

ELLORA'S CAVE TWILIGHT

A muscular man with long dark hair is shown from the chest up in profile, facing right. He is shirtless, and his physique is well-defined. The background is a dramatic sunset or sunrise with a large, bright sun partially obscured by dark, silhouetted clouds. The lighting is warm and golden, highlighting the man's skin and the texture of the clouds.

LAURANN
DOHNER

Mate Set

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It's werewolf mating season. All the males are in heat and the driving, sexual lust of their beasts is almost uncontrollable. Mika is human, in an alley, surrounded by four horny werewolves. She knows she's in deep shit. A tall, handsome werewolf rescues her then demands payment. Hot, sweaty, intimate payment.

Grady is a half breed whose his human mother abandoned him to his werewolf father, so he knows human women just aren't safe to fall in love with. The wolf within him wants Mika as his mate, but Grady will not give in. Never. Ever. He's willing to fight his emotions and his beast, no matter how much sexy Mika tempts him.

But neither of them expected her Uncle Omar to assign Grady to protect her from other males—24/7, in her home, sleeping just down the hall. Mika decides to make the best of her vacation and keep the hot wolf in her bed. Grady can't resist the scorching sex, but he is determined to resist the bond.

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Chapter One

Mika experienced fear and confusion as the four men surrounded her. She was supposed to be safe in Bartock. This was her uncle's town—humans were off limits to werewolves, it being law to leave them alone. The four men who had grabbed her from the sidewalk and dragged her down the alley weren't following the rules. They'd released her but she was trapped in the corner of two buildings that prevented escape.

Three of them were blond and resembled each other enough that she knew they had to be brothers. The fourth one was black haired and looked nothing similar to his companions. They were silently watching her and she had the sinking feeling that they were toying with her as though she were a trapped mouse.

There was no doubt what they were. The one closest to her was showing his teeth. They were sharp and his mouth was a little too long to be normal. The drunken man to her right was sprouting so much hair that his arms looked like hairy mats, and unless cheek hair was the norm, his face was way too hairy. He also had wild eyes. Drunken werewolves were obviously bad at maintaining their human appearance and at least two of them had slipped enough to let her know what they were. The smell of alcohol was strong enough that she breathed through her mouth.

"I'm human," she said softly. "Back off me now."

"Totally fuckable." The blond to her right leered at her. "We were looking for a bitch and now we have her. I say we go by age on who gets her first."

The second blond softly growled. "You say that because you are the oldest. Let's go by size. Smallest to biggest so she survives longer."

She didn't know these men. She was trying hard to control her fear since she knew the scent of that emotion to a werewolf was an aphrodisiac. That's the last thing she wanted to smell like considering the four were talking about sex. She frantically tried to bring up a memory that would piss her off.

Her ex-boyfriend came to mind instantly. Ralph had cheated on her, she'd caught him dead to rights in the act but he'd told her it wasn't how it looked, as though his dick inside another woman could be anything other than what it was. Anger burned. Ralph thought she was a freakin' idiot.

"I said back off me." She was proud that her anger was clear.

The beefy blond with the teeth and hairy-arm problem was closest to her. He sniffed, his brown eyes narrowing as he softly growled at her. She tensed. He was close enough now to smell her fear, which was probably making the wolf's senses go into overdrive. He inched even closer.

The black-haired one licked his lips. "She looks tasty, doesn't she, cousins?"

Mika pressed her back tightly against the brick wall. Her gaze flicked from one man to another. They were definitely showing her what they were, whether they meant to or not. She had no doubt of her predicament at that moment. She was in deep shit.

She was trapped against a wall with no escape. She bit her lip harder but then released it when she realized, if she made herself bleed, she was done for. It would send all four men into frenzy and she'd be at the center of it. If they shifted into their wolf forms completely, they'd tear her apart.

"Breathe through your mouths," she ordered them. "And back up. I'm human and it's against the law to attack me."

The black-haired one growled, taking a step closer, making Mika glare. He glared back but hunger lurked in his eyes as well. Her look darted to the other three. Hunger burned in their scary eyes as well. She was screwed, literally and figuratively, if she didn't get control of these four men fast. She probably wouldn't survive the attack, and she even if she did, she was pretty certain she would wish she hadn't. Surviving one out-of-control werewolf would be tough. Four of them would be a miracle. Mika's luck just wasn't that good.

"Take off your clothes and present to me," the second blond growled at her.

"I'm not a werewolf," she yelled at him. "Do you hear me? I'm not taking my clothes off and I sure as hell won't be getting on my hands and knees to show my ass to you. I'm human. Go find one of your own if you want to get laid. Leave me alone."

"She knows about us," the black-haired one growled. "She knows what 'present' means. Human or not, I say we take her."

"Shit," Mika gasped. "You're slipping form. That's how I know what the hell you are. You need to shave your arms in the worst way and two of you are showing canine teeth. Don't do this. I'm Omar Deken's niece," she said in a shaky voice. "If you hurt me, he'll hunt down every damn one of you. I'm pack protected."

The blond closest to her sniffed again, frowning. "You're not pack. You're not even the right race, and you don't carry a man's scent, so you aren't claimed."

"I'm under Omar's protection. He'll kill you and I'm not kidding about that."

"Who?" The first blond growled. "I don't know him."

Shock hit her hard that these men weren't familiar with her uncle's name. That meant they weren't from anywhere around Bartock County so they weren't pack. Any shifter within a hundred miles knew her uncle. All hope of talking her way out of this mess suddenly evaporated. She was going to die a horrible death. She squeezed against the brick wall, wishing she could become one with it. They weren't Alpha Pack so the rules wouldn't apply to them.

"He's the alpha's advisor. He's also best friends with Alpha Elroy. You know him, right? You're in his territory." Her voice shook.

They sniffed her, moving in closer, as horrible images filled her mind. Would they take turns raping her or would they all attack at once? She knew it was going to hurt. Her uncle had told her all about werewolves and he was an expert since he was one.

Uncle Omar had given her the birds and wolves sex talk when she had once asked if she could ever date a werewolf when she was a teenager. He'd been horrified at even the thought, made damn sure all boys from the pack weren't allowed near her, and had promptly sent her back to California. She remembered what he'd told her though. Werewolves were dominant creatures, highly sexual, aggressive and rough. He'd also told her that she'd never have to worry about one coming after her.

Stalking a human for sex was illegal as hell in most packs. If taken by force, human women usually didn't survive or ended up gravely injured. It drew attention to their kind, which was a crime in shifter society. Most unmated males hunted female werewolves nightly for sex but Mika was safe from that shit. One whiff and they avoided her and always had — until now.

Why had she left her house? *Oh yeah.* She was depressed and craving chocolate to cheer her up. Every year she visited her uncle for a few weeks but usually she came to spend Christmas with him. She'd arrived in Bartock just six hours before on a hot June evening so a stroll to the store had obviously been bad planning on her part. Of course she'd thought she was safe. She'd walked to the store lots of times on those previous visits without running into trouble.

She knew for a fact, even if they didn't, that Uncle Omar would track their sorry asses down. He'd kill them slowly and make them pay for the torture she was about to endure at their hands or claws, depending on how they controlled themselves. One look at the sharp teeth and sprouting hair told that they weren't in control at all. It was little consolation to her that they'd die when her body was found but it was all she had.

Mika screamed as one of the men lunged at her. He gripped her arms, spun her around and his body pressed her tightly into the wall until he was breathing on her neck when he lowered his face into her shoulder. She held still, not fighting, knowing it would only turn him on more. He pushed her harder against the wall until it was difficult to breathe. His knee brushed against the back of her leg for a second before he shoved it between her thighs, forcing her legs apart.

She turned her head slightly, enough to see that the guy had her shirt in his mouth when it was tugged hard. She took a deep breath, forcing air into her lungs, and screamed as her shirt was torn open down the back when the man jerked his head. She fought the panic that gripped her as air hit her skin. Every instinct inside her told her to fight but everything her uncle had ever taught her reminded her that would only make the man more aggressive.

Hands were touching her and they didn't belong to the blond who had her pinned. His hands were gripping her arms, holding them tightly against the wall next to her ribs. Rough hands yanked at her snug jeans and attempted to tear them down her hips but they refused to budge at first. She heard a snarl before the body pressed hers

against the wall backed up a few inches, allowing the other man working on her jeans to yank the zipper.

Mika screamed again when she heard the zipper give way and her jeans were tugged downward. She shut her eyes tightly, fought tears, and realized it was going to be brutal and she probably wouldn't survive. She held still but she was panting—fighting her urge to fight.

She could almost hear Uncle Omar's voice in her head, telling her if she was ever grabbed by a werewolf not to struggle. He'd warned her that she'd never win a fight with one. They were too strong, too fast, and fighting would be a sure-fire way to turn an attacker into a brutal animal intent on killing its prey.

"What do you have there?" The voice was a new one—deep and male—and it snarled the words.

The hands on Mika froze and the body behind hers tensed. Mika whimpered. *Great, another one*, she thought. Now instead of being a sex toy to four males, there were five involved in her worst nightmare.

"Get lost," the man gripping Mika snarled back. "She's ours."

Long seconds ticked by where Mika only heard heavy breathing. The man pressed against her back shifted his weight and pushed her hard against the wall again. He nuzzled her blonde hair, moving it away from her neck. She heard what sounded like a scuff on the concrete.

"The way I see it," the new male voice snarled, "is that she's not yours. She isn't in your pack since my nose is telling me she isn't even our kind and she doesn't sound very willing from those screams that drew me this way."

The blond behind her seemed to be in charge since he was the one doing the talking. "Mind your own business and get lost. We aren't sharing so leave or my brothers and cousin will tear out your damn throat."

The stranger had a deep-sounding chuckle. "You pups think you can take me? You're new in town or you would be pissing yourselves right now if you knew me."

"Who are you?" It sounded as though the black-haired man spoke.

"I'm the one who's going to tear your heads off if you don't let that woman go."

The blond eased his hold on Mika's arms as he took a step back, totally releasing her. Mika's knees nearly buckled in relief. Her eyes flew open and she reached down, yanking up her jeans. Her hands shook but she managed to zip her pants and fasten the snap. She slowly turned around, keeping her body against the wall.

Her four attackers were standing close together a little to her left but they weren't touching her anymore. Her terrified gaze moved from them to the new man on scene. She couldn't help but stare at the big bastard. He had to be at least six foot four and probably two hundred forty pounds or so. A tough-looking male wearing jeans and a gray sweater. He had long black hair that touched his wide shoulders and bulked-up biceps. His arms hung casually at his sides. A wide chest matched those broad

shoulders and his slim hips were perfectly displayed in the snug jeans that revealed long, muscular legs.

Mika's focus lifted to the man's features. He was partly in the shadows so she couldn't see his eyes but she saw his lower face well enough in the dim light from the alley. He had a strong chin and a wide nose. His full, generous lips were drawn into a firm line of disapproval. His long hair hid his eyes, even if the light had been strong enough to see them. The man slowly lifted his arms.

"Do you want a piece of me, pups?" His fingers wiggled, urging them to come at him, as his voice dropped from a snarl into a husky growl. "I dare you."

Even Mika knew that daring a werewolf was a no-no. Werewolves were stubborn, proud creatures who didn't back down from a fight or from a challenge. The tone in the stranger's voice left no room for misinterpretation that he was issuing both, provoking them into attacking him.

The new guy snarled and growled so she had no doubt that he was another werewolf. He'd scented that she was human too because he'd mentioned it. Mika inched along the wall, trying to ease away from the four would-be rapists. If the stranger was willing to get his ass kicked to save her from being gang raped, she wasn't going to stand around the way a frozen idiot would. She was going to make his sacrifice worth it by fleeing the first chance she got.

Guilt ate at her a little as the four men started to surround the stranger. He was bigger than her attackers, but still, four against one weren't good odds. Mika swallowed hard.

"Um, guy who's rescuing me...what's your name?"

The man didn't even glance her way. "Grady."

"Thank you," she whispered.

She'd be sure to tell her uncle about Grady. Maybe Uncle Omar would pay his hospital bills and give him some type of reward if he survived the fight. She was pretty certain her uncle would make sure this man was compensated well for helping her. That's just the way he was.

The blond leader lunged at Grady but he saw it coming. Mika watched in horror as the other three men attacked from the sides. She instantly looked for a weapon, knowing she should help the guy who had come to her rescue. Grady snarled a second before it became a dog pile as four men leapt on him.

The five men went down in snarls and flying fists. Mika saw a board in the alley and sprinted to grab it. The wood was rough and dirty as her fingers curled around it, heavy as she lifted it. She spun to face the fight. *This is insane*, she thought. *I should be running*.

She fought with her conscience and it won so she crept closer to the men on the ground. The black-haired man who'd attacked her went flying from the pile to land a few feet from Mika. He shook his head, snarling, his gaze locked on the fight while he

jerked into a sitting position. Mika struck without pause, nailing the son of a bitch with everything she had with the board, swinging it as though it were a baseball bat.

The man groaned before he slumped forward to the ground. Mika dropped the broken board that had snapped in half when it had made hard contact with the back of his head. Her hands hurt from the impact but it was worth it until he started to move again, trying to lift off the ground. She turned and spotted a full, metal trashcan. She grabbed it by the handles and lifted the heavy, smelly thing with a grunt. She tossed it at the downed man so it hit his back hard, knocking him flat again. Trash spilled out all over him.

One of the blond men screamed as he flew toward the wall where Mika had been pinned, hitting it hard enough that Mika actually flinched as he landed motionless on his back after he bounced from the wall. She saw that his nose and mouth were bloody. Her attention flew to the remaining three battling werewolves and realized that Grady was winning. He was punching the shit out of one of the blonds and had the other man pinned under him with his legs. The pinned man was trying to crawl away but it wasn't working for him since he couldn't escape those strong thighs.

Grady could fight. She could see he had both the attackers well under his control. Her relief was instant when she knew he'd be fine. She eyed the downed man on the ground who'd hit the wall to see he still wasn't moving. The guy under the trashcan grunted, cursed, while slowly shoving garbage off with one hand while gripping the back of his bleeding head where Mika had nailed him with the board. He looked done in.

Mika turned and fled, running for all she was worth toward the main street. Bartock was pretty dead at ten at night so it wasn't a surprise that she didn't see anyone as she turned the corner and sprinted down the sidewalk. Her little house was three blocks away. She ran a good block before her burning side made her slow down. She was never going to go out at night again. No damn way. If she wanted chocolate, she'd call Uncle Omar to go get it for her or she'd be smart enough to buy it before dark.

She was breathing hard and walking when she heard a sound behind her that made her spin around. Shock coursed through her when she saw the man who had saved her coming down the sidewalk. She froze as Grady advanced on her, his long legs quickly ate up the sidewalk between them. Even though his head was down and his sweater was gone, she knew it was him. Grady was wearing a black tank top that was torn open over his stomach. His head lifted as he came within ten feet of her, pausing where he stood to stare at her.

She'd never seen such dark eyes before. He was attractive but not handsome in the way she usually liked men to be. He was still damn good-looking in a purely male sense. Masculine fit him perfectly as a description. His hair was black, shaggy, and wild looking. He had long black eyelashes and his dark, intense gaze peered out at her from beneath them. Fear crept up her spine. No one's eyes should be that black and they didn't look human. The fight he'd just been in had probably helped that look along, she realized.

Why is he here? She wasn't sure she really wanted to know the answer. They stared at each other.

The man moved first by taking a step toward her and then another. Mika froze where she stood. If she tried to run away from him then his instincts would demand he chase her. She was all up on her werewolf facts since Uncle Omar had pounded them into her head since she was five years old and realized the doggy that played with her sometimes was really Uncle Omar. She'd accidentally witnessed him changing so he'd had to tell her the truth. Sometimes a big dog wasn't what it appeared to be.

She was alarmed by how tall Grady was when he stopped just feet away to stare down at her. At five foot four Mika had never felt shorter in her life as she looked up a good foot into the man's face. She had never considered herself really tiny before but she felt that way at that moment. The man's sheer size dwarfed her.

"Thanks for saving me back there," she said softly.

His eerie black eyes blinked and she couldn't distinguish the pupil from the iris. The street lighting on the residential street was a lot better than it had been in that alley so she was getting a good look at him this time. His full lips parted, his breathing slowed, but only nominally, as his tongue ran across his lower lip.

"You know what we are. You owe me."

"Owe you?" She hated the way her voice shook. Uncle Omar hadn't mentioned that tidbit to her about what it meant when you owed something to a werewolf. She wasn't sure she was going to appreciate finding out the meaning either.

"Don't scream and don't fight me." His tone was commanding.

"Shit," she breathed out. There was no way that statement, coming from that big guy, was good news.

His hands rose slowly as he gripped her arms over her elbows. His touch was gentle as his fingers curled around her and he backed her off the sidewalk. He used his hold on her to maneuver them between two houses. A wood fence stopped her when her back brushed it. The streetlights didn't reach between the houses so she stood there with him in the dim light.

"Don't talk. I'm not going to hurt you." He had a husky, deep voice.

"I—"

"Shush," he whispered.

Her heart hammered as her lips sealed together. She had a pretty good idea why a man would back her into a dark area between two houses and tell her to be quiet. Her gaze raked up and down his body, verifying again that he was a big bastard, and it sent fear inching up her spine. She tried to think of something that would keep her calm since fear wasn't her friend when she was being touched by a werewolf. She didn't want him to scent anything that would turn him on.

One of his hands released her arm so he could reach between them. Mika could hardly make out anything in the shadows but nothing was wrong with her hearing. She heard a zipper – his, not hers, since he hadn't touched her pants.

"No," she said softly. "Please."

"I'm not going to hurt you," he whispered. "I helped you and now you're going to help me. Hold very still. I promise you're safe with me."

She wanted to run. *A scream would be great too*, she thought. She held still though and kept her lips locked together while her heart thundered in her chest. The man leaned down to nuzzle the side of her face by brushing his scratchy, short whiskers lightly against her skin. His touch was too gentle to be painful, though he needed a shave. He lowered his face more and then his mouth brushed her throat.

Mika tensed hard, stunned. The man wasn't attacking her but he was touching her with his face and mouth. He inhaled deeply as a soft growl came from his lips against her skin. She was grateful for the fence behind her that held her up when her knees started to shake. She took a deep breath, inhaling a soft, masculine scent that reminded her of the woodsy outdoors.

"Easy," he rasped against her neck. "Quiet."

Her vision adjusted to the darkness. The big, warm hand on her arm tightened as he lifted his head, tilting it all the way back. She looked down his body and shock tore through her at seeing Grady's open jeans, hard flesh protruding from the hand he had wrapped around a major hard-on.

His hand released her arm so he could grip the bottom of her shirt and his head lowered again. Mika tore her focus from his hand on his cock and up to his face. His dark gaze locked with hers as he softly growled at her.

"Turn and lower your pants now."

She was frozen.

"Now," he rasped. "I won't enter you. I saved your life, I'm highly aroused, and this isn't going to hurt you at all. Do it."

"No." She got that word out.

Another soft growl came from him. "I'm really turned on. I just want to touch you while I calm down."

Her gaze dropped to his hand wrapped around the distinctive shape of his cock. "That's not going to calm you down. That's going to make this situation worse."

"You know what I am and you know about our kind. Didn't your boyfriend ever tell you that the only way to calm him in a highly agitated state is to get him off?" His voice was a soft rumble. "I just want to touch you and I need to smell you."

"So inhale." She realized he thought she knew about them by dating one. She didn't correct him, doubting that he'd care since the others hadn't.

"Not the kind of scent I need to get me off. I said I'm not going to hurt you or enter you. I saved your life. Can't you do this for me?"

Shit! He had saved her, she reasoned, and he didn't have to get her permission. He was big enough to make her do whatever he wanted but he was asking instead. *Damn!* She turned and her hands shook as she unfastened her jeans to slide them down her thighs. He wasn't hurting her and she knew that she couldn't get away from him. At least there weren't four of him. She hesitated and then lowered her panties until they bunched around her knees.

"You better not be lying to me. If you hurt me—"

"I won't." His voice was even deeper than it had been.

He moved restlessly against her. She tensed, waiting for his next move. She hoped he was telling her the truth but half expected him to have lied—that he would force his way into her body. He was breathing heavier now, faster, but so was she as adrenaline zipped through her body.

"Spread your thighs more."

She shifted her legs apart as far as her jeans would allow. One of his hands gripped her hip and then slid over her stomach. She tensed and then gasped as his hand dove lower and cupped her mound. His body moved in closer until his chest was against her back as he leaned into her but kept his hips back. He had really warm skin since her shirt was torn open there, leaving her bare, to feel him. The man had a lot of body heat to put off that kind of warmth. His hand shifted and then she gasped as his fingers explored her sex.

"Easy. You'll enjoy this," he softly growled at her.

He lowered his face and inhaled deeply against her neck. She jumped a little when he licked her under her ear and that lick turned into an open-mouthed kiss. Sharp teeth raked her sensitive skin but it didn't hurt and he wasn't biting. All she could smell was wood from the fence and the masculine scent of the man behind her, surrounding her with his larger body. His fingers ran along her slit and she squeezed her eyes closed. She was embarrassed by the fact that she knew she was wet. His fingers rubbed in that proof between her legs. Proof that he was affecting her. He growled a little deeper.

Shock assailed her as his fingertip drew circles around her clit. Worse, the pleasure was intense, raw, and he didn't let up. She opened her hands on the wall and pressed her forehead against the cool wood. Grady's finger rubbed her clit back and forth, changing the motion while he applied a little more pressure. A moan tore from Mika. Ecstasy was in the man's fingertip.

"You smell so good I want to fuck you with my tongue and have you ride my face. I bet you taste better than you smell," he rasped against her throat.

Mika hated how his words made her body respond. She was turned on and if he kept rubbing her clit, she knew she was going to come. She bit her lip and fought the next moan. She couldn't stop her hips from moving though. She tried to resist the urge but her body wasn't listening. She bucked her hips against that thick digit that was tormenting her.

"That's it, babe," he breathed against her skin. "Feels good, doesn't it?"

He moved his hand a little and one of his thick fingers pushed into her pussy. She moaned. There was no stopping the sound that pushed past her lips. He didn't enter her far, probably couldn't because he was still rubbing her clit with that hand, but he was knuckle-deep, sliding in and out of her. She knew she was really creaming with need now, soaked.

"Come for me," he growled.

Mika threw her head back into his chest, turned her face against his neck, the scent of him with her nose against his skin was all she could focus on. That and what his hand was doing to her. He was damn good with his hand—too damn good—and was playing with her perfectly. Her hips bucked, straining against his hand and fingers. She tensed and then cried out softly as she did exactly what the man demanded of her. The climax hit her hard and fast as pleasure tore through her.

His breathing increased and then he stiffened behind her, his chest against her back going taut. His body was rock solid and then wetness spread across the inside of her thighs. She realized then that he'd been masturbating while touching her. He groaned as that warm wetness splashed repeatedly on her skin as he kept coming on her thighs.

His finger eased out of her pussy and he jerked his hand from between her thighs. She turned her head away from his neck as he straightened and she opened her eyes. She had to tilt her head to look up at him. His eyes were closed and his lips were parted. She watched in shock as he lifted his hand that had just given her the best climax of her life and licked his finger that had been inside her. His mouth closed over his third finger and he sucked on it as a low growl tore from his throat.

He yanked his finger from between his lips the second his eyes snapped open. Mika stared into black eyes when he looked down at her, their gazes locking for a long moment. He moved back, not touching her anymore, and reached for the front of his jeans. She was too stunned to move even as she felt the wetness on her thighs cooling on her skin from the night air.

"You do taste better. Get dressed," he ordered softly.

She didn't need to be told twice, his words knocking her out of her stunned stupor. She reached down and just yanked up her panties and pants. She felt his release smear on her thighs as she got her pants up. The man zipped his jeans while he watched her with that intensely dark stare.

"Get your ass home and don't come out after dark for the next few weeks. You don't know what kind of danger lurks out here. Whoever you used to date didn't give you enough information. You're not safe right now out on your own."

She slowly turned to face him after she'd closed her pants. She just stared up at him, speechless. He sighed. One hand lifted as though he was going to caress her cheek but he let it drop back to his side.

"I marked you with my scent so you'll get home safely now. It will protect you from all the males out lurking tonight, waiting for a female to grab. Once you're home, shower and wash your clothes to remove my scent. Do not take any more night walks,

little one. Got it? It's mating season for my kind and all the single males are roaming, looking for a piece of ass. They just want to get laid and won't care if you're human or not. My scent will keep them away from you."

His words astonished her. "You did that to mark me?"

She saw his lips twitch into a semi smile and then the emotion was gone in a blink of his eyes. "Would you have preferred I pissed on you?"

Her mouth opened and then slammed closed. "Maybe."

He did smile then. "It wouldn't have made you come. Now go home. I have shit to do and I don't have time to get you there safely myself. I also don't think it's a good idea if I know where you live. You're too damn tempting. I might not be around to save you next time so be good and stay inside at night from now on."

He spun and walked away. Mika watched the tall man walk back to the sidewalk, turn left, and move quickly back toward the way he'd come. She leaned against the fence for long moments, trying to let her body calm after what he'd done to her. She took a few deep breaths.

"Son of a bitch," she breathed. She didn't even know what to think.

Mika forced herself to move as she stomped away from the wall and headed toward her house. With every step she got a little more pissed off. The man had marked her, touched her, terrified her, and worse, made her come. She stopped. She shook her head. *Great*, she thought. That was the first time she'd gotten off without batteries in six months.

She suddenly smiled. It had been pretty great. The man had talented fingers and he had been very sexy. She started walking again, shaking her head. Her night had gone from nightmare into naughty, mild sex with a hot stranger. It could have been a worse night.

She was almost home when she saw two men walk out from between some bushes. She froze and fear was instant as she stared. They were in their early twenties. One of them, dressed in sweats and a tank top, walked toward her. Neither of them wore shoes, which alerted her that something was off about them. She met the man's gaze as he approached her and saw a hungry, wild look. He inhaled, obviously sniffing her, and she saw shock cross his features. He frowned, shot her glare, and spun around to sulk away.

"She's taken," he growled to his friend.

She stood there watching both men disappear back into the bushes. She jogged all the way to her front door. She locked the door behind her and leaned against it.

"Why do I even come here?" The house didn't answer her.

Chapter Two

Minnie had worked and lived with Uncle Omar for twenty years and was a keg of high energy. Her six-foot-two frame was rail thin and it had never ceased to amaze Mika that the woman was involved with her uncle. Uncle Omar was shorter, rounder, and so mellow he rarely got excited. Currently, Minnie was in a highly agitated state.

"That poor woman," Minnie raged. "Can you imagine? She's mated to that asshole now. Mated! He just grabbed her and bit into her."

Uncle Omar sighed. "She knew better than to be out at night. Everyone knows it's that time of year. If she wasn't looking for a mate, she shouldn't have been running around last night." He sipped his coffee and frowned at Minnie.

Minnie glared back at him. "She wanted to get laid, not waylaid. He didn't just fuck her. He bit her and claimed her."

Uncle Omar shot Mika a weak smile. "Sorry. You're lost, aren't you? You have that dazed look on your face."

Mika arched her eyebrow. "A little."

Minnie slammed down the rolls on the dining room table and sat down in a huff. "It's mating season. The moon does this thing...well, never mind that. The point is that every year for a few weeks the men get hornier than shit and it started three days ago. It is nature's way of making sure those horndogs might create a pup or two to keep us in future generations. Most men have the sense to just get laid as much as possible—wearing condoms—just for the fun of it all. But last night one of them bit a friend of mine. He didn't just fuck her in a way Mother Nature howled at him to do. He bit her during the sex." Minnie shot Omar a look. "Did you explain to her what mating is?"

Mika shook her head, answering before her uncle could. "Not really. He mostly avoids the sex talks unless it's a warning about how dangerous men can be."

Minnie sipped her coffee. Mika didn't think Minnie should drink caffeine but she wisely didn't mention that to the hyper woman. Minnie looked ready to explode as she ran her fingers through her dark hair and shook her head.

"Your uncle and I live together and we're a couple but we aren't mated. I don't want to be mated. I was mated when I was younger and it sucked." Minnie's gaze locked on Mika. "Being mated pretty much makes you a damn slave that a mated man thinks he owns lock, stock, and barrel. He orders you around and treats you like property because you are his. It's in their damn blood when they mate to take it to the extreme. We have sex." Minnie pointed at herself and then Omar. "He can bite me all he wants but no glove, no love. That's our motto. We use condoms. It takes more than a

bite alone to make a mate. You must have a mix of sperm and saliva at the same time to mate while partially shifted."

"She doesn't want to know that." Omar sighed. He gave Mika a pained look. "Tell her you don't want to hear this."

Mika ignored him. "Tell me more."

"When you don't use condoms they mark you inside, and the more you smell of them, the stronger the urge is for them to bite you. Once you're mated your body changes so you smell like their scent, telling all males you belong to someone. Once mated, all these aggressive and dominating asshole genes that are hidden in their blood come screaming out," Minnie raged. "And then whatever poor woman agreed to the mating finds herself barefoot and pregnant with a dominating jerk issuing orders."

"Now Minnie, it's not that bad," Omar said.

"Are you the woman?" Minnie glared at him. "I was mated, Omar. Don't you tell me it's not that bad."

"Um..." Mika eyed Minnie. "You aren't mated anymore?"

Minnie shook her head. "The dumbass got himself killed in a bar fight. It was the best day of my life."

"Not a love match, huh?" Mika hid her surprise at Minnie's outburst.

"No. I was eighteen and he was hot looking. I just wanted to jump his bones but instead the drunken son of a bitch bit me. He was a lazy jerk who couldn't keep a job and he was a lousy lay to boot. His mother was a real bitch in every sense of the word so it was the worst year of my life." Minnie huffed. "And don't bother asking me why I stayed. You humans have it easy because divorce isn't allowed with shifters. No man is going to let his mate just walk away. They own you and they are going to give you up about as easy as they are going to allow someone to cut off one of their nuts. It ain't happening."

Omar closed his paper as he frowned at Minnie. "Honey, I'm sorry your friend got bitten during sex. I will never do that to you. Calm down. It's done. Getting upset over it won't do any good. Maybe she'll be happy with him. She wanted him enough to go to bed with him so it might work out. You said yourself that she was really lonely."

"Maybe." Minnie calmed. "We'll see. At least he has a job and a house."

Omar nodded before he looked at Mika. "How is the house? I sent a cleaning woman in to clear out the dust."

"Perfect." She nodded. "Thanks for the food in the fridge too."

"Make sure you lock all the doors and windows," Minnie said softly. "You've never been here during mating season. We have a lot of strange men running around Bartock because it's the largest shifter city within a few hundred miles so they all come here to hook up with women. Some of them aren't picky if she's Other or human."

That drew a frown from Omar. "I didn't think of that. I've been busy trying to keep the peace and then Mika just showed up so I didn't register that she might be in danger."

"Duh," Minnie muttered. "She's good looking. Did you never think one of them might see her and want to jump our girl?"

Omar stood. "I'll assign her a guard. Shit. I'm so used to our pack following the rules about leaving humans alone that I didn't think about all the visitors we have."

Mika was half tempted to tell him what had happened last night but she kept her mouth shut, figuring she and Grady were even. He didn't need to be rewarded by her uncle for saving her ass after that marking stunt he'd pulled. Besides, if she told her uncle what had happened, she'd have to tell him every detail, from the moment she left her house until she'd arrived home. She wasn't going to share what had happened between her and Grady with him. *No way*. Her uncle would blow his top. An angry Uncle Omar was a scary Uncle Omar.

Minnie sighed and stood. "Who can you trust with her? Really? I can't think of one strong male in the pack who wouldn't let his dick get the best of him. A young, strong, mated male isn't going to leave his mate at home when there are randy wolves sniffing around."

"She's human." Omar frowned. "She'd be safe from our pack."

Minnie rolled her eyes. "She's attractive. That's all a hard-on sees, love." She snorted. "A turned-on guy doesn't care if she's an alien from space. If she's good looking, a man would do her. You can handpick one of the best of our single males and maybe they'll hit it off. No vacation should be complete without a little sex." Minnie winked at Mika. "It would probably be your best trip here yet. I might hate the idea of a mate but you were ready to get married to a man. Our males don't cheat."

Omar softly cursed. "No. She's not hooking up with a wolf."

Minnie frowned. "You raised her to know about us, Omar. When your sister married a human, you could have kept her oblivious to our kind."

"I saw you change from a dog into a naked man." Mika chuckled. "You had to explain what you were to me at that point."

"Dog." Omar rolled his eyes. "I'm a wolf."

Minnie chuckled. "*Ruff*."

Omar growled. "Not funny. It was cute when she called me doggy when she was tiny but it's not cute anymore." He puffed up his chest. "I'm a timber wolf. We're fierce."

"You told her for a reason. I thought you wanted her to hook up with one of our males."

"I told her so she wouldn't hook up with one of ours." Omar sighed and studied Mika. "You were too young to remember how hard your parents had it, being of mixed race. Your mother always had to hide what she was from your father's family and

friends. Our kind gave them shit because your dad was a mere human. I hate to admit it but wolves can be assholes about that. We're stronger and we can be pretty damn snobbish. I want you to marry a human and avoid wolves. You'll be happier that way."

"Okay. So what's the plan, fierce wolf?" Minnie asked.

Omar's attention fixed on Mika. "You will stay here at the house this visit. We'll change the bedding in the guestroom."

"Oh no," Mika shook her head. "I'm scarred from the last time I stayed here."

Minnie laughed. "We were just having sex."

Mika's eyebrows shot up. "It sounded as though *Animal Planet* hit wolf land during a dog fight. No thanks. No way." She frowned at her uncle. "I couldn't sleep between all the thumping noises and the howling and the growling."

Minnie laughed again. "And now it's mating season. We were tame then. We broke our bed last night."

Omar flushed a little. "She's a child, Minnie."

Mika shook her head. "I'm not a virgin at twenty-eight years old. I haven't broken a bed yet but I've sure fallen out of a few of them a time or two when we lost track of where the edge was."

