on his belly she stalled. She felt a tremor go through him giving her hope that this crazy ass plan of hers was going to work after all. Thank god, she hadn’t told Kane her plan. He would have gone nuts if he knew she was going to sneak into Chase’s room and touch him until he woke up. Thinking about the plan now, she had to agree. This was crazy.

Holding her breath, watching her hand, she walked her fingers from the middle of his chest down. She wasn’t sure what she was going to do once she got closer to his cock, but she was going to find out.

And then it happened.

Right before she reached his cock, a hand wrapped around her wrist tightly, stopping her. Jada jumped, her gaze on the hand now wrapped around her wrist.

Chase had his eyes open and was staring at her. “Mind?” he rasped out.

“Oh, you little son of a bitch,” she gasped letting out the air she was holding then smiled. “What the fuck took you so long. I thought I was going to have to grab hold of your dick.”

He licked his lips and let her go. “Where’s Sasha?”

* * * *

Sasha ran out of the elevator and down the hall towards Chase’s room, leaving Kane, Cole, and the rest of them behind. When she reached his room, she went inside and came to a dead stop as she took in the unbelievable sight. Chase was awake, sitting up on the bed with a nurse standing over him checking the IV and taking his blood pressure. When she moved to the side, he looked up and their eyes locked.

It felt like the world stopped. The nightmare was over. Finally over and he was awake, here with her.

The stare lasted for seconds before she rushed up to him, going into his arms. The minute he closed them around her, Sasha closed her eyes and sighed deeply. This was right where she needed to be. Where she belonged and where she was going to stay.

“I missed you,” she whispered at his shoulder.

“I missed you too,” he whispered against her hair.

“Damn, it’s good to see you awake.” Sasha pulled back wiped the tears from her eyes and smiled as Cole leaned down and hugged

Chase.

“Well, Mr. Sexton, I heard you were awake.” Doctor Sager walked into the room, a smile on her face.

Chase took a deep breath, gripping Sasha’s hand while he smiled back at the doctor. “Had some persuasion.”

Everyone looked at Jada. Her eyes went wide and she tried to put on an innocent face. Sasha giggled and rested back down on his chest, hugging him tight.

“Well, now that you’re awake I’m going to need to check you out,” Sager went on. “There were a few things that had me concerned.”

Chase kissed Sasha on top of her head and she reluctantly pulled away from him. With a look from the doctor, everyone left the room, closing the door so the doctor could check him over.

“Okay what did you do?” Kane demanded.

Before Jada could answer, Sasha put her hand on his chest and smiled up at him. “I don’t care what she did. He’s awake and that’s all that matters.”

“I’m going to call Dedrick and let him know,” Cole said.

“And I think that when the good old doctor comes out, Sasha should have some time alone with him.” Jada grabbed Kane’s arm, tugging him away.

“I want to know what you did to get him to wake up,” Kane demanded again.

Sasha smiled and shook her head. She didn’t care. Jada could’ve stripped him bare and touched him, if that’s what it took to get him awake. All she cared about was that his eyes were open and his arms were once more wrapped around her.

She held her breath and just about jumped out of her skin when the door opened and the doctor came out. Instead of her going in, Chase was being taken out. The first thing she thought was that something bad happened to him again.

“Don’t worry,” Sager said, coming up to her, touching her arm and rubbing her in a kind manner. “I’m just sending him down for an X-ray.” Sasha nodded. “Sasha, come sit down for a moment. I want to talk to you before he comes back.”

Sasha let herself be led over to a chair in the hallway. She sat down but didn’t look at the doctor until Chase was out of sight.

“This isn’t going to be smooth and easy,” Sager said.

“What?” Sasha turned in her chair, frowning. “I’m sorry. What’d you say?”

Sager took a deep breath, took hold of her hands and the expression the doctor's face made Sasha's gut drop. "Honey I don't know how to tell you this, and I won't have all the answers until I get a few tests done and the results in hand, but I wanted you to know that Chase is going to have to have a lot of therapy and time. That hip of his has me worried. I don't know yet if there was any nerve damage."

Sasha frowned. "I don't understand what you mean."

"I mean that if there was any damage he might not be able to walk right or have sex." A few seconds went by before she spoke again. "I'm trying to tell you that if he can't sustain an erection he might turn you away or become vicious. Shifter males are very proud men. Over the next few months, as we work to get him up on his feet, is going to be a challenge for him. If it turns out that he won't be able to mate with you then things could become very ugly."

Sasha shook her head. "I don't care about that. I just want him with me."

Sager reached out, touched Sasha's face and gave her a kind smile. "But he will, honey. What I'm trying to do is prepare you for the worst. And things will get worse before they get better."

Sager gave her a pat on the hand before standing up and walking away. Sasha stayed put, digesting everything the doctor said, as she tried to make sense of it all.

"What did the doc say?" Cole sat down next to her, snapping her out of her thoughts.

