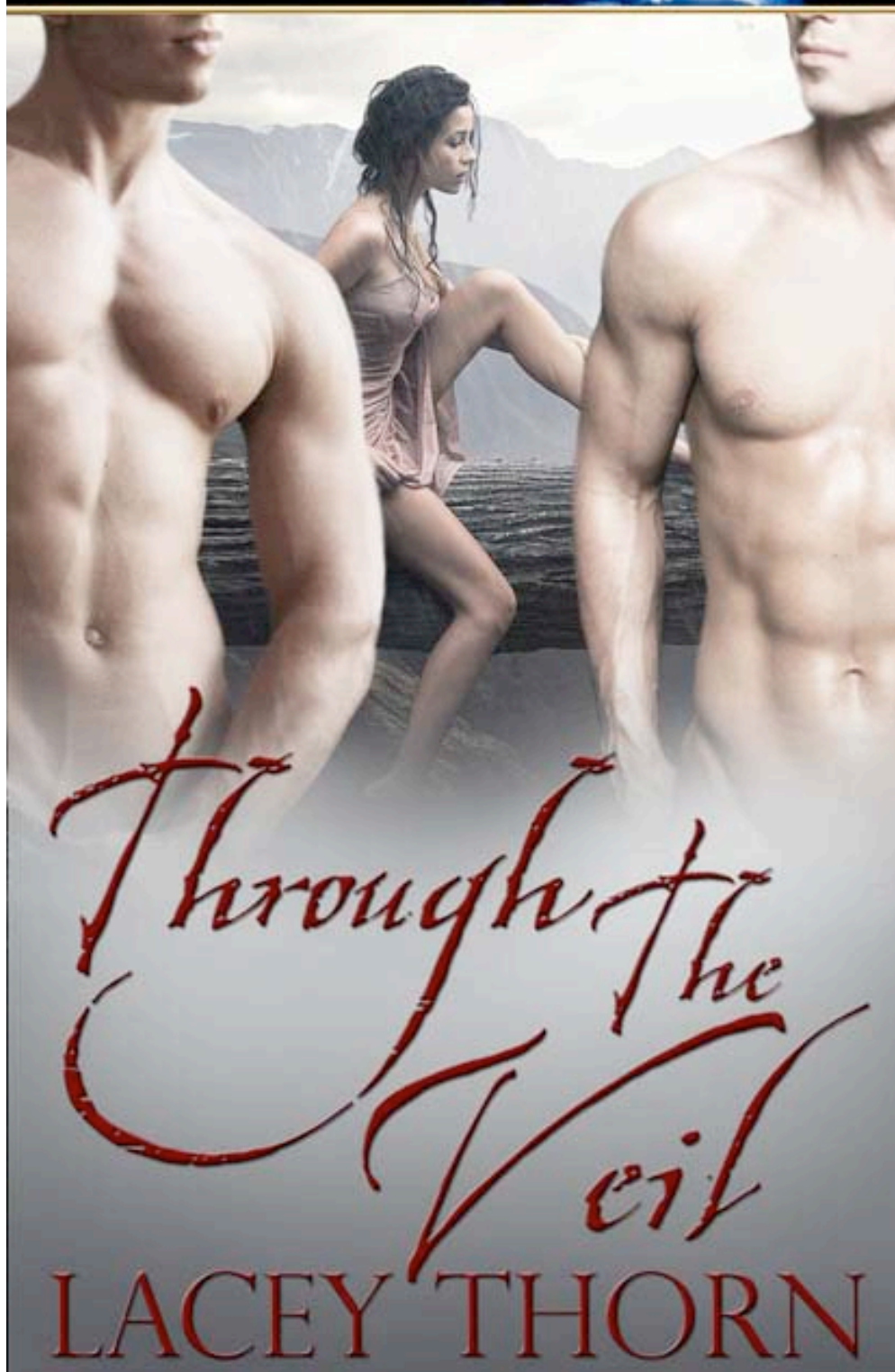


ELLORA'S CAVE TWILIGHT



## Through the Veil

Lacey Thorn

Reggie finds her mother wrapped up in a cult and barely escapes with her chastity intact. Drugged and on the run, she is drawn by a wondrous song through a veil of fog and into a whole new world.

Jamison and Taggart are devoted to the task before them, finding and seducing the woman who is to be theirs. When they find Reggie already submerged in the bridal pool, they can't believe their luck.

The pool serves one purpose, to prepare a bride for her mating by revving her sexual desire and need. Her body craves their touch, their possession, and that's just what they desire as well. Let the mating begin!

An Ellora's Cave Romantica Publication



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Through the Veil

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# *THROUGH THE VEIL*

Lacey Thorn

## Dedication

To all the people who dream of going through the veil...and finding a different tomorrow...this one is for you. Keep dreaming.

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Tinker Bell: Disney Enterprises, Inc.

## Chapter One

*What the fuck had her mom gotten her into?* That was all Reggie could think as she ran deeper into the woods of the national park. She'd been worried when her mom's letter had arrived, begging her to come, saying it was important. Her mother's phone was disconnected and a new address was listed. So being the daughter she was, Reggie had dropped everything and left.

For the longest time it had been just the two of them and Reggie still suffered from guilt issues at having left home a year ago at twenty. But she had finally made herself believe that she deserved a life of her own. So she'd packed up and moved for all the good it had done her. She was just like her mother. She worked from home as a medical transcriptionist and did most of her shopping by mail. She'd barely gone out in the year she'd been on her own and had no friends.

*So there was no one to miss her now.* She should have run when she pulled up to a gate guarded by two men with guns. Especially when they recognized her on sight and greeted her by name. But they'd told her that her mother would be so excited that she was finally here, they had laughed and smiled and tricked the hell out of her. She had left the car with her bags at the gate, and taking only her purse, had followed one of the men to find her mother.

Her mom had looked gorgeous. She had positively glowed, looking years younger. She'd been wearing a formfitting dress that seemed to be the style for every woman who Reggie saw. Her mom wasn't sick, wasn't in trouble, actually seemed better than she'd ever been. When they'd finally found a private place to sit and talk, Reggie had felt the hairs on the back of her neck rise. From everything her mother was saying there was no doubt that this was some kind of cult.

Her mother had asked Reggie to freshen up, offered her one of the dresses that Reggie had politely refused, preferring to keep her jeans, t-shirt and running shoes. Then they had gone back to where the others were so that Reggie could meet some of her mother's new friends. And with each new woman Reggie had felt her anxiety increase. The women were content to be subservient and Reggie didn't think it was just the cooking, cleaning and child-rearing that they were expected to do.

Reggie had been taking everything in when a sudden silence fell over everyone and she watched as they all had bowed their heads. Glancing around, her gaze landed on a man dressed in loose-fitting, white linen-style pants and an unbuttoned white shirt. His eyes took her in from head to toe and when he met her gaze he didn't seem too happy but quickly tried to hide his displeasure.

"Daffy, you did not offer your lovely daughter the time to freshen up before leading her to meet everyone?" He phrased it as if it were a question but Reggie could hear the reprimand in his voice.

"Mom offered," Reggie said. "But I preferred to stay as I am since I'll be heading to the hotel soon." She hadn't planned any such thing but it seemed important to keep that information to herself. Something just didn't feel right here.

"But of course you will stay here with your mother," he said. "Isn't that so, Daffy?"

"Yes, yes." Her mother grabbed her hand and squeezed. "Regina, you must stay here with us, with me." The tone of her mother's voice made her even more uneasy.

"Well, it is settled then," the man said. "I will see you later at the evening meal."

Reggie had feigned fatigue and her mother had taken her back to where she slept. It was in a big building that reminded Reggie of a dormitory. There was one big communal bathroom that everyone used. Her mother explained that a lot of the women shared a room but her mom had one to herself so that Reggie could stay with her as long as she wanted.

"Mom, why don't we go out for dinner?" Reggie asked. "Just the two of us, like old times."

"Oh, we can't do that," Daphne said, shaking her head frantically back and forth.

"Why can't we do that?" Reggie asked. "Aren't you allowed to leave, Mom?"

"Dinner is a big event, Regina," her mom said. "We'll be dining with Brother Michael tonight. That is a big honor and not to be denied."

"I didn't come here for him, Mom," Reggie shook her head. "I came to see you, to make sure you were okay. I was afraid that something was wrong, that you were sick."

"Oh, Regina," her mom gushed. "I've never been so happy. My life is so perfect here. Brother Michael takes care of all of us. I've only a few specific duties to see to and everything else is taken care of for me."

"What do you do, Mom?" Reggie asked.

"I take care of helping with the morning meal," her mother said excitedly. "It is the most important one of the day. Then I go with two other women and clean the worship center. When we are done there it is time to help with the lunch preparations so that some of the younger women can take the refreshments out to the men. Then I have the afternoon to read or sew before starting on the evening meal."

Her mom loved to read, sew and cook. She had been meant to be a housewife, which was what she had been before her husband, Reggie's dad, left them. Her mom had never really seemed to recover. But looking at her now was like going back in time to the younger, more vibrant woman her mother had once been.

"That sounds wonderful," Reggie said. "But if you are so happy then why the letter to me?"

Her mom looked away, refusing to meet Reggie's eyes and a chill went down her spine. She definitely felt like something wasn't right now.

"I just wanted to see you, Regina," her mom insisted, still looking anywhere but at Reggie.

"Mom, you haven't called me Regina since I was six," Reggie said. "Why are you calling me it now?"



"Brother Michael says that Regina is a beautiful and fitting name," Daphne said.

"And yet he calls you Daffy?" Reggie asked with a laugh. Daffy made her think of the cartoon duck.

"Brother Michael said the name fits me perfectly," her mom said with a smile and a dreamy look.

"Mom, you're not sleeping with this guy, are you?" Reggie asked and her mom finally met her gaze, an appalled look in her eyes.

"Of course not," her mom gasped. "Don't speak of such things out loud, Regina. I am not worthy of one such as Brother Michael."

That didn't make Reggie feel any better. The women here were all subservient in manner and it hadn't escaped Reggie's notice that when her mom had offered her a dress to wear she'd been told to just throw "all" her clothes in a pile in the corner of the room. The longer Reggie was here the more creeped out she got.

"Here," her mother said, handing her a glass of what looked like tea. "You look hot and tired, Regina. Drink this. I just love the tea here. It is perfectly brewed."

Reggie took a sip and it was perfect. Not too sweet and no trace of the bitterness that sometimes came with tea. She really was thirsty so she drank it all down.

"Mom, I'm glad that you are happy," Reggie said and she meant it. Perhaps this was the life that her mother needed. She would have to stop at the police station in town and find out what she could about this group. And then she would work on getting her mother out of here. Maybe she would have to get word to her mother that she was sick or something. That thought made her feel guilty. Her mother was a grown woman and Reggie had never seen her look happier.

"I am happy," her mom gushed. "The only thing that could make me happier is if you were to join me here."

Reggie shook her head. "I can't, Mom. I have a job, friends, and they'll be expecting me to check in soon."

"No, you don't," her mom said with a laugh. "Brother Michael checked. You work from home and have no visitors."

Reggie blinked. She was getting really tired and was fighting to keep her eyes open. "How would Brother Michael know that?"

