



Bloodlines

JESSICA LEE



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by Jessica Lee

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*To my husband—the man who keeps my dreams alive and the
fires burning: I love you, baby.*

Acknowledgment:

*To Naima, Justyn, Julie, and Annette: your friendship means the world
to me. Without your encouragement, advice, and never-ending
support, this story would not have come to life.
Thank you all for believing in me.*

Chapter One

HOW *the hell did I let things get this far?*

Evin KinKaid pulled his hips away from the searching hand of his intended mate.

“Jocelyn, we shouldn’t,” he said, attempting to hide the desperation creeping into his voice.

“Why shouldn’t we?” She stood from the sofa, not releasing the grip on his hand. “I think this is exactly what we should be doing.” Jocelyn moved across the den of his cabin and toward the bedroom, the tug on his arm pulling him to his feet.

The moment Jocelyn had shown up unannounced at his door, carrying a six-pack of Sam Adams and his favorite—Italian-sausage-and-mushroom pizza—he’d had a bad feeling about where this would end up. The clock was ticking, and Evin knew there loomed a possibility that Jocelyn might take things into her own hands if he didn’t make the first move. Damn. He just wasn’t prepared for it to be tonight.

“Jocelyn...?”

"In one year, we're going to be bonded." She pulled a little harder, keeping their path headed straight for his bed. "Don't you think it's time we take the next step?" At the foot of the bed, she stopped, turned in his direction, and released his hand. A moment later, she grasped the hem of her blouse and quickly lifted the thin cotton over her head. Full breasts with tight, dusky nipples bounced free. "I hate wearing a bra. They're so restrictive," she said, running her palms over the tanned mounds, then lifting them forward for his perusal.

Shit. He sucked in a ragged breath. Jocelyn Lathan was a beautiful woman—even he appreciated that. Any male would be a fool to refuse what she was offering. Any male who wasn't gay, of course.

She lowered onto the mattress and scooted to the center of the bed. After hooking her fingers into the waistbands of her shorts and panties, she wriggled free and then tossed the remaining clothes over the side.

Jocelyn lay back and splayed her arms apart in open invitation. "Come take what is rightfully yours...mate."

Without thinking, as if someone else resided inside him, moving him toward her, Evin climbed onto the bed and hovered over her nude body. *Fuck*. He felt as if he were on some gut-wrenching carnival ride he couldn't get off, no matter how hard he screamed.

This was his duty. As the only son born to the alpha of the KinKaid wolf pack, the responsibility of mating and continuing the dominant bloodline of his family fell to him. He had no choice.

Evin glanced down at the voluptuous curves of his intended.

"Do I please you, Alpha Prime?" she asked, her voice a bit huskier with her arousal. The scent of her need enveloped him and should have had his balls aching and his cock raging to be inside her. But instead...

He swung his gaze back to hers. "You're very beautiful, Jocelyn," he murmured. "Never doubt that."

"Likewise." She smiled and ran her fingertips up his chest and over his shoulders before pulling him down. He came to a halt, his lips mere inches from hers. "Now show me."

Her mouth claimed his in a kiss that wouldn't be denied. Evin's stomach rebelled. This was all so wrong and unfair to Jocelyn. He had a gorgeous woman in his arms, intended to be his for the remainder of his existence, and he should have been envisioning her curves and not someone else's tight ass and abs to get his cock's attention. But that was exactly what he was doing. Evin's mind wandered back to his last sexual encounter.

A hot naked male on his knees.

Yes.

His cock seated at the back of the man's throat and a handful of the human's dark hair wrapped in his fist. Evin's groin stirred at the memory, and he moaned.

Jocelyn moved her lips to his neck, then kissed her way down the side. The weight of her palm covered his awakening shaft. Evin sucked in a breath and tensed.

"What's wrong?" Jocelyn swung her head up in his direction. Evin dropped back onto the mattress. His chest tightened, making every breath a labored effort to move in and out of his lungs. It felt as if his secret had wrapped itself around his rib cage and was trying to squeeze the life out of him.

"Evin? Did I do something wrong?" The bed rocked, and then Jocelyn was leaning over him, smoothing her palm across his sternum. "Everything seemed to be going so well." Her hand eased down his abdomen and onto his thigh. Evin stifled a groan, one not driven by pleasure. He was so fucked.

"That's just it, Jocelyn." He forced the words through clenched teeth and shook his head. "It wasn't."

Jocelyn yanked her hand back and straightened. "I don't understand. You were..." She nodded in the direction of his crotch. "And I was..."

"Please, I don't want to hurt you," Evin whispered and pushed up into a sitting position. He had to stop this now, send her home so he could think of a way out of this without causing her or anyone else pain. Yeah, like somehow that was going to happen tonight, when he hadn't thought of a way to come out in the last ten years.

Jocelyn's eyes grew large, and her hand flew to her mouth. "Oh my God. There's someone else..." she mumbled behind her fingers.

"No. It's not what you think." *Shit.* Evin reached for her. It wasn't supposed to happen like this.

"Who is she?" Jocelyn scrambled away from his touch and toward the end of the bed. "Who is she, Evin?" she demanded. "You want out of this so you can take someone else as your queen." She shook her head. "You're mine. It's been written. We've been declared since the eve of our primary shift. Our families are the strongest of the pack. As the firstborn Lathan female, I'm to be the next alpha queen." She stood, grabbed her shirt from the floor, and pulled it on. "I cannot believe this." Jocelyn shoved her fingers through her hair.

"Like I said, it's not what you're thinking." Evin left the bed, rounded the mattress, and moved closer. Dammit, the situation was getting out of hand.

"Oh no?" She whirled on him. "What else am I to think?"

Evin reached for her hands.

"Don't!" Jocelyn jerked them out of his reach and stepped back. Her eyes narrowed, fury darkening her blue irises to gray. "Who is she, Evin? Tell me, because I'm going to kill her!"

"It wasn't a she," he shouted back, the words tumbling out before he could stop them.

"What?" Jocelyn froze.

"I said, it wasn't a she," he repeated, this time softer. Evin couldn't put the brakes on now if he wanted to. And God help him, but he really didn't want to stop. It was as if someone had reached inside him and yanked the plug that had held back a flood begging for release. "I was thinking about a man."

"A man...?" The two syllables fell from her lips, spewed like something distasteful off her tongue. "What are you saying?" Her expression twisted in disgust.

"You know what I'm saying." He kept his voice dead calm.

Jocelyn shook her head, a slow back-and-forth action of denial. "But you're the alpha prime." As if on automatic pilot, she moved toward him. "You're not... You cannot be gay!" Jocelyn slammed into his chest with both fists. "How could you do this? This will ruin everything. All my plans... It was going to be perfect." She pounded him. Evin could have easily grabbed her arms and subdued her. But a part of him needed this—wanted this. He deserved every punch and every dig of her nails into his flesh. If only her attack could delve deeper and batter some of the guilt attacking his heart.

Jocelyn shoved away from his chest, her blonde hair wild and her cheeks flushed. With one hand, she thrust her hair away from her face and shot him a tearful glare.

"You'll pay for this, Evin KinKaid," she growled, the sharp points of her canines making an appearance from beneath her upper lip. "I'll make sure of it. You'll regret the day you betrayed me." She turned on her heels and grabbed the remainder of her clothes from the floor.

"Jocelyn... I'm sorry." Evin rubbed his face with both hands and then dropped his arms at his sides. "I never meant for it to come out this way. Never meant to hurt you. We've been friends for years, but not once had you ever mentioned possessing any feelings that went

beyond that." Evin stepped in closer and lowered his voice. "This is more about your loss of alpha queen status than it is about me."

"Shut up!" she spit, and tugged her panties and shorts back on.

Fuck. Could this get any uglier? He knew Jocelyn had an attraction to the finer things in life. But he had no idea how deep her desire to become alpha queen had resided. Jocelyn made a break for the door, but Evin blocked her path. God, he had no idea how to make this better, and even though he recognized Jocelyn's heart wasn't broken over losing him, he still couldn't stand seeing her hurt.

"Please... Jocelyn, slow down. Stop long enough to talk to me. Please," he repeated. "You deserve a relationship that's based on love, not power and money."

Jocelyn's head popped up, her gaze then locking with his, and the fucking Antarctic would have felt warmer than her frigid stare.

"Get out of my way, Evin. You *really* don't want me here another minute in your presence." The tone of Jocelyn's voice made it clear: there was no turning back. The edge of the cliff he'd been toeing for years had crumbled, and he was in a complete free fall. All he could do now was grab hold of his ass and hang on.

Evin stepped aside and allowed Jocelyn to pass. A second later, the door to his cabin slammed shut.

He whirled, bringing his fist up, and rammed it into his bedroom door. The hollow wood bounced off the doorstep and splintered around his hand in an explosion of sound. Evin jerked his arm free and shook off the throb that radiated through his knuckles and into his wrist. He moved to the foot of the bed and sank onto the edge of the mattress. Bracing his elbows on his thighs, Evin then dropped his head into his palms.

"What a fucked-up mess," he groaned to the empty room. He loved his family, but how the hell was he going to tell his father he would not be taking his intended and continuing the KinKaid bloodline? That in itself would have the alpha enraged, but add his coming out as gay male... It would destroy his father.

Literally.

Without a KinKaid male to assume the alpha role at age twenty-five, Evin would be leaving his father open to any family that wished to challenge him for the title. And by law, they would have the right to kill the current alpha and take control of the pack. God, how was he going to live with himself?

He'd tried. Shit, he'd tried so hard to live the life expected of him. And if it were possible to will oneself into being straight, he would have been fucking Jocelyn right now.

Jocelyn. Evin sucked in a hard, deep breath and rubbed his hands over his face and through his hair. He had to go face his father. Better he learn the truth from him first. *"You'll pay for this, Evin KinKaid."* Jocelyn's threat raced through his head, jerking him to his feet.

"Ahh, fuck!" Evin's head fell back on his shoulders. "Jocelyn, you wouldn't."



Ten minutes later, Evin rolled his Ninja to a stop in front of his family's home—right beside Jocelyn's Hummer. A cloud of dust blew in behind his arrival as he killed the engine and removed his helmet. The boom of his father's voice traveled through the air and across the lawn. Evin's heart pounded. He pulled his leg over the seat of his bike, stood, and released a long, slow breath, attempting to calm the sick feeling that had settled in the pit of his stomach. *Well, at least I don't have to wonder anymore how I'm going to break the news.*

A few strides took him from the driveway to the double front doors of the two-story dwelling. He didn't bother knocking. Without hesitation, Evin gripped the large glass knob, twisted it, and let himself in. His family home had always been open to him even though he'd moved out four years ago, right after his twentieth birthday.

From his vantage point in the foyer, he couldn't miss the sound of Jocelyn's soft sobs punctuating his father's bellowed commands directed at his staff.

"Find him! I want Evin brought before me now. I don't care what his excuses are. Tell him I won't accept no for an answer. He's to get his ass here now."

Evin moved forward and braced himself in the center of the archway that opened to the great room.

"That won't be necessary," Evin announced, his voice deep and controlled.

All heads swung in his direction, and mouths snapped shut. Even Jocelyn stifled her dramatic display of tears. Tension filled the air so thick, it felt as if an electric charge lifting every hair along the back of his neck.

Evin glanced at Jocelyn once more, where she stood drying her eyes in the arms of his mother. His twin sister, Rosa, lingered near

the doorway on the other side of the room. She looked like an angel with her long blonde hair shining in the sunlight that beamed through the window at her back. Like an anchor of light in the darkness that threatened to swallow the room. The look she gave him brimmed with compassion and love. Rosa had been the one and only person he'd trusted with his secret. The only person he could share his innermost thoughts with. But there had never been a need to reveal the truth to her; she'd always known. Maybe even before he'd admitted it to himself. Rosa possessed an uncanny knack of "seeing" things.

Pulling his gaze away from his sister and placing it on the impressive six-foot-six frame of his father, Evin curled his lip into a half smile and stepped into the room.

"Well, I see Jocelyn didn't waste any time in obtaining an audience with the KinKaid alpha."

Barron KinKaid stepped from behind the large, dark wood rectangle of his desk, which divided a section of the living space. Wearing a black turtleneck sweater and matching jeans, his straight dark hair pulled back and bound at his nape, his father was an intimidating presence. A fact the alpha was very aware of and used to his advantage.

He came to a halt, and the ice blue gaze he'd inherited locked with his father's.

"What do you have to say for yourself, Evin? Why would you make up such an outlandish lie?" His father's canines flashed from under his lip. "Do you *not* want to mate with her that bad?" he growled, and as if on cue, Jocelyn let out another sob.

"It's not a lie." Evin kept his hands at his sides, his fists clenched, and his chin lifted. He would not submit.

Not this time.

If he had to die by his father's hand, then fuck it, he'd die today. But he would not go on living a life hidden inside the closet anymore.

His father's head fell back, his jaw elongated, and a roar was unleashed, reverberating off the walls of the room. "No!" His head lolled forward as his muzzle receded. "No KinKaid male has ever claimed to be a homosexual" — Barron closed the distance between them — "and I refuse to have it start with *my* son."

Evin lifted his gaze the two inches that brought him eye to eye with his father. "It's not your call," he growled.

"The hell it isn't," Barron shouted. "You're the alpha prime, and you will accept your duty and carry on the bloodline of our family."

"I never said I wouldn't accept my role as alpha prime, but I cannot mate with Jocelyn or any other female."

A groan began low in the alpha's chest and then burst from this throat. The next thing Evin knew, his father's clawed hand was wrapped around his neck. Shrill screams belonging to his mother and sister rang in his ears.

"You're not my son," Barron snarled, his head shaking back and forth. Evin's feet left the floor. "An abomination to our bloodline."

He couldn't breathe, and the sharp points of Barron's claws dug into his flesh. His father drew his arm back, and then Evin's head snapped forward as he was hurled through the air. His back collided with the wooden coffee table in the center of the room. Pain sizzled up his spine and into his brain, blurring his vision. His back arched, and an agonized howl filled the open space. Evin sucked in a breath and realized the cry had to be his own.

Reflex rolled him over, off the wood, and onto all fours. Black fur erupted from his pores. Fingernails curled into claws. The sound of popping stitches and tearing cotton grew loud in his ears. Evin's head kicked back and a growl tore from this throat. He whipped around to find his father's half-human, half-wolf form in midair, his large paws aimed straight for Evin's head.

Evin dug his claws into the wool of the braided rug beneath his pads and launched himself to the left, barely dodging the alpha's pounce. But he hadn't moved fast enough. The other wolf's front paw had snagged his hind section, ripping open the soft tissue. Evin spun, blood from the wound splattering the floor as he turned and faced his challenger's snarl.

Head-on they clashed.

Jaws snapped.

Blood and saliva flew as they fought for dominance, each seeking the other's neck for that final, throat-crushing bite.

The taste of their combined blood coated Evin's tongue. His heart hammered in his chest, and his breath rushed from his lungs in rapid pants. There was no time to think about the repercussions of his actions. There was only act and react.

Dominate or submit.

Live or die.

At that moment, no longer did a father and son fight. The wolf had laid claim to whom or what would survive in the room tonight.

Searing pain clamped around Evin's throat, bringing him to a rapid halt and lifting his front legs off the floor. Evin howled and writhed

against the restraint. He flung his head in his father's direction and found the source of his new enemy. The alpha's security detail had arrived and had ensnared them both with a silver halo: a silver-laced noose attached to a long steel pole.

Out of the corner of his eye, his mother and sister moved between them.

"You will stop this battle now," his mother commanded. "I will not tolerate father and son killing each other in my home—or anywhere, for that matter." Her gaze darted from Evin to his father. "Shift now so we can resolve this."

Evin breathed deep through his nostrils and stretched his limbs, bringing the image of his human form into focus. A tingling sensation began in his feet then raced across his body as his fur retracted. His bones shifted, sending a lingering ache through his joints as his extremities returned to their normal length.

"Get this damn thing off from around my neck."

Seconds after his father's command, a *click* sounded behind Evin. The strap loosened and was lifted over his head. His skin burned from the prolonged contact of the silver against his flesh.

One of the guard staff dropped Evin a robe. He glanced up and noticed his mother securing one around his father.

"There's nothing to resolve, Sable," his father said, then turned and faced Evin. "Evin determined the outcome of this night—and his future—the moment he decided he preferred to have sex with men instead of being the alpha his pack deserves."

Evin slid his robe on and stood, swallowing hard at the acid burning the back of his throat. He'd never get his father to understand this wasn't a choice. Barron sauntered toward him, slow and deliberate steps that spoke of his alpha status. He stopped inches from Evin's face.

"When you decide you're ready to be a real man—the alpha your pack expects and demands—you can return to my home. Until then, I want you out of my sight and out of this pack."

"Father, please!" Rosa darted across the room and gripped their father's arm. "Please don't hurt him like this. It's not a choice. It's who he is, and he's my brother." Her gaze swung between them, tears filling her large blue eyes.

"Do not condone his actions, Rosa," he said, shaking off her hold.

"He's my brother!"

"He's an abomination!"

Evin flinched. The repugnance in his father's voice struck him like a blow to his gut.

"I refuse to accept what he's become in my home." Barron whirled, and with his back turned, announced, "You have two minutes to say your good-byes to your mother and sister." With his spine straight and shoulders rigid, his father stormed from the room. The alpha queen moved on hesitant feet in Evin's direction. She reached up, and with her palm, smoothed the long strands of his black hair out of his eyes and away from his face. Slowly she shook her head, turned her back, and walked away.

Evin's breath hitched. *Dammit*. He'd never wanted to hurt them.

From the corner of the room, Jocelyn sashayed toward him.

"So sorry you got kicked out of your pack and everything, Evin." She sighed. "But I told you I would make you pay for betraying me." Jocelyn reached out and stroked her fingers along his cheek. Evin jerked his face away from her touch. She pulled her hand back and shrugged. "Now...we're even." Jocelyn pivoted, and without another word, left the room.

Evin closed his eyes and inhaled deeply, grasping for the remaining threads of his control. He felt for the ties to his robe at his waist, cinched them tighter, then opened his eyes and glanced over at his sister. She stood with her arms across her chest, as if she could hold in the emotion that appeared to be tearing her apart—and breaking his heart in two.

Rosa strode toward him, and Evin met her halfway. She wrapped her arms around him and held him close. Exactly what he needed. Rosa always knew. Ever since they were little, Rosa had been there whenever he'd needed someone.

She sniffed, then pulled back. "You're going to be okay." She nodded with a failed attempt at a smile. "These tears are only because I'm going to miss you so damn much." Evin reached up and wiped the moisture from her cheeks.

"I'm going to miss you too." He swallowed. "You're my heart. You know that, right?"

Rosa nodded again. She lifted her hands to his face and cupped his jaw between her palms.

"You will be fine—and happy—Evin KinKaid. Believe me. It's out there waiting for you. You just have to trust in what you find."

Chapter Two

Dover, Washington, USA
One year later

“CAN I see some ID, please?”

