

Noble Romance Publishing



Once in a Blue Moon

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Book Blurb

Tara has always wondered what it would be like to meet a real live werewolf. Little does she know, her wish is about to come true.

Chapter One

"Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf?" Tara read the book title aloud and handed it back to her friend Beth with a laugh. "How can you read this stuff?"

"What?" Beth tucked the romance novel back in her purse and fidgeted a little in her seat. "You know as well as I do this shit is hot."

"Yeah, it is," Tara admitted.

They were the only ones in the theater, which suited Tara just fine. She and Beth liked to talk, but since Beth lived about thirty minutes

outside of town and they'd both been busy lately, they hadn't seen each other in a couple of weeks. They'd arrived for the movie twenty minutes early, so they took the opportunity to catch up a bit.

"Well, I'm not afraid him," Tara said. "I've actually gone in search of him."

"You mean like those television shows where they hunt down supposed monsters?"

They both laughed.

"You've always been drawn to the wrong sort of man," Beth said.

"That's all a matter of perspective. I love a man with a hairy chest. And if he can manage one of those Jack Nicholson growls, then he's speaking my language."

Beth laughed so hard she nearly snorted popcorn.

"I'm serious. I like to tease you about the books you read, but I really find the idea of a wolfman very sexy."

"Me too. Pity they aren't real."

Tara propped her feet on the seat in front of her. "I don't know; they might be."

"Oh, please. Did Tyler tell you that?"

Tyler was a science professor at a local university and he'd written a book about lycanthropy. Not some hocus-pocus, but an actual scientific study. He was also Tara's closest friend besides Beth. Tyler had shared some of his findings with her, and she had to admit, the existence of werewolves seemed to be a real possibility. But she wasn't about to share such crazy thoughts with Beth.

She waved off her friend's comment. "Tyler's got nothing to do with it. Have you ever been drawn to someone, a complete stranger? I'm not talking about just lust here, but instantaneous, complete animal attraction. Have you?"

Beth raised a brow. "Maybe. Go on."

“Well, the first thing you might notice varies according to your own personal taste. But for me, it would be their scent. To breathe their scent is to taste their skin on your tongue. Faint and salty, mingled with the overpowering scent of a man. It makes every hair stand on end and muscles you forgot you had begin to clench. Your breathing becomes faster as your mind leaps at the unspoken possibilities. You flush with arousal and your mouth goes dry. If you have your way, nothing short of an act of God is standing between you and tearing them from their clothes. Yeah, it’s something like that.” Tara paused to take a sip of her drink. “So, ever experience anything along those lines?”

“Fuck me.” Beth took a deep, shaking breath. “What books have *you* been reading? No, I’ve never experienced anything like that. I don’t think stuff like that actually happens.”

The lights dimmed, and Tara lowered her voice to a whisper. “Well, my point was that if it felt like that, then maybe you had encountered a werewolf. You know . . . if they were real and all. That’s what I imagine it would be like.”

Beth laughed. “No wonder you keep looking for The Big Bad Wolf. I wish I had your imagination.”

Tara got paid well for her imagination. More accurately, she got paid for her dirty mind *and* her imagination. She wrote the copy that appeared beside photos in adult magazines. The kind that said things like, “Candy enjoys shaving her pussy and playing with her dildos.” So coming up with such a sexy description of a werewolf encounter was a piece of cake. Tara enjoyed her job, though most people had no idea what she did for a living. Some people said she was an artist, others said she was a writer. Only a few family members and Beth and Tyler knew the truth. She found it very empowering to write something sexy to go along with the photos. But most people in her small town would not feel the same way. They did whatever the hell they wanted, but were quick to

judge others. That was one of the not-so-great things about small town life.

Her job helped to spark her on-going jokes about Beth's reading material. Beth enjoyed a good romance, while Tara preferred straight up sex. On the bed, in the shower, or the floor . . . whatever was convenient. As a matter of fact, she should be getting some new photos any day now. Her editor gave her a general idea what they were looking for and even though they strictly limited her word count, it was unbelievably freeing to speak frankly about sexuality. She was looking forward to the new pictures.

After the movie, she made plans to have lunch with Beth next week then headed home. Just outside of town, she stopped for gas.

The sun shone brightly overhead and big, puffy clouds floated across a clear blue sky.

She headed into the gas station to pay before she pumped. As she entered one side of the double doors, a man exited the other. They brushed shoulders as they passed, and Tara sucked in a breath. She froze and slowly turned her head to watch him walk away.

He had to be new. Or just passing through. She'd never seen him before, and in a town the size of Graceville—population 2,000—she wouldn't have missed a guy like him. Tall, with dark, shoulder-length hair, he looked like he'd been chiseled out of marble. His white t-shirt stretched tightly across his broad shoulders and his biceps flexed as he pulled a key from his pocket.

His deep, chocolate brown eyes instantly captivated her. Her breathing grew shallow and her mouth went dry. For a moment, time stood still as she fell into his eyes. She looked him up and down with a boldness she usually reserved for much more intimate circumstances. Tara liked everything she saw, and longed to see everything she didn't.

Her gaze lingered for much longer than appropriate, particularly at

the bulge in the front of his tight blue jeans. She remembered that old country song about the devil wearing blue jeans and smiled. For her to be so aroused by just one look at him, he had to be bad. But that was alright with her. Tara liked bad guys.

She seemed to have a knack for picking them out of a crowd of perfectly decent men. It's wasn't exactly the "bad boy" image that appealed to her. First of all, she didn't like "boys." But bad *men* were a different story. They seemed to have more confidence. They had a strong, undeniably male air about them. And this guy had that look about him. A look that said he would know how to put her in her place, how to take charge. And when it came to sex that's exactly what Tara wanted. She could think of little else as she looked at him.

He turned, their gazes met, and the briefest of smiles played across his sultry lips. She didn't look away, but continued to appraise him, unashamed of her interest. She glanced down. If the size of his package was any indication the guy was hung like a horse. His jeans were just tight enough that she knew what she was looking at and she wanted to see more. Through the station window she watched him drive away on a Harley Roadster.

"Hey." The man in line behind her didn't seem inclined to hang around while she stared out the window.

"Alright, alright," Tara said, taking some money out to pay for her gas.

"What a luscious piece of meat," the woman behind the counter said. "Must be new in town."

"Yeah, otherwise you'd have already sucked him off," the man behind Tara said.

"Hold onto your dick, Fred. There's no reason to get nasty here," the woman shot back angrily. She handed Tara her receipt. "You have a nice day, hon."

* * * * *

It was storming by nightfall and no matter how much Tara wanted to look for the new pictures in her email, she wasn't risking turning on her computer. Her modem had been hit by lightning twice in the past year. Even with a surge protector! Her computer was her livelihood, so she couldn't take the chance of having it fried. Early November in Florida meant there was still a possibility of hurricanes. But Tara had learned to love storms over the years and the rumbling thunder and flashing lightning excited rather than frightened her.

Lightning flashed across the sky, and Tara sat out some candles in anticipation of the lights going out. They usually did. She lived about five miles outside of town and it seemed like if the wind blew too hard they lost power.

The lights flickered and she decided to go out onto the porch to watch the storm. Tara loved her home. The house—an old bed and breakfast—had belonged to her grandparents. When her grandfather had passed away a few years earlier, her grandmother had been ready to retire, so she'd given the place to Tara. From the back porch, she had an excellent view of a field. Her grandmother still lived just on the other side, through a little patch of woods.

She sat underneath the shelter of the porch and watched a dazzling lightning storm. She felt the thunder rumble deep within her chest only moments before lightning split the sky, like a blinding jagged sword. A cold, crisp wind blew across the field, raising the hairs on her arms with its icy fingers. Jack Frost seemed well on his way, but it was not her nose he was nipping at. Another gust of wind hit her and Tara's nipples hardened in response.

The description she gave Beth earlier of a lycanthrope encounter

came to mind. Maybe she had met the wolfman today at the gas station? Just the thought of the bulge in his pants made her pussy clench. As she watched the lightning climb across the northern sky, she couldn't stop her mind from wandering. With no new erotic images for her to work with, Tara started making up her own.

She walked slowly across the porch. Coming to a stop at the steps, she wriggled her toes over the top riser and debated whether or not to seek shelter. She held her hand out to feel the first cool drops of rain. But it wasn't rain she felt. In her mind, she imagined touching the hot, wet skin of the man she had seen in town.

She had never truly understood what it meant when someone was described as a heartthrob. But the definition had been made very clear to her earlier that afternoon. The stranger made her heart throb. Hell, he made her *pussy* throb, and she imagined what it would feel like to touch him.

As she let her mind go where it would, Tara found herself growing hotter. She wasn't just aroused; her skin felt on fire. Her panties were soaked through, and not from the rain. She was hot, feverish. She thought about his tight-fitting jeans, his bad-boy good looks, and sighed. A devil in blue jeans. Well, if he were the devil he'd feel perfectly at home with her, because he made her hotter than hell.

She stepped a little closer to the edge of the porch and felt the cool rain pelt her face. She should have been cold. After all, it was November and she was wearing only a white t-shirt and a pair of Batman underwear that looked more like boy's shorts than a grown woman's lingerie. But fantasies of the tall, dark stranger did more than keep her warm; they made her blood boil.

She stepped out into the yard and felt the cold, wet grass crunch underneath her bare feet. She lifted her face to the sky and let the storm beat down upon her.

The rain felt like needles against her skin, but she loved the sharp, tingling sensation. As her shirt began to cling to her body, Tara pretended someone was out there, watching her. She looked toward her grandmother's house and pretended The Big Bad Wolf awaited her there. She smiled. At five-foot-four, with fiery red hair, she could definitely pass for a "little red." And what if the wolf wanted to eat her? Well, she admitted, she'd gladly spread her legs and leave him to it!

Her pussy ached with the thought of him, this tall, dark, nameless stranger. She slipped her hand down inside her panties and cupped her mound. She squeezed a little and one finger slipped inside her sopping pussy.

Lightning flashed again, striking something close with a loud *pop*. Tara jerked her hand from beneath her panties and hurried back to the porch.

Chapter Two

Back beneath the shelter of the porch, Tara quickly slipped out of her wet clothes. Although the lightning had forced her from the field, it hadn't forced the fantasies from her mind. She longed for release, and the idea of the tall, handsome stranger watching her from afar made her ache. She dropped her wet clothes on the welcome mat and moved to sit on the top step. No one could see her. Her closest neighbor was her grandmother and the tree line hid her house from view. A thrill ran through her at the thought of indulging in her fantasy, right here in the open.

Tara spread her legs and let the cool rain pour over her heated flesh. She had been busy with work and it had been a while since she'd touched herself. She needed to come. Now.

She opened her legs wider and ran her index and middle fingers over her swollen pussy while she imagined the stranger watching her

from the bushes just beside her house. She turned her pussy in that direction, propping up one leg on the steps so he could get a better view.