"He checked on you," her mom said. "When he saw your picture he told me that you were the one whom he'd been waiting for."

"Waiting for?" Reggie asked. That didn't sound good to her.

"You're the one," her mother stated with awe. "You'll be the one to give birth to Brother Michael's son."

Reggie was shaking her head now in denial as well as an attempt to clear her vision. "I'm not having his child," she vowed.

"You will, Regina," her mother told her. "It is God's will."

Two things clicked in Reggie's mind at once. First was that her mother was lost to her. They had never been that close, probably because Reggie had always felt like more the parent than the child. She would never be able to persuade her mother to leave here. The second thing was that her mother had drugged her drink, or at the very least given her a drink that was drugged.

"Mom, what have you done?" Reggie asked, fighting to stay awake with all she had.

"It's for your own good," her mother stated and she looked angry. "You have been chosen and you plan to walk away as if this is not a great honor. Brother Michael is willing to accept you as his bride and gift you with being his son's mother. There are many women here who would give anything for that honor."

"They can have it," Reggie groaned. "If there are so many willing then why me?"

"I told you," her mother shook her head. "You are the one who was chosen." Her mom pushed her back on the bed she'd been sitting on so that she lay on her back. "Don't fight it, Regina. Relax and sleep. I'll have you bathed and changed when you

awake. And soon you'll be with Brother Michael, his first wife. And I will hold the honor of being the mother of the first wife."

First wife? What the hell? Her mom's eyes glowed now with a sort of zealous light that sent more chills through Reggie. This was not the woman she'd grown up with, not the cowering figure who just wanted to stay home and in her own world. This woman would go to any lengths, it seemed, to get what she wanted, even drugging and sacrificing her only child.

"Mom, please," Reggie begged as she felt the effects of the drug sucking her under.

"Just sleep, Regina," her mother said and her smile was anything but reassuring. "Everything will be ready when you wake up."

That was what she was terrified of.

\* \* \* \* \*

Reggie awoke with a pounding headache. She had to blink several times before she could focus on the room around her. It wasn't her mother's. She was in a much bigger, plusher room now. She lay on a huge bed and she was wearing a white dress similar in style to what her mother had been wearing, only Reggie's was made entirely of lace. You could see the dark rings of her areolas through the dress as well as her nipples, which were tingling.

When she looked down she saw that her pubic hair had been completely removed, which disturbed her. Who had shaved her? Her mother? And what the hell was she wearing? She stood up and wanted to laugh. Her dress covered her from neck to ankle and yet revealed everything.

"Ahhh, I'm glad to see that you finally woke up, my love," a voice she recognized said from behind her. Brother Michael. She didn't dare turn around. "I was afraid you might sleep right through our wedding night."

That got her turning around. "Wedding night?" she said and her voice actually squeaked. "I don't remember a wedding, saying 'I do' or anything like that."

His gaze was all over her, taking in her breasts and sex and making her feel dirty. The lust in his eyes was more than apparent when he finally met her eyes. "There is no need for either of us to say words when our joining was decreed by God."

"Yeah, I'm not so sure about that," Reggie said, edging away from the bed behind her and still trying to keep her distance from him. "I'm not sure that I'm really the one who was chosen."

Brother Michael smiled and it was a scary thing to see. "You were chosen, Regina. And we are already bonded. The ceremony was performed while you slept, my love. Our priest checked and vouched for your purity and your mother and her ladies prepared you for our wedding night."

Reggie was devastated. A priest had vouched for her purity? That could only mean that he had checked for her virginal status, which meant that he had touched her, while she was unaware. What kind of man of God was that?

"Then I'm sure he told you that I don't have a hymen," she said. She knew that it was on the outside of the vagina no matter what some romance stories said, and she knew that she didn't have one. She'd used toys, even though she'd never been with a man.

"He assured me that you have not lain with a man," Brother Michael said. "It pleases me that I will be your only. And you will hold the title of first wife and be the mother of my heir."

"First wife?" Reggie said. "How many do you plan to take?"

"A man may have as many wives as he desires," Brother Michael said. "You will not concern yourself with what I chose. Your only job now is to take care of my needs, to see that I am happy and well."

He walked toward her and she found herself trapped between him and the wall. He leaned into her, letting her feel the ridge of his hard cock against her abdomen. "I am well pleased with you, Regina," he said while he ran his hands over her body, stopping to fondle her breasts and pinch at the nipples.

She recoiled against the wall, wanting to disappear inside it. Her hands were flattened against it, somehow knowing that it wouldn't fare well for her if she gave in to the desire to claw his eyes out. She turned her head when he leaned in and she gagged at the feel of his lips on her neck, sucking and licking at her flesh. She had to get out of here. She could not let this happen.

"Brother Michael," she whispered. "Please, I need to use the facilities," she begged.

His tongue was licking at her skin, his hands pinching any part of her he could reach and he was rubbing, almost grinding, his cock hard against her. If he didn't let her go soon she would most likely throw up all over him.

"Please," she pleaded again and finally felt him pull back with a groan.

"I should have thought of that," he sighed, finally moving back from her. "Right over there." He pointed toward a door on the other side of the room. "I'll turn the bed down while you take care of yourself." He gave her nipple another pinch and tug before stepping back and pointing toward the door again.

She nodded, feeling the bile rising in her throat. She hurried across the room and into the bathroom. She turned the water on in the sink and splashed her face several times to clear her head. She left it running as she looked around her. She needed a plan, a way out of what awaited her behind that door.

She looked at the window. It wasn't very big but she might be able to squeeze through it. She held her breath as she flipped the lock and pushed up on it. No sound as she opened it so she let out the breath she'd been holding. Straight across from her, maybe twenty feet away, was a tree line. If she could get out the window and make a dash for it she just might be able to disappear in the trees. She was pretty sure that it was part of the national park that she had visited as a girl.

She pushed on the screen, wiggling until she popped the right places and it slipped free. It hit the ground and Reggie held her breath again until she was sure that no one was coming. The screen hitting had been loud to her but hopefully no one else had noticed. Nodding her head, she pulled herself through the window, landing on her

hands and then her knees. Glancing all around her, she took off at a sprint, wishing she still had her running shoes and own clothes instead of a lacy gown and bare feet.

She hit the tree line and though her feet screamed she refused to slow down. She had no idea how long she would have before he discovered her gone and they came after her.

## **Chapter Two**

Reggie didn't know how long she'd been running when she first heard the song. It was beautiful though she couldn't make out the words. They seemed to be in a language that she wasn't familiar with. All she knew was that someone was either singing it or playing it and if she could just find that person she might find help.

There was something comforting about the song, as if safety would be given if she just followed where it led her. She wondered vaguely if they had given her more than the sleeping drug. Or maybe it was just the pain that was now radiating from her feet up and through her entire body. She knew that they were bruised, torn and bloody from the scratches they bore. But she couldn't afford to stop until she found help or at the very least a safe place to hide.

She kept running until she saw the fog rising from the ground. It grew thicker until it was like a veil separating her from the path behind her. She floundered forward, hands out in hopes of preventing herself from running into something. She prayed she wasn't heading toward a ledge and serious injury or death if she fell. But just as suddenly as it appeared the veil of fog seemed to lift.

It was as if by disappearing as suddenly as it had appeared, it lifted a covering or screen from her eyes. The forest around her seemed brighter, more colorful and alive than it had been before. She heard the trickle of a waterfall and headed in that direction. The song had stopped and though that should worry her she felt as if she were safe now. It was hard to explain even to herself, but she felt as though she was where she was supposed to be.

She came upon the pool of water and sighed in appreciation. It was in a lush garden oasis surrounded by rich green bushes and flowers. The water she had heard was from a waterfall that fed the pool from above. It wasn't very big but appeared deep enough

to swim in. Reggie wanted nothing more than to strip and jump in, washing off all that had been done to her and all that could have been done to her, still would be if she hadn't managed to escape.

She made her way down the path that led to the pool and stood at the bank, just looking into the clear water. She dipped her foot in and sighed as the water seemed to ease the burn in her foot. She ripped at the material in her hurry to lift it up and over her head, just wanting to rid herself of what they had put on her. She sat on the edge, dangling both legs into the pool, and felt the caress of the water on them.

It was as she imagined a lover's hands would feel, warming and stroking over her skin. She slid all the way into the water, letting it embrace her as she slipped fully beneath its surface. It held her, making her body come alive everywhere it touched her. With a gasp she surfaced, inhaling deep breaths of air into her lungs. Her hands rubbed over her body, trying to soothe the burn she felt now.

Her entire body was alive and churning with desire. The more she moved in the water the higher the burn seemed to go. She swam quickly over to a rock that rested just beneath the fall of water. Hopping up, she leaned back on it, spreading her thighs so that the water fell onto her body like a million tiny hands stroking her flesh. It was so good and yet still it wasn't enough. One hand moved down between her thighs while the other played with her breasts and nipples. She wondered if this was due to some drug that they had given her in preparation for her wedding night that had just kicked in.

Whatever it was she would probably jump the first thing that came upon her if her body didn't settle down. For a woman who had never known a lover's touch she certainly craved it now. She rubbed her thumb over her turgid clit and felt the flood of juice from her pussy as she orgasmed. But it wasn't enough. She needed more, a deeper touch, something to fill her clenching channel.

She leaned her head back and closed her eyes as her fingers moved in and out of her pussy. She held her pussy lips open with one hand so that the water continued



caressing her clit while she fucked herself with the fingers of the other hand. She needed more. Her eyes flew open and, gazing up, she saw two men at the top of the path she had taken down. They just stood there, watching her as if they couldn't believe that she was there.

They didn't look like anyone she had seen in the camp where her mother had tricked her into going. They wore nothing but brown pants that might be leather or something similar. She couldn't really tell from where she was. They had long hair, just past their shoulders, whereas all the men she had seen in the camp had worn military-short hair. The color appeared to change as they moved in the sunlight. Brown, then blond, then red, and she realized as they moved down the path and closer to her that it held all of those colors.

They were big, easily taller than her five-foot-five-inch frame, with broad shoulders and well-formed arms. Hair spread across their chests and then tapered into a thin line that trailed down their six-pack abs to disappear into the band of their pants, where very noticeable bulges showed. She licked her lips as they squatted by the edge of the water and looked at her.

Chocolate. That was the warm color of their eyes. She licked her lips again and arched her breasts up into the water's caress and wished it was their hands on her. She had no idea why she suddenly wanted these two men, but she did. Both of them. She had just run from one man, hoping to escape his touch on her body and now here she was craving the touch of another. Not just one but two. What was wrong with her?

"You need to get out of the pool," one of them said and his voice was deep and seductive like a verbal caress to her senses.

"I can't," she whispered.

"The need will only get stronger the longer you stay in the water," the other one said and though his voice wasn't as deep it was just as stimulating.

"They drugged me," she said. "I must still be drugged."

"They?" the first one again. "I promise you that what you are feeling is from the waters of the bridal pool."

"Bridal pool?" she asked, gasping as the sexual desire raged through her body.

"The pool that you are in is the bridal pool," the second one spoke. "It is used strictly by our women to wash in prior to forming a mating bond."

"Oh God," she moaned. It seemed that she had left one cult behind only to find herself in another one. A mating bond? Her body was on fire and she was finding it hard to fight against the pull she felt to leave the water and join them on the banks.