Mason reached into his wallet, removed his driver’s license, and handed it to the convenience store clerk. The older gentleman held the credit card next to Mason’s license and lifted his reading glasses into place. He glanced at Mason, then back at the photo before comparing the names. “Mason Thorne II.” His weathered blue gaze darted to Mason again, and a half smile turned up his lips. “Any relation to *the* Thorne Global?”

A groan formed at the back of Mason’s throat, but he forced it back. In its place, he shaped his well-practiced, polite smile and nodded. “That’s my father’s pride and joy.” The clerk released a low whistle and shook his head.

“I can’t even imagine growing up around all that money, son,” he said, sliding the card through the reader. Mason released a *humph* of acknowledgment. Yeah, the old man didn’t know what he’d missed

by not being the son of a shipping tycoon, whose world revolved around business first and his family second. The receipt rolled from the register, and after tearing it free, the clerk handed Mason a pen for his signature. "You planning on spending some time in Dover, or just passing through?"

Mason scribbled his name and handed the pen back. "Just passing through."

"On your way back to Seattle?"

Easing his wallet back into his jeans pocket, Mason muttered a "that's right," turned, and headed toward his car.

"Have a safe trip," the clerk added. Mason threw his hand up and gave the older gentleman a smile as he stepped outside.

One week. That was all he had left before he had to return to work and grad school. Damn. How had his vacation flown by so fast? Mason slid onto the leather driver's seat of his convertible, pulled the door shut, and secured his seat belt. He glanced over at the passenger floorboard, where a dark case housed his most prized possession: his guitar. Mason couldn't help the smirk he knew sat on his face. His father may have been able to guilt him into obtaining an MBA, but he couldn't take away Mason's passion for music, no matter how damn hard he tried to mold him into a reproduction of himself.

Mason pressed the Start button, pulled away from the gas pump, and turned back onto the two-lane country road, heading west. He should have stayed on the main highway; it would have been faster. But God knew he was in no hurry to get home. So why not enjoy some of the countryside?

Playtime had been over too soon, and his father expected him to promptly return to his junior executive position at TGI. And what Mason Thorne the first wanted, he never failed to get. If it couldn't be bought, then guilt and manipulation were his tools of persuasion.

Even against his own son.

A deep, treelined bend in the road loomed ahead, and Mason tapped the brake as he headed into the curve. He glanced down at the black leather briefcase propped on the passenger seat, its bronze *TGI* emblem encircled by a graphic of the world shining in the dappled sunlight. His stomach clenched at the sight. Mason swung his gaze back to the road, and his heart leaped into his throat.

"Shit!" A large white wolf stood in his lane.

Mason stomped on the brakes and yanked a hard right on the steering wheel. He veered wide, missing the wolf, but his tires dropped off the low shoulder of the road. Instinct had him pulling

back left, but velocity careened the car out of control, shot him across the centerline, and slammed him into a ditch.

Dazed, Mason ran his hands over his face as he sat staring at the large *BMW* letters in the center of the steering wheel. A long, deep breath slowly released from his lungs. Damn. That was too close. Mason glanced to his left, then right. The wolf... Where...?

There she was, or he—who the hell knew? His breath hitched, and he gripped the leather-wrapped wheel. Large blue eyes locked with his on the other side of the passenger door. He'd never seen a real, live wolf this close. Wow, it was beautiful. Mason squirmed in his seat, reaching for his cell that had fallen onto the floorboard. The animal jerked, stepped back, then dashed into the dense tree line.

Two hours and a tow truck ride later, Mason was still in Dover. Guess he was staying for a while. He watched from the lobby as his Bimmer was hobbled into the bay. Mason pushed on the double doors of the waiting area and slowly followed the progression of his car onto the pit rack. This being a small town, no signs were posted that stated customers had to remain out of the work area, like one would find at a large dealership.

A young redheaded man popped out from behind the wheel, chocked the rear tire, and called out to another technician beneath the car. "She's all yours, Evin."

"Thanks, Doug," a smooth, deep voice replied from the pit. Mason's brows lifted. *Nice*.

The junior tech stepped toward the office, giving Mason a dismissive glance over his shoulder as he approached the rear bumper. With a *click* then a *thump*, followed by the sound of compressed air surging through the hose lines, the convertible's front tires lifted from the plate racks. Mason moved in and crouched by the front wheel that appeared to have taken the worst of the damage.

"How bad does it look?" Mason rested his forearms on the linen pants that covered his thighs and peered around the displaced tire at the shadowed figure moving beneath the front end.

"You've definitely got some bent parts here," the tech known as Evin replied in the same deep voice that skated across Mason's skin, lifting the hairs on his arms. "The good news is I think the damage is isolated to parts only, meaning you may not have any frame damage." Sexy Voice stepped from underneath the car and rounded the wheel.

And Mason forgot to breathe.

Damn. No man had the right to look that delicious.

Straight and black-as-sin hair brushed the top of one shoulder, with the other side tucked behind his ear. Eyes the color of a clear summer sky captured his gaze and, in that moment, had Mason wanting to drop to his knees. Because every instinct told him that if he ever got to watch this man lose control, it would be fucking amazing.

He wore a snug-fitting dark blue T-shirt that barely contained his biceps. Mason licked his lips.

"Hi, I'm Evin," Delicious said, climbing the concrete steps that brought him onto the same level with Mason. The air he forgot he'd been holding rushed from his lungs as the other man moved his direction. Evin's long stride took him to Mason's side with only a few steps. Mason straightened as he neared, but his gaze lowered to the faded blue jeans wrapped around thighs that should belong to an athlete. Evin was built like a runner, but at the same time possessed broad shoulders and arms made for strength—a combination that made Mason's palms itch to touch and his dick more than interested.

With a smile, Evin wiped his hands on a shop towel and then held his right out in offering. Mason swallowed, then reached out and wrapped his fingers around Evin's.

Electric.

No other word could describe the tingling sensation that began where their skin met, igniting the nerve endings that arched straight to his cock.

"And you are...?"

"What?" Mason glanced up from where their hands were still joined. If Evin had felt what he did, he hid it well. His expression gave away nothing but a grin.

"Your name. I'll be happy to put together an estimate for you, and if you choose to proceed, order your parts. But I'll need your name first."

"Oh. Of course." Mason slid his hand free and gave him a smile in return. "Mason Thorne."

"Mason...nice name," he said, then curled one side of his mouth into a smile that showcased a dimple.

God, Mason loved the way his name rolled off Evin's tongue. It heated his blood like a hot brandy on a cold night.

"If you follow me, we'll go inside, and I can get that estimate for you." Evin indicated the side door with a tilt of his head.

"Sure. Let me get something out of here first." Mason turned, reached over into his car, and grabbed his guitar and briefcase. "I just want to secure these..." He swung back around at the same time

Evin's gaze jumped from where it looked like it had been perusing Mason's ass. *Well, fuck...me. Please.* Could Mason's sex-on-a-stick auto tech be gay? This accident might turn out not to be such a bad thing after all. Mason's guitar slipped in his hand, reminding him of what he'd been about to do. "Yeah, let me put these in the trunk, and I'll be right there."

After a few phone calls, Evin had put a plan of action together for Mason. He seemed good at his job, which Mason respected. And he was a pleasure to watch in action. Evin was thorough, quick, and moved around the office with a fluidity that once again reminded him of an athlete. No—wait. More like a predatory animal whose stealth meant his survival. Yeah, that was it.

"Well, I have good news and bad news," Evin said as he approached the counter where Mason waited on the other side. "Which would you like first?" Evin rested his forearms on the laminated top and leaned in, paperwork in hand.

"Let's start with the good." Mason gave a halfhearted attempt at a laugh, propped his elbow on the countertop, then rested his chin in the palm of his hand as he studied the figures Evin presented.

"I found the parts you need."

"That's good to hear."

"That's your good news."

Mason glanced up. "And the bad?"

"Since this is Friday, they can't get them here until at least Tuesday."

"Tuesday?" Mason pushed back from the counter and groaned. He'd counted on being home by tomorrow and having a few days to himself before he had to return to the hellhole he called a job. Shit. What was he going to do in this town with no car, stuck in a hotel for the next four days?

"I'm sorry, man. Wish I could do more, but that's the best option I found."

"I know." Mason nodded. "I know you've done all you can. I'm just not from around here, and with no car, I'm stranded until that's repaired."

"Dover's not so bad. I moved here last year myself. It's kind of nice. Peaceful."

Mason met Evin's soft blue gaze and couldn't help but feel there was a lot more to the story as to why Evin had ended up in Dover.

"In fact," Evin began and handed the estimate over to Mason.

"I'm getting ready to close up and grab a bite to eat. How about I take you over to Bruno's and introduce you to the best steak you'll ever find in the Pacific Northwest?"

"The best, huh?" Mason raised a brow and grinned.

"It'll make you want to growl." Evin sent him a look that promised a dinner he wouldn't forget. And Mason had a feeling Evin made good on his promises.

"Now how can I pass on an offer like that?"



Evin was absolutely right.

The steak had been amazing, as well as the company.

Mason didn't want to think about how long it had been since he'd been out to dinner with a man. Back home, everyone knew him as Mason Thorne II, heir to a multimillion-dollar fortune. Finding someone who was more interested in him than his bank account was nearly impossible. So most of Mason's evenings were spent with his arms around his guitar rather than a lover.

Dinner with Evin was like breathing: refreshing and easy. They'd talked about anything and everything as if they'd known each other for years. He'd discovered that Evin and he shared the same passion for motorcycles and fast cars. Evin had assured him that the back roads around Dover were a bike lover's wet dream.

"I take it you liked your steak?" Evin smirked, his gaze landing on Mason's empty plate.

"You could say that." Mason laughed, reached for his beer, and lifted it to his lips. "It was delicious," he said over the lip of the glass bottle before taking a swig, his gaze never leaving his dinner partner.

"I'm glad you approve," Evin replied and took a swallow of his own brew.

At that moment, their server chose to appear and offered a selection of desserts she was sure they would enjoy. She leaned over Evin's shoulder, allowing her full breasts to brush across his arm as she lifted his empty plate. When Evin declined anything extra, she looked to Mason.

"How about you, hon?" she asked, then tossed Mason a wink.

"I'm good. I think the steak and potato were plenty."

"Okay, then...but I don't think you two know what you're missing," she added with a provocative smile, then pivoted with a roll of her hips and headed back toward the kitchen.

"I think our server has the hots for blonds," Evin muttered over

his beer and glanced in Mason's direction.

"Uh, think again. That redhead nearly shoved her breasts in your face." Mason chuckled and lifted his Sam Adams. "I think you're the one she's after."

"Yeah?" Evin shrugged. "Not really interested, though."

Mason cocked his head at Evin. "You prefer brunettes?" he asked before taking another swig.

Evin's gaze snagged Mason's, and he leaned in at his ear. "I prefer cock," he said, the words accompanied by the rasp of his deep voice, sending a shiver down Mason's spine and stalling the beer in his throat.

Mason swallowed hard, forcing the liquid the rest of the way down his esophagus on a choking cough. He lunged forward in his chair, plopped the bottle back on the table, and grabbed a napkin to cover his mouth. Evin delivered a hard pat to his back.

"You okay?" Evin's smooth voice whispered again near his ear.

Mason took a deep breath, then cleared his throat once more. "Fine. Sorry about that. That last swallow went down the wrong way." Mason glanced over at his dinner partner, who'd leaned back in his chair, a slight smile curling the edge of his lips. Dammit, he was sexy as hell. He had hoped—even suspected—Evin was gay, but he hadn't anticipated such a colorful announcement. One that about had him spewing beer across the table.

"About what I said..." Evin began, rotating his beer bottle with his fingers. His gaze drifted from his hand to Mason. "Does that bother you?"

"I have your checks all ready," their server stated after drawing up to the table. She placed a register receipt next to each of them. "I'll be back in a moment." She wheeled around and headed in the direction of her next table.

"So does it bother you?" Evin picked up their conversation right where he'd left off.

"That you're gay?" Mason placed his elbows on the table and leaned in, matching the intense blue-eyed stare that made his cock ache, his heart pound, and him want to do anything but talk.

"Yeah. That," Evin said, one black slash of a brow lifting.

"Absolutely not."

Dimples appeared in both cheeks as Evin flashed Mason a smile. He lifted his beer and took a long swig, then topped it off with a slow swirl of his tongue around the lip of the bottle. *Fuck*. Mason couldn't

take his eyes off the way Evin worked the rounded curve of the glass. Inside and out. Blood surged to his groin, bringing his dick to rock-hard attention. Mason dragged his stare from Evin's expert maneuvers up to his face. The air seized in his lungs when he caught the sight of Evin's hooded gaze. One that said, *I want to fuck you, and you can be sure it'll be the best damn ride you've ever had.*

And God help him, but Mason wanted to find out.

The server returned moments later, collected their payment, and then Evin led Mason back to his yellow '69 Chevelle SS convertible.

Mason slid onto the black, buttery-soft leather just as Evin eased into the driver's seat.

"So how long did it take you to restore her?" Mason brushed the dash with his palm.

"I started restoration about four years, before I moved to Dover, and I finished it up while I've been here. So all together, five years."

"You did an awesome job." At the stoplight, Mason didn't have to look to know Evin's gaze had left the road and lingered on him. He could feel it. Evin's perusal was like a warm hand that traveled his body, leaving a trail of arousal in its wake.

"Thank you," Evin said, the heat of his gaze never wavering. "But I would have thought your mind would be more focused on when we're going to fuck than on my car."

Mason jerked his head in Evin's direction, his heart rate pounding in his throat. "You get straight to the point, don't you?"

"I don't play games, Mason." Evin reached down, palmed the gearshift, and accelerated them back into traffic. "I know I want you, and I don't think I'm way off base by saying that you want me just as bad. You're stuck here in Dover for the next few days." Evin glanced his way. "Why don't we make the most of it?"

Chapter Three

EVIN had been cocky as hell in front of Mason. But the truth was, he was anxious as shit.

A year had passed since his father had banished him from the pack and he'd moved to Dover. Twelve months of jacking off alone in his bed. And the loneliness was driving him out of his mind. But no one in town had even piqued his interest, and a string of anonymous one-night stands wasn't Evin's thing. They had a nasty tendency of making an empty bed feel even colder.

There was something different about Mason, though. The human definitely piqued his interest. From the moment Mason had walked into his bay, Evin had been coiled so tight and his dick so hard, he was surprised he'd been able to form a coherent sentence. The spicy scent of Mason's skin made his blood hot. The way those damn linen pants hugged Mason's ass when he moved had Evin's cock aching for release. *Shit*. No other guy had ever got under his skin so quick before. But it had been all Evin could do to keep a handle on his control and

not grab the man by the back of his head, spin him around, and fuck him until Mason knew who he belonged to. *Whoa*. Where the hell had that come from? He shook his head.

Evin turned left on Highway 211, heading out of town and toward his cottage. After rounding a curb, he pulled onto the shoulder and set the brake.

"Why are we stopping?"

"If I turn around now, there's a hotel about two miles in the other direction." Evin pivoted in his seat and faced Mason. Even though the moon served as the car's only source of illumination, Evin's perfect night vision allowed him to drink in the rich hue of Mason's dark eyes. A striking contrast to the short layers of golden blond hair that shimmered under the beams of moonlight. Evin tightened his hand around the leather-covered steering wheel. He had to, or in the next second, his fingers would be wrapped in those locks, and he'd be finding out if they were as soft as they looked. But he knew one touch would never be enough to satisfy the craving about to drive him out of his mind.

"Is that what you want, Evin? Would you rather I choose the other end of the road tonight?"

Yes. Because I've got a bad feeling you're going to be a taste I'll never get enough of.

No. Because I think I'll go crazy if I don't touch you.

"I think it's pretty clear what I want." Evin reached out and trailed a forefinger along Mason's cheek. The coarse sensation of Mason's shadow of a beard shot through Evin's skin like a bolt of lust aimed straight for his cock, forcing him to bite back a hiss of pleasure. Mason turned into his touch, then took Evin's finger knuckle-deep inside his mouth.

And sucked.

Evin couldn't hold back the groan that emanated from his throat. "Tell me what *you* want, Mason. Say it." With a final swipe of his tongue over the tip, Mason released his finger with a *pop*.

"I want you to fuck me."

Two miles had never seemed longer in his life. Evin slowed and turned onto the gravel driveway, tires biting into the rocky surface and spitting a dust cloud to their rear. In silence they rolled to a stop in front of his rented one-bedroom house, both exiting the vehicle the moment he'd cut the engine. Evin's heart pounded a constant beat of anticipation in his ears as he shoved the key in the lock and opened

the door. In one move, he dropped his keys on the table against the inside wall and flipped the light switch before stepping into the living space. Mason entered next, and a slight *click* signaled he'd closed the door.

He rotated on his heels, grasped Mason's wrists, took them over his head, and shoved his back against the wood. A hot rush of air left Mason's lips right before Evin's came down hard, claiming them. Mason released a moan into his mouth, and Evin had to fight to keep from licking up the sweet sound. The effect was sexy as hell and had Evin's cock swelling even more than he'd thought possible. *Fuck*. At this rate, he might blow before he ever got a chance to get inside his delectable human.

Evin pulled back from Mason's lips, coming up for air and to make sure a few things were perfectly clear. "Before we go any further," he began, placing his forehead next to Mason's. "I'm not into deep kissing, okay? No tongue."

"Oh...okay," Mason said between breaths. "We all have things we don't like."

"Don't get me wrong; I like kissing." Evin brushed his lips against Mason's, stimulating a rock of Mason's pelvis into his. "Just no tongue." He couldn't risk introducing too much of his saliva into Mason's system. The chance was minimal that enough DNA would be present to infect a human partner. But it was a chance Evin wasn't willing to take.

"Whatever you say."

"Good," Evin nearly growled. "I like the sound of that." He dipped his head in search of the bounding pulse at Mason's neck and dragged his tongue across the heated surface. A shudder raced through Mason's body, vibrating against him. Evin traveled up to Mason's ear and traced the lobe with the damp tip. "But that doesn't mean I don't like to use my tongue elsewhere." Mason arched, pressing the hard ridge of his erection into his own throbbing cock.

"Fuck. Evin..." He gasped and tugged at the hold Evin had on his wrists. "Want to touch you."

"Soon, Brown Eyes," Evin breathed, moving back to Mason's pulse. "I'm not done tasting you yet." Unable to resist, Evin nipped the tender flesh, not enough to break the skin, but enough to get his lover's attention.

"Fuck. Yeah," Mason moaned, his breathing reduced to hard pants that tickled the hair at Evin's neck. His cock jerked. Shit. So responsive—even better than he'd imagined. Evin slid his lips over the

mark, allowing Mason's flavor to coat their surface, and then with a swipe of his tongue, relished the essence on his taste buds.

"Mmm... Damn. So fucking sweet." Evin released one hand from around Mason's wrist, continuing to bind him with the other, and followed the outline of his body down to the man's fly. Mason arched into his exploration.