Omar growled, narrowing his eyes at Mika. "You're a damn virgin until you get married. That's final."

Chuckling, Minnie walked over and sat on Omar's lap. She winked at Mika. "It would probably be impossible for you to hook up with a guy and get laid if you were staying here. Your uncle would kill any guy who wanted to nail you under his roof."

"Enough," Omar growled. He shot Minnie a dirty look but he rubbed her hips with his hands. "She doesn't get laid. She's an innocent virgin. That's how I want it and damned if either of you are going to blow my illusions. I'm much happier this way."

Mika laughed and stood, grabbing breakfast dishes. "Okay, Uncle Omar. I'll remove my virgin ears and go do the dishes since Minnie cooked. I'm not staying here though. I'm fine at my house. I'll lock up tight at night."

Mika slowly washed dishes, her mind drifting to the stranger from last night. Grady. She was tempted to pull Minnie aside and ask her if she knew who he was. It was doubtful though. She'd met a lot of pack males over the years. She'd never met Grady. Minnie had said lots of werewolves showed up in town for mating season. Grady was probably one of those males who traveled far to meet up with his own kind.

She dried the last dish and walked out of the kitchen. She heard voices coming from the living room. Minnie stormed into the dining room. Mika froze, seeing the pissed-off look on Minnie's face. Minnie clenched her teeth.

"Men!"

"What's wrong?"

"Your uncle called some of the pack males here and he wants you in there."

Mika blinked. "Okay," she said slowly.

"He's going to parade you around and see who looks at your body. He's going to pick a guard for you from the man who looks least interested."

"No way."

Minnie jerked her head in a nod. "I tried to tell him, but will he listen to a mere female? Hell no. It's insulting. We're not meat to dangle in front of men. He's using your body to see who is interested in fucking you and who isn't. It's disgusting."

A chuckle escaped Mika. "I see."

"I don't know what you find amusing."

Mika looked down at her clothes. She bit her lip and unbuttoned her shirt. She tugged at it until a hell of a lot of cleavage showed. She gripped her cotton skirt and tugged the waist up to under her bra, securing it there. It hiked her knee-length skirt up to her thighs at an almost indecent height. She lifted her head and smiled at Minnie. She put her hands on her hips while pushing out her breasts. She winked.

"Unless one of them is gay, they'll all look. I don't want a guard."

Minnie suddenly laughed. "If you're going to teach him a lesson on bad plans going wrong, go all out. Mess up your hair after taking it out of the ponytail. Our men love wild, long hair."

Mika tugged out her ponytail and shook her blonde hair. Minnie moved to her and put her fingers in Mika's hair, giving it a good tussle. Minnie was grinning when she stepped back.

"Suck on your lips and rub your teeth over them. It makes them redder and kind of pouty."

Mika did it and smiled at Minnie. "What do you think?"

Minnie grinned. "Don't move." She ran in the kitchen and in seconds she came back holding up a small dark brown bottle. Mika eyed it and arched her eyebrows. Minnie laughed, uncapping it. She put her finger on it and turned the bottle. She stepped closer to Mika and then gripped Mika's shirt. She reached in and wiped her finger on the bottom of Mika's bra. When she pulled out her hand she adjusted Mika's shirt down low again to expose maximum cleavage.

"Vanilla. All that was missing to turn on a wolf was you smelling like something edible and sweet."

"My uncle is going to kill me, isn't he?" Mika chuckled.

"It will serve him right." Minnie closed the small bottle and shoved it into her back pocket. "He'll bellow for you in a minute. I'm going back in there. I have to see this."

Grinning, Mika waited. She edged toward the door and listened, keeping out of sight. She didn't want to get caught spying but she was really interested in what her uncle was saying to his men.

"So I want one of you to guard her while she's visiting. She's human."

"Human?" One of the men almost spat the word. "I thought you said she was your niece."

"She is." Omar growled. "She's not blood though. She's my sister's adopted child. My sister was unable to birth children so they adopted Mika when she was four weeks old. She knows she was adopted so it's no secret. We are blessed to have her in our family and I consider her to be my daughter. She's off limits. Is that understood? If one of you touches my girl, I'll castrate you myself. There's no rock in this world that you can hide under that I won't find you if you lay a finger on my Mika. Now, I'm going to call her in here. She's known about us since she was five years old so you can be yourselves."

"Great," one of the men snarled. "This should be fun. Does she decide who guards her or do you?"

"I do," Omar growled back softly. "Be polite." He took a deep breath. "Mika! Come in here now," he bellowed.

Mika grinned. She waited a few seconds and then pushed away from the wall. She walked into the room and kept her gaze locked with her uncle's. She ignored the men.

"Whoa, it's hot in that kitchen." She waved her hands at her chest. "You should turn on the air conditioner."

Mika fought a laugh as she watched her uncle take in her clothes. His jaw dropped, his eyes widened as he paled and sucked in air sharply.

"Mika, we have company. Fix your clothing, damn it."

Mika ignored his demand and turned. She let her gaze go over Minnie, who was grinning widely and obviously fighting a laugh. Mika studied the first man, a blond, about six feet tall, who stared at her chest so hard she could almost feel it. She turned to look at the man about three feet to his left. He was shorter, stocky, with a crew cut of dark brown hair. He was gaping at her legs. The man next to him, openly leering at her breasts, had blond hair and wore a suit. The last man was over by the door so Mika had to turn her head to get a good view of him.

Oh shit, she thought. She stared into a pair of dark, familiar eyes that were staring right back into hers. He broke eye contact to glance up and down her body and then his gaze locked on her face again. For a few seconds there he paled just a little. She saw Grady's Adam's apple bob as he swallowed hard and his hands at his side flexed into fists and then opened. Mika spun away from him quickly.

"You bellowed?" She was proud that her voice didn't shake as she faced her uncle.

She was in shock. *He's one of my uncle's men. Shit, this is bad*, she thought. Her uncle had just warned his men that he'd castrate any of them if they touched her so if he found out about last night he'd have a damn fit over what Grady had done to her. She bet her last dollar that right now Grady was silently freaking out too. Her heart pounded but she took deep breaths to calm herself as she met her uncle's furious look.

"Fix your clothes," he growled.

Mika tugged down her skirt to a modest length and buttoned up her shirt. "Better?"

"Much." Uncle Omar was still angry. "Let me introduce you to my most trusted males."

Inclining her head, she turned to the first one again. The man had stopped staring at her chest as he moved forward. "I'm Riley Forest." He held out his hand to her.

"Mika Richards." She lifted her hand to shake his.

"Don't touch her," Omar growled.

The man jerked back a few steps, letting his hand drop. Mika sighed and dropped her hand. She shot her uncle a frown as he shook his head at her.

"They aren't allowed to touch you at all."

"Don't you think that's a little overboard?"

"I think you're still not too old to get a good swat on your ass if you keep arguing with me."

Mika darted a glance Minnie's way. Minnie rolled her eyes then lowered her gaze to the floor. Mika sighed and put her hands behind her back to lock her fingers together. If it happened to push out her breasts, so be it. She smiled in amusement and nodded at the man. The second man nodded at her when her attention turned to him.

"Gregor Marlin," he said softly.

"It's nice to meet you."

The third man had crossed his arms over his chest and he looked pissed off. He met her gaze and jerked his head in a nod. "Rick Voll."

"Hello."

Grady was careful to show no emotion on his face. "Grady Harris."

Their eyes locked. "It's a pleasure to meet you." She smiled at him.

She saw his eyes narrow but his expression didn't alter one bit. She had to bite back a laugh. She hadn't meant to say that. It had just popped out of her mouth. She turned back to her uncle to stare at him silently.

"One of them has volunteered to guard you during your stay after I explained about the danger you could face. You're an attractive girl and I think it would be best if you had a guard with you." Uncle Omar paused. "I know you are independent and you think it's not necessary but I don't want someone to go after you. You have no idea what a male is capable of when it's mating season."

She sighed. "I think I have a pretty good idea, Uncle Omar. I promise you that I won't go out after dark."

He snorted. "We're not like your human men, honey. You don't know how persistent we can be. Just because the sun is up doesn't make a man less stupid when it comes to an attractive woman. They aren't just going to be looking for an attractive woman after dark. Minnie was right. It's a dangerous time for you to be visiting. I insist on the guard and that's final."

"I'm sure your men have better things to do than babysit a twenty-eight-year-old woman."

"No, they don't." Uncle Omar frowned. "You have a guestroom. One of them will be at your house within an hour with a bag. He'll be staying with you while you visit or until mating season ends. Sorry, baby, but that's how it is. You may go straight home now. That's an order."

She clenched her teeth. "Fine."

"I know you aren't happy about this." Uncle Omar sighed. "I'll worry about you. You can't defend yourself against a wolf, Mika. If you were a bitch, you'd have claws and teeth to fight off an unwanted male but you don't. I'd rather be overprotective than the alternative."

She saw the worry in his eyes and her shoulders slumped. "I know you worry about me."

"I do. You're the only family I have and you're a daughter to me. I love your visits but I'd never forgive myself if you were hurt or killed while you were here. Please let me protect you, baby. I can smell that you're very angry but this is what needs to be done. I have a pack meeting tonight so I don't want you coming here because it's going to be wall-to-wall males."

Mika nodded. "All right."

"Go straight home. Your guard will arrive soon."

Mika nodded. "Fine, Uncle Omar."

He smiled. "Don't think I don't appreciate you not arguing about this."

"Would it change your mind?"

"Not a chance in hell." He chuckled.

She grudgingly smiled back. "You taught me better than to fight with a wolf." She winked at him. "I'll see you soon." She turned toward the kitchen, where she'd left her purse.

"Mika?"

She turned back to her uncle. "Yes?"

"Your guard will be in charge. If he says no to something, you listen to him. Do you understand me?"

She stared into his eyes. "No."

He frowned. "You can't go to the bars this visit. That can't happen again."

Mika paled a little. *Shit. He knew about that? Damn.* Her gaze flew to Minnie, who shook her head. Minnie hadn't ratted her out.

"Two of my men were there," Uncle Omar said softly. "I try to always keep tabs on you when you come home." He paused. "No more bar fights. Are we clear?"

She flushed. "It wasn't my fault."

“And that’s why I didn’t put you over my damn knee. Now go so I can talk to them.”

Mika turned and fled. She didn’t dare even glance at Grady, too afraid her uncle would notice. She was also embarrassed about the bar comment her uncle had made. Grady probably thought the worst of her.

Chapter Three

Mika paced and glanced at her watch for the fiftieth time, at least. She heard a vehicle stop in front of the house and she walked for the front window. She gripped the curtain, pulled it back and watched a man climb out of a black Jeep. Her eyes closed and the air left her lungs in a whoosh. *No way in hell could I be that unlucky.* She opened her eyes. *Yes, I am that damn unlucky.* The sexy proof was coming her way.

"Son of a bitch," she cursed. She dropped the curtain, marched across the room, turned the deadbolt, and yanked open her front door. Her gaze locked on the man walking up the sidewalk carrying a duffle bag. "You volunteered?"

Grady Harris' dark gaze bore into her as he walked up the three steps to her front door. He did not look happy. "No. I got drafted because I didn't stare at your tits like the other three did."

She moved out of the way, instantly noticing that he looked even taller in the daylight. He looked bigger too as he eased in her front door. She hesitated and then closed and locked the door to face the man who'd marked her the night before in his oh-so-unusual way. He stood in the middle of her living room, giving it a once-over. He was breathing hard and his lips were twisted into a snarl.

"If you tell him what happened last night he's going to blow a damn fuse."

"No shit."

"Did you tell him anything?"

Mika shook her head. "Do I look stupid to you?"

"You knew the danger and you went out anyway. If I hadn't heard you scream and saved your ass from those four pups, you wouldn't be breathing today. With that in mind, do you really want to ask me if you look stupid?"

"No one told me it was mating season. How freaky is that? It was the first I ever heard of it. I usually go out at night when I'm here and have never run into trouble before."

Grady arched a black eyebrow. "What was that about a bar fight I heard mentioned?"

"That wasn't my fault."

"What happened?" He loudly dropped his bag on her wood floor.

Mika frowned as she crossed her arms over her breasts. "Last year I went to a bar and some asshole decided to get a little too friendly. I took offense and I told him off. He pulled back a fist to hit me and another man decided to stop him. They both came with friends so it turned into a brawl."

"Were you dressed the way you were today?"

"Damn it. Minnie warned me what he was up to. She told me if all the men looked at my body he wouldn't assign me a guard. I just made sure everyone looked."

"I probably would have looked too, except I was so shocked when I realized who you were that I couldn't tear my eyes away from your face until the shock wore off." His voice lowered. "If he finds out what happened between us I might as well hand him my balls on a silver platter. You should have told me who the hell you were last night. I'm furious."

"I told those four men and they didn't know who the hell my uncle was when I mentioned I was protected by him. It didn't work with them so I figured it wouldn't work with you. Excuse the hell out of me."

"You could have said no."

She had to shut her mouth, which had dropped open. "You didn't have to come after me."

They glared at each other. "All you had to do was say no."

"I believe I did and you told me to shut up."

"I didn't say shut up exactly."

"Close enough. It's done. It's a good thing I showered when I got home, huh? I washed my clothes too so nothing is marked anymore. No one but you and I know what happened."

His shoulders relaxed. "You aren't going to tell Omar?"

"Do I look...? Never mind. You think I'm stupid. I got that. Hell no, I'm not going to tell him anything about last night. That wasn't just a threat when he said he'd put me over his damn knee. The last time he spanked me I was twenty-five years old. I couldn't believe he almost blistered my ass."

A smile tugged at the man's mouth. "What did you do to deserve that?"

"Deserve this." She flipped him off. "I am not telling you. We're stuck together until your replacement comes. The guestroom is the first door down the hall to the right so we'll just avoid each other. I'm going grocery shopping."

"Not without me." He sighed. "I'm under orders to keep you in my sight at all times and that means you don't go anywhere without me." He paused. "And there is no replacement. I'm it, babe. Your uncle didn't enjoy the way the guys eyed your body so I'm on duty until you leave town. When will that be? I had to put my life on hold."

"Unbelievable," she muttered. "I just arrived yesterday and I'm going to be here for two more weeks. I'm stuck with you for that long? The entire time?"

He nodded. His dark eyes looked cold and angry. "That's the plan."

"Great. Well, you can't keep me in your sight at all times."

"Those are my orders and I follow them."

"You're not watching me sleep and you sure as hell aren't following me into the bathroom."

His gaze raked down her slowly. She saw him pause at her breasts and then again at her hips until his gaze rose. "You owe me. It's mating season and I'm not immune. Thanks to your bad timing, I'm going to be the only single male not getting laid. The least you could do is let me watch you shower. Visual aids would be appreciated since I'll be stuck relieving myself."

"Pervert," she sputtered. "Not a chance in hell."

A slow smile curved his lips. "We'll see."

"See this," she gritted out. She spun and stormed for the kitchen. "Me walking away."

He had the nerve to laugh. "I'm going to get settled and then we'll go to the store."

Mika was fuming when she yanked up the phone and dialed Minnie's cell number. Minnie answered on the second ring.

"I guess he arrived?"

"What do you know about this asshole?" Mika kept her voice low.

"He's an Enforcer. Remember what one of those is?"

"Remind me."

"He kicks ass, is what it means. He's a badass of the worst sort. On a personal note, he's a good man who is as loyal as hell to the pack and he's got honor. I hear he's heaven in bed. I'd take him for a test spin if I were twenty years younger and not in love."

"That helps a lot since I heard that castration threat from Uncle Omar."

Minnie chuckled. "Sarcasm just drips from your lips. Okay. He's Elroy's bastard son."

Mika was shocked. Elroy was the alpha of the pack but he didn't handle the day-to-day functions of the pack. That fell to Uncle Omar. Elroy and Omar were best friends and had been raised together. She knew Elroy had four sons but she'd never been allowed to meet them since Uncle Omar was so damn protective of her. He could control all pack males but those four.

"One of the four?"

"No." Minnie's voice softened. "He was born before Elroy mated to Eve when he had a short relationship with a human and she gave birth to Grady. Elroy didn't know about that boy until the woman showed up with him when Grady was ten. She didn't know what Elroy was until Grady started shifting. She freaked out the first time her son sprouted hair. That's when she brought Elroy his son. She pretty much walked up to the door, told Elroy to take him, and abandoned Grady on the doorstep."

Eve had a damn fit and wouldn't let Grady in her house. I know she's my alpha bitch but that woman is heartless. It wasn't Grady's fault he was born to another woman, but she made Elroy have other pack families raise Grady. He grew up hard,

Mika, so give him a break. He turned out to be a good man despite his shitty childhood. Elroy acknowledges him and so do his sons but Eve is a nightmare when it comes to Grady. He's still not allowed in her house or near her and she goes out of her way to shun him."

Mika leaned against the counter. "That's fucked up."

"It is. Now he's got this shit job of protecting you, no offense. He's got a bar to run but instead he's stuck at your house and it's going to hurt his business. I tried to tell Omar this was stupid but he wouldn't listen to me."

"A bar?"

"Yeah. It's his baby. He patrols two nights a week for the pack and he handles pack business during the day for the most part. The other five nights he runs his place. He opened last year. He's doing well from what I hear and he lives in an apartment over the bar. He's a good guy so don't bust his balls too bad. He's about as happy about being your guard as you are to have one."

Sighing, Mika nodded. "Okay. I'll play nice."

Minnie chuckled. "He's hot."

She hesitated. "Yeah."

"I don't envy you. He won't touch you though. He'll want his balls attached to his body."

"Would Uncle Omar really —"

"You bet your ass." Minnie sighed. "He's determined that you're going to marry some nice human man." She snorted. "Like that's guaranteeing you a happy life. I'm telling you that I love him but the man has funny ideas about life."

"Who said anything about marriage?"

"That's my girl," Minnie laughed. "Use condoms if you do go after that man and wash everything twice. Don't forget our damn sense of smell. The last thing you need is to forget to wash your bedding and have my love step into your room."

"It's not happening."

Minnie sighed. "Probably not. Grady will follow his orders to the letter since he is always trying to prove himself to his father and he's under orders to not touch you. Call me if you need me."

"Thanks." Mika hung up.

The next two weeks were going to be hell if she had to spend them with Grady. She turned to face him when she heard him coming. She met his dark gaze as he stepped into the kitchen with her, seeing that he'd changed into a pair of jeans and a red tank top. She eyed his exposed arms and swallowed. The man had broad, tan shoulders and his arms were well defined. He definitely ate his Wheaties and lifted weights.

She blew out her breath. He looked mighty fine and totally fuckable. His wild hair called to her and she had the urge to run her fingers through it. He was one hell of a

well-put-together package of hard-body male and his long hair was playing hell with her libido.

"Could you put your hair up?" She gave him a hopeful smile.

He frowned. "What's wrong with my hair?"

She hesitated. Mika thought about lying to him but she wasn't that type, admiring honesty most. "You look really sexy with your hair down and your body displayed but I'd be totally disgusted if you'd grease your hair back. How about it?" She gave him an encouraging smile. "I have cooking oil right over there by the stove. The greasier, the grosser."

He lifted his arms and crossed them over his chest. His full, firm lips molded into a frown as those dark eyes seemed to go darker.

"I am not putting grease in my hair." His gaze roamed down her. "And what about you? You're wearing a damn skirt. Go put on baggy jeans."

She looked down at her skirt. "It's decent when I don't have it hiked up. It's past my knees and it's loose." She raised her chin and met his gaze. "What's wrong with it?"

"It's easy access."

She swallowed hard as an image of him making use of her easy-access skirt filled her with dirty thoughts. "This is going to be a damn long two weeks, isn't it?"

"Hell yes." He sighed.

She took a deep breath. "Let's go grocery shopping. It's not just me fending for food for myself anymore and I'm guessing you'd like to eat regularly while you're living with me."

His gaze raked down her body and then back up. "There's a lot of things I'd like to do regularly while living with you."

They stared at each other for a good minute. Mika's body responded to him as her nipples hardened and her belly quivered. "Shit. How many days do you give it?"

He frowned. "I don't understand the question."

She grabbed her purse and passed within feet of him. "How many days do you give it before we end up in bed together?"

His jaw tensed and his dark gaze tore away from hers. "It won't happen. I have my orders and I enjoy my balls attached to me. Let's go, babe. We'll take my Jeep."

She nodded and walked through the living room to the front door. She wanted him bad. "We'll pick up condoms just in case."

She heard him curse softly behind her but Mika didn't turn to look at him. She smiled instead, her mind made up instantly that she was going to get Grady in bed. He turned her on and she knew intimately that he was good with his hands. No one had to know if they did have sex. They were going to be living together for two weeks until she left town and she was a realist.

She was single and free. He was single and free, judging by his earlier comment about how he'd be a single wolf in mating season who wasn't getting laid. She walked out the front door as Grady growled softly at her. Her body reacted to the sound he made, reminding her of last night, and how hard he'd made her come. He locked the door and pointed to the Jeep.

"Walk and don't look at me that way."

She chuckled. "How am I looking at you?"

"You know," he growled. "It's not happening, babe. If I had known who the hell you were last night I never would have followed you to collect your debt."

"I'm glad you did. I ran into two more men after you left me but they got a sniff of me and then just walked away."

Grady cursed. "Fuck. I hope they weren't pack. They know my scent and if they know who you are then it's only a matter of time before Omar hears about it."

"I've never seen either of them before so I don't think they are."

Snorting, Grady shot her a glare as he opened the passenger door for her. "You never met me and I'm pack."

She climbed into his Jeep and he carefully shut the door. She appreciated it that Grady was a gentleman. "Good point."

Chapter Four

Mika was going stir-crazy as she glared at Grady. He was driving her crazy. Two days of living with that man would drive any woman insane. He barely spoke to her, he treated her as though she was diseased, he usually kept a room between them, and he was rude when he did speak to her. She had cabin fever since the man wouldn't let her go anywhere. Grady's shitty attitude was the last straw for her.

She walked into her bedroom, feeling his intense stare on her from the dining room where he was reading the paper. She shut the door and glanced at the clock on her nightstand. It was just past eight on a Friday night. No single person should be stuck at home. She was twenty-eight, not eighty-eight, and she needed a damn life. She was on vacation but instead she felt as if she were in prison.

She put on a pair of low-slung jeans, a button-down black shirt with some cleavage showing and black boots with three-inch heels. In the bathroom, she put on light makeup and brushed out her hair, deciding to leave it down. She met her blue eyes in the mirror and slowly smiled at her reflection. She wanted to raise some hell and drive Grady Harris crazy. He deserved it. It was only fair.

She left the bathroom and opened the bedroom door. Grady's almost black eyes widened from across the room as he took in her change of clothing and appearance. He frowned as he slowly stood.

"Where do you think you're going?" His voice was soft but there was a deceptive hardness there too.

"Out. I'm about to lose my damn mind. Let's go."

"It's after dark."

"No one is going to screw with me when I'm with you. I'm not asking you to take me to some wild damn party where we're going to end up arrested. I just want to go out. This is my vacation, damn it, and I'm going crazy. I guess I *could* stay here to have some fun, instead of going out."

"I want to stay here." He crossed his arms over his chest.

Mika slowly smiled. "Great. Take off your clothes."

His mouth dropped open and his eyes went wide again. "What?" he rasped.

"The only fun you and I could have here doesn't involve clothing. I'm determined to have some fun and since you barely speak to me, that just leaves sex. Either take off your clothes, stud, or grab your Jeep keys. Your choice. One way or another, I'm not going to sit here again the way we did last night being bored out of my head."

A low growl came from him as he stood frozen. She stared at him, watching his tense body. Her focus lowered to the front of his jeans and she couldn't miss the noticeable bulge there. Grady had a serious hard-on. She grinned.

"Are we staying or going?" She arched her eyebrow at him. "That sexy growl thing you have going on and your obvious erection tells me that you'd rather stay in with me."

"Let's go," he snarled, tearing his gaze from hers. "I'm not losing my balls over you."

Sighing, she walked toward the door. "But what a way to lose them."

He growled at her again, glaring at her until they reached the Jeep. Even though he was pissed off he opened the door for her and then shut it. He was quite the gentleman, at least when it came to installing a woman in a vehicle. He slammed his door when he climbed in and studied her in the dim interior. "Where do you want to go?"

She hesitated. "Why don't we kill two birds with one stone? Minnie told me you own a bar so you could go in and get a little work done while I have a few drinks."

She saw indecision on Grady's face but he finally nodded. "There will be wolves there but I have good security. We can go there but you are to stay where I put you. Do you understand?" He shot her a hard look.

"I speak English so I understand what you said." She smiled at him. That didn't mean she'd do what he wanted. She didn't mention that out loud.

The bar was actually a nice place, certainly not the dive Mika had expected. It was decently lit, there was a large dance area in the corner, and tables separated the dance area from a game room. She counted four well-used pool tables, judging by all the people playing the game. Grady pointed.

"Over there at the bar." He had to yell over the music to be heard. "You sit your ass down and stay there."

She rolled her eyes but moved where he indicated. Mika appreciated the muscular bartender in his mid-twenties with blond hair and dark brown eyes. He was total eye candy. Their gazes met and held until Grady stepped between them so Mika was left staring at Grady's back. She sighed.

"Yon, guard her. She's Omar's niece. Her drinks and whatever are on the house. No one touches her. Am I clear?"

Yon must have agreed because Grady jerked his head in a nod and slowly turned around to glare down at Mika. "I'm going to my office for a bit to check on things. Sit down and stay there. Order a drink."

She gave him a salute. If her fingers bent except for her middle one as she saluted him, so be it. He growled at her, dark eyes glittering dangerously, and then he shook his head slowly. He stepped into her personal space as his head bent so his cheek nearly touched hers. She inhaled his cologne and wanted to groan. Not only did he look good enough to jump on but he smelled good enough to want to rub her body all over him.

"You're not worth losing my balls over," he whispered.

She clenched her teeth as Grady jerked away, spun on his heel, and disappeared through a doorway. She climbed up on the barstool and gave the bartender a once-over, immediately noticing that he wasn't giving her a sexy look anymore. He actually looked damn unhappy to see her now that he knew who she was.

"May I have whiskey? I want ice too." She held up her fingers. "That much at least, in a glass, and don't give me a tiny shot. I'm drowning my sorrows here and Grady said it's on the house so show me the love when you tip the bottle."

Yon's eyebrows rose and he almost smiled but then masked his features. He walked away, grabbed a decent-sized glass, dumped ice in, and set it down in front of her. Within seconds he'd filled it with whiskey. Their gazes met and held.

"You're really Omar's niece?"

She sipped her whiskey. She made a face when it burned down her throat, clearing a warming path all the way to her tummy where it settled. "Yeah."

"How the hell did that happen? You're not one of us."

She knew what he meant. She wasn't a werewolf. "I was adopted. My mom was Omar's sister, his only sibling."

He blinked. "Do you know anything?"

She took another sip. "I'm well *aware*. My uncle doesn't lie to me."

"I see." He nodded. "I have to work but I'll keep an eye on you."

She watched him go down the bar serving drinks. She was sure he would keep an eye on her. He was obviously pack if he knew her uncle Omar. It also stood to reason that Grady would hire pack to work for him since pack stuck together. She sipped her whiskey and turned in her chair to watch the dancers, wishing she were out there since she loved to dance. She tapped her foot to the beat. Grady's bar played good music and he had a good sound system.

A dark-haired man walked up to her. He was nice looking, in his late twenties, and dressed in black slacks and a blue silk shirt. He smiled as he drew near. "Do you want to dance?"

She set her drink down and was on her feet in an instant. "I'd love to."

Mika glanced at Yon, spotting him at the end of the bar. His gaze met hers and he shook his head. Mika walked to the dance floor with the man who'd asked her to dance on her heels.

"I'm Jeff," the guy yelled at her.

She turned on the dance floor to face the man, who was only a few inches taller. In her heels she was just about five-seven. She met his intent look and smiled.

"I'm Mika."

He grinned and reached for her hand, which she let him take. He tugged her farther onto the dance floor and started to dance with her. He danced a little too close so Mika

had to put some distance between them and when he spun her she pulled her hand out of his to keep back from him by a few feet. She knew he was examining every inch of her but she didn't care as they danced. He was keeping his hands to himself and that's all that mattered.

Yon was watching her from behind the bar with a deep frown. Mika grinned and waved. She turned her back to him and finished her dance with Jeff. The song ended and she smiled at the man.

"Thanks."

"Come to my table with me." He reached for her arm again.

Mika dodged his hand. "I came with someone but thanks for the dance. Have a good night."

Jeff frowned, not looking happy, but he didn't try to stop her as she walked away from him. She moved toward the bar going between tables to get there. She noticed that there were a lot more men in the bar than when she'd entered. There were women too but the men noticeably outnumbered the women.

She was almost back to her seat when a man stood up from one of the tables and purposely stepped into her path. She froze and looked up, taking him in quickly. He was a big guy, in his late twenties, about six foot two if she had to guess, and about two hundred pounds of beefy male who was decent looking. The look in his green eyes was too intense for Mika's comfort as his gaze locked with hers.

"Let me buy you a drink, pretty."

Pretty? She gave him a tight smile. "No thank you." She tried to step around him.

His hand shot out fast and gripped her wrist. She was shocked that the man had grabbed her that fast, hadn't even seen his hand move, but his hold on her wrist was tight. It didn't hurt but she knew she'd be hard-pressed to make him release her if he didn't want to. She tugged but his hold only tightened almost painfully, letting her know he wasn't willingly going to let her go easily.

"I insist." He had a deep voice.

"I insist you let me go. Thank you but no. I'm not interested."

He jerked her closer, hard enough to knock her off balance, and she gasped when her body hit his. She saw his nose flare and he had a hungry expression on his features as he looked down at her. His other arm wrapped tightly around her waist, locking her against his body. Her panic was instant as she realized he wasn't human. She had figured that out because of how fast he moved, the look in his eyes, and the fact that he sniffed her.

"We're leaving," he growled. "I won't hurt you if you don't make a scene."

She saw three men at his table stand. It was obvious that they were with him. *Shit. What is it about werewolves traveling in packs of four?* Mika took a deep breath, pushing back the memories of four other werewolves outnumbering her, and glared up at the man who had her trapped in his arms.

"I'm pack protected," she gritted out. "I'm Omar Deken's niece and I'm also not your type. Let me go."

He blinked. "I don't give a damn who you are but I'll tell you what you are. You're mine tonight. If you're worried about the other men, don't be. I don't share well with others. This is going to be a private party when we get to my hotel."

"I said no." She had one hand free, pushing against his chest. "That means, let me go."

He growled at her low and deep. "You don't know who I am. I'm Vargas Lorne, alpha of the Lorne Pack, and you're mine tonight, pretty. Don't bother fighting. You know what we are, I heard you talking to the bartender, and I watched you dance. You stirred my blood so you're leaving with me now. Don't make a scene because it won't change the outcome. My men will handle any problems that arise if someone tries to stop me from taking you. If you have friends here that you wish to remain unharmed, you won't fight me."

Anger surged in Mika. "The only way you're stirring my blood is by making it boil because you're pissing me off. I am not leaving here with you. I can guess what you want from me and I'm not interested."

The smile that curved his lips was ice cold. "I don't care what you want. It's all about me." His smile widened. "And I want you. I always get what I want."

Mika's fear made a lump form in her throat that she had to swallow down. He was an alpha and he had men with him. That was bad. He lifted her higher up his body, her feet leaving the floor as he held her in a near-crushing hold with his arm locked around her waist, and he carried her a step. His hand was still gripped her wrist almost painfully and she knew he could snap it easily.

"Don't fight me and you won't get injured. You might not enjoy what I plan on doing to you but I know I'm going to enjoy it a hell of a lot."

"Put her down," a familiar deep voice snarled.

Relief swept through Mika. Grady sounded furious and close but she couldn't see around Vargas Lorne. She knew Grady was behind him somewhere though. The man holding her sighed and turned his head toward Grady.

"Stay out of this."

"She's mine," Grady's voice was steel hard. "She came with me and she's leaving with me."

Vargas slowly eased Mika back to her feet. He turned, forcing her to turn with him, his hold on her waist never easing but he let her wrist go. That hand moved to her shoulder as his glance shifted from Grady down to her. Mika tensed as the man slowly moved her shirt back on each side of her shoulders to look at her skin, one side at a time. He smirked as his cold gaze rose to meet Grady's, who was now behind Mika.

"She isn't yours," Vargas said calmly. "She doesn't carry your mark or carry your scent."

"She's promised to me." Grady had inched closer, sounding as though he were right behind Mika. "She's mine," he repeated.

Mika was staring up at Vargas where he had her pressed hard to his larger body. She couldn't turn to see Grady because of the tight hold on her. The chest she was pressed against vibrated as Vargas growled at Grady.

"You should have put your mark on her. That's too bad for you that you did not. You have no claim to her. She doesn't even carry your scent. You can have her back when my need for her is over." Vargas smirked at Grady. "I'm alpha of the Lorne Pack. Think twice before you attack me. My men will take you down before you get her away from me and she'll get hurt in the process."

"I didn't realize Jessup died," Grady ground out.

"He didn't. I'm taking over when he does. I'm first son."

"So am I. I'm Elroy's oldest." Grady sounded closer now. "And she's mine. This bar is full of my pack. Do you really want to do this? She's my future mate. I'm willing to die to protect her. Are you willing to die to try to fuck her?"

Vargas looked angry as he glared at Grady. "Mark her now, then." Vargas suddenly dropped her on her feet and shoved Mika. She didn't go far, slamming into Grady's body instead of hitting the floor. His arms locked around her waist and she was yanked off her feet as Grady took at least four steps back and turned his body sideways to get Mika away from Vargas. When he turned with her in his arms, it put her totally out of Vargas's reach.

"If she's yours, then mark her now," Vargas snarled.

Mika saw Vargas's men spreading out to surround her and Grady. She stared up at Grady, watching rage grip his features while he glared at Vargas. She could feel how tense Grady's body was, so hard it was as though a stone man were holding her, and under her hand on his chest she could feel his heart pounding. Her own was racing just as fast over the horrible situation.