The cold wind wiped past her and it excited her even more. Here she was with her legs spread wide. Anyone could see if they drove up. Or if they were watching from the woods. She shoved two fingers into her pussy, not needing time to warm up. Fuck foreplay; she was already there. With her other hand she began to rub her clit. Her movements were frantic in her need. Tara tried to slip another finger inside her aching pussy, and she came before it was halfway in. She growled, writhing and grinding her pussy against her hand, imagining it was the stranger's handsome face.

* * * * *

He watched her go back into her house and he let out a hiss that was meant to be a sigh of relief. It was wrong to have followed her scent, he knew that. He was trying to keep a low profile. Besides, being discovered in his neighbor's bushes might be difficult to explain. But once he was there, he couldn't force himself to leave. There'd she'd been, standing in the rain with her thin cotton shirt clinging to her body the way he wished his hands could.

Logan had been busy unpacking his things when the storm rolled up and knocked out the power. He'd stepped out onto the porch for a breath of fresh air and caught *her* scent—the woman he'd seen in town that day. Even though he meant to hide what he was, it wasn't always easy to deny his beast. And his beast was horny. He tracked her scent to the edge of the woods and stopped to watch her standing in the rain.

Before he knew it she was stripping down to nothing and fingering her pussy on the front steps. His cock was about to rip through his jeans even now. When she had turned deliberately in his direction, he thought

she saw him. His heart did an awkward sort of flip flop and his beast urged him to step forward. Surely she must have known exactly where he was. But when she closed her eyes and threw her head back he realized she wasn't actually watching him. Obviously her mind was someplace else. Good thing he hadn't listened to the beast. Otherwise he would have ravished her. Just the thought of her creamy thighs spread open like that, so unashamed, was almost enough to make him go knock on her door. Instead, he'd return home and take matters into his own hands, so to speak.

* * * * *

Tara dropped her wet clothes onto a rug as she stepped inside the large upstairs bathroom. Thankfully, the power hadn't stayed out for long. Still too worked up to sleep, she decided to take a long, leisurely bath. She poured a liberal amount of soothing, vanilla-scented bubble bath underneath the running water. Tyler knew she loved the stuff, so he bought her a big basket full every Christmas. She was nearly out. Good thing Christmas wasn't far away.

She'd filled her bathroom with a large assortment of candles—all vanilla, but different shapes and sizes. Some were in ornate or even bizarre candle holders, while others sat on bronze plates across the floor. She lit every single one before turning out the lights.

As she slipped into the water she propped her head on a folded towel along the rim of the tub and tried to relax. Steam rose from her cold skin. The warm water eased the tension from her stiff muscles, but Tara was still having one hell of a time putting the stranger out of her thoughts. When she closed her eyes she was not confronted with the image of what she had seen that day, but everything underneath his clothes that she had not.

Tara began to visualize what to expect if she should be fortunate enough to make him and those tight jeans part company. Piece by piece, she'd remove his clothing. His skin would be nicely bronzed, though not from spending much time in the sun. In her imagination, he had one of those naturally golden skin tones . . . and no tan lines. Her hands became his hands as they explored her body underneath the bubbles, taking things much slower where she had been so frantic before. The more clearly she visualized the length of his rock hard shaft, the less she was aware of her surroundings. She pictured his strong hands as they caressed her breasts, lingering over one taut nipple. She imagined his fingers as they trailed along her inner thigh and plunged into her pussy. She remembered looking at his hand when he took out his keys. He had long fingers. As she caressed herself, Tara wondered how far up into her pussy they would reach. Just the thought of him touching her that way nearly sent her over the edge. She stroked her clit and came almost immediately.

Finally totally and completely sated, Tara climbed from the tub, dried off and climbed into bed naked. In the wee hours of the morning she let sleep finally claim her, only to be tormented with dreams of tight fitting jeans.

* * * * *

Early the next morning Logan prepared for his first day at work. He'd only accepted the position three weeks ago. The house he'd purchased months before, but waited until he had a job lined up to move. When he'd started looking for a place in Graceville and a job online he was disappointed. Not much real estate and even fewer job opportunities. As soon as the university made him an offer, he took the first job he was qualified for, teaching sociology. He also took the first

piece of real estate that wasn't located inside the city limits.

Logan had been corresponding with a local scientist named Tyler for a few years now through the Internet. Tyler had done the most extensive research on lycanthropes Logan had ever seen. Maybe he could help.

It had taken a couple years of hard work and patience, to find a job *and* a home close to the scientist, but he felt it would prove to be time well spent.

As if his mind wasn't in enough turmoil, he had his body to deal with now as well. Watching the redhead last night had done things to him he couldn't put into words. Sure, seeing her naked, touching herself, had turned him on, but it was more than that. Maybe it was his beast that was confusing him. Perhaps his urgent need to bury himself in her flesh was nothing more than his animal instinct. But he doubted the attraction was that simple.

He buckled his belt and ran a hand through his dark hair for about the fifth time. Even though he had become friends with Tyler, he had never actually met him. Not in person, anyway. They had spoken on the phone a few times, but mostly they'd communicated through email. Tyler and his research might have some of the answers Logan was looking for.

Truthfully, he was more nervous about meeting his new friend than he was about starting his new job. Either way, it was time to face the music. He might even wear a tie for the occasion.

* * * * *

Several days passed with no more sightings of the tall, dark-haired stranger. Tara began to think he'd just been passing through, after all.

Needing a distraction, she called Beth and arranged to meet for

lunch.

“Can you stop by the library for me?” Beth asked. “There are a few books I want and the library here doesn’t carry them.”

“Sure.” Tara frequently picked up books for her friend, since her library had a larger selection than Beth’s. “Why don’t we meet at the diner at twelve-thirty? That’ll give me time to find your books.”

They agreed to meet later that day, and Tara got ready and headed into town. She parked on the street, pulled out the list of books she’d made and headed into the library.

The sun was in her eyes and she ran straight into him. As soon as her hands touched his chest Tara swore her heart stopped. Even through his shirt she could feel the heat of his body burning into her palms.

Who needed to check out romance novels with a view like this? He was a fantasy come to life. She looked down the length of him and realized he wore black leather pants. It was almost too much to take. Shinning armor had never been her thing; she was much more of a leather kind of girl. Her fantasies from a few days popped into her mind, but Tara wasn’t embarrassed. The heat in her cheeks came more from arousal than any passing guilt. She felt the muscles down low in her stomach clench and realized she hadn’t apologized for running into him. She just stood there, panting like a marathon runner.

“Excuse me.” Her voice was breathy.

“Of course.”

His rough, baritone voice sent chills down her spine. He smiled, and her heart leapt. His teeth sparkled brilliantly. Tara realized she was licking her lips in anticipation of finding out what he tasted like. Something told her Baskin Robbins didn’t sell this flavor.

She lowered her hands as well as her eyes, reluctant to break the contact.

“I’m sorry,” she said. “I must have left my manners at home today.

I'm Tara."

She extended her hand in greeting. He took her hand between both of his and warmth spread through her body. It was like standing beside a fire. To her surprise he lifted her hand toward his face. He ran his nose up and over her wrist without quite touching the skin. To smell her perfume? Tara wasn't sure, but she liked it. Then he gently pressed his lips against the back of her hand and she swallowed back a moan. Seeing his lips pressed against her skin had her imagining all sorts of erotic images.

"My name is Logan. It's nice to meet you. Do you live around here? I hope you don't mind me asking." Logan added the last quickly. He knew she did, but he couldn't let on.

"Yes, as a matter of fact I do. What about you?"

"I'm new in town." He paused, gathering his thoughts. No way he wanted to let her go again. He had to figure out away to get to know her better. "This might sound forward, but I wonder . . . how would you feel about showing me around? I mean, if it's not an imposition, or if your time is not otherwise spoken for?"

"I'm not spoken for, but what exactly did you have in mind?"

"Whatever you're up for. We can take my bike, ride around; you can show me the sights. How does Friday sound?"

He flashed her another dazzling smile and Tara's breath caught. She swallowed hard and nodded. "Friday sounds fine."

"Should I call later to set a time?"

Tara thought that sounded like a great idea, but she didn't have a piece of paper to write her number down. All she had was the small note with Beth's book list and she couldn't give him that. "Let me go ask for a pen at the desk."

“I’ve got a pen,” Logan offered. “And you can write it on my hand.”

He held out his palm and Tara tried not to tremble while she did as he suggested. As she leaned into him his cologne wafted toward her. Damn, he smelled good. What was that fragrance? She tried not to look obvious as she took a deep breath. Her clit gave a little jump when she breathed deeper of his scent. Wow. Cologne had never done that to her before. It was all she could do to hold the pen steady. No one had ever asked her to write her number on their hand before. It was sexy as hell.

His hands were soft, but not overly so. She turned him slightly into the light in order to see and as she did, she brushed her fingers lightly across his fingertips. He had calluses. She liked that. A man whose hands were too soft could never be trusted in her opinion, because soft hands meant he wasn’t used to work and didn’t plan to do any.

“Give me a call,” she said, trying not to sound nervous.

He took the pen back with a smile and winked as he said, “I’ll do that.”

She turned to watch him leave, enjoying the sound of his leather pants creaking with every long-legged stride.

“Damn.”

Tara turned toward the woman behind the counter and nodded her agreement. “Tell me about it. How have you been, Luci?”

“Better after seeing that.” The older woman laughed. “And look at you, giving out your number and all.”

Tara laughed. “Stop teasing me. Here’s Beth’s latest list. Can you tell me if any of them are in?”

“Sure thing.”

Luci had worked at the library for as long as Tara could remember and over the years they had become friends. While Luci looked up the book titles on the computer Tara leaned against the counter and tried to act casual. After touching Logan, however briefly, it felt like her insides

were on fire.

“Do you know anything about him?” she asked.

“The hunk that just left?”

“Yeah, that one.”

Luci shrugged. “Sure. He teaches sociology at the university.”

Hmm. Interesting. Maybe her bad guy wasn’t so bad after all. She couldn’t wait to smack Tyler for not telling her about him.

* * * * *

“His name is Logan,” Tara announced as she sat a stack of books on the table in front of Beth.

“Who?”

“This guy I saw at the gas station the other day. I ran into him this morning at the library.”

“You picked up a man at the library?” Beth laughed. “Somehow I can’t see you being interested in a bookworm.”

“I like you, don’t I?” Tara sank into a chair. “Besides, he’s not a bookworm. Not really, anyway.”

She proceeded to tell Beth all about Logan, and her encounter with him at the library. Beth listened attentively, seeming to enjoy Tara’s description of Logan in his leather pants almost as much as Tara enjoyed talking about it.

“I’ve got a date,” she said as she finished her story. She sat back, fingering the menu while she waited for her friend’s reaction.

Beth slanted her an evil smile. “I’ll just *bet* you’re going to show him around.”

“Come on, I’m not a total slut. I’m just looking forward to spending some time with him. I mean, if he’s a teacher, then he has a brain to go along with his good looks. Besides, going out with someone with a job

will be a new experience for me.”

“This is true.”

“Ha! Nice. So you agree I’ve previously attracted nothing but losers,” Tara said. “Well, I’m willing to bet this one is different. He has to be. Who knows, maybe he’s that perfect mixture of bad-boy and responsible adult I’ve always been looking for.”