"I'm not sure." Sasha frowned when she looked Cole in the eyes. "Cole, if you couldn't have sex with Celine anymore because of getting hurt, would you leave her?"

Cole looked taken back. "Wow, you really are direct."

"Would you?"

He breathed in, rubbed his chin, and let it out slowly, "Boy I don't know. Where's this coming from?"

"I think the doctor thinks that Chase might be hurt too much to have sex again. Something like, as they worked to get him back up on his feet he was going to become mean or something."

"I'm sure it's just a misunderstanding."

"And if it isn't?"

"Sasha, Chase has waited a very long time and fought a big battle to claim you as his. I don't think that, after all that's happened to him, he's going to let it stand in his way from staying with you."

"But if he couldn't do that, would he leave me?"

"Is that what you're worried about? The sex?"

She shook her head quickly. "I don't care about that really. What I want is him. I don't want him to leave me if something goes wrong."

He smiled, leaned close, and kissed her on top of her head. "Don't worry about it. I'm sure everything will be fine. It's going to take a hell of a lot more than some damn injury to get him to leave you alone." He stood up when his cell phone went off. "Your damned brother couldn't keep him away, so keep that in mind. Hello?"

Sasha bit her lower lip, thinking about what everyone was saying. She had the doctor telling her that if Chase couldn't have sex he would leave her, and then Cole saying he wouldn't let her go for anything. It was all very confusing.

Ten minutes later hospital staff rolled Chase down the hall on his bed back to his room. She couldn't go in to him because the nurse was giving him a bath and changing his dressings. As soon as she saw the door open, Sasha rushed into the room.

Chase was sitting up in the bed, pillows behind his back, head back resting on top of them. His eyes were closed, face bruised and pale. But he looked perfect to her. He was alive and awake. Things couldn't get better than that in her eyes.

"Staring again?" he asked.

She couldn't stop her face from breaking out in the biggest smile or her feet from taking her over to his bed. She went into his arms. The tension, the worry that she'd been carrying around for weeks melted on a sigh against his chest.

"I thought I lost you," she mumbled against his chest.

"Not a chance."

"So you're awake." Sasha pulled back turned and looked over her shoulder. Brandon walked into the room, right up to Chase and shook his hand. "Man I feel like this shit is half my fault."

"Wasn't your fault," Chase said. Sasha rested her head on his chest, listening to the pounding of his heart as he talked. "But would love to know what the hell happened."

"What do you remember?" Brandon asked. He pulled a chair next to the bed, and sat down.

Chase rubbed Sasha's back and moved some in the bed. She felt him tense, heard the sharp intake of breath, and moved away from him. When she looked at him, she got this strange feeling like something was off. But then she shook it off and took the other chair, letting them talk.

Only half of what they said she heard. Sasha watched Chase, taking in the fact that he was awake. She stayed there until a nurse

kicked them out. When she started to come up to him to say goodnight he brought his hand up. A quick smile from him had her stopping. Hanging her head down, Sasha left his room behind Brandon not understanding what was going on.

The moment she saw Kane waiting for her she rushed up to him, wrapping her arms around his waist, hugging him.

"Hey, what's this?" Kane asked, returning her embrace and pulling her close.

"Something's different." She pressed her face into his chest, muffling her words. "He feels distant to me."

"He's worn out, that's all," Kane said.

Sasha shook her head and pulled back. His hands went to her shoulders and she wrapped her hands around his arms, fighting the tears. "No. The doctor said that he might feel like he can't be with me."

"Something is wrong," Brandon said as he came up to them. Sasha turned in Kane's arms, laying her head on his side. "He wasn't acting like himself."

"He'll snap out of it." Cole arrived then, shoving his cell phone into his pocket. "Just got off the phone with Celine. Drake called and Heather has officially been put on bed rest for the whole term of her pregnancy. Drake and Carrick are going to stay there and help out with her and the company until the baby is born. So we're on our own."

"Do they think she's going to lose the baby?" Kane asked.

Cole crossed his arms over his chest and took a deep breath. "Brock found a doctor of our kind up there that is taking care of her. From what Drake has told me, they'll be glad if she can carry it to thirty weeks, but don't think so. Brock is under strict instructions to not let her up on her feet for anything, and they mean anything."

"How far along is she now?" Bandon asked.

Cole rubbed his chin. "Think Drake said almost twenty weeks."

Brandon whistled, "Damn. It's going to be a long pregnancy."

"Yep," Cole nodded. "Anyway, Drake has talked to Stefan and Dedrick. They have the room and we'll stay there until Chase gets out. But from what the doc told me, we might be staying long. Chase is going to need months of therapy to get back on his feet. That hip of his is very touchy."

"Something else is going on with him, Cole," Sasha said.

"Don't worry, Sasha, we'll get him right." Cole gave her a quick smile. "Promise."