The man was demanding Grady mark her in front of him to prove that she was his. Mika wondered what marking entailed and prayed it wouldn't mean he'd have to come on her thighs again, this time in the middle of the bar for all to see.

"Mark her or hand her over because I'm willing to fight you for her. I could use a good fight and a good fuck." Vargas smiled coldly. "Of course, after the fight is over, I'm going to be in a mood by the time I bend that bitch over in front of me. She won't enjoy that, will she?"

Grady growled. His hold on her eased as he gently set her back on her feet and broke the glaring contest between him and the other man to look down at her. His arm tightened again around her waist while his other hand gripped her shirt to yank it to the side to expose the top of her right shoulder.

Mika could only gasp as Grady's face buried in the crook of her shoulder and neck and pain made her cry out. It hurt so much as his sharp teeth punctured her skin that her fingers clutched at his chest and gripped the material of his shirt, clawing at him.

Grady growled and then his teeth pulled back just enough to leave her skin but his mouth didn't move away. He kept it open over his bite as his tongue licked across her skin while he lapped at the bite a few times. His head jerked up as he yanked her shirt back in place over the fresh wound he'd made.

Grady didn't meet her eyes or even look down. He glared at Vargas Lorne instead. "She's marked by me. Now get the hell out of my bar."

Fury lit green eyes as Vargas jerked his head in a nod. "Fine. We'll leave. She's yours." The man spun on his heel and waved his hand toward the door. He stormed for the exit with his three large companions on his heels. Grady watched them go. Long seconds ticked by.

"Shit." Yon was close. "You had to mark her. He backed you into a corner until there was no other way out of it."

Shock was rippling through Mika. Grady had bitten her. Her shoulder burned and throbbed from the injury. Grady growled.

"I'm taking her back to her house. It's too dangerous to have her out." She didn't like the way Grady sounded. He slid his keys out of his pocket and tossed them at Yon. "Park my Jeep in the lot when you leave. I don't trust that bastard to not be waiting out there to snatch her. There were witnesses in here but there won't be once we leave so I'm going to sneak her out the back before he can prepare to try to steal her from me."

Grady didn't look down at her once as he practically dragged her toward the back. The door he yanked her through was marked Employees Only. Mika had to run to follow the man who gripped her arm to drag her out of the bar. Keys hung on pegs next to another door. He snatched up a set and tugged her out into the cool night air behind the bar. There was a private parking lot there.

His hand on her arm loosened but he didn't let her go. She could almost feel his rage as he led her to a motorcycle. He finally let her go. She watched him remove both helmets attached to the bike and shove one her way. Her shoulder throbbed where he'd bitten and marked her. Uncle Omar hadn't gone over what happened when a werewolf bit a human so she wasn't sure what the hell it meant.

"Grady..." Her voice was soft.

"Shut up," he snarled. He climbed on the bike, shoving his helmet on, and jammed a key into the ignition. "Get on now before they show up. It doesn't take long to move around the damn building."

She put on the helmet and climbed on the big motorcycle behind him. She barely had her arms around his waist when he started the bike and took off. He let his anger guide his driving skills and Mika shut her eyes tightly, to avoid visual proof of how fast they were going and how he was taking turns. Feeling it was bad enough without having to see the danger.

He finally stopped the bike and Mika opened her eyes when he killed the engine. Dread was immediate as she realized that Grady had pulled up in front of her Uncle

Omar's house. The lights were on inside and there were a few unknown cars in the driveway.

"Get off," Grady snarled in his anger.

"Why are you so angry at me?" She climbed off the bike and removed the helmet. "I didn't lead on that asshole. He just stood up and grabbed me. I told him to let me go. It wasn't my fault."

Grady climbed off the bike, tore off the helmet, and slammed it on the seat. He reached over without meeting her gaze and snatched away the helmet she held. He slammed it on the seat too, not bothering to hook them to the bike. His large hand snaked out and gripped her arm under her elbow. He jerked her toward the house.

Mika had to practically run to keep up with Grady. He was majorly pissed off and he wouldn't even look at her. When they reached the front door he didn't bother to knock, just twisted the handle and jerked it open. He yanked her into the house and slammed the door behind them. In seconds Mika was staring at a group of six men sitting in the living room with her uncle. She recognized Alpha Elroy who sat in a LaZBoy with his feet up. Sitting on the couch near him was Uncle Omar. Every eye in the room was on them.

"What happened?" Uncle Omar frowned. His full focus raked over Mika and settled on Grady. "I assume something happened."

Grady growled. "Your niece made me take her to my bar."

Anger clouded Uncle Omar's face while he leveled Mika with a cold look. "I told you no bars and you..." That cold stare shifted to Grady. "How the hell did she make you take her?"

Grady took a deep breath. His voice was harsh and deep when he spoke. "She said I could take her out or take off my clothes. She was bored and she's a pain in the ass who's spent days teasing me. It's mating season, damn it. If she'd stripped or come on to me the way she threatened to do then there was no way I could have controlled myself. She's too damn attractive. That's how she made me take her out of her home and to my bar. Jessup Lorne's son is in town, he saw her and grabbed her. He had three enforcers with him to guard him and he had his damn hands on her, determined to take her with him. He refused to let her go because she wasn't marked and didn't carry my scent since I'm not fucking her. He demanded I mark her in front of him while he was watching or he was leaving with her. He was actually looking forward to a fight with me."

"You killed Jessup's son?" Elroy shoved the chair upright and got to his feet. He growled. "You should know better, damn it. The last damn thing we need right now is the Lorne Pack and our pack going to war."

Grady shook his head. "I didn't kill him or fight with him." Grady glared at Omar. "He told me to prove she was mine and left me no choice in the matter. He said to mark her while he watched or he was taking her." Grady's hands balled into fists at his side. "He wanted her so bad that he wasn't reasonable and didn't care that she isn't Other."

Grady took a deep, shaky breath. "I had to bite her. I didn't know what else to do other than let him take her or start a war by killing him."

Mika watched her uncle pale. He closed his eyes and his head lowered until his chin nearly rested on his chest, saying nothing. She knew it had to be a bad thing for her uncle to react that way. He stayed frozen, barely breathing.

"I had no choice," Grady said softly. "It was start a war, kill him to stop him from taking her, or let him and his three enforcers walk out of there with her. We've all heard the rumors about what he does with his women. Omar, should I have allowed him take her instead? I made a decision to protect her since she's human and wouldn't have survived. If I'd let him take her it would have been a death sentence to her. I'm sorry."

Omar's head slowly rose as his eyes opened to stare into Grady's. "You made the right decision. We have all heard the rumors about how he passes his women to his enforcers when he's done and how abusive they are. She definitely wouldn't survive that kind of abuse as a fragile human." Omar looked at Mika. "Look at the trouble you've caused."

"I'm sorry." Mika frowned. "I just wanted to go out. I'm going crazy at home because I'm not used to being locked up." She jerked her thumb at Grady. "He stays a room away from me and I have no one to talk to."

Grady growled softly, turning his head, glaring down at her. "I barely speak to you because you tease me and I stay a room away because it's safer for both of us if I do. Maybe no one explained mating season to you but keeping my damn hands off you has been the ultimate test of control. I'm a goddamn saint, Mika. Yesterday morning when you woke up you walked around your house in a half shirt with no bra and tiny shorts that didn't cover the lower half of your ass. I have bruises on my knees from gripping them so damn tightly to inflict pain so I could concentrate on that instead of touching you."

"Well, excuse me, Mr. Growly. I'm not used to having a man in my home. I wake up and go eat. I'm dead to the world without coffee and some food in the morning. Be happy I slept in that much, considering I usually sleep naked."

"Mika!" Uncle Omar cleared his throat. "Look at me."

Mika jerked her gaze from Grady and met her uncle's eyes. He looked grim. "He marked you as his. You don't know what that means."

She frowned. "I will smell like him? That's my educated guess."

She watched her uncle move toward her. "It takes a few hours but you will carry his scent." He walked to her and halted. "Normally it would be fine. It will fade from you in a few weeks from just a quick bite." His gaze flew to Grady. "How deeply did you mark her?"

Grady's mouth tensed into a line. "I was angry."

Uncle Omar growled and reached for Mika's shoulders. She flinched when both of his hands came down. In seconds her uncle had bared her shoulder. He closed his eyes and then sighed. He released her after covering her injury again.

"He marked you well and you'll carry his scent for months. It's mating season so there's no way he'll be able to resist keeping his hands off you now. Even at this moment he has to control the urges that have to be hitting him hard—to tear your clothing from your body and take you. You have no idea how strong the compulsion is during our season to..." His lips sealed together.

"Have sex?" Mika said softly.

"Yes. For the next two weeks Grady will be sharing more than your house with you. I'd send you away but it would drive him crazy because it's mating season. He'd hunt you down and it would incite his animal in the worst way. Females who've run from hunting males have ended up dead and it's the worst tragedy since both usually die. The male never means to hurt the woman and when she ends up dying, the male can't live with what he's done."

Grady growled next to her and Omar flinched as he shot Grady a sympathetic look. "I know. It's begun for you. I won't send her away. I'm afraid you'll hurt her or worse, lose control and mate her if you have to hunt her."

Grady shook his head. "Thank you. I'd never hurt her and I sure as hell won't mate her. I want one of our own for a mate when I take one. My control is starting to slip. I've had sex with humans plenty of times so I know how to not hurt them since I'm aware of how fragile they are. I give you my word that no harm will come to her."

Omar nodded as his gaze slid to Mika. "I'm really sorry, Mika. You should have stayed at home like I warned you to do. I know that I threatened to spank your ass and I know you will think this is a much harsher punishment but he won't hurt you." He turned and gave a sharp nod at Grady. "Remember she's my heart. She's yours until mating season ends."

Shock tore through Mika. "I'm not his." Her gaze flew from her uncle to Grady, noticing her uncle looked teary-eyed while Grady's eye color had gone pitch black. "I'm not yours. What the hell does that even mean?"

Omar answered. "I'm giving you to him, baby, but just until mating season is over when he will be more in control. He'll be able to let you go without having the urge to track you."

"What does that mean?" Her heart was hammering in her chest. "You can't give me to someone. I'm an adult, a person, and not an object to just be given away. I know I should have stayed home but this is crazy."

A tortured look crossed her uncle's face. "There's no choice in this. Would you prefer I have to injure him so severely that it takes weeks for him to recover so he can't touch you? Do you realize how severely he'd have to be injured?"

Elroy growled, glaring at Omar. "That won't happen. He's my son."

"I know. That's why I'm giving her to him." Omar lowered his gaze and his head. "I know what must be done, Elroy. Take her, Grady. Get her out of here but don't hurt her. She's a daughter to me."

Grady gripped her arm and turned, yanking her toward the front door. Mika could only gasp as Grady dragged her from the house. He dragged her along behind him to the bike.

“Get on. We’re going to your house right now. Don’t fight me. I don’t want to lose control.”

Chapter Five

Grady unlocked her front door and firmly pushed Mika into her house. The door slammed behind them and the deadbolt slipped into place with a distinctive sound. She turned as he released her arm to look up at Grady.

His eye color remained that eerie black and his features were tense, making him appear a little harsh. His lips parted and she saw his teeth as he breathed hard. He moved, kicking off his boots and then yanked his shirt off over his head, dropped it on the floor. His gaze was locked with hers.

“Undress quickly if you don’t want me to destroy those clothes because I’ll tear them off otherwise.”

Shock tore through her. “I...”

“You wanted me and now you’re going to get me, Mika. You’ve spent days teasing me. You bought condoms when I took you to the store. You wondered how long it would be until we found ourselves in bed together and now you have your answer. In about two minutes we’re going to be in your bed. If you don’t undress and get in your room now I’ll take you here on the damn floor. My control is all but gone. I can still taste your blood in my mouth.”

She backed up and Grady followed her, stalking her with his graceful fluid movements. He reached for the front of his jeans, tore open the top button and reached for the zipper. Mika backed into the bedroom, flipping on the light, and kicked off her shoes as she kept backing up. Her heart pounded as she watched his every movement.

This wasn’t the perfect situation that Mika had in mind when she’d fantasized about her and Grady in her bedroom but she wanted him bad. The large man following her looked wild and untamed as his gaze burned into hers. He paused and then tore down his boxers and pants, dropping them to the floor.

Mika stared at Grady’s naked body. He was better looking than she’d even imagined. Tan skin and a muscular body greeted her eyes. His stomach was flat and she saw muscles ridged it, clearly defined. Her focus lowered and she swallowed hard, her body responding instantly. Grady naked, in good lighting, made her feel damn impressed. Grady could proudly hold up his head in any men’s locker room. She wanted him as much as he obviously wanted her, judging by how hard he was.

A deep, rumbling growl came from him. Her attention jerked up his body to his face. “Undress now.”

She gripped her shirt and lifted it over her head. She had wanted Grady and now she was about to get him. This was what she’d wanted for days and she’d fantasized that it would come to this. The attraction between them was too strong to deny. A slow

smile spread across her lips as she backed toward the bed. Grady followed her, inching closer. She couldn't wait to feel his hands on her body.

"The condoms are in the nightstand behind me."

Grady watched her tensely as she undressed. She stripped out of everything until she was totally naked. His look was hungry as he slowly raked every inch of her body with his intense gaze. He growled softly and then was moving. He walked past her but a gentle hand shot out that made contact with her skin, shoving her.

Mika landed on the bed flat on her back. She was shocked that he'd done that to her as she watched him jerk open the drawer of her nightstand. He used both hands and just tore the box in half, causing condoms to spill out onto the floor. He bent, grabbed a roll of them, and tossed them on the bed after tearing one off. He used his teeth to tear open the condom wrapper and looked down at his body as he fit it over his cock.

"In a hurry?" Her voice shook.

Grady's head snapped up. "Have you ever slept with a wolf?"

"No."

The word he cursed under his breath made Mika flinch. She saw his jaw jerk as he clenched his teeth hard. "Usually this wouldn't be a problem but I marked you. It drives me crazy to smell me on you and I want you bad. I'm also suffering mating heat. This isn't going to be romantic but I won't hurt you. I hope you don't mind raw sex because you're about to get just that. Spread your thighs now."

She had to close her gaping mouth. "I don't..."

He moved. She suddenly found her legs spread wide by Grady's hands, which held them that way. In the blink of an eye Grady dropped to his knees next to the bed and yanked her toward him until her ass was at the edge of the mattress. Large, strong hands adjusted her thighs to push them wider open and higher. Mika met his intense black gaze and then he looked down at her exposed sex. She could only widen her eyes in surprise as Grady buried his face between her thighs and his mouth attacked.

Shock tore through Mika as Grady's mouth, lips, and tongue ravaged her. He shifted his hold on her so his thumbs spread her sex wider open to his seeking, teasing mouth. He stabbed his tongue inside her and then slid it out and upward to torment her clit before he sucked on the swelling bud. The pleasure increased in intensity when his teeth lightly raked her clit. Sensations overwhelmed her.

Mika threw her head back, clawing at her comforter as moans tore from her. She didn't fight since what Grady was doing to her body was amazing and too damn good to even want to resist. He growled and she moaned louder from the vibrations it caused where he was latched on to her. His tongue and lips had no mercy as he licked and suckled. He figured out just the right tiny spot that sent her pleasure into overdrive and zoned in on it. Mika screamed as her body tensed and the climax hit her hard. It shocked the hell out of her how fast she'd come.

Grady's mouth released her entirely as he eased back away from her a little. She was feeling the climax starting to ease back and she relaxed. Large hands gripped her

hips and Mika cried out in surprise as she was flipped over as though she were a rag doll. Those hands yanked her to the edge of the bed until her knees touched carpet and she found herself kneeling over the bed. Mika's eyes flew open.

Grady's body caged her as his chest pushed her back down where he pinned her securely under his large body. His hands left her hips then slid down her thighs on the outside. He gripped her knees and jerked them farther apart as he lifted her hips higher so her knees left the floor.

She turned her head and stared into his dark eyes. They weren't almost black anymore, they were completely black and didn't look human, even in shape, since they appeared wider and rounder now. His lips were parted and she saw his canines as he breathed hard. She knew she made a soft, terrified sound.

"Easy," his voice was really deep—too deep. "I'm that turned on and I'm slipping just a little but I won't hurt you. Look away if I'm scaring you, babe. It's still me."

Mika turned her head away from him, not really wanting to see just how far he was going to slip. She was a little freaked out by having him turn a little into his wolf but he wasn't hurting her or changing much except for the shape of his eyes and a show of his longer teeth. She glanced at his arms, not seeing a mat of hair but tan, smooth skin instead, and relaxed completely. She lowered her face into mattress as the blunt tip of his cock nudged against her pussy. He was thick enough that her body resisted slightly even though she was wet and ready for him as Grady gently pushed into her, going really slowly but deeper until he was fully seated inside her body.

"Balls-deep," he growled. "Thank God you can take me because I was afraid you couldn't. You ready? I won't be real gentle but I'll try damn hard to not hurt you."

She nodded into the bed. Grady braced his arms next to hers until they were touching, pressed skin to skin. He withdrew partially from her and thrust forward. Mika moaned at the sensation. It felt really good as every thick inch of him brought sensitive nerve endings roaring to life.

Grady growled and withdrew then pushed into her deep again. He had her pinned tightly between the bed and his body. She was unable to move, so all she could do was feel the pleasure as Grady rode her faster and harder, increasing the pace. Mika had never felt anything close to the way Grady made her feel and she was no slouch in the sex department. She'd had lovers before but none of them had even come close to feeling as good as Grady did. She realized another climax was coming. She never came during straight sex without more stimulation to her clit but that wasn't the case this time. She tensed and came hard.

Grady rode her harder, if that was possible, as her muscles went crazy and the pleasure made her scream. She clawed the bed and bucked frantically against Grady. He suddenly gasped in air loudly and his hips started to jerk violently against her ass. A loud groan came from him as he lifted his chest off her back. His hands gripped her hips to hold her steady as he snarled something she couldn't understand as he came.

His hips stilled.

They were both panting. Mika acknowledged silently that Grady had just given her the best sex she'd ever had in her life. Grady was still gripping her hips but his hold eased and he shivered against her. When he slowly withdrew from her body she was glad she was lying half across the bed as he backed away, knowing that if the bed wasn't holding her up she would have collapsed. She forced her eyes open and turned her head.

She watched Grady straighten and tear off the used condom before he turned away to go into her bathroom. Mika was shaky as she forced her legs to move. She climbed all the way onto the mattress and collapsed on her side. She lay there while Grady turned on water in the other room and quickly realized he was using her shower.

She was tempted to go join him but she couldn't find the energy to get out of bed. She had to catch her breath. The shower shut off in under two minutes so she guessed that Grady must have just wanted to rinse off. He walked out of her bathroom with dry hair but water beaded on his chest and arms. One of her pink bath towels was slung low around his hips. His dark eyes had lightened from black to dark brown when his gaze locked with hers. He looked grim.

"Did I hurt you?"

Mika couldn't resist grinning. "If that was pain, sign me up for more."

His eyes widened in surprise and then a smile tugged at his lips. "You're signed up for the duration of mating season."

Questions filled Mika's head. The top one came pouring out of her mouth. "Does that mean that I'm the only woman you'll be sharing a bed with for the next two weeks? I don't share."

He blinked and his smile faded as he studied her.

Mika found the strength to sit up. "I know we're not in a relationship or anything but don't expect me to be a part of that shit. It won't happen. If you plan on bed hopping then don't try to climb back into mine."

He slowly nodded. "That's fine. Any other rules you want to lay down?"

She shook her head. "That's the only one I can think of."

"You shouldn't worry about that since we'll be in your house until you go home. I won't be around other women."

"We still have to stay here? I'm marked by you and carry your scent. Aren't I safe from being a walking sex toy?"

He cocked his head and then nodded. "You should be safe but if we do go anywhere you aren't getting out of my sight since we aren't mated. You're just marked with my scent. Some bastards might still go for you." He raked a heated look over her body. "You're very tempting, Mika."

Her eyes lowered down his body and saw he wasn't soft anymore. His cock was growing hard as she watched the bulge under the towel lift it slightly. Her eyebrows arched as she looked into Grady's eyes.

"Let me guess. Werewolves have good recovery time?"

He nodded. "Excellent. We're very sexual."

Mika smiled at him and rolled onto her back, stretching out. "Lucky me. Want to play nice and slower now?"

The towel dropped to the carpet as Grady got on the bed and crouched over her until he caged her under his body with his arms and knees but they weren't touching. Mika moved first, reaching up to open her hands on his chest. He had hot skin. He was hard bodied but his skin was soft and she ran her hands over his nipples, loving the feel of him. The cool drops of water made her lift her head to open her mouth and lick at some between his nipples.

"Babe," Grady softly sighed. "You're playing with fire."

"So burn me up." Her hands slid to his shoulders and she tugged.

Grady lowered his bigger body until he was totally on top of her. He braced enough of his weight to not totally crush her under his large frame. Mika spread her thighs wider to give him room for his hips to snuggle against her body. Her legs lifted and she wrapped them around his firm ass. Grady moved his hips and she felt his arousal pushing against her still-wet and welcoming pussy. She wiggled her hips, feeling the hard press of his cock right there, and wanted him to enter her.

"Condom," he said softly.

Mika bit her lip. "I'm on the Pill and I'm clean. Are you disease free?"

She saw something wild flare in his eyes. He shook his head and then nodded.

"Damn," he rasped. "No, I don't have any diseases. We don't catch them. Our physiology is different enough from yours that most diseases can't be passed on to us. I can't come in you. It's too dangerous right now with mating heat. You'll scent stronger of me and it's the kind of scent that could get us in deep shit."

"Deep shit sounds bad." She smiled at him. "Of course I like trouble."

He suddenly laughed and his dark eye color lightened again. It amazed Mika how the man's eyes could change color so quickly. She was learning that emotions lightened and darkened them. Smiling back at her, Grady caressed her cheek.

"I wouldn't trust myself not to bite you while I was fucking you. My control isn't the greatest when I'm in heat. Without a condom it would feel too damn good. We'd be stuck with each other forever. During sex all kinds of hormones and chemical changes are happening in my body that weren't present when I marked you. If I lost control and bit you during sex all those would be introduced into your bloodstream. It would bind us together and make you my permanent mate."

"Ah. That kind of deep shit."

He nodded. "I wish I could risk it. I hate condoms and I want to feel you so damn bad I hurt. I just can't risk making you my mate."

Pain at his words hit her. She'd heard him tell her uncle he wanted a werewolf woman as a mate. *It shouldn't be any skin off my nose*, she reminded herself, *if he doesn't*

want me on a long-term basis. The problem was, she was too strongly attracted to him and the idea of him settling down to have babies with some literal bitch made jealousy rear its ugly head inside her.

Grady was a great guy and he was fantastic in bed. Mika rolled her hips again, wiggling until she felt the head of his cock pressed right where she wanted him. "Pull out and put on a condom in a few minutes...but right now I want to feel just you. It feels different."

"You don't have to tell me the difference between a condom and skin, babe."

"Just let me feel you."

"It's a bad idea."

"Just a few minutes and then put on the condom." She paused. "They irritate me and make me a little sore. I'm usually in long-term relationships with men I have sex with so I'm not used to using them since I'm on the Pill."

He nodded. "I'm dying to know how it would feel with nothing between us."

He pushed into her and Mika knew heaven as his cock slid home. Her lips parted to release a moan of sheer rapture. Her nails raked his shoulders and she tightened her legs around his hips so her heels dug into his ass. The sensation of Grady's cock, with nothing between them, was the most wonderful thing she had ever experienced. He was fuller, the sensation was different without latex, and as her vaginal walls gripped him, Grady groaned softly. She met his intense gaze. He looked hungry and wild, if eyes really were the windows into someone's soul.

"We're fucked," he rasped.

She squeezed her muscles around his cock again. Grady's eyes widened and then he pulled back. She thought he was leaving her body, withdrawing from her totally, and she had to halt the urge to cling to him to keep him there but she released her death grip around his hips with her legs so he could move away from her. Grady almost withdrew completely but then he drove his hips into hers, plunging his cock into her deep and hard, pushing her body into the bed.

Mika cried out in pleasure and her legs wrapped tightly around him again. Their gazes remained locked, Grady keeping eye contact with her as he drove in and out of her again and again. Mika couldn't look away from the pleasure that was easy to read on his handsome features. She bucked her hips and she met him with an upward thrust. Skin to skin felt unbearably good, too good, and her body tensed, muscles tightening as a climax built inside her.

Her nails bit into his shoulders. Grady's eyes narrowed, the shape changing just a little, and when his lips parted, sharp, extended teeth were revealed. She screamed out Grady's name as she came hard, ecstasy tearing through her entire body and watched as his eyes closed when his own release hit him. His mouth opened wider, his teeth grew longer, and she threw up her hand over his mouth, right as he lowered his face into her neck.

"No," she moaned, still riding her pleasure.

She could feel the sharp points of his teeth against her palm but then his lips closed over them. His face was buried in the crook of her neck, her hand trapped over his mouth as he panted. She shivered in the aftermath. The sex had been amazing. The only downside was that she'd seen him lose control and if she hadn't been watching him he would have bitten her. He turned his face away from her neck and away from her hand. She wrapped her arms tighter around him, holding him, and loved the way his heavy body pinned hers to the bed.

"Sorry," he whispered. He lifted his head and stared down at her, their noses nearly touching.

"Never apologize for making me come that hard. That was mind-blowing. You're amazing."

He tensed on her and then relaxed. "If you hadn't gripped my mouth I would have bitten you. You feel too damn good and make me lose my head."

She chuckled. "We'll have to buy you a muzzle, honey."

She saw amusement spark his dark eyes. "I think they make them. I know this sex shop that carries all kinds of kinky shit."

"Really?" She laughed. "I think tomorrow we should go there to buy one for you because I don't want to use condoms with you."

His smile died. "You're serious?"

She nodded. "Do you really want to use them when we don't have to? Tell me that wasn't damn good, that you don't want to do it again and I'll call you a liar."

The amusement left him. "It was too damn good. I could get addicted to you."

She ran her tongue over her lips. "You don't want me for a mate, remember? You want a wolf."

"Your life isn't here anyway. Where do you live?"

"I have an apartment in Orange County, California."

"What do you do for a living?"

"I work for the phone company as an information operator."

"Whose house is this? I didn't know Omar owned it."

"He doesn't. It was my parents' house when they still lived here. When I was two we moved to Southern California but we'd always come here for a few weeks here and there so they kept it. When they died it was left to me. My mom was a wolf and my father was human but they were mated. They were childhood sweethearts."

"It's rare that a were-woman mates with a human guy. Most families wouldn't allow it. They'd demand he risk his life to change so he'd be strong enough to protect his mate."

Mika didn't see any bias in his eyes. He just looked curious. "My mother never wanted to risk his life to attempt to change him. Mom and Uncle Omar's parents were killed when they were in their teens and Uncle Omar grew up with my father too, so he

didn't protest when she followed her heart to marry the man she loved. Uncle Omar was just happy that my mom was happy."

"Why did they leave here then?"

"The pack didn't agree with their union and Mom was worried about Dad's safety. My dad had family in Orange County so it was logical to go there."

"How did they die?"

She glanced away as pain lanced her heart for a moment but then looked back at him. "When I was ten years old they went on a skiing trip and had rented a small cabin. They left me with Dad's aunt. There was an avalanche, it happened in the middle of the night and they probably never knew what happened unless the sound woke them before the snow hit the cabin. They were found in bed together when the rescue teams dug them out. The cabin was totally destroyed."

"So Omar raised you?" He frowned. "I've never met you and you'd think I would know if a girl was in his house for all those years. I've been around long enough to have seen or scented you when you were younger."

"No. My father's aunt kept me. My life was there and Uncle Omar thought it would be safer for me to be with other humans. Every year I come for two weeks. It was always that way before my parents died and that was the agreement he made with my aunt. When I hit adulthood I kept coming every year. I have met some of the pack, of course, but for the most part, he keeps me away from them. I always stay here so it's not like I live with him. The one time I stayed there since I turned eighteen was a nightmare I never want to repeat." She laughed. "He and Minnie are very sexually active and loud so I barely got any sleep."

He chuckled. "We're very sexual creatures."

She smiled. "Lucky me, for the next two weeks."

He grinned. "Have you ever thought about moving here?"

She nodded. "The only time I considered it was when my ex and I broke up and I found myself suddenly homeless. Uncle Omar kind of made it known it was a bad idea. He's visited me in California often and always scouts out my neighborhood before I move into a place. I guess wolves don't want to live in heavily populated areas. He said it was werewolf-free so I was safer living there."

Grady frowned. "You were married?"

She shook her head. "We lived together. He wanted to go do the quickie Vegas marriage thing but I said no way because I wanted to live with him for a year first to make sure we'd work out. It was a damn good thing I put my foot down because it's a hell of a lot easier to pack up shit and move out than it would have been hiring an attorney to get a divorce."

Grady withdrew from her body and rolled over, unpinning her, and totally not touching her anymore. He stretched out on his side next to her and propped his head on his hand so he could stare at her.

"Why did you break up?"

She winced. "Well, I got off work early one day and I walked into our apartment to find him with someone else. He was literally nailing her in our bed. I was shocked. I trusted him completely and never saw that coming. There were no signs." She shrugged. "I was hurt and really angry. Then he had the nerve to tell me it wasn't what it looked like." She snorted. "He was inside her. How can you misconstrue that? Not only did he betray me and hurt me but he insulted me by trying to treat me like a complete moron."

Grady's eyes twinkled and she could see he fought a smile. "What did he tell you it really was? I'm dying to hear this."

She turned onto her side facing him. The pain had mostly faded from her ex's betrayal but the anger remained. "She was his boss. He said he was trying to get a promotion so he would make more money so we could afford a house."

"What an asshole."

She nodded. "I told him he was lucky she didn't fire his ass for incompetence." A smile played at her lips. "When that sank in and he understood what I meant, he got pretty mad."

Grady laughed. He had a great laugh. "Not too good in bed, huh?"

She shrugged. "He was okay but it was nothing compared to this." She glanced down at his body. "Not even close. He made me laugh and I thought I was in love with him. I was more pissed off than hurt when he cheated on me. We got along well and it was comfortable living with him. We had the same interests."

"You settled for him."

She didn't look away from Grady. "I guess I did. I probably should be happy he did cheat on me. I told him if he ever did it that I'd never take him back and I wasn't kidding."

"Did he try to get you back?"

She nodded. "He still tries. He calls my cell phone every few days and he's sent flowers to my work half a dozen times but he's wasting his time. I delete his messages without listening to them and every time he sends me flowers I give them away at work."

Grady reached out and rubbed her hip with his large hand. "He was stupid. If I were a human guy, I'd do everything to keep hold of you."

"But you're not one. Not fully."

"No. I'm not. Ready to get some sleep? It's been a long day."

She nodded. Grady released her and rolled away. He stood and walked around the bed. Mika turned onto her back and tracked him as he reached down and picked up his discarded underpants and jeans. He walked toward the door of her bedroom and then paused but didn't turn around.

"Good night, Mika."

"You aren't sleeping with me?" She was astonished at his actions. She saw his muscles stiffen as he shook his head slowly.

"No. You're leaving soon so it's best if we keep some distance between us. Sweet dreams." He reached out and flipped off her light. He left the door open and walked away.

Mika frowned and rolled onto her stomach. She could see Grady picking up his discarded shirt and his footwear. He had a really nice ass that she got a great view of as he bent to retrieve his things from the floor. She lifted her head and let it fall, banging her head over and over against her soft comforter. *Shit, I'm in trouble.* She was really hurt and disappointed that he wasn't going to sleep with her. *Bad signs,* she told herself.

She bit back a curse when anger was her next emotion. She was good enough to fuck but not to sleep with? Is that what he thought? He'd get close during sex but he didn't want to hold her in his arms all night. She climbed out of bed and walked to her door. She slammed it closed, not caring how he took that little action of hers, her anger growing. She flipped on her bedroom light and stormed to the shower. She smelled of sex and Grady. If he wouldn't sleep with her, she sure as hell wasn't going to inhale reminders of them together when she was alone.

She turned on the shower and stepped into the stall. She stood there letting water pour down her body for a long time. She finally moved when she got her anger under control, though it wasn't anger as much as hurt, she realized. She liked Grady way too much and she always tried to be completely honest about her feelings. She confronted them. She was falling for a guy who didn't want anything lasting with her. She wasn't a wolf and he was set on never hooking up with a human mate. It really hurt and when something did that, she tended to turn that emotion into raw anger, something she could deal with more easily than tears.

She took her time and even shaved her legs. She washed her hair and let her conditioner set for a good five minutes, anything to stall until she got a grip on herself. When she was sure that she wouldn't burst into tears or storm out there and tell him off, she dried off and walked back into her room.

The bedroom door was still closed the way she'd left it. She listened but didn't hear anything coming from the other side of the door. She figured that Grady must have just gone to bed since she'd have heard the television if he had it on. She walked to the scene of the crime and yanked down her comforter. She climbed naked into her bed and reached for the light switch over her head on the wall. The room went totally dark.

Mika couldn't sleep. Why was Grady acting the way he was? Would it kill him to sleep with her and to share her bed? He had no qualms about burying his face between her thighs or burying his cock to the hilt inside her. That was damn personal. Sleeping in a bed with her obviously wasn't a line he wanted to cross. She decided he was a total jerk and a major asshole.

Gritting her teeth, she flipped over onto her stomach and sighed, knowing she should be tired. It was almost eleven-thirty at night and she'd gotten up at eight. At

home she usually went to bed at ten. She sighed again and flipped back over. Maybe some more sexual release would put her out. She stuck her finger in her mouth, wet her index finger, and spread her thighs. She closed her eyes and put an image of Grady in her mind. It turned her on remembering he had one hell of a body, picturing him naked as she rubbed her clit.