Within seconds, Evin had the zipper and button released on Mason's pants, and then worked the closure of his own. Evin shoved his jeans and underwear, followed by Mason's, past their hips. After releasing the other man's wrists, he jerked him forward.

"Shoes off."

Mason did as instructed, toeing off his loafers. Evin made short work of his boots and shucked the denim from his legs before grabbing Mason by the thin cotton of his deep blue shirt. He didn't wait for permission; Evin took the liberty of removing the article for him. Gripping a section in each hand, Evin ripped the material down the front. Buttons snapped off, hitting the wood floor in a shower of pellets.

"Fuck!" Mason stumbled back, his rigid cut cock bouncing against his lower abs. Evin's mouth watered.

"You like that?" The words released on a rumble from Evin's chest. He stepped forward, closing the inches between them, then ran his palm from Mason's navel up and over his nipples. Mason's rear bumped the door, and his head fell back with a *thump* against the wood.

"God...yes."

Mason's pulse hammered under Evin's palms, matching his own rapid heartbeat. Damn. Evin couldn't remember the last time he'd been this turned on by any man. He dropped a kiss onto Mason's throat, then worked lower until he captured a tight nub between his teeth. Mason hissed and thrust his erection against Evin's abdomen, as if begging for attention. Evin obliged, rubbing the hard line of his abs next to the other man's shaft in time to the tiny sucks he inflicted to Mason's nipple.

"Shit," Mason cried out, digging his fingers into Evin's hair.

Yeah, it was so fucking good. Evin brushed his cock against the other man's leg, reveling in the firm feel of his quads along the sensitive back side of his shaft. On a breath, he moved to Mason's other nipple and gave it the same nip-and-suck treatment. Mason writhed, spiraling Evin's lust to near combustion.

Evin trailed his tongue down the center of Mason's abdomen,

dipping within the hollows. Mason's rapid breaths pressed his human flesh to his lips, and Evin rode the undulating waves lower, allowing the tip of his tongue to circle Mason's navel before sampling the inside.

"Christ, Evin," he groaned, the thrash of his head releasing a steady series of bumps on the door.

The fingers wrapped in Evin's hair tightened, the sting at the roots going straight to his balls, and the pressure to his scalp directed him farther south and onto his knees. Exactly where he wanted to be.

Mason's cock flexed and tapped his lips, the smooth, hot skin beckoning him to taste. Evin flicked his tongue out and sampled the sweet spot beneath the head. Mason sucked in a harsh breath, and Evin glanced up. Fuck, Mason looked so damn hot, his almond-shaped brown eyes filled with lust and hooded by long, thick, blond lashes. Beautiful.

Evin followed the curve of Mason's cock with his tongue, down toward the base. The musky scent of Mason's flesh invaded his nostrils, sending a buzz to his brain. Evin reached up and tugged on Mason's sac. Mason spread his legs wider, and that was all the invitation Evin needed. He lowered his head and took one of the rounded jewels into his mouth. A tremble rolled through Mason's thighs. Evin moved his hand, gripped the other man's shaft, and with a steady rhythm, worked his length. Mason groaned in encouragement. Evin couldn't resist any longer and grasped his own cock, squeezing, then releasing the base to slide along the girth to the tip.

Moisture leaking from the slit coated Evin's fingers as they glided up and down Mason's length. Mason pumped into his hands, his breath ragged. Evin loosened his grip on his own erection and moved in for a taste of his lover's. Dragging his tongue from the base to the crown, Evin savored the warm and salty essence that was Mason. His hand followed, maintaining the pressure, milking the precum from his shaft. At the flushed head, he dipped into the opening, not wanting to miss a drop.

"Fuck!" Mason cried out, jerking his head forward. "Don't want to come."

Lifting his chin, Evin flashed Mason his best provocative smile. "Don't worry, Brown Eyes, you're not. I haven't given you permission yet."

"Oh, God," Mason groaned and thrust his hips as if he had no other option than to give in to his body's demands. Sweat beaded the surface of his flushed skin, and Evin couldn't wait to feel him slick,

hot, and sliding against him.

Without hesitation, Evin took Mason's shaft to the back of his throat.

"Son of a...!" Mason's body shook, and it felt as if he'd nearly doubled over when he dug his nails into Evin's scalp. Evin worked his throat, swallowing around the engorged head of the other man's erection. He reached up with one hand and massaged Mason's tight sac. Mason rocked his hips, attempting to force control of the movements along his shaft, striving for that last bit of command over the strokes on his cock that would take him to completion. *Oh, hell no.* Mason would come when Evin said he could come, and when he did release...Mason would never forget who fucked him tonight.

Giving one last gentle suck to the crown, Evin pulled back, then stood.

"Come here." Evin motioned toward the bedroom and led the way. Inside the doorway, Evin yanked his T-shirt over his head and tossed it. Making quick steps to his nightstand, Evin then opened the drawer, reached in, and pulled out a condom. He held the thin square up between his fingers as Mason approached.

"Allow me," Mason said with a grin and plucked it from his hand.

He dropped to his knees before Evin, ripped the package open, then circled Evin's cock with his fist. Evin sucked in a breath from the onslaught of sensation, and his head fell back between his shoulders. Christ. If it felt this good with only his hand wrapped around him, he'd never last if he got Brown Eye's lips around his cock. Suddenly the hot, wet feel of a tongue brushed the underside of his shaft. Evin groaned and rocked his hips, seeking more of the pleasure. But instead of more wet action, the cool feel of latex rolled over the head and covered his shaft. Evin glanced down and narrowed his eyes.

"Cocktease."

The corner of Mason's mouth lifted, and he winked. "Ditto."

Evin reached back and snagged the bottle of lube from the drawer, then tugged Mason up from his knees and guided him to the foot of his wrought-iron bed.

"Grab on to those." He motioned toward the iron railings of his footboard. Mason wrapped his hands around the thin bar and lowered his upper body.

"Damn," Evin said, his voice reduced to a lust-filled rasp. "What a beautiful sight." He smoothed the pale flesh of Mason's perfect round ass with his palms before bending over and following the path that

led to the tight ring below with his tongue. Mason pressed back into his exploration and moaned his approval. Evin gripped Mason's firm cheeks, spread them wider, and pushed the tip of his tongue in deeper.

"Yes... Evin. God."

Evin reached out and stroked Mason's cock from below, then pulled back. "You liked that, did you?"

"Oh yeah." Mason swung his head around. "But I'd like it even more if you'd fuck me already," he said, giving Evin an *I dare you* look.

Evin slowly straightened to his full height and rubbed an open palm over Mason's right cheek. "You're just begging me to slap this ass, aren't you?"

"I'm begging you to fuck it." Mason twitched his rear, and Evin couldn't resist. He reared his arm back and then swung forward, landing a smack to Mason's cheek. Not hard enough to be painful, but firm enough to get his arrogant lover's attention. Mason jerked forward, then slung his head around. "Ouch!" His lids lowered to half-mast over smoldering eyes that said *kiss my ass*, but the movement of his hips spoke of other needy demands.

"Nice," Evin said, palming the red flush blooming on Mason's rear.

With one hand, Evin reached for the lube and squeezed a small amount into his other palm. After tossing the bottle onto the bedcovers, Evin worked his slick hand over his erect shaft. Slowly, he circled Mason's ring, testing the tension in the muscle, then eased a finger inside. Mason groaned and bore down on the invasion. Evin inserted a second digit, followed by a third, and worked them in and out, stretching the snug channel. Damn, how long had it been since Evin had a lover? This wasn't going to be easy for either of them.

"Yes. Oh shit, yeah," Mason moaned, his head lolling between his shoulders.

"Hold on, Brown Eyes. I've got what you need."

Evin slid his fingers free and replaced them with head of his cock at Mason's entrance. He pressed forward, jamming his teeth into his lower lip. *Ah fuck*. Mason was so damn tight. Sweat rolled down Evin's temples, strands of his long hair sticking to the sides of his face. Evin had to take it slow. But slow was going to kill him.

"Do it," Mason growled, pushing back.

"Shit, Mason." Evin ground to a halt. "Don't want to hurt you."

"Fuck me," he groaned. "God, I need to come."

"Relax. Breathe. Shhh..." Evin grasped Mason's hips and eased

forward. "Bear down, baby. Let me in."

The muscles gripping Evin's shaft relaxed, allowing Mason to gain a few more inches of ground. But he still had about half of Evin's nine to go.

"You okay?" Evin moved his palms up, gliding them over the curve of Mason's spine.

"Burns...so good." His blond head shook. "More. Do it, Evin. All of you."

Christ. He knew fucking Mason would be good, but he'd had no idea how perfect he'd feel wrapped around his cock. How the sound of him demanding more would penetrate his brain and take him to some kind of drug-filled high.

"Hold on..." Evin located Mason's hips with his hands once more, then on a groan, surged inside.

"Oh God," Mason cried out. "Yes."

Evin stilled, slid his hand lower, and wrapped his palm around Mason's length. Oh yeah, even through the pleasure-pain, Mason was still rock hard. He gave a few swift strokes to Mason's length. Mason moaned and rotated his hips.

"Move, damn you," Mason demanded, his voice hoarse with need.

Evin leaned back and took hold of Mason's hips with both hands again before easing out until only the head of his cock remained.

"You want to come, Brown Eyes?" Evin's voice had long since gone beyond hoarse. His control was on the verge of shattering and a hairsbreadth from releasing the beast inside that wanted to fuck until neither man could stand.

"Yes," he breathed.

Evin eased forward, making sure his progression slid over the sensitive gland inside, tantalizing the nerve endings, but not enough to send him over the edge.

"I asked if you want to come."

"God, yes," Mason gasped.

Again Evin slowly withdrew, leaving only the smooth head of his shaft buried. "Tell me exactly how you want it, Mason." Evin bit down, grinding his molars. "What do you want me to do to you?" So fucking close to losing it, but he had to hold on. Had to hear the words.

"Please! Fuck me, Evin! I want you to make me come so hard that I fucking can't breathe."

On a roar, Evin slammed back inside.

"Yes," Mason cried out with each pounding thrust.

Over and over, Evin drove into Mason. The slap of skin against skin filled the room, becoming an erotic rhythm that surrounded them and took them higher.

"Oh...fuck..." Mason's head snapped back. His mouth dropped open on pleasure-filled groan, and his body shuddered, his release spurting onto the wood floor.

Evin lost it.

Harder and harder he thrust. Sweat dripped from his brow, stinging his eyes.

The beast within had unleashed its claws.

It needed.

It wanted.

Mason.

Evin threw his head back, and a growl tore from his throat as stream after stream of cum jetted from his cock, filling the latex. Ecstasy raced up his spine, knocking him forward, over Mason's back. Dazed, Evin wrapped his arm around Mason's neck and pulled him back onto his chest. Evin curled his lip, exposing his canines, and cocked his head.

Mine.

A shadow of movement reflecting off the bedroom window caught his eye and froze Evin in his tracks. *Holy shit.*

The image staring at him held the face of a wolf in partial shift, canines primed and ready to mark. Evin jerked his arm from around Mason's neck. *Get your ass under control, KinKaid.* Evin closed his eyes, willing himself back into complete human form before easing free from Mason's depths.

Mason groaned, straightened and turned, then braced himself against the iron footboard. With his face flushed and his eyes hooded, he wore the look of man with a damn good buzz. Evin rubbed his face with a trembling hand. Shit. He had to get out of there. Needed to clear his head.

Evin stepped to the side and swiped his shirt from the floor, then quickly disposed of his condom in the bathroom, grabbing a handful of tissues on the way out. "There are towels in a small closet in the bathroom if you'd like a shower."

"Huh?" Mason moved from the bed. "Oh, yeah. Sounds good." He reached out and wrapped his fingers over Evin's bicep. "Join me?"

"I'll finish up here." Evin diverted his gaze. "You go first." The

warmth of Mason's palm slipped from his arm. "Besides, there are a couple of things I forgot I need to handle outside." Evin crouched by the bed, taking care of the evidence of Mason's pleasure—which had definitely been Evin's as well. Maybe a little too much...

"Sure." Mason's voice carried a hesitant tone. Evin didn't blame him. He'd just gone from *can't get enough* to *Siberian freeze*. But right now, he didn't understand his own damn self.

The sound of bare feet moving in the opposite direction drew Evin's gaze. Mason's nude form filled his bathroom door. Wide shoulders led south to narrow hips that carried a rounded ass God had to have made to drive Evin into insanity.

He bit back a groan and turned on his heels, then headed for his dresser. "I can leave something out for you if want clean clothes to wear tonight."

"No need," Mason called out from the other room. "I don't normally wear anything to bed."

Oh yeah. This time Evin didn't hold back the groan that had again reared its head. He *was* going to lose his mind.

As soon as the *clink* of the shower door sounded, Evin darted toward the rear of the cabin. He'd never needed a run more than he needed one now. With a twist of the dead bolt and a turn of the door-knob, Evin stepped into the night.

The crisp evening air of the Pacific Northwest filled his lungs, and Evin closed his eyes. He had no idea why he'd lost it so bad in there. If he didn't know any better, his actions had been one of an alpha claiming his mate.

And that was *not* possible.

Mason was human. No way in hell would he ever allow himself to infect a human and take away the only existence he'd ever known.

Evin pulled the door shut behind him and immediately dropped to all fours. Fur erupted and bones shifted, bringing forth the wolf. Without looking back, Evin bolted toward the dense woods lining the rear boundary of the property.

Large black paws dug into the grass and leaf litter, and Evin picked up speed. The wind in his fur and the crunch of pine needles beneath his pads were exactly what he needed to help bring his world back to center. Because one night with Mason Thorne had just knocked Evin's off its axis.

Chapter Four

MASON blinked once, then twice, trying to bring the shadowy images of the room into focus. *Where the hell...?* He pushed up from the mattress onto his elbow and came to an abrupt halt. Oh, yeah. The soreness in his behind and the languid state of his muscles—despite the nosedive into a ditch earlier—brought the memory of the best orgasm in his life whirling back to the forefront of his mind. Mason glanced over his shoulder. Lying in bed next to him, chest bare with a white sheet draped over his groin, was Evin. Mason's cock stirred at the sight.

After he'd showered, Mason had stretched out on the bed to wait for him to return, but he must have been more tired than he'd thought. He didn't remember Evin coming back or getting into bed. Evin had acted distant after they'd had sex, but maybe that was just his thing. He wasn't a cuddler. Kind of sucked, but Mason was a grown man and could do casual. It was what he was used to. The few relationships he'd experienced had never amounted to anything more. Though with

Evin, casual, he had a feeling, was going to be a hell of a lot more difficult. One didn't connect with another like that both inside the bedroom and out and then blow it off so easily. Mason palmed his awakening shaft and rolled onto his side to face Evin. The soft glow of the moonlight cast shadows across the ridges of his ripped abdominals. A fine dusting of dark hair covered his chest, then trailed down his midsection, disappearing beneath the sheet that barely concealed his hips.

Mason had never really got a chance to sample the thick cock he knew hid beneath the thin layer of cotton. And it *was* pretty impressive; his ass could attest to that. Mason gently lifted the corner of the sheet. Evin lay with one leg bent at the knee, his foot pressed against the side of his other leg, parting his thighs. The broad length of his cock lay faceup, surrounded by a dark patch of hair. So tempting.

A smile tugged at the corner of Mason's lips as he pulled the sheet lower. How far could he actually go before Evin woke?

Mason gently maneuvered his body until he was leaning over Evin's hips. Using only his tongue, he glided over the underside of Evin's cock from root to tip. A guttural moan emanated from the back of Evin's throat, and his hips arched upward. Mason glanced up, but Evin's eyes remained closed.

Encouraged and feeling a bit bolder, Mason enclosed his fingers around the thick shaft. So warm against the palm of his hand. Mason lowered his head and circled the crown with the tip of his tongue, then gave a gentle swipe through the slit. The unique flavor that was Evin exploded across his taste buds, hardening his own cock even more. Damn, what was it about this man...? Everything about him was addictive as hell. Even his cock was like a crack lollipop: salty, hot, and wild, and he couldn't get enough of his fix.

He wrapped his lips around the head. Evin's dick roared to life, swelling and lengthening beneath his touch. Mason opened wider and sank lower, taking Evin to the back of his throat and beyond. He swallowed around the hard length, massaging the sensitive flesh.

Evin's hip flexed, beginning an erotic rhythm that was as old as time itself. Shallow thrusts pumped Evin's cock into the back of his throat. Mason matched the pace with his fist, sliding it up and down Evin's shaft. With his other hand, Mason reached between Evin's legs and grasped his taut sac, moved it aside, and located the sweet spot at the base. He pressed into the flesh there, working his fingers in a gentle massage.

"Mason..."

His heart raced at the sound of his name. Evin's cock thickened,

hardening even more. The pace of his hips quickened, and Evin's breathing reduced to short pants. His heels dug into the mattress.

Fuck, yeah. Come for me. Mason was dying for a taste. He straddled Evin's thighs, leaned in, and keeping his tongue flat, worked the back side of Evin's shaft. Up and down. Pumping with his fist. His mouth.

Over and over he worked, unable to pull his gaze away from the man he pleased. Mesmerized by his lover's expression. Evin's lips were parted. His hair wild around his face. His hands grasped at the sheets, searching, fisting. God help him, Mason had been right. Watching Evin lose control was something he'd never be able to erase from his mind.

Evin's head jerked back on his pillow, then snapped forward.

"Gonna come..." he gasped, and his eyes popped open. His unfocused gaze landed on Mason. "No!" The single syllable left his throat on a strangled cry. A split second later, Evin's large hands had Mason by the arms and were tearing him away from his erection.

Mason landed in a heap on the mattress. "What the...?"

Evin released a guttural sound, fisted his cock, then pumped the shaft at a feverish pitch as stream after stream of cum shot from the end, landing on his stomach.

Holy shit. That was the hottest damn thing he'd ever seen. Mason reached down and stroked the still-hard length of his own shaft. His balls ached, and precum slicked the head of his cock.

Without warning, Evin's large frame loomed over him at the same time a firm grip snatched Mason's wrists away from his erection and pinned them to the mattress above his head.

"What the hell did you think you were doing?" Evin nearly growled. Strands of his dark hair hung loose around his face as he held himself directly above Mason's.

"I think it was obvious what I was doing. And I also think you enjoyed it immensely." Mason cracked a smile despite Evin's gruff expression. "What's the problem? I would think waking to someone going down on you would be a good thing." Mason lifted his brows.

"That's not the point." Evin shook his head, feathering soft strands of hair across Mason's cheek. Nice. Mason breathed deep, and his eyelids lowered. Evin's scent reminded him of his last hike through the woods: fresh pine needles after a storm. "The point is it's not safe."

"Not safe?" Mason opened his eyes. "What are trying to say?" The guitar solo from "Panama" suddenly filled the room. Evin blinked, and he loosened his grip on Mason's wrist.

"Well, unless someone just flipped on an episode of *VH1's '80s*

classics, I think that's your cell phone." Evin rolled off Mason and onto his back.