“We’ll see.” Beth’s tone was noncommittal. “Let’s order. I’m starved. And if Logan is half the man you say he is, you need to eat to keep up your strength.”

Tara laughed and picked up her menu. “God,” she murmured, “I certainly hope so.”

Chapter Three

Even with the cold November wind in his face, her scent still haunted him. He had come to this town for research purposes and here he was letting a local woman get underneath his skin. And no matter how much he wanted to deny it, that’s exactly what she’d done. He wanted her even before her little display in the rain the other night. But after that he made up his mind to have her. There was something about Tara he simply could not resist. For the first time since his change, Logan and his beast were in complete agreement.

* * * * *

Over the next few days Tara tried to think of something else. But her mind would not rest and unfortunately neither did she. The photos she had been expecting finally arrived by email. She read her editor’s guidelines carefully and planned to print them out later. Sometimes she could come up with a good idea while looking at them on the computer

screen, but she normally found it easier to lay the pictures out and look at them for a while that way. She would come and go throughout the house and pass them on the coffee table. Normally, by the third or fourth time she looked at them, she had the words she needed to describe what was going on in the picture. This time she had been given shots of a three-way—two men and one woman. The scenery (what little there was) looked sort of gothic, like a castle or old manor house. In the first couple of shots, the men wore armor. Knights? Tara grinned. She would have fun with this one.

Her dreams since seeing Logan for the second time had been a series of delicious torments, filled with images of a man she barely knew, but could now give a name. She'd tried to call Tyler to ask about him, but he was either avoiding her calls or working on a new lecture. Knowing him, he forgot to turn on his phone.

Logan called on Wednesday to set a time for their tour/date. Tara was making coffee that morning when the phone rang. She jumped and nearly spilled her creamer before picking up the receiver.

"Hello?" She answered, unable to keep the irritation out of her voice.

"Tara? This is Logan." He paused then asked, "Is everything alright?"

"Fine. I just almost spilled something. I'm a little clumsy before I have my coffee. And grouchy." She laughed nervously, hoping she hadn't sounded rude.

"That's alright, so am I. But I've been up for a few hours already. Sounds like I beat you to the coffee this morning." He laughed and the sound sent shivers down her spine. "So, about Friday. How does four o'clock sound?"

"Good. That should give us plenty of time for a tour."

"How do you feel about motorcycles?"

“Are you kidding? Half of my wardrobe is leather.”

He laughed a bit louder at her response and she wondered if admitting how much leather she owned was a bad thing. As a matter of fact, his laugh sounded positively wicked.

“Does that mean you’re cool with taking the bike?”

“Yes. A tour by motorcycle sounds like fun.” Tara gave him directions to her house.

“Really?” Logan said when she told him her address. “I think I’m your new neighbor.”

Her heart leapt into her throat and her pussy fluttered at the thought of him being so close. Then another thought crossed her mind. He really *could* have been watching her through the bushes the other night, just like she imagined. Holy shit. To think he was that close while she was fingering herself on the front step. The idea turned her on something fierce.

“Really?” She tried to sound calm, but her voice quivered. She cleared her throat quickly and made some comment about allergies, lest he think she was an overeager dimwit. “Did you buy the old MacIntyre place then?”

“Yeah. It needs some work, but I think it’s got a lot of potential.”

“Well, that would make you just through the woods.” She paused, unsure of what to say next and not wanting all of her excitement to show.

“That’s right.” His voice had lowered considerably, and Tara shivered with desire.

Again, she cleared her throat. “Well, I guess I’ll see you Friday at four,” she said.

“Friday at four,” he repeated. “I’m looking forward to it.”

Tara hung up the phone and put a hand to her chest. “Oh, my God.” If his voice over the phone could get her worked up like this, what

would she do on Friday? Ah, the things she would do to that man if she ever got the chance. She had never reacted quite this way before. She'd always been confident with men, but this was different. She felt like she was in heat. She knew what she liked when she saw it, but she'd never seen anything like Logan.

She was sitting at the kitchen table, working on her second cup of coffee when the doorbell rang. No one visited her this early except Beth. Curious, she made her way through the mudroom to the back door.

"Logan," she said, opening the door. "This is a surprise."

She fought to maintain eye contact and not stare at his muscular thighs covered by tight-fitting, faded jeans. He wore a black t-shirt that fit him like a second skin, revealing every muscle of his gorgeous body. His shoulder-length hair had been tossed about by the wind and it gave him a wild, just-rolled out-of-bed sort of appeal.

She, on the other hand, probably looked like an eighties reject. Opting for comfort over fashion, she'd donned a pair of dark gray tights and an oversized purple sweater that morning. Now she wished she'd chosen something a little sexier. But Logan didn't seem to notice. As a matter of fact, he looked like he was enjoying what he saw. The wind whipped past him and blew a few strands of hair across her face.

He moved before she could and brushed the hair back, tucking it behind one ear.

"Sorry to drop by unannounced," he said, his rough voice making the hairs rise on her arms. "I was hoping to get some sugar." He smiled broadly and held up his coffee cup. The words "I do fieldwork" were printed in red letters across the front.

Tara laughed softly. "Sure, come in."

Logan stepped inside and she closed the door behind him.

"Fieldwork?"

"Oh," he said, looking at the cup. "I don't think I've told you what I

do for a living. I'm a sociology professor."

"A professor?" she asked, smiling.

"A doctor, as a matter of fact." Logan raised one eyebrow and her smile widened. "Dr. Logan Xavier, at your service."

"Ooo, that sounds important," she teased.

"I like to think so."

"The kitchen is through here, follow me."

Tara led him into the kitchen but stopped short just inside the doorway. She'd totally forgotten her work, and the highly erotic photos were where she'd left them, spread all over her kitchen table. She dared a glance at Logan to find him staring, wide-eyed at the pictures.

Shit. Might as well try to explain. Not many people understood what she did for a living. Come to think of it, not many people knew. He would either understand or think she was a raging pervert. Either way, she had to say something.

"This is what I do for a living," she said. Logan's gaze leapt from the pictures to meet hers and she elaborated. "I'm not a porn star or anything." She laughed nervously at her lame explanation. "Look, this is all coming out wrong. I work for adult magazines. Several of them. I write the copy that appears beside photo like these." She gestured toward the table.

Logan nodded and started looking through the pictures. He moved them around. "Hmm. I may be familiar with some of your work."

"I normally don't have them lying around like this. It's just that I was working and—"

"And you weren't expecting anyone, I understand. Don't worry, I'm not a prude and I'm not easily offended."

She breathed a sigh of relief. "Good. I was afraid you were going to think I was a raging pervert and run screaming."

"Now why would I run from a perfectly good pervert?"

They both laughed and Tara turned around to get the sugar out of the cabinet while Logan moved to lean against the counter. He crossed his arms over his chest. His biceps flexed and the muscles of his well-toned forearms became even more noticeable. Tara swallowed hard and focused her attention on the sugar bowl on the bottom shelf of the cabinet.

“So, what do you teach, besides basic sociology?”

“Human sexuality.”

She paused and turned back to him.

“And you do fieldwork, huh?”

“A friend of mine got me the cup as a gag.”

He shrugged, but Tara wasn’t fooled by his attempt to act casual.

“Do you really need any sugar?” she asked softly.

“Not the kind that’s in that jar.”

Before she could react he’d moved around the counter. His arms wrapped around her waist and Tara melted against him. Despite her initial shock, she couldn’t hide her reaction. His lips were soft, yet insistent as they pressed against hers. She leaned into him and could feel his erection against the soft flesh of her belly. Tara opened her mouth and Logan growled as he deepened the kiss. The sound vibrated along her skin and Tara was instantly wet with anticipation.

“I’m sorry,” he said, pulling back with a gasp. “I don’t normally act this way. I don’t want you to get the wrong idea about me.”

“It’s alright,” Tara answered breathlessly. She didn’t normally act this way either. “Would you like to stay for breakfast?”

Breakfast? Logan glanced at the table again and saw her notes scribbled down beside one photo. *Saucy wench takes two cocks at once*. Food was the last thing on his mind right now.

“Maybe later,” he said and pulled her back into his arms.

Tara met him halfway. She ran her hands up underneath his shirt and pressed her palms flat against his heated flesh.

“You’re so warm,” she breathed against his lips.

Logan growled again and it almost didn’t sound human. He had to be careful. He couldn’t afford to lose control. But he wanted her so much. She was so soft and willing, pressed against him. And she smelled so good. He buried his face in her hair and breathed in her scent as he pulled up her sweater. He trailed kisses down her throat, ran his face across the delicate skin of her shoulder, trying to commit her scent to memory.

Tara’s knees grew weak and her pussy throbbed by the time he ran his hand down inside the front of her tights. She was glad she hadn’t bothered wearing panties. They would have only been in the way. He moved to cup her pussy with his hand and she gasped.

“Yes, Logan. Touch me.”

“Tell me what you want.”

She met his dark eyes as she said, “I want you to put your fingers inside my pussy.”

He ran one finger up and down, barely parting her lips. Tara wasn’t sure what had come over her. Who was this wild woman? She had never behaved so wantonly before. She writhed against his hand and Logan slipped one finger inside her heat. He nibbled at her bottom lip while he started to finger her slowly.

“You’re so tight,” he whispered.

Logan remembered how she had touched herself the other night. He closed his eyes and he could see her fingers moving in and out of her swollen pussy. He had wanted to do the same and now he indulged that fantasy.

She was shaved bare except for a small strip of hair at the top of her pubis. He rubbed her smooth flesh as he said, "Let me taste you."

Tara nodded and took a step back. Logan removed her tights and pushed her sweater up around her hips as he sat her on the counter. In an instant he had his face buried between her thighs. Tara cried out and put a hand against the back of his head. She ran her fingers through his dark hair as his mouth found her clit. His tongue moved with maddening speed and when he slipped his finger back in her pussy she came.

Her muscles spasmed around his finger and Logan continued to lick her clit while her juices coated his face. She held him close, grinding her pussy against him like she had imagined doing in the rain. He let out a soft moan and the sound vibrated against her skin.

As soon as he pulled back Tara slid off the counter and began to unbutton his pants. Unsteady on her feet, she turned him into the counter and leaned against his body for support. She pulled the zipper down and his cock sprung free. Damn. He had to be at least twelve inches long and he looked very wide.

"Oh, my God," she panted.

His size intimidated her, but didn't stop her from what she had planned. She pulled the sweater over her head and tossed it onto the floor before kneeling in front of him.

Logan watched as she took the tip of his dick into her mouth. Her lips strained against his girth and he smiled, imagining her pussy would do the same. She ran her tongue up and down his length and his beast cried out for release. He had to have her, *now*. The beast would wait no more. It cried out with the primal need to penetrate the soft folds of her flesh.

"Enough," he said hoarsely. He fought back the beast for a moment

and remembered something very important. “Fuck, I don’t have a condom. For what it’s worth, I’m clean.”