She softly moaned at the thought of what Grady's mouth could do to her and spread her knees wider. She drew circles around her clit, imagining it was his tongue. She tilted her head back and bit her lip. It didn't take her long to get to the point where she was ready to come. She tensed and softly cried out as pleasure tore through her. She sighed and shut her legs, withdrawing her hand from under the covers as her body relaxed and she tried to calm her pounding heart.

Her bedroom door came crashing open, loudly slamming into the wall, and Mika lunged for the light switch. She heard a growl and then her bed dipped. She flipped the light on right as the covers were torn from her body. She stared in shock at a naked and very aroused Grady glaring at her. He was on his knees on her bed by her knees. She couldn't miss the hard-on that was pointing right at her.

"If you really wanted me to share your bed all you had to do was say so," he ground out harshly. His hand gripped her leg, yanked her flat on her back and shoved her thighs apart before he came down on her. "Don't ever torment me again. I could hear every breath, every moan, and every other sound you made while you touched yourself."

Mika cried out in sudden pleasure as Grady entered her. He gripped her arms, jerking them above her head, and used his elbows to support his upper body weight, to keep from crushing her. His hold was tight but not painful on her wrists. He started to move in her in deep, long strokes. Mika wrapped her thighs around his hips and curled her legs over the back of his ass.

Intense pleasure hit her while Grady fucked her hard and fast. He drove in and out of her. She wound her arms around his neck and clung to him as their bodies moved together when he released her wrists. He tensed and she felt him jerk on her. He groaned and came. She noticed that he kept his face turned to the side, his teeth far from her skin.

Disappointment hit Mika. Grady cursed softly and then was rolling them over. His large, strong hands gripped her. He moved her so she was straddling his lap sitting up on top of him. He was still hard inside her. He released her and lifted her with his hips, driving into her. One of his hands gripped her hip to steady her while his other hand reached between them to rub against her clit while he bucked her on his hips. In less than a minute Mika came hard.

Chapter Six

Mika woke up alone. The bedroom door was open, allowing the smell of coffee to lure her into crawling out of bed. She winced a little as sore muscles protested. She was a little tender between her thighs in that day-after-too-much-sex way.

Grady had growled the night before as she sprawled on his chest, panting after he'd made her come. Mika had just lain there, letting the aftermath turn her into jelly. She had breathed in that wonderful scent Grady's skin put off and listened to his heartbeat pounding in her ear. He was damn warm, large, and comfortable to lie on. Mika had drifted to sleep on top of him the night before.

She studied her bed as she climbed out of it. Had Grady spent the entire night with her? He's accused her of tormenting him. *What the hell was that about?* She sighed and stumbled to the bathroom. Her mind gave her simple instructions—*use the bathroom, brush your teeth, take a fast shower.* Zombielike, she stumbled through her morning habits.

Ten minutes later when Mika walked out of her room, still damp and wearing a robe, Grady was in the kitchen. His hair was wet and she knew he'd showered too. He was leaning against the counter holding a coffee mug in one hand and a cell phone held to his ear with his other. His dark gaze fixed on her but no emotion showed on his face.

"I'm going to have to put that off." His voice was soft as he spoke, looking away from her. "I'm sorry. I know we had plans." He pushed away from the counter and walked around Mika. He was careful to not touch her as he moved into the living room. "I got assigned pack duty and I can't take off for a weekend."

Mika walked to the coffeepot and poured some into a mug. She cocked her head, straining to hear anything but it was silent, as though Grady were listening to someone. She couldn't see him since he'd moved out of the room. She hesitated and then tiptoed over to the wall and pressed her ear against it.

"I know it's mating season and I know we had planned on spending the weekend together, Megan. I just can't get out of this because its pack related. You know how that goes. Your job with your pack is important to you and so is mine as an enforcer. I was looking forward to a few days of no-holds-barred animal sex with you myself. We'll do this in a few weeks when our schedules clear up again."

Mika hated the raw pain that sliced through her as she realized he was on the phone with a woman. That no-holds-barred-animal-sex comment had hit her as the verbal slap that it was. She reeled away and walked back to the sink to stare out the kitchen window. Tears filled her eyes, blinding her, and she hated them. It hurt that Grady was talking to another woman, obviously a werewolf bitch, and possibly the one he'd mate with when he wanted to settle down. He said they'd meet up in a few weeks so he was definitely planning on fucking that bitch.

She closed her eyes, frantically fighting more tears, and just stood there trying to get hold of her emotions. The real problem was that she was having them. She was falling for Grady as fast as if a ton of cement hung around her neck and he was never going to fall too. He'd slept in her bed but he was talking on the phone to another woman, making plans to meet up with her in the near future. She admitted it hurt and she was jealous.

"Morning," Grady said from behind her.

She kept her eyes closed, refusing to acknowledge him as she took deep breaths until she knew she had the urge to cry under control. She opened her eyes, sipped her coffee and stared out the window to avoid looking at him. She needed to get a leash on her temper that was rising fast because anger was how she handled the raw pain of knowing he wanted to be with another woman instead of her.

Mika wanted to be honest with herself. He was only with her because he'd been ordered to protect her. He'd been forced to live with her and if he hadn't marked her, he'd probably still be refusing to touch her. *Life sucks*, she determined.

"Mika? I said 'morning'."

She didn't turn to face him. "I heard you."

He was silent but she could sense him watching her. "Are you all right? Did I hurt you?"

He had no damn idea how much. She remained silent. She didn't turn but she just knew he was slowly drawing closer. She felt him directly behind her though he didn't touch her.

"Mika? I know I hurt you. Do you need a doctor? Was I too rough with you?"

"It must be hell for you." She kept her voice soft.

Long seconds passed in a room too quiet. "What must be hell?"

She slowly turned then and set her coffee cup on the counter next to her so she wasn't tempted to chuck it at his head. She forced herself to look up at Grady. Only a foot separated them. "Having to be with me instead of who you want to be with. I'm really sorry that I ruined your plans for the weekend and I'm really damn sorry that you have to put up with me for the next two weeks. Duty must a hellish thing for you right now. Excuse me. I'm in need of some space so I'll be in my room alone."

Grady's face paled slightly. She inched sideways, and walked quickly away from him. She didn't want to be in the same room with him. She heard him softly curse as she left the kitchen but she didn't look back. She walked to her bedroom and closed the door.

It was insane to fall for someone too fast. She must have lost her damn mind. He'd saved her twice, given her mind-blowing sex repeatedly, and he certainly was too damn attractive to ignore. She walked to her dresser. She needed to be away from him to clear her head, even if it was just to hide away in her bedroom.

She put on jeans, a T-shirt, and running shoes. She studied her reflection as she brushed out her damp hair and pulled it into a ponytail. She was going to get hurt even worse by the time this was over. Spending one night with the guy was already affecting her to the point that she'd had to fight bawling like a baby in the kitchen. What would happen when it was time to go? After getting used to touching and having Grady around, it would be hell when it ended. She shook her head sadly. It would be really damn stupid to set herself up for that kind of pain. She wasn't psychic but she knew she'd fall harder for the guy.

He wanted a werewolf mate. Hell, what could she offer him anyway? Her life was in Orange County. She'd have to give up her shitty apartment and have to quit the job she couldn't even stand. She'd never see her friends who were in relationships and who barely found time for her. She winced. The truth hurt. Giving up her life in Orange County wouldn't be difficult at all.

Mika sighed. If Grady wanted to mate her she'd go for it even if it was totally nuts since she barely knew him. Giving up her life in California wouldn't be a hardship and she'd have a sexy hot man in her bed every night if he mated her. He had a job so he wasn't a loser and they could live in her house. It was probably bigger than his place over his bar. Besides, she loved her house and had wanted to move in full-time once before. Uncle Omar would have to accept it if she mated Grady.

Spinning away from the mirror, she was totally disgusted with herself for even having those stupid thoughts. Grady didn't want her that way so going over how nuts it would be to mate with the guy was a moot point. Imagining little Grady babies was just ridiculous. She bet that any kids she had with him would be damn cute and she really wanted kids. Mika clenched her teeth and walked over to collapse heavily on her bed.

Grady was a werewolf and she wasn't. They were either born or brutally made. She knew it was usually a deadly attempt when someone tried to turn a human into a werewolf. Uncle Omar had explained that to her when she was a child and had wanted to turn into a puppy and run with her uncle in his wolf form.

It was all about biting, blood loss, and near death to get someone to turn into a werewolf. The bite would have to come from a werewolf in full wolf form. There had to be massive blood loss and shock to the body, taking the person to death's door, and then there was just a slight chance the body would accept being turned. More died from trauma than those who survived the attempted change. Uncle Omar said only about one in twenty survived long enough to let the process take hold so their bodies could heal to survive.

No. Even if she was willing to attempt being turned into a werewolf, and she wasn't, there was no way it would be allowed. Uncle Omar would kill anyone who even suggested it. She really didn't want to tie herself down to a man who wanted her to be brutally bitten, with just a prayer that she'd survive. She realized chivalry had died but she wanted a man in her life who would do anything to protect her from hurt.

The drawbacks to mating a werewolf as a human were well known to her. Her parents had been harassed and not accepted by the pack. They'd moved away to avoid it but Grady would never leave. She and Grady would have to deal with that kind of mindset from the pack. The fact that he was alpha blooded would make him want a werewolf woman even more. Pure-blooded mating made strong offspring. Any children she had with Grady would probably be considered mutts in werewolf terms.

Unlike her parents, she would be raising shifters. Grady had alpha blood so all his children would definitely be shifters, even with her, a mere human. She'd never have that in common with her children. She'd always be different from them because she couldn't change into another form the way they could, and she'd have to learn how to care for shapeshifter children.

She couldn't be with Grady the way a werewolf woman could. No midnight runs and no doggy sex while in four-legged bodies. She curled her lip at the thought of his conversation on the phone. She bet that's what he meant about animal sex with that bitch and that was probably important to Grady. She'd overheard her uncle and Minnie chuckling about how great sex was between them in Other form. It had grossed her out but she wasn't able to see their perspective of it.

Mika couldn't forget what Minnie had told her either. Grady was Elroy's bastard child and his mother had been human. Elroy's mate was a bitch but she'd taken it to a new level by refusing to accept Grady into their family so he'd been reared in another one. He probably felt left out and bitter.

Acceptance was probably something Grady longed for. Mating with a human was a surefire way to never receive it. Mika's shoulders sagged in defeat. There was no way Grady would ever mate with her even if she totally fell in love with him and wanted to mate with him.

She had to face that there wasn't going to be a happy ending here. She wasn't what Grady wanted or needed. If he hadn't had to bite her, he'd never have touched her. He'd said it himself. She wasn't worth losing his balls over and Uncle Omar would have castrated him if he'd touched her before he'd had to bite her to save her from that jerk in the bar and maintain peace between the packs.

The house was quiet. She wondered what Grady was doing and what he was thinking. She could guess he was probably considering what a pain in the ass she was and wished that he'd never laid teeth on her. He'd be going on his weekend with his werewolf bitch for his obviously desired animal sex the minute Mika was gone.

The phone rang and startled her. She leaned over and grabbed it before it rang a second time. "Hello?"

"I wanted to call you last night," Minnie said softly. "Omar ordered me not to. Are you all right? I heard what happened and Omar was really upset. He's worried. He wanted to call and check on you but he's afraid to. He thinks you'll hate him for giving Grady permission to fuck you and I think he's afraid you will tell him that you got hurt. Are you all right?"

Mika hesitated.

"Damn it. Was he not careful with you? They can be rough and you're so human," Minnie growled. "If he hurt you, I'll tell Omar. He'll kill the son of a bitch."

"No, don't do that. He didn't. I'm fine."

"You don't sound fine."

Mika stretched out on her bed and took a deep breath. "It's complicated but I'm fine."

"Do you want me to come over?"

"No. Please don't."

"You're not talking much."

"You have good hearing."

There was a pause. "Oh. He'll hear what you say."

"Exactly."

"Did he hurt you during the sex?"

"No."

Another pause. "Was he hell on wheels?"

"Oh yeah."

Minnie chuckled. "I'd heard that about him. Us women talk and he's gotten around. So what's the problem? Give me a word and I'll guess. He won't be able to hear my side of the conversation unless he's sitting close to you."

"I don't know what to say."

Minnie was silent. "You have feelings for him, don't you? You sound depressed."

"Yeah. Good guess."

"He's a good catch, Mika. If you feel things for him then why fight it? I know your uncle doesn't want you with a wolf but Grady is a damn good man. You could do a hell of a lot worse and you've been raised with our kind so there won't be many surprises."

"It's not me."

Another long pause. "He doesn't want a relationship beyond the sex?"

"Bingo."

"You don't know that. Give it a week. I can't see any guy spending that much time getting to know you without falling in love. Any man would be damn lucky to have you, Mika."

Mika was silent.

"Mika?"

"I'm sure that's not going to happen."

"He said so?"

"In so many words."

"Why? What is he? Blind? Stupid?" Minnie was angry. "You're my baby and that son of a bitch should know what he has."

"I'm not you," Mika said softly. "Do you understand? I'm different."

Silence. Minnie cursed. "He's been treated like shit by Eve because he's a bastard and because his mother was human. He's a bigot about you being human? Is that what you're saying?"

"You are really good at this."

"Is he putting you down for it? Insulting you?"

"No."

"But you being human is a problem for him?"

"Exactly."

"He won't mate with a human? He said that?"

"Yes."

"Oh baby, I'm so sorry. He's stupid."

Mika smiled. "I agree."

Minnie was silent. "You like him a hell of a lot, don't you?"

"Yes."

"Like him enough that it hurts that he won't even consider long term?"

"Yeah. Stupid, huh?"

"Not at all. You like him too much and you're facing about two weeks of getting hot and sweaty with him. You're going to get hurt when this is over and you go home, aren't you?"

"Did anyone ever tell you that you're kind of spooky on how you can accurately guess things?"

"I just know you. I'm also a woman and I can put myself in your shoes. Are you sure you don't want me to come over? I can send him on an errand and we can talk without him hearing us. I can buy ice cream and we can talk about what dickheads men are as we polish off a carton or two of something a thousand calories a bite."

Mika actually chuckled. "Thanks, but no."

"I could tell Omar and he could order him to mate you."

Shocked, Mika insisted, "Don't you dare. That's not even funny. I already feel..." She softly cursed. "It would make it way worse and it's bad enough as it is."

"Sorry. Shit. He feels as though you've been forced on him? Are you sure he doesn't want you? Is he gay? If he doesn't want you, he's definitely into men."

"No. Definitely not that last part. The first part, yeah. Big-time."

"And he told you that he doesn't want you and feels forced?"

"You know how phone calls go."

"Phone call?"

"Yeah. His."

"You overheard him making a phone call?"

"Yeah."

"To who?"

"A woman."

"Shit. He had someone lined up to spend mating season with, didn't he? A lot of unmated males do that. They find some bitch who they know doesn't want to settle down yet and kind of make an annual date with them. Is that what you overheard?"

"Yeah."

"What an ass. Is he still planning on meeting her? I'll have Omar kick his ass. He can't be in your bed and another woman's. Now that he's marked you, you could probably detect her scent and it would drive you into a rage. It's just damn rude too. Not to mention, he marked you so if he screwed around it wouldn't get him off. It would be like foreplay without the hope of a good ending, no matter what."

"No. That got canceled."

"He canceled? Well, that's good."

"Is it? Just listening to what you say is hard to do when you're telling me what you want and you know I can't give that to you."

Millie was silent for a moment. "Shit. He got all "sex talk" with her? In detail? Let me guess. He wants to chase her tail through the woods and you sure as hell don't have a tail."

"Close enough."

Minnie cursed. "What an ass. You should give it back to him by telling him how great human guys are so he knows how it feels. Tell him you hate sharp teeth and how you think growling is low class."

"I don't though."

"But he doesn't know that. When he mounts you, you tell him you like it the human-guy way. It's different, right? I heard they are all romance and talk you half to death and touch you like you are made of glass. That would drive me crazy and our guys aren't into that shit. They are into hot and hard sex. He'll think he's shit in bed since he can't give you what you tell him you want."

Mika laughed. "Too late for that."

"You let him know how good he was?"

"You're the best," Mika laughed.

Minnie laughed. "Oh, you so didn't tell him that."

"I so mean it too."

Minnie chuckled. "Well, do it anyway. Try. I'll think up something. Shit. Omar walked in so I have to go. Call me if you need some girl time with high calories."

"I love you." Mika hung up.

She knew she couldn't hide out in her room all damn day. She finally stood up and walked to the bedroom door. She hesitated and then opened it. She saw Grady sitting on the couch, staring right back at her. He looked angry.

"Who called? Who was that on the phone? Who do you love?"

She hesitated, frowning at him, wondering why he was pissed. "Minnie."

He visibly relaxed and the anger on his features melted away. "Why are you mad at me?"

"I don't want to discuss it. I'm bored and want to go do something. I need to get out of the house for a little while."

Grady shook his head. "I think we should stay here."

"I don't really give a damn what you think right now, to be honest."

His jaw clenched. "You overheard my phone conversation, didn't you? Is that what has you so mad? I called to let my friend know I wouldn't be joining her for the weekend. I didn't break your rule. I broke my date with her."

Mika hesitated. "That's not what upset me. I have had some time to think about it and I'm not mad anymore, Grady."

"You look mad and you smell mad."

"I smell mad? Anger has a scent?"

"Yes. Fear, arousal, and even pain give off scents."

"That's disturbing."

"Why?" He stood up slowly.

"Well, feelings are private, that's why. Now, please take me to the movies. I want out of here and you can watch me from the back of the theater while I sit in the front." *Far away from you.*

"I'm not taking you anywhere until you tell me what made you mad."

"Fine. You want to do this? I don't point out all of your shortcomings because you're *just* a werewolf. I heard you on the phone and I got it that you *clearly* have a low opinion of humans. Since you didn't seem to mind that so much when you were *inside* me it tended to piss me off that it seems a big point with you that you can't have sex with me with fur on."

He frowned. "I didn't say that and I didn't insult you in any way. I didn't even mention you."

She arched her eyebrow. "Okay. How would you feel if you overheard me talking to a guy I was supposed to spend the weekend with and heard me tell him how much I wished I was with him doing things to him that I know damn well you can't do to me."

His mouth tensed and his eye color turned black. "I can do anything to you that a human can do." He took a step and then another. "I can do it better."

"Then swear to me that you can have sex with me without a condom on and not be tempted to bite me. Can you fuck me without having your teeth grow out, or your eyes turning black? With human guys I don't have to deal with any of that shit."

Anger tightened his face.

Mika studied him, realizing she was trying to piss him off and knew it was dangerous. Werewolves weren't known for control when they were angry. "I don't want to fight with you. You've already made it clear that the only reason you want to have sex with me is because you were forced into it by protecting me."

Grady inched closer to her. "You think I don't want you? Look at me. Hell, feel me. I'm hard because I want you."

"If you hadn't been ordered to guard me you wouldn't be here. I wanted you but you wouldn't touch me until you were forced to bite me. If my uncle told you today he was pulling you from guarding me, you'd be out that door in a snap if you hadn't bitten me. You sure wouldn't be cancelling your weekend plans. You'd be chasing tail in the woods."

His jaw clenched but he didn't say a word. His dark eyes looked away from Mika, guilt crossing his features, and pain hit her hard.

"That's what I thought. The token denial would have been nice though. Let's go. I'm leaving with or without you."

Chapter Seven

Grady's bar wasn't packed during the day. The female bartender was in her early thirties, had black short hair, startling green eyes, and four face piercings. Her nose, lips, and eyebrow sported metal. She watched Mika curiously as Grady introduced them.

"Watch her, Tina. She's Omar's human niece and she's aware of what we are."

Tina's nose twitched and she arched an eyebrow at Grady. "I see how the wind blows. I thought you were seeing—"

"That will be all," Grady cut her off. "I'll be in my office for a few minutes and then I'll be back." Grady glared at Mika. "Your ass doesn't leave that seat. I don't want a repeat of the other night. If you want to dance, wait for me and I'll dance with you. I just need to take care of a few things while we're in town."

He walked away leaving Mika with the bartender who was still eyeing her carefully and thoughtfully. The woman leaned closer, meeting Mika's gaze.

"He doesn't do humans. You must be something in bed since he marked you."

Mika ignored the comment. "May I please have a rum and coke on ice?"

The woman moved away and a minute later she placed a drink in front of Mika. "You can't hold him." Tina gave her a cold look. "You can't handle him for long. He'll get tired real fast of a fragile human. He likes it rough. He likes to partially change because he doesn't have to hold back or keep in control." Tina smirked at her. "He'd break your bones just gripping you if he didn't tear you up inside going at you that hard."

Mika took a sip of her drink and studied the bartender, trying to hide her anger and how hurtful the words were. "I'm thinking your eyes aren't just green from what you were born with. I know it's mating season. Were you hopeful he'd nail you? I bet it burns that he's in my bed instead."

A growl tore from Tina's throat and sharp teeth showed. Mika leaned back.

"Temper, temper, Tina. I'm Omar's niece. He'd really be pissed if you laid a...paw on me. He's very protective of me since we both know you're a lot stronger and a fight wouldn't be fair between us."

Snarling, the other woman spun away and stomped to the other end of the bar. Mika knew she'd been a bitch but she was angry. It was bad enough she had to face that she wasn't what Grady wanted but to have it pointed out to her in graphic detail by the rude bartender had just pushed her "bitch button".

Feeling watched, Mika turned and glanced around the bar. She saw about fifteen men in the room but, other than her and Tina, there were no other women. One of the

men stood, gripping his beer, and started to walk toward her. When he was about five feet away she saw him inhale, sniff at her. He froze. He sniffed again and then frowned. His gaze locked with hers and it was obvious he was confused.

"You're sniffing right, Joey," Tina called out. "He marked her. She knows what we are."

Joey's stunned gaze shot to Tina. "But...she's...what the hell?"

Mika sighed and turned to face the bar to take a sip of her drink. The man was shocked that Grady had marked her. It was just one more reminder that Grady would never accept her as a mate since his friends were reacting with shock that she carried his scent. Tina snorted.

"Who knows, but he did it."

Mika was surprised the entire pack hadn't heard of how Grady was left with no choice but to mark her. Maybe Uncle Omar had silenced that rumor because, if anyone could do it, he could. Knowing her uncle, he didn't want people talking about her. She was actually grateful for that secret at the moment. She had a good idea that if Tina knew that Grady had been left with no choice, she would have said much worse to Mika.

"What's going on?" Grady growled.

"Nothing," Joey said. "I just got close enough to scent you on her."

Mika glanced at Grady. He looked grim as he frowned at Joey. "And?"

"Nothing. I just didn't think, well...she's not your type. It's one thing to fuck one of them but to mark one?"

Grady growled low. "Respect her. She's marked by me."

A man chuckled. "Ah. Someone went after your little girlfriend so you had to mark her to keep them away, didn't you? I'd have done the same in mating season. Now we all know she belongs to you. I guess this one is pretty good for you to want to not share her. When you get tired of her, mind if I give her my number?"

Grady's jaw clenched and he growled at the man.

"I take it that means I'll just wait until you've moved on to the next one to give her my number. I enjoy variety sometimes too." Joey nodded and walked back to his table.

Grady's dark gaze moved to Mika. He looked angry. "Let's go."

"I'm not done with my drink."

Grady grabbed her drink off the bar and downed it in a few swallows. He slammed the empty glass on the bar and glared at her with black eyes.

"It's gone now."

Mika took a deep breath and fought her anger. She figured he was embarrassed to be seen with her and his friends were giving him shit so he wanted to hustle her out of there fast.

"What about that dance?"

He growled low at her. "If you want to feel me holding you, we'll do that at home. Let's go." His hand clamped down on her arm.

Mika glared at his hand. "Let go."

Grady growled deep and she saw his teeth growing a little longer as his lips parted. He was really pissed off now. His hold on her wasn't bruising but it was damn firm. "I said let's go, Mika. Now."

"Fuck you."

"You're going to." His other hand reached out and grabbed her around her waist. He yanked her off the barstool.

"Easy," Tina said from somewhere close behind Grady. "You're going to hurt the little human. Let her go and let's go into your office. You won't hurt me, Grady. I want it rough."

Grady's head snapped around and he growled at the bartender, "Get your damn hands off my ass."

"Want them somewhere else?" Tina softly growled back at him.

Grady released Mika and spun. Mika heard a thump, a chair scraped, and a whimper sounded. Grady growled and moved enough so Mika could see Tina. The woman was against the bar about six feet down and leaning on a barstool that was holding her up. Tina rubbed her side and growled at Grady. It was obvious that Grady had shoved the woman hard.

"Don't ever do that again," Grady warned Tina. "If I wanted your hands on me, I'd let you know."

Tina glared at him. "You wanted me last week just fine, against the Jeep out back. It's mating season and I hurt for you. Smell me. I'm so fucking hot I'm soaked from wanting you."

Grady snarled. He spun and grabbed Mika by her arms and forced her toward the back door. He took a deep breath when they got outside and headed toward his Jeep.

"Get in and don't piss me off more. You don't want to see me lose my temper."

She shut her mouth, more than a little shocked at the scene inside. Grady started the Jeep and punched the gas. He didn't talk to her at all as he drove back to her house. When they got there he shut off the engine, jumped out, and rounded the Jeep. Mika had barely released the seat belt when Grady grabbed her.

Mika gasped as she was tossed over his wide shoulder. He stomped toward her front door. "Keys, now."

She had nearly lost her purse when he'd literally made her world go upside down. Her hands were shaking while she unclipped her keys from her purse and Grady jerked them from her fingers. He unlocked the door, stepped inside, and slammed it. He spun again, fast enough to make Mika a little dizzy and then he moved.

He grabbed her and she squealed as he tore her from his shoulder. She landed hard on her feet. She saw Grady's eyes were black as he glared down at her. He was on her in

a heartbeat as he grabbed her shirt with both hands. The material tore apart as he shredded it from her body and then spun her around. One hand came down on her back and another one went around her as he forced her over the back of the couch so she was bent over it.

He tore open the front of her jeans and both hands gripped the waist of them. He jerked them down her hips hard. Her panties went with her jeans. His hands left her body. She heard a zipper and then his knee pushed between her thighs. All she could do was gasp as Grady entered her from behind.

One of his hands gripped her shoulder while his other hand gripped her hip. He started to move inside her hard and fast. She clawed at the couch cushions under her. Pain and pleasure slammed her as hard as Grady did from behind. She heard sounds coming from her and from him. His weren't human but hers weren't entirely either. Grady pounded her body as he fucked her.

She felt him tense behind her, his hips stilling, and then he jerked inside her, his hips bucking. He snarled when he came. She felt his cock throb inside her and he came hard enough that she could feel it as he shot streams of his cum into her. He stilled and then he withdrew from her body just as quickly as he'd entered her. He released her and backed away. Grady snarled a curse word.

She lay there panting, confused, and sexually frustrated. Her legs were shaking. Her jeans bunched at her knees. She finally reached down to tug on them when she got a hold on her raging emotions. She straightened, shaking still, and looked down at her destroyed shirt. Her bra was intact. She turned her head to find Grady standing in the corner, facing it, and his pants were up. She stared at his back. She shook as she gripped the torn jeans to hold them up on her hips.

"I'm sorry," he whispered.

Sorry? Tears filled her eyes. She ached from how hard he'd fucked her, but worse, he'd left her high and dry sexually. It had hurt a little when he'd taken her that way but it had felt really good too. If he'd just touched her clit she would have come with him or if he'd just lasted a little longer she would have come. She turned without saying a word and walked on wobbly legs to her bedroom. She closed the door softly and then made it to her bed where she collapsed. Hot tears seeped out. She felt used and it hurt.

The bedroom door opened but Mika kept her eyes shut. She was curled up on the bed in a ball on her side. The bed dipped from his weight and then his large body curled around her back. She tensed but then relaxed as Grady pulled her tightly into his arms, holding her.

"I'm so sorry I hurt you," he whispered. His lips brushed her neck. "I'm a total bastard."

She sniffed. "I'm fine."

"You're crying and I can smell your pain."

"I don't like being used. That's what hurts."

His hold on her tensed and then he pulled her firmer against his body, curling his more tightly around her. "I didn't use you. I just wanted you too bad to have much control."

"You used me. You fucked me and then couldn't get away from me fast enough. You didn't even care if I got off or not."

"I'm sorry I lost control and took you as though you were a wolf. When I realized what I'd done and I was horrified. That's why I pulled back and why I stopped touching you. I'm so sorry, Mika. Did I hurt you inside? I was rough. Do you need a doctor? I know I'm too much for you when I'm like that."

She sighed. "Get over yourself. You didn't break me. It was pretty damn great until you stopped."

She heard him suck in air in surprise. His hands on her moved, massaging her hip and her arm. "Really?"

Mika opened her eyes and turned her head to meet his shocked gaze. "Really."

He softly growled and his eyes darkened as she stared into them. The brown turned to black. "Take off your clothes. I'll let you use me this time."

She studied his eyes. "I don't want to use you, Grady. I want to be with you. *Be with you*," she repeated. "Share it all. Every touch. Every sensation. I want us to enjoy each other."

His breathing increased. Mika wiggled away from him and got off the bed. She opened her torn shirt and let it drop. Her bra went next. She kicked off her shoes and shoved down her destroyed jeans and panties, stepping out of them. Grady sat up and discarded his shirt and jeans. Naked, he sat on the bed watching her.

"Did I make you sore?"

"A little," she admitted.

Grady held out his hand to her. She didn't hesitate putting her hand in his and let him tug her back on the bed. He rolled her onto her back and stared at her. His long hair brushed her shoulder and tickled slightly.

"I can kiss it better."

She grinned. "You didn't use a condom. You'd taste yourself."

"I don't give a damn." He reached for her knee. "I crave the taste and scent of us together."

Mika stretched back on the bed, her gaze meeting his, as Grady shifted his body between her thighs. She spread wider for him. He slowly took in her body stretched out under him. Another growl came from his throat. He kissed her shoulder and then started to brush kisses down her body. He spent a lot of time at her breasts. His mouth was hot and wet. He teased her nipples into hard nubs. His mouth kissed lower, over her rib cage. By the time he pushed her thighs wide and fit his shoulders between them, Mika was hurting with need.

"I wish you were totally shaved," he rasped. "Would you do that for me? I think you'd enjoy my tongue tracing over bare skin here." He rubbed his jaw against the soft, short hair of her mons. "Now I'm going to lick you within an inch of your life."

"Just make me come. I need to. Fuck me."

He growled and his mouth lowered to bury his face between her thighs. Hot breath touched her and then his tongue.

"Grady!" She moaned as he found her clit.

Mika clawed the bed. The man had the most amazing mouth ever. He sucked on her and licked her sensitive skin. Grady knew exactly what spot made her go crazy with pleasure. She moaned, arching her back to keep her hips still, and thrashed her head.

She came screaming his name. Grady growled, licked her one last time, and then he rose up. Mika opened her eyes and stared at Grady as he fit his body over hers.

He is beautiful, she thought. His hair was long and wild looking. His black eyes were burning with passion. His mouth was slightly swollen from what he'd been doing to her. She saw sharp teeth between his parted lips. His body was tan and muscular. She watched those muscles move under his skin as he positioned himself over her.

Her attention moved down to his flat stomach and to the protruding, hard flesh he was about to thrust into her. His cock was large, hard, and red with need. Her gaze lifted to meet his. He was watching her.

"Take me, Grady. Please."

Mika cried out in ecstasy as Grady slowly entered her. She felt swollen there from his rough treatment from before. Swollen and hot and really wet. He pushed into her deep and let his large body settle down on her. He braced his forearms next to her and froze when his cock was buried to the hilt inside her body. He shifted to take both of her hands in his, one at a time. His arms braced his weight but his fingers were laced with hers, up by her head. Their gazes locked just as Grady started to move on her.

"Am I hurting you?"

"No," she moaned. Her legs lifted and she wrapped them high around his waist to give him more room to move so her knees were at his ribs. Her heels rested on his ass. "Don't stop."

"I couldn't if I wanted to," he rasped. "You're burning me up, Mika. You're so damn sexy and you feel so damn good." He started to slowly pump into her. In. Out.

Grady shifted his hips to change the angle of his cock inside her. A loud moan tore from Mika's mouth.

"You like that?"

"Yes. God, yes, Grady."

"You respond to me the way no other woman ever has," he rasped. "You fit me so damn perfectly. You are so damn hot. You ready?"

She wasn't sure what he was asking her if she was ready for. Did it really matter what he was asking? She didn't think so. Whatever he wanted, at that moment, she wanted to give him. She nodded.

He moved faster on her, doing a motion with his hips that made his shaft rub her clit as he drove downward. Mika had to close her eyes. She moaned, moving her hips frantically against him. The man was too damn good at this. He kept moving on her, making her feel, building her frantic need to come until she exploded. She gasped and then panted his name.

Grady's response was to growl and drive into her a little faster and harder as her muscles twitched inside. Mika heard the snarl that came from his lips as he shot his release inside her. She looked at him then, needing to see his face.

Grady's eyes were closed and she was stunned to see his mouth wasn't quite human anymore. His lips and jaw were pushed out too much. Sharp teeth were showing, gleaming white. His nose even looked a little wider than normal. He let his head fall into the crook of her neck, hiding his face from her. Without giving it any thought she turned her head and gave him full access to her neck if he wanted to bite her. She almost wished he would so he'd be mated to her.

His sharp teeth grazed her skin. She didn't tense, though she had to fight the urge. She took a calming breath and forced herself to relax. Hot breath and teeth were pressed to the top of her shoulder, front and back, where his teeth gripped her.

Grady growled before he tore his mouth away. He turned his head from her neck and let his cheek rest there instead. They were both breathing heavily, their hands still laced together. Grady was still buried deep inside her and he wasn't moving away this time.

Their breathing returned to normal. They lay there together for long minutes recovering from the hot and heavy sex. He smiled. He still didn't break his hold on her fingers laced with his or withdraw from her body.

"We need a bath," he finally said softly and lifted his head. "What do you say? Does a bath sound good? I'll wash you. We'll order a couple pizzas so by the time we get out they should be here. I noticed you have cable. We could watch something together."

Mika smiled at him. "That sounds fun."