"Are you saying that you do not know of the pool? That you are not promised in a mating bond?" She was beyond knowing which of them was speaking now. Need burned thick and strong through her, making it hard to focus on anything but her body.

"No," she moaned.

"But it is forbidden to be here unless you are to bond," one of them said.

"Who are you?" she asked.

"I am Jamison Ballard," the one with the deep voice said. "And this is my brother Taggart. What is your name?"

"Reggie," she breathed out.

"Such a harsh name for such a beautiful woman," Taggart said.

She chose to ignore that. After the past day she was damned if she wanted to be called Regina by anyone again. "Where am I?"

"You are in the valley," Jamison spoke softly. "White Valley."

"I've never heard of White Valley," she said. She hadn't spent much time at the national park and even less once she hit her teen years. Still, growing up, she'd never heard anyone mention a place called White Valley.

"Only those worthy can enter the valley," Taggart told her.

Great. It was some other type of cult. When did they start popping up around her hometown? She hadn't heard of any before she left and she hadn't really been gone that long.

"You must come out of the water," Jamison said.

"Come get me," she said instead, not feeling up to moving just yet. She was struggling to think as it was. She needed to work on a plan to get her out of this new mess. But this time her body was fighting her. Instead of the revulsion of earlier she was craving their touch, which made no sense whatsoever. She didn't know them or anything about this valley they called home.

"It is forbidden for men to enter the sacred waters of the bridal pool, Reggie," Taggart said.

"You must come to us," Jamison added in that deep seductive voice of his. "We can help to ease you."

"Ease me," she repeated, knowing that he meant they would take care of the physical need rampaging through her body. It made no sense and yet she suddenly didn't care. She wanted to give in to the desire, wanted to feel them against her, inside her. There would be time enough later to figure out where she was, when her mind could focus on more than her body's need. At least she hoped there would be. Surely the flames of desire couldn't stay this intense for too much longer.

"I hurt," she breathed as she slipped back into the water and moved toward them. "I ache."

"It is the water," Jamison assured her. "It prepares you to mate, making the desire for touch so powerful that it cannot be denied."

"Yes," she agreed as she reached the bank. Taggart held a hand out to her and she took it. He pulled her easily from the water and she found herself naked between the two brothers. "Touch me," she pleaded, wanting nothing more than to feel their hands on her. Jamison was right, she couldn't fight the desire surging through her.

"Our hands are tied until you say the words," Taggart said.

"What words?" she demanded. "What do you need me to say?" At this point she would say anything if it would help alleviate the painful desire she felt.

"You must choose us as your mates," Jamison stated softly. "You must say the words that will allow us to claim you and begin the bond as mates."

Mates? Claim? There was something wrong about that but she couldn't seem to focus on that right now. "Yes, yes," she cried, her hands massaging her aching breasts. "I choose you."

Jamison and Taggart both chuckled. "You must say the bonding words," Taggart said.

Words came to her, filling her mind, and it was as if a voice whispered them to her, the voice she had followed here, the one who sang the song. "I choose Jamison and Taggart Ballard as my mates."

Jamison and Taggart had been waiting all their adult lives to hear those words. They were the most beautiful words that a man could hear. Bonding words that assured a man that a woman chose him to form her life bond with. For in their valley the weres mated for life, only death could separate them.

Just this morning they had awoken to the message that Lynx wanted to see them. No one kept the old wolf waiting so Jamison and Taggart had hurried to see what he needed of them. What they had heard had been hard to believe.

"The fairy queen has begun issuing a mating call," Lynx told them. "This morning the rest of the village will see the truth of that when Dimitri and Sebastian Cordova officially introduce their new mate Dakota."

"It is true!" Taggart exclaimed but Jamison had remained silent.

"It is true," Lynx nodded. "The fairy queen issues the call through song and only those worthy will hear and be allowed to cross beyond the veil and enter White Valley."

"How is that possible?" Jamison asked. "I thought it was impossible to cross the veil since so many left long ago?"

"All things are possible if the queen decides so," Lynx replied but something in his eyes made Jamison wonder. "The thing you must understand is that the women who come from the other side live in a different world, one where they are no longer treated as the treasures that they are. They often work harder and longer than any man. They are sometimes discarded and left by those who they trusted to care for them."

"How could any man do that?" Taggart demanded. Women were to be cherished and protected above all else.

"Things are very different outside the valley," Lynx said. "Just know that a woman may not be used to avid attention, to the care and love that we are known to shower on our mates. They are leery and uncertain of the sincerity of what you say and do. Sex is no longer a bond in their world."

Jamison heard the words and shook his head. To lie with a woman was a sacred act, one to be taken only when the mating bond was begun. To do otherwise was to bring disgrace to her and to himself. It was also strange hearing the words from a confirmed bachelor like Lynx. It was well known that he still refused to form the triad bond with his brother and the mate his brother had chosen.

Though no one knew why, there were many stories that were spread. All Jamison knew was that by not forming the bond he denied the woman the ability to find her inner wolf and fully enjoy the shifter lifestyle. Jamison felt that was selfish and he knew that Taggart felt the same way.

They had always known that they would form the triad bond together, sharing one mate for the rest of their lives. That was just the way it was among their people. And once the bond was fully formed the wolf they had known since puberty would awaken in their mate and she would transform for the first time under their watch and care. At that point they would be inseparable, a unit, a triad.

"Why tell us this?" Taggart asked and Jamison nodded in agreement with his brother's question.

"Because even now your mate makes her way through the forest to the veil," Lynx said. "She runs from something that she fears. She will have much doubt of what you tell her. You will have your hands full as you lead her through the bonding and help her to embrace her inner wolf and release it."

"What is it that she runs from? That she fears?" Jamison asked.

"That I have not been told," Lynx stated, shaking his head. "I only know that you must be there when she finds the pool. You must not stop her as she makes her way to the sacred waters and enters. You will know when the time is right to approach her. Only by letting the waters prepare her will she allow the mating bond to begin. If you interrupt before the time is right then you will lose her forever."

"We will not lose her," Taggart vowed.

"We will watch and wait until the right time is revealed to us," Jamison vowed.

Lynx nodded. "Then I wish you a smooth journey during the days ahead. Remember that she will not believe at first, even if she sees with her eyes what we are. We are a myth in her world, often feared as monsters. You must find a way into her heart."

Jamison and Taggart had both nodded.

"May the goddess's blessing smooth your way," Lynx said then turned and left them.

*A mate?* Jamison asked his brother as they shifted to their wolf forms for quicker travel. When they shifted back they would once again be in the clothes their human selves were wearing so they shouldn't scare her.

*A chance to find the woman who will complete us,* Taggart replied. *A woman for us to love and treasure for all our lives. One who will love and treasure us in return.*

*A mate*, Jamison said again. And with a prayer to the goddess he and Taggart tore across the field, headed for the bridal pool and the woman they hoped to win over and form a mating bond with.

Now that she stood in front of them, their Reggie, and had whispered the words that would allow them to bond with her, it was better than either of them could have anticipated. It was time to claim their mate.

## **Chapter Three**

Reggie saw their relief as the words they required left her lips and then thankfully she felt their hands on her skin. Taggart pulled her back so that she rested against his chest while his hands came up to replace hers on her breasts. Long fingers cupped and molded her firm flesh before thumb and finger moved to pinch and tug at her nipples. She reveled in his touch, loving the way his hands felt on her aching breasts.

Jamison leaned in and took her mouth in a searing kiss. His big hands framed her face as his tongue pushed past her lips to forge into her mouth and explore. Her eyes drifted shut as she was lost in a whirlwind of pure sensation. By the time he pulled back she was gasping for air, desperate to feel more.

Taggart's lips were moving over her neck, licking and sucking at her skin while Jamison moved his mouth down to her chest. His lips wrapped around one firm nipple that Taggart held out to him and he sucked greedily at it. She cried out and reached out to grasp his hair and hold him closer to her. He moved back and forth between her nipples and the tugging pull of his lips had her pussy clenching in growing need.

Jamison left to blaze a wet trail over her trembling abs to the top of her cunt which was now completely bare. It seemed to give him pause but only for a moment then she felt the tip of his tongue dipping into the top of her folds to rub against her swollen clit. She moaned and her head fell back to rest against Taggart. Turning her head, she licked at his skin, her hips canting out toward Jamison and his magic tongue.

Two things happened at once, sending her into a sensation overload that had her screaming into the air. Jamison used two fingers to spread the lips of her cunt and latched on to her clit, sucking it as he had her nipples. Almost at the exact moment Taggart leaned closer to lick and bite down where her neck met her shoulder. She could



swear she felt sharp teeth penetrate her skin, like what a dog's bite might feel like and then Taggart was sucking and licking over the mark he must have left.

Fire moved through her veins but was quickly replaced by a euphoric sensation that had her body loosening and relaxing between them.

"You bit me," she whispered and then cried out again as Jamison thrust one finger into her pussy and began fucking her as he continued to worship her clit with his mouth.

It was wicked being completely naked between two men who were still partially dressed. The fact that they were strangers added to the allure. Never had she fantasized about participating in such a risqué and taboo union. Two men at the same time? But at the moment she couldn't wait to feel them inside her, their cocks pounding into her pussy. It was a foreign and yet intoxicating feeling.

Taggart's mouth left her skin. He used one hand to turn her face toward him and took her lips in a kiss that tumbled her into a chaotic void of sheer fantasy. That's what this was, a fantasy, one she'd never had before. She prayed she wouldn't wake up to find that this was all a dream brought on by the drugs given to her by her mother or someone at the camp her mother was at. She wanted this to be real.

"It's real," Taggart whispered as he moved his mouth from hers to let his lips wander and explore every curve of her face. "We are real."

She smiled. It was almost as if he could read her mind. He chuckled against her skin and even his breath was a warm caress against her body.

"I want to feel you," she whispered, her hands clenching and unclenching on Jamison's shoulders. She was so close to coming, could feel the orgasm building with every thrust of his finger and stroke of his tongue. "I want you inside me."

"And we will be," Taggart assured her. "Have you ever been with a man before, Reggie?" he asked her. She should have been embarrassed at such an intimate question but that would be ludicrous given her current position.

"No," she admitted. She'd had toys and brought herself to orgasm many times but she didn't feel like sharing that knowledge with them.

Taggart chuckled again. "It will feel so much better when Jamison and I are inside you."

How the hell did he seem to know what she was thinking? Then her mind went blank as her orgasm rushed through her. Her pussy clenched on Jamison's finger, trying in vain to hold him inside her. She arched into his mouth and then pressed her hips back toward Taggart as Jamison's touch on her clit became too much.

The orgasm should have satiated her burning need but it seemed to only rev that need higher. Instead of taking the edge off, giving her a little reprieve, it was as if she was only hungrier now.

"Please," she begged. "I'm dying to feel you inside me."