Mason swung his legs over the side of the bed and stood, then headed for the chair that held his pants and the phone inside one of the pockets.

"Seriously man, Van Halen?" Evin added.

Mason glanced back over his shoulder. "Seriously." He nodded. "Eddie Van Halen. The man was a guitar legend." He zeroed in on the pocket containing his phone and pulled it out.

"It's five a.m. Who would be calling you this early?"

The large screen of the iPhone displayed *Dad* across the top. His gut tightened with unpleasant anticipation. Mason slid his index finger across the bottom of the cell and answered.

"Hello, Dad." Mason turned with the phone at his ear and rolled his eyes at Evin. The other man nodded and left the bed, headed toward the bathroom.

"You were supposed to call us last night once you got home." Mason Sr.'s voice boomed at the other end of the line. "Your mother has been worried. And you know how she gets when she's worried. You *are* home, correct?"

As usual, his father's normal string of *what have you done to disappoint me today?* statements and questions. Mason pulled in a deep breath. A *hello, are you safe, son?* would have been way too personal for the head of the Thorne family. He bit back a chuckle. Even the word "family" sounded absurd when used in the same sentence with the surname Thorne.

"No. I'm not home." Mason moved back to the side of the bed and dropped onto the mattress's edge.

"And why not? We have a meeting scheduled for tomorrow. There are several things I need to go over with you before you return to work. Were you even planning to call me to let me know you wouldn't be here?"

It was all Mason could do not to grind his molars into a toothache. Damn. It was nothing short of a miracle he had enough of his teeth left to eat with at all.

"Yes, I was going to call you after I got up this morning."

"So, what happened to you?"

Mason relayed the story about his detour and then about his near miss with a wolf that landed him in a ditch.

"Why haven't you called someone from TGI to pick you up?"

"Because it's not necessary. It's only going to be a few more days."

"A few days spent wasted in some small town when you could be home taking care of this company. Your future—"

"It's only four days, Dad. I'm sure Thorne Global will survive without me just a little longer."

"Oh God," his father groaned. "Please don't tell me you're with a...you've picked up some strange man."

"Fine. I won't." Mason didn't bother to hide the hard edge to his voice. His free hand fisted the pillow at his side right before he launched it across the room.

"Goddammit, Mason. What am I supposed to tell your mother? Her son will be home as soon as he decides to crawl out of the sack with his new boyfriend? What if the press gets wind of this little detour of yours?"

"That's unfair..." Mason swallowed hard past the knot in the back of his throat. Whether it had grown out of pain or anger, he had no fucking clue. Probably a combination of both emotions trying to choke the shit out of him. "My sex life has never compromised the family or the business. In fact, I've done everything in my power to keep out of the public eye and to be exactly the son you would prefer. I'm getting my MBA, just like you'd planned, and I've worked my ass off as assistant vice president at TGI. So don't play the ungrateful slut-of-a-son card with me."

"How dare you speak to me in that tone—"

"I have to go. I'll call when I'm on my way."

"Mason—"

He jerked the phone from his ear and tapped End Call. From behind, a large hand brushed his arm. Mason jumped and glanced over his shoulder.

"Shit. Evin..." Mason shook his head. "I didn't hear you come back into the room." Evin's chest pressed into Mason's back, and then both arms circled his waist. Mason leaned into Evin's hard yet warm presence. Damn, it felt good. Too good. He closed his eyes, drinking in the serenity of the moment.

"You were deep in conversation with your father," Evin said. "I didn't want to interrupt."

Mason scoffed. "*That*, you didn't have to worry about interrupting." He tilted his head up, allowing it to fall back against Evin's shoulder.

"I gather from the sound of things, dear old Dad isn't too pleased

with your being gay."

"And you would be right. As long as he doesn't have to see it or hear about it, he's fine. Meaning, as long as I'm playing the good son, becoming the executive he wants me to be, and he can pretend that my being gay doesn't exist...oh, he's fine."

Evin's arms tightened around him. "Sounds very familiar," he began, his deep voice crawling inside and infusing Mason with additional heat. "Different situation, but still very much the same."

"Not a pleasant family experience when you decided to come out?" Mason glanced up. For a split second, he could have sworn what looked like a wave of pain washed over Evin's face, but then it disappeared.

"Something like that," he murmured.

"How long ago—"

"I heard you tell your father it had been a wolf that caused you to run off the road?"

Well, that was subtle... Mason clamped his mouth shut on the rest of his question. Apparently Evin's coming out wasn't a story they would be reminiscing about over coffee this morning. That was okay and something Mason could definitely understand. He wasn't all that eager to reveal his skeletons either. It felt too nice, at least for a little while, to forget who he was, where he came from, and what was waiting for him back home.

"I knew you'd hit a ditch, but I didn't get a chance to ask you about the details." Evin released his hold, left the bed, and made his way over to the dresser.

Mason followed his movements with his gaze as he crossed the room. Evin had pulled on a faded pair of blue jeans since he'd last seen him. A pair of denims that looked as if their creation had been inspired by the man's ass. Evin leaned over, rummaging through a drawer, sticking that perfect behind up for his inspection. Blood rushed to Mason's cock, sending him straight back to rock hard. *Shit.* He had to get Evin out of his system, because hanging around much longer wasn't an option.

"Yeah... It was one of those freakish, one-in-a-million type of things. This big white wolf appeared out of nowhere in the middle of the road as I came around a curve. Largest damn wolf I'd ever seen, with these big blue eyes." Mason propped his back against the headboard. Keeping one leg on the bed, he allowed the other to slide off. Since he was still nude, there was no hiding the fact he appreciated the

view across bedroom.

When Evin didn't respond, Mason realized the other man hadn't budged. He stood with his back to Mason, staring at the shirt in his hands.

"Hey... Evin... You okay, man?"

Evin swung his head around. "Huh?"

"You were standing so still. I wasn't sure you'd heard what I'd said. Where'd you go?"

"A large white wolf. Yeah, I heard you." His gaze trailed from Mason's eyes and roamed lower until it rested on the hard length of his cock. "And in answer to your other question"—blue eyes darted back to Mason's—"I didn't go anywhere." Evin flashed him a smile that could only be described as sinful, right before he tossed his shirt over the footboard and crawled back onto the bed. Muscles bunched, flexing along his arms and across his shoulders as he slinked over the mattress. A primal beast moving in to take what was his. The knowledge that he was the primary focus of Evin's hungry gaze sent a bolt of lust sizzling along his nerve endings. Mason shivered.

Evin reached out and circled his fist around Mason's length. Mason sucked in a harsh breath through his teeth. With his other hand, Evin grasped the hair at the back of Mason's skull, yanking his chin up and putting them face-to-face. The tug at his roots and the pressure of the other man's fist around his cock had his heart hammering against his chest. God, how did Evin know exactly what drove him out of his fucking mind?

"Why would I want to go anywhere," Evin began, "when I have you?" His rough palm slid up and down his shaft. Mason groaned. "Right here." Evin leaned in and feathered his lips over Mason's. "Where I want you," he breathed against his mouth.

Chapter Five

EVIN slid his spatula beneath the hamburger patty on the grill and then flipped it onto its other side. Flames leaped from the coals and licked at the edges of the meat. The tantalizing smell of char-grilled beef invaded his nostrils, stimulating another rumble in his stomach. He glanced from the grill to the trees that lined the back of his property as Mason's words tumbled over and over in his head.

"A large white wolf with blue eyes..."

"Bigger than I'd ever seen."

It had been over forty-eight hours since he'd learned the details about what had sent Mason into that ditch, but Evin still couldn't shake the feeling that what Mason had seen that day hadn't been any ordinary wolf. And based on the description, there could only be one logical conclusion. But who the hell from the KinKaid pack would be sniffing around Dover? Many of the females and a few select males in his pack were blue-eyed with a white coat.

Pack law clearly stated that it was forbidden to contact one who had been banished. They risked expulsion themselves. Besides, there

was only one person he knew of from his former life who even gave a crap whether he was dead or alive: Rosa.

Damn. Evin shook his head. *For God's sake, Rosa, if it is you, what are you up to?*

"Wow, that smells great."

The sound of Mason's voice yanked Evin back into the present. He turned and watched as Mason stepped from the screen door onto the deck. It felt so natural having him here. It was as if they'd been living together for months, not days. Mason had this uncanny ability to read his moods, knowing when he needed a few moments of alone time—and especially when he didn't. There was no denying the chemistry between them. He couldn't remember ever staying so fucking hard around a man. So asking him to find another place while his car was being repaired were words Evin couldn't find the will to utter.

They'd picked up some of Mason's belongings from his BMW on Saturday, giving him a few changes of clothes. Tonight he looked like he'd just stepped out of a Tommy Hilfiger catalog, in his sandals, white cotton shorts, and dark blue polo. The colors suited his fair complexion and blond hair. And those chocolate brown eyes... Evin melted every time he looked into them.

Mason pulled out a patio chair, sat, and then kicked back, stretching out his long legs. He wasn't quite as tall as Evin, probably only reaching about six feet. But when they came together, he fit Evin just right. A sudden flash of memory from last night flooded his mind: Mason's legs wrapped around his hips, Evin buried balls-deep as his cock spewed over and over... An odd fluttering inside his gut had Evin reaching for his abdomen and rubbing his palm over the sensation. But this time he knew it wasn't the need for food gnawing away at him. This particular hunger was for a whole different kind of sustenance.

And he needed to get his damn head examined.

Mason was out of here tomorrow if everything went as planned and he managed to get his car back together. Evin had known this from the moment he'd brought Mason back to his place. And for Christ's sake, Mason was human. A human and a shifter did not make a healthy choice for a long relationship. There was way too much at risk—for both partners involved: the continued secrecy of his kind's existence and the safety of the human.

"I'm starved."

Evin swung his attention back to the grill. "Yeah. Me too."

"Burgers almost ready?" The sound of aluminum scraping against wood came from Mason's direction. Evin glanced up as Mason approached.

"Yup. I think so." Evin turned back to the coals. The warm feel of Mason's hand slid up the center of his back, followed by the hard nudge of his chest against Evin's arm. Evin closed his eyes and forced back the shudder of pleasure that wanted to grip him, the growl that wanted to roll from his throat. He gave his head a slight shake. Dinner. Think about food. They needed to eat. "Do you like potato salad?" The words came out more croaked than spoken.

"What did you say?" Mason stepped back.

"Potato salad. Do you like it?" Evin grabbed the plate next to the barbecue and began moving the burgers off the grill.

"Oh. Sure. Yeah, I like it."

Evin cocked his head at Mason and pointed the spatula toward the cabin. "On the bottom shelf in the fridge. Would you grab the container for us?"

"Coming up." Mason pivoted and made his way back into the cabin.

Evin moved to the patio table with the burgers and set the plate in its center. He dropped both palms to the surface, bracing himself on the acrylic, and breathed deep. What had he got himself into? This connection he felt with Mason had him reeling. His head spun, and his stomach roiled as if he were on some kind of roller coaster. Four days with Mason wasn't going to be nearly enough time to get the human out of his system. Then again, it was way too long. Because Evin had a bad feeling it wasn't going to take many more nights at all for him to lose his mind—and his soul to the guy.

By the time dinner was over, the sun's warm glow had turned the lower edges of the skyline to a brilliant orange, red, and yellow. Evin lifted his beer bottle while studying Mason's profile and took a swig. Mason had kicked his feet up in an opposing chair, looking quite relaxed. A much different pose than the one he'd been in a couple of days ago when Evin came out of the bathroom and found Mason on the phone with his father. The tension that had lined the other man's face had long vanished, but Evin hadn't forgotten the words he'd overheard from the other end of the line, thanks to the excellent hearing provided by his shifter DNA. The fact that Mason had settled for a life that wasn't his dream didn't sit well with Evin. He understood all too well the pain of living one's life to fulfill another's expectations.

But unlike himself, Mason had remained at home, trying his best to make his father proud. Evin couldn't help but respect the other man for the love he held for his family.

"So Mason, tell me, if you weren't the assistant vice president at your father's company, what would you do with your life?" Evin lowered his Sam Adams to the table, leaned in, and propped his forearms along the clear surface. Mason turned in his seat, bringing his body around and facing Evin.

"You really would like to know, wouldn't you?"

"Sure I would."

"Would you believe no one has ever asked me that before?"

Damn. Emotion nearly clogged Evin's throat as he narrowed his gaze on Mason. "So tell me, Brown Eyes. Who is Mason Thorne II, and what is he really into?"

"Easy." Mason tossed back a swig of his beer, swallowed, then said, "Music." He lowered his arm, taking the bottle back to the table with a *clink* of glass against the solid top. "I love playing the guitar. It's all I've ever wanted to do. It's hard to describe the peace I feel when I'm able to sit back and channel my thoughts and emotions into music."

"I'd like to hear you play sometime." Evin couldn't imagine how his family had failed to notice how Mason's eyes sparkled with life when he talked about his passion for the art.

"Sure." Mason nodded. "I'd love to play for you," he said and flashed a little smile.

Evin visualized Mason's hand and fingers moving over the long arm of a guitar, the other hand strumming the instrument and coaxing it to life. The mental picture accompanied by that damn sexy grin across the table had blood rushing to his cock. How could anyone ever resist giving him exactly what he wanted with a look like that? Evin dropped one arm from the acrylic and leaned back, allowing his palm to stroke the length of his denim-covered shaft. Mason hadn't missed the maneuver, judging by where his gaze was now fixed. Arousal flooded Evin's veins.

The sun had set, and the sound of the awakened creatures of the night filled Evin's ears along with the beating of his pulse. The wolf stirred under his skin. It wanted Mason. He wanted Mason. Now.

Raw.

Wild.

Under the moon.

Evin pushed up from his seat, and Mason leaned back in his chair, his gaze following Evin's movements.

"I want to take you somewhere," Evin said and reached out, offering Mason his hand. With a quizzical look, Mason slipped his fingers around Evin's.

"Where?"

Evin pulled Mason to his feet and brought them chest-to-chest. "Come with me." Evin tossed him his best sly grin. "I promise you won't be disappointed."

"With you, Evin, I'm sure I won't be," he whispered, then leaned in and traced Evin's lips with the soft tip of his tongue. To his credit, though, he'd remembered not to slip it inside. Evin groaned with the overwhelming need to open and sample the sweet flavor of Mason's mouth.

Using every ounce of self-control he had, Evin pulled free. "Wait here," he managed to say. "Let me grab my keys." Evin brushed past Mason and stepped back inside.

"Your keys?" The muted sound of Mason's voice filtered through the screen door and the walls of the cabin.

Evin grabbed the few items he needed from the bedroom and was back outside in less than a minute. "Yup." He held up the key ring to his bike. "We're going for a ride to the back of the property line." Evin motioned with his head for Mason to follow and led him down the deck steps and around the side of the house to where he'd parked his Ninja. "We could walk, but I'd like to show you the area before it gets too late." Evin swung his leg up and over, then handed Mason his helmet. "Hop on."

Mason snagged the helmet from his hand. "What about you?" He slid the shell over his head, then positioned himself behind Evin.

"I'll be fine," Evin said over his shoulder. "We're not going far. I'd rather you be protected since you have to hang on."

The hard feel of Mason's body wrapped tight around him had Evin's cock hot and throbbing against his zipper. He stirred on the seat, hoping to ease the burn. But it proved useless. The only thing capable of temporarily dousing the flames was the man who kept the fire stoked.

As if on cue, Mason found the hem of Evin's T-shirt and slipped his hands underneath. The warm feel of his palms exploring the planes of his abdomen had his pulse thundering inside his head. Evin turned the key and revved the engine before burning out across the expanse

of the grounds. He had to get them moving—now—or he was going to fuck Mason right there in the backyard. And he had much better plans.

Evin knew this area like the back of his hand. For over a year now, it'd been a private haven for him to allow his wolf to roam. About a mile and a half in, he slowed to a stop underneath the canopy of several moss-covered trees and cut the engine. The slight elevation provided a perfect view of the small pond fed by the creek that ran along the property's boundary.

Mason's arms dropped away from Evin's waist, and the rustle behind him told him Mason had removed his helmet.

"Wow. Beautiful, Evin. I feel so trapped sometimes in the city. So many people, lights, sirens, traffic." The weight of Mason's palm returned and traveled up his spine. Evin straightened under the stirring sensation. "No wonder you like living out here."

Evin set the bike on the kickstand and dismounted, then headed toward the precipice that faced the pond. Mason followed close behind.

"I've never brought anyone out here before." Evin didn't have to look over his shoulder to know Mason stood directly behind him. His skin literally vibrated beneath the surface when Mason was near. His blood heated. His cock ached. Damn. He stayed so rock hard around the man, he didn't know whether to fuck him or to run like hell. Mason was too perfect. Too much like everything he'd been searching for. But as much as he wanted—needed—to stay away from the human, shit, he didn't have the strength to make it happen.

"Why me?"

Evin whipped around, lifted his hands, and smoothed his palms upward and over Mason's chest. Mason lifted his chin and closed his eyes, appearing to savor the contact. God, just touching him felt so good.

"Because you drive me crazy, and I had to. Had to have you here." He dug his fingers into Mason's shoulders and pulled him close. Evin leaned in and nuzzled the corded length of his neck, inhaling the spicy scent that was Mason. His canines nearly throbbed with the need to sink into the human's flesh. To mark. To dig in and hold him tight while Evin took what belonged to him. Evin couldn't contain the growl that rolled from his throat.

"Damn, it is so fucking sexy when you do that." Mason's words barely registered in Evin's fogged brain. But it was enough to rattle

him back to reality. The reality that he held a human in his arms. Evin moved up to the corner of Mason's mouth and kissed him before pulling back.

"You like that, do you?"

"Yeah. I do." Mason reached up and cupped the back of Evin's head, then yanked. "Come back here and growl some more for me. Better yet" —Mason gave a slow and deliberate lick of his lips—"why don't you come here and make *me* growl."

A rumble started deep in Evin's chest, then radiated out, becoming a literal tremble along his arms and down his legs. Fuck. His vision went red. Evin sucked in a deep breath. *Get a grip, KinKaid. He's human. You can't take him like a fucking animal.* Evin curled his fingers into fists, allowing his claws to dig into the flesh there. *Control. You can do this. You can have him; just dial it down.*

On exhale, Evin unclenched his hands, reached up, and took Mason by the nape with one, then locked on to Mason's arm with the other. He pushed forward, reversing Mason's steps until his back bumped into the trunk of a large spruce. As one, their arms dropped and their chests collided. Evin braced his hands against the bark, his gaze never leaving Mason's.

"I wanted you from the moment I saw you," Evin whispered, their lips a breath away. "It was all I could do not to touch you."

"Shit. Me too." Mason brushed his five o'clock shadow against Evin's own unshaven cheek. The scratch of his beard detonated like minibursts of fireworks along Evin's nerve endings, setting off another trembling wave through his extremities. "God, I wanted you so bad." Evin brought his lips down over Mason's, inhaling the soft utterance of his words. Mason's fingers sank into his hair. Evin grasped his arms and pried himself free despite Mason's grumbled complaint and stepped back.