He grinned. "It does. I'm not really one for going out. I kind of like sticking home with fast food and something good on television. We'll have an in-home date night."

He was making an effort to get to know her. Mika saw it for what it was. He was moving their relationship from just sex to a little more and she'd happily take it. He released her fingers, easing his hands away and lifted up more from her chest. Mika couldn't stop herself. She reached up and caressed his cheek. An emotion she couldn't read crossed his features as he hesitated, letting her touch him.

"Thank you," she said softly.

"For what?"

"For making this more than just sex. It— I appreciate it."

His eyes searched hers. "You're more than that."

She wished that were true. "So, what kind of stuff do you want on your pizza? I'll order them if you start the tub."

He chuckled. "Stuff you won't like. That's why I'm suggesting we get two." He climbed off the bed and held out his hand to help her up. "Get up, woman. I'm hungry."

Chapter Eight

Mika was so fucked. She knew that as she laughed. Grady was making her too happy and she knew how bad that was for her in the long run. He was making her breakfast when she found him in the kitchen after waking up in bed alone. It was as sweet as hell. Grady grinned back at her.

"What is so damn funny?"

She glanced at the mess. "You're so banned from making breakfast ever again. You single-handedly destroyed my kitchen and how the hell did you get chocolate on your chest?" She walked up to him and studied the chocolate syrup on his bare chest to make sure it was what it appeared to be. It was.

"For chocolate pancakes."

She laughed as she glanced at the stove. Dark, flat lumps were stacked on a plate and she guessed those were the chocolate pancakes. "I didn't know werewolves loved chocolate that much. How much did you use?"

He grinned. "I love chocolate. I wanted to surprise you with breakfast in bed. Did I make too much noise?"

She shook her head. "I rolled over and you weren't there. That woke me up. Then I smelled coffee and your pancakes. This is so damn sweet of you, Grady. You didn't have to make me breakfast."

"I figured it was the least I could do. You've kept up with my sex drive." He winked. "How are you feeling? Sore?"

She was but she shook her head. "I'm feeling pretty damn good."

He softly growled, his grin dying. "You can say that again. You are amazing."

She looked down at his boxers, the only thing he wore, and saw his cock straining against the material and pointing up. When she'd heard that male werewolves had high sex drives, she'd had no idea what that meant. After yesterday and last night, she knew for sure. Grady had taken her about a dozen times, starting right after they'd eaten pizza until the crack of dawn when he woke her up by entering her from behind while she was stretched out sleeping on her stomach. She was shocked she wasn't limping or in a wheelchair.

"Can you take me again?"

Her mind was so there but her body nearly whimpered with a cry of tiredness. She smiled. "Are you always this damn horny?"

"Mating season. Too much?" A look of concern was instant. "Am I asking too much of you, Mika? You're human. I'm so damn sorry. You are sore, aren't you? Don't lie to me."

"A little."

He pulled her into his arms and hugged her. "It is okay, babe. Mating season is hell, even on us. It helps a hell of a lot that our women go into heat too. It's not just the males. I swear, I'm not usually this damn bad. I have a high sex drive but even I'm sore. Unfortunately my lower half doesn't seem to care."

She chuckled. "Did you use all of my chocolate syrup on pancakes?"

"No. I saved a little so if you wanted hot chocolate I could make you some."

Mika grinned at him. "Where is it?"

He turned a little and pointed. She glanced at it and then him. Her fingers brushed down his body and hooked his boxers. She shoved them down to his thighs. Grady growled softly at her. She was learning his growls and she knew that one. It was one he made when he was turned on.

She went onto her tiptoes as she shoved his boxers down his legs. His erection was hot and hard against her stomach as she rubbed their bodies together. She only wore a half shirt and panties. She aimed for the chocolate on his skin and swiped at it with her tongue. A groan came from Grady.

"Don't tease unless you aim to please. I take it you're up for another round?"

She chuckled. "Nope." Her mouth and tongue traced his skin to his nipple and she teased it with her mouth.

"Babe," his voice got deeper, a sign he was really turned on. She'd learned that too about him. His voice got damn deep when he spoke while they were making love. "It's not nice to taunt me like this. I have no control."

"If you put chocolate there, my mouth will so follow it," she said after she released his nipple and looked up at him with a grin. Her hand reached between them and she gripped his hard-on, rubbing him. "Just please don't grab my hair. I don't like to choke."

She saw his eyes widen. In a flash, he grabbed the bottle. She laughed and eased down from her toes. She backed up a little but didn't release her hold on his hard flesh. She did point his cock straight out at her and then started to kneel.

Grady gripped her arm. "Living room. The floor is hardwood in here."

"So?"

He arched an eyebrow. "Living room has a soft rug."

She sighed and backed up but didn't let him go. She led him by his dick into the living room. Grady was grinning.

"This is better than a leash. Come on, boy."

Grady laughed. "I'll get even for that comment. Are you implying I'm a dog? I want you to know that I'm a proud wolf. I don't fetch sticks or slobber."

Mika stopped and turned, facing him. She lowered to her knees in front of him when she reached the area rug. She held his hard flesh and grinned up at him. "Chocolate please."

Grady growled again and opened the chocolate syrup. "This is going to be messy as hell. You know that, right?"

"Do I look like I give a damn about that right now?" She squeezed his cock in her hand. "This is all I'm thinking about and how good chocolate would be right here."

Grady turned the bottle over and dripped chocolate all over his cock. Mika made a small "mmmm" sound and then moved in closer. She opened her mouth and licked at the chocolate on the head of Grady's cock. She heard him take a deep breath and she smiled as he dropped the bottle of chocolate to the floor.

"Don't tease me," he said softly. "Seriously. Usually you could tease me forever but with mating heat, I could lose control easily. I'm afraid as it is that I'll force more of my cock inside you than you can take if I thrust against your mouth."

She nodded as she took Grady between her lips. She wondered how different he'd be when mating season was over. Right now he was an aggressive lover with no patience. Teasing was out for the most part because within a minute he was ready to get down to serious sex with her when she'd tried taking it slowly. She took as much of Grady into her mouth as she could since he was so large.

Grady growled above her as she worked him with her mouth. Chocolate smeared on her lips and the taste of him and chocolate were two things she thought she could learn to love together. She licked and sucked on his hard flesh. If he were any thicker he wouldn't have fit, no matter how wide she opened her mouth.

"Oh, Mika," Grady almost snarled. "I'm not going to last, babe. Fuck. You're good at this."

Usually Mika would love to tease him and explore every inch of him with her mouth. She knew with Grady already on the sexual edge and with his lack of control, it would be a mistake. The idea of him losing control and forcing himself down her throat wasn't good. She reached up and cupped his balls with one hand. He had heavy balls. He jerked at her touch and growled low and deep. Her other hand wrapped firmly around the base of his cock. She pumped him fast and hard with her hand while her mouth sucked and moved on him in time with her hand.

Grady tensed hard and she felt his balls draw up, tightening in her hand. In seconds his cock pulsed in her mouth and in her hand. He came, jerking slightly against her, as he poured cum into her mouth. She heard him almost roar as he came. She swallowed over and over again as his release spilled.

The taste of Grady and chocolate was good. She swallowed everything Grady had to give her. His body relaxed and she finally released him from her mouth. She licked her lips and backed away as she tilted her head up to look at him.

Grady grinned down at her. "Sorry. I came a lot, didn't I?"

She laughed as he reached down and tugged her up to her feet. He cupped her face with both his hands. He lowered his head and Mika was surprised when Grady suddenly licked the side of her jaw in one long swipe of his tongue.

"Mmmm, I do love chocolate."

She reached up, smiling, and touched her face. Chocolate had smeared around her mouth, down her chin, and she even felt some on her nose. She laughed out loud.

"I bet I look funny."

He chuckled. "You do...but damn sexy. You can suck chocolate off me anytime, anywhere."

Mika stood still as Grady lapped every drop of chocolate from her face, chin. She shivered when he reached her neck. It felt incredible. She never thought she'd enjoy someone swiping at her with his tongue but it was erotic the way Grady lapped at her skin.

"All clean yet?"

"Not yet," he reached for her shirt and tugged it up. "I think I should search your body for any more drops of it."

"I think you got it." She grinned.

"I don't think so. I'm sure there's chocolate on you."

"Do you smell it with your keen nose?" She let him tear her shirt off over her head and wiggled her ass a little as he shoved her panties down to the floor. She stepped away from them.

She gasped when Grady suddenly grabbed her and then gently laid her flat on her back. He dropped to his knees and moved her legs so he was crouched between her spread thighs.

Grady softly groaned. "So damn hot. You are bare for me." His finger slid chocolate downward over the sensitive area and spread it lower to her clit, then back upward. "So damn sexy and soft to the touch."

"Until it starts to grow out and I have stubble," she teased.

His eyes locked with hers and he blindly reached out for the fallen bottle of chocolate syrup. He smiled as he turned the bottle over and let chocolate drip on her breasts, down her stomach, to her shaved mound. He tossed the bottle somewhere to the side of them.

"I knew there would be chocolate on your body." He winked at her.

Laughing, Mika lifted her arms and curled her fingers over the back of the couch so her arms were stretched over her head. She arched her back, pushing her breasts at him.

"Only because you put it there."

"It won't be there for long." He lowered his body and licked at the chocolate on her skin between her breasts.

"That feels so good," she murmured.

Mika loved the way Grady removed chocolate from her body. He took extra care to taunt her nipples as he sucked on them to clean off the chocolate. He moved lower, wiggled his tongue inside her bellybutton and caused her to laugh. He chuckled and continued down. His hands gripped her ankles and he put them over his shoulders.

"Oh God," she moaned as he spread her sex wide with his fingers and started to lick at her clit.

She didn't last long at all. Giving him head had turned her on to begin with and his exploration of her body as he'd cleaned off chocolate had put her in desperate need to come. When his tongue and lips sucked and licked at her clit, she didn't stand a chance of not coming. She cried out his name as pleasure tore through her.

Grady growled—a deep, gruff sound. Mika opened her eyes and watched Grady move her legs from his shoulders. He lifted up and then crawled over her. His eyes were pitch-black and his teeth were extended. He was really turned on.

"I need to fuck you. Roll over for me. Hands and knees...now."

She didn't hesitate. With him crouched over her it made it a little hard for her to find the room to roll over in the cage of his body but she did it. She had barely risen to her hands and knees when he entered her from behind. One of his arms grabbed her around her waist to hold her in place and his other arm reached up and grabbed the back of her couch to hold his weight. He started to pound into her.

Mika braced her arms. She had to, so he didn't pound her into the back of the couch headfirst from the hammering he was giving her. He was thick and hard inside her. It felt amazing. He moved even faster and harder. Pain and pleasure slammed her.

Growls tore from his throat. Mika came again in minutes. Pleasure tore through. She heard fabric ripping. She looked up to see Grady's hand clawing her couch, the material being shredded by claws that were extending. Her gaze flew to his arm and she saw a hell of a lot of hair. Behind her Grady snarled and jerked violently inside her as he came.

"Fuck," he snarled in an unusually frightening and deep voice.

Mika was shocked as Grady suddenly tore out of her body and left her on her hands and knees on the floor. She turned her head in time to see him stumble away from her. It wasn't just his arm covered in hair. She saw it on his other arm too, his legs, his back, and even his ass was covered in fine black hair where just skin used to be.

She sat down hard on the carpet as Grady disappeared into the kitchen. Realization hit her as she sat there. He'd started to change into a wolf when they were going at it. That's why he'd sounded so unlike Grady at the end and that's why he'd fled the room.

Mika was shaky as she forced herself to her feet. She winced as she stood up. She was going to hurt a lot more later because of how hard Grady had taken her. Even now she felt sore and tender between her thighs. As good as it had felt, he'd been rough. She swallowed and walked to the kitchen to find him.

She wasn't prepared to find a big black wolf lying on the floor on the rug in front of her sink. He was beautiful but Grady was one hell of a big wolf. That wolf was almost

big enough to ride. Her uncle was a lot smaller in his wolf form. Grady lifted his head. Black eyes stared at her and she thought she saw him flinch as she stared back at him. He was panting, mouth open, and his eyes were locked on her.

Mika only froze for a moment and then walked farther into the kitchen. She let her gaze run over his furry body. He really was a beautiful animal. If she didn't know it was Grady she probably would have been terrified at finding a two-hundred-pound-plus black wolf in her kitchen. As it was, she just walked over to him and slowly sat down next to him. The cold wood floor felt good on her overheated flesh.

"Are you all right?" She was proud that her voice didn't quake.

He just looked at her.

She bit her lip and reached out slowly. He didn't pull away so she touched his fur on the back of his neck. His coat was thick and soft. She ran her fingers into it and loved how satiny he felt. Uncle Omar had a rougher coat of fur and he didn't feel as wonderful to touch as Grady did.

"Do you need some water?"

He hesitated and shut his eyes. He laid his head on her thigh. She guessed that was a no or he wouldn't have pinned her down with his head. She hesitated and then kept touching him. She stroked his fur and used her nails to scratch him. He turned his head a little and relaxed more with his head on her lap. They sat that way for a long time.

Mika wondered how long he'd be in wolf form. Her uncle said sometimes it could take a while to change back if the person shifting was highly emotional or if they were tired. She wondered what had triggered Grady's change. She sat there waiting and then realized he'd fallen asleep.

Instead of moving him, she shifted her body a little and curled around his back so his head was still on her thigh and she was lying on her side against him. The rug in front of the sink was a thick one that pillowed her head. She shut her eyes and lay there with the big black wolf. Her lover was currently sporting enough fur to make her a nice coat and he had a tail, four paws, a cold nose, and he couldn't talk to her as he was.

Her life was seriously strange. She lay there petting him as he slept. Her mind was going over how she probably needed some therapy because she didn't seem to mind that she'd just had sex with a man who was now a wolf. She had no desire to ever make love to him when he had a tail but she knew she should seriously be freaking out over after-sex cuddling with a wolf.

Her life was seriously fucked up. She was cuddling with a freaking big wolf on the kitchen floor after hot sex and she didn't even mind. She was living with and in love with a werewolf. Hot tears filled her eyes but she fought them back. The fact that she could never turn into a wolf would always stop him from accepting her. He'd never mate her. The entire situation hurt. She didn't want to be with a man who couldn't give back as much as she was willing to give. She'd gladly adjust to anything for Grady but he'd never do the same for her.

In less than two weeks she'd leave. He'd go find his little phone buddy and play chase tail in the woods with her. He'd forget about Mika. She'd just be another woman he'd fucked.

She'd go home and never forget him. Life wasn't fair. She forced herself to shove the painful thoughts away. Her fingers gripped his silky fur. He smelled like Grady even as a wolf and she loved how he smelled. She kept hold of his fur as she drifted to sleep.

* * * * *

Mika woke up when Grady lifted her into his arms. She opened her eyes and smiled as she wrapped her arms around his neck. It was still light outside and Grady was back in his skin. He carried her out of the kitchen. Her body ached and was sore. She wasn't sure if sleeping on the hard kitchen floor accounted for most of her aches and pains or if they were from the sex.

"Are you all right?" He didn't look at her as he carried her into her bedroom and eased her down on the bed.

"I'm great. Were we asleep long?"

Grady straightened and glanced at the clock. "A few hours." His gaze wandered down her body and he flinched.

She followed his focus and saw that she had a bruise on her hip where he'd gripped her during sex. She sat up and hid the flinch, she hoped, from him as she accidentally rubbed her tender flesh on the bedding with her movements. She was damn sore. Her sex felt swollen and slightly inflamed.

Grady growled. "I hurt you. I'm so damn sorry, babe."

"I'm not complaining."

"You should be screaming at me after what I did."

Frowning, she watched him as he seemed to look at everything on the bed except her. "I'm fine. Are you all right? You didn't mean to shift, did you?"

His attention snapped to her and she saw his eye color go black. "Do you think I'd ever do that on purpose?" He spun and walked a few feet away, keeping his back to her as he ran his fingers through his hair. "I could have killed you or hurt you really bad."

"You didn't. I'm a little sore, I admit, but it was amazing. I came hard if you didn't notice. If you were hurting me I would have been screaming in pain instead of getting off."

He growled low and deep—his angry growl. She bit her lip and watched his tense, naked body. Dread filled her. Was this where he called it all off? Was he going to tell her goodbye now? He'd marked her. If she understood it correctly, he needed her during mating season now that he'd marked her. No one would have worried about Grady hunting her down if she left unless there was a reason that Grady wouldn't be

able to not hunt for her. If it were that simple he would have shipped her off himself. He couldn't get rid of her while he needed her, could he?

"I think you aren't safe with me. I thought I could control myself but I can't."

She let out the breath she'd been holding. He wasn't telling her to go home and he wasn't leaving. "I'm fine. We're fine. You didn't hurt me. I'm sore but I was before. We can do other things for a day while I heal up."

Grady spun and snarled. He flashed his teeth and his black eyes narrowed. "You don't understand. I lost control. I started shifting inside you, damn it, like you were a werewolf. You aren't. I fucked you hard, as though you were built to take it, and you aren't. You don't heal fast the way I do. I could have torn you up inside. I could have fully shifted and not stopped fucking you. Do you understand that? Do you have a hidden kink for bestiality, babe? How much would you have hated me right now if that had happened?"

"But it didn't."

"Do you know when wolves are in mating season that we can go for hours? If you were a werewolf I would take you, come, stay inside you, and keep taking you over and over until I collapsed. In skin and in fur. I'm very dominant as an alpha-blooded male. If you were a werewolf then my shifting would have forced you to shift with me. We would have shifted from skin to fur together and kept right on going. I lost control and it wasn't until I realized you weren't shifting with me that I snapped out of it long enough to get the hell away from you. I'd already started shifting and I couldn't stop."

Swallowing, Mika kept her gaze locked with his. "It's all right, Grady. I'm all right. You realized, you got control, and you didn't hurt me. I'm fine, so calm down."

He shook his head and spun away from her to present her with his back again. "I can't. I wish to God I hadn't had to mark you. I can fuck other women if I have to but I know you're carrying my mark. My inner beast wants you. My animal side won't be satisfied unless it's you I'm with. It would mean fucking someone but not coming if I try to mount other women until my mark wears off you." He moved and punched the wall. A hole opened in the plaster under the assault of his fist. "Damn it!"

Pain sliced through Mika at the thought of him with other women. "It's a good thing then that you promised me to be loyal until the mark wears off so you won't have to worry about other women and what would happen if you tried to have sex with someone else."

He kept his back to her. "I'm putting you in danger. If I thought mounting other women would protect you, I'd walk out now to go find one. I know I'd end up going insane if I couldn't have you. I know you're marked as mine and I'd hunt you down when I lost my mind from my need to be inside you. I hate mating season. This is so screwed up. I used to love this time of the year. It meant hot sex, plenty of it, with women throwing themselves at me. Now I'm terrified I'm going to end up killing you and because I marked you, other women aren't a viable option."

Shoulders hunched, she curled into a ball sitting up. The anger and regret in Grady's voice hurt. He really hated the fact that he was stuck with her through his mating season. He wanted to be with another werewolf. She'd thought he might change his mind at some point and be happy he was with her but he hadn't. If anything he was even more set on it being a mistake after spending time with her.

"Please shower," he said softly. "I'm getting hard again and you smell like me and sex. Clean yourself well. I need to get some air. I'll call someone to watch the house while I'm gone. Don't leave. I can't touch you anymore without condoms. The stronger you smell of me the harder it is for me to maintain control."

She watched him storm for her bedroom door. "Grady?"

He stopped at the door but he didn't turn to look at her. "What?"

"Are you going to go be with someone else? Please be honest with me."

He shook his head. "It wouldn't do any good. My body only wants you, Mika. We're both damned until this is over. I just need some air to clear my head and I should stop at the bar to check on things. I also need to grab more clothes while I'm there. I won't be gone long, I can't be gone long, or my need for you will start to hurt me if I don't...touch...you again soon."

She watched him leave her room as he moved down the hallway to the guestroom and the other bathroom. She got up from the bed and limped slightly as she walked to her bathroom. She heard Grady talking from the other room. He'd said he was going to call someone to guard her and obviously was doing that now. She softly shut her bathroom door and started the shower.

Chapter Nine

Mika took an instant dislike to Eric Voigt. He watched her silently as she sat on her couch trying to pay attention to the television. He looked at her as though she were a bug under a microscope. The man was a blond surfer-looking type with tan skin and a swimmer's built. He was good looking but he made her feel uncomfortable. The six-foot-tall man had arrived minutes after Grady had left her house. This was the man who Grady had called to babysit her.

She turned her head and met his pale blue gaze. "Do you have to stare? I can feel it. Do you want the remote control? I'm sure there's something more interesting to watch on the TV."

He didn't look away from her. "I'm just thinking. I didn't mean to wig you out."

"I'm not wigged. I'm just getting uncomfortable with the whole intense staring thing."

"I apologize. I'm just very intrigued by you. Omar kept you a secret from most of us because I didn't even know he had a niece until recently. From what I heard, Omar threatened death to any man who touched you. Now I'm sitting here wondering how long Grady has to live since you reek of him. Omar is going to kill him, isn't he?"

She looked away and glanced at the commercial on TV. "Uncle Omar is aware that Grady and I are sleeping together and Grady is perfectly safe. Beyond that I don't want to talk about it."

He tilted his head, still staring at her. "Grady isn't into human chicks. He avoids them unless it's an occasional one-night stand. You're obviously more than that. He marked you well from the strong scent you carry."

"Ask Grady your questions." She stood up. "I'll be in my room taking a nap. Make yourself at home. There are snacks in the kitchen if you get hungry. Grady said he wasn't going to be gone long."

She walked into her room and shut the door. The guy was as nosy as hell and she really didn't want to hear more about how she wasn't Grady's type. It stung enough when she got that from Grady.

She lay back on her bed, peering up at the popcorn ceiling of her old house. How she could fall so hard and fast for a guy amazed her but Grady wasn't like any other man she'd ever met. He wasn't even really a man.

She turned her head and looked at the phone, tempted to call Minnie and have a girl talk. She didn't reach for the phone though, knowing Minnie would just worry about her and she didn't want that. She was doing enough of that on her own.

She heard the front door slam a while later and sat up. She heard soft male voices but she couldn't make out the words. A good ten minutes passed and then she heard the front door slam again. She watched the bedroom door open and Grady paused in the doorway. He looked good in the faded jeans and blue tank top. He had his kick-ass boots on and his hair was down. His dark eyes studied her.

"How are you feeling?"

"I'm fine. How are you feeling? Did getting some air help?"

He hesitated and then nodded. "I just needed to think."

She figured, by the tone of his voice, that nothing he'd been considering boded well for their fragile relationship. She just waited, figuring he'd tell her about whatever had put that tension in his voice. She scooted to the edge of the bed.

"I still don't trust myself with you."

"You're not going to hurt me, Grady. I trust you even if you don't trust yourself."

He took a deep breath. "I came up with a solution."

She had a bad feeling. "Why do I get the feeling that I'm not going to agree with what you're about to say? Are you leaving? Are you moving out?"

"I can't do that. I'd want you and I'd go nuts if I couldn't have you until I'm out of heat."

She knew it was pathetic that relief flooded through her. She wasn't ready to say goodbye to Grady. She knew her time with him was limited but she was unprepared to lose him so soon. She hugged her chest and silently stared at him, waiting for him to talk.

"We're not mated."

She blinked.

"Eric is a special member of our pack. His father is a werewolf but his mother is human. He got some of the abilities of a shifter but not all of them. He can't shift all the way and he doesn't suffer from mating heat but he has the strength of a full shifter. He's unique that way."

Mika frowned. "Okay. Thanks for sharing that. What does this have to do with us?"

"Eric and I grew up together and we're best friends. I explained to him what is going on and my fear of hurting you."

"And he had some good advice?"

Grady hesitated. "No. I just told him what I needed. He agreed with me that it was a good idea."

She frowned. "What do you need? What is a good idea?"

Grady leaned against the doorway. "I don't trust myself with you. I really am afraid I'll hurt you, Mika. I'm afraid I'll lose control totally one of these times. I don't want to be mated to you and I'm sure you feel the same way on the mating issue. I could kill you by accident or cause you serious harm. I was too rough with you earlier. Next

time..." He clenched his teeth. "Next time I could really do damage to you and I won't allow that to happen. Omar trusts me not to hurt you. I couldn't live with myself if I ended up doing something bad to you."

"I appreciate that but you're making too much out of this. You didn't hurt me, Grady. I'm fine." The front door slammed again. "I thought your friend left before."

"He did." Grady walked into the bedroom. "He went outside to make some calls but now he's back." Grady turned to face Mika again. "He's going to be staying here with us until mating heat ends."

"What?"

Grady slowly nodded, staring at her. "He can make sure I don't hurt you. He won't suffer mating heat so he can keep a clear head and he's strong enough to stop me if I get out of hand. Because we're best friends and we've dated some of the same women in the past, I know he won't hurt you."

Mika was swamped by confusion as she let everything he said sink in. "You want him to stay here while we..." She swallowed. "He'd hear us, Grady. He'd be in the damn house with us."

Eric walked into the bedroom. Mika shot the man a frown and then turned her full attention back to Grady. Eric stood just inside the bedroom door. Grady walked closer, to stand in front of her. He crouched down and put his hands on the bed so her legs were between his body and his arms. A few feet separated them as he stared at her with a very serious expression.

"I don't think you understand, babe." Grady's voice softened. "I don't just want Eric in the same house with us. I want him *with* us. He'll be right here on hand to protect you if I get out of control. He needs to be in the same room so he knows if I lose control. When I said we dated a few of the same women, I don't mean we just saw the same ones at different times. We shared them. Together."

Mika's heart nearly stopped and then it started to pound. Emotions slammed her in a jumble she couldn't even sort out. "What?" She barely got the word out.

Grady lifted his hands and gripped her knees. "Have you ever fantasized about a threesome?"

Mika reacted as though he'd physically slapped her when pain shot through her at his words. Her horrified stare flew to Eric. He was smiling at her. Her attention jerked back to Grady. He was watching her face closely. She didn't think about it but just did it. She lifted her foot and planted it on Grady's chest. She kicked him away from her hard enough to knock him on his ass.

She stood as Grady hit the floor on his back, hard enough to make him grunt in surprise. She moved away from him, inching toward the bathroom. Tears burned behind her eyes and she blinked them back. Grady looked shocked as he sat up. She didn't even bother to glance at his friend Eric. Grady frowned, staring at Mika, as he got to his feet.

"Get out of my house," Mika said softly. "Both of you get the fuck out of my house."

Grady looked confused. "Babe—"

"Don't!" she yelled at him, cutting him off.

She moved toward the bathroom slowly. She wanted a place to run to if Grady tried to touch her. Her heart was breaking. She knew he would hurt her when it was time to go home. She expected that kind of pain when it came time to tell him goodbye. She never thought he'd pull something as agonizing as this.

"Get the hell out of my house now. Don't come back, Grady. I mean it. Don't ever come back. Take your damn friend with you." Her voice shook.

"Mika," Grady growled. "What the hell is wrong with you?"

"What is wrong with me? Get the fuck out of my house, Grady. If either one of you touches me, I swear to God, I'll have my uncle kill you both. Do you hear me? Get out!"

"Why are you reacting this way?" Grady was staring at her as though she'd lost her mind. "I'm trying to protect you."

She stared in horror at Grady. "Is that what you call this? Protecting me? I realize that you weren't happy about the whole forced-to-mark-me thing. You and everyone else has made it very clear to me that I'm just a mere human and how you only think werewolf bitches are good enough for you. I'm sorry that you had it rough growing up the way you did. I get why you don't want to hook up with a human after the treatment you got since you're not of pure blood."

Grady paled at her words and then his mouth tensed into a firm line as he stared at her. He didn't cut her off though or move. He just stood there listening to her.

"Even knowing how you felt about me being human I at least figured you had to feel something for me. Even just a little something. I will not be passed between you and your friend like a twenty-dollar whore. Being tag teamed by two men is not a fantasy of mine. It's insulting that you care so damn little about me that you'd even want to see another guy fuck me. Maybe my saying I don't share was too mild of a hint to someone like you that I'm totally into monogamy. Get out of my house now and take your damn friend with you."

"That's not how it is," Grady growled.

"Fuck you. Get out. I mean it, Grady. Get out of my house and don't ever come near me again."

A snarl tore from Grady. "You're marked by me. You can't just throw me out. I'll go insane and hunt you. I'm in mating heat."

She jerked her chin up and glared at him. She held onto her anger so she didn't totally fall apart in tears from her broken heart. "Then I'll buy a big damn gun and shoot your ass if you come after me. Get out. I never want to see you again." Her voice broke.

Grady growled again. He jerked his head to Eric. "Go."

Eric left the bedroom. Grady's head snapped in Mika's direction, eyes gleaming black in a way she'd never seen before. "I don't know why you're so damn angry. Most women would have jumped at the offer. Eric is very popular with women. Most women would jump at the chance of having two men in their bed."

She blinked back tears. "I'm not most women. Leave, Grady."

He shook his head. "I won't do that. Tell me why you are pissed off at me."

Her anger slipped away and pain took its place. "I'm not pissed."

Grady frowned. "You're scenting of anger."

"Then take a bigger damn whiff, asshole. Inhale my pain."

Grady sniffed and she saw confusion on his face again.

"For a man so concerned about not hurting me you just did the one thing that hurt me the most," she said softly. "I could have chalked up you not wanting a relationship with me to your childhood and the rejection of your human side you must have suffered from your stepmother. I could overlook and forgive you for making it damn clear that I'd never be enough for you because I understand how important it is for you to want a werewolf to mate with so you get acceptance from the pack as an adult."

Hot tears fell down her face. Grady took a step toward her. Mika shook her head at him and threw up her hand to stop him and he stopped advancing on her. Mika wiped at her tears and backed up so she was in the bathroom.

"Don't ever come near me again, Grady. You didn't need to protect me from you physically. You needed to protect me from you hurting me inside. I can't believe I gave a shit about you. I can't believe – Just get out." She slammed the bathroom door and locked it.

"Babe?" Grady was on the other side of the door. "Open the door."

"Don't ever call me babe again. You lost that right. You lost all of your rights. Goodbye, Grady." She closed her eyes and didn't bother to stop the hot tears falling down her face.

"Son of a bitch," Grady roared from the other side of the door. "I thought you'd be excited about the idea."

"I'm taking a shower," she lied. "You made me feel dirty." That part wasn't a lie.

She turned on the water and then ran to the window. She unlocked it and carefully slid it open, praying the sound would be covered by the loud water pouring from her showerhead. Mika was out her window in seconds. She ran around the house and that's when she saw Eric.

He was leaning against a Mustang and staring at the house. He turned his head and saw Mika. Fear hit her hard. Would he yell out to Grady that she'd escaped? *Shit!* She sprinted down the sidewalk barefoot.

At the corner, she waved down a woman in a car and the woman actually stopped. Tears were freely flowing down Mika's face.

"Are you all right?" The woman looked concerned.

"I had a fight with my boyfriend. I'm afraid he'll come looking for me. Can you please give me a ride to my uncle's house? I can give you money when we get there."

"Get in," the woman unlocked the door. "Where does your uncle live?"

Gratefully Mika climbed into the car. She gave directions and felt relief as the woman pulled away from the curb. She'd gotten away from Grady and his friend. She wiped at her tears.

"Thank you so much."

The woman reached over and patted her leg. "We've all been there, honey. I'm glad to help."

Chapter Ten

Minnie handed Mika whiskey with ice. Uncle Omar wasn't home, thankfully. Minnie had taken one look at Mika's tearstained face, bare feet, and had dragged her into the kitchen. She'd made both of them drinks and sat down across from her.

"What happened?"

Mika used a napkin to blow her nose. "He brought home another guy, telling me he was afraid he'd hurt me in mating heat. He said the other guy doesn't suffer from it and wanted the guy in the room with us during sex. He asked me if I'd ever fantasized about threesomes."

Minnie's eyes widened and she took a good gulp of her whiskey. "Whoa. No shit? Who'd he bring?"

"Eric somebody. I forgot his last name. Blond, about six feet tall, and he looks like a surfer."

"Eric Voigt."

"That's him."

Minnie stared at her. "And this made you cry and obviously run away from home without your purse and shoes?"

Mika's mouth fell open. "Did you hear what I said? He brought his friend into my house and wanted the three of us to go to bed together."

Minnie sipped her drink and then slowly smiled. "And this hurt you? Eric is hot. Hell, Grady is hot. You could have been the filling in a hot man sandwich. Where did I raise you wrong?"

"Unbelievable." Mika glared at Minnie. "Picture this. You're in your room and Uncle Omar walks in to tell you how he brought home another woman so the three of you can have sex together."

The smile was gone from Minnie's face in an instant and anger burned in her eyes. "I'd kill him."

"Why?"

Understanding dawned in Minnie's expression. "If he touched another woman it would kill me."

Mika nodded. "Exactly. You really love him and the idea of him touching another woman kills you inside, right? The idea of Grady touching another woman does that to me. It kills me to think about it. He brought a man into my home and wanted that guy to climb into bed with us, Minnie." Hot tears filled her eyes. "What would Uncle Omar do to a man who even thought about touching you?"

Minnie downed her drink. "They wouldn't find all the body parts of the man who touched me. Omar would see to that. He'd tear the man apart a piece at a time."

"Because he loves you, because the idea of you being with another man hurts him. Grady doesn't give a damn about me. I thought he'd get over his anti-human thing he has if we spent time together. Maybe I was stupid enough, hell, I *was* stupid enough, to even hope he'd fall in love with me." She wiped at her tears. "I fell for him, Minnie. Oh God. I fell hard for him."

"Baby..." Minnie stood up and walked around the table. She sat next to Mika and pulled her into her arms. Her fingers brushed through Mika's hair to try to soothe her. "I'm so sorry."

"Me too. It hurts. How could he do that? How?"

"Men are different. You don't need to be told that. Maybe he thought he was doing something nice."

Snorting, Mika shook her head against Minnie's shoulder. "Don't bullshit me. He brought a guy into my home, Minnie. Into my bedroom."