*We can't mess this up,* Taggart told his brother, speaking without words the way they had since they'd first gone through the change and embraced their wolves. With his bite he had been able to begin hearing Reggie's thoughts. Jamison hadn't marked her with his bite yet. *She believes this is a dream, that she will awaken and we will no longer be here.*

*We can't fully mate her until we both fill her as one, until we all reach fulfillment together,* Jamison replied. *We will just have to watch over her until the time for that is right.*

*I think the time is now,* Taggart urged. *The sooner the bond is completed the better for us all.*

*She has never been with a man,* Jamison said. *You want her first time to be with two men at once?*

Yes, Taggart admitted. *I know how it sounds but I can't shake the feeling that we need to seal the bond as quickly as possible. Ours has already been sealed, hers is only beginning. If we don't want to risk losing her then I honestly believe that we need to begin with the final mating.*

Taggart knew what his brother was thinking. They had been taught that when the time came to take a mate that the males should woo the lady into the bond. It was important that she be accustomed to both males' touch prior to the final mating where they would both fill her and reach the pinnacle of pleasure together. But Taggart couldn't shake the feeling that it was important to solidify the bond for her and let the changes begin in her body before she could panic.

Listening to her thoughts made him feel sure that she would panic. Once she knew that they were able to shift into wolves, that with the introduction of the hormone they passed to her through saliva and semen she would be able to do the same. Well, she just might run back to the place she had run come from.

Taggart allowed Jamison to hear his thoughts, thus sharing what he had learned from Reggie with his brother. He and Jamison had been able to communicate with thoughts for a long time now, so it was easy to shield some thoughts while sharing others. Reggie didn't have that experience yet and Taggart wouldn't scare her by sharing his thoughts with her just yet. Eventually she would be able to shield some of her thoughts from them but not yet. Right now her mind was completely open to him.

*Bite her.* Taggart urged his brother. *See for yourself and then tell me that you would prefer to take things at a slower pace.*

Jamison rose to his feet in front of her and Taggart kept her head turned toward him, leaning down to take her lips in another kiss, exposing the other side of her neck for his brother. He kept his eyes open and watched as his brother licked her flesh, saw his canines flash before Jamison bit Reggie as he had. He could remember the pleasure of sinking his teeth into her flesh, the feel as his saliva mixed into her blood. The hormone they filled her with would help her to relax while making her need and desire flare higher.

She pulled from his kiss and he would swear that her blue eyes were darker pools like the bottom of the water where the sun didn't quite touch. Her shoulder-length black hair was wild around her face and her skin was the dusky rose of sunset as

passion burst beneath her skin. He could feel her heartbeat, could hear it like a song of seduction. He knew that he wouldn't be able to hold back much longer.

Jamison brought his mouth slowly up from the place he'd bitten and his eyes met Taggart's.

*The bridal pool mixed with our saliva will help to prepare her for taking us both at once but still we will need the oil to ease the way inside her ass, Jamison said. I did not think to bring any with me.*

*The cabins are close, Taggart stated. They are all kept fully stocked with anything that might be needed during the time of mating. It shouldn't take us very long to reach one of them.*

*It will be close. The taste of her cunt is still on my lips. I can still feel the ripple of her pussy on my finger, Jamison groaned.*

*The smell of her desire threatens my control of my wolf, Taggart told his brother. It will be hard to hold him back when I sink my cock into the snug depths of her ass.*

Jamison nodded. He slid one arm between Taggart's chest and Reggie's shoulders and dipped to wrap the other behind her knees. Taggart watched his brother easily lift their mate into his arms, cradling her firmly against his chest. *To the cabin as quickly as we can.*

Taggart nodded and preceded his brother up the path from the pool and onto the one that would lead them toward the cabins. He was surprised when he saw Gunnar Mondella outside the first cabin they came to. Gunnar and Geran must have found a mate as well. The way Gunnar smiled and nodded as they passed made Taggart hope that things were going well for the Mondellas.

Taggart led the way farther up the path, heading to the next cabin and feeling like he might kill something if it was occupied as well. His wolf was clawing at his skin, sensing the urgency inside him, and wanting to burst free and run to reach their goal more quickly. Somehow he doubted that such a sight would go unnoticed by Reggie, no matter how consumed with desire and need she was.

His brother gave a shaky laugh and shook his head as Taggart shared his thoughts. Eventually they would have to show her, to let her see what would happen the first time that she changed. But first they had to mate her. His cock was so hard that it hurt, so hard that he could feel his heartbeat throbbing in it. He was going to burst if he didn't get inside her soon.

The next cabin came into view and he was happy to see that it appeared empty. He quickened his stride, leaving Jamison behind as he tore up the path and threw open the door. He turned and nodded at his brother. It was empty. He left the door open and immediately began unfastening his pants. He shoved them down his legs and stepped out of them before turning to open a cabinet to search for the oil they would need.

The second one held what he was after and he already had it in hand when his brother entered, Reggie still secure in his arms. He watched Jamison kick the door shut behind him and moved toward the bed as his brother did. Jamison eased Reggie down to her knees on the bed and stepped back. Taggart couldn't take his eyes off her. She was the most beautiful sight he'd ever seen.

Her eyes met his and he moved closer, only stopping when his knees hit the edge of the mattress. The tube of oil was still in his hands but he still hadn't managed to open it. Her eyes flared as they traveled his body from head to toe and he felt his cock flex as her gaze seemed to linger there. She met his eyes again and licked her lips. He groaned, easily reading her desire to take him into her mouth and taste him on her tongue.

Before he could do anything she seemed to leap toward him. Her hands and mouth were everywhere and he loved the feel of her sharp teeth nipping at his flesh as she explored his chest and abs on her descent to his aching cock. He had to force the hand still holding the oil to remain loose or he would burst the tube in his grip. Goddess, the things her touch did to him.

She stilled and he glanced down to see her poised on her hands and knees just in front of his cock, her mouth inches from his straining flesh. It took a strength he didn't realize he possessed to keep from thrusting forward, taking her mouth and fucking it

the way he would her ass. But somehow he managed to find the restraint required, no matter how tempting her hot breath was as it caressed his length.

She sighed. He watched her wet her lips with her tongue and then in the next breath she was licking over the head of his cock. He moaned at the touch and his hips moved slightly forward, butting the head against her lips, seeking entrance into the wet heat he knew waited there.

She didn't disappoint. She opened wide and sucked the head of his cock, her lips tight around him as her tongue flicked in and out of the tiny slit. He could feel a drop of his cum bursting forth and she moaned as she took it on her tongue and jabbed eagerly for more.

One small hand wrapped around his shaft and stroked slowly up and down as she continued to suck at the head. She was killing him. He wanted to grab her hair and hold her in place while he fucked her mouth, riding into the back of her throat as he came. But there would be time for that later. He held tight to his control, his eyes hooded as his brother moved onto the bed behind Reggie.

Slowly Taggart pulled from her mouth and hand, easing away from her with a wince as she tightened her fingers, not wanting to release him. He stepped back as his brother reclined back on the bed, shifting her attention from him to Jamison. Taggart poured some oil into his palm and slowly caressed his cock with it. As soon as Jamison had her in position he would join them. He couldn't wait to feel her ass grip his cock as he plunged into her tight hole while his brother filled her cunt. Thank the goddess that she appeared as on edge and eager as they were because Taggart had no doubt this first time would be quick.

He opened his mind to his brother and Jamison did the same, making it as if they were one person experiencing Reggie. She moved to straddle Jamison and Taggart could almost feel her sharp little nails as she dug them into his brother's chest, the feel of her wet heat as she slid her pussy back and forth across Jamison's cock. Jamison met his eyes and Taggart grinned as he moved to slide onto the bed behind them.

He knew the moment Jamison gripped her hips and thrust inside her pussy, could feel the pleasure rippling between the bond they shared. Her moan of pleasure echoed in the cabin and Taggart knew what it cost Jamison to pull her forward instead of letting her ride his cock like she seemed so eager to do.

Taggart didn't need to hear his brother's demand to *Hurry up!* He was already moving into place behind her. One hand spread her back cheeks and then he was using the hand still coated in oil to work her anus. He rubbed over it, making sure it was coated before sinking that first finger inside. She was loose and ready but the oil would make it even better for her. It would continue what the bridal pool waters had started.

When he could easily fit three fingers inside her, when she was pressing back into his touch with passionate cries falling from her lips, he pulled his fingers free and placed his cock head there. He pressed hard, feeling the resistance of her muscles finally give as he popped past that first tight ring. With a groan he pressed deep until his balls rested on the curves of her ass cheeks. He could feel his brother's cock throbbing through the thin membrane of skin that was all that separated them. It was sheer heaven and a torture like he'd never known.

As one Taggart and Jamison fucked her, their cocks plunging deep before pulling almost free only to return in another hard thrust. She was keening and screaming between them. One hand was curved back and her fingers dug into Taggart's forearm where he held her hips with his hands. The other hand was clenched into Jamison's shoulder. Taggart would almost swear that he heard a howl come from her as he felt her orgasm building.

She tightened like a vise on them and Taggart did howl as his cock exploded, pumping his semen inside her ass. Jamison filled her pussy with his seed and Reggie gripped them tighter than a fist as she screamed through her orgasm. They held still, buried to the balls in her wet heat as their bond was sealed. There would be no turning back now. The process would begin and sometime in the next twenty-four to forty-eight hours Reggie would begin her first transformation into a wolf.

As she collapsed between them, already on the edge of sleep, Taggart sighed. He had a feeling they would be doing a lot of explaining while they waited. He pulled free of her ass and jumped up to get a cloth to clean her up. She cuddled against Jamison's chest and he could read her contentment in her thoughts. He also could tell that she still thought this was just a dream.

He would go for a run while his brother rested with her. His wolf was alive and howling with pleasure at finding a mate. He was looking forward to her first shift to wolf form, wondering what color her pelt would be, hoping it would be the rich black of her hair. He was eager to have her experience the joy of running and his wolf was just as eager to claim hers once she shifted.



## **Chapter Four**

Reggie woke up slowly, her body aching in the most delicious way. It felt like she had really lived her dream of having two gorgeous men make love to her. She stretched and her hand came into contact with something warm and hard and definitely male. She ran her fingers through the chest hair and followed the path down to tight abdominal muscles before feeling the brush of a hard cock. She let her fingers wrap around it and gave it a squeeze before moving up and down the long length. She was still dreaming.

"I love waking up this way, Reggie," a voice said beside her and the name Jamison went through her head. "But if you keep that up I'm not going to be able to stop from coming all over you."

Her eyes fluttered open, a smile on her lips until her gaze locked with the man beside her. With a cry she let go of him and jumped from the bed, only to discover that she was naked. She wrenched the top blanket free and wrapped it around herself as quickly as she could. What the hell was going on? Where was she? Who was this guy? What the hell had they drugged her with? Had they raped her?

"I take exception to that, Reggie," the man—Jamison?—said from the bed and he didn't look happy. "Taggart and I would never stoop to taking from a woman what is only hers to give. That you would even think such a thing hurts."

Was he reading her mind? How did he know what she was thinking? And why did she suddenly feel very guilty for that last thought? Was it the hurt in his eyes? Why would she care? And what was this feeling inside her as if someone else were sharing her body?

Jamison sighed. "We really need to talk, Reggie. There are a lot of things that you need to know and understand." He patted the bed beside him but she just lifted her

eyebrow at him. No way was she getting back on that bed with him. "It would help if you sat down and relaxed. I have a feeling that most of what I say will be hard for you to believe. I promise that I will not touch you unless you ask me to."