It was hard over the next couple of weeks watching Chase try to get back on his feet. Sasha stayed back, mostly because Chase wanted her to. He didn't let her go with him down to therapy and shooed her out when his bandages were changed and when the therapist came in to move his legs in the bed. It all felt like he was shutting her out and she didn't know what to do about it.

By week three, Chase was coming home. Cole went to get him, Brandon headed back home, Kane and Jada left to go back home also to make sure things were running okay but would be back. But Sasha stayed at the Draeger house waiting outside next to the pool, her feet in the water staring at nothing.

She was lost. Lost worst than anything she ever felt before since Chase came into her life. There had been this light in her life that was slowly fading away. For three weeks the gap between her and Chase had widened, but she'd been powerless to stop it—just as she was powerless to prevent the beatings that Kane had to endure in the lab.

"I sort of thought you'd be getting the room ready for Chase." Jaclyn Draeger walked up to Sasha and sat down. Sasha didn't reply, just kept her head down, eyes on the water. "Ah, I see. Know that look and feeling all too well." Jaclyn's feet went into the water and moved around, making ripples. "It's their pride, honey, that's all it is."

Sasha shook her head slowly. "He doesn't want me anymore," she whispered. "I feel that now."

Jaclyn's legs stopped. "He wants you."

She turned her head and looked at her. Jaclyn was so pretty. Her long black hair hung down her back, eyes bright, body still looking great. It wasn't a big mystery why Dedrick was attracted to her or why he fought it so hard. Jaclyn Draeger was a knock out confident woman.

"He won't let me get close to him." Sasha's lips trembled and she couldn't control it. Tears fell and before she could catch her breath, Jaclyn had her in her arms.

"Oh honey, he's a wounded animal right now," Jaclyn stated, resting her chin on top of Sasha's head. "And wounded animals distance themselves from everyone."

"But he isn't distancing himself from Cole," she whined. Sniffing and pulling back she quickly wiped her face. "Look at me. I'm crying like some baby. Maybe I should've gone home with Kane."

"You're not crying like a baby," Jaclyn told her, taking hold of her chin, meeting her gaze. "We've all cried over them dumb-asses."

It's what makes us human. You love him and that hurts, I understand that. Trust me when I say that I do. But girl you have to fight for him, not run away, feeling bruised."

Sasha couldn't help herself and smiled. Jaclyn had a way with words that could always make people around her either feel better or get pissed off.

"Tell you what." Jaclyn stood up and pulled Sasha to her feet as well. "Cole won't be here for another hour or so and I feel like spending some money." Her eyes sparkled. "You go wash your face and we'll go get something special for Chase."

"I don't know."

"Not taking no for an answer." Jaclyn turned and pushed Sasha towards the house. "Go!"

* * * *

Jaclyn pointed to the door and Sasha went. Once she was inside, she went out to the guest house that Dedrick was working on for Chase. They didn't think he was going to be able to get up and down the stairs yet, so the family decided to clean out the pool house for him. It had just about everything he would need, except for a kitchen.

The old daybed had been replaced with a regular sized bed. Dedrick was just finishing putting the new mattress on the frame when Jaclyn barged in, slamming the door behind her.

"Okay what the fuck is going on with him?" she demanded.

"Yeah...no...I've got it," Dedrick grunted, dropping the mattress down. "Thanks for helping with that one."

"Dedrick, don't play games. What the hell is going on with Chase?"

"Wasn't playing games. That mattress was heavy. And what makes you think anything's going on?" He glanced over at her and she narrowed her eyes at him. That had him sighing. "Damn I hate it when you figure shit out like this."

"So there is something going on?"

"Maybe."

"What the hell is that suppose to mean?"

Dedrick growled low—or more like a groan that came out sounding like a growl. "He might have a problem, but *I* don't know for a fact if it's true or not."

"What kind of problem?"

Dedrick rubbed his face and sat down on the side of the new bed. "There might be some nerve damage from the break he had to his pelvic. Damage to his boys."

Jaclyn frowned for a few seconds, not sure of what he was talking about, but then it hit and when she opened her mouth, nothing came out. Instead, she went over and sat down next to him, stunned.

“Shit,” she gasped, covering a hand over her mouth. “That might explain why he’s pulling away from her then.”

“Yeah, well the doctor doesn’t know if it’s in his head or really there. The last test she did showed that everything was okay. He was feeling things down there, but for sustaining an erection we don’t know.”

“But how can that be—”

“Because he told Cole that every time Sasha had been around he felt something and got slightly hard,” he interrupted. “At the moment he isn’t.”

“Oh, Dedrick,” she groaned. “It’s going to kill her if he leaves her.”

“I know,” he sighed. “We’ve all been talking to him about that, but he said if he can’t be a whole man with her then he wouldn’t make her suffer with him. He wanted to leave and go back to that shithole he was in with Brandon, but we all sort of ganged up on him.”

“So what are you all going to do?”

“I don’t know.”

“Well you better figure something out fast.” She stood up and headed for the door. “I’m taking her out shopping and hoping it might cheer her up.”