"I know."

"You can't tell Uncle Omar. He'd kill Grady."

"You aren't kidding about that one. He might have given you to Grady but he would kill him if he found out he'd offered your body to his friend as well."

"I want to go home."

Minnie tensed. "You can't leave. You're marked, baby. It's not close enough to the end of mating season for you to be able to leave. Grady would go insane and come after you in a matter of days."

"Fine. I won't go home. I'll travel around so he won't find me. It's not as though he can track me if I decide to fly to Washington to visit one of my friends or get a rental car and just take a sightseeing trip on my way home."

Minnie suddenly moved and forced Mika to look at her. Minnie shook her head. "You don't understand. Just because mating season comes to an end... Hell. Your uncle told you so much about us but he left out the entire important woman-to-man shit. If you split on a man who's marked you during mating season, he goes insane. His need for you will drive him out of his head until it's all he can think about. They totally lose it. The sex keeps them sane when mating heat strikes. Since you're marked, only sex with you will do it for him. If you run and he were to go insane, well, until he has you again he won't just get over it. If he goes long enough hunting for you and he doesn't find you? Well, most don't ever recover from it. They have to be put down, Mika. If you run, Grady will track you until he finds you, no matter how long it takes, and he'll just go more nuts the longer it takes, until he's totally gone. Do you understand me? He could kill you when he finds you and never mean to. If you manage to hide long enough then the pack will have to kill him, baby. He'll be that crazy."

Horror engulfed Mika. "I just thought it would stop when mating season ended. I mean, Uncle Omar said something about hurting Grady and making it so it took him a while to recover until mating heat was over so I thought—"

"Damn idiot." Minnie cursed. "He said that?"

Mika nodded. "The night Grady marked me and brought me here to tell Uncle Omar. He said that was the only way to not hand me over to Grady."

"Look, something like that could have happened if Grady had never mounted you but now he's totally bonded to you through mark and sex while he's in heat. The only way I can see to do this is if we put him in a damn coma so he doesn't suffer missing you through the rest of the mating heat. I wonder how hard that would be."

Mika stared at Minnie in shock. "A coma? Are you kidding me?"

"No."

"You can't put him in a coma. He could die."

Minnie shrugged. "If you run, one of you will die for sure. He'll track you down and be so nuts he will probably kill you. Mating heat is very painful and he's marked you. He can have sex with other women but it won't stop his suffering. You are what he craves and needs."

Mika picked up her glass and downed the contents. "I'm stuck is what you're saying."

Minnie downed her drink and then grabbed the bottle to refill their glasses. "Welcome to the wonderful world of being a female in a male, shifter world. Be happy you aren't mated to the son of a bitch. Then you'd never have a way of getting away from him and the entire pack would consider you his property."

"Was being mated that bad?"

Minnie nodded. "I admit he was really awful. I've seen a lot of really happy couples but I was in a nightmare. My mate was horrible and he was abusive. I was trapped and no one would help me. It was a long time ago though. Now if a mate is abusive he will get his ass kicked until he learns not to do it."

Mika sipped her new drink. "Really?"

"Really. We had a guy kicking the shit out of his mate. Omar and Elroy went and kicked his ass. They told him for every bruise his mate had he'd get twenty. He stopped hitting her pretty damn fast after a few rounds with the men. He's too afraid to abuse her now."

The silence stretched into minutes as they sipped their drinks. Mika finally sighed. "Grady will be coming for me, won't he?"

Minnie nodded. "He'll be coming."

"I was afraid of that. What if that guy is still there?" Mika fought tears. "I won't let him touch me, Minnie. I don't want anyone but Grady."

"When Grady comes to get you, I'll talk to him. I know you don't want Omar to know what happened but I'll explain to Grady what will happen to him if Omar gets word of what he tried to pull. He won't be bringing any more men home."

The doorbell startled them. Minnie sighed and stood. "Stay put. I'll take care of this."

Mika finished her second drink. She figured Grady was the one at the door. Eric must have raced into the house to tattle that she'd fled. It wouldn't have been hard for Grady to figure out where she'd headed when she ran.

Grady stormed into the room and growled low at her. "What the hell do you think you're doing by running from me? You could have been harassed by a male."

"I want to talk to you," Minnie demanded from behind him. "Don't ever just push past me again and storm into my house. We need to discuss Mika."

Grady jerked his head in Minnie's direction. "There's nothing to discuss but the fact that I'm taking her home now."

Minnie snarled at him, showing teeth. "If you ever bring another damn man into her home I'll personally cut your balls off. Are we clear? If I tell Omar what you tried to do to her then he'll kill you. She's not that way."

Mika saw Grady pale. His head jerked to Mika and she saw his shock. She reached over and grabbed the bottle of whiskey and poured more into her glass. She sipped it and glared at Grady while she got shitfaced. It was helping her numb the pain he'd caused her.

"I tell Minnie everything. Almost anyway. She doesn't know how we really met."

Minnie frowned. "What does that mean?"

Grady growled. "Let's go, Mika."

"Is your friend gone?" Mika sipped her drink, glaring at him. "If you want him to get fucked so much, you could always fuck him. How about that one? Or I'll watch you get fucked by Eric. You deserve to get bent over for what you did."

Grady was shocked at her words and it showed. He stared at Mika. "I don't know why you're so damn upset. I am trying to protect you, damn it."

"And yet you ended up hurting me worse emotionally than you ever did physically!" She slammed her drink down so hard the glass broke. She stared at the spilled contents that splashed over the tabletop and glass pieces. "Sorry."

Minnie moved around Grady and started cleaning up the mess. "Don't worry about it, baby. You're upset." She shot Grady a glare. "Leave her here for the night. You'll survive until morning without her. She's not much of a drinker and that was number three for her. She'll pass out soon so you can collect her in the morning."

"No." Grady inched toward Mika.

"Is he gone? Swear to me he won't be back."

Grady crouched down next to Mika's chair. "He's gone. I won't bring him back to your house. Let's go."

She sat there. "I don't want to be anywhere near you right now."

Cursing, Grady grabbed her out of the chair and lifted her into his arms as he straightened. He headed for the door. "We're leaving."

"Put me down." Mika didn't fight but she said the words.

He paused at the door and shifted her in his arms to open the door. His Jeep was in the driveway. "We'll talk about this at home."

"There's nothing to talk about. I'm stuck here with you. Minnie explained what would happen if I leave. I don't like you anymore, Grady. I don't even want you touching me or talking to me."

Grady looked a little pale to her as he shifted her again and opened the Jeep door. He deposited her gently into the passenger seat, put on her belt, and slammed the door. She watched him round the Jeep and climb inside. He drove silently back to her house.

Eric's Mustang was gone. Grady pulled into the driveway and then lifted her out of the car. She noticed he'd attached her key ring to his keys as he unlocked her front door. He must have taken them from her purse. He carried her to her room and set her on the bed. She watched him. She heard the front door slam. In seconds he was back in her room. He stared at her from the doorway.

"Don't ever pull another stunt like that again. I can't believe you sneaked out the bathroom window."

"Don't tell me what to do."

"Damn it, babe. I'm sorry, all right? If I knew you'd freak out this way, I never would have suggested bringing Eric here to protect you."

"Get out of my room."

"I want you." He paused. "I need you. It's been hours."

"Go fuck Eric." She climbed off her bed and stumbled as she staggered to her bathroom. "I am really taking a shower this time."

"I don't fuck other men," he growled behind her.

She froze and turned her head to glare at him. "Neither do I."

She staggered into the bathroom and tried to slam the door. That's when she realized it was broken. The lock and handle were dangling and the doorframe was broken. She saw a crack on the door next to the handle. Grady obviously had kicked in the door. The water wasn't running in the shower anymore.

She stripped and turned on the water. It helped sober her up but not by much. She really didn't drink often. She took her time. She was almost afraid Grady would follow her into the bathroom but he didn't. She hadn't brought clean clothes. She wrapped a towel around her body and walked into her room.

Grady sat on her bed, watching her silently. His eye color had gone totally black. She saw the look on his face as he slowly took in every inch of her from toes to head. She knew he wanted her. She hesitated and then walked to her nightstand drawer. She

opened it and threw a condom at him. She walked to her dresser and grabbed the hand lotion she used on her legs. She shot him a glare and then dropped her towel.

She threw the lotion at him, hitting him in the chest. "Go ahead and fuck me, Grady. It's all you want from me." She walked over to her chair in the corner and bent over, gripping the arms of it to support her balance. She looked over her shoulder at him. "Put the condom on, lube up, and use me. Don't sugarcoat it anymore. Just do it this way so I know exactly where I stand. Or should I say bend."

Grady snarled. He put on the condom and grabbed the lotion. He dumped it in his hand and coated his hard, condom-covered cock. He stood up and moved toward her.

Mika turned her head away from him and squeezed her eyes closed. She tensed and then forced herself to relax as she took deep breaths. She hoped he wouldn't hurt her, knowing he could if he wanted to, by taking her too roughly. She could sense him standing inches from her.

"Babe," he growled.

"Just do it and get it over with."

"I'm not taking you like this. You don't want me and you aren't ready."

Mika swallowed hard and fought tears, refusing to look at him. "Do it, Grady. You need to fuck me so get on with it. You don't have a clue what I want, obviously. I'm here, I'm bent over, and I'm telling you to take me. Just do it so I can get away from you again for a few hours."

Grady snarled and his hands gripped her hips roughly. Mika tensed but Grady didn't enter her the way she thought he would. Instead he yanked her away from the chair and she screamed as he threw her. She hit the bed but it didn't hurt. She stared at Grady in shock as he got on the bed with her.

"Spread your thighs," he snarled.

She saw his intent. He wanted to go down on her to get her turned on. She rolled away from him and lifted to her hands and knees. "I don't want your face between my thighs again. Just fuck me, Grady. I totally have learned my place in your life. You made certain of that."

"What in the hell are you talking about?"

She turned her head and glared at him. "If you aren't going to fuck me then get out of my room."

Grady snarled and moved to his knees behind her. One hand gripped his cock and his other hand gripped her hip. "Do you really want me like this, babe? No foreplay?"

She turned her head away and shut her eyes. *No*. She didn't. She wanted him to love her. She wanted him to care enough about her that the idea of someone else touching her made him furious. She wanted him to never...

He entered her slowly. All thought left her head. Mika bit her lip hard. She should hate the feeling as Grady pushed into her from behind but she didn't. She fought the urge to moan. He was working his cock into her slowly and he buried himself in her

balls-deep, where he held still. One hand wrapped around her waist and the other slid between her legs to her clit. It was the hand he'd slathered with lotion.

He stayed still inside her while he rubbed her clit. "I can make you want me," he growled at her.

"I hate you," she whispered.

His hand stilled then his fingers moved faster and firmer until Mika couldn't fight the sensations anymore. She moaned and wiggled on his hand. Grady groaned behind her and started to slowly thrust in and out of her. With the sensation of him inside her and his fingers rubbing her clit she only lasted a few minutes before she came hard. She cried out but she refused to say his name.

Grady released her clit and gripped her hips. He pounded into her from behind, hard and deep, as her muscles inside still clenched and fluttered from her climax. He didn't last long. He shook and groaned loudly as he emptied his seed into the condom.

Mika tried to crawl away from him but Grady refused to release her hips. "I'm sorry I upset you."

"Let me go, Grady. Get out of my room and don't come back in here until you need me again."

"You like sleeping with me." He withdrew from her body and released her hips.

Mika crawled to the edge of the bed and stumbled to the bathroom. "That was before I knew how you really felt about me. I'm going to go wash. I feel dirty."

She'd barely turned on the water when she heard a howl of rage come from her bedroom. Something heavy smashed into something else. She experienced a little fear as she inched toward the bathroom door and eased it open.

Her nightstand was across the room in pieces and the wall it had hit was damaged. Grady wasn't in her bedroom. She turned, easing the broken door closed again, and moved to the shower as hot tears fell down her face. She didn't even bother to wipe them away. Maybe her words had hurt him as much as his words had hurt her.

Chapter Eleven

"We need to talk."

Mika ignored Grady. She glanced at her watch instead. "We had sex an hour ago. We have nothing to talk about for at least another hour." She moved around his large body and walked into the kitchen.

For two days she'd refused to talk to him except for unavoidable, clipped exchanges. She'd stopped fighting to keep things cold in the bedroom. Grady was stronger and bigger. He'd easily pinned her down and done things to her to turn her on. He loved to bury his face between her thighs. She just wouldn't talk to him and right after sex she'd shower every time and refuse to stay in a room with him.

"Damn it, Mika. We can't go on like this."

She shrugged and opened the fridge. "I've already told you I don't want to talk to you."

"You're being childish, damn it."

She clenched her teeth and then removed a premade chicken Caesar salad from the fridge. She ignored his insulting remark, not wanting to fight with him. She walked to the table and sat down with her lunch. She got up, went back to the fridge and grabbed a soda, got a fork and then sat down and started to eat.

"Mika, damn it, we can't live this way."

She swallowed her bite. "Is mating season over?"

"Not yet."

"Then this is how it is since it's been clearly explained to me that we're stuck together."

He sat across the table from her and glared at her. "Are you ever going to forgive me for suggesting Eric be with us in the bedroom?"

She sipped her soda. "You said a threesome. There's a world of difference between a threesome and voyeurism. You were going to let that prick fuck me. No, I'm not going to forgive you."

"I never pegged you for a prude."

She looked up at him then. "I never pegged you for a complete asshole with the intelligence of a turnip since you're too dense to get why I'm so damn upset and angry with you."

"Then explain it to me slowly since I'm so damn stupid," he growled.

"I thought I already had."

"I don't get it."

"Is there a woman in your life, any woman at all that you feel protective of? Maybe a sister or a mother figure?"

He blinked. "Yes. One of the families that raised me had four daughters. They are like sisters to me."

She nodded. "Good. Now imagine one of them ending up with a creep who wanted his pal to fuck her too. Think long and hard about it. Is that a happy thought for you? Is that what you want for your sister?"

She saw his eyes darken. "That's totally different."

"Really? How?"

"I'd kill any asshole who touched one of them if he wasn't mated to her. No mate would ever let another male touch his woman." He frowned. "We're not mated."

She sighed. "You're never going to get it. I'm done trying to explain it to you."

She continued eating, sensing he was watching her but she didn't look up. When she finished lunch she threw away her trash and turned to leave the kitchen.

"I miss seeing you smile and hearing you laugh," he said softly. "I miss how it was."

So did she. She paused in the archway to the living room. Grady knew how to get to her. She took a deep breath and turned to meet his gaze. "What do you want me to say? You hurt me, Grady. Am I supposed to forget that? Am I supposed to just get over it?"

"I wish to hell you would. I want to sleep in your bed again and I don't want to have to feel as though I'm forcing you to want me every damn time I touch you."

"How long is mating season still in effect?"

"About a week more but it's hard to tell since it's not an exact science. It's more to do with it being summer and...hell, I can't explain it. We have about a week left."

She wanted it to be the way it had been between them before he brought Eric home with him but this time she wasn't going to let herself get hopeful he'd fall for her. She slowly turned around and walked toward him.

"If you ever suggest another man to me, I don't care if you go crazy and they have to put you down. I'll run, Grady. I will run so far and fast, do whatever it takes to get away from you, and I'll stay away from you. Are we clear?"

"Perfectly."

She stopped in front of him and held out her hand to him. He reached for her hand and stood up. She led him to her bedroom and released his hand. She licked her lips and looked up at him as she kicked off her shoes.

"We have a week left. Let's make the most of it. Just don't ever try that shit again, all right? I'm not some bitch you can pass off to one of your friends."

"It wasn't like that." He looked furious. "I am afraid I'll hurt you, damn it."

"So fucking another guy is going to keep me safe?"

"Yes," he growled. "It will remind me that you're not mine to keep so I don't mate you. The urge is so strong that you're in danger and Eric could protect you, so yeah, I'd let him fuck you if it meant you were safe from me. I'd do anything to keep you safe."

That shocked her. She wanted to ask him if the idea of mating her was really all that bad for him, but she held her tongue. She knew he had emotional scars from being punished for being half human by his father's wife Eve. She realized, from what had happened to her own parents, that a human and werewolf mating wasn't easy on any couple in a pack. She knew that Grady wanted and needed to be accepted by them.

Grady stared down at her. "I want you to want me without fighting me on it. I need you to really want me, babe."

She stripped out of her clothes. "Wanting you isn't the problem. Needing you is."

He cocked his head. "Why? I need you."

"You need me until next week. Then you won't need me anymore. I'm afraid I'm still going to need you, damn it. I'm..." she sighed. "I'm getting attached, Grady."

An emotion flickered over his face but then it was gone. "I can't ever mate you, babe."

"So you've told me."

He stripped naked. Mika was always affected by his muscular, sexy body. He was perfect, he was Grady, and she loved him even though she hated doing it. She couldn't stop caring for him even if he'd never feel the same way about her. She moved backward and then climbed on the bed. She stretched out naked on her back and held her arms out to him.

"Take me."

Grady growled at her, his eyes going black, as he climbed on the bed. Mika spread her thighs wide open for him. She wanted him to touch her. She wanted his hands and mouth on every part of her. She wanted to touch him and she did as he climbed over her. Her hands brushed his chest and she ran her palms up to his shoulders. Their eyes locked and she lifted her head.

"Kiss me. Make me forget everything but you and me, right now."

Grady lowered his mouth and took possession of hers. She loved the way he kissed her. No one ever kissed her the way he did as he fully possessed and dominated her mouth. His tongue moved against hers the same way he moved inside her when he was buried deep in her sex. She moaned and clawed at him. She knew he was holding back. She could feel it. She broke the kiss.

"Give me what you have, Grady. You aren't going to break me. I promise."

He snarled a curse and then rolled them so she was sprawled on top of him. She sat up, straddling him, and lowered her head. She went for one of his nipples with her mouth. He groaned as she sucked on him and used her teeth to nip his pebbled nipple between her teeth. He jerked under her.

"Don't," he warned. "I'm holding onto my control by a thread. No biting."

She kept hold of his nipple and raised her eyes to meet his black ones. She nipped him a little harder. He snarled, showing sharp teeth, and then rolled them again. In a heartbeat, she found herself pinned as Grady entered her hard and fast.

She cried out in pleasure as he buried himself deep in one sure drive of his cock. She had released his nipple when she cried out. Their gazes locked.

"I'm going to fuck you, babe. Hard. I've missed you so damn much. I've wanted you to look at me like that again so damn bad, you have no idea what it does to me."

"Please."

That was all it took. Grady's cock plowed in and out of her, powered by his frantically driven hips. Mika threw her head back and moaned loudly. She wrapped her legs high around his waist to give him plenty of room for easier access. Her fingernails dug into his muscular arms while she clawed at him.

Grady shifted his position and drove in at an angle that had her feeling a new level of pleasure. The faster he moved the better it felt. When Grady arched his back and lowered his head to capture one of her breasts, she lost it as he sucked hard on her nipple. She came, screaming his name.

Grady's release exploded inside her. She felt hot heat shooting deep inside her as Grady snarled. With every spurt of his release he sucked hard on her nipple, causing her own climax to drag out. With one last spasm, when she felt pain from how hard he sucked on her nipple, she went limp under him. Grady released her breast and collapsed on top of her. He adjusted his arms to brace his upper weight so she could breathe. It was the only movement she had with his bigger body pinning her under him.

The sweat tickled between their bodies and they were both breathing hard. Mika couldn't help but smile. She rubbed his back and paused at the hair she felt there. "You okay?"

Grady's entire body turned rigid. The afterglow of great sex was suddenly destroyed as Grady growled and started to viciously curse.

"Fuck. Damn it. Goddamn it. Fuck!"

He rolled away from her in the same instant that he jerked his still-hard cock from her body. He was off the bed in a shot and he went crazy as Mika watched. She lifted her head, stunned and horrified as Grady actually attacked one of her walls. He punched and kicked the wall so hard that plaster cracked and broke. She saw the insides of her walls as he continued to go crazy.

She sat up, staring at the man who'd obviously lost his mind. "Grady?"

He turned, pure rage burning in his black eyes. She drew back in real terror. His face was partially changed. The teeth she saw were sharp and dangerous looking. Grady threw back his head and literally roared out in rage.

Mika fled. Terrified, she leapt from her bed and ran from her room to the guestroom. She slammed and locked the bedroom door. She didn't know what was

wrong with Grady but he was scaring the shit out of her. The look in his eyes when he'd roared at her had been ice cold and filled with fury.

It sounded as though he were tearing her bedroom apart. She heard wood snap and things being thrown. She hugged herself hard, shaking, and wondered what the hell had happened.

Something wet tickled her arm under her breast. She looked down and saw red on her arm and on her breast. She stared in shock as she realized what she was seeing. There were sharp teeth marks and three puncture wounds on her breast. She gripped her breast. It hurt. She examined the underside of her nipple where she found more bloody punctures.

Her knees collapsed under her. She sat there, stunned. She yanked her hand away from her breast as if she were on fire. She heard something smash in her bedroom as wood splintered. She closed her eyes.

It all made sense now. "Oh God," she whispered.

Grady had bitten her breast, drawn blood, and she knew what it meant when a werewolf bit a woman during sex. She'd been told enough times. He hadn't used a condom either. He'd lost control just the way he'd feared he would. She'd felt hair on his back and he'd had sharp teeth so he'd been partially changed during sex. He was freaking out and in a rage in her bedroom because he'd done the one thing he swore he'd never do.

He'd mated himself to a human. He'd bitten and mated himself to Mika. Her breast was still bleeding. She felt a drop of blood splatter on her. She stared at her naked thigh and another drop marred her white skin. She heard Grady roar in rage down the hall and glass broke.

Mika pushed to her feet and ran for the bedroom door. Grady was still down the hall in her room. She wasn't sure if there was anything left to break in there but it sounded as though he were still trying from the loud noises she still heard.

She ran into the hall bathroom and stared at the bite marks on her breast. She turned on the water as she kicked the bathroom door shut. Grady was going to hate her. He was going to resent her and every day he was going to look at her the way he'd looked at her when he'd leapt from the bed.

She squeezed her breast and pushed out more blood, forcing the wounds to bleed. She washed her breast, splashing water. Maybe he hadn't bitten her hard enough. Maybe the blood had pushed out whatever saliva had gotten in. She scrubbed the wounds with soap, ignoring the pain. Maybe the mating hadn't taken.

She couldn't do any more. She knew that. She shut off the water. Down the hall, her bedroom door was shut and the house was ominously silent. She wrapped a towel tightly around her and ran for the kitchen. She yanked a bottle of vodka off the top of the fridge and uncapped it as she went to the sink. She opened the towel and poured the clear booze over her injured breast. It was the strongest alcohol proof she had in the

house. She shut her eyes and hissed through gritted teeth as the alcohol burned her injured skin.

She reached for the phone next and dialed Minnie's cell number. She moved so she could see down the hallway. Her bedroom door was still shut, the house was silent. Had Grady left? Was he still in her room? She was too afraid to risk walking to her room and opening that door to find out.

"Hey," Minnie chuckled. "How is life?"

"Listen to me," Mika said softly. "Do not freak out and if Uncle Omar is there get the hell away from him now. I'm in trouble."

Silence greeted those words. "Hang on, Mel. Let me go outside so we can have some privacy. Omar is having a few of the pack over."

Mel was Minnie's brother. Heart pounding, her eyes locked on her closed bedroom door, she waited for Minnie to get out of the house so she couldn't be overheard by Omar. Mika tried to calm her pounding heart.

"What happened? Are you all right? You sound like you want to cry."

"Don't freak out. Promise?"

"Fuck. How bad is this?"

"Grady accidentally bit me during sex. What do I do? I cleaned it. I scrubbed the puncture wounds with soap and poured alcohol over them. They bled well so that will help push out the saliva, right?"

Silence. She heard something on the other end of the phone thump and then she heard Minnie softly curse. "Sorry. I dropped the phone. Shit. Oh, shit. Shit!"

"I know. Grady is...upset."

"Upset," Minnie hissed. "He's upset? How the hell did he *accidentally* sink his damn teeth into you while he fucked you?"

"I...damn. He bit my breast when he came."

"What the hell was a part of you doing in his mouth when he came?" Minnie was hissing and growling softly. "He's old enough to know better. He's not some damn pup who's new to sex and — Shit! Are you sure it was accidental?"

"It was an accident. Trust me."

Minnie took deep breaths. "It's going to be fine. It wasn't a deep bite, right? More like a scratch? The condom didn't break, right? You're good if it was just a scratch and the condom held. Matings don't take without sperm and saliva together."

Mika eyed her breast. It was still bleeding. She used the towel to pinch the areas that bled. "Uh...it's more than scratches. He punctured the top and bottom of my breast around my nipple. We weren't using a condom and he partially shifted."

Silence. The sound Minnie made after long seconds of silence almost made Mika drop the phone as she had to jerk it away from her ear. Minnie howled loudly in rage. She heard glass shatter next. Minnie panted into the phone.

"Minnie? Calm down. What just broke?"

"I threw a chair through the damn sliding glass door," Minnie said softly. "Shit. I lost my temper. Here comes Omar and Elroy and some of the guys to see if I'm all right."

"Don't you dare tell them," Mika pleaded. "Please?"

"I have to go. I'll be there soon. I won't tell, but Omar's going to find out the second he gets a whiff of you in a few hours and realized you've been mated." Minnie hung up on her.

Mika hung up the phone. She closed her eyes and let her head hang. Minnie's words rang in her head. *You've been mated*. She was so fucked.

Chapter Twelve

Half an hour later Mika finally worked up the nerve to walk to her room. The silence was eerie. She'd seen that Grady's Jeep was still in her driveway so he was still in her room. She started to fear that he'd hurt himself when he'd torn up her bedroom. As afraid as she was to face him, her worry for his well-being finally got her to move down the hallway.

She opened her door slowly to stare in horrified shock at the devastation he'd created. Her dresser was in about twelve pieces and all her clothes were thrown all over the room as though an explosion had hit. Her bed was in pieces. The mattress and box spring were shredded by what looked like knives but she knew Grady had done it with his claws. Her other nightstand was now destroyed too. Her walls were down to bare studs in a lot of places and insulation showed where the plaster was just gone or broken.

Hot tears flooded her eyes as she realized it was going to cost her a fortune to fix it. The ceiling fan that had been above her bed was torn out and hung in a broken mess of wires and snapped blades. She swallowed and inched into her room, avoiding broken wood and stuffing from her mattress.

Grady wasn't in the room. She stepped over one of her bedposts, a smashed dresser drawer, some of her clothing, and inched around broken glass from her lamp. She made it to the bathroom and peered in—it wasn't destroyed. The bathroom window was wide open though and Grady wasn't there.

She turned and carefully studied her bedroom again, still horrified that Grady had done this. Her stunned gaze returned to the ceiling fan. She wondered if the torn wires could cause a fire. She wiped at hot tears falling down her face. Grady was gone and he'd destroyed her bedroom.

While she picked up clothes from the floor, looking for something to wear, she silently wondered if he'd have hurt her if she hadn't run from the room. She stared at the destroyed mattress with all the ugly slashes through it, remembering she'd been on the bed he'd attacked with his claws. She fought back more tears, knowing crying wasn't going to fix this mess.

She found that he'd left her closet untouched. She got her suitcases out and went through her room carefully so she didn't cut her feet. She salvaged what clothes she could from her smashed dresser drawers. She removed her clothes from the closet and made sure the ceiling fan switch was off.

She dragged out her suitcases and shut the bedroom door. She left her suitcases in the hallway. She didn't want to go back into her room but knew she'd have to go in there to pack up her bathroom things. She could stay in the spare bedroom for now.

Where was Grady? His Jeep was in the driveway but she hadn't seen his clothes in her room when she'd moved shit around, looking for her things. He'd stripped in her bedroom so they should be there. They weren't. That meant he hadn't left her house through the bathroom window on four feet and fur. He'd climbed out that window on two legs, wearing his clothes.

Anger surged through her. He'd sneaked out the window to avoid her. *The coward.* He'd gone wild after biting her and he had just sneaked out, not even bothering to check on her. She fought the pain and anger that welled inside her.

The doorbell rang. Was he back? She wondered if he was calm enough now to talk or if maybe he'd just come back to get his Jeep keys. She walked slowly to the door and took a deep breath. She straightened her shoulders, unlocked the deadbolt, and swung the door open wide to face whatever mood Grady was in.

Minnie was pale and tears swam in her dark brown eyes. "I didn't tell your uncle a thing about what happened here. I told him I got into an argument with my brother so he thinks I went for ice cream to calm myself down." Minnie stepped into the entryway and grabbed Mika, pulling her into her arms in a tight hug. "Are you all right?"

Mika gripped the taller woman tightly around her waist and shook her head. "No."

"My poor baby. Where is Grady? I want to talk to him. He knew better than to touch you without condoms. It was stupid. I know you don't understand a lot about this but damn, it was stupid of him to fuck you without a condom. The stronger you scent of them and sex the more they get the urge to mate you. It was just a matter of time. He—"

"Is gone," Mika cut off Minnie from her rant.

Minnie pulled back and frowned down at Mika. "His Jeep is in the driveway so don't lie to me. He owes your family an explanation and he should be glad it's me and not Omar who wants to hear him tell me how this happened."

"I'm not lying. He was upset." That was putting it mildly. "He is gone and I don't know where he went. I don't know when he's coming back. He didn't want to face me I guess. His keys were out here with me but he took off and left the Jeep."

Rage twisted Minnie's face. "He mated you and split? I knew it. He did this on purpose and now feels guilty so he doesn't want to face you until you calm down. Damn men. I'm always terrified your uncle is going to do this shit to me. He's been after me for twenty damn years to mate his ass. I was sure Grady was honorable. I'm so damn sorry but he did this on purpose, baby."

"He did not."

Minnie gave Mika a frown. "Trust me. This was obviously intentional. He took off because he wants to give you time to calm down."

Mika gripped Minnie's arm and dragged the woman down the hallway. She opened her bedroom door wide and watched the shock and horror play across Minnie's features as Minnie took in the state of the room.

"He didn't mate me on purpose. He was that damn upset over accidentally biting into me. He isn't avoiding me because of guilt. I think he left so he doesn't kill my ass. He can't be mated to me if I'm dead, right?"

Minnie had turned sheet white as she stared down at Mika. "Let's go now."

"I'm not going anywhere. This is my house. He'll calm down eventually and come home. At the very least he still needs me for a few more days and I have his Jeep keys and his bag is in the spare bedroom where he's keeping his clothes. I don't think I'm really in any danger. He took his rage out on the room instead of me. I was just down the hallway so if he wanted to hurt me he could have."

"Are you looking at the same damn room I am? He damn near shoved your headboard through the wall that separates your bedroom from your bathroom. Everything in here is broken. Every damn thing."

"I'm not broken and I was in here at first."

"Oh, Mika," Minnie said softly.

She almost flinched at the look of pity that Minnie was directing her way. She straightened her shoulders. "There has to be a way to un-mate us."

Shaking her head, Minnie's look of pity deepened. "The only times I've ever heard of an accidental mating, well, they just dealt with it by trying to make the best of it together as a couple. You were marked before and carried his scent but it was faint. Marking fades after a short period of time. Now... Hell, Mika, you're going to smell just like him. It will be that strong and it will remain that way. Right now, if the mating took, your body is changing. It's bred into them that the woman who smells like them belongs to them. He may not have meant to mate you, but honey, you are his now. He'll have to come to terms with that because he won't have a choice. His body, his animal, will know and once it gets a whiff of you, his instincts will take over."

"He wants acceptance from the pack. You're the one who told me about his childhood. He's dead-set on having a werewolf mate. Look what my parents went through until they left here for the human world. He had a hellish childhood and now he's going to be facing discrimination again for having a human mate."

"He's Elroy's son and your uncle isn't just some pup like he was back when your mom married your dad. Both of you have powerful relatives. The pack won't dare shun you or treat you bad, even though you're a mixed-race mate set. Your mate is alpha-blooded. Few will be stupid enough to give you any shit, Mika. Your man will kick their asses. It will be all right because your children will be shifters. Alpha-blooded kids always carry the strong shifter genes. Most mixed races are looked down on because mating with humans can result in non-shifter children." She paused. "Besides, it's more acceptable to werewolves if the males take human mates. Your parents had it really rough because your father was human and no one believed a human could protect his female mate from other males in the pack."

"Grady is so upset, Minnie. What am I going to do?"

"You're his mate now, baby. You call your work, quit your job, and hire movers to bring your shit here. Like it or not, he has to stay in town. Your life is here now with him." Minnie's face relaxed and she suddenly smiled. "You're going to live here and I'll get to see you all the time. Your uncle can't kill Grady for real because Elroy won't let him. He'll be pissed but he'll have to accept that you're mated to one of the pack."

"How the hell can I expect Uncle Omar to accept it when Grady won't? He's going to hate me and resent me, Minnie. God, this sucks."

"I know, baby. Why don't you come home with me until...well, until your mate cools off and comes looking for you. He will soon. He's still in mating heat and needs you now more than ever. He'll have to accept what's done and it *is* done. It's just how it has to be."

Mika shook her head. "I'll wait here. I guess I should start cleaning up that mess in there. It will give me something to do until he returns."

"I don't think it's a good idea. What if he comes back and wants to screw up the rest of your house?"

She frowned. "Thank you for coming because I was freaking out. I still am but now I have a clearer picture of everything. I just needed someone to be here for me."

Anger tightened Minnie's face again. "Your mate should have been here to support you. You're human. This all has to be really confusing and frightening to you. Someone should kick Grady's ass."

"Trust me. He's kicking his own ass right now more than anyone else ever could over what happened here. Go home. Please don't mention anything to Uncle Omar yet. Who knows? Maybe we got lucky and it didn't take."

"I wouldn't hold my breath on that one, baby." Minnie hugged her and walked out the door.

Sighing, Mika put on shoes and grabbed trash bags from her kitchen, taking the entire box of them. She stepped into her bedroom and stared with sadness at the disaster that used to be the room she loved. She cringed. She didn't need trash bags. She needed a bulldozer and a few large dumpsters. A few muscular men to lift broken furniture would be helpful too.