She looked at him. He still sat on the bed, naked and seeming not to care that his erection bobbed up for her to see. She groaned. It would be nice if he could just cover himself so that she could concentrate and stop salivating. It was as if she could remember what he'd felt like moving inside her.

"You had but to ask," he said with a smile as he pulled the sheet up and over his lower body. His chest and abs were still visible and were just as tempting to look at.

She had to force her legs to move back toward the bed and she sat at the foot, opposite where he reclined on the other side. "How do you know what I am thinking? Are you reading my mind?"

"Yes and no," Jamison answered. *We have formed a bond that allows us to share our thoughts with one another.*

Okay, she heard the words but hadn't seen his mouth move. What the hell was going on?

"I don't have to speak aloud," Jamison said. *You can hear me just fine without the need to speak.*

"I'm not sure that I like that," Reggie said. "Why can't I hear anything right now? Can you hear everything that I'm thinking?"

"Yes, I can," Jamison said. "And it makes me wonder what kind of life you had on the other side of the veil."

"The veil?" Reggie shook her head. His answers were only leaving her more confused. Where the hell was she?

"You are in White Valley," Jamison informed her. "It is the place that my people have always called home."

"Where is White Valley?"

"It can only be reached from your home by crossing through the veil," Jamison told her.

The fog-like stuff that she had gone through?

"Yes, that was probably the way the veil would have appeared to you," Jamison nodded.

"Listen, I understand that you can read my thoughts," Reggie said. "But I find it really rude so please don't reply unless I ask it out loud."

"As you wish." He nodded.

"Why can't I hear your thoughts the same way?" she asked. He had said that there was no need for words between them but it didn't seem like she was hearing anything.

*I can control what thoughts I desire to share with you.* He spoke in her head again. It was really disconcerting. *Eventually you will learn to do the same.*

"Did...? Was...?" She couldn't figure out how to word her question of what exactly had happened last night. Had she made love with two men? If so then where was the other one? The name Taggart came to mind. Had she really been so wanton as to sleep with two men, two strangers? Or had that part been a dream?

"It was a dream come true," Jamison murmured. "Taggart and I formed a bond with you last night."

Images flashed through her mind of the three of them together. She touched her shoulders and realized that her flesh still bore the marks of both men where they had bitten her. "You bit me," she said.

"Yes," Jamison nodded. "It is part of the bonding process."

"What is this bonding process that you keep talking about?"

"In White Valley when a triad is formed, it is called a bonding," Jamison said, seeming to search for the right words to use with her.

"A triad?" she questioned. So it was normal for a woman to be with two men in his home?

"Yes, it is what we all do," Jamison nodded then seemed chagrined that he had answered another question that she hadn't spoken out loud. "I don't know how to explain this all to you without scaring you," he said. "Please promise me that you will sit and listen to everything that I tell you."

He seemed so sincere and afraid that she might bolt. What exactly did he have to tell her? Had she wandered from one cult to another? When the hell had all the cults shown up?

"We are no cult," Jamison answered angrily. "At least not in the way that you envision it. I will not apologize for answering your thoughts this time when they are virtually screaming to me."

"Well, it is not exactly like I can control them," she snapped back.

"Nor can I control how I react to them," he replied. "We are not a cult. We are an old society that has chosen to stay in the place of our birth and adhere to the way of life our ancestors walked."

"And what way of life is that?" she asked.

He took a deep breath and looked at her as if he was debating what to share with her next. "We have an ability that your people have forgotten. A gift from the goddess to be embraced and loved."

"What gift?" she wanted to know. "And how have my people forgotten it?"

"Long ago there were people who left the valley in hopes of finding what they desired on the other side of the veil," Jamison said. "They turned their backs on their people and their heritage, instead choosing a new life where people judged one another by how much wealth they obtained."

Yeah, that sounded like the world she lived in. Of course they also judged on beauty and body. The better you looked the more you were liked.

"I am sorry that your people have so little character that they would judge what they do not know," Jamison said.

"So what do you judge on?" she asked.

"We don't really judge," he answered and she laughed.

"I guess perhaps we judge by a person's actions," he conceded. "How they treat others as well as themselves. We look to a person's heart and know the beauty that lies inside."

That sounded wonderful, but was it truly possible to live like that?

"We have never known of any other way to live," Jamison said.

"It sounds nice," she said. "But I don't understand why I am here."

"I'm not exactly sure myself," he answered. "Taggart and I were told that you would be at the bridal pool and that we should go and see if you would choose to mate with us."

She remembered saying the words that had popped into her head, choosing them as mates. What had she committed herself to? How long would she be forced to remain here?

"You will never be forced to do anything that you do not desire," Jamison said and there was anger in his voice again. "What type of society did you live in that such a thought would occur to you?"

"You're reading my thoughts again," she said, deciding not to answer him. How did she explain to him that women were bedded and discarded all the time? That marriages rarely lasted forever. That it was common to marry and divorce several times.

"It is a sad world that you live in," Jamison spoke softly. "I can't imagine anyone wanting to go back to such a place."

He was right. She had nothing to go back for, no one who would care. Her mother might want her but only so that her place in the cult she was now a part of would be sealed. It appeared that her mother had finally lost her mind and Reggie doubted that she would ever be able to save her. The only thing she would do would be to find

herself trapped and married as the first wife to some religious dictator. She shuddered at the thought.

"How could a mother put her child in such a place?" Jamison asked. "How could a man desire more than one woman to be his life mate, to bring his children to life? We have no divorce as you call it here. When we take a mate we form a bond that lasts forever."

"Is that what I did when I spoke those words?" Reggie asked. "Did I form a bond with you and your brother?"

"Yes," Jamison nodded. "You accepted our desire to bond and mate with you."

She nodded. So what did it mean to mate or bond with someone? Obviously it lasted forever to them? So did they not die? Age? What?

Jamison laughed. "Yes, we grow old and die. It is the cycle of life. Death gives way to birth and all life has time. But the bond we have formed is more than a physical one. Already I hear your thoughts and fears and they become mine. I sense your needs and want nothing more than to meet every one of them. I begin to know you and love the person before me. Do you not feel anything for me?"

Well, yes, of course she felt something for him. She wouldn't say that it was love. She couldn't believe that. Love didn't happen that quickly. But there was something there. She knew that she didn't want to hurt him. That it mattered to her what he thought and felt. And there was this thing inside her that kept wanting to take over, to have her give in to all that he desired. It was getting hard to fight. And her bones were starting to ache.

"Your bones ache already?" Jamison exclaimed and she knew it would do no good to remind him again to stay out of her head. "The process is moving quickly. I must call Taggart back."

"Where exactly is Taggart?" she wanted to know.

"He went for a run after you had fallen asleep," Jamison said absently as he seemed to concentrate on something.

"Are you calling him without words?" she asked. "Can you just reach out no matter where he is and contact him?" Hell, that was better than a cell phone.

"Yes," he said. "Our bond allows us to communicate no matter how far apart we might be. He is on his way back." He sighed. "There are certain things you should know before he arrives."

"Such as?" she questioned.

Jamison sighed again and shook his head. "I don't know where to begin or how to share with you what I must without scaring you."

"Well, telling me that is making me nervous so maybe you should just come right out and say what you need to say," she stated.

"White Valley is the only home that I have ever known," he said. "I have heard tales of what lies beyond the veil but I've never crossed."

That was still a little weird to think about. How exactly did a fog create a veil between worlds? How did she manage to cross it and, more importantly, what did it mean? She'd never heard of a White Valley.

"That is because it does not exist in your world," he answered softly.

What did that mean? She was no longer in America? No longer on Planet Earth? What the hell?

"I knew that this would be difficult," he said again. "You are and yet you aren't."

"Well, that explains it," she said dryly.

"I'm trying, Reggie," he said. "My fear of losing you is holding me back from what I need to tell you."

"We've only just met," she said. "How could you fear losing me?"

"Perhaps you didn't understand what I said earlier," he replied. "We have already formed a triad bond. To lose you now would mean that Taggart and I would walk the rest of our days alone. We mate for life, there can never be another for us at this point."

"I don't want to hurt you, Jamison," she said sadly. "I know that something inside me calls to you, desires to be with you, almost demands it. But I-I just..."

"You don't believe," he said.

He was right. Part of her was still convinced that this was some dream she was still in the middle of.

"It is no dream," he promised. "I do not know how to convince you of that. Soon, sooner than we anticipated you will know beyond a shadow of a doubt that this is real, we are real. I cannot shelter you from what lies ahead."

"And what is that?" she asked. "What lies ahead?"

"When Taggart and I both claimed you at the same time and we all reached fulfillment together we formed the final mating," he said. "It is that act that begins the process that you feel inside you."

"What process?" she demanded. What the hell had they done to her?

"There is still so much to explain," he sighed. "The why, the how, so much detail. But I have run out of time. Taggart is here."

He rose from the bed, doing nothing to cover his nakedness and she couldn't help the way her body responded to his. He was perfection. He moved across to the door and opened it just as a dog ran in. Hell, that was no dog. It was a wolf. A big one at that. She moved to the center of the bed on her knees, eyes wide as the wolf moved toward her.

His coat was beautiful, reminding her of Jamison's hair with varying shades of brown, blond, and red. And the eyes were the same chocolate color. The wolf came right over to her and put his front paws on the bed, leaning in to lick her face.

"What is this wolf doing here?" she asked and she knew her voice was shaking with the fear she felt. Those jaws looked strong enough to tear her apart with one bite.

"He would never hurt you," Jamison said.

"I'm glad you're sure of that," she murmured.



"Taggart, you are scaring her," Jamison said.

"Taggart?" she asked and looked back toward the door that Jamison had already closed. "Where is he?"

"Right in front of you," Jamison replied, watching her.

"Are you trying to tell me that Taggart is the wolf?" she laughed.

"Show her," Jamison said with a sigh. "I think it might be the only way that you start to believe."

The wolf moved back so that all four paws were on the floor. She could hear popping noises and then right before her eyes the wolf began to change. So much happened at once that she couldn't keep her eyes on just one spot. The muzzle retreated, the fur began to shimmer and transform to skin and soon the wolf was gone and Taggart rose to stand in his place.

"You're-you're..." she was stuttering and her mind was as well. There was no way that she had just seen a wolf transform into a man. Werewolves didn't really exist. Not outside books and movies.

"We do exist," Jamison answered quietly as Taggart just stood before her, watching her. "And soon you will see for yourself."

"What does that mean?" she wanted to know.

"You're one of us now," Taggart replied. "Your wolf is already awakening and soon you will transform as well."

"That is why you feel the ache in your bones," Jamison added.

A wolf? Werewolves? A veil that separated worlds? She must be going crazy. That was it, had to be it. She was locked up in some hospital somewhere because she had lost her mind. She closed her eyes, squeezing them tight.

*When I open my eyes, I'll be back home. When I open my eyes all of this will disappear. When I open my eyes, I won't be here. When I open my eyes I'll be in my bed at home and this will have all been just a dream. Just a dream.*

## Chapter Five

"We are not a dream," Taggart said. "And when you open your eyes we will still be right here."