* * * *

Chase was released from the hospital; sat in the front seat of the truck with Cole driving. He stared out the window, holding onto the crutches tightly between his legs. They weren’t going home, but back to the Draeger home. He felt okay with that, but was nervous about facing Sasha.

Aside from that moment when he woke up and hugged her, he made sure to put distance between them. He had to. He wasn’t himself. Didn’t feel like the man he was before the accident and wasn’t sure if he was ever going to be again.

It frustrated the hell out of him that he didn’t get that normal, usual feeling when he saw her, smelled her, or was near her. He had hip damage. According to the doctor, bone fragments bumped or scraped against nerves around his groin leaving him limp. So if he couldn’t be a whole man for her then he’d rather she go find another.

But Cole wouldn’t let him leave.

It seemed that the family figured out what he was thinking about

doing and put a stop to it. His damn brother even went so far as to call Brandon and make sure that he wouldn't let Chase come back either.

"Think we will only have to stay here until you get rid of the crutches," Cole stated.

"Un-huh."

"Sidney went ahead and got the therapy appointments set up," Cole went on. "And Dedrick was getting the pool house ready so you wouldn't have to worry about the stairs."

"Peachy."

"Kane and Jada are going to be heading back tomorrow. Kane wanted to double check the orders and make sure the projects are moving along, and bring back some house plans for you and Sasha. Drake is still demanding you build her a home."

"Tell Kane to not bother."

"Chase—"

"Don't start in, Cole," Chase snapped. Three weeks he was in the hospital trying to come to terms with what he was going to have to do. And it hurt like hell!

Cole turned the truck into the drive, pulled up to the front door, and before he had it parked Chase was opening his side, struggling to get out.

"Chase!" Cole snapped.

"Not now!" Chase yelled.

"Dammit, talk to me!"

But he couldn't talk. Using the crutches Chase walked away as fast as he could to the back of the house towards the pool house. He didn't want to see anyone, talk to anyone and was hoping like hell that he wouldn't run into Sasha right now.

One more week he had to put up with these damn things and then it was on to a cane. A fucking cane! Beside the broken hip fucking with his dick, it also had him walking with a limp. He wasn't normal now. He was messed up—abnormal. Why the hell would Sasha want him? Right now, he didn't even want himself.

He made it to the pool house. Sweat covered his face by the time he lowered himself to the bed and his damned hip throbbed.

He wanted to yell, throw something at the wall, anything to get rid of his frustration. But instead of doing that he decided to take a nap. A three-hour nap, and only woke up when someone knocked on the door.

"Yeah!" He was short when he called out, working at sitting up and swinging his legs over the side.

Dedrick's head appeared around the door. "Dinner is going to be ready in about fifteen minutes. No bitching, complaining or excuses. Ass at the table." He slammed the door and Chase took a deep breath.

Fifteen minutes later, he was thumping into the kitchen and heading to the dining room. He glanced at everyone before taking a seat. Stefan and Dedrick each sat at one end of the table, their wives next to them. Cole was next to Sasha who sat across from Chase, her head down.

Fried chicken with all the fixings was passed around. It was quiet, it was tense, and Chase had this nagging feeling that it was all directed towards him.

"So how's Brock handling things?" Jaclyn asked, her attention directed at Sidney.

"Freaking out," Sidney answered. "I'm thinking about heading up there."

"Might be a good idea."

Chase saw Cole lean closer to Sasha and whisper in her ear. She nodded and began to eat. But it bothered him that Cole was that close and he couldn't stop himself from doing something stupid.

"Do you have to sit so damned close?" Chase snapped.

"Excuse me?" Cole frowned.

"You have a mate, why don't you go home to yours?" Chase pushed himself away from the table and stood up. "But then I suppose since I'm down and might not be able to get it up you thought you'd have both."

"What the hell—" Cole also stood up.

"Save it, I understand it all."

He grabbed his crutches and limped out of the house. Each limp, each motion he made just seemed to bring up an anger that he never felt in his life. Something about his brother being so close to his mate just pissed him off. Why? Because as much as he hated himself, his body, he loved her and didn't want to see her in the arms of another.

Back inside the pool house, he slammed the door, dropped one crutch, and took the other one to swing against the lamp that was on the nightstand next to the bed. He smashed it, huffing with the sharp pains tearing through his hip. But he didn't stop. He turned his body and hit the wall, breaking his crutch.

Before he could pick up the other crutch and start again, strong arms grabbed him from behind, holding him. He yelled, fighting the hold.

"Let it out." Chase barely heard Dedrick's voice over his own

yelling. “Get it all off your chest.”

How the hell Dedrick was able to hold him, Chase didn’t know. But his arms were like iron around his upper body, holding his own arms down. Chase fisted his hands raised his lowered arms up and tried to twist as much as he could, the whole time yelling. Tears even fell from his eyes, but it didn’t stop him from fighting or yelling, only after his voice had gone hoarse did he stop, the exhaustion from his injuries took the fight out of him.