“Me too, and I’m on the pill.”

Werewolves couldn’t contract human diseases anyway, so that was all he needed to know.

Logan helped her to her feet before removing his shirt and sitting her back on the counter. He spread her legs wide and placed his cock at the edge of her opening. He moved back and forth, spreading her lips wide without pressing forward.

Tara gasped. He looked even better without his shirt than she had imagined. She ran her hands over the planes of his ridged abs before settling her hands on his cock. She stroked him a few times and a thrill ran through her. She had never had anyone so big.

He could hear her heart beating faster and sensed her fear, though he suspected it was mixed with more than a little excitement.

“I won’t hurt you.”

With those words he began to move slowly forward, stretching the muscles of her pussy to the limit. He was only halfway inside and Tara was flushed with the effort it took to take this much of him. He began to move slowly in and out, gradually working more of himself into her each time until at last he was there. Buried deep inside her sweet pussy.

Tara began to move against him and Logan helped her wrap her legs around his hips, holding her thighs in place.

“Yes, fuck me back.”

She bucked against him, losing herself to the rhythm until she felt another orgasm building within her. Tension flowed up and over her muscles, tensing her ass, her thighs. Suddenly he spread her legs wide and drove into her hard. Tara came with a loud scream as he pumped in

and out of her. She looked between their bodies, saw how wide he was stretching her, and her orgasm intensified.

“Fuck me hard.” She urged him breathlessly.

She rested her head against his chest for a better view and continued to watch as he followed her instructions. Logan’s labored breathing beside her ear let her know he wasn’t far from coming. She watched him pump in and out of her until his body went stiff and he growled in her ear as he came inside of her.

Chapter Four

Logan took a step back and helped Tara to stand. Her long red hair fell over one shoulder and he couldn’t resist the urge to tuck it behind her ear again.

“I don’t usually—” She began.

“Neither do I.” Logan smiled in an attempt to change the mood. He didn’t want her to feel guilty for what had just happened; he certainly didn’t. “Does the offer of breakfast still stand? I’m starving.”

Tara laughed and the awkward moment passed. “Sure. Do you have any preference of breakfast food?”

“Bacon?”

“Sounds good to me.” Tara bent to pick up her clothes, then turned back to face him. “Do you still need some sugar?”

The suggestiveness of her words brought a wicked smile to his lips. “Not really,” he admitted. “I hope my lame excuse to come over doesn’t offend you.”

Tara smiled and shook her head. She thought his lame excuse was pretty sexy. No one had ever made up a reason to see her before, at least not to her knowledge. They both got dressed again and Tara excused

herself to go freshen up before she started cooking. When she walked back into the kitchen she found Logan cleaning the counter with a disinfectant spray and she laughed.

“I was going to do that.”

“I hope you don’t mind,” Logan said. “I found this under the counter and thought I’d help.”

Tara cleared away the scattered pictures and started taking ingredients out of the fridge. She had been craving French toast ever since she got up that morning. Besides, it would go good with bacon.

As Logan watched her he battled his conflicting emotions. He felt so connected to her. He hadn’t planned to get involved with anyone when he moved here, especially with the changes he was experiencing. But he wanted to be with her. If there was one thing he had learned since his change it was that the beast made things certain. If you wanted something, there was no doubt. His rational mind tried to argue about the complications this would cause, but his beast was convinced. And the beast usually won.

“Are you seeing anyone?” he asked, moving to stand beside her.

“That’s probably a stupid question to ask after”

“No, I’m not seeing anyone.”

Logan smiled down at her and Tara’s heart did a painful flip-flop. “That’s good,” he said. “Look, I know we just met . . . but I’d really like to get to know you. More than just a tour.”

“I thought we just did that.”

“You know what I mean.”

“You don’t beat around the bush, do you?”

He shrugged. “Not usually, but it’s a hell of a form of birth control.”

Tara laughed so hard her eyes watered. “Fine,” she said, turning

back to the bacon. “So you’re saying that after seeing me twice—”

“Three times,” he said.

“Okay. After seeing me three times you want to date me?”

Logan took a step closer and placed his hand against the small of her back. The soft contact thrilled her in a way she had never experienced before.

“How long do you normally take to get to know someone before you start dating?” he asked softly. His deep rumbling voice would be her undoing.

“I don’t know . . . a couple of weeks at least.”

“And has that proved overly successful in the past?”

“No.”

Logan took a deep breath and plunged forward. “Then why not try me? I guarantee you’ve never met anyone like me before.” That was an understatement. He knew at some point he would have to come clean about everything. But in the meantime he planned to enjoy being with Tara. No use borrowing trouble from tomorrow. Today had enough of its own.

Tara took a good look at him and thought carefully about her response. He really didn’t waste time. Things were moving quickly, but that didn’t feel wrong to her. She was comfortable with Logan. She took in his appearance once more and sighed. His dark hair was tousled, both from the wind outside and their encounter in the kitchen. His pouty lips looked fuller after their passionate kisses and his eyes seemed to have darkened. He was gorgeous. Tara almost laughed as she remembered describing to Beth how she thought it would feel to meet a werewolf. Hell, that was what it felt like being near Logan. He made her heart beat faster and her mouth go dry. He also made her pussy ache and just looking at

him like this made her wet all over again. How could she refuse?

“Alright.”

Logan reached over and took the fork out of her hand. He started stirring the mixture for the French toast.

“Now that that’s settled, at least let me help you cook.”

Once everything was on the stove Tara asked, “So, what brings you here? To this town, I mean?”

“It’s a long story really. You want the abridged version?”

Tara shrugged. “Cliff notes are alright with me.”

“Well, my mom is originally from a small town not too far from here. Have you ever heard of Two Egg?”

“Holy shit. That is a small town.”

“Well, she met my dad, who was visiting from Texas. They got married and moved to Los Angeles. I was fifteen when they divorced. I went to live with my dad in Texas and mom moved back around here. I had wanted to move closer to mom for a while. It took me almost two years to find a job close by. I moved in a few weeks ago.”

It was all true. He just left the part out about being attacked by a werewolf while he was in Texas. He also left out his business here with Tyler.

“What about you?” he asked. “Have you always lived here?”

“Off and on. I moved away after high school. I almost got married once.”

“What made you leave?”

“I was fucking stupid.”

He raised a brow at her response and she explained. “Literally, my boyfriend was stupid and I moved because of him. We lived together up in New England for a while. It was beautiful there, but it never felt like home. So, a few years ago I came back here.”

Logan reached for another fork to turn the bacon and drew back

with a hiss.

“Are you okay?” Tara asked.

“Grazed my knuckle on a knife.” He lied. Who would have guessed she had some real silverware mixed in with the stainless steel? He carefully selected another fork, one that clearly said “Made in Taiwan” on the back.

After breakfast Logan had to leave for work. He had a class to teach at noon, but promised to call later. Alone once again, Tara wasn’t sure what to think. She felt happy, *really* happy, and that surprised her. The last time she felt this good about something . . . come to think of it, she’d never felt this good about anything before. It was completely unprecedented. It was also completely unexplainable.

There was nothing particularly special about her. She had long, straight red hair, hazel eyes and a less-than-thin set of hips. Her breasts weren’t particularly large or voluptuous. In fact, other than her B-cup breasts and full thighs, she really didn’t have any curves. Tara couldn’t imagine what a hunk like Logan saw in her, but she sure as hell wasn’t going to try to talk him out of it.

* * * * *

Friday came and Tara found herself trembling with excitement. She’d finished her work and emailed it off early that morning. Now she had nothing to do but focus on giving Logan a proper tour. Beth came by for a visit at noon and dropped off the books she’d already finished reading. Tara took the opportunity to fill her in on what had been happening.

“Don’t complain,” Beth said. “You’re having sex and I’m not. So I’m really not in a position to offer any advice.” She laughed. “Besides, it sounds to me like you’ve finally found your wolfman. Goddamn he

sounds sexy. Did you really go at it right there on the kitchen counter?"

Tara blushed from the memory. "Oh yeah."

"Judging by the look on your face it was the best sex you've ever had. Like I said, don't complain. So what if he likes to move fast? None of us are getting any younger. What's wrong with fast?"

"I'm twenty-six, Beth. Hardly a spinster."

"No, I suppose that's me." Beth ran a hand through her short brown hair and rose to leave.

"Thirty-one isn't old either," Tara said. "So don't give me that whole, 'I'll never find anyone I'm compatible with' speech. I've told you a million times . . . you should let me fix you up with Tyler."

Beth snorted. "Do I look like a science project to you?"

"No, but he told me he likes to play doctor."

Beth agreed to give it some thought and after showing her friend to the door, Tara went back upstairs to get ready. She selected a pair of black leather pants and a white t-shirt from the closet and quickly dressed. After spending so much time talking to Beth she was running behind. She had just enough time to zip her pants and lace up her boots before she heard Logan's bike coming up the driveway. She pulled on a matching jacket and stepped onto the porch.

She smiled automatically when she saw him. They looked like they had dressed to match. Black leather pants hugged his muscular thighs in ways that made Tara's mouth water. A calf-length leather jacket opened to reveal his magnificent body as he swung one long leg over the side of the bike. The only difference between their attire was that he wore a black shirt, while she'd chosen white.

Logan smiled when he saw her and the chocolate brown of his eyes seemed to darken.

"I would have rung the doorbell," he said, walking up the sidewalk.

As usual, his rough, sexy voice made her shiver. "That's alright. I

heard you drive up.”

“I see you weren’t kidding about the leather.” He teased.

Logan walked back to the bike, remounted and patted the seat behind him. Tara moved forward slowly in an effort to contain her excitement. A motorcycle between her thighs and a hard-bodied hunk to press up against. God, talk about a dream come true.

She straddled the bike, squeezing him with her thighs. Logan took her hands and placed them around his waist.

“Hold on tight,” he said. “And tell me where to start.”

The tour was almost as much fun as straddling Logan all afternoon. The leaves were turning and with every gust of wind, a few fell to earth. Fall had always been her favorite time of year. Pumpkins were still visible in nearby fields, leftover crops from Halloween, but still too early to be picked for Thanksgiving.

She showed him the small school she had attended and the old house where her parents still lived. They took the shortcut across the back of her grandmother’s property and through the woods. Tara ran her hands up underneath his shirt and he flinched.

“Are you okay?” She spoke into his ear to be heard above the bike’s roar. He looked fine, but his skin felt fiery hot and she wondered if he had a fever.

“Fine.” He turned to smile back over his shoulder. “Your hands are just cold, that’s all.”

“Are you sure? You feel like you’ve got a fever.”

Logan froze for a moment and hoped she didn’t notice his hesitation. Werewolves had an extremely fast metabolism and because of this his temperature always ran a bit high. The closer it was to the full moon, the hotter he got.

“I’m fine,” he said again, and hoped she would drop the subject.

Tara leaned forward and pressed her lips against the side of his throat. She simply could not keep her hands off of him. When she moved she caught his scent again and fought the desire to lick him, just to see if he tasted as good as he smelled. His skin was hot beneath her lips. She felt him relax against her. She could feel his pulse. Tara pressed her face against the side of his neck and nuzzled his ear. He growled low and deep, a sound just barely human and it turned her on even more.