Jamison watched her eyes flash open, saw the fear and uncertainty in them, heard the echo of panic in her thoughts and felt them like a knife to his heart, to his soul. How was he to protect his mate from her fears when what she feared the most was him? Lynx had warned them that this would be hard, that the woman meant for them would be filled with doubt. Jamison had hoped differently. But now he understood exactly what they faced. And if they didn't convince her before the change began in earnest, before her wolf forced the shift, Reggie might not survive.

"You must calm down and listen to us," Jamison urged, wanting to move closer to her, to take her in his arms and yet knowing that she would not be accepting of such an act in her current state. "Reggie, I am begging you to stop panicking and listen to me, to us."

He watched her struggle to gain control and felt pride when she finally managed and gave them a nod. This was their one chance to win her over. They had to fight past the fears and doubts she'd brought from her world and open her up to how life worked in theirs.

"You have bonded with us," Taggart said. "You are now mated to us for life. Soon your wolf will call and you will have no choice but to answer and let it free."

Well, apparently his brother would be of no help. But then Taggart had always been the one to act first and think later.

*You are not helping the situation,* Jamison told him.

*No, he's not.* He started as he heard Reggie's voice in his head. Not her chaotic thoughts but her actual voice.

He smiled. He couldn't help it. "You spoke to us," he told us. "We heard you."

She shook her head. "None of this makes sense. What you are asking me to believe just isn't possible."

Taggart stepped forward and took her hand, pulling it until it rested against his chest. "And yet I am real. I am the man who made love to you until you passed out from the pleasure. It was my cock buried in the snug grip of your ass. Tell me you don't remember the pleasure you experienced with us."

Jamison watched Reggie blush, read the memories of the previous night in her thoughts and smiled.

"Perhaps we should show you again?" Taggart asked and Jamison watched his brother move her hand down until it touched his straining cock. Jamison wanted that touch for himself. "Is that what you want? To feel us again and know that we are real and not some figment of your imagination?"

Jamison could read the hunger in her, felt it as his own. She wanted them, wanted to believe and yet a part of her just couldn't seem to. Maybe Taggart was right. Maybe what they needed to do first was convince her that they were real, alive and all hers. Then maybe she would be more willing to listen and believe what they were trying to tell her.

Reggie didn't know what to say or what to do or, heaven help her, what was even real anymore. Except that she could feel Taggart. Could feel the heat and firmness of his flesh. He was real. He had to be. No dream could feel this way. No imaginary man would feel so alive beneath her hand. Taggart's question took root in her mind and she couldn't think of anything else. Yes, that was exactly what she wanted right now. Not to think, or question or wonder. But to feel them and know that they weren't going to disappear.

She let her fingers wrap around Taggart's shaft and stroked up and down the length. He groaned and stepped closer, placing one knee up on the bed. "I want you to be real," she whispered.

"I am," he promised, reaching out to touch her face and let his fingers trail down her cheek. "But I am more than you have ever known."

A werewolf. They were men capable of shifting into animals, wolves. She had thought such things didn't exist in real life but Taggart had changed right in front of her eyes. And Jamison said that she would be able to change too. How was that possible? She'd never changed in her life. Why would she be able to now?

"We will answer the rest of your questions after," Taggart promised as he moved onto the bed with her. "First I desire only to assure you that I am flesh and blood, alive and all yours."

She nodded and when he leaned in to take her mouth, to push his tongue inside and explore she gave herself over to every sensation he evoked. Her hands found his shoulders and her nails gripped him. He was flesh and blood and male. And yes, he was hers, all hers. She couldn't touch enough of him. Although it wasn't as debilitating as her desire had seemed the first time she still wanted him, craved him and couldn't wait to feel him inside her.

"The first time was aided by the waters of the bridal pool," Jamison spoke from behind her. He must have moved around the bed while she was wrapped up in Taggart. "The waters help to make a woman ready to mate with two men, to ease her. You have no need of that now."

"Your body knows our touch, craves it," Taggart added, his lips moving down to her shoulder where his tongue licked over the mark he'd left when he bit her. "Your body knows and accepts what your mind can't seem to."

She was panting with desire. At some point she had lost the blanket and now her flesh was flush against Taggart's. She loved the rub of his hairy chest against her nipples, the way his hard muscles felt to her softer flesh. Most of all she loved the touch

of his mouth and the way his cock brushed her stomach, leaving a wet trail. Taggart bit her again and she cried out, more in pleasure than pain. She felt a need to do the same to him.

He pulled back, his tongue soothing the mark before his lips pressed a kiss there. "Go ahead," he urged. "Follow your instinct."

She ran her lips over his shoulder and neck, letting her teeth scrape his flesh. She trailed her mouth down to his chest and let her teeth scrape over his nipples before moving to grip his right pectoral muscle between her teeth and biting down. The small act was like an aphrodisiac bursting under her skin. When she let go she pushed until he fell to his back before her and she could slide on top of him.

He didn't stop her as she moved her mouth over his chest and down his taut stomach, nipping and sucking along the way. *Real, so real.* She took his cock in her hand and eased down until her mouth hovered just over the glistening crown. Her tongue slid out to lick over the crest like a favored treat and his taste exploded in her mouth, making her crazy for more.

She wrapped her lips around the mushroom head and sucked greedily, her tongue flicking at the opening, seeking more of his taste. She felt Taggart's hands wrap in her hair, the caress of his fingers on her scalp. She moved her mouth down along his shaft, letting her teeth scrape his flesh as she took as much of him as she could. Still, it wasn't enough. She wanted more.

"Reggie," he moaned, "you're killing me here."

She loved the way he moaned her name, loved the power she felt. This had to be real. He had to be real as did Jamison. Which meant that she had a lot to learn and understand.

She felt hands at her legs positioning her so that she was up on her knees, her legs on the outside of Taggart's. Jamison. She groaned around Taggart's cock. Jamison was working two fingers into her dripping pussy and it felt incredible. She could feel his lips moving over the small of her back until he was nipping at her buttocks. His other hand

spread her rear cheeks and she felt his tongue jabbing against her anus. It was wrong and yet felt so amazingly right.

"Nothing is wrong between mates," Taggart spoke. "Everything you desire is natural."

Her only answer was to moan around his shaft and the vibration seemed to make him very happy as he arched up into her mouth so that his cock butted the back of her throat. At her slight gagging sound he immediately pulled back until his cock popped free of her mouth.

"I'm sorry, Reggie," he said. "You make me lose my mind."

She couldn't answer, could only moan again as Jamison continued to work his fingers in and out of her and his tongue kept up the steady jabbing at her anus. She was moving back into his touch, rocking on her knees. She bent her head to nuzzle along the shaft of Taggart's cock. If this was a dream she never wanted to wake up.

"No dream," Taggart said. "When you sleep we will be here beside you. And when you wake up we will still be here. Loving you, caring for you and making sure that you want for nothing."

She lifted her head to look at him, wanting to believe and yet still not able to process it all.

*For now just feel, Reggie.* It was Jamison's voice in her head and she truly appreciated this new way of communicating as his mouth stayed busy pleasuring her.

Husky chuckles filled her head and she smiled.

*Come here.* Taggart held his hand out to her and as she moved up his body she felt the loss of Jamison's mouth and fingers.

Taggart helped her move up so that her pussy hovered over his groin. He used one hand to hold his shaft steady while the other cradled her hip, helping her lower onto him. The first thing she felt was the press of his cock head as he began to push inside. She closed her eyes as her channel pulsed and clenched around him. Inch by inch he

filled her, keeping the pace slow and steady and making her catch her breath until finally she knew she held every inch of his length.

Her hands were fisted on his abdomen as they both just held still, enjoying the feel of being joined in such an intimate way. This was real. He was real. She had never felt so alive, so vibrant. Her mind flooded with a million thoughts of things she would have to deal with, things she would need to understand and accept. For now she was going to do just as Taggart and Jamison suggested though, just feel.

Taggart's hands gripped her hips and helped her as she began to move up and down on his cock. It felt so amazing to have him inside her. Up and down she moved, keeping her pace slow and easy as she rode him. Taggart just held her, allowing her to set the rhythm. His hands went from stroking her hips to gripping them and then back to rubbing them.

She leaned forward, changing the angle as she let her hands brace on the mattress beside his shoulders. She kept working her hips on him and his hands slipped down to cup the back of her thighs just beneath her buttocks. She found his mouth with hers and the kiss they shared was long, wet and deep. His tongue played erotically against hers in perfect simulation of what was going on with their bodies. Her nipples were hard points of pleasure where they rubbed against the hairy plane of his chest.

Their breathing changed, coming in pants and gasps as the pace picked up, both of them moving faster as they sought the release of orgasm. Mouths parted and she rose slightly, allowing his mouth to find and suck a turgid nipple. Each pull of his mouth, scrape of his teeth seemed to pull an imaginary string that tugged at her cunt, making it ripple and squeeze his pumping cock. She could feel the rush of orgasm as it began to pull her in.

It seemed her entire body tightened, every muscle clenching and holding tight as she reached the tip of the pinnacle. Then with a crash that forced a cry from her lips she was falling down the other side, free-falling into a cyclone of sheer pleasure. There was nothing to catch her, no parachute to slow her fall. Instead she tumbled, flinging

headfirst into a whirlwind that left her breathless and sensitive to even the softest of touches.

Taggart had joined her at some point and she could still feel the heat of his release inside her. His strong hands stroked down her back where she lay limp atop him. His touch was gentle, soothing and exactly what she needed as she shuddered her way back. She was just letting her eyes drift open when she felt another hand, another touch. Jamison.

*Can you take more pleasure?* His question filled her mind as he touched her ass, running his hands over her curves.

“Yes,” she answered aloud. She couldn’t—no, wouldn’t—deny him the pleasure that she and Taggart had shared.

She pushed herself up onto her hands and knees over Taggart and with his help moved to lie on her back beside him. Taggart came to his side beside her and just smiled and watched as Jamison moved between her thighs. Soft and slow but no less consuming. That was Jamison. His rock-hard cock slid deep as he bent to brush his lips over her. His tongue teased and rubbed, moving from the soft skin just behind her ear to lick across her jawline before nibbling down the column of her neck. Then it was a hot trail back up to her ear and nibbling kisses along her lobe before his tongue traced the sensitive shell.

“Jamison,” she moaned and his husky chuckle brought goose bumps as it washed over her wet skin. Her hands slid beneath his braced arms and moved up his back to grip his shoulders, holding him close.

Was it possible to feel real emotion this soon? To feel the beginning of love for not one but two men who were more than she’d ever known existed? She had nothing to compare this to. She’d never really known love before.

Jamison’s mouth moved back to her neck and he sucked at the mark he’d left on her before. His pace quickened so that he rode hard and fast between her thighs, his cock pumping deep into her pussy with every thrust. Her nails buried in his flesh as she held



on for the ride and her legs came up to grip the sides of his thrusting hips, opening her wider.

She was panting, moaning and couldn't believe that she was climbing another orgasm so soon after the first one. She wouldn't have thought it possible. Her back arched from the bed, pressing her nipples into his chest as her head dug into the mattress. No sound left her throat this time as she flew the heights of release again but Jamison's groan of pleasure echoed her feelings.

She swore she felt the press of something inside her, as if another presence was awakening within her and beginning to stretch. Her wolf? Jamison and Taggart had told her that having gone through a final mating process with them that her wolf would begin to form and grow inside her. They had also said that she would shift as she had witnessed Taggart doing. All exhaustion left her as her mind exploded with questions.