In one move, Evin yanked his T-shirt over his head and tossed it aside. "Take your shirt off," he commanded. Mason complied and tossed his where Evin's had landed. Evin moved in close but not enough to touch. Mason reached up, his hand going for Evin's bicep. "Stop." Mason froze. "Not yet. Let me look at you, baby." Mason dropped his arm back to his side. Evin lowered his gaze, reveling in the soft glow of Mason's pale skin. The moon wasn't quite full yet, but there was still enough light that, with his enhanced vision, he could enjoy the view. "You have no idea what you do to me, do you?"

The only reply was the sound of Mason's breath hitching. Evin tilted his head and found Mason's dark gaze watching his every

move. Slowly Evin leaned in, making sure not to touch, and whispered in Mason's ear, "Are you hot, Brown Eyes?"

"Yes," Mason groaned.

Evin pushed back and then circled the tree. Mason jerked his head to the side and followed his path with his gaze as Evin came around and faced him again. Evin reached for the closure at his jeans and undid the button. Mason's hungry gaze lowered and monitored his progress.

"Do *I* make you hot, Mason?" Evin grasped his zipper. A second later, the sound of metal sliding against metal surrounded them as he opened his fly. His cock sprang free, and the cool night air wrapped itself around the warm head.

Mason licked his lips. "Yes." His head fell back against the bark. "So damn hot." Mason reached down and palmed the large bulge straining against his shorts.

Bracing both hands on the tree behind Mason, Evin lowered his head beneath the other man's chin and breathed in the heated sweet musk of Mason's flesh. His mouth watered for a taste.

"I like that," he murmured, coming to rest an inch above Mason's lips. "I like that a lot."

A groan rolled from Mason's throat.

"Show me."

Mason's eyes widened. "I thought you'd never ask." He shuffled between their feet, then began to lower to his knees.

"Oh no, Brown Eyes." Mason came to a halt and glanced up. Evin shook his head. "I want you to show me how hot I make you."

Slowly Mason straightened as his fingertips followed the waistband of his shorts and found the button and zipper. Evin didn't think it was possible for his pulse to beat any faster, but at the sight of Mason freeing his erection, he found his temples throbbed with the rapid-fire rate of his heart. Fuck. He had a gorgeous cock. The shaft had to be a good seven inches, with only a couple of thick veins that ran the length from its root to a large, flushed crown. Evin ran his tongue along the roof of his mouth, imagining how salty and sweet Mason would be on his taste buds.

Mason shoved his shorts past his hips, then kicked them and his sandals from his feet before gripping his shaft, pulling it up, and stroking it against his lower abs.

"That's it." Evin sucked in a breath, trying to push back his need. "Show me what you like." Moving one step back, Evin then wrapped

his hand around his own cock. He watched as Mason squeezed his length and then worked the back side of his shaft up and down with the pads of his fingers. Someone moaned, but Evin couldn't be sure which one of them had uttered the sound.

"How much longer?" Mason panted.

Evin leaned in, his erection brushing the knuckles of the other man's hand. "Until you make me want to come for you so fucking bad that I'm begging for it."

Something like a whimper released from Mason's lips; then he dropped to the ground. Whether he meant to end up collapsing onto his discarded shorts in the grass or not, Evin didn't have a clue. But the site of Mason naked with one knee bent and his other leg spread, jacking off under the moonlight, was enough to draw Evin's balls up tight, on the verge of release.

Their combined harsh breaths filled the air, drowning out the sounds of the night. Evin lowered onto his knees, his gaze riveted to the man in front of him.

"Evin..." Mason's eyes appeared drugged with desire, with the need for release as his gaze clung to Evin's. One hand squeezed the base of his shaft, and Mason hissed. "So...close..." he forced out through clenched teeth. His hips rocked forward, exhibiting his desperate need to fuck.

Evin licked the tips of his fingers and then wrapped them back around his cock. God, he felt like his brain might short-circuit before he got inside Mason. He released his shaft and inserted his fingers back into his mouth, this time taking them to the knuckle and coating them with the dampness of his tongue. Mason groaned, and his eyelids fluttered. With a *pop*, Evin released his digits and returned to work on his hard-on.

"Have you ever finger-fucked yourself, Mason?" Evin's voice dipped low and hoarse.

Mason's eyes opened wide. "Oh God, Evin..." His voice quivered, and he shook his head. "I'll lose it. I'll fucking come."

Reaching for the forest floor, Evin rolled forward onto his hands and knees, his gaze locked with Mason's. "No." He cocked one eyebrow. "No, you won't. Because that's mine"—he glanced down at Mason's rock-hard cock, its flushed head glistening with precum, and then back to Mason—"and you come only for me."

"Only for you," Mason whispered with a nod and lifted a trembling hand to his lips. Evin reached out and snatched Mason's fingers

away, brought them to his own mouth, and sucked them in. "Fuck! Evin." Mason's head thrashed back and forth. "No fair," he gasped.

After he wet them thoroughly, Evin opened his mouth, allowing Mason to pull free and his hand to fall back to his groin. "Now, take me to the edge and blow my mind, baby."

On a low groan, Mason thrust two fingers within himself. His hips lunged forward. Sweat beaded on his face, arms, and chest, making his skin appear glossy and slick. With his other fist wrapped tight around his cock, Mason quickly found his pace, pumping his shaft up and down as his fingers drove in and out.

"Do you want this? Want me?" Mason's words were thick with arousal. "Oh God..." Another moan fell from his lips. "Evin..." Mason spread his legs wider, driving deeper, stroking harder. "Need you..."

"So fucking hot," Evin muttered and then reached back and tugged the lubricated condom he'd stashed in his back pocket earlier when he'd went back for his keys. With one hand busy on his shaft, Evin tore the wrapper with his teeth and quickly rolled it over his erection. There was no way in hell either he or Mason was going to last much longer.

"Evin!" Mason cried out, his fist clamping down on his cock as his fingers stilled in his ass. "Got to come," he hissed through his teeth, his face twisted in pleasure-pain.

Evin lunged and, in one move, took Mason by the shoulders, rolled him onto his hands and knees, and buried himself to the hilt.

"Ahh fuck..." Mason reared his head back. "So good."

Wrapping his arms around Mason's damp chest, Evin then lifted him onto his knees, Mason's back pressed into Evin's front. Air sawed in and out of Evin's lungs, matching the pace of Mason's ragged breaths.

"God, you're so tight, Brown Eyes," Evin groaned at Mason's ear. "I love the way your ass feels pulsing around my cock." Holding Mason in his arms, Evin eased his hips back and then thrust forward. A shudder racked Mason's body, and Evin's name released from his throat on a hoarse cry. "Now, Mason. Come for me." Evin pistoned deep once, twice, then with a roar, Mason's back arched as thick streams of cum jetted from the end of his shaft.

A tingle set off in Evin's gums, signaling the lengthening of his canines. Evin loosened his hold on Mason and pressed him forward, back onto his hands. The urge to sink his teeth into his flesh and pound away inside his ass until his balls were dry was just too irresistible.

Evin slid his palms over Mason's hips and held him tight. Over and over, he shuttled his cock into Mason's snug passage. Sweat ran like a cool ribbon down Evin's spine. The need to come had become an incessant burn in his cock, but he didn't want it to end.

More time.

He needed more time before letting go. Before letting Mason go.

There was no suppressing the growl that ripped from Evin's throat along with the orgasm that erupted from his cock. He slammed his hips into Mason, burying his shaft deeper, as if powered by the beast within who strained to leave a piece of himself behind. But that was something Evin could never allow.

He slumped forward, over Mason's back, and the heavy beat of his heart thumped against his chest. With a sigh, Evin rolled to his side, pulling free from Mason, and dropped onto his back. Mason collapsed onto his chest, draping an arm over Evin's midsection in the process.

"Damn, Evin," Mason groaned. "That...that was unforgettable."

Evin's heart swelled, threatening to block his airway. "Yeah, it was," he managed to say.

"You know how to leave your mark on a man, don't you? You make it damn hard to have to say good-bye."

Then don't, Evin's mind rebutted. But instead of voicing his wish, Evin reached down, dragged Mason's palm to his lips, and pressed a kiss to its center. The next thing Evin knew, Mason was on top of him, pulling his hand free and replacing it with his mouth. His lips roamed over Evin's as if he were imprinting every centimeter of their shape, feel, and taste into his memory. Evin moaned under the exploration. Mason filled his heart and made him feel alive again. Something he wasn't sure would ever be possible after he'd lost his family, his identity as a KinKaid. Evin wrapped his arms around Mason, drawing his hard body tighter against him. How was he ever going to let Mason go?

The moon was high in the sky by the time Mason and Evin came up for air, dressed, and climbed back onto Evin's bike. It had to be at least one in the morning, and dawn was going to come too soon. Tomorrow he had to finish the repairs on Mason's car, and then it would be over. *They* would be over.

Mason's hands found their way back under his shirt and held on tight. The warmth of his embrace spread through Evin's skin and all the way to his heart. He couldn't help the stupid grin he knew sat on

his face. He revved the engine and sped out across the clearing that separated his cabin from wooded acreage, when a young doe sprang from the tree line and directly into their path.

Evin yanked the handlebars of the bike in the opposite direction of the deer's course. "Hang on!"

The motorcycle jerked forward, barely missing the animal's hind-quarters. Evin cursed and straightened the front wheel, but the bike suddenly came to violent halt, the front tire striking a large tree root. The rear wheel left the ground, launching both men into the air.

The world slowed to a crawl.

Every heartbeat, every breath became a deliberate action that roared in Evin's ears. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw Mason's body tumble through the air like a rag doll falling at half speed from a child's grasp and then land in the tall grass. The frame-by-frame movement would have almost been funny if it weren't for the fact that it felt as if Evin's heart was being ripped from his chest.

This could not be happening.

God, no—not like this. I can't lose Mason.

A sharp pain tore through Evin's leg, followed by a hard crack to the back of his head. The stars above blurred, and then without warning, winked out of existence.

Chapter Six

AIR punched from Mason's lungs. His vision dimmed. Digging his fingernails into the dirt, he managed to pull himself off his back and onto his side as he ripped the helmet off his head.

Breathe.

With his mouth agape, Mason desperately searched for the oxygen needed to refill his starved and paralyzed chest. *Breathe, dammit!* As if in response to his command, Mason's diaphragm kick-started back into action. A loud wheeze accompanied his first breath, followed by a cough that sent the blood rushing to his brain like a jackhammer chipping away at his skull. *Holy shit.* He moaned and grabbed both sides of his head.

Mason drew his legs up, then rolled over onto his hands and knees, ignoring the throb in his lower back from its nasty impact with the ground. Then it hit him. *Evin.* Where was Evin?

Oh fuck. His heart jerked in his chest. Mason reared up onto his shins and scanned his surroundings. The motorcycle's sputtering engine drew his immediate attention. It lay on its side with the front

wheel bent nearly beyond recognition. Less than a foot away of what remained of the bike lay a dark figure crumpled in the grass.

"Evin!"

Mason lurched onto his feet and began to move, half running, half stumbling the few steps needed to take him next to the unconscious body. "No..." The plea fell from Mason's lips as he neared the still form. Long dark strands of hair covered the man's features, but Mason didn't need to see his eyes. He already knew...

"Evin... Can you hear me?" Mason dropped to his knees, reached out, and brushed away the tangled locks. He lowered his fingertips to Evin's neck and searched for a pulse.

"Oh, thank God." A strong *thump* registered against the pads of fingers. Evin was alive.

Quickly Mason assessed Evin for injuries, starting with his head, then progressing lower to his legs. No open wounds were apparent to his upper body, but the moment he moved south, Mason realized that wasn't the case for one of Evin's legs.

Evin's right leg lay at a distorted angle, the jeans torn and a section of bone protruding through the material. His stomach roiled. As he leaned in for a better look, Mason's palm found a warm, sticky pool in the grass near the injury.

Shit shit shit. Evin was bleeding out. The fracture must have torn an artery.

He needed an ambulance—now. But before he went anywhere, Mason had to do something about the amount of blood Evin was losing. He couldn't hold pressure and leave to call for help at the same time.

Fuck fuck fuck. What the hell was he going to do? His head throbbed, making it a son of a bitch to think.

A tourniquet. Yes. That should work.

Mason glanced down at his torn cotton shirt. It would have to do. He grabbed his polo by the neckline and yanked it over his head. He reached over and gently turned Evin's head to brush his lips over his lover's. Evin's lips parted on a deep breath.

"Evin? Can you hear me?" Mason cupped Evin's cheek. "It's Mason."

He grimaced, squirmed, and then a loud groan tore from Evin's throat.

With both hands, Mason held on to Evin as his eyelids fluttered. "Don't move. Try not to move. You're leg is bleeding, and I need to do something to stop it, but you've got to be still."

A low growl vibrated off Evin's chest. "Leave me alone," Evin spit.

"Evin, please. It's Mason." A shiver gripped Evin's body, followed by another groan, and then something flashed across his face, almost like a reflection on water that had been disturbed by ripples. Mason shook his head. Damn, for a moment the face staring back at him hadn't appeared human. The blow to his head must have been harder than he'd thought.

"Mason... No, Mason." Evin's head rolled back and forth. "Got to get away," he muttered. "Got to get away." Over and over, Evin muttered the same phrase.

Mason swore his heart had moved into his throat. He swallowed hard, trying to force the knot back down, and whispered a prayer.

"Please God, help him. I can't lose Evin." On a deep breath, Mason shook off his nervousness. He had no choice. "You're going to be okay." He scurried to Evin's injured leg. "You're going to be okay. You hear me? You're going to be okay."

"No!" Evin's upper body rocked. His hands clawed at the ground. "Get the fuck away from me!" The sound that roared from Evin was unlike anything Mason had ever heard.

The hairs on his arms lifted. Christ. Evin was worse off than he'd thought. He was out of his mind. Delirious. Mason had to stop the bleeding and get help. He stretched out the remains of his shirt, then twisted it into as narrow a band as he could before slipping it under Evin's injured thigh. Evin cried out.

"No! Get. Away. Mason... Fuck!" Evin thrashed his arms. "Get away from me!" The words were growled more than spoken, spurring Mason to work faster. He reached between Evin's thighs and pulled the other section of the material through. Putting the ends together, Mason formed the beginnings of a knot. He glanced over his shoulder at his lover's agonized expression.

"I'm so sorry..." Mason sucked in a ragged breath. "This is going to hurt." He closed his eyes, pulled hard, and yanked the material tight against Evin's thigh.

A loud yelp sounded from behind, and the tourniquet jerked from Mason's hands. *What the...?* Stabbing pain sliced through his left shoulder, forcing a shriek from his throat. The crushing weight of a powerful jaw seized him as a set of canines sank deeper. *Oh God.* Mason's knees left the ground. Hot pain arrowed down his arm, and then he was flying backward. His body hit the ground with an *umph*.

A shadow fell over him, blocking the moon's glow. Something big, dark... Mason's heart hammered against his chest. Its head turned into view. *Holy shit.*

A wolf.

Mason scrambled for purchase in the grass with his good arm, and using his heels, made for some serious reverse action. His gaze darted to Evin's location.

What?

He was gone. Evin was gone. How...?

Mason swung his head around just as a huge paw landed in his chest, pinning him to the ground. A large black muzzle lowered, and vivid blue eyes locked with his. The animal's gaze bore into Mason's, sending a chill down his spine.

Suddenly its gaze left him, and its muzzle trailed down Mason's neck. The air froze in his lungs. *Christ.* He should fight—kick, punch, do his damn best to knock the thing off him. So why was he lying there as if he were waiting to see if it was going to finish the job? The hot stroke of a tongue traveled over Mason's pulse, then paused over the evidence of the bite to his shoulder. What was it doing? A second later, the warmth of the beast's breath moved upward to his cheek. Mason's heart galloped as the wolf's gaze found his once more.

The animal stared into Mason's eyes as if he somehow knew him. Had the right to share his personal space. So familiar... Mason couldn't drag his gaze away. The irises were such a brilliant blue. The exact same color as... *Impossible.*

"Evin?" Unbidden, the name tumbled from Mason's lips before he could pull it back. Mason lifted his arm, needing for some crazy reason to touch the dark fur. But before his fingertips made contact, the animal whipped around and leaped into the tall grass. Mason jumped to his feet, his gaze searching for any movement.

Nothing.

No one.

The sound of his breathing and the continued sputter of the Ninja's engine was all that remained.

Mason had no idea how he'd made it back to the cabin so fast. His back ached. His shoulder throbbed. Thin ribbons of crimson ran from the bite wound down his arm, mixing with the sweat covering him. He must have run the rest of the way back. Damn. He barely remembered the trip. But some things were way too vivid inside his head. Images Mason would rather forget, because there was no way what

he'd seen tonight was real. People did *not* turn into wolves. Mason shuffled from the back door and over to the kitchen sink, reached out with a shaking, bloodied hand, and turned on the faucet. He cupped his palms under the flow and splashed a handful of water onto his face. Cool rivulets ran down his bare chest, stimulating his body and mind. Mason gripped the edge of the counter, his head hanging. If only answers came with the sharpened focus.

If what he'd seen go down tonight were some kind of trick of his mind—perhaps the result of a mild concussion—then where the hell was Evin?

"Mason..." A familiar deep voice sounded from behind him, jerking his spine straight. Mason whirled and found Evin, naked, standing just inside the screen door. His gaze darted over Evin's exposed flesh. Not a scratch. His leg was completely intact. Mason's stomach turned over, sending a wave of nausea up his esophagus. There had to be some logical reason. No man—correction—no *normal* man healed that damn fast. What the fuck was going on?

Instinct sent Mason lunging for a knife from the butcher block on the counter. He gripped the hilt of the first large blade in the stand and scurried backward, putting a few feet between them.

"What the fuck are you?" he demanded, pointing the sharp tip in Evin's direction.

Evin threw his hands up as if in surrender.

"I never meant to hurt you, Mason." He shook his head, his gaze settling on Mason's injured shoulder. "Never."

"That doesn't answer my question." Mason took a step forward, the serrated steel in his hand lending a boost to his confidence. "I know what I saw." Mason chanced a glance down to the area that had once been an open fracture in Evin's shin. "Your leg...the bone was exposed."

Evin nodded, then reached for the shelf at his side. Mason tensed. "Let me grab something to put on from here." He placed his hand inside a bin, pulled out a pair of gray athletic shorts, and slipped them on. When Evin's gaze returned to his, Mason watched as he took a long, deep breath and then said, "You're right, Mason. You're not crazy. My leg was broken—bad."

"Then how...?"

"Let me take care of you first." Evin stepped forward.

Mason jumped and stumbled backward, sending a searing pain through his shoulder. "Shit," he hissed and tucked his arm against his

chest. "Stop right there." Mason pointed the knife again at the other man. Evin froze. "You don't need to take care of anything. What I need are answers."

"You're still bleeding, Mason. And you're in pain. I can help."