Logan brought the bike to a stop in front of the house and stepped off before turning to reach for her. Tara remained seated and turned to face him. She took a moment to just look at him. He seemed completely at ease with whatever she wanted to do and he didn't say a word when she pulled up his shirt. She ran her hands up over his chest and down the fine line of hair that trailed over his abs and disappeared into the top of his leather pants. She leaned forward and brushed her face over the hair like a cat, savoring the feel of his hot flesh against hers.

"What are you wearing?" she asked, her voice growing hoarse with desire. "You always smell so good."

"Maybe it's just pheromones."

Tara thought he was teasing her and she laughed as she pressed her lips against his stomach.

Logan didn't bother to tell her he wasn't joking. Werewolf pheromones were nothing to be trifled with, especially those of an alpha male. Some speculated females were powerless to fight the attraction caused by the male's particular scent, but even if that were true he would never take advantage. Logan wanted a woman who was eager to please him. But they also needed to be willing. He felt Tara was completely in control of her actions. When she ran her hand across the front of his pants, he sure as hell hoped he was right.

Thunder rumbled overhead and they both paused to look up.

Storm clouds had gathered seemingly out of nowhere.

Tara glanced up into Logan's eyes and her pussy clenched as she remembered fantasizing about him as she'd fingered herself on the porch a few days earlier. "Spend the night with me, Logan."

"Are you sure you want me to stay all night?"

"There are things I want to do to you that cannot be accomplished in a few hours."

Damn. Logan cleared his throat. No one had ever said anything like that to him before. He didn't need to be asked twice.

They walked onto the porch and Tara suddenly stopped. She took off her jacket and tossed it onto a wicker chair. Then she turned to Logan and ran her hands up and over his shoulders as she pulled his jacket down his arms. He slipped out of it easily and tossed it onto the chair, following her lead.

Tara placed her hand on his chest, palm flat. She pushed gently and Logan moved back until he stood on the first step. Thunder rumbled again and a soft shushing sound could be heard coming through the trees. Rain.

"I hope you don't mind getting a little wet," Tara said.

Logan only smiled in response. Tara watched as the rain pattered against his wet shirt, her mouth growing dry as the cloth clung to every ridge and hard muscled plane of his body. She stood on tiptoe, urging his lips toward hers. His arms moved around her, pulling her tight against him. Tara kissed him with a hunger like she'd never felt before.

Her nipples grew taut. His unusually high body heat burned through both their shirts. She was suddenly impatient to see him naked again. Tara pulled at the hem of his shirt and Logan helped her to remove it. She then quickly removed her own shirt and tossed it onto the porch behind them.

“Do you want to go inside?” he asked.

“No, I want it here. Now.”

Chapter Five

The storm raged as Logan unclasped her bra and took one hard nipple into his mouth. It felt like there was a nerve connecting her nipple right to the center of her pussy. Tara moaned and arched against him. Logan wrapped one arm around her while bringing his free hand up to toy with her other nipple.

He licked and sucked the rain from her body and now it was her turn to growl. She'd had good sex before, but this went so far beyond anything she'd ever experienced. She wanted to be a part of him. She wanted him inside of her with an urgency she could not describe.

She started unbuttoning his pants and Logan lifted his head. “I thought you wanted to take your time?”

“We've got all night to take our time. I need you now. I need to feel you inside of me.” She began to peel the wet leather down his legs. “I want you to fuck me right here on the top step.”

Logan kicked off his boots and finished removing his pants while Tara removed the rest of her clothes. When she stood naked before him, Logan took a moment to admire her. She was perfect. Long auburn hair that reached halfway down her back . . . firm, high breasts. And those thighs . . . so lush, so firm. He wanted to take a bite out of them. But the desire he saw in her eyes was the sexiest thing of all. No woman had ever looked at him quite the same way. Sure he'd had others who wanted him. But this was so much more than that. There was desire in her eyes and maybe . . . love?

Tara sat down on the top step and spread her legs in bold

invitation. He had been waiting for just such an offer. He sank to his knees and ran his hand over her pussy.

She groaned. "Please. Fuck me."

He leaned forward to kiss her and just as their lips met he thrust one finger into her wet slit. He smothered her cry of pleasure with his kiss as he moved his finger in and out. The rain fell harder, washing over her body and down between her legs, making a soft sloshing sound as he moved faster and faster.

Her pussy squeezed harder on his finger as he moved his other hand up to work her clit. The muscles of her stomach began to move in short, jerky motions. He knew she was ready to come and increased the pace.

A deep, burning urgency surged through Tara's body. She had never felt anything like this before. The buildup was nearly too much to take. Just when she thought she'd scream from the powerful sensations coursing through her, she gushed all over his hand as her orgasm overtook her. Her pussy tugged at his finger, pulling him deeper inside. Surprised, Tara looked up to find Logan smiling, obviously pleased by her reaction. Another first. She had never gushed before.

"Are you ready for my cock?" His voice was a harsh whisper against her throat.

"Yes."

"Tell me you want it. Make me believe what you say."

He placed the head of his dick at her entrance and Tara moaned.

"I want it."

"Make me believe you."

She arched against him and reached around to grab his ass.

"I want you to fuck me right now," she growled. "I want to feel your dick splitting me in two."

He thrust into her in one move and she screamed.

“Yes, fuck me like that.”

He pumped into her harder and faster while Tara raked her nails across his back. She clenched her pussy, squeezing his cock, and knew she was about to come again. Her pussy spasmed around him as Logan put his hands underneath her butt for better leverage. He held her in front of him now as he thrust in and out of her throbbing cunt.

“Oh, my God, Logan. *Oh, my God!*”

Tara held onto him, digging her nails into his back as he thrust harder and faster into her.

“Yes! Yes! I like it hard!”

Their bodies made a loud slapping noise every time they met and the thumping, slapping noise sent him over the edge. Something primal took over Logan as he thrust into her once more and roared, throwing his head back while he came inside her.

Logan closed his eyes and drew a deep breath. The way his chest ached when he looked at her had nothing to do with overexertion. He was falling for her and he knew it. And sooner or later he would have to tell her the truth. But how? *I forgot to mention, I'm a werewolf.* Yeah, right. Maybe he would ask Tyler for some advice. In the meantime, they needed to get out of the cold rain before she caught a chill.

Logan rose to his feet and helped Tara to stand. Her knees wobbled a bit and he smiled his satisfaction. He offered to pick up their clothes while Tara removed the key from her coat pocket and turned to unlock the door.

“Logan your back.” Tara gasped. “I’m so sorry. It looks like I broke the skin.”

Logan knew the exact moment it had happened. His beast had sensed the pain . . . and liked it.

“That’s alright. I think a little pain mixed with pleasure is good now

and then.”

Tara seemed taken aback, but didn't push the subject. By the time they got inside and put the wet clothes in the laundry room, she was shivering uncontrollably.

“Let's get you warmed up,” Logan said, hugging her against his chest. “How about a hot shower?”

“What about a bath instead?” Tara asked through chattering teeth. “I've got a tub big enough for two.”

He smiled and nodded. “Sounds great.”

Logan watched while she filled the tub in the upstairs bathroom, his gaze roaming hungrily over her body. When she bent over to check the water temperature, he couldn't resist. He stepped up behind her.

“Mmm.” He growled against her neck. She smelled of sex and rain and sweat. Even after he'd just fucked her Logan could smell her arousal. She wanted him again and that was hard to ignore. He leaned forward and ran his tongue up her spine causing her to squirm in his grasp.

Tara could feel his cock already growing hard again, pressed against her ass. She arched back against him. Even though she would likely be sore in the morning, she wanted him to fuck her. She couldn't get enough of him.

Logan reached between her legs, spreading them wider before he slipped his cock inside her again. Tara lowered her head and watched from underneath as he started to stroke her clit. Watching his hand move over her body while he slid in and out of her pussy thrilled her. It was an unbelievable turn on to see him touching her. To be able to watch and feel everything that was happening to her body was an exciting experience. It also made her come quicker than she had expected. Tara's knees gave way as her muscles gripped him tighter. Logan wrapped one

arm around her waist, holding her back against him while she came again and so did he. She was shaking even harder now, but not from the cold.

“Let’s get in the tub,” Logan said. He lowered himself into the hot water and reached for Tara. She climbed in between his legs and he wrapped his arms around her. She rested her face against his chest, listening to his heartbeat as it gradually slowed to a normal pace. Even after being out in the rain he was hot. His skin warmed her like an electric blanket and in a matter of minutes Tara wasn’t cold anymore. She sighed as a feeling of contentment swept over her and she nuzzled against his chest. She had never felt this connected to anyone before. Sure, she’d been in love before, but that paled in comparison to what she felt now. And yet it was too soon for talk of love. She didn’t want to frighten him away so she just lay there until she accidentally fell asleep in his arms.

Logan stayed in the tub for the longest time, just watching her. He felt fiercely protective of the small woman in his arms. She came to him so easily when he reached for her and the way she touched him spoke of trust. Even though he had accepted being a werewolf, he and his beast were never quite at peace. That is until he had met her just a few short days ago. She soothed him in a way he could not describe. When he was with her he wasn’t a werewolf or a man at war with himself. He was simply a man and he loved her for that. There was no other way to describe what he was feeling.

* * * * *

Tara awoke to the soft sound of Logan’s breathing and the feel of his warmth pressed against her back. After he had carried her to bed last

night they made love a few more times before finally passing out. Even though she had wanted to go all night, being with Logan took quite a bit of energy. Tara was surprised to find she wasn't up to more than a few more rounds before she had to throw in the towel.

She rolled toward him and smiled as his eyes fluttered open. He still looked sleepy. His hair was tousled and his long lashes brushed his cheeks as he blinked lazily. He was positively breathtaking, lying there in the early morning sun. Soft rays of light seemed to dance through his hair, making parts of it look like a polished gem. If it was possible he smelled even better. Tara smiled as she thought about how his scent would linger on her satin sheets.

Logan stretched and rolled to his back, taking Tara with him. She rested her head against his chest and for some reason her throat closed and tears threatened. She had never felt so safe before or so wanted. The emotions were nearly overwhelming.

Logan was just about to make love to her again when he looked at the clock.

"Shit."

Tara rolled to the side and sat up. "What's wrong?"

"Stupid fucking faculty meeting. I forgot all about it. I have to be there in an hour." He could see the disappointment on her face and it made him feel even worse about having to leave her.

"On a *Saturday*?"

"I'm afraid so." He sat up and scooted to the edge of the bed. "The department chair is a dick, I can tell that already. It shouldn't take long though. If you'll have me, I could come back this evening, maybe bring a few movies with me?"

She smiled and leaned forward to kiss him. "That sounds great. Bring Chinese food too and I'm all yours."

Logan got dressed fairly quickly. His leather pants were still damp, but he planned to go home and change. He wasn't going to wear leather to a faculty meeting, no matter what he thought of the department head. But the real reason for his rush was the scratches on his back. He didn't want Tara to notice they had healed overnight.