Limp, tired, panting, Chase hung in Dedrick’s arms crying out the rest of his frustrations and Dedrick held him through it all.

“Let it all out,” Dedrick sooth again. “It will only get better from here on out.”

Chapter Twelve

He was off the crutches, using a cane and still had the same problem. Chase didn't have a clue what to do about it. Dedrick ended up taking him to see a specialist. They did a shit load of tests on him, but couldn't find a thing physically wrong with him down below. Everything was working, so they just concluded that it was all up in his head.

Bullshit! Something was wrong with him. He knew it. Felt it. And it was fucking up his relationship with Sasha. If he even had one still.

A depression hit him. Chase couldn't stand being around anyone. Having the family look at him funny because now he was going to have to walk with a limp and cane for the rest of his life was more than he could bear. He didn't think he could ride his bike again; knew that with the major problem he wasn't going to be able to make love to his mate. No longer was he a real man. He couldn't stand too long without his hip hurting and he refused to take the pain medication. After therapy, he hurt like a motherfucker and was usually in an even worse mood than normal.

He stayed away from everyone. Only when Dedrick came and informed him that he was either going to come willing or unwilling to dinner did he go. It was the only time that he went into the house. The rest of the time, he stayed in the pool house.

And the depression was also causing problems between him and his brother. They ended up having one hell of a fight and Chase pretty much accused Cole of trying to steal Sasha. No that wasn't true. What Chase had done was accuse Cole of trying to sleep with her and that almost started a fistfight.

Chase felt bad about it and was going to apologize but Cole packed up his shit and left the house. That was the day before he was off the crutches. And he hadn't talked to him since. Then to add even more tension to the house, Kane and Jada showed up.

Kane wanted to take Sasha home. That started another fight, one that almost would've ended up like the one back home with them rolling on the floor exchanging punches.

But Kane held off and Chase saw it in his eyes. They were all taking pity on him because of what he was now after the wreck—half a shifter.

His world was crashing down and Chase didn't know how to stop it.

"So you do get out of the house after all."

Chase stopped walking, closed his eyes, and inwardly groaned. He had been walking the grounds in the woods at the back of the house for the past couple of days, thinking. It helped some but couldn't take away the anger or this nagging feeling of inadequacy.

"What are you doing here Jada?" He didn't even bother keeping the bitterness from his voice.

"Oh, I came to see for myself just how pathetic you are." He turned and she wrinkled her nose at him. "And it's pretty bad."

"Leave," he growled.

"Oh, not this time." She shook her head and slid both hands into her jean short pockets. "You know right now Kane is forcing Sasha to leave. He's packing her stuff right now."

No! "And what makes you think I care?"

She moved so fast that he didn't see it coming. Jada was in his face, her fist landing in his jaw with a punch that had him falling to his ass. "You selfish little prick." She kicked him right in the gut, knocking the wind out of him. "I can't believe that I'm watching you piss everything that you worked so damned hard for, and I helped with, right down the fucking toilet. I should just beat the fuck out of you."

"I'm not the man I was then!" he yelled, holding his gut. Jada backed away from him as he slowly rose to his feet, rubbing his belly. He was trying to walk around without the cane, and was doing pretty well. Until now. "You don't think for one second that I don't want to go to her and hold her." He glared, holding out his arm in the direction of the house.

"Then do it."

"It isn't that simple."

"Don't make me hit you again." She took a threatening step towards him, but this time Chase stood his ground.

"Damn it, Jada, I love her, but I'm broken. What kind of life would that be for her if all she could have was a little bit of affection? She deserves more."

"And what gives you the right to decide what she needs?" She was breathing hard, her own anger showing on her face. "She's suffering like hell right now because of you. You've turned her away. And that bullshit you just spit on me sounds like the crap she had to put up with all her life. Everyone telling her what to do. Well fuck

you! I thought you were different than the others, but you're not. You're just like the rest of them. What they want, they get."

"That's not fair," he said through his teeth.

"Isn't it?" Another step and she was within inches of him, glaring up at his face. "Let me tell you something Chase Sexton. Of all the things that ever happened in her life, the shit she has had to put up with, nothing has ever broken her like the way you turned your back on her."

Chase opened his mouth but a twig snapping had both of them turning their heads. Sasha stood next to a tree. Pain, sorrow, and hurt spread across her face. Three weeks had passed since he had even stood this close to her and it was tearing him apart from the inside out.

"It's okay, Jada," she said softly, her voice spreading him into so many pieces he feared he might crumble. "I think Kane is right. It's time for me to go home."

NO! "Sasha—" what was he going to say?

She took a deep breath, raised her head, and met his gaze. "Thanks, Chase." Her chin started to tremble and her voice broke. "It was fun while it lasted."

"You dumb bastard," Jada said.