"You can help by telling me who—or what—I've been fucking," he said, his voice close to a snarl.

Evin's throat worked, and then his lips parted. "I'm what's called a shape-shifter. I can shift and take the form of a wolf."

"Oh my God," Mason breathed and began a slow reverse step to the other end of the room. "That really was you..." It registered somewhere in his mind that Evin matched his steps, moving forward into the kitchen as Mason made his way backward. But at that point, his brain had short-circuited on the new reality slapping him in the face. No, make that bit him on the shoulder. *A shape-shifter?* His lower back rammed into a chair at the table, sending a shooting pain up his spine and causing him to jerk. "Ah shit." A burning sensation seared down his arm, and every beat of his heart pulsed into his fingertips.

"Please, Brown Eyes. Let me help you." Evin closed in. Mason steadied the hilt of the knife in his hand, keeping it out front. He opened his mouth, ready to tell him to stay the hell away, when Evin's gaze found his. "I can take the pain away. If you'll let me." His eyes... they seemed so full of sincerity, maybe even a tinge of regret. "I know all this doesn't make sense right now. I didn't mean for you to ever have to see that side of me. It was the pain; it brings the wolf to the surface—for self-preservation. Under such conditions, it's nearly impossible to suppress the change." Evin took another step closer. "But I'm still the same man who less than an hour ago was loving every inch of you." His eyes narrowed as if he were relishing the memory. "Trying to give you pleasure—a moment in time—that you'd never forget." Evin lifted his arm and brushed his palm over Mason's bicep, then lower until his hand covered the hilt of his blade. "I never meant to hurt you. Please, allow me to heal my mistake."

"How?" Mason relaxed his grip as the pressure of Evin's hand against his lowered the knife to his side. *I've lost my mind. Yup, totally stupefied by my feelings for this man—er, shifter—whatever.* He should have kept his guard up until he knew more. That would have been a smarter move. Mason had no idea yet what the full implications would be of having this new knowledge about the world. But he did know that the last three days he'd spent with Evin had been the best in his life.

A hint of a smile curled Evin's lips. He reached out and stroked his knuckles along Mason's cheek. The sensation had Mason leaning into his hand. *What are you doing? The man just told you he can turn into a wolf, and here you are going all soft from a smile and a touch.*

"Like this." Evin threaded his fingers into Mason's hair and then cupped his nape. "Hold still," he whispered, then leaned in and lowered his head toward the bite.

Mason flinched. "Whoa...what are you doing?" He squirmed against his hold.

"Shhh..." Evin's grip tightened on his neck. "This will feel so much better when I'm done."

The warmth of Evin's tongue glided over the surface of the wound. Mason gasped, fully expecting an unpleasant burning or painful sensation, but instead, a strange tingle traveled along his nerve endings. Evin lifted his head and glanced up. Compassion clouded his blue eyes, and they bore straight into Mason's soul.

"You okay?"

"Yeah," Mason forced out through the emotion clogging his throat. "Doesn't hurt." He swallowed. "Just the opposite."

"Good." A smile quirked Evin's lips. "Under the right conditions, our saliva can produce an anesthetic and natural antibiotic that aids with healing."

"And what kind of conditions would that need to be?"

Evin's gaze flicked to Mason's wound and then back to him. "When the person in pain is someone we care about very much. The driving need to ease their discomfort triggers the response."

"Oh..." The single word had passed his lips only a mere second before Evin's mouth was back on his shoulder.

His mouth and tongue moved over the bite, every lick dragging the breath from Mason's lungs. It took all that Mason had to stand still under the assault. And assault was the perfect word to describe the sensation. His nerve endings were under attack, but not from pain—from excruciating pleasure.

Heat crawled under the wound. Hot tendrils of awareness spiraled from the center, across his chest, and headed lower. His cock stirred. Mason groaned, and his fingers lost their hold on the knife's hilt. The metal clanked against the wood floor.

Evin, he mouthed, unsure if the name even registered as audible. The hard ridge of the other man's erection nudged his abdomen as strong arms pulled him against Evin's chest. When Evin's hands had

moved from his neck and wrapped around him, he didn't remember. All he knew was how damn good they felt there.

His mouth moved up Mason's neck; then the tip of Evin's tongue dipped into his ear and skated the inner and outer surface of the lobe. Mason shivered.

"You have no idea how sorry I am that I hurt you," Evin whispered. Kisses trailed from beneath his ear over and onto his cheek. Evin pulled back, and his blue gaze pierced Mason's. "So very sorry."

Mason still didn't understand how all this was possible. Like *Alice* in Wonderland, he felt as if he'd just tumbled down the rabbit hole. And it was dizzying. But the emotion he found in Evin's eyes at that moment was grounding, easy to read, and...human—he was hurting too.

"I believe you," Mason rasped. Evin's eyes drifted closed, as if in relief. His eyelids fluttered open a second later, and then his lips brushed over Mason's.

"Thank you," he breathed against Mason's mouth, then retreated an inch. "No fear. Okay? Not between us." Evin shook his head. "This was the last thing I wanted—to hurt you and for you to fear me."

Mason wet his lips. "Not afraid," he uttered. "Not anymore." He trailed both hands up Evin's back, their journey ending in the long, tangled locks of his lover's hair. Mason buried his fists in the dark mass. "Not anymore," he repeated on a near groan and yanked Evin's mouth to his.

Maybe he was a madman for being led by his emotions, but this was Evin. He knew his taste. Mason dragged his tongue over the full curve of Evin's lips. So wild and sweet. The soft feel of his hair. He coiled and uncoiled his fingers around the long, thick mane. The hard length of his cock next to his. Mason rocked into Evin's thick erection, and Mason did groan this time.

In the short time they'd been together, Evin had filled Mason's heart and touched his body like no other. How could he dismiss the last three days as if they'd never happened? Honestly, Mason didn't know that he could if he'd wanted to. The guy was already buried too deep under his skin.

Evin's tongue traced the crease of Mason's lips, and then his teeth tugged at Mason's lower lip, giving them a slight nip. "Let me inside, Brown Eyes. I'm dying for a taste."

"But I thought you weren't into that."

"Changed my mind."

"Thank God." Mason slammed his mouth back into Evin's. Their tongues dueled for dominance, each greedy to sample the other as quickly as possible. So damn good.

A loud bang of wood colliding with wood told Mason that somehow Evin had reached behind and tossed the chair out of their path. His large frame guided Mason back until his rear bumped the edge of the table. Evin's hands dropped to the button and fly of Mason's shorts.

"Need you so much," he mumbled against Mason's lips and ripped open the closure to his Hilfigers.

"Yes." Mason freed his hands from Evin's hair and found the waistband of his shorts. "Want you," he breathed. He shoved the elastic and cotton down Evin's thighs. The heat of his erection bumped against Mason's. He glanced down and drank in the sight of their fully engorged cocks flexing and sliding over each other's sensitive flesh. Mason's mouth watered as he remembered the taste of what had to be at least nine inches of cock with a two-inch-thick crown demanding passage down his throat. He groaned and rocked into Evin. Pressed together, Mason could almost feel the blood surging through both their cocks, pulsing with the need and lust that were thundering forces inside their veins.

Evin's strong hands gripped Mason by the arms and moved him to the side. He kicked his shorts the rest way off his feet, then turned and hopped on the table.

"I need to be inside you. Can't wait." Evin reached out his hand to Mason. "Ride me, Brown Eyes. Let me watch while you take me."

Mason's balls tightened at the mere thought of taking Evin that deep. Christ. He'd never done it that way. Evin lowered his back onto the table. His shaft stood rigid, extending from his groin like a wicked tool of pleasure. Mason couldn't drag his gaze away. Fuck, that was a lot of cock. His ass clenched in eager anticipation.

He slid his palm into Evin's and wrapped his other hand around his own erection. Mason worked his fist over his length, enjoying the feel of the tight friction as he neared his lover. Evin yanked, pulling Mason down, and their mouths collided. Mason's head spun. He released his shaft and buried his fingers once more into Evin's hair, needing something to hold on to. Evin's tongue thrust into Mason's mouth, hot, spicy, and mimicking the action both men craved, the lust they both needed fulfilled. Mason moaned and sucked, wanting more. More of Evin's flavor. More of the man himself. As if sensing

exactly what he needed, Evin obliged. He pulled Mason up onto the table and placed him over his chest. The wood beneath them creaked and complained under the strain of their combined weight. Their hips rocked, hands roamed, and teeth nipped each other's naked flesh.

Nearly drunk with desire, Mason pushed away from Evin's lips and slid lower. Evin tossed his head back and groaned.

"Take me," he rasped, bringing his head forward and locking his gaze with Mason's. "Take what you need."

The table was just wide enough for Mason to straddle Evin's hips and still have room on either side to place his knees. Mason reached low and positioned the head of Evin's cock at his entrance. Fuck, Evin felt so damn large against his opening at this angle. Fortunately he hadn't been back long enough to shower after their earlier encounter, making the need to stop and search for lube unnecessary.

"Wait. No condom." Mason glanced up at Evin.

"No need. Not since I..." Evin shook his head. "Nothing between us. No more barriers, Brown Eyes." Evin cracked a small smile. "No more hiding. Tonight I want to feel all of you, because I plan to give you all of me."

Mason pressed down against the large crown of Evin's erection and pulled his hand away from the shaft. The thick girth penetrated the ring of his back door, and his thighs trembled. On a deep inhale, he bore down, taking it all.

"Oh God," he gasped as the hard length of Evin's cock passed over the ultrasensitive tissue inside. The sensation arrowed through his balls, boiling the cum inside.

Evin's warm palm gripped his shaft in a tight embrace. The sudden halt of his pending orgasm had his head snapping forward.

"Damn," Mason groaned and dropped his palms onto Evin's chest. "Oh fuck. You feel so damn deep."

Coarse palms glided over and up his arm. "Beautiful." Evin's deep and raspy voice skated over Mason's skin, raising gooseflesh in its wake. "God, you're so beautiful."

Mason closed his eyes. The things Evin said, the way he said them... He made Mason believe they were true.

Evin stirred beneath him, and his hard cock flexed inside. Mason couldn't contain the moan that rolled from his chest.

"Got to move, baby," Evin groaned. "'Cause God, I have to fuck you."

Mason lifted his hips, allowing a few inches to slide free, stroking the heightened nerve endings inside in the process.

"Oh fuck." Mason shook his head. "I won't last." He sucked in a steady breath through his nostrils before plunging back down.

"Yes," Evin hissed. "That's it." He reached out, and Mason watched as he closed his fist over Mason's cock and began a gentle pump.

"So good," Mason groaned.

Again and again, Mason rose and fell, meeting the upward thrusts of Evin's hips with each downward stroke. The new angle took Evin's cock deeper than he'd ever imagined, hitting the sweet spot just inside with every stroke. Combined with Evin's relentless efforts along his shaft, it was more than he could take.

"Oh God." Mason cried out between hard pants for air. "Can't hold back... I've got to..."

"Come for me," Evin growled, increasing the speed of his strokes inside and out. "Give it to me, Brown Eyes."

A sizzle of lightning, originating at the base of his spine, arced and then raced through his balls and out the end of his cock.

"Yes!" Mason's back arched as his cum jetted from his shaft in wave after wave of ecstasy. "Fuck. Evin!" White dots whirled before his eyes, spinning out of control along with the room behind them. On and on, Evin milked the pleasure from Mason's cock with his hand and with the rigid shaft that pounded his ass.

With every last drop drained from his balls, Mason's head lolled forward while he braced his upper body, his palms resting on his lover's chest. The pace of Evin's hips slowed, and Mason watched as the other man released his grip on Mason's cock and took his cum-slickened fingers to his mouth. Mason heart bounded. Evin's lips parted, and with a look that said *fucking delicious*, he licked each digit clean.

"You are so wicked," Mason said, his voice hoarse.

"I could come from the taste of you alone." Evin's eyes narrowed as he sucked the last drop of spunk from the tip of one finger.

Evin came forward, still burrowed deep inside, and wrapped his arms around Mason. Their lips came together in a heated lock of teeth and tongue. The salty flavor of his orgasm lingered on Evin's tongue, but the memory of the expression on Evin's face as he experienced his taste for the first time made the whole damn kiss that much hotter.

Their mouths parted on a breath. "To bed," Evin whispered. "I so need to fuck you now."

"I do love it when you talk like that." Mason gave a lopsided grin.

"Does it get you hot?" Evin tossed him a sly grin in return.

"You know it."

"Good. Then I plan to talk about fucking you a lot."

"Mmm... I like that idea."

They made quick work of coming apart and hauled ass to the bedroom. Mason dived onto the mattress and then flipped onto his back. Seconds later, Evin's long, muscular frame covered him, positioned between Mason's thighs. Without hesitation, Evin slammed home, his balls slapping Mason's ass.

"Holy shit!" Mason arched, grabbed the wrought-iron rails above his head, and wrapped his legs around his lover's hips.

Evin froze. "You okay? Did I hurt you?"

Mason released a moan and locked his gaze with Evin's. "Hell no." He shook his head.

"You do like it rough, don't you, Brown Eyes?" Evin leaned in and brushed his lips over Mason's. His cock slid from Mason's ass, then with a flex of his hips, thrust deep once more, forcing a groan from Mason's throat.

"Yes," Mason bit out through clenched teeth. "Now fuck me—hard. I need this." He needed one more taste of the pleasure-pain Evin could bring. A physical reminder of what they'd shared for the past three days—that it had been real.

The bed rocked and the metal railings clanked with each pounding of Evin's cock into his ass. God. The man could fuck like an animal. He might have laughed at the pun if it weren't for the exquisite sensations coursing through his body and fogging his mind.

Evin tackled his mouth with a ruthless kiss, taking, demanding everything that he could give. And it was luscious. His head swam and his chest burned with the need for air. But damn if he wanted to stop just to breathe. His skin tingled. His cock, rock hard again, pulsed against his abs. Evin pulled back.

"Don't stop," he gasped. "Too good."

"Never, baby." Evin's lips grazed Mason's neck.

He licked a path down Mason's throat, creating gooseflesh across his skin. Mason moaned and tossed his head to the side, giving him more room. Over the angle of his lover's shoulder, Mason watched Evin's bare ass lift and bunch as he thrust into his. The sight had the cum in his balls threatening to erupt.

Suddenly Evin tensed, drove deep, and clamped on to the site of his previous bite right before sucking hard. Blood shot straight to Mason's head, hot and pulsing.

"Shit. Evin," Mason cried out between pants.

The sound of a growl reverberated in his ears as sharp teeth sliced into his shoulder. But this time, the pain that seized his mind morphed into an explosion of pure pleasure. Colors swirled before his eyes and burst into a showering rainbow on the heels of his spewing cock. Hot cum sprayed his abdomen in wave after wave of contractions until his balls were once again dry.

Dazed, Mason was barely aware of Evin sliding from him. The damp feel of his tongue gliding over the new marks on his shoulder sent another wave of shivers across his body.

"No more," Mason whispered. "Damn, I don't think I could survive another round like that."

A kiss landed on his cheek, then brushed his lips. "You were amazing, Brown Eyes." Mason reached up and threaded his fingers through his hair, holding Evin's blue gaze to his.

"You weren't half bad yourself, Wolf."

A lone, dark slash of a brow lifted. "Wolf?" A smile that was all teeth lit Evin's features. "Coming from you, I think I like it." He nodded, then leaned in and sealed his lips over Mason's, stealing his breath before jerking back on a gasp. "But only you," he growled.

Chapter Seven

GRABBING the handlebars, Evin righted the busted remains of his Ninja. The wheel was a lost cause, not to mention whatever else was bent all to shit on the rest of the bike. At a slow pace, dragging more than rolling the warped machine, Evin began the trek back toward the cabin.

There were at least three more hours till daylight, and he'd left Mason sound asleep in their bed, exhausted after all that had gone down. But sleep was a fantasy that wouldn't be fulfilled for Evin tonight.

He'd bitten Mason.

How the hell was he supposed to find enough peace inside his head to rest?

And what made it even worse was that his beautiful lover understood only half the picture. It was too soon to reveal the rest. Evin groaned. God, would Mason hate him when he confessed the whole truth? The bite was bad enough, but his DNA now swam in Mason's

blood and was setting off a chain of events. Events that could not be stopped or cured. Within three days, Mason Thorne II would become one of them.

A light breeze lifted the hair off his nape, cooling the skin beneath as he approached the rear of the house. Evin breathed deep, sampling the wild scents riding the wind, then paused midstep and straightened.

"Hello, Rosa." He lowered the bike beside the deck and turned toward the tree line. A lone white wolf stepped from the shadows. At the sight of his sister, Evin couldn't help the smile that spread across his face. But inside, his gut twisted into a knot of concern that she'd taken such a chance to come here.

She trotted in his direction, her beautiful snow-white coat shimmering under the stars. Rosa had inherited her coat color from their mother, while Evin had inherited their father's dark coloration. But both had been born with the same blue color to their eyes. Rosa slowed to a stop and then sat back on her haunches at his feet.

"Don't move. I'll be right back," Evin stated, then darted into the cabin and grabbed a blanket that he'd stored on the shelf by the door along with his spare clothes. She was right where he'd left her when he made it back outside. "Here." Evin unfolded the blue fleece and held it up, blocking his view while she shifted. Maybe some packs didn't give a shit who they flashed their naked asses to when shifting. But he did, especially when it came to his sister. He would always protect her—any way he could.

A moment later, warm, lithe fingers removed the blanket from his hands. "Thanks." He watched as Rosa wrapped the material around her.

"You shouldn't be here, sister." Evin crossed his arms over his chest.

She stepped closer, lifted her hand, and gently brushed her palm over his cheek. "You're my brother, and I sensed you needed me."

Evin covered her hand with his and then pulled it away, not letting go. "Tell me, was it you who stepped in front of Mason's car?"

A small smile played at her lips. "Mason? Is that his name?"

"Dammit..." Evin tossed his head back and released his hold on her hand. "You could have been killed," he said, bringing his gaze forward and capturing hers. "What possessed you to do such a thing?"

"I don't know." She shrugged and diverted her eyes toward the woods. "I can't explain it. I just knew I had to be there at that moment.

For you." Rosa glanced back, concern written on her face. "The human...was he hurt? He seemed to be okay when I'd left."

"No." Evin shook his head, then on a sigh, rubbed his face with his palms before moving to the steps that led up to the deck and plopping onto the wooden surface. "He wasn't hurt." Rosa followed, coming to stand in front of him.

"But he's not okay now, is he, Evin?" she whispered.

"Right again." Evin slowly lifted his head, finding the unconditional love his sister always held for him in her eyes. "I made a terrible mistake tonight. Something I thought I'd never allow to happen."

"Mason...he's infected."

Evin closed his eyes. He couldn't tolerate seeing himself reflected in her gaze. This should have never happened. Ever since his first shift as a pubescent teenager, the pack had driven into his head the dangers of infecting a human. It was strictly forbidden for fear of discovery and possible genocide if humans ever learned of their existence.