* * * * *

Weeks passed and Thanksgiving came and went. Tara had admitted to herself that she was in love with Logan, but she thought it was still too early to let him in on that secret. They were going out on a double date tonight with Tyler and Beth. She had finally talked both of them into letting her fix them up. She was drying her hair when Tyler arrived early.

Tara greeted her friend at the door. He wore his usual khaki pants and a pale blue shirt that matched his eyes. He'd combed his short brown hair back neatly and he looked every bit like the science professor he was.

"You're early," Tara said, smiling. "Come on upstairs. You can help me decide which dress to wear."

She and Tyler had been friends for so long they had become like brother and sister. While he looked over the dresses she had laid out on the bed, Tara went back to drying her hair. There was something she had been meaning to discuss with him and it had nothing to do with fashion. She figured now was as good a time as any.

"How come you didn't tell me about Logan?" she asked.

Tyler straightened his shirt, a sure sign he was hiding something. He always straightened his clothes when he was nervous and Tara knew him well enough to notice.

"I guess it just slipped my mind, that's all."

"That's all," she said sarcastically. "If you say so."

It wasn't a big deal or anything. But normally if Tyler met someone who was her type he would pass along that knowledge. Logan couldn't fit the profile any better if he'd tried. She couldn't help but wonder why Tyler wouldn't have mentioned him. Ever since they met they had both been trying to play matchmaker for each other. Yeah, something was up but she didn't have time to press him for information just then. If she didn't hurry, she'd be late.

"This one," Tyler said. He held up a short, black, sleeveless dress with a low-dipping back.

"I can't wear a bra with that one."

"And your point is? Come on, it'll look good."

"Are you sure?"

"Logan will love it."

Tara paused. She guessed it made sense that he would assume she wanted to please her date. Still, it felt like Tyler was reading her mind.

"You're all he talks about." Tyler paused and shook his head. He laid the dress back across the bed and turned away.

"I didn't know you talked that much."

Tyler cleared his throat nervously. "When he does speak, he normally mentions you. Listen. Get dressed or we're going to be late. I'll wait for you downstairs."

Tara watched him leave the room, wondering what the hell had made him so nervous. She shrugged. He was right; she needed to get moving. She slipped on the black dress. Deciding to wear her hair down, she used a curling iron to add soft ringlets that framed her face. She smiled appreciatively at the results in the mirror. Every now and then she thought she looked good and tonight was one of those times.

As she headed downstairs, the doorbell rang. Tara opened the door to find Logan standing on the porch and Beth coming up the steps behind him. Beth wore a short purple dress in a similar style to Tara's, except Beth looked like she had about three times as much skin showing with those long legs.

Logan looked amazing. He wore another pair of black leather pants and a short-sleeved matching shirt. One look at the material told her it wasn't cotton by the way it reflected the soft porch light. Whatever the shirt was made of it seemed to reveal the curves of his muscles even more. His dark hair shined underneath the light like it had been polished and his eyes sparkled as he looked down at her. Tara couldn't help licking her lips as she finished her appraisal.

"You guys ready to party or what?" Beth asked.

"Or what," Tyler said, joining Tara at the door. He smiled at Beth and Tara knew he found her attractive. No doubt they were in for an interesting night.

* * * * *

They had dinner and spent an hour or so barhopping before arriving at a dance club near the beach. Tara was glad to see her two best friends had hit it off. She was watching them dance while she ordered her second martini and Logan excused himself to go to the bathroom.

As soon as Logan disappeared into the crowd, another man sidled up to the bar. Tall and built like a machine, he approached her with confidence and propped one hip against the bar. Tara ignored him and ate the olives out of her drink. He ran a hand through his hair and licked his lips before speaking.

"You wanna dance, beautiful?" he asked.

His voice was deep, but it lacked the appeal of Logan's. As a matter of fact, it sounded kind of creepy. Tara turned to take a closer look. He was tall, blond and a devilish smile curled his lips. A chill raced up her arms.

"Sorry," she said, "but I'm here with someone."

"That's not what I asked."

Fucker. She wanted to slap him, but something about the way he looked at her said that would be a very stupid thing to do.

"Well, it's the answer I'm giving." She spoke with much more confidence than she felt. Fortunately for Tara, Logan chose that moment to reappear. She caught sight of him across the room and said, "There's my date. Excuse me."

She finished her drink in one gulp and slid down from the barstool.

Logan saw her from across the crowded room. She was the most beautiful woman there. The most beautiful woman he'd ever seen. Even though he'd only been gone for a few minutes he found he was already hungry for the sight of her. He wondered vaguely if his arms would ever be able to hold her the way his eyes did. She moved toward him across the floor, dodging the other people with a casual sort of grace.

Chapter Six

Just as she reached him a new song started to play.

"Let's dance," Tara said, pressing her body against his.

The moment Logan put his hands on her Tara forgot all about the idiot at the bar. Whatever anger she had felt melted away beneath Logan's gentle touch. He ran his hands lightly up and down her arms before turning her around, pressing her back against the front of his body. Her black dress rode high as they moved together. The music had

a slow, pulsing, grinding rhythm that seeped into her very bones. It sounded like sex put to music. It thumped in her chest like a heartbeat and warmed her like the feel of Logan's hands on her thighs as they moved.

The feelings that swept over her could not be put into words, yet they were undeniable. Logan always made her feel this way. Being with him felt like magic though the touch of his body was unquestionably real. He kissed her softly. The touch of his skin was almost too much and yet, at the same time, never enough. She was full of contradictions when it came to her reaction to him. He made her feel so many things at once she sometimes felt as if she would burst. Every word she'd ever heard to express love came to mind. What she felt was all that and more.

Logan was so caught up in the moment, the scent of her hair and the feel of her warm skin that he almost didn't notice the man by the bar. Almost. He was dressed all in black with a coat that hung to his ankles. As Logan watched him from the corner of his eye, the man ran a hand through his shaggy blond hair. Then their gazes met. His name was Heath and if he was here that couldn't mean anything good. Logan looked around the club and wondered how it was that no one else seemed to understand there was a predator in their midst. Couldn't they see this man was . . . *different*? It wasn't the way Heath looked that made him stand out. It was the way he *felt*.

Earlier Logan had noticed a change in the air. The hairs on his arms raised, but he couldn't catch the scent of danger, not with a club full of people, most of whom wore obnoxious cologne. But now that he saw him out in the open, he didn't need his sense of smell to identify a fellow werewolf.

He bent down and tenderly kissed Tara on the forehead. She stopped and looked up at him.

“What was that for?”

“Maybe we should call it a night.”

“Is something wrong?”

“Yes and no. I’ll explain later, but I really do think we should leave.”

He didn’t know why Heath had come here and he didn’t want to endanger Tara or her friends, not to mention all the people in the club.

Thankfully, Tara didn’t argue. She quickly located Beth and Tyler and they all headed toward the parking lot with Logan bringing up the rear. He had his arms stretched out, ushering them all along.

“What’s going on?” Beth asked, slurring her words a bit.

“Yeah, I was having fun,” Tyler said.

Logan turned toward him. “Do you remember me telling you about Heath?”

“Yes.”

“Well, he’s here.”

“In the club?”

“No, Sherlock in the ladies’ room. Yes, in the club. He was standing at the bar, watching us. I think it’s time we all left.”

“Who’s Heath?” Tara asked. She glanced back and forth between Tyler and Logan, wondering how well the two of them really knew each other. To her knowledge they were only associated at work. And now suddenly *Tyler* knew about someone, who was obviously important to Logan, and *she* didn’t? What the fuck?

“It’s Heathcliff actually,” a deep voice answered from a few paces behind her. The tall blond man from the bar stepped out of the shadows, another wicked smile spreading across his face. He would have been handsome if not for the obvious malice in his eyes. “You can call me Heath.”

“And you can call me Goodbye, I’m leaving.”

Tara didn’t know what was going on and she wasn’t sticking around to find out. Heath put his hand out to stop her and fell just short of touching her. He drew back at the last moment, closing his fist as if he had to fight to keep from making contact.

“You know,” he said smoothly, “I normally get what I want.”

Heath licked his lips again and took a step forward. He was creepy as hell, but Tara refused to be intimidated. She was surrounded by her friends. Nothing was going to happen to her. Still, she didn’t want to pick a fight. She just wanted to go home.

“Good for you,” she said. “So do I and I want to leave.”

Logan stepped between them before Heath could come any closer. They were the same height and he stared into the other werewolf’s icy blue eyes.

“What are you doing here?” he practically growled.

“Nice to see you too.” Heath opened his arms wide as if he were going to hug him, but stopped short of actually completing the act.

“Whatever you’re here for, is the knife really necessary?” Tyler asked, taking a step forward.

Logan had noticed the blade up his sleeve, but Tara apparently hadn’t because she gasped when Heath revealed the weapon before dropping it to the ground.

“Fine. I won’t need a fucking knife.”

He growled and in an instant his blue eyes turned gold. They glowed in the dark and Beth let out a shrill scream while Tyler yelled, “Holy mother of fuck!”

Logan let out a low growl that was clearly not human.

The fine hairs at the back of Tara’s neck rose and she took a step back, nearly falling into Tyler.

The muscles of Logan’s back flexed and rippled underneath the

fabric of his tight black shirt and Tara watched in horror. Claws extended from his right hand and in an instant he had Heath by the throat.

“Not here. Not now,” he said, his voice gone incredibly deep and threatening. “Not in front of these people.”

“What’s so special about *these* people?” Heath asked. He didn’t react to Logan’s hand at his throat. He didn’t act like it bothered him at all. He just continued to stare at them with those terrifying, golden eyes. “If not now then when? You know what I’m here for.”

“Tonight. I’m sure you already know where I live.”

The smile Heath gave him answered the question. It also revealed a set of fangs.

“There is a large field behind my house. Meet me there in three hours. I’ll give you what you want.”

He released Heath’s throat, retracting his claws while the other werewolf stepped aside to let them pass. They all hurried across the parking lot.

“What’s going on?” Tara asked as soon as they were in the car.

Logan cranked the engine and pulled out of the parking lot before answering. “You wouldn’t believe me if I’d told you.”

“Try me,” Tara said, her mind connecting the dots. Tyler’s research into the existence of werewolves. Logan and Tyler’s relationship, which seemed to extend beyond a mere business association. Logan’s strange transformation moments ago, and the creepy man with the gold eyes. As crazy as it all seemed, she could only come to one conclusion. She shuddered and drew a shaky breath. “Well now I don’t know whether to be afraid of you or what. Are you a, um”

“Werewolf is the word you’re looking for.”

“Holy shit,” Beth said from the back seat.

“I really don’t think he’s dangerous,” Tyler said.

“Just as I thought,” Tara said. “You knew about this and kept it from me. God. Logan, I . . . please take me home.”

“Are you really afraid of me? Think about it. It’s *me* we’re talking about here. Haven’t you trusted me these past weeks? Does my DNA being different from yours change that?”