Sasha turned her back and began to walk towards the main house. They were all deep in the trees—deep enough that it felt like the woods. He was far enough in that he could get all of the privacy he wanted or needed. Watching her turn, head down, shoulders slumped, the animal inside snapped.

Tunnel vision hit. Every sense he had focused on her. He growled low at the back of his throat and narrowed his eyes on her.

"Go back to the house, Jada." Even his voice sounded raw to his ears.

Chase didn't turn to see if Jada was doing what he told her or not. His attention was fixed only on his mate and how she was walking away from him in a manner that he didn't like one bit.

As quickly as he could he went after her. He caught hold of her arm before she could turn towards the path that would lead her back to the main house. With a little bit of roughness Chase pulled her back, deeper into the trees.

"What are you doing?" she asked, the tone of her voice changing. He heard fear in her voice, but ignored it.

Chase didn't answer her. He took her to a certain spot, shoved her to the ground, and was behind her in a second. When she tried to get up, he fisted his hand into her thick, long hair, pulling her head back.

One hard tug and he had the shoulder of her shirt ripped down, exposing not only his mark but her birthmark as well.

“Chase, what’s wrong?” Now she sounded like she was about to panic.

“Mine!” he growled right before he closed his mouth over the mark, biting her.

Sasha cried out, her arms went up and hands fisted into his hair, pulling at the locks. Chase let go of his animal. He closed his eyes and sucked on the mark.

His body felt like it had a mind of its own. He could feel the one free hand of his going down to her shorts, pulling at the snap and jerking them off her body. With a rip, he had her panties gone and using his other hand in her hair pushed her down into the doggy position.

He was fast in his actions. He had her shorts gone, her shirt up to her chin and the thin bra ripped on the ground with her panties. His own pants were undone, down his legs and with a blink of an eye and one powerful thrust, he buried his cock deep inside her body.

The erection was painful, but he felt at home, a place he hadn’t been for a long time. . For three weeks, he had thought that he was no longer a man. That he would never be able to make love to his mate again. But for some strange reason when he saw her—saw how broken she was, it just seemed to fix him.

He took her hard, pounded into her as he held onto her hips with bruising strength and she moved back against him. The bite he gave to her made her instantly wet, ready for him.

She was tight, hot and felt so right. *This* was right. She was right for him. No other woman would do and there was no way in hell that he was ever going to be able to let her go. To let another touch her, to love her body would have to be death for him.

“Chase—oh!”

Sasha arched, then sank back and up on him. He felt her orgasm, hands going around her, cupping and squeezing her breasts while she bounced on him, and still he kept going. It felt like the three weeks were three years and he had a lot of fucking time to make up for.

One good grind from her and it was over. He slammed her down hard, yelled at the top of his lungs, then bit her shoulder again, which triggered another orgasm from her. It only heightened the pleasure that was washing over him now.

Instead of letting her go, or leaving her body, Chase fell forward on top of her. He rolled to the side just enough so he wasn’t crushing

her, but he refused to leave her body. He was still hard, still had the hunger, but the raging lust that he felt when she was walking away from him was slowly disappearing.

"I'm sorry," he breathed out, trying to catch his breath. "I'm so sorry."

Sasha eased away from his body. She turned over and wrapped her arms around him. Chase hugged her back, closing his eyes while the tears of his pain, and depression flowed freely

"I should never have tried to push you away," he said into her hair, crying softly. "Don't leave me."

"I'll never leave," she whispered.

"Kane, I'm telling you that you don't want to go looking for them!" Jada's voice had Chase quickly looking around for her shorts and trying to put himself back together.

"And I told you that he isn't going to hurt her anymore—oh shit!"

Chase was just barely able to shield Sasha's body from Kane's eyes. Hell, he just got his own jeans over his hips, but not closed when both Kane and Jada came around a big tree and saw them on the ground.

"Hi." Chase held his hand up smiled and waved.

Sasha hid behind him, pressing her face into his back. He heard her laughing and felt his face heat up when Kane glanced around and saw her underwear on the ground.

"I hate you," Kane said, turned, and walked away.

Jada stood there, head down, one arm over her chest and the other holding her hand up to her mouth. When she gave Chase a quick glance, he saw that she was trying to hold back the laughter.

"You should call your brother later on," Jada said, then turned and went in the same direction as Kane.

The second they were gone Sasha started to laugh.

"I think he's starting to come around," Chase stated, which had Sasha laughing even harder.

* * * *

Sasha sat in the middle of the bed, in the pool house, the sheet under her arms covering her nakedness, knees drawn up. They had walked back, took a fast shower, then made love beneath the soothing water's spray. Now she was watching Chase pace the room while on the phone, a towel around his waist.

She made him call Cole and make up. So for the past twenty minutes she had the pleasure of studying his magnificent body. He

had another scar to add to the collection on his body. This one a large straight line on his hip and another in the middle of his belly. On the back of one shoulder a bullet-hole scar that matched the one on his leg. When he walked, he had a slight limp, one that was going to be there for the rest of his life.