There were a million things she needed to know and understand before anything else happened. And it didn't feel like she had a lot of time to get those answers.

Jamison slipped free of her body and moved toward what she knew was the bathroom. She heard him turn on water and sighed at the thought of feeling it wash over her skin. It seemed like days that she had swam in what they called the bridal pool though she knew it was only hours.

"The water is running and ready for you," Taggart whispered, leaning to give her a soft kiss. "Jamison has it all set for you. Take your time. We will talk when you are refreshed."

Her legs were shaky as she stood and moved from the bed. It was nice, the way they took care of her. She'd never really had that before. She had always been the caretaker and liked this new feeling. It was definitely something she could get used to.

## **Chapter Six**

She stepped back into the bedroom to find both men sitting on the bed, looking refreshed as well.

"We could hear your questions all the way out here," Jamison said with a smile.

"So if you're ready we'll do our best to give you the answers that we can," Taggart added.

Both men were still naked and she noticed how comfortable they were as if it was a natural thing for them.

"What is more natural than your skin?" Taggart murmured.

"I guess I'm just not used to it," Reggie said as she moved to settle on the bed and to pull one of the covers up to tuck under her arms.

Jamison nodded and moved to grab his pants and toss Taggart his. Taggart groused a bit but he put them on before moving back to the bed and settling in next to her. Jamison took her other side, putting her firmly between them.

"I figured it would be best if we spoke aloud for now as you have voiced that you're not so comfortable with our way of communicating," Jamison said. "And Taggart has agreed."

Taggart nodded.

"I thought we would start by telling you of what we know of the history of White Valley," Jamison said, looking at her and only continuing when she nodded. "The valley has always existed as far as we know. It has been a home and shelter to our kind as well as the fae that reside here."

"Fae?" she questioned. "As in faeries?"

"I don't believe that they are as you are picturing in your mind," Taggart said. "I'm not sure what this Tinker Bell is but she is not as the fae."

Reggie blushed and laughed. So Tink was what she thought of when talking about faeries.

"They are small, yes, but not tiny enough to fly around you," Taggart continued. "And the fae are the ones to control the magic that keeps our valley hidden and secure from strangers or anyone who would do us harm."

"The Lady Serena is the queen of the faeries and she is the one who has managed to open our border to a chosen few who may cross over," Jamison said.

"Like me?" Reggie asked.

"Like you," he agreed. "I'm not sure how she does this or how she picks but we were told that the queen was issuing a call and that you would be arriving."

"A song," Reggie said. "I heard the most beautiful song and followed it here. I felt as if I would be safe if I could just find where the song was coming from."

"And you will," Taggart stated. "No harm shall befall you now that we are together."

She nodded. "What exactly does that mean? That we are mated?"

"It means that we will love and protect you for the rest of our lives," Jamison vowed. "Only death can separate us. But even then the bond we share is unbroken."

"So no divorce, huh?" she jokingly said.

"What is divorce?" Taggart asked.

"It is when a man and woman decide that they shouldn't be together and separate." She did her best to explain.

"There is no separation here," Taggart said. "When you are blessed by the goddess with a mate you do not question. Already I know that if needed I would die for you. You are a woman to be treasured and cherished. There is no questioning, only embracing."

"Are women so easily discarded where you come from?" Jamison asked softly.

"My father left my mother when I was but a child," Reggie admitted. "It is not uncommon for a woman to rear her children alone."

"I am sorry for what you have known," Jamison stated softly. "No child of ours shall question a father's love. Nor shall their mother."

"What place would allow such treatment?" Taggart asked with anger in his voice. "Do they not understand the treasure they are given? To know a woman's love, to be given the gift of heart and body and then throw it away? What could possibly make a man do something so callous? What type of man is that?"

Reggie shook her head. She had often wondered that as well. "Sometimes people change, physically or maybe intellectually, emotionally, and it just doesn't work anymore."

Taggart swiped his hand through the air in anger. "Excuses and nothing more. Change is to be expected. We all grow. The key is to be around to grow together. To watch and share in the journey."

Reggie nodded. She agreed with him.

"So is there a physical bond that we have formed that makes us mates for life?" she asked, wanting to get back on track and relieve some of Taggart's anger over what occurred on her side of the veil.

"When we bit you, made love to you, our hormones passed into your bloodstream and began to make changes within your body," Jamison said.

"How is that possible since I am not from here?" Reggie asked. "How can you know that I am compatible and able to accept your hormone?"

"Long ago there were shifters who decided that they wanted more from life than what our valley offered," Taggart said. "The story says that they crossed the veil, knowing that they would be unable to return and embraced the life of those they lived

among. The wolf spirit was repressed until finally it was forgotten and called forth no more."

"So how is it possible for me?" she asked.

"Women do not make the hormone on their own," Jamison said. "Even those few who still are born within the valley do not change until they are mated and their mates' hormones are introduced to their systems."

"Okay." Reggie did her best to process all of this. She was mated to two men who were werewolves and lived in a valley hidden from those on the other side of the veil. They had always existed and many of the people from her side were descendents. It was a lot to digest. "So how does the queen know who to call and who not to call?"

"That is a question that only she can answer," Taggart replied. "Perhaps someday you will see her and be able to ask her yourself."

"You don't see her?" Reggie asked.

"The fae keep mainly to themselves," Jamison answered. "Our races do not mix much."

"So no fae-werewolf matings?" she asked with a laugh.

"It's forbidden?" Taggart said.

"Why?"

"It just is," Jamison said. "We have never questioned the why of it."

"So how exactly is this going to work?" she asked and she could feel her heartbeat accelerating. "How will I shift, so to speak?"

"There is nothing to fear," Jamison said, reaching to take her hand in his.

Taggart did the same with her other hand. "We will be here every step of the way. It is a natural process. The body takes over and you're just along for the ride."

"Does it hurt?" she asked softly.

"There is some discomfort as your body shifts, as bone structure changes," Jamison answered. "But it is not pain as you are thinking of pain."

"Okay," she said. She was still as scared as hell of what was going to happen. "How long do I have?"

"Each person is different," Taggart said. "With the final mating the change begins. Already you should be able to feel the spirit of your wolf growing inside."

Reggie nodded. She did feel it and was a little terrified of it.

"There is nothing to fear," Jamison did his best to assure her. "Your wolf is there to guide and protect you as well. Listen to her voice within. She will be your friend and comrade."

"My wolf awaits the arrival of yours," Taggart said softly. "He calls to you even now. He longs to race with you, to show you his world and all it has to offer. He longs to mate with your wolf and claim her as his, just as I have claimed you as mine."

"So we wait here until that happens?" she asked.

Both men nodded. "The cabins are here for use by mating couples to allow them privacy to aid their mate in her first change and run," Jamison said.

"And then what?" Reggie asked.

"We will take you back to our home and introduce you to everyone," Taggart said.

"Where is that?" she asked. "What is your home like? Do you live with family?"

"No, we have a home of our own," Jamison replied. "Once we reach our maturity at twenty-three years we are given a gift from our family, a shelter of our own, a home as you call it."

"Shelter?" she asked. "Like this cabin?"

Taggart laughed. "No, our shelter is much more than this mere cabin. It is a place to take our mate and some day to rear our children."

"Ummm," Reggie blushed. His talk of children brought up another question for her. "We didn't use anything."

"Use?" Jamison asked.

"You feel the need for something more than our bodies?" Taggart asked.

"No," she shook her head. "That's not what I mean. I mean that when we had sex..."

"Made love," Taggart corrected her with a fierce look on his face.

"Made love," she reworded, "there was nothing between us to keep your seed from me."

"Why would we need something to separate us?" Jamison said. "Our seed is required for you to change."

Okay, how did she get them to understand what she was thinking? And wasn't it a little late to have the conversation about disease and babies and all that?

"Oh, I see," Jamison smiled and Reggie was actually happy that he could read her mind.

"We do not have disease here as in your world," Taggart said. "We mate once and only once, for life. None have known the touch of another."

"So you were virgins?" she asked, finding it hard to believe that she had been their first, not as amazing as they were.

"You were no less spectacular," Jamison whispered. "Yet we do not question your purity."

She was blushing again. She had never really questioned that when she eventually decided to have sex that the guy she chose would be experienced. It was just a given in her world. But she admitted that it was amazing knowing that they had waited for her, that she was their first.

"Our only," Taggart said softly. "Never shall we have another."

And that was amazing too. She could tell that they really meant it. As far as they were concerned they were mated for life and nothing would ever change that.

"Mating is for life," Jamison said. "There is no need to question what is."

"What about children?" she asked, wondering if even now she could be pregnant.

"No, you are not with child," Taggart said. "You cannot carry before you change."

"And once I am able to shift into wolf form?" she asked. "Then I'll get pregnant?"

"Pregnancy is a choice," Jamison tried to explain. "We must all desire a child in order for our seed to take root."

"So we won't have children until we all agree?" Reggie asked. That was certainly different but then why shouldn't it be?

"Some mated couples never have children," Taggart said. "That is why our race has dropped in numbers and fewer and fewer female children are born."

"Why fewer females?" she asked.

"Females are rare anyway," Jamison replied. "A gift from the goddess to those deserving of the treasure of a female. Not all who choose to have children are given that gift. And so our numbers grow smaller."

"How many of you are there?"

"We number only in the hundreds now," Taggart said. "Once thousands of us crowded the valley but now, now we are few."

"And do your parents live close? Do you have family here still?" she asked.

"A rather large family," Jamison laughed. "When the time is right you will meet them all."

"How large?" she asked.

"Our mother and fathers still live," Taggart answered. "We have two younger brothers close to their twenty-third year and we have been helping to prepare their shelter for them."

"Then our parents were gifted with not one but two daughters," Jamison added. "They both grow each day and soon we will see them mated."

"You have sisters? Are they twins as well?" Reggie had never had siblings. She'd longed for a sister to share things with. Maybe she could have had a twin. It sounded like everyone here had twins.



"No, not everyone has a twin here," Taggart said with a laugh. "But our parents have two sets of twins, us and our brothers. The girls are a year apart."

So many siblings to grow up with. It sounded wonderful to Reggie.

"Our family is yours," Jamison said.

"They will love and embrace you as we have," Taggart added.

"I only had my mother," Reggie admitted softly.

"Yes, we have seen your thoughts and memories of her," Jamison said.

"We can ask to speak with the queen about your mother," Taggart said. "If you desire we can request that she be allowed to cross."

"I'm not sure that she would," Reggie replied.

"You don't believe that your mother would want to be with you?" Jamison said.

"My mother is different," was all the explanation Reggie could voice but she knew they could see what she was thinking.

"I cannot fathom a woman such as that mothering one as special as you," Taggart stated.

"I love her," Reggie said, not wanting them to doubt that.

"We know that," Jamison said. "Your love is not what we question."

Her mother's love. It was something Reggie had questioned often as well. But not anymore. She was moving on, moving forward. She had gone from a woman of doubt to a woman willing to embrace where she found herself.

"So what do I need to do to prepare for my shift?" Reggie asked.

## **Chapter Seven**

It had gone more easily than she anticipated. The wolf spirit took over when the time came to change and really, Reggie just felt like she was along for the ride as Taggart had said. The sounds were scarier than anything she felt physically when it came to shifting. And by the time it was all done she was so ramped up with excitement that nothing else mattered.