“Growing claws in a parking lot and grabbing another man or whatever he was by the throat does not make me feel warm and fuzzy about you, no. Hell, I don’t know what to think. Is this really happening?”

They rode in silence the rest of the way home. All the while Tara thought back to the book Tyler had written about werewolves. It was his life’s pursuit, just like some people always searched for Bigfoot. She had read the book, and had looked over some of Tyler’s source material. Everything her friend had uncovered seemed to point to lycanthropy being a blood-born disease that caused a mutation of human DNA. Once infected you became more and more like an animal. Heightened senses, strength, speed, and yes, sex drive. However, an actual transformation into an animal had not been documented. Tyler had conducted a strictly scientific study. No pentagrams on the palm, unabrows, or other archaic bullshit.

According to his research, people with this disease were found to be very sensitive to silver. Not like the movies, but more like an allergy. Tara remembered how Logan had reacted when he reached into the silverware drawer in her kitchen. He’d said he grazed his knuckle on a knife, but there wasn’t a mark on him. He must have touched a piece of her grandmother’s silver.

The infected were also supposed to heal at an accelerated rate, no matter what the injury. Had there been a mark on his back the next day after she’d scratched him so badly? She couldn’t remember clearly, but she didn’t think so.

These symptoms were not entirely unfamiliar to her. After knowing Tyler for eight years Tara had learned enough about werewolves to write her own book. She just hadn't thought to look for the signs in her boyfriend.

It took them an hour to get back to Tara's house. Heath would be arriving in two hours. That didn't leave Logan much time to explain. He asked Tyler and Beth to stay at Tara's house until it was all over.

"I don't think it's safe for you to be out. If he's been here long enough to track me down, then he has probably been following my neighbors too."

"But we're not your neighbors," Beth said.

"No, but Tara is and you've both been to her house in the past few days. It's not safe for you to be out tonight."

"Motherfucker," Beth said irritably. She was still a little drunk, though no doubt hearing that her best friend's boyfriend was a werewolf had done wonders toward sobering her up. She staggered toward a chair and propped against the arm, her expression showing how clearly distraught she was.

They were all in the living room and Tara started to pace.

"Is somebody going to explain this cluster fuck to me or do I have to just guess what's going on?"

"He came here for help," Tyler said.

She turned to Logan. "I thought you came here to be closer to your mother."

"I did. But while I was looking for a place here a few years back something happened to me. It kind of took precedence."

She turned back to Tyler then and he continued. "It appears that he had been infected and was experiencing some rather strong changes. We corresponded for a few years online before he agreed to come here and be a part of my new study. I even recommended him for his new

job.”

“What do you mean strong changes? Stronger than turning into a wolf?”

Logan shrugged. “Well, different anyway.” He tried to think of a way to explain what had happened to him and decided to start from the beginning. “Do you remember me telling you about my parents divorcing?”

Tara crossed her arms beneath her breasts and tried to think calming thoughts. She focused on what he was saying and remembered their conversation about his parents.

“Yeah, and you moved to Texas with your dad.”

“Right. I stayed in Texas until I finished college. But while I had lived in Los Angeles, I knew a kid in high school who claimed to be a werewolf.”

“Let me guess, Heath?”

“Yes. Well, after college I took a job at a university that was close to where I lived. I was attacked on campus late one night. Security never saw a thing. They had a trail that went around campus, lots of joggers used it, but not in the middle of the night like I did. I was out running one night and someone jumped me from behind. My back was torn up pretty badly. I made it back to my car, but I passed out before I could call for help.” He paused again and ran a hand through his hair before finally sitting down on the sofa. “I should have died from blood loss. Only when I woke up . . . I didn’t even have an injury. There was blood all over my car and I had shiny new skin where I should have had several open wounds.”

“Oh, my God,” Tara said.

Despite her apprehension she sat down beside him. Logan was sharing obviously painful memories and she wanted to reach out to him, but she was still a little bit afraid.

“Did Heath attack you?” Beth asked.

“No. It wasn’t Heath. I didn’t understand what had happened to me at first. I cleaned the car myself and tried to forget about that night. But the first full moon confirmed my fears and I ended up killing my neighbor’s dog. I couldn’t change what had happened, so I had to learn to control it. As bad as I felt about the dog I was thankful it wasn’t a person I had killed. I never would have forgiven myself. So, I moved back to Los Angeles and got back in touch with Heath. It was all I knew to do.”

“And he helped you?” Tara asked.

“For a while, yes. He helped me learn to control the change, to control the beast. But it quickly became obvious that I was different from Heath. I had abilities he didn’t have. Like the claws.” He held up his hand and wiggled his fingers for emphasis. “Most werewolves can’t do shit like that. A partial transformation is very rare and is difficult to control, especially for someone who has only been turned for a few years, like me. I have other . . . oddities about me as well.”

“Such as?”

This time Tyler answered. “He can extend the claws up to seven inches at will. He can also grow long fangs and retract them without transforming the rest of his body. He heals even more quickly than most and according to him he is larger than average when he transforms.”

“According to him? You mean you haven’t seen for yourself?” Tara asked.

“Our schedules conflicted for the last full moon. I haven’t had a chance to examine him properly.”

Beth stood and waved her hand for silence. “What the fuck do you mean *most* werewolves?” she asked Logan.

“I understand how this sounds. I had no idea they were really out there until I was turned. Heath started taking me around, introducing me to others. There’s a whole world out there that people don’t know

about. Yes, there are other werewolves. Thousands of them.”

Beth sat back down and stared numbly into space.

When Logan spoke next his voice was barely above a whisper. “I understand if you don’t want me around. But please don’t be frightened of me.”

He looked up then and his eyes grew darker with emotion. Tara’s heart leapt into her throat and despite what had happened, she longed to comfort him. While part of her wanted to scream, the other part wanted to pull him into her arms and hold him close. Her mind kept telling her to use caution. But her heart still felt the same as before.

“It’s alright,” she said softly, placing her arm across his back. “I’m not afraid.” She kissed his cheek. “And I still want you around. It’s going to take a hell of a lot more than that to make me get rid of you.”

Chapter Seven

Logan nearly cried when she accepted him so easily. He wasn’t going to give her a reason to regret it.

“So,” Beth said. “What does this Heath guy want?”

“To challenge me. He was jealous of my different abilities. As soon as he realized we weren’t the same he kept trying to pick a fight with me. It was like he *needed* to prove that he was better, stronger.”

“Must be an alpha male thing,” Beth said.

“It is. The only problem with that is I don’t want to gain any more recognition among the werewolf community. I don’t belong to a pack of any kind and that’s fine with me. I have nothing against them; I’d just prefer to slip under the radar. Defeating Heath will not go unnoticed. He was the leader of a pack in L.A. His wolves must know where he is. If this is a traditional challenge, then he has brought one of them here to

oversee the fight.” He looked at the three of them as he added, “The rules also state that I must bring someone with me.”

Logan wasn’t sure how they would react to this new bit of information. They seemed to have taken the news of him being a werewolf quite well. Of course, Tyler already knew. For this reason he opened his mouth to ask Tyler to come with him but Tara cleared her throat, drawing his attention back to her.

“I’ll do it,” she said.

“No, it’s too dangerous. I won’t put you in that position.”

“All I’ve got to do is be there, right? Sort of like a referee?”

“Yes. But—”

“I can’t just sit here and wonder what’s happening to you. I’ll stay out of the way, I swear.”

Logan could see there was no talking her out of it and they were running out of time. Still, he didn’t like the idea of placing the woman he loved in danger, especially not if it could be avoided.

“The rules say I have to come unarmed, but it doesn’t say anything about the one I bring with me.”

“Then it’s settled. I’ll go armed to the teeth.”

“Who writes these fucking rules?” Beth asked.

* * * * *

An hour later Tara stood in the middle of the field with Logan, waiting for Heath to arrive. They had both changed clothes, though she didn’t understand exactly why he’d chosen his oldest, most ragged pair of jeans. He’d also completely refused to wear a shirt or shoes.

Tara wore black jeans, combat boots and a black turtleneck. She was also well-armed. Logan seemed surprised to know she had a mini

arsenal in her guest bedroom. She informed him that being a woman living alone in the middle nowhere meant being prepared. She was licensed to carry the nine millimeter pistol she had slid into the waistband of her jeans and she'd put a knife in her boot for good measure. Growing up with a lot of male relatives, including an overprotective grandfather, did have its advantages. Tara knew how to take care of herself. Her cousins and grandfather had taught her well.

Logan had insisted Tyler and Beth wait on the roof of Tara's house. They could see the whole field from there, but they'd be safe. Tyler chose a position close to the chimney, and he carried a rifle, just in case anything went wrong. Beth hid behind the chimney, no doubt praying that no one she cared about got hurt.

Tara checked her watch for the fifth time just as Heath emerged from the trees.

"Right on time," Logan said.

"Punctuality was always one of my virtues." He seemed to consider that for a moment. "Maybe my only virtue."

He cocked his head to the side and studied Tara. To her credit she didn't flinch.

"You brought a human as your witness. How cute."

"Leave her out of this. She's only here as my witness. If I lose she walks away unmolested, understood?"

"Unmolested?" Heath raised a brow and looked back in Tara's direction.

She fought the urge to flip him the bird. That would not help the situation.

"Well, I suppose so. What use do I have for a human?"

Heath spread his arms wide and another, slightly shorter man stepped up behind him to remove his coat. Tara assumed he was a werewolf too and a very well-muscled one at that. Heath also removed his

shirt and shoes and stepped farther out into the open.

“So, how would you like to do this?” Logan asked.

“The challenger names the circumstances,” Heath snarled. “And make no mistake, you are the challenger. I’m just here to finish what you started.”

“Bullshit.”

By this time Logan’s eyes had already begun to turn amber and Tara was starting to wonder if she’d made a mistake. She wanted to be there to help protect him, but he might not need her help.

“Oh, yes. By showing up the way you did you challenged me. You were powerful and my pack could see that. Some of them wondered if I could take you. A few were even foolish enough to discuss the matter in front of me. It didn’t matter where you were. I could not let your challenge go unanswered. We will finish this thing tonight.”

“Fine. But I don’t want the pack. That’s not what this is about.” Logan directed his next comment to the man behind Heath. “James, you are the next in line, right?”

“That’s right.”

“If I win tonight, it’s yours.”

“Can he do that?” James asked Heath.

“He can. But you should know that if he ever changes his mind the pack is his for the taking, with or without a fight.”

James nodded his agreement and Heath and Logan turned their attention back to each other.

“If I name the terms then I say use whatever works.”

“Human form or werewolf?”

“Whatever you want.”

“To the death then,” Heath growled.

“To the death.” Logan agreed.

Tara’s chest felt tight and she suddenly found it hard to breathe.

Had they just said to the death? She scolded herself mentally. What the hell else did she expect from a werewolf fight? Werewolf. That still hadn't settled in yet.