But he was still amazing to look at. Bronze chest with ripple after ripple of muscles. Arms that were powerful, shoulders broad, hair that he kept long. She loved the goatee, and her breasts still tingled and felt sensitive from the kisses he gave them.

She was also sore between her legs and it didn't bother her one bit. In fact, she couldn't wait for him to get off the phone so she could do it all over again.

Sasha lowered her gaze to the tent between his legs, beneath the towel. He'd shunned her, and had stayed away because he couldn't get it hard again. That was what Sidney told her, a blow to his self-esteem. Tests had been performed and no physical problems had been found. The doctors had said it was all in his head. That meant that something was going to have to happen to get it all right again.

And it had happened.

"Yeah, I'll stay put until you all get here," Chase said, keeping her out of her thoughts. "Dedrick said the girls want to do a big family cook out and Sidney wants Heather here anyway. She trusts Sager more than the doc Brock has I guess." He smiled at her and shrugged his shoulder.

Sasha used that moment to let the sheet drop, showing him her breasts. Chase stopped walking around and the tent got bigger. He licked his lips when she touched her nipples, teasing them.

"Hey, uh Cole, I need to go," he said, pulling the towel away, dropping it to the floor. "Yeah, I'll talk to you soon." He hung up, tossed it to the side, and narrowed his eyes on her. "That is so going to cost you."

"Really?" She kicked the rest of the sheet away and came up on her knees to the side of the bed.

Chase walked up to the side and hissed when she took hold of his cock. "Oh, yeah," he moaned.

"Did it hurt when it came back?" she asked, rubbing her hand up and down the shaft.

"Like hell," he strained to talk. "But not as much as the hurt that I saw I caused you."

"Then I suggest you do a lot of kissing for me to make up." She let him go and scooted to the middle of the bed. He opened his eyes

and she parted her legs, putting her hand on her sex. “Down here.”

Chase smiled, got down on his knees, took hold of her legs and dragged her closer to him. She settled her legs over his shoulders, sucked air into her lungs when he parted her, thumbs taking the folds of her sex and opening her up.

A moan left her lips and her upper body dropped to the bed with the first touch of his tongue. He licked her, sucked on her clit and Sasha went nuts quickly as he licked up and down, up and down, stopping a few times to flick the tip of his tongue on her clit. Sasha couldn't catch her breath or control herself from squirming on the bed. She was so close that she didn't know if it was ever going to happen or if he was going to drive her mad with the need.

But it ended when he eased two fingers inside her. Just that one thing, nothing else, and Sasha was crying out her pleasure. She shook with the climax, panted, and closed her legs around his head.

When he pulled away, she was both relieved and disappointed. But she also didn't have time to think about it.

Chase stood up, her legs went with him. Her rear hung off the side of the bed, legs up in the air held open by him holding her ankles. One powerful thrust, one motion forward and he was inside her, parting her, filling her. He stretched her to a burn and Sasha loved it. She hungered for it, craved it. Something deep inside her seemed to burst. She trusted, loved, and thirsted for even more.

And more she got.

The peak came and as she rode the wave. Chase pulled out and had her once more on her stomach. Her legs hung from the side of the bed and his body pressed up against hers.

“Trust me?” he asked the question softly in her ear.

Sasha swallowed hard and nodded. “I trust you.”

His fingers were inside her again, then out and moving back towards her rear. He touched her back there, teased the small entrance of her rear with his wet fingers before one finger pushed inside her.

She gasped and arched back. He moved her hair away from her back and over her left shoulder. Chase kept teasing her back there. He kept pushing fingers into her pussy then moving them back to her rear and inside. In a teasing manner, he moved one finger in and out of her a few times before adding to it.

The sensations that gripped her left her breathless. And while he teased her like this he kissed at the mark on her shoulder and moved down to her birthmark. The second he touched it she shivered with a tiny orgasm.

The head touched her rear, fingers still moving in and out fast. Chase kept kissing at her mark, licked at it, and sucked on it. He didn't miss a beat with his fingers and when another small climax hit her, his fingers stopped, almost pulled out and parted.

Sasha couldn't help herself and held her breath while his cock pushed into her. It felt like it didn't want to give, but with a bit of determination it did and she lost the will to think. Breathing only happened because her body required it, but doing anything else was out of the question.

He filled her, stretched her, burned her and she pushed back. She was being taken, loved, and dominated. And she welcomed it all. The pain, the stretching, the burning. Once he was in all the way his hand moved around to her pussy and fingers touched her clit. One pinch and she was screaming, shaking, coming apart.

He moved with ease, sliding in and out, twisting her up in so many knots that she couldn't focus on anything but the motion, and the mind-blowing pleasure.

"I can't—can't—oh god!" she screamed the word and shattered into a million different pieces.

"Shit!" Chase yelled behind her before his mouth bit her shoulder again. She felt him swell, felt the hot seed come out of him and it seemed to heighten her pleasure.