She ran, feeling the breeze rippling over her fur. It seemed that all of her senses were stronger, better while in this form. Taggart and Jamison stayed at her side, never allowing her to be on her own. It was nice to know that they were there ready to help and support her if needed.

She couldn't fathom being able to change, to embrace a different part of self and choosing to walk away. Having seen what was open to her on this side of the veil, having experienced the love of men such as Jamison and Taggart, it made no sense to her. What woman would choose not to stay? Not her, that was for sure.

Shifting back, she walked a ways from the cabin, adjusting to being back on two legs. Her mates seemed to have no problem with it but going from all fours to two and vice versa was going to take some getting used to on her part. She had waved them off when they'd offered to walk with her. She needed a few moments to herself. A lot had happened in the week she'd been here and though she had accepted it, she was still adjusting.

"Hello," a voice called to her and Reggie looked up to see another woman. She was a few inches shorter than Reggie, with short golden-brown curls and big blue eyes.

"Hello," Reggie replied.

"I'm Nikki Mondella," the woman said and held a hand out to Reggie.

"Reggie," she answered and then caught herself with a laugh. "Reggie Ballard."

"I'm still getting used to it myself," Nikki told her.

"You..." Reggie wasn't sure how to ask what was going through her head.

"Yeah, I'm from the other side as well," Nikki nodded.

"The song?" Reggie asked.

Nikki nodded her head. "The most beautiful I'd ever heard. I just knew that if I could find where it was coming from that I'd be okay." She smiled. "I was right."

"How long have you been here?" Reggie wanted to know.

"About a month," Nikki said. "We are just getting ready to leave the cabins and head back to their shelter. I'm about to meet my new family."

"Nervous?" Reggie asked.

"Terrified," Nikki answered with a laugh. "But so excited. I've never really had a family."

Reggie wondered if that was something that they would all have in common. "You've been in the cabin for a month?"

"Yeah, according to my mates Gunnar and Geran, this is considered the honeymoon period," Nikki stated. "Each new triad is given the time required to complete the bond and allow for her to successfully shift and embrace her new wolf spirit."

"So I have more time before I go to meet my mates' family," Reggie said. "I have to admit that I'm a little nervous about that."

"Did you leave family behind?" Nikki asked softly.

"My mother," Reggie said. "But honestly we were never really that close and well, it was thanks to her actions that I am even here to begin with. Can I ask you something?"

"Sure," Nikki replied.

"Are you happy here? Do you miss home?" Reggie was curious if she would experience doubt or homesickness down the road.

"No," Nikki shook her head and then laughed at the look Reggie knew was on her face. "I mean that I don't miss home. I love it here, love my mates and feel grateful that I was chosen to come here."

Reggie laughed. "That's good to hear. I guess that I'm still adjusting."

"I think that is part of giving you so long here at the cabin as well," Nikki said softly and took her hands. "The good thing for you is that when it is your turn to join everyone else you'll already have a friend there."

Reggie laughed. "I'd like that."

Nikki nodded.

"Nicolette," a man yelled and Reggie looked up to see one of Nikki's mates calling to her.

"That's Gunnar," Nikki said. "Apparently it's time to head out." She gave Reggie's hand a squeeze. "Wish me luck."

"Luck," Reggie said though she doubted the friendly girl would need it. She had a feeling that everyone who met Nikki would love her.

"I'll see you in a few weeks," Nikki called as she hurried toward one of her mates.

Reggie nodded and waved before turning and heading back to her cabin. Taggart and Jamison would be there, waiting for her. For the first time in her life she felt treasured and appreciated, loved. Every new morning she opened her eyes and gave thanks that she really was here, with her mates. Her life was a dream but thankfully one come true.

"Reggie," Jamison called as she approached the door. "Hungry?" he asked and she could smell a delicious aroma coming from the cabin. "Taggart is cooking."

"Ummm," she sighed. "It smells delicious. I'm starved."

Jamison pulled her close and nibbled along her throat up to her lips then took her under with his intoxicating kiss. "I'm starved too," he murmured. "But I guess we'd better feed you first."

"I think you'd better," she agreed, though truth be told it wouldn't take much to convince her otherwise.

"Save that for later," Taggart said, tugging her away from Jamison and dropping a kiss on her head before leading her over to sit at a table that held the tantalizing aromas. She took in the scene around her. A table filled with tempting food, a fire set and ready to go in the fireplace and a bed with the covers already pulled back. But more importantly she took in the two men with her. They smiled and looked at her with such love in their eyes.

It was too soon and yet she couldn't deny the words any longer. Maybe it was where they were. She'd already discovered that everything was different on this side of the veil. Without the little things to complicate and manipulate it was just her and them. They had no fear of showing her how they felt, no need to deny or hide. And it was that which gave her the courage she needed.

*I love them,* she admitted to herself.

*We love you too.* Jamison's voice filled her head.

Taggart just nodded. Reggie wanted to laugh. What took courage for her to say they just accepted and returned as if their love was a given.

*But it is. To know you is to love you.* Taggart's voice this time.

"I love you," she spoke aloud, needing to say the words, to give voice to them. "I love you."

Taggart and Jamison both just smiled at her and nodded in agreement. Totally accepting and obviously reciprocating her love. She had to laugh. Here it was all so simple. No games, no lies. Just an embrace of life and love and one another. It was something she had longed for her entire life and finally found.

"Dig in," Taggart urged her as he moved a filled plate of food in front of her.

And that was just what she planned to do. To dig in and savor every moment of what her life offered now. Her gaze moved from Taggart to Jamison and back again. She was truly the luckiest woman in the world.

\* \* \* \* \*

Serena stood in the center of the clearing and listened to the voices on the wind. It was nice to hear the joy of others all around her. Especially since it seemed their joy was all that she would ever know. Standing there, she drifted back to that one moment so long ago when everything had changed for her.

"All you have to do is walk away from him," Meryll had told her. "You know that it is forbidden to love a shifter, especially when we have always been promised to one another."

"I don't love you," Serena tried to get him to understand. "I've never felt more for you than a friend."

"Because of him," Meryll sneered.

"No," Serena said. "He has nothing to do with how I feel about you."

"The man you love has nothing to do with your spurning the man you are promised to?" Meryll asked with a cold smile. "How can you stand there and lie to my face?"

"I'm not lying to you," Serena declared. "I love Lynx. We never meant to fall in love. It just happened."

"Unfortunately for you it doesn't matter," Meryll said. "I have already spoken with your parents and they are willing to overlook your words as long as I am willing to still marry you."

"And you would marry me?" Serena asked softly. "Knowing that my heart and soul belong to another, that your bed will remain cold and empty of your bride?"

"You will come to me and we will consummate our vows," Meryll stated. "You will put this shifter out of your mind and move on as is expected."

"I won't," she said just as softly.

"You will," he yelled at her, spittle flying from his lips. Serena had never seen Meryll so angry before.

"I love Lynx," she stated, her voice louder this time. "Nothing you say will change that."

"Really." He turned to her and, grabbing her by the arms, shook her hard. "You think that there is nothing that I can do to change that. Don't fool yourself, little girl. You will uphold our promise or I will see to it that you never see Lynx again."

"How do you propose to do that, Meryll?" she asked with such confidence. "Lynx will not be easily manipulated."

Meryll smiled. "And what about you?"

"Serena," her mother's voice rippled through the air and brought her eyes flying over to where the woman stood. "You shame our family."

"No—" Serena tried to speak but her mother wouldn't listen to her.

"That is right," her mother spoke over her. "You will not shame us. You will marry Meryll and conceive a child. The continuance of our line is important and Meryll's family line is as old and sacred as ours."

Never had she defied her mother. Never. "I won't," she said. "I love Lynx and I wish to mate with him."

"I forbid it," her mother said. "You are lucky that Meryll is willing to overlook this moment of stupidity on your part and take you as wife anyway."

"I will not marry Meryll," Serena said, her voice gaining strength. She could see Lynx in her mind, the strength and character of him. She loved him and knew that he loved her too. Their love would be enough.

"You think to defy me and run away with your wolf?" her mother asked calmly, too calmly.

"I don't want to defy you," Serena tried to explain. "But I cannot marry a man who I don't love."

"Let me put it this way," her mother said with a tight smile. "If you try to marry Lynx you will sign his death warrant. I will evict him from the valley and not allow him or any heirs he might conceive to ever cross back."

"No!" Serena screamed, shaking her head. "You can't do that. He's done nothing wrong."

"He is as much to blame for this foolishness as you," her mother said. "But I will leave the choice of his fate up to you."

"So if I walk away from him then you will let him stay here," Serena repeated with tears streaming down her face.

"Yes, if you do not marry him or engage in any type of physical relationship then he will be able to stay," her mother agreed.

"Then I will agree to stay away from him," Serena said. "As long as I have your word."

"You have my word," her mother nodded. "Now we will see to planning your nuptials to Meryll."

"No," Serena said.

"No?" her mother thundered.

"That wasn't part of our agreement," Serena said. "I agreed to give up Lynx. I never agreed to accept Meryll."

"Then you would choose to shame us anyway?" her mother almost screamed.

"I would choose to remain alone rather than to accept a life with a man I don't love or want," Serena stated.

"Then know this," Meryll said. "If you don't choose me then there will never be another. I will hold the contract until the day we both die."

"So be it," Serena agreed.



"I don't think you understand," her mother spoke again, softer this time, her face showing sympathy for the first time since she'd arrived.

"What is there to understand?" Serena asked.

"My time will pass soon and you will take over as queen of the valley," her mother said. "But if you do not mate and produce a daughter then your time will never cease. Your life will be tied to the valley and if the goddess decides your time is done then there will be no one here to uphold the veil and protect our people."

"Then I would suggest we all pray that the goddess does not choose to punish me for falling in love the way that you have," Serena said and with her heart breaking she turned away. And never spoke to her mother again. Not when her father passed, not when Meryll finally died.

Instead she walked alone, guarding and protecting and watching over the valley and all its inhabitants. And never once did she think of any man other than the one who still held her heart all these years later. Lynx.

She would continue to give her call, to woo those worthy of crossing and entering the valley. With every call she worried that this one might be the one to lay claim to her Lynx. But so far the goddess had heard her prayers. She hated that he was as alone as she was and yet she knew that his love was true and that like her, he would never take another.

With a sigh she headed out once more, the words of the love song already floating from her lips. She couldn't have the man she loved but she could help the people of the valley to find love. It was the choice she'd made over forty years ago and the one she and Lynx would always have to live with. No one but her would ever know that the song she sang was for one crafty old wolf who she would always love.

## About the Author

Lacey Thorn spends her days in small-town Indiana, the proud mother of three. When she is not busy with one of them, she can be found typing away on her computer keyboard or burying her nose in a good book. Like every woman, she knows just how chaotic life can be and how appealing that great escape can look. So toss aside the stress and tension of the never-ending to-do list. For now, sit back, relax and enjoy the ride with Lacey as she helps you to unlace and unleash the woman inside.

Lacey welcomes comments from readers. You can find her website and email address on her [author bio page](#) at [www.ellorascave.com](http://www.ellorascave.com).

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