She looked to the dark-haired werewolf across the field, the one Logan had called James. He took a few more steps back and Tara followed suit. Heath and Logan began to circle each other. The way their breaths fogged in the cold night air reminded Tara of dragons. When Heath's eyes started to glow it only added to the illusion. It occurred to her then that she hadn't really believed werewolves existed before tonight. She'd been open to the possibility, especially after listening to Tyler. But she'd never expected to actually see one, let alone meet one . . . let alone fall in love with one.

The muscles of Logan's back rippled again. Only this time he wasn't wearing a shirt to block her view. It looked like a small wave passed underneath his skin. Like something inside was trying to get out. Or maybe waiting its turn.

Heath let out a roar and lunged forward. He moved so fast Tara barely saw what was happening. Logan released the claws of his right hand and slashed his attacker across the face.

"Fuck this," Heath growled. His voice was a deep rumble that no longer sounded human. He grabbed the skin across his chest and peeled it back as if it were an article of clothing. Tara put a hand over her mouth to keep from screaming as a beast stepped out of Heath's skin, discarding it like a coat.

Logan glanced over his shoulder toward Tara and gave her an apologetic look. He didn't want to reveal himself this way, but he had little choice. Maybe after seeing his beast she would at least remain as his witness. He doubted she would remain his lover. But if he didn't fight, they would both be killed. Even though Heath had given his word

not to harm her, Logan didn't believe him. Not for a minute. He pushed thoughts of Tara from his mind and concentrated on the change.

The first thing Tara noticed was a sort of crackling sound. She looked Logan up and down and realized the noise was coming from his hands, which were lengthening before her eyes. She could hear the bones breaking and reforming as his skin became covered with black fur. The process of transformation was nothing like she had expected and Tara could only stare in amazement. Logan turned more easily than Heath and with much less violence. His hair became longer, and he threw back his head and howled. Fur spread to cover his massive chest. The bones of his lower legs lengthened, and his feet became gigantic paws. His face began to lengthen as well, but it was nothing like what had happened with Heath. Logan's transformation flowed, almost like a movie, but without the screaming or overacting. It wasn't something awful or horrifying, it simply *was*.

Even though it felt like time stood still while she watched him turn, Logan's transformation had taken only a few minutes. In his werewolf form he was over seven feet tall. What remained of his jeans barely covered anything at all. Though Tara loved the sight of his human form she wasn't sure she was ready to see a naked werewolf. At least now she understood why he hadn't worn shoes or a shirt.

The two werewolves circled each other, their eyes glowing with deadly intentions. The cold air made it look like they were blowing smoke from their nostrils. As Tara watched she realized she'd backed up even more and her hand had instinctively moved to the gun she carried. Logan's werewolf form was imposing and she was admittedly unnerved. But Tara couldn't bring herself to be afraid of him. It was Heath she feared.

The blond werewolf was only slightly smaller than Logan. And the

look in his eyes said clearly that he would enjoy causing harm to anyone who got in his way. Even though Logan assured them that silver bullets weren't necessary, Tara had loaded her gun with silver-tipped bullets just in case. She was glad of the choice now. However, she could only use the weapon in her own defense. The rules stated the fight must be allowed to run its course. She was not permitted to help Logan for any reason. But something told her he would not need help.

Heath dove at him again. This time he left the ground in favor of a full-out flying tackle. Both werewolves rolled over the ground. Their snarling and howling echoed across the field. They moved in a blur of blond and black fur until one of them yelped. Logan leapt back, his right hand covered with blood. Tara's heart leapt, afraid he had been hurt. But then she saw the gash on Heath's left shoulder.

The fight raged on for what felt like hours. They moved back and forth, tearing bits of fur and flesh from each other until Logan once again had the upper hand. This time he didn't hesitate. In one swift move he tore out Heath's throat and took a step back to watch him bleed. Though he was loathed for Tara to see him this way, his beast enjoyed the fight. A thrill ran through him as realization of his victory and their safety settled in.

James roared as his leader fell to the cold ground. But he didn't otherwise react.

"The pack is yours now," Logan growled.

His voice was deep and strange. Tara found it odd to look at a beast and hear it speak with the voice of a man.

James bowed in acknowledgement.

"See that he is given a proper funeral."

"You will not keep his hide as a trophy?" James asked.

"No. At one time he was my friend. Return his body to his family."

When James hesitated he added, "You will do as I say."

Tara watched the scene unfold before her as if she were watching someone else's life. This couldn't be happening to her. The blond werewolf transformed before her eyes. He was once more a handsome human man. The pale moonlight streaming down on the field made the situation even more surreal. James stepped forward and used Heath's long coat to cover his body.

"It will be done," he said softly. James looked back up at Logan, a reverent expression on his face. "I will respect your victory and your claim as our leader. If you ever wish to take the position from me, I will give it to you without a fight."

Logan nodded his agreement. James picked up Heath and started to carry him away as Logan turned back toward Tara.

Tara looked at Logan and a chill swept over her that had nothing to do with the temperature. She suddenly realized it was night and she was standing in the middle of a field with a werewolf. Alone.

Logan saw her stiffen and turned back toward the woods. Just as he had feared, she no longer wanted to be with him.

"I should go," he said.

"Wait."

Tara ran forward and grabbed his hand. He was still in his beast form, but when she touched him she felt Logan. He looked more dangerous than anything she'd ever seen as he turned and looked down at her. His eyes glowed in the darkness.

"Do you really want *me* to stay?" His voice seemed even deeper somehow.

He towered over her, blocking the moonlight completely from her view. The only light she saw was his glowing eyes and she shivered

again.

“Yes,” she whispered. “I know it’s you. I won’t lie and say I’m not a little shaken, but I want you to stay. Please, come back home with me.”

Logan looked down at his long clawed hands. He could change form if he wanted to, but he wanted Tara to understand what she was asking for. There was no cure for lycanthropy. He was a werewolf and she would have to accept that.

“But . . . I’m a monster.”

Tara moved closer and gestured for Logan to bend down. Even on his knees he still towered over her, but he did as she asked. She ran her hands through the soft fur on his chest and couldn’t stop the tears from falling. Something like this probably *should* scare the hell out of her. But all she could think about was Logan. What must it have been like for him? She couldn’t let him go, even if she had wanted to. What had happened wasn’t his fault. She continued to stroke his fur as she looked at him. There was nothing disgusting about him even if he was a beast. He was powerful and Tara knew that the muscles she felt beneath her hands would never be used to harm her. Maybe watching him turn would have changed the minds of other women. But not Tara.

“I love you, Logan,” she whispered. “I am upset. But I’m not frightened of you.”

“*You love me?*”

He shifted form so smoothly, so easily that it looked like magic. In an instant he stood before her, human once more. He was also completely nude, having lost his shredded jeans in the fight.

“Even after tonight you love me?” He was truly astounded. Logan had never expected her to accept him this way.

“Yes.” Tara reached for him again and found him to be burning hot despite the cold. “Now let’s go home.”

Chapter Eight

Logan stopped at his house long enough to get another pair of pants before they returned to Tara’s. He felt so light. His heart was overflowing. She loved him.

Tyler and Beth met them at the door. Beth seemed shaken, but alright. Tyler was thrilled to have new research material. Although, he found it most unfortunate someone had been killed. He kept rattling on about new tests while Tara took Beth into the kitchen.

“I’ll make you a cup of tea,” she offered.

“That’ll be nice.” Beth was obviously still upset. But when she spoke again it wasn’t what Tara had expected to hear. “That must have been so hard for him.”

“Huh?”

“Turning like that in front of you. Oh my God. When I think of what the past few years must have been like for him. And now he finds someone he cares about and he has to do *this*.” She stopped to wipe a few stray tears. “That poor man!”

“So, you think I should keep him around?”

Beth looked shocked. “Are you kidding me?! If you dump him I’ll kick your ass. He risked everything to protect us tonight. I don’t care what that Heath asshole said, if Logan hadn’t fought him he would have killed us.”

“I’m not dumping him,” Tara said. “I’m in love with him.”

“You’re . . . in love with him? Really?” Beth jumped up and hugged her. “Oh, honey I’m so happy for you. Have you told him? I know Logan loves you; I can see it when he looks at you.”

"I've told him."

"And?"

"And he seemed pleased, but he didn't say he loved me too." Beth went to speak but Tara put up a hand to stop her. "That's alright. I didn't say it to hear it back."

* * * * *

Logan was still in a daze. After Beth and Tyler went home he was surprised when Tara asked him to stay. Her saying she loved him had come as more of a shock than Heath showing up to challenge him. He had eventually expected to see Heath again. But he had never hoped that Tara would return his feelings.

Once they were alone upstairs he watched in silence as she undressed and turned on the shower. He had no idea what to say, but felt he had to say *something*.

Tara stepped into the walk-in shower and adjusted the water. When she felt Logan's strong hands on her shoulders she melted back against him.

"When I realized what I had become I gave up on ever finding someone to love me. I never thought that anyone would be able to accept me if they knew the truth." Tara turned slowly in his arms and his heart ached to see the tears in her eyes. "You're so much more than I expected in so many ways. And I love you so much," he whispered.

Tara pressed her face against his chest, the heat of his flesh burning into her as she cried. "Logan, I don't know what I'd do if something happened to you. I realized as soon as the fight was over that you could have been killed tonight. That could have been you lying on

the ground out there. I already knew I was in love with you, but I knew then how much I needed you. I could never turn you away no matter what you are. As long as you are mine, it doesn't matter."

Logan kissed her then, not bothering to hide his growl of passion. She could feel his shaft already growing hard against her belly. As he kissed her all of the pieces finally fit. The puzzle of her life came together and for the first time in her life Tara felt complete.

She deepened the kiss, reaching between their bodies to take his cock in her hand.

"I want you," she whispered silkily. "I want you to make love to me against the wall."

Logan put his hands on her hips and lifted her high. He buried his face between her thighs, running his tongue between her pussy lips. Tara braced against his shoulders for support as he plunged his tongue in and out of her. By the time he raised his head, she ached to feel him inside of her.

He slid her slowly down the tile until she could feel the tip of his cock, pushing at her entrance. Tara reached down and spread her lips wide in invitation as he slid slowly into her pussy. She moaned and left her hand in place so that she could feel as he moved in and out of her. He moved faster and faster and she gripped his cock at the base, guiding him back and forth. Then when she couldn't take anymore, she let go, allowing him to thrust all the way into her when she came. Her muscles closed tightly around him, pulling the orgasm from his body so forcefully he screamed.

Logan thrust into her one last time, holding her small body in place against the wall.

"I am yours, Tara. I will always be yours, for as long as you want me."

Once in a Blue Moon

~The End~

About the Author

Tracy has been writing stories pretty much since she could write. She had wanted to be a writer since she was six years old. She is truly blessed to be able to do what she loves, and there isn't a day goes by that she doesn't thank God for that. She can't imagine not writing, even if it was just for herself. She loves being able to share her thoughts and ideas with new people, and to have the opportunity to touch someone's life in some way. We've all loved, hated, felt pain and passion. So, even if we cannot, or do not have the desire to put these things into words, we can understand when someone else does. This is her goal: To put feelings into words. To express herself in a way that will resonate with others.

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