A few hours later she showered. She'd made a dent in the mess but still needed days of cleaning and help just to get the broken debris out of her bedroom. She didn't even want to think about the damaged walls and the electrical mess. Grady hadn't returned. She put on jeans and a tank top. She forced herself to eat as she watched the clock. He'd been gone six hours in total by the time she started to really worry.

Grady was in mating heat, angry, and probably confused. She put on her shoes, grabbed her purse, and walked to the front door. She hesitated and then grabbed his Jeep keys. If he wouldn't come to her then she'd try to find him. Her heart was pounding, she was nervous as hell, but she loved the guy. He was out there suffering from going without sex for too long and they needed to talk. She straightened her shoulders, opened the front door and walked out into the cool night air.

He'd go home, she hoped, as she backed the Jeep out of the driveway and headed for the bar. She parked in the back and hoped they didn't lock the back door as she approached it. The idea of walking through a packed bar wasn't something she wanted to contend with. She hesitated and then tried the handle, relief sweeping through her as it turned easily in her hand.

She didn't run into anyone as she headed for the stairs she'd glimpsed the time Grady had brought her through the back. She knew he lived above the bar so she'd check his place first. No one stopped her or stepped out from any of the back rooms as she climbed the wide staircase. At the top was only one door. She hesitated and then tried the handle, only to find it locked.

She had Grady's keys so she tested each one until she found the right key, inserted it, and turned the handle. Light greeted her as she opened the door and she swallowed, afraid of the confrontation that was about to take place but it needed to be done.

The apartment was an open space with a living room immediately inside the door and to the left was a bar that separated the living space from a modern kitchen. She stepped farther inside, hopeful that since the lights were on he'd be there. She closed the door firmly and listened, hearing the sound of running water. Her gaze locked on a partially open door across the room and she moved toward it.

She hesitated at the bathroom door, hearing the shower running and through the crack she could see a toilet. She took another deep breath and then pushed the door open. "Grady?"

The shower door was clear and it only took an instant for Mika to register that the person who turned at the sound of her voice was not Grady since it was a tall, slim woman with red hair who spun in the clear glass shower stall to stare back in shock at Mika.

The woman moved, shoving at the glass door, grabbed a towel from the rack, and frowned at Mika as she wrapped it around her body, turning off the water with her free hand. Anger was instant on the woman's face. "Who the hell are you?"

Mika was too shocked to speak. There was a woman, a naked one, in Grady's shower. She stumbled back a step and pain sliced through her. The woman growled, shoving the shower door all the way open and stepped out onto the bath mat, securing the towel tighter around her body.

"I asked who the hell you are and why you're in my boyfriend's apartment. He's going to be here any damn minute and I want an explanation right now."

Mika backed up.

"How do you know Grady?" The woman advanced, looking enraged. "I'm Megan, his girlfriend. I asked you who the hell you are and I want an answer right now."

"I'm Mika," she finally got out. "I'm Omar Deken's niece."

That stopped the tall redhead from advancing on her further. The woman frowned. "Oh. Does he need Grady for something? He should be here any minute. He called me an hour ago and told me to get my ass here so I just arrived. I think he had to take care

of something downstairs." The woman turned, walking over to the bathroom counter, and stared at herself in the mirror. "Sorry you caught me in the shower but I wanted to be nice and clean for my Grady when he gets here. I was on duty and had to break up some fights. I didn't think he'd like to smell a bunch of males on me." She glanced at Mika over her shoulder as she opened the drawer under the counter, grabbed out a brush to run through her wet hair. "You know how males hate that damn scent when they are fucking us."

Mika spun and moved toward the door. She had to get the hell out of there before Grady returned. He'd called a werewolf female to be with him. That's why he hadn't returned to her. He was going to try to be with that redhead instead of coming home to Mika. Pain burned through her hard at his betrayal.

"Where are you going?" Megan called out.

Mika rushed out of the apartment and down the stairs, leaving the apartment door open behind her. She walked quickly toward the back door and had almost reached it when another door opened across the way. The loud sounds of the bar were instant when it happened, making her turn her head just in time to see Grady step into the back area with his back turned her way.

"I don't know how she's going to take it and I really don't give a damn either. It wasn't anything serious between us." Grady said the words loudly, obviously talking to someone in the bar, as he took another step back. "If she makes any problems over it and won't leave me alone then she'll have to realize that I'm willing to kill her if she tries to lay claim to me." He spun around at that moment and his gaze locked on Mika. Shock made his eyes widen.

"Mika?"

She fought tears. "I came looking for you, thinking you might need me."

He just stared at her, twenty feet away, and didn't say a word.

"I see you don't. Your girlfriend is naked and waiting for you upstairs. You're going to have a great life because you'll never see me again so you don't have to kill me." She spun then, shoving open the back door, and ran.

"Mika!" Grady roared.

She was shaking when she reached the Jeep. A loud boom sounded and she turned her head, staring in shock as Grady barged out the back door. He'd hit the door so hard that it literally came off the hinges. Pure rage was on his features and her terror was instant. She shoved the key in the ignition.

"Mika!" He roared out her name again, threw the door he still gripped, and stormed toward her, looking like a big, mean, enraged male.

She turned the key in the ignition, the engine roared to life, and she threw it in drive as she slammed her foot down on the gas. Tires squealed as the Jeep jumped forward and threw her back against her seat. She had to swerve the wheel hard to avoid plowing into the wall, barely missed it, and she heard a snarl. She glanced at the

rearview mirror as she straightened the wheel and pressed down harder on the gas. To her shock she saw a large form running after her. Grady.

She was shocked as her gaze fixed on him in the tiny mirror. He was gaining on her, running down the street, and he looked scary as hell since she could see that he'd partially changed with his extended nose and sharp teeth. The Jeep gained speed though and she jerked her attention from the mirror to the road ahead of her so she didn't crash. In seconds she glanced back but Grady was gone. She twisted her head, looking over her shoulder, and saw a shape running onto a side street, moving fast.

Her mind worked frantically, realizing he was going to try to cut her off from going to her house. She knew even on two legs, he could run fast and for miles. She didn't slow, taking a turn in the opposite direction of her house and where he was heading. She had her purse with her. Hot tears nearly blinded her so she had to quickly wipe them away before she wrecked. Grady had said he'd kill her.

She parked Grady's Jeep at the airport and sat there shaking and wiping away tears. He'd called his girlfriend, the one she'd overheard him with on the phone, to try to get him through his mating heat and she'd heard him say he'd kill her if she tried to lay claim to him. She nearly screamed with fright when her cell phone rang, startling her, and she twisted in the driver's seat, staring at her purse on the passenger side.

It rang five times before it stopped, going to voicemail. She had to get out of town, had to make sure he couldn't find her. She was in grave danger if he was willing to kill her if the mating had taken. She removed his keys from the ignition, shoved them under the driver's seat, and grabbed her purse. One look in the rearview mirror showed that her eyes were red and puffy, obviously from crying, but she couldn't do anything about that as she climbed out of his Jeep and carefully locked it.

Some people stared at her as she entered the small airport but she ignored them, going to the ticket line. Her phone made her jump as it started to ring again. She reached down, removed it from the side pocket, and glanced at the number. She hesitated and then flipped it open.

"Hello?"

"I'm too worried to sleep," Minnie said softly. "What happened when he came home?"

Mika moved in line when the person in front of her did. "He didn't come home," she admitted.

"Damn it, he's stubborn, but I'm sure he'll be home soon. Why didn't you answer your house phone? I tried calling it first."

"I'm not home. I'm at the airport."

"What?" Minnie nearly yelled. "Why?"

"I'm leaving."

"We went over this, damn it. You can't do that, Mika. I told you what would happen. He'll come home and he'll accept you."

She glanced around her, seeing just two people in front of her. Her voice lowered. "He wants me dead, Minnie. I went to the bar looking for him and I heard him telling someone that. I have to run."

"You come here now."

"I'm taking the first flight they have open, I don't care to where, but I'm out of here." The guy in front of her moved, the line going fast. "It's my turn to buy a ticket. I left Grady's Jeep in the parking lot and the keys are under the seat. Let him know where it is tomorrow. I love you and I'll call you soon. I'm turning my phone off now." She hung it up and turned it off, returning it to her purse.

* * * * *

Mika glanced at her watch for the tenth time in as many minutes. The first flight out was to New York and she couldn't board for another twenty minutes. She glanced around the nearly empty terminal, relaxing when she didn't see Grady. She really didn't expect him to come after her now that she was leaving. He had no reason to kill her if she was no longer a part of his life.

Hot tears threatened to spill again but she blinked them back. She hugged herself and winced, forgetting the bite that throbbed as her wrist rubbed across her tender breast.

She glanced at her watch and realized only a minute had passed. Time was crawling by. Movement made her lift her head and she stared at a tall, long-haired man wearing a black leather jacket and jeans walking straight toward her. He looked very similar to Grady but the walk was different. He was staring right at her, moving quickly, and she sat frozen just staring at him until he stopped a few feet away.

"Mika?"

"No," she lied, staring into eyes that resembled Grady's enough that she knew this had to be one of his half brothers.

The man's mouth was similar to Grady's as well, especially when he frowned at her. He purposely sniffed and shook his head. "You can't lie to me when you scent of Grady that damn strongly. Get up and come with me now."

Her fingers gripped her purse, nearly clawing the material. "No."

His frown deepened. "I need you to come with me."

"I need to leave."

They stared at each other. The man shifted his weight. "Grady needs you."

"No, he doesn't." It hurt to say the words. "He's got Megan."

He sucked in air. "He's hurting bad, Mika."

"I just saw him not forty minutes ago and he was fine." *And able to make death threats about me.*

The big man stared at her with a deep frown. "He chased you, trying to catch up with you and ran right into the path of a truck. I didn't want to tell you that here but he's in bad damn shape. They don't think he's going to make it and he's asking for you."

The air left her lungs and shock tore through her. If she hadn't been sitting she knew she would have hit the floor. "What?"

Grady's brother looked grim. "He's asking for you. You need to come with me now, Mika. Get up and let's go."

She couldn't make her legs move as tears blinded her. He'd been hit by a truck? "He'll heal," she said hopefully. "Your kind heals fast."

"It was a big damn truck, he was hit head-on, and he's dying," the man said softly. "Get up and come with me."

"Oh God." Grady's image flashed in her mind as pain lanced through her.

A hand gripped her arm, gently pulling her up and she found herself being led through the airport blindly, since she couldn't see through her tears. Grady was dying? It couldn't be true. Not Grady. He'd been chasing her but she'd been terrified after hearing him say he was willing to kill her. She didn't even know why he'd run after her. He should have just let her go.

She blinked hard, clearing her vision as a car pulled up in front of them, a black four-door sedan, Grady's brother yanked open the back door and practically shoved her inside. She was forced to make room for him as she wiped at her tears, staring at the man in the front who turned his head, knowing instantly that it was yet another brother of Grady's because they could have been twins.

"How did you talk her out?" He faced forward and punched the gas, the car pulling away from the front of the drop-off zone at the airport.

The man sitting next to her sighed. "I lied."

His words sank in and Mika jerked her head in his direction to find him watching her with a grim look.

"I lied," he repeated softly. "Grady is fine. I figured you'd come with me easily enough if I told you that shit. I couldn't exactly throw you over my shoulder and carry you out of there. Security would have stopped me."

She stared at him, mute, and then her heart started to pound. "You son of a bitch! You told me he was dying."

"Shit," the man in front hissed. "That was harsh, Von."

"Shut up, Rave. It worked, didn't it? She's in the damn car."

Mika was in shock, trying to calm down now that she knew Grady was fine, and tried to make sense of things while she fought the rage that filled her over being fooled that way. It was mean and cruel.

"Why would you tell me that shit?"

"You were running," Von sighed. "Grady called us to look for you. There's only three ways out of town unless you were going to try to drive back to California. Rave and I got the airport. Grady went for the bus station and our other two brothers are at the train station hunting for you while our father was activating the tracker on Grady's Jeep with teams of our men standing by to hit the road to chase you if you had tried to drive home." He pulled out a cell phone, hitting a few buttons, and held it to his ear. "We have her. Call off the search. We're bringing her in now." He hung up and stared at Mika. "Did you really think you could just leave and we'd let you go? Do you know what would happen to Grady if you left him high and dry while he's in heat after marking you?"

"Do you know what is going to happen to me if I don't leave?" She huddled in her seat.

Chapter Thirteen

Dread was instant as the car pulled up in front of a house that Mika had never seen before. It was a large, ranch-style home surrounded by woods. She turned to stare at one of her captors. Von took a deep breath.

"We're at our father's house. He wants to know what the hell is going on and he wants to talk to you. Let's go, Mika."

She didn't budge. "I want to call my uncle." She really wanted him to come get her. She was afraid and didn't know Elroy all that well. She reached for her cell phone but Von was faster, his hand grabbing hers. He shook his head.

"Let's go," he repeated. He had an annoying way of doing that. "Don't make me carry you in there because I will."

She was scared but nodded. The hold on her wrist eased and he released her. She turned and before she could reach for the handle, the door opened. Rave stood outside the car now, staring down at her, and she thought she saw pity on his face as she stared up at him. He held out his hand to help her but she ignored it, getting out on her own.

Her hands trembled as she clutched her purse and walked for the front door. Rave walked beside her and Von stayed behind them, close, as though they expected her to try to bolt. She knew she couldn't outrun them but at that moment she really wished she could. The front door opened before they reached it and a black-haired woman who stood about six feet tall frowned at them.

"Hello, Mother," Rave sighed. "Father is expecting us."

The woman sniffed and her lip curled as she glared at Mika. "That isn't coming into my house."

A low growl rumbled from behind Mika, making her jump and twist her head to stare at Von. He glared at his mother. "Move. This is pack business and you have no right to interfere."

Fury gripped the woman's features but she spun away and stalked into the house. Rave jerked his head, glancing down at Mika. "Walk."

She barely glanced at the nice interior of the home. It was lavishly furnished with deep earth tones, the only impression her mind registered before she was led down a dim, long hallway that opened into a large room. There was a pool table in the center of it and Pack Leader Elroy turned as they entered, a pool stick in one hand, a beer in the other. His attention focused intently on Mika.

"You've caused a lot of trouble for me tonight."

She swallowed the lump that had formed in her throat, not sure what to say.

"Grady never asks for a damn thing so imagine my shock when he called here in a panic an hour ago saying you were running and he needed us to move fast to try to find you before you got too far out of our reach." He laid the pool stick down on top of the table, took a sip of his beer, and then shook his head as he set the bottle down. "If you were going to get involved with one of my pack you should have realized that you need to follow our rules. I understand you're human but your uncle allowed you to know about us so it was his responsibility to make sure you know our laws. Are you aware that running from a male who marked you during mating season is against pack law?"

Oh shit. She shook her head. "No one told me that."

Dark eyes glittered, frightening her more. "They should have. Pack law is harsh."

"I didn't know," she said softly.

"Were you told that Grady would hunt you if you ran and that he could go insane if you did?"

She debated lying but then discarded that idea. "Yes."

Elroy's eyelids narrowed into slits. "So you were willing to have me put my own damn son down? Is that what you're telling me? Is this some damn game to you, Mika? We're talking about my son's life and sanity."

"He doesn't want me." She paused. "If he hadn't had to mark me he never would have touched me. I went looking for him tonight when he didn't come home and found a naked woman in his apartment who he'd called to come to his place." Her chin lifted and some of her fear eased. "Then I heard him threaten my life. It's not a game to me but I'm not going to stay put and be a sitting damn duck to a man I heard say he's willing to kill me because he wants someone else."

The enraged look eased on the pack leader's face. "That doesn't make sense about the other woman. You're marked and it's mating season. No other woman would satisfy the needs he has right now but you."

"Tell that to the redheaded, naked woman in his shower who told me he called her. She said her name was Megan, his girlfriend." She refused to cry in front of them so she fought the urge. "I told him if he cheated on me while we were together that I was leaving so he knew what would happen."

Elroy sniffed the air and his face darkened with anger. His gaze slid to one of his sons, standing next to her. "Where is Grady, Rave?"

"I assume he's on his way here to get her." The man shrugged his broad shoulders. "That's where I'd be if she were mine."

"Am I the only one scenting her?" Von was staring at Mika. "She's in a lot of pain."

Elroy nodded. "I'm aware. My son has some explaining to do."

"Your son doesn't want me. I wish he did, but I'm human. He's got a problem with that. Please just let me go. He wants a werewolf woman and he called her to be with him."

A door slammed and Von stepped back as Rave also moved away from her, both of them turning to stare down the hallway. Mika looked over her shoulder to see two men walking side by side toward them. Both of them looked similar to Grady and she knew these were his other two brothers. They stopped feet from her, two sets of dark brown eyes locked on her.

"He tried to use another woman to get him through mating heat." Elroy was pissed. "No wonder he called us for help to find her. She," Elroy glanced at Mika, "found the other one in his apartment naked. She stated she told him she'd leave if he touched someone else."

The brother on the left, who had just entered the room and appeared to be the oldest of the four, frowned, stared at Mika. "She's human."

"No shit," Elroy spun away, walked to the pool table and leaned heavily against it as he faced his sons again. "I guess he didn't learn from my mistake of getting involved with one of them."

The brother watched his father and then his dark gaze zeroed in on Mika. "I'm Anton." He jerked his head at the man next to him. "He's Braden." He paused. "Why did you run from my brother?"

"He doesn't want me," she said softly. "Trust me, my leaving is for the best. I'm human, he's got a big problem with that, and after he bit me he destroyed my bedroom in a fit of rage. He called a woman to be with him after he left me at my house." She paused. "Then I overheard him say if I tried to claim him he was willing to kill me. Please just let me go."

"He bit you?" Anton sniffed loudly.

"It was an accident." The men all looked at each other but no one said a word. Frustration and anger had Mika on edge. She decided to try again. "Please just let me go."

A door slammed and Mika wanted to whimper when she saw Grady storm down the hallway looking half wild, his hair messed up, clothing disheveled. The snarl he uttered was enough to make her knees go weak. Rage made his eyes appear to be two orbs of pure evil as he kept coming at her, never even glancing at his family, and a louder snarl tore from him as he lunged for her.

Mika cried out when she saw claws swipe at her but Grady never got to touch her. Rave jumped in Grady's path, preventing him from reaching her. "Don't," he snarled.

"Move," Grady snarled back. "Mine."

"Calm," Elroy was there instantly, standing next to Rave to block his son from Mika. "You're out of control."

"Move," Grady snarled, sounding even scarier.

Von suddenly grabbed Mika around her waist, lifting off her feet to hold against his body as he backed away. Her purse dropped from her hands, hitting the floor hard. His voice was soft as he spoke.

"You running sent him over the damn edge. He's not himself. He won't mean to hurt you but like this, he will."

A howl of rage shattered the room and Mika watched, horrified, as Grady attacked Rave, throwing his brother aside as easily as if he were a feather pillow. The big man flew a few feet to crash to the floor and Grady tried to lunge again at Mika. Elroy moved, grabbing him, and they struggled. Anton and Braden were in the mix in the blink of an eye, each man grabbing Grady's arms and hauling him away from their father. Elroy roared out in rage, glaring at Grady.

"Control yourself."

"Mine!" Grady's face wasn't quite human anymore as he snarled at his father, struggling to break free from his brothers.

Elroy shook his head, backing up a step, and shot a look at Rave when the man got to his feet. "Get the chains and the dart gun now. Move."

"Fuck," Von hissed. "Are you happy now, human? Look what you did to him. He's totally out of his damn mind because you ran and left him to go nuts. They are going to have to chain him down and drug him to calm him now."

Mika snapped. She was horrified, terrified, and tired of taking the damn blame. She elbowed Von hard, hitting him square in a soft spot under his ribs, making him hiss out in pain and drop her. She moved away from him and then looked at Grady. He was fixated on her, those terrifying eyes of his never wavering, and he struggled, snarling again, trying to reach her.

"Knock it off," she yelled at Grady, moving closer to him. "I'm not yours."

"Don't provoke him," Von ordered her, rubbing his ribs. "The drugs will calm him down enough for you to be safe with him."

Provoke him? All she'd wanted to do was leave town. This was Grady's fault, not hers. He was the damn jerk who kept breaking her heart. She glared at him when he snarled at her again, fighting the hold his brothers had on him but unable to break free. All her pain turned to anger and she encouraged it.

"Mika," Grady snarled. "Come here. I need to hold you."

"Fuck yourself," she yelled at him. "That's what you want from me, right? That's all you want. Why don't you call Megan again?"

He snarled, tried to bite one of his brothers, and fought but they held him. Mika inched closer, not caring what kind of danger she was in—too angry.

"I'm okay, by the way. Not that you give a damn since you left me bleeding and scared in the spare bedroom while you tore my damn room up. Do you have any idea what it's going to cost me to fix that?" Hot tears filled her eyes and she didn't care anymore who she cried in front of. "I was worried so I went looking for you. How stupid was that? I told you if you slept with someone else I'd take off. I am so damn tired of you hurting me."

He stopped struggling, just watching her as he breathed heavily. Mika shook her head at him.

"Then you have your brothers come after me." She jerked a thumb toward Von. "He told me you were hit by a damn truck to get me to leave the airport. I was worried about you, terrified you were going to die, and I left with him to rush to your damn side. Again, really stupid. I'm done, Grady. You've hurt me for the last damn time."

He was breathing hard, his chest rising rapidly. "I didn't call Megan to fuck her. I owed it to her to tell her face-to-face that it was over."

"In your shower?"

He growled low. "I didn't know she'd let herself in."

"And I heard you say if I tried to claim you that you'd kill me."

He struggled to break free again but then stopped fighting. "I was talking about Megan. I'd kill her if she tried to claim me. She could only do that if she challenged you and killed you. I was protecting you when I said that."

Some of her anger eased because she really wanted to believe him. "It doesn't matter, Grady. You never wanted me and it was an accident when you bit me. I just want to leave and go back home." She wiped at her tears. "I can't and won't take this anymore."

"You're mine," his voice was deep but he wasn't growling or snarling anymore. "I did bite you and you're my mate."

"I'm nothing to you, Grady. You've made that perfectly clear. I'm leaving."

He went insane, howling, and hair started growing out on his arms. Elroy was suddenly in front of his son, grabbing his face in his hands, his voice deep when he spoke.

"Don't. Hold your skin," Elroy ordered him.

Grady stopped changing but he was hairy as hell, his mouth was extended, his nose wider, and his eyes... Mika had to look away. They were narrower than they should have been, shaped differently, and pure black. Those eyes scared her as growls tore from him.

Rave rushed forward with chains draped over one muscular arm and, in shock, Mika watched his hand rise. She saw a handgun and then she heard a soft noise.

Grady whimpered and her head jerked in his direction. A blue dart was sticking out of his chest. She stared at it and her gaze flew to his face. He was staring at her, showing sharp teeth, and then he slumped forward, his brothers having to hold his weight totally, Elroy helping them by holding his son's head.

"He'll be out for about an hour. Let's get him secured quickly." Elroy was furious as he turned his head, glaring at Mika.

"I can't scent that you're his mate but if he bit you then it's just a matter of time. You are going nowhere." He released Grady's face carefully, allowing his head to slump, and then he bent. "I got him."

Elroy was strong as he straightened with Grady's big body draped limply over his shoulder. Anton looked grim as he walked to Mika and gripped her arm gently but firmly. She stared up at him.

"Come with us."

"Where?"

"The basement. We have holding cells down there in case one of our pack gets out of control. You and Grady are going to be contained there until he finds his sanity and you realize that you can't run from this."

Mika shook her head. "No." She tried to pull out of his grasp but the big man tightened his hold.

"Don't fight. I don't want to have to hurt you."

The anger in his eyes was clear and she didn't struggle when he tugged on her. They followed Elroy as he carried Grady toward the back of the house. The dark-haired woman stood in a kitchen when they stepped into the large room. She frowned, taking in every detail with a sweeping glance, and shook her head.

"He's not allowed in my house," she said firmly.

Elroy glared at his wife. "Stay out of this, Eve."

"He's not allowed in my house," she repeated.

"It's my house and you're my mate. You'll do what you're told," Elroy growled at her. "Go to our room."

She hesitated, fury on her features, but then she spun away toward another hallway.

Elroy sighed. "Hell."

"That's what your life is going to be like until she calms down," Rave said softly from behind Mika where he followed them. "You spoiled her too much."

Anton snorted. "You should have put your foot down when he first came to us. You never should have allowed her to prevent him from living here."

Elroy turned his head, shooting his son a glare. "Wait until you have a mate."

"I'd never allow her to tell me a child of mine couldn't come into my house." Anton glared back at his father. "She would have accepted him if you had made her face it when he came. Look at the mess you've made, Father."

Elroy moved, ignoring what Anton said, and opened a door. Mika was afraid as she was led down a wide staircase into the basement. It was a full basement that had plaster walls and carpet which made her relax until she saw that around a curve the plaster ended and there were two holding cells with metal walls and thick bars. Elroy walked into one of the cages, Rave right behind him, and they gently laid Grady down on his back.

Anton tugged on Mika, putting her in the other cell. He frowned at her as he released her. She glanced around. It was a ten-by-eight foot cell with a metal cot that

looked welded to the floor, a sink, and a toilet. Anton backed up and gripped the cell door.

"No," Elroy called out. "She needs to be with him."

Anton's head swung around. "He'll hurt her in his condition. She's not a bitch. If he gets rough with her she won't heal."

"We're chaining him down," Rave informed him. "She'd have to put something close to his mouth for him to be able to bite her and he won't be breaking free since the drugs will keep him from shifting. Dad is right. She needs to be with him."

Minutes later Mika was gently pushed into the cage holding an unconscious Grady. She was shocked when she saw that they'd stripped him naked, chained him face up on the cot, and had just tossed a sheet over his lap to cover him. She looked up at Elroy as he paused in front of her.

"You take care of my son. He's in mating heat." He leaned down a little, staring directly into her eyes. "If he goes insane and I have to put him down, you will be put down as well. Do you understand me?"

"Father," Anton warned. "She's human."

Elroy straightened, walking out of the cell. "If I have to kill my son over her, she's dead. That isn't up for debate."

"Dad," Rave said softly. "She's Omar's niece and she's not one of us."

"I don't give a damn who she is or what she is," Elroy snarled. "If Grady dies because she won't care for him then she won't leave here alive." The cell door slammed closed loudly.

Mika spun, watching Grady's father and brothers walk away. Only Anton turned, glancing at her over his shoulder, and she saw regret for an instant before they turned out of her sight. She gripped the bars, giving them a jerk, but the door didn't budge.

She was locked in a ten-by-eight foot cage with Grady. She looked at him, staring at him really, seeing that he was still partially changed, the drugs not reducing him back to his normal human-looking self. She shivered, leaned against the cage door, and watched his chest rise and fall.

* * * * *

A strange sound made Mika jerk awake, confused at first, and her body ached. Her ass was sore and her shoulder hurt. She frowned, lifted her head, and realized she was slumped in a corner, sitting up, with something hard digging into the pained shoulder. Her eyes opened and memory was instant as she stared at the man chained to a cot just feet from her.

Grady was staring at her, his black eyes open and still not human. He pulled again on the chains, the strange sound repeating, and then he softly snarled. "Let me go."

"If I had keys I wouldn't still be here." She studied him. "How are you feeling?"

"Like shit," he groaned.

She watched, fascinated, as his face transformed back to human. He strained, pulling on the chains again, his muscles in his arms and abdomen tightening and bulging as he fought them, but they held. His hips shifted, nearly losing the sheet that barely hid his groin, and that drew her attention to the fact that it was tented by a thick, hard pole of arousal that reached Grady's waist. She stared.

"Come here," Grady ordered.

Mika moved but she just got to her feet. Her ass protested from sitting on the hard floor for too long as she moved her legs, trying to alleviate the soreness. She stayed back from him as she shook her head.

"I'm fine right here."

Grady frowned. "I need you."

Her gaze shifted to his lap. "I see, and forget it."

Anger tightened his features. "I didn't call Megan over to fuck her, damn it. I bit you and you're my mate now. I have been seeing her for months and wanted to tell her in person that we were over. I owed her that much."

It hurt. She turned her back on him, staring between the bars at the other side of the room where the carpet started and she could see white plaster walls. Grady sniffed and a low growl came from him.

"Mika, I swear I wasn't going to fuck her. She has a key to my place and let herself in. She assumed I called her to meet up for sex but that wasn't my reason. Please come here. I didn't touch her." He paused. "I can smell your pain."

She spun. "Stop smelling my emotions, damn it. It's rude."

He stared at her. "I need you." His voice was soft. "I'm still in heat and I'm hurting."

"I was hurting when you bit me and terrified me. You just left," she shook her head. "You destroyed my damn bedroom, Grady. I can't afford to fix that shit. You took out the damn walls, broke all my furniture, and then didn't even come back while I waited for you to return. If you're hurting that's your own damn fault for going so long without sex. I was there and you chose to stay away from me to go talk to another damn woman."

"I needed to clear my damn head. You know I didn't want a human mate, damn it." His voice deepened. "And after I spoke to Megan I was planning to return to your house. I'll pay for the damages. Repairing your room isn't a problem."

What about the damage he had done to her heart? He couldn't write a check and pay someone to fix that but she refused to say it aloud.

"Mika," his voice softened. "I need you, babe. I'm in agony. Can you at least touch me and get me off? I am fighting it hard but I'm going to lose my mind soon if you don't. I can't take care of myself." He rattled his chains. "We can discuss this when I'm not feeling like my balls are on fire."

Anger burned in her, probably equal to his discomfort, she decided. "Fine." She closed the distance between them. "It's always about you, right? It's about what you want and what you need." She grabbed the sheet and tugged it off him, dropping it to the floor. "I don't want you to go nuts since your father said he'll kill me but when your father lets us the hell out of here, I'm leaving. I'll help you through mating heat but afterward I want your word you'll let me leave." She looked into his eyes. "That's the new deal, Grady. Your choice. Agree to my terms or I'm going to go back to my corner over there and you can just suffer."

He sniffed, annoying the shit out of her, after she'd told him to not do that. He frowned. "Come a little closer."

"I'm pissed off. That's what you smell."

"That's not it. My scent isn't strong enough on you." He looked confused. "How many hours have I been asleep?"

She glanced down at her watch. "Nearly two hours."

"How long since I bit you?"

"It was over nine hours ago."

"Son of a bitch," he rasped, his eyes going wide. "It didn't take."

It took her a second to understand what he was saying but then she did. "We're not mated?"

His mouth tensed into a line and for some reason he didn't look happy about that as he took a deep breath. "No. You're marked by me, that scent is strong, but your scent is still there under it. If the mating took, it would be totally replaced by mine."

Mika didn't know how to feel. Part of her was relieved. It meant that she could go home after Grady was out of heat so he wouldn't resent and hate her, but another part of her grieved. She was going to lose him for sure. She carefully sat down on the bed, refusing to look at his face, as she reached for the firm, hard flesh pointing straight up his abdomen.

"I guess we don't have to worry about deals anymore," she said softly. "Now I know you'll let me go when this is over."

"Mika—"

"Don't talk to me, Grady. I'm going to take care of you and you're going to be silent until we're released from this damn cage."

"Mika, we need to—"

She licked her lips, bent and took Grady's cock into her mouth. He groaned, whatever he was about to say lost as she worked him, sucking on him. She moved fast, nearly removing him totally from between her lips and then taking him as deep as she dared, lifted as she sucked hard, then pushed down again. The sounds Grady made were loud as he panted and groaned. She cupped his balls with her hand, feeling how hard and taut they were, drawn close to his body, and she knew he was going to come

fast. The second she realized he was going to, she released him completely, straightening up, and wrapped her hand around his thick shaft to finish getting him off.

She watched Grady throw his head back, his body arching, and he snarled as he came. Her gaze lowered and she watched him shoot out his release with each hand motion she made, drawing it out until his body relaxed and he stopped spilling his semen. She released him and bent, grabbed the sheet off the floor, and dropped it over his lap as she stood, moving away.

"Now you don't need me for a few hours." She walked to the bars, gripped them, and stared out.

His breathing slowed within minutes. "Mika, we need to talk. We need to—"

"You need to shut up if you want me to touch you in two hours." She lifted her wrist, twisting it to show off her watch. "That's the deal, Grady. You keep silent and I'll attend to you when you need me to."

He sniffed and softly growled. She closed her eyes, pressing her forehead to the bars. She knew what he smelled and she recognized that damn growl. She was turned on, was always affected by the sight of his naked body and touching him, and he usually fucked her when he uttered that type of growl he'd just made.

"Come here, Mika. I can take care of you."

She took a deep breath. "No thanks. I'm not in heat. I'm just fine, and again, shut up."

"You can put your knees beside my shoulders and grip the wall and fit over my face," he said softly. "I want to taste you, babe."

Her eyes snapped open. "Damn you," she spun, glaring at him. "You think I'm going to let any part of my body near your damn mouth again? You bit me and you left me bleeding, huddled in a room, terrified that you were going to come after me and kill me. You didn't even give a shit enough to make sure I was alive."

Something flashed in his eyes. "I knew you were fine and I smelled your terror so I left to give us both a chance to calm."

"Fine. You stick with that bullshit excuse of why you abandoned me. Shut up, Grady. I really don't want to talk to you."

He watched her but he didn't speak. She was stuck with Grady until his damn family released them.

Chapter Fourteen

Elroy was grim as he unlocked the cage door. Mika was in the far corner, definitely not going near the angry man. She thought about trying to run past him but knew, after three days of being locked up, that it wouldn't work. She'd tried twice but one of Grady's brothers always caught her before she made it to the stairs.

She had been fed four times a day but she also had to feed Grady. The stack of towels and hand towels they were given daily had been used to give her and Grady sponge baths from the sink. She'd bathed him, cared for him, and taken care of all of his needs. Every time he'd tried to talk to her, she'd threatened to stop. He'd watched her though, silently, hour after hour. She just wanted a real shower, fresh air, and to get the hell out of the cage.