Face down she fell, jerking with each contraction from her orgasm. The screams soon turned into tears. Sasha sobbed her release and shook, her breathing labored.

"Shhhh," Chase soothed. He kissed her cheek, her neck and pulled gently from her body. "Don't move."

Don't move? She laughed through her tears at the statement only because there was no way in hell she was going to be able to move if she wanted to. He came back, touched her with a cool wet cloth and Sasha hissed. She was tender, sore, and very tired.

"I can't move," she sighed.

"You don't have to." He scooped her up, placing her under the sheet.

Sasha sighed, curled up on her side. Her eyelids were so heavy that she couldn't watch him slip in beside her. Chase pulled her into his arms and she willingly went. Sleep came and she welcomed it, embraced in her mate's arms.

* * * *

Three weeks later

“How do you do it now?” Chase sat in a lounge chair around the pool, watching Sasha and Skyler play around with Skyler and Adrian’s five children.

“Do what?” Adrian asked, handing him a beer.

It was the fourth of July and Skyler and Jaclyn decided to do a big family celebration. Stefan said that their mother Natasha loved to do big barbeques with her family. So in honor of her, the whole family was there.

With medical transfer, Heather was here and the plan was that her and Brock would stay until the baby was born. So far, her bed rest was going well and she wasn’t having any more complications. But Brock was also being a mother hen. He carried her everywhere. Only when Dr. Sager told him that she could get up and walk to the bathroom did he let up. But he still carried her to other places in the house.

Carrick also fussed over her as did Drake some. But even though they all worried about it everyone was looking forward to the birth of a new baby. Shifter to human child was very hard to conceive, so any time any of them got pregnant, then it was a very big deal.

“How the hell do you handle five kids?” Chase twisted the top of his beer took a drink and watched the kids.

Adrian shrugged, “I dunno. Just do.”

“So you going to punch the guy who comes to claim one of your girls?”

Adrian took a big drink and nodded. “Probably.”

Chase chuckled, sat back, and enjoyed the sun. Dedrick was cooking, Jaclyn was telling him something or pointing at something he was doing wrong. Brock hovered over Heather. Drake, Stefan, and Jada were trying to push Kane into the pool. It was a nice, relaxing day.

“Going to be a hot summer,” Adrian sighed, sitting back in a lounge chair.

Chase put his sunglasses on with a smile and closed his eyes behind them. Hot days, night swims, lots of skinny dipping. “Yep.”

“Hey!” Chase jumped when cold water touched his chest. He opened his eyes and sat up to a smiling Sasha. “Come swim with me.”

She tugged on his hand until he put his drink down and got up. At the side of the pool, he picked her up. She screamed, twisted in his arms and together they went into the water.

Sasha swam up to Chase wrapped her arms around his neck and kissed him. “I love you, Chase Sexton.”

He moved his hands down to her rear, cupping her. She wrapped her legs around his waist, rubbing herself like a cat. “And I love you. Have from the first moment I laid eyes on you. I’m never going to let you go, Sasha Sexton. Ever.”

She smiled. “Good. Because if you do then I’m going to have Jada come and kick your ass all over again.”

Chase laughed, more because she swore. Sasha never cussed and it was very cute hearing her do it now. “Yes, mama.”

“Good. Now that we have that out of the way, take me inside. I want to have my way with you before lunch.”

He was instantly hard and knew without a doubt if he got out of the water, everyone would see him. He shrugged. He didn’t give a shit. After three weeks of thinking he was never going to be hard again or be able to make love to his mate, Chase didn’t give a damn who saw him now with a very hard cock.

“Your wish is my command.” Keeping hold of her, he walked to the steps of the pool and got out, walking her right into the house, not giving a shit who was watching.

That’s it...for now

Draeger Family Ancestry

Drake (S) and Natasha Draeger (S)
(Drake – deceased)

Children of Drake and Natasha Draeger
Dedrick – Stefan - Skyler

Book 1: Stefan's Mark
Stefan (S) married Sidney Martin (H).
Children of Stefan and Sidney Draeger:
Drake (S/H) & Brockton (S/H)

Book 2: Claiming Skyler
Skyler (S) mates Adrian Laswell. (S)
Children of Skyler and Adrian Laswell:
Alex – Ash- Fox – Darian- Lyssa

Book 3: Dedrick's Taming
Dedrick (S) married Jaclyn Davis (H)
Children of Dedrick and Jaclyn Draeger
Celine (S/H)

Book 4: The Prowling
Drake (S) married Carrick Stan (H)
Children of Drake Draeger:
Kane – Sasha

Brockton married Heather Baily (H)

Book 5: Cole's Awakening
Celine Draeger (S/H) married Cole Sexton (S)

Book 6: The New Breed
Kane (S) married Jada Leonard (H)
Twin sister to Kane, Sasha (H)

Book 7: Seducing Sasha
Chase Sexton (S) married Sasha (H)

H—human S-shifter S/H –Both