"How did it happen?" Rosa eased down beside him on the step, her calm presence a steadying force. "Can you tell me?"

Evin recounted the last few hours of the night to his sister—minus, of course, the intimate details.

"You care about him very much." The words were more a statement than a question. Rosa knew him too well. Evin glanced at his sister, then turned his gaze to the calluses that lined his palms. He nodded. "You've been in accidents before—pretty bad ones—and you've never lost control. But...those situations hadn't occurred when with the person you love."

Evin snapped his head in Rosa's direction. "Love? Who said anything about love?"

A mischievous grin formed on her lips. "All right, big brother." She shook her head. "I'm just saying that maybe a part of you, subconsciously, wanted to hold on to Mason. So the wolf decided to lay claim to him for you, doing something that perhaps, consciously, you hadn't come to terms with yet."

Dropping his head, Evin studied his palms again. She made a good point. Pretty much hit the nail on the head, actually. He'd been struggling for the past twenty-four hours with the fact that Mason was leaving. Maybe the wolf had decided to do something about it. *Damn*. He hadn't meant to alter Mason's life without giving him a choice. His stomach churned.

"There is another reason I'm here tonight, other than the fact that I could feel your distress."

"Yeah?" Evin leaned against the step behind him, facing his sister's profile.

"The full moon will be here in two days, the first since your twenty-fifth birthday."

The bottom fell out of Evin's gut, and bile scalded the back of his throat. Could this night get any worse? He swiped a hand over his mouth and jaw. If things had been different, in forty-eight hours, he would have assumed the role of alpha for the KinKaid pack. Since that would not be happening, it would be open season on his father. Evin had been so consumed with Mason, he'd totally pushed the date to the back of his mind.

"I knew this would be a difficult time for you as well, and to be honest, I didn't know if I could bear seeing what was to come for our father. As cruel as he can be sometimes"—Rosa twisted on the step and looked his way, wearing a sad smile—"he's still my dad."

Evin reached out and pulled her into his arms. "I know exactly what you mean," he whispered in her ear. "I've been so caught up with Mason, and just for a little while, was able to think about something else. I can't believe we're only two days..." Evin wrenched back.

"What?" Rosa stared up at him blankly "What's wrong, Evin?"

"The full moon... It's in two days." Evin jumped to his feet.

"Right." She nodded. "And...?"

"Mason... Oh fuck." Evin shoved both hands in his hair and groaned. "His primary shift will happen in two days."

Rosa's blue eyes widened, and her hand flew to her mouth. "Oh no..." She stood, pulling the blanket tighter around her. "The moon will tear him apart. He won't survive unless you get him to our healers so they can guide him through the change."

"And just how the hell am I supposed to do that?"

"Yeah...I'd like to know that as well, Evin." The sound of Mason's voice sliced through Evin's heart like a hot blade. His chest burned with regret. He bit back a curse and glanced at the shadowed image of his lover standing in the open screen door. "And when you're done explaining that"—Mason stepped onto the porch, the screen door slamming behind him—"how about telling me exactly when you'd planned on informing me of the nasty little side effect of your bite?"

Chapter Eight

MASON paced the small confines of Evin's home the next afternoon. His mind whirled, making him light-headed. He hadn't slept most of the night, and he was exhausted. After he'd overheard a portion of Evin's and who he'd later learned was his sister Rosa's conversation, they'd spent the next few hours filling him in on the full consequences of his lover's bite.

He was infected.

The word rattled around inside his brain: infected. That had been the reason behind Evin's initial reluctance to deep kissing and his insistence on wearing a condom. It appeared there were a hell of a lot more scary things in the world that could be caught from your next bed partner besides STDs. Like the sudden urge to turn into a fucking wolf during the next full moon.

A groaned bubbled up from his chest, and he sank onto the sofa. Evin had said they'd talk some more when he got home from the shop and they were on the road. It was Tuesday, and the parts for Mason's

car were scheduled to arrive. Their plans were to find a way to get him to the KinKaid pack healers so they could help him through his primary shift and keep the moon's pull from tearing him apart. Mason shuddered. *Primary shift tearing him apart.* Christ, he couldn't wrap his mind around the concept. He shook his head.

The sound of an engine nabbed his attention. Mason moved from the sofa over to the window. It was Evin, making his way up the dirt driveway in Mason's BMW. He must have decided to leave work early and deliver Mason's car. The sight of the other man's large frame behind the wheel, the top down and his long hair lifted by the breeze, had Mason's chest constricted in a vise grip. Apprehension, lust, fear of the unknown, all had him strung so tight, it felt like the air had to fight its way into his lungs. He didn't know whether to grab Evin when he came through the door and fuck him senseless, or beat the shit out of him for turning his world upside down.

On second thought, he'd do the next best thing—avoid the confrontation for as long as he could. Mason left the window and went back to the bedroom and to packing his clothes. According to Evin, the KinKaid territory was somewhere near Mount Rainier National Park, so they would have close to a two-hundred-mile trip ahead of them.

The cabin's front door rattled and then clicked shut. Mason sucked in a calming breath. A moment later, Evin's six-foot-plus frame filled the bedroom's doorway.

"The car's ready. The repair went without a hitch."

Mason nodded but couldn't bring himself to meet Evin's eyes. The heat of his gaze felt like a flame licking at his flesh. Nearly impossible to ignore. But if he acknowledged the pull, what then? What was there to say? Was he really okay with what had happened? His life had been changed forever. Fuck, he wasn't even going to be human anymore. That is, if he even survived. And from what he'd gathered from Evin and his sister, the probability of Evin's father allowing their healers to help him was going to be about as successful as pissing in the wind.

"Can I help?" Evin stepped into the room and stood at his back.

"Nope." Mason folded a pair of his shorts and stacked them on top of another. "Got it."

A long sigh sounded from behind him, and then a pair of rough hands gripped his arms. "Stop." Evin's hard chest and hips pressed into him. "Please," he whispered at his ear. Mason's stomach quivered in response. "I know you're scared and pissed off. Hell, I can't

even imagine why you haven't hammered into me for what I've done. But know this: I will not let you die. You hear me, Brown Eyes?" Mason couldn't help the small tremor that racked his body. Evin's palms slid down his arms, then back to his shoulders before he spun Mason around in his arms. Large fingers dug into his hair, his blue gaze boring into Mason's. "Whatever the fuck it takes, I will *not* let you die."

Mason gave a slight nod. He couldn't form any words past the lump in his throat. The brush of Evin's lips over his set his pulse racing.

"I only hope that one day you'll be able to forgive me for my lack of control," he breathed against Mason's mouth. Evin didn't give him a chance to respond. He dropped his hands and then grabbed one of Mason's packed bags and headed to the car. A part of him was glad, because he didn't want to have to answer that question. Not right now.

Logic said that after what Evin had put him through, if Mason survived this, he should get as far away from the man as possible. Find another shifter to help him transition into his new world. So why did his heart hurt like a mother every time he thought about leaving Evin? Mason smoothed his palm over the center of his chest. Shit, he was messed up, because if he didn't know any better, that sick feeling in his gut and the pain behind his sternum...felt a whole lot like love. Too much too fast. He was losing his mind. One minute he was madder than hell at Evin; then the next, Mason wanted to hang on to him and never let go.

"Oh God," he mumbled, closed his eyes, and slumped onto the bed beside his suitcase. Leave it to him to throw his brains away and fall for a damn werewolf.

"Are you about ready?"

Evin's deep voice dragged him back to the task at hand. "Yeah," he said and glanced over his shoulder. "This is the last one. Besides my guitar."

Thirty minutes later, they were in Mason's car and heading northwest toward KinKaid territory.

"Hungry?"

Mason looked over at Evin, who was behind the wheel, and shook his head. He couldn't think about food. The whole idea made him want to retch.

"I know eating is the last thing on your mind. But it's important to keep up your energy supply." Evin tilted his head, catching Mason's gaze, concern written on his features. "You're going to need it."

"I don't know if I can keep anything down."

"I bought some protein bars on the way home and stashed them in the glove box." Evin motioned with his hand in the general direction of Mason's side of the dashboard. "Grab one, take small bites, and chew real slow. I remember my mother giving my sister and me something like that when our time was close."

Mason unlatched the small compartment and pulled out one of the bars. With a shaky hand, he unwrapped it and nibbled on a section of the granola-and-peanut-laden snack.

"How's it going?" Out of the corner of his eye, Mason could tell that Evin watched every grind of his jaw.

"Fine," he muttered around a mouthful of crunchy unknowns that seemed to grow larger with every passing second. Mason pushed the mouthful to the back of his throat, then chased it down with swig off his Dasani.

"It's going to get better. I promise." Evin's large hand covered Mason's thigh. He squeezed the muscle there, then smoothed his palm over the surface. Mason nodded, the knot in esophagus loosening, allowing his food to pass. Just like that. One touch from the man had a way of soothing his nerves and making everything a little bit better. Mason lifted his hand and placed it over Evin's. He could have sworn he heard Evin's breath hitch, and then his palm moved and his fingers laced with Mason's. Damn. Nothing ever felt more right.

They sat like that for what felt like an hour, neither saying a word. The sound of the engine grew to a near deafening intensity inside the silence-filled cabin until Mason couldn't take it anymore.

"So tell me about Jocelyn," he said, his words cracking the tension between them.

"What?" Evin did something like a double take in Mason's direction.

"I need to talk." Mason twisted in his seat. God, he needed a distraction—something else to preoccupy his mind other than the what-ifs that plagued his brain.

"Okay." Evin pulled his hand from Mason's and fisted the steering wheel. "What do you want to know?"

"You mentioned you were supposed to 'mate' her, and by refusing, you ended up banished from your pack." Evin nodded. "But you said she had no feelings for you and that Jocelyn only wanted the title, so why risk everything when the mating would have been a front?"

Evin's chest rose on a deep breath, and then he glanced Mason's way. "In our world, a pair being joined isn't like a human marriage.

When a male shifter mates, he is truly bonded in such a way that he physically can never be intimate with anyone other than his mate." Mason straightened in his seat. Had he heard him right?

"You mean...he can't ever get...?"

Evin nodded.

"You would have never been able to get an erection for anyone else other than her?"

Again, Evin nodded. "Right."

"Shit. No wonder you had to back out."

"That, and it would have been such a lie. She deserved more than a marriage based on money and position. And dammit, I wanted more too."

Mason's heart hammered in his chest at Evin's declaration. Evin had been through hell. He could so relate to feeling the pressure of family expectations. Mason cringed internally, remembering the phone call he'd had to place a few hours ago, informing his father that he wouldn't be home as planned. Mason Sr. had been livid, threatening to disinherit him if he didn't return soon. Like he fucking cared about the money.

"So, out of curiosity, and since this will be my future as well, how does one go about...mating someone on that level?" Mason dried his suddenly damp palms on his jeans. His mind was conjuring all kinds of images from late-night television that involved full moons, big fangs, and wild wolf sex.

Evin worked the steering wheel under his palms. "There's a ceremony the couples go through with one of our spiritual leaders. They drink from a cup filled with a brew that opens the mind. It's done under the full moon, when the pull of the wolf is at its greatest. Partially shifted, the two will bite each other's wrist, marking each other and combining their blood. An ancient chant, passed down through our generations, is recited by the priest and repeated by the pair."

"That's it? No sex?"

Evin's gaze darted to Mason, then back to the road. "What makes you think sex would be involved?" He released a chuckle that seemed to relieve some of the ominous atmosphere inside the cabin.

"Hey, you're asking the man who's spent the last four days in your bed...on your table, in your woods..."

"All right. All right." Evin laughed again. "Point taken, and well, you're partially right."

"I knew it." Mason flipped his hand up in the air in a gesture that said *I told you so*. Evin looked over and rolled his eyes.

"Just like in most human marriages, there is a wedding night, but it's not a necessary part of the mating. The couple is bonded by the ceremony's end."

"Other than the sexual side effects to the male, do you feel any different?" Mason studied Evin's profile.

"I've heard some say that it's possible to have a stronger mental connection to their mate. For instance, if one of them is hurt or distressed, sometimes the other can sense it, sometimes even hear them inside their head."

"Like telepathy?"

"Yeah. Something like that." Evin nodded.

"But this type of mating can only happen between two shifters, right?" Mason glanced at his fingernails. "Meaning, if you wanted to mate a human, it wouldn't work like that?" The heat of Evin's gaze washed over him like a rush of warm cognac seeping into his bloodstream.

"Right. That type of mental and physical connection is only possible between shifters."

"Makes sense." Mason directed his attention to the road. "It's hard to absorb all this." He shook his head. "If I survive after tomorrow, I can't believe this will be my world."

"*When* you survive, you mean." Evin's deep voice, lined with a hard edge, filled the space between them.

"Yeah." Mason dragged his gaze from the road and risked a glance at Evin. "Yeah. Sure. That's what I mean." Piercing blue eyes bore into Mason's soul.

"Then say it like you mean it." Evin's dominant tone reached inside, commanding that he respond, to give him what he wanted. But this wasn't the bedroom. And a part of Mason itched to piss him off.

Mason narrowed his gaze. "Kiss my ass." The words fell from his lips like a line drawn in the sand.

The car swerved hard to the right.

"What the hell?" Mason gripped the dashboard as the BMW's tires bit into the soft shoulder, then came to a halt in a section of tall grass. The seat belt grabbed his shoulder, yanking him back against his seat. Before he could form another question, Evin was out the car and making his way around the front fender toward the passenger side. *What is he doing?*

Evin jerked the car door open, then reached in, unfastened Mason's seat belt, and pulled him from the vehicle before slamming the door.

"What the hell is your problem?"

His only response was a deep rumble emanating from Evin's chest, followed by hard hands spinning him around, putting him face-first into the car door. Evin's hand went straight for Mason's button fly.

"If that's what you really want, I'd be happy to kiss your ass right here." Evin growled into his ear. The words were punctuated by a firm grind of his erection into Mason's backside.

"Have you lost your fucking mind?" Mason squirmed against his tight hold. "Let me the hell go."

"No." The single word vibrated inside his head and set off a tremble that raced through his system.

Mason exploded.

His vision hazed. He twisted, breaking free, spun, shoved, then swung.

His fist connected with Evin's jaw with a loud *crack* of bone against bone. The bolt of pain ricocheted up his arm and into his shoulder. But he didn't give a shit. In some messed-up way, it felt damn good.

"Come on!" Evin cocked his head, then swiped at the blood trickling from his busted lip. "Is that all you got?"

Mason lunged, fists clenched tight, and slammed into Evin. At some point, not sure when exactly, their fight had mutated into more than just his being pissed at Evin. Maybe it happened after the rapid one-two slam into Evin's jaw that had the other man staggering but coming back with a grin. Or perhaps it was after the right hook that came out of nowhere and crashed into Mason's face, making his ears ring but had him begging for more. Who knew? But this was fucking great. Each punch, every impact, felt like an exorcism of the demons eating away at his insides.

Evin's hands snatched Mason's wrist; then his body impacted Mason's chest, knocking him back against the car with a grunt. Mason's arms went over his head, and Evin pinned them to the roof. The air sawed in and out of Evin, his bloodied face inches above Mason's.

"You feel better?" Evin glared down at him, his left eye already swelling.

Mason blinked, the question catching him off guard. He searched inside, grasping for the lingering feelings of anger, resentment, and confusion he'd been carrying around. Most of them had nothing to do with Evin—hell, he'd been the one bright spot in his life—but more to do with his father's expectations. It dawned on him then that while

all the nagging feelings hadn't completely vanished, shit, he did feel better.

"In some sick way," Mason began, pulling air into his lungs in greedy mouthfuls. "Yeah, I do." Mason shook his head. "Fuck. I'm sorry, man."

Evin dropped his hold on Mason's wrists and backed up. "Nothing to apologize for."

"Yeah, there is. I shouldn't have gone off on you like that." Mason ran his fingers over the section of lip that felt three feet thick and stung like a mother. Damn, that hurt.

"You needed to." Evin came forward once more—slowly this time. He reached out, and with his thumb, rubbed away what had to be a smear of blood from the corner of Mason's mouth. "I think you've needed someone to go off on for a long time now. Long before you ever met me."

He turned into the brief caress, unable not to. Evin's touch was like a magnetic pull on his soul. "Still," Mason uttered past his busted lip. Evin's palm slid around and captured Mason's nape, forcing him to lock his gaze with the other man's.

"Don't be sorry." A slow shake of Evin's head sent his dark hair skating over the tops of his shoulders. "I would do anything for you," he breathed, then pulled his hand away, pivoted, and headed toward the driver's side of the car.

Mason was at a loss for words. He stood there, frozen in place. No one had ever said anything like that to him in his life. Well, said it and actually meant it. Mason swallowed, his throat suddenly verging on the Sahara, because he knew without a doubt, Evin KinKaid didn't say anything he didn't mean.

Chapter Nine

THE sun dipped below the horizon, leaving streaks of red and gold visible along the tops of the trees as Mason and Evin pulled up to the locked gates of the compound. Evin tapped the brakes, then reached over and ran his palm down Mason's arm before giving his hand a squeeze, waking him.

"We're here," Evin said at the same time a large dark-haired man, wearing a scowl and all in black, stepped from the security house.

Mason straightened in his seat. "Well, I guess Mr. Sunshine here is our welcoming party."

"Yeah, we're about to see if Rosa arriving first and informing my father I was coming was a smart move."

The guard strode toward the car, his palm riding on the grip of the pistol at his hip. Like that was really going to save his ass if Evin had wanted him dead. Evin lowered the window as he neared.

"Tell the alpha I require an audience with him," Evin said, giving the other man a stare that spoke of his previous alpha prime status.

"He's been expecting you." He stopped at the window, his baritone voice filling the cabin as his gaze assessed them. "Out of the car," he commanded and took one step back. "You can leave your vehicle here."

"What?" Evin was about to blurt a few choice words as to what Sunshine could do with his orders, when a rush of movement caught his attention, stifling his protest. From every angle, a team of commandos who looked as if they'd stepped right off the set of another Rambo sequel surrounded the BMW. "Fuck. Me."

"Love to, but I think we're about to be a little busy," Mason mumbled.

"Ha. Funny." Evin shot Mason a look that said *bite me*. He'd assumed getting to speak with his father would be a difficult task, unpleasant to say the least. But damn, he hadn't expected the old man would call out the National Guard to haul his ass in. Evin grinned. A part of him was a bit flattered. The alpha had treated him as less of a man the last time they'd spoken. Now suddenly he felt it was necessary for a group of armed men to escort him inside. Interesting...

"Like I said," the original lone guard stated. "Out of the car." The slide of steel followed by a loud *clank* filled the air as the team chambered rounds into their rifles, punctuating his words.

In his peripheral vision, Evin noted Mason's hand lifting in surrender as he did the same. Both went for the door handle to exit the car.

"Slowly," Sunshine demanded.

"It's all good," Evin stated with his arms out to his side. "I just need to see my father, not kill anyone."

"Well, thank you sharing that. I feel so much better now." Sarcasm dripped like venom from the guard's words. "It's a relief to know I won't have to waste any of the silver in my rifle on your ass." At that moment, a black van appeared and pulled up alongside their car. The gates released a *click* and jumped into action, rolling open with a steady hum.

"Into the van." The leader gave a sweeping motion with his arm in the direction of said vehicle.

Evin and Mason did as instructed. At this point, what choice did they have if Evin wanted to speak to his father? Mason's life depended on that very event. Both men headed toward the van's door, but before Evin could step inside, a broad hand landed between his shoulder blades and shoved him against the cool aluminum exterior.

"What the fuck?" Evin whipped his head around, noting Mason had been forced to assume a similar position beside him.

"Shut up," a deep voice grunted behind him, with another shove against Evin's back. Several hard pats landed up and down both Mason's and Evin's torsos and legs. "They're clean," their inspector declared to the rest of the team and stepped away. "Now. Inside."

Evin looked to Mason, who gave him a nod that said he was okay, and then they both climbed on board.

The drive toward his childhood home, across land that was part of his blood, his heritage, should have been one filled with joy. Instead, it was one smothered in dread. Many families occupied the several thousand acres claimed by their ancestors going back multiple generations. And the KinKaid's had led the pack for the past five. Until tomorrow night's full moon. Evin breathed deep. Mason, as if sensing his unease, leaned into his shoulder. Damn, he shouldn't be the one attempting to offer comfort right now.

After a ten-minute drive, Evin spotted the familiar glow of the landscape lighting that highlighted the stone exterior of his family's two-story mansion ahead. Evin nudged Mason.

"This is it," Evin said.

Mason's chest rose and fell on a deep inhale. Evin itched to take him in his arms one more time and tell him everything would be fine. But a show of affection right now toward another man was probably not the wisest choice. Evin assessed the armed men who watched their every move; then his gaze drifted to the one beside him who held a piece of his heart. He needed Mason healthy if he was to have a chance of surviving tomorrow night.

The van's tires hit the curb of the driveway and lurched, forcing the passengers to brace themselves, then came to a halt next to the Lexus parked before the open garage door.

"It's do or die time—literally," Mason mumbled.

Evin hit him with a glare. "Not funny."

"Not laughing."

One of the guards came forward and swung the door wide, then exited. "Out," he ordered, swinging back around in their direction.

They filed out from the vehicle, and with the gunmen on their heels, Mason and Evin headed inside.

Through the garage and into the home via the side door, the guards marched them straight to Evin's father's receiving room. The large room hadn't changed since he'd last seen it over a year ago.

"Wait here," one of the armed men commanded. "The alpha will see you once he's free."

Evin glanced over his shoulder, then spun, narrowing his gaze. "And when will that be, exactly?"

The other man shrugged. "You'll have to wait and see." A smirk curled his lips; then he turned and left, with the two other guards falling in step behind him.

"So they stick guns in our backs nearly all the way here, and now that we're actually in your father's home, they're just going to leave?" Mason cocked a brow at Evin. "That's fucked up."

Evin grabbed one of the straight-back chairs in front of the alpha's desk and whipped it around before straddling the seat.

"We're not alone." He shook his head. Out of the corner of his eye, Evin couldn't miss Mason's nervous assessment of every corner of the room. "My father always has a couple of personal guards who stay on the premises. What we experienced on the way in was a power display on behalf of the alpha. He wanted to make sure I knew he was still fully in charge"—Evin laced his fingers, staring at the lines crisscrossing his palm—"and that if I came here needing something, I would damn well have to go through him to get it."

"Well said, Evin." His father's gravelly voice washed over him, tightening his gut.

Evin eased off his chair and pivoted on his heels. Barron KinKaid's six-foot-four frame filled the entryway. By reflex, Evin moved and placed his body slightly in front of Mason's.

"You got my message, then," Barron went on to say, striding into the room. Evin followed his every movement as he passed, watching for the least sign of trouble—a twitch of muscle or a flex of his hand as he went for a weapon. "No need to stand in protection over your... friend, boy." The alpha's steps halted alongside his desk, his long dark hair bound at his nape and falling to his hips. His head swiveled over his shoulder in their direction, Barron's blue gaze pinning Evin's. "I have no plans to kill him." One shoulder lifted in a shrug. "Yet." The last biting word dropped with a flash of large canines.

The warmth of Mason's hand pressed into Evin's lower back, sending a shiver up his spine and another layer of resolve through his soul. *I can do this.*

For Mason, he would do this.

"Sit down, boys," Barron said, his calm demeanor setting Evin's nerves on alert. The alpha lowered onto the large black executive chair

behind his desk. The leather squeaked in complaint as his weight settled onto the cushioned surface.

Evin looked to Mason, and then they both took a seat in the two chairs facing his father.

"So, tell me, Evin. What have you done?" The alpha leaned forward, his thick arms sliding over the wooden top as he laced his fingers. His glare darted between them.

"Rosa did come to you, I assume, or we wouldn't have got this far onto your land."

"She did"—Barron lifted a brow—"but only to beg me to allow you on the property tonight. She wouldn't elaborate as to the purpose of your request for a meeting." He leaned back against his chair. "She caught me on a good day, and I agreed," the alpha added, then sized up Mason with a look that could only be called scathing. He gaze flicked to Evin. "So make use of my momentary good will, boy. Speak."

"I request that my friend, Mason"—Evin's gaze touched his lover's profile, then returned to his father—"be allowed treatment from our healers."

Both his father's brows shot up. "And why would he need help from us?" A corner of his mouth curled.

Evin swallowed hard. It was bad enough to admit what he'd done to Mason, but having to reveal his slip to his father was nearly choking him. But there was no other alternative. Evin braced himself and uttered the words.

"He's infected."

"And let me guess..." His father's tone dipped into a snarl. "Not only have you fucked up, breaking law number one of our code and forcing our DNA into a human, but your timing may very well take more than his humanity. You've given him a death sentence."

Mason's clutched hands dropped between his knees, his head rolled forward, and he stared at his feet.

"Stop it," Evin snapped. "I know what I've done, and Mason already understands the implications. You don't have to shove it in his face."

"I didn't create this problem," Barron growled. "And watch your tone if you don't want to find both your asses hauled back to the gate."

Fisting both hands, Evin dragged a deep breath in through his nostrils.

Patience.

Control.

Barron KinKaid was their only hope.

"I know I fucked up, and I can only hope that one day Mason will forgive me." Evin glimpsed Mason's distressed profile, and his chest ached. He swung his gaze to the alpha's and shoved his pride aside. "That is, if you'll help him. Will you help him, Father? Will you allow the healers to get him through his primary shift during tomorrow night's full moon?" Evin's heart slammed against his chest as he bowed his head in submission. There. It was done. He'd laid it all on the table and humbled himself before his father. The next move was his.

The incessant ticktock of the room's mantel clock while he waited for the alpha's response felt like an ice pick chipping away at his brain. *Shit!* Why wouldn't he say something? His father was fucking with him. Payback time, Evin guessed. Barron KinKaid had the upper hand at this moment, and it appeared he planned to make him squirm.

Suddenly, chair wheels squeaked, rolling under the burden of over two hundred pounds of wolf shifter, signaling his father was on the move. Boot heels thumped against the wood floor as he rounded the desk.

"My, you have created quite a predicament for you and your... friend, Evin," the alpha said, his voice taking on that calm and controlled tone that made Evin want to jump out of his skin. What the hell was he up to? "And what do you have to say for yourself?" Mason's sudden sharp inhale had Evin's head jerking up and swinging around.

Before Evin could stifle its release, a low growl erupted from his throat. Barron had his hand wrapped around Mason's chin, forcing their gazes to meet.

"Take your hands off him." Evin forced the words through clenched teeth. Fuck, he didn't even recognize the sound of his own voice.

Barron's head swiveled in Evin's direction, his hand still firmly in place. "Really?" He cocked his head. "Is that a command? May I remind you that I hold more than just his chin at this very second in the palm of my hand?" The alpha straightened, and he pinned Evin with a hard, blue-eyed glare. "Back. Down."

Evin mentally wrenched tight on the chain around the throat of his beast, slowly reining it back in control. He wanted to claw the man's eyes out. Rip a hole into his damn throat for touching what was his. Air burned as it coursed down the dry path to his lungs. Evin didn't

give a shit that the other man was his father. His muscles twitched, and his skin itched to tear his hand away from Mason's face. Evin closed his eyes, willing himself to let it go, and lowered his head once more. Christ, he had to. What the hell was wrong with him?

"So answer me," the alpha demanded. "What do you think I should do here?"

"I would prefer to live, sir." Evin clenched his fists once more at the sound of Mason's voice. The tone was strong, confident, but even though they'd been together only a few days, Evin could detect the small note of underlying fear the other man was trying to hide. Others who didn't know him as well would probably have missed it. But Evin hadn't, and it made his stomach twist in desperation. God, he wanted to grab Mason so bad, it physically hurt to deny the urge. If only he could whisk him away from all this and tell him it had been a bad dream.

"And if I let you live, what then? Are you prepared to walk away from everything, from everyone that you know?"

Evin glanced up. The alpha had released Mason and stepped back, his hip leaning against his desk as he faced the other man. Mason turned his gaze to Evin.

"That's been all I could think about, actually," he said, his words barely above a whisper. "I don't really have that much to walk away from—not emotionally, that is." Mason turned back to Evin's father. "My family will be furious if I don't return. But for me, it will feel like a release. So even though what happened to me wasn't my choice, and I was pretty pissed off at first, I can't say that the end result—finding a new life away from the Thorne legacy—won't be a blessing in disguise."

"Thorne?" Barron straightened. "Are you saying your family owns Thorne Global?"

"Yes sir, but—"

"Son of bitch, Evin!" The alpha whirled on Evin. "Not only do you break pack law, but you do so with someone from one of the most prominent families on the west coast."

"I can assure you, sir, I will see to it that no attention is brought to your pack," Mason interjected.

Barron pivoted back toward Mason. "And just how do you plan to do that when Thorne Sr.'s son doesn't return to the fold?"

"I'll release my trust back to my father. He's already threatened disinheritance. So I'll give him back what matters to him most—money and any claim I have on Thorne Global."

Evin watched as some of the tension released from his father's shoulders.

"Without my shares and access to his money," Mason continued, "I'm no longer a threat. I have a younger sister, so it's not like he'll be without an heir eventually. I won't lie and say I won't miss watching my sister grow up and being there for my mother as she ages. But I'm smart enough to know that for their safety and the pack's, sacrifices have to be made. And if giving him his money back doesn't work," Mason went on to say, "I know what will. If he doesn't leave me alone and in peace, I'll threaten to go to the media with an exposé on his son's lifestyle." Mason looked Evin's way and smirked. "That'll get his attention and guarantee he won't come near me."

"A decent plan...if I agree to this rescue mission." The alpha's words hit like a bucket of cold water down Evin's spine.

Mason's head swung back to the man who dangled the key to his life like a carrot on stick in front of him.

"How about we make a deal, Evin?" His father turned on his heel and made his way back to his seat.

"What kind of deal?" Evin rumbled. The hairs on his arms lifted in trepidation. This had ugly written all over it.

"I have something you want." Barron lifted his hand in Mason's direction, then moved and pointed in Evin's vicinity. "You have something I need."

Evin's pulse raced. *Why doesn't he just fucking spit it out?* "And what do you need, Alpha?" Evin met his father's stare head-on.

"You to mate with Jocelyn Lathan, continuing the power of our bloodline, and to assume your role as alpha."

His father's demand should have felt like a boulder slamming into to him, knocking the air from his lungs. But on some level, this had been exactly what Evin had expected. *Right?* A part of him knew his father would use this opportunity to get what he wanted. The timing couldn't have been more perfect.

"What?" Mason jumped to his feet. "No. You're asking him to give up his life to a woman who cares nothing about him."

"Silence, human!" Evin's father's fist pounded the wood of his desk. "If you wish to live, you'd better hope and pray Evin cares enough about you to do exactly that." Barron flicked his gaze back to Evin. "Those are my terms."

"Evin...don't," Mason groaned. The sound ripped at Evin's heart. But deep inside, he'd already come to the resolution—the answer—to his father's terms before he'd even set foot on KinKaid land.

"Consider it done." Evin held the alpha's gaze, his words flat. "You have my word."

"Like hell," Mason shouted. "Don't do this."

Evin couldn't look at him. He couldn't. Not right now. Instead Evin stared at the satisfied gleam in his father's eyes. The alpha picked up his phone and pressed a key.

"I need you to escort a guest to the exterior quarters now," Barron stated into the receiver. "And then gather our healers and have them brought to me at once."

Mason appeared in front of him right before his hands clamped on to Evin's shoulders, forcing him to drag his gaze up. Dark brown eyes glistened in the soft glow of the lamps scattered throughout the room. *Tears? For me?*

"My God, Evin. What are you thinking? I don't want to live like this..." Mason shook his head.

"It's done," Evin whispered. "I promised you I would not let you die. I gave you my word," he added, his voice carrying more strength.

"This way, sir." A male appeared beside Mason and slipped his hand around his bicep.

"I'm not ready yet." Mason jerked against the hold on his arm, the tension in his jaw visible.

Evin pushed up from his seat. "Yes, you are."

"Wait." Mason braced both palms on Evin's chest. "We need to talk about this."

"There's nothing to talk about," Evin said, his voice low and hoarse. "It's done." He reached up and eased his fingers around Mason's wrists, then pushed his lover's arms away. "Go with them." His gaze darted toward the two guards who'd come for Mason.

"Evin, we have things to discuss." His father's voice cut through the tension in the room. "Here. Now. Guards, take Mason to his quarters. The healers will be there soon. He needs to be ready."

Large hands appeared on Mason's shoulders, and they pulled him back, nearly dragging him from the room.

"Evin..." Mason twisted against the other man's grip, shaking his head. "No. Dammit. You can't go along with this. There has to be another way."

Claws dug into the palms of Evin's hand. He clamped his fist tighter, needing the pain to keep him grounded. Cutting his heart out with a dull blade would have hurt less than watching the two armed men tear Mason away from him. And knowing the other man prob-

ably hated him for it tasted like bitter acid in the back of his throat. But Mason would live, and knowing that he would still have a chance for happiness, Evin could make it through this.

"Get out of here, Mason," Evin growled. "Do what they say. Don't make me regret this." He narrowed his gaze on his lover, who continued to struggle against the alpha's security guards.

Mason stilled, holding Evin's stare. "Fuck you," he spit, but Evin didn't miss the tremble that rolled over him in the process. "This is so wrong," Mason whispered, then turned and walked away.

Chapter Ten

“UGH.” Mason felt like shit.

He shuffled back to the bed from his umpteenth trip to the bathroom in the last twenty hours. Endless hours of being poked and prodded by strangers who were there to “help” him. Mason crawled onto the mattress, wearing only his shorts, then stretched across the bed onto his stomach, enjoying the cool feel of the white sheets against his overheated skin. His throat was raw. His stomach cramped as if he had a bad case of the flu. *If only*... Except he wasn’t quite sure if the symptoms were the effect of the changes happening inside his cells or the nasty concoctions they kept forcing him to drink so they could “purify” him.

The pain inside his chest was a different story, though. He knew its exact origin: Evin.

No matter how hard he tried, he couldn’t ignore how much he missed him. Needed him. Dear God, how did this get so fucked up? How was anyone supposed to let the person they love die? Physically or emotionally? Evin was giving up his soul, his happiness, for

him. Killing himself internally. And there wasn't a damn thing Mason could do about it. He was in Evin's territory now. He and his father made the rules, and they had stuck him in their guesthouse until he completed his primary shift.

"Turn over," one of the healers demanded. Mason pushed against the thick padding of the mattress and rolled onto his back. He stared up into the neutral expression of one of the five women who'd come last night. They'd stayed covered beneath white hooded robes as they busied around the room and on him, whispering, never actually talking to him, only addressing him when necessary in short commands. Their discomfort with dealing with him—or perhaps it was the manner in which he was infected and by whom—was palpable. "We need to apply some oil to your body. It will aid in your shift, helping to make your skin more pliable." She set a large, dark-corked bottle beside him, and then another woman kneeled on the bed on the opposite side. "It should also help with some of the heat and sensitivity you're experiencing," she added. Well at least they were professional enough to push past their personal opinions to think of his comfort.

Both healers began with his arms, rubbing him down with a mixture that smelled of mint and sandalwood. An immediate cooling sensation washed over his skin wherever the solution touched it. Mason glanced up at the healers, who were mechanically going about the process of working the product into his flesh. The whole situation felt too odd. Mason reached for the bottle.

"Really," he interjected, moving to sit up. "I can do this."

"Lie down." The woman on his left pressed a palm to his chest. "This has to be rubbed in everywhere, but of course"—she blinked, then glanced his way for a second before returning to work on him—"we'll allow you your privacy for certain areas."

Good God. Mason closed his eyes and lay back. If he wasn't already so damn overheated, he might have managed a blush at her implications of where he had to lubricate himself.

"Has anyone heard from Evin?" He tossed the question out, needing a distraction yet desperate for some news. The four hands working on him faltered for a millisecond, then resumed their ministrations. Mason had to ask again. He couldn't allow himself to believe that Evin wouldn't at least check on him through this whole fucking altered reality he was living.

"No," Healer One answered, her tone flat. "Like the last five times you've asked, no one has shared any word with us on the alpha prime."

Alpha prime. That's what they'd kept referring to Evin as each time he'd asked about his whereabouts. Seemed Evin's banishment had been immediately lifted and his title restored.

A knock sounded at his door. The women covered his lower body with a bedsheet before one of the others crossed the living space and opened the door.

"I need to see Mr. Thorne." A soft female voice drifted across the room. One that sounded familiar.

"Yes, of course." The healer pulled the door wider, allowing the other woman to enter. Mason released the breath he didn't realize he'd been holding while he'd wondered who the hell other than Evin would be asking for him. Wearing a pale lavender sundress that stopped just above her knees, Rosa headed toward his bed. His heart thumped hard in anticipation. Finally someone was here who could tell him what had happened to Evin.

Mason watched as Rosa pulled a chair closer to the bed and perched on the edge of the seat. She looked at the other women.

"Could you give us a few minutes alone, please?" Rosa addressed the healer who'd appeared to be in charge during his cleansing ordeal.

"Yes, but it's nearly sundown, and we haven't completed all his preparations." A disapproving groove creased her brow.

"I understand," Rosa softly added. "I promise I won't be long. But there are matters I must discuss with Mr. Thorne privately that cannot wait."

A *tsk* escaped the healer's lips before she uttered a "very well"; then with a sweep of her gaze, she gathered her fellow healers, and they exited the room in a flurry of white robes.

The door clicked shut, and Mason rubbed his face with both hands. "Thank God for a few minutes of peace," he muttered behind his palms, then dropped them to his sides.

Rosa's delicate fingers lifted his, and she slid her hand into his. "How are you doing?" The sincere tone of her voice drew his gaze to meet hers, her eyes