The pack leader ignored Mika as he stepped into the cell, his full attention on his son. "How are you feeling?"

Grady was frowning at his father. "Fine."

Elroy paused. "How are you feeling now that you're out of heat?"

Surprise flashed through Mika as her gaze darted to Grady.

He shook his head. "I'm still in heat."

Elroy's eyes narrowed and then he looked at Mika. He returned his attention to his son. "I see."

Grady stared at his father. "I want my chains removed."

"No," Mika instantly said. "If we stay locked up, he stays locked down."

"You don't give me orders," Elroy told her. He reached in his pocket and withdrew a key. He stared into Grady's eyes. "How much longer do you think you'll need to be here so she can't take off on you?"

"I'm not sure. I'll let you know when I have this heat thing under control."

Elroy bent, unlocking Grady's wrists, staring at his son the entire time. "I'm going to leave the cage open and instead just lock the door to the basement so you can be more comfortable in the apartment down here." He made a face. "You both need showers."

Grady's wrists were free. He moved his arms, wincing a little and sat up. "Thanks, Dad."

"I hope you know what you're doing," Elroy said softly. "I'm taking heavy shit upstairs so I hope you go out of heat soon." He paused. "Am I clear?"

"Yes." Grady's legs were released and he sat up as Elroy straightened, moving away.

Elroy shot a glance at Mika. "Don't try to escape. I have four guards set up around the house outside. You wouldn't make it to the gate that separates the property from the street. Am I clear?"

"Don't threaten her." Grady stood up.

"Then make sure she stays where she's needed and I won't have to." He softly growled at his son. "If you hadn't totally made a mess of this, I wouldn't have been involved at all."

Grady sighed. "I know. I'm sorry."

Elroy nodded and walked out of the cage. "Two days, Grady. That's all you've got."

Mika stared at Grady as he stretched his big, naked body. The sheet was on the floor where it had dropped the second he'd stood. He watched his father go and then slowly turned to face her. The look in his eyes scared her a little.

"Things have changed now, haven't they, babe?" He moved, slowly inching closer.

"Yeah. You can wash your own ass now."

His hands gripped the bars on either side of her, trapping her between them and his body, but he didn't touch her. She looked up at his face since, if she looked down, she'd see more of him than she wanted to without that sheet.

"You can't keep me quiet anymore with your threats to not touch me." He inhaled slowly, lowering his head, turning it, and breathed in close to her neck. "We're going to shower and then we're going to talk."

Mika swallowed the lump that formed in her throat. "We don't have much to talk about. As soon as you don't need me anymore you can get on with your life and I can get on with mine."

His nose brushed her throat and she jumped, trying to move away from him but she had nowhere to go as her arm pressed against his where he gripped the bar, trapping her there.

"Let's go shower."

"You go right ahead. I'll take one after you."

Grady backed up a step, released the bars, and grabbed her forearm. "You don't leave my sight. You could try to run from me again."

She bit back a curse as he turned, tugging on her, and she was left with no choice but to follow him. Her gaze dropped to his ass, watching the muscles flex there as he walked. The guy had a really nice ass. She forced her gaze away, refusing to look at him in that manner. He turned to a closed door she'd assumed was a storage closet and opened it. She was stunned when instead it opened into a large living area that was a living room divided by a long bar separating it from a small galley kitchen.

"It's small but it works." He led her around a couch to another closed door and pushed it open. He tugged her around his body and she found herself in a nice-sized bathroom.

"Strip," he ordered her, releasing her arm. The door firmly closed behind them as he inched around her to turn on the water in the tub-shower combo.

"You shower first and I'll wait here."

He faced her, staring into her eyes. "If you don't take off your clothes, I'll do it. If you fight me, I'll shred them so you don't have anything to wear. Am I clear? Get your ass in the shower. We both need one."

"Jerk," she muttered, reaching for her shirt.

He chuckled, proving her title for him, and adjusted the water flow and temperature. She glanced at his bent ass and looked away. She was nervous as hell now that he was free. She wasn't in control anymore and knew it. She also knew that it wouldn't be her hands and mouth getting him off anymore now that he could take her any way he wanted her.

He silently watched her undress, his dark gaze taking in every inch. She cleared her throat. "Are there any razors around here?"

"Are you planning on trying to cut my throat?"

"No. I'd like to shave my legs before they look like yours."

A chuckle escaped him. "I'm not going to complain."

"I bet," she shot back. "You prefer your women hairy at times."

His grin died. "Get in the shower now, Mika."

She had to brush against his side as she stepped over the tub rim. He turned and she glanced down as something brushed her hips, something firm and hot. He was aroused, his cock standing straight out, and she looked away, knowing for sure what was about to take place.

"You can't do that," she said softly.

"Do what?"

She backed up in the corner of the tub stall, watching him step in with her. There wasn't that much space between them and she was trapped with the glass door in her way as he slid his side closed. He faced her, bigger than life, with the water hitting his back.

"You can't fuck me, Grady."

His lips twitched. "Watch me." He reached for her.

She tensed. "Your father and brothers took my purse and wouldn't give it to me. Do you want to know what was in there? My birth control pills, damn it. I haven't been able to take them."

His hands paused inches from her. Mika stared up at him while he studied her eyes.

"I'm telling you the truth."

He inhaled slowly. "You're not ovulating."

"You can tell that too?"

His hands gripped her hips. "Yes."

"Freak," she grunted as he jerked her against his chest, her breasts smashed against his hot skin.

"Maybe so, but I'm the freak who is going to fuck you, babe."

"I want to wash my hair."

He released her hips after pushing her back a few inches. He moved, pressing his back to the side of the shower wall. "Hurry."

She had to step next to him into the spray of water. He wouldn't change places with her so she ignored him as she washed her hair and body. Her body brushed his and he growled at her a few times. She backed away from him when she was done. He moved into the spray of water, tipped his head back, and let water soak his long hair.

Her gaze flicked to his broad shoulders, his muscular arms, and to that wonderful chest of his. Then her gaze lowered since he wasn't watching her. She wished he had a beer gut instead of a six pack. His cock was still standing up, full, and thick. She looked away, staring at the small window above her head that led to the outside world. There hadn't been any windows in the other room but she realized it was too high and small for her to be able to use it to escape.

Grady turned off the water once he washed out the conditioner from his hair and handed her a towel. "Dry off fast. I'm going to go open up the bed." His gaze locked with hers. "I want you out there in less than a minute." He slung a towel around his waist and left the bathroom.

Mika was trembling. Most of the pack was going out of heat so Grady would too. Her time with him was limited, maybe a day or two left, then she'd be returning to California. He'd continue with his life and she'd go back to hers. It depressed her. She was in love with a guy who didn't want her. She wasn't a doormat and she refused to allow him to trample all over her.

The couch pulled out into a bed. Mika glanced at it and then Grady, who stood there at the end of it waiting for her.

"Drop the towel."

She hesitated. "You said you wanted to talk to so let's talk."

"You're stalling."

"I'll get you off but I don't want to take a chance at getting pregnant."

His eye color darkened. "You're not ovulating. Trust me."

"That's the problem. I don't." She frowned at him. "I'm going home in a few days and we've already taken enough risks." Him biting her flashed through her thoughts. "We got lucky so let's not push it."

"I wasn't going to fuck Megan if that's why you don't want to climb into bed with me." He took a step toward her. "I wanted to make it clear to her that I wouldn't allow her to challenge you for me. Sometimes females do that to other females when a male takes a mate."

"You owed *me* enough to not destroy my damn house and leave me there alone to face that shit. I was scared."

Regret flashed on his face and then he took another step. "It was a mistake."

"I know you never meant to bite me."

"I meant about reacting that way and leaving you alone." He took another step, closing the distance between them until only inches separated them. "If I could change it I would." He paused. "I am talking about leaving you, not the biting part."

"You can't change it."

She backed up and hit the wall. He was making her nervous as he stared down at her, so close she was afraid to take a deep breath and brush against him. She moved to the left, ducking away, and then lowered to her knees in front of him as he turned to face her.

His eyebrows shot up as he stared down at her. She reached for his towel. "I'll do this for you but not more, Grady." She tugged off the towel and his cock sprang up, no longer held down by a wet towel.

He softly growled at her. "You're not calling the shots anymore, babe. I'm not tied down, at your mercy. Maybe I should chain you down to that damn cot and put you at my mercy for the next few days."

Mika reached up with both hands. One of them curved around the thick shaft of his cock while her other hand cupped his balls. He sucked in air, passion gripping his features and his eyes turned an even darker color. She licked her lips and then opened them, her gaze dropping to focus on the part of him that she took into her mouth.

"Fuck," Grady groaned. "That's not fair."

Love isn't fair, she thought. *If it were, you'd love me*. She concentrated on his cock, on the feel of it against her tongue, on the soft groans and sighs he made as one of his hands brushed through her wet hair, gripping a handful of it, but not interfering with her as she moved her head to torment his cock with her mouth.

"Stop," he ordered in a deep voice. "I want to finish inside you."

Her hand tightened on his balls, holding him in place, as she moved faster on him, sucking a little harder, and she heard Grady hiss out a curse as he started to come in her mouth. She swallowed down each burst of his cum, taking all he had to give, and then released him when his hand released her hair. She refused to look up as she licked her lips and pulled back.

Hands gripped her upper arms and she gasped when Grady pulled her to her feet. She stared up into his face when he shook her a little. The frown on his face was a contradiction to his body's response to what she'd just done to him.

"You really don't want me inside you, do you?"

"I'm not willing to risk it."

He softly growled at her but then released her as quickly as he'd grabbed her. "I—"

A knock sounded on the door. Grady turned his head. He bent, snatched his towel from the floor, and wrapped it around his waist as he stomped to the door. Mika glanced down to make sure her towel was still secure around her body. She looked up in time to see Grady jerk the door open wide to reveal Anton standing there. He looked furious.

"You're playing games with her now? What the hell is wrong with you?" Anton snarled the words.

Grady snarled back. "Leave."

Anton gave his brother a hard shove, sending Grady stumbling back into the living room and he entered the room to fix his full, dark gaze on Mika. His hands were fisted at his sides.

"Grady is out of heat. We all are." He looked away from Mika to glare at Grady. "Just because you have a problem with humans doesn't mean you can lie to her and toy with her. Father said you wanted a few more days to fuck her before you let her go. How could you do that to her?"

Mika's shocked gaze jerked to Grady as he turned his head to look at her. She saw guilt there and anger. "You son of a bitch."

"We need to talk, babe." He faced her. "It's not as bad as it sounds." He shot a glare at Anton. "Leave us alone."

"Don't," Mika pleaded, staring at Grady's brother. "Can you get me out of here? Let me grab my clothes. I can be dressed in one minute."

"No," Grady said.

"Hurry," Anton ordered at the same time.

Mika darted to the bathroom and her clothes. She dropped her towel the second she closed the door and quickly started to dress. Grady had lied to her about still being in heat. It hurt and shocked her but the fact that he'd lie shouldn't have surprised her. In the other room she heard soft male voices, Grady and his brother, and they started to rise in an argument.

"You had no right to interfere," Grady said loudly.

"Don't I? I used to look up to you, my older brother," Anton shouted. "But not anymore. I saw what you did to her house."

Mika jerked the door open, dressed, and stepped out to see Grady and Anton nearly nose to nose, the anger between them obvious, and they looked as though they were about to punch each other.

"I'm ready to leave. Do you know where my purse is?"

Anton stepped back from his brother. "It's upstairs. Let's go. We'll grab it on the way out."

Grady spun, glaring at Mika. "I'll take you home. Give me a few minutes to get dressed. We need to talk."

She refused to look at him. "We've said more than enough to each other. Have a good life. It's been..." Her mouth closed, unsure what to say. *A pleasure?* The sex had been. *Painful?* Very, at times. She took a breath. "Goodbye, Grady. I wish you well." That was true. She moved then, having to walk behind the couch to get to the door to stay away from him. Anton backed out of the apartment, waiting for her, grim.

"Mika? Please? Let me take you home." Grady's voice was soft. "We need to talk. I need to tell you..." He went silent. "I'll drive you to your house."

She hesitated at the door, could feel his gaze on her back almost as though it were a physical touch. "It's over now and we're both free." She forced her legs to move, walking one foot in front of the other, and knew her heart was breaking with each step.

Anton led her through the basement, past the cage that had been her home for days, and then up the stairs. Her purse was on a table next to the door, as though it waited for her. She gripped it, happy to have something familiar back in her life, and Anton walked to the back door. He glanced at her as she stepped out into the sunshine. She breathed in a deep breath of fresh air.

"You can't blame him for trying to keep you for a few extra days." He opened the passenger door to a car, his dark gaze sweeping down her. "If it were me, I'd try to keep you forever."

Surprised at his words, she looked up into his handsome face that looked similar enough to Grady's that it hurt.

He shrugged his broad shoulders. "He's got issues with human women but I don't. We should hurry before he grows a brain and tries to stop us from leaving."

"He won't." She was sure as she sat.

Anton paused, holding the door. "He's a fool." He pushed the door closed.

Mika glanced at the back door she'd just come from, seeing it closed, watching as Anton got in the driver's seat, started the car, and pulled away. Grady never came out. She forced her attention forward. Grady was the past and the sooner she left she could get on with her future.

* * * * *

"I brought a contractor in here yesterday," Anton shook his head. "Grady is going to pay to fix everything. By the time you return for another visit, it will look as good as new."

"He really did a number on my room." She wondered if she'd ever come back and how long it would be before she had an urge to return to Bartock. The house would remind her of Grady and she wasn't sure when she'd be able to face that. She stepped over a broken drawer, moving toward the bathroom. "Thanks for sticking around while I pack up and for offering to take me to the airport."

"We took you from it when you tried to leave so one of us should return you."

"I appreciate it." She walked into the bathroom, bent, and grabbed out her travel bag. She packed up her personal items quickly and then turned to leave, nearly walking into Anton's big body that blocked the door. She gasped, staring up at him. "Sorry. I didn't realize you were right there."

"Grady should have appreciated you but he can't." He paused. "You should get revenge on him for hurting you and I'm more than willing to help you do that. I don't scent fear on you. You realize you're alone with me, don't you?"

"You won't hurt me." She didn't add the "I hope" part that filled her mind. Suspicion was instant as she stared up at the man blocking her way. "Do you and your brothers hate Grady or something? Why are you hinting that I should try to get even with him? You could have let him keep me for a few extra days since I was clueless about when mating ended but you stopped him from doing that by telling me the truth and getting me out of there."

The man frowned. "No. We love him. I don't know what you've heard but it's my mother who is blindly jealous over Grady. She thought she was breeding with our father to give him the next-in-line alpha. She was smug with her place in our father's life. When Grady showed up, she realized she hadn't birthed the first son. It really pissed her off. She's..." he sighed. "I love her but she's messed up."

Her eyebrows arched and she put her hands on her hips. "I see. No. I don't see."

He chuckled and then winked at her. "It's complicated. We love Grady. To us he's just our brother but because of our mother putting defined lines down he sees a difference. He told our father he wouldn't take his rightful place as first-born son because he is part human and he's a bastard. I think he was afraid I'd hate him if he stepped into the role no matter how much I tell him I was actually relieved. Being active alpha is a pain in the ass. I see my father's life and shudder at the thought. Grady is fixed on this idea that he doesn't fit in totally with us but we're fixed on the idea of showing him otherwise. I believe if he faces his human side and accepts it that he'll finally come around and the only way to do that is if he accepts a human as his mate. He wasn't ready to let you go but I pressed the issue when I took you today."

"What was the logic behind that? If you think he's going to come after me, think again. He's probably making a date with Megan as we speak."

He cocked his head, seeming to listen to something, and then chuckled. "I don't think so. Go along with this." He winked. "Trust me," he said more softly. His voice rose. "So I'll mate you. You can stay in town, live here, and forget all about that brother of mine. If he wasn't smart enough to keep you, I sure as hell am."

Mika's mouth dropped open and then she tensed as Anton suddenly wrapped his arm around her, yanking her off her feet, pressing her against his body. She stared wide-eyed at him, too shocked to struggle or protest.

"I can make you forget all about Grady, blondie."

"Let her go," Grady snarled.

Mika's head jerked in the direction of her doorway to see Grady storming into her room. He kicked some of the debris out of his way and kept advancing, fury on his features. Anton turned his head, looking bored, and arched a black eyebrow.

"What are you doing here? Did you come to clean up the mess you made? You can start by taking all the shit out to the dumpster that the contractor had delivered this morning."

"I said, let her go," Grady snarled, reaching for Anton.

Anton put Mika on her feet as swiftly as he'd grabbed her, spinning to face his brother. "You're out of heat. She may carry your scent still, but she's not your mate. She's human and you've done nothing but hurt her. I don't have your hang-ups."

Grady growled. Anton snarled back. Mika was in shock, staring at the brothers, wondering what the hell was going on. Why was Anton trying to make Grady think he wanted her and why was Grady even at her house? The one thing she was sure of was they were about to come to blows.

"Enough!" Mika shoved forward, getting between the men, glaring up at Grady as she pressed her hands on each man's chest to push them apart. "What are you doing here?"

He looked down at her, enraged, his canines extended. "We need to talk."

"Anything that you had to say to her should have already been said when you were locked up together," Anton said softly.

"She wouldn't let me." Grady was furious, glaring over Mika's head at his brother. "She threatened to not touch me and since I was chained to the damn cot I didn't have a choice but to remain silent."

"You wouldn't have needed to be chained down if you hadn't blown it with her so damn badly she tried to run away from you and then, when she was returned to you, you came at her like a vicious animal. You could have hurt her."

Grady snarled, a deep rumble that made his chest vibrate. "You want her, don't you?"

Anton pushed against Mika's hand, straining closer to his brother. "I am going to mate her. You might not know what you had but I know how special it would be to have a woman who wants a man for who he is instead of what he is. I'm sure she likes you despite your damn alpha bloodlines."

"Find your own female."

"I did." Anton grinned. "She's right here and I'm not letting her go like you're about to do."

Grady grabbed Mika, lifting her out of the way, and placed her on her feet behind him. He spun and tried to lung at his brother. Mika threw her arms around his waist.

"No!"

Grady snarled. "You want my brother?"

Chapter Fifteen

Grady took a deep breath. His body was rock hard, he was that tense, and he turned slowly in her arms. Mika had to ease her grip on his waist to allow it and then tried to release him completely when they faced each other but Grady's hands gripped her hips, stopping her from putting distance between them.

Grady's teeth clenched. "You tried to throw me out of your house for suggesting I let Erik touch you so my animal side would smell another man on you and stop clamoring to mate with you. I did that to protect you. I didn't want anyone else to touch you but, even more, I didn't want to risk losing control and possibly kill you. Now you're going to let my brother touch you? You want him as a mate? What happened to you saying you didn't fuck other men?" He snarled and his eye color blackened.

"Grady," Anton grabbed his shoulders. "Let her go before you hurt her. Calm down. I didn't mean it. I was trying to make you jealous and it worked. She had no idea I was going to grab her or say that shit. She doesn't want me, brother."

Jerking his head around, Grady growled at his brother. "Get out and leave us alone." His nose extended and the shape of his eyes changed.

"Not until you calm the hell down."

"I said get out. I want to talk to Mika and no one is going to stop me this time. Leave. I'd never hurt her. I'll calm the hell down when we're alone."

Anton hesitated, looking uncertain. He finally nodded. "I'm not going far though." He shot a meaningful look at Mika. "I'll be in the living room and then I'll drive you to the airport when your talk is over." He inched around them and left the bedroom.

Grady closed his eyes and his body trembled. He seemed to be fighting both sides of his nature as he fought to get control of his body. His breathing finally slowed and his features changed back to human. Black eyes snapped open and they were directed right at Mika.

"I got to thinking after I bit you. I'm sorry I freaked out and left you here alone, babe. I'm always hurting you when I don't mean to, aren't I? I was sure that the mating took and I had to be realistic with myself for the first time in forever, after I calmed down. It's not that I don't want a human mate because I have something against humans or hate that part of me. I don't. I'm afraid to take a human mate."

She inched back and he released her. She cleared her throat since it wanted to close up on her with emotion. He was opening up to her and she wasn't sure where he was going with this but the fact that he'd come to talk to her had to mean something.

"Why are you afraid?"

"My mother was human and she didn't want me, Mika. When she tracked my father down she couldn't get rid of me fast enough. Mated werewolves have chemistry going that keeps them dependent on each other but that usually doesn't happen when we mate with humans. What if you change your mind about wanting to be with me after we have children? What if you leave us the way my mother left me? Your chemistry is different. A werewolf mate would get addicted to my scent and always need me as much as I get addicted to her and need her. You probably won't do that. Mates are for life but you could leave me at any time." He paused. "It would destroy me to lose you or to one day see the kind of pain I've suffered on the faces of our children if you left them as well."

Mika stared at him in shock. She didn't know what to say. Grady didn't have that problem.

"If you were a werewolf you would have known that I had no intention of touching Megan, you wouldn't have run off to leave me in heat, and I wouldn't have had to call my family to help me find you before you were gone. It pissed me off, made me so damn angry that I had been right all along, and I thought you were my mate, abandoning me, which was my worst fear. That's why I was so out of control when I reached my father's house. I didn't mean to scare you but I was going crazy inside. You didn't give me a chance to explain anything but instead just ran from me."

"I thought you were going to kill me and that she was the one you wanted, Grady. She's the woman you had to cancel your plans with. She's the one you originally planned to go through your heat with."

He frowned. "I explained that. I was afraid when I told Megan that I took a mate that she'd try to challenge you. You're human, you'd lose, and I was telling Yon if she tried to do that, I'd kill her to make sure she didn't try to claim me."

"It would have solved all your problems if that were the case and the mating had taken, Grady."

He took a step closer to her, looking scary and angry. "You think I'd let that happen? That I'd allow anyone to hurt you?"

She glanced around her bedroom and then arched an eyebrow at him. "You obviously didn't want to be mated to me and felt pretty damn strongly about it. Look around you."

He did and then his gaze locked on her again. "I never wanted to risk making a human woman the center of my world again because the one human that I did left me on a doorstep and never looked back once. I was seeing that in my future when I did this, terrified that one day you'd abandon me and our children, the pain it would cause us, and I know the grief firsthand."

"I'm not her," Mika said softly. "I could never do that."

"You already tried to leave me but I realize it was my fault." He leaned against an exposed wood stud. "I'm sorry I hurt you and I'm sorry that I was too afraid to show

you how much you mean to me. The closer we got and the more I wanted you, the harder I fought it. I know I was somewhat of an ass at times."

"I understand," she said softly. "Thanks for explaining it to me." She shook her head, a small, sad smile playing at her lips. "And you were a first-rate asshole at times. Don't be modest."

A quick grin flashed on his handsome features. "Don't ever leave me, babe."

The air in her lungs froze and then she pushed it out. She couldn't look away from him. "What?"

He hesitated. "When I calmed down after biting you I came to terms that you were my mate. I didn't hate it, babe. I actually was relieved that I didn't have to fight my feelings anymore. I'm still terrified that I'm going to lose you since we won't bond the way I need us to but I'd rather take the chance than just let you walk away from me." He hesitated. "I'm disappointed the mating didn't take and if my damn brother hadn't stuck his snout in it today, I was going to spend the next few days convincing you that I can make you happy." He paused. "I was going to bite you in bed but it wouldn't have been an accident this time."

Her mouth dropped open and then she slammed it closed. Grady pushed away from the wall, staring down at her, and his hands reached for her. Mika took a step back, tripped on something that hit the back of her heel, but she never fell. Grady had her in his arms in a heartbeat, sweeping her up, holding her tightly to his chest so their mouths were inches apart.

"I'll never cheat on you, never shut you out again, and I'll make it all up to you. Just don't leave me, Mika. I don't want to live without you." He paused. "You're in my blood and I want to be in yours."

She couldn't look away from his sincere gaze as her hands wound around his neck. "I—"

"Give me a chance, babe. I miss you, I miss us, and I want it the way it was."

She chewed on her lip, her gaze locked with his. She loved him.

"I'm not letting you go," he whispered. "I already think of you as my mate."

"But you want a mate with a tail and fur. One you can—"

His mouth came down on hers, cutting off her words. His tongue invaded, sliding across hers, his passion igniting instantly. They had chemistry, she knew that, and so did he. She moaned into his mouth and he pulled back, breathing hard, his gaze locking with hers again.

"I'd rather risk losing you later than watch you walk away for me forever. I love you, babe. I fought it, I was set to not mate you no matter how much my two sides battled but both of them want you. I want you."

"Grady..." She paused, studying his eyes. "I love you too but I don't want to get hurt either."

He smiled. "I might have to hurt you once but after that, no more."

He turned his attention to the floor, stepping over broken furniture and bed stuffing as he carried her down the hallway to the spare bedroom. He kicked the door closed behind them and then eased her down on the bed.

"What do you mean you might have to hurt me once?" She frowned as he backed away.

Grady tore his shirt up over his head, tossing it to the floor while he toed off his boots, just kicking them away. "I'm going to bite you. You didn't feel it last time so I'm confident I can distract you enough this time as well but I'm not going to jerk my teeth away quickly the way I did before. I'm going to make damn sure the mating takes this time. Get undressed."

He was really going to do it. She was stunned a bit but she reached for her shoes, tearing them off one at a time, watching him strip out of his jeans. Her gaze ran down his body, admiring every damn inch of him. He was so damn sexy, so...hers. That thought had her smiling. Grady arched an eyebrow as he stood naked, watching her, waiting for her to finish undressing.

His gaze lowered down his own body and then he softly growled. "Are you happy to see how much I want you?"

Mika lifted her hips as she lay back on the bed, shoving her pants down. Grady gripped the bottom of them and tugged before she could free herself of them. He grabbed her ankles, making her gasp as he dragged her ass to the edge of the bed, and then sank to his knees on the floor.

"I am happy," she admitted.

"If you ever try to leave me I'll chain you to a bed," he warned. "You're mine, Mika."

"Not yet. You haven't bitten me."

"I heard once that if a male bites his mate often enough, that it can create a strong bond like a werewolf mate set has."

Mika sat up, gripping his shoulders, and pulled him down on top of her as her legs lifted to wrap around his hips, holding him there. "I love it when you bite me. Just don't leave me this time or tear up this room. It's the last damn bed I own and I'm not going to sleep on the floor." She smiled to soften her words.

A twinkle sparkled in Grady's eyes, which were turning black in color. He shifted his hips and Mika moaned as his hard shaft rubbed against her clit where she was spread open to him. Grady softly growled, rocking his hips slowly against her.

"I will never leave you again, babe. You're so wet for me already."

She stared into his eyes. "I always want you, Grady."

"You got me." He shifted his hips a little more and then slowly pushed forward.

A loud moan tore from Mika as he penetrated her pussy, stretching her and filling her. Nerve endings burst to life sending ecstasy straight to her brain. Her hands clutched his shoulders, her nails biting into his skin, and Grady groaned.

"I want to take you fast and hard. We'll do slow and leisurely later."

"Bite me." She was sure she wanted to be his mate.

Grady stared into her eyes as he started to move with deep, strong thrusts of his hips. Mika threw back her head, breaking eye contact with him, and moaned his name. Grady lowered his chest against hers, pinning her tightly, and his mouth brushed her shoulder. Hot breath fanned her skin and then sharp teeth bit down hard, pain and pleasure merging as Grady drove her over the edge, a climax making her scream out his name. Grady tensed on her and then he exploded inside her, coming hard enough that she could feel every twitch and all his warmth filling her.

His hips stilled as he kept her pinned, his teeth locked into her, and his tongue licking her skin, held between his canines. It didn't hurt as much as Mika feared but then he'd waited right until she was on the edge to do it. Even now, in the aftermath of mind-blowing sex, she was feeling too good to let the slight, uncomfortable pinch on the top of her shoulder bother her.

Grady gently eased his teeth from her and slid his tongue across the marks he'd left there. Mika grinned.

"You distracted me pretty damn good."

He chuckled. "Good because I'm going to do it again in about five damn minutes when you catch your breath. I'm making sure we're a mate set this time."

Her hands slid to his back, hugging him to her chest. "You get to tell Uncle Omar but make sure he doesn't get near your nuts. I enjoy playing with those and want you to keep them since you mentioned kids."

Grady chuckled, his tongue swiping her skin again where he'd bitten her. "I think we should stay here, hiding out from him, and let my dad tell him. He has to take orders from his pack leader and Dad will just order him to be fine with me taking you for my mate."

She laughed. "Good plan."

Epilogue

Four months later

Mika grinned and shut off the water in the sink. She glanced down and turned around to run across the kitchen to the open archway into the living room. Grady strode into the house and turned to face her just as she launched herself at him. He caught her in his arms and lifted her as she wrapped her arms and legs around his body.

"I missed you."

His hands slid down to her ass. "I love thongs." His hands caressed her bare skin under her T-shirt. "I missed you too."

He walked a few feet to the couch and set her down on the edge, keeping one arm around her and reached to the front of his jeans to unzip them. She leaned closer to him, lifting her chin to reach his throat, and bit him where his T-shirt ended and the curve of his neck began. Her teeth didn't break skin but she nipped him hard. Her tongue darted out to soothe the bite.

Grady growled. "It's like that, huh?"

"It's the hormones you share when you bite me. I can't stand spending hours away from you. I ache to have you touching me and I need you. You've turned me into a damn sex fiend."

"It's the addiction. You need me as much as I need you." He shoved his jeans down.

Mika gripped the bottom of his T-shirt, tearing it up his abdomen as she leaned back a little to make room between their bodies. She hooked her legs around the back of his thighs so when he released her back she didn't fall over on the unsteady perch. She shoved his shirt all the way over his head and just tossed it away.

Her gaze ran over his broad chest and she moved in, lowering her face, thinking he was the sexiest man alive. She licked one of his nipples and moaned when his hands gripped the inside of her thighs, shoving them farther apart. His fingers slid down the front of her thong, gripped it, and with a jerk, it tore away.

"Have I destroyed all of them yet? How many do you own still? When we moved your stuff here were most of those damn boxes filled with hundreds of the damn things?"

She laughed. "You destroy them and I buy new ones. I can't go around without panties all the time."

"Yes you can." He softly growled at her. "They just get in my damn way."

She rubbed against him, frantic with need. "Fuck me now. Please? We'll negotiate what I wear and don't wear later. Right now just take me. Damn shifter-mate hormones.

If this is how horny you are all the time I don't know how you survive this without going nuts. If it were up to me, I'd chain you to our bed. Maybe we should back off on the biting so I don't attack you every time you walk in the door. I can't get enough of you."

He smiled. "You won't be saying that come summer when I go back into heat."

"I look forward to it. I'm so damn horny all the time. Oh God. I won't survive when you pull eight-hour shifts now that the bond formed. I'll have to come down to the bar and drag you upstairs to your office. Maybe you should kick your brother out of your old apartment so we can use the bed there."

"I'm the boss," he went for her neck, licking and biting at her sensitive skin. "I don't have to go in. We can lock the doors and I can run the bar from home since Anton is there now."

"You're the best," she moaned. "Now quit talking and move."

He wiggled his ass side to side. "I'm moving."

Mika gripped his face and stared into his eyes. "If you don't fuck me right now, Grady Harris, I'm going to hurt you."

He chuckled but adjusted his hips, pressing his cock right against where she was aching. He drove into her pussy with one powerful movement, the pleasure instant and intense. Mika threw back her head, shut her eyes, and cried out his name. Grady growled and gripped her hips tighter as he withdrew and drove in again. Their bodies moved together until Mika's vaginal walls started to clamp around his cock, drawing louder moans from both of them. She screamed out his name as pleasure exploded through her. Grady groaned as his hips jerked, filling her with his release.

"Babe," he kissed her. When the kiss ended he pulled back. "Look at me."

Mika loved to stare into his eyes, something she could do for hours. His eyes were dark, a little too narrow now to be totally human, but that didn't frighten her anymore. This was Grady, her mate, the half human, half wolf who made her happier than she'd ever been in her life.

"I love you."

She grinned. "I never get tired of hearing you say that. I love you too."

"Remember when I was worried that you wouldn't be able to keep up with my sex drive?" He lifted her from the top of the couch and kept her locked around his body as he walked slowly toward their remodeled bedroom. "I take it all back."

He dropped her on the bed and kicked off his boots. She laughed as she realized he'd walked with his pants hobbling his ankles. He kicked off his jeans and crawled over her on the bed, caging her with his body over her, on his hands and knees.

Mika suddenly rolled over under him and pushed her ass up against him. "Again."

Hunger and passion lit his eyes. Against her thigh she could feel Grady swelling with desire. She loved how fast a werewolf could recover between bouts of sex. She

pushed her ass up higher and spread her thighs wider, totally exposing herself to his view.

"Wolf," she teased, then made a husky little barking sound.

Grady's eyes narrowed with amusement. "You're going to pay for that one."

"It sounds fun." She wiggled her ass again. "You can just pretend I have a tail."

He cupped her ass and moved onto his knees behind her. His hands slid around her hips, gripping her, as he entered her. "I love you. You're everything I want and need, babe."

"Good. I could stop shaving if you miss having a hairy woman." She laughed.

"You're really asking for it," he laughed. "I love you just the way you are. No fur or tail required."

"I'm partial to both now myself." She winked at him. "Love me more. Move."

Grady chuckled. "Brace yourself, babe. You're getting all the love you can handle."

"It's about damn time," she moaned.

About the Author

I'm a full time "in-house supervisor" (sounds *much* better than plain ol' housewife), mother and writer. I'm addicted to caramel iced coffee, the occasional candy bar (or two) and trying to get at least five hours of sleep at night.

I love to write all kinds of stories. I think the best part about writing is the fact that real life is always uncertain, always tossing things at us that we have no control over, but when you write, you can make sure there's always a happy ending. I *love* that about writing. I love it when I sit down at my computer desk and put on my headphones to listen to loud music to block out the world around me, so I can create worlds in front of me.

Laurann welcomes comments from readers. You can find her website and email address on her [author bio page](#) at www.ellorascave.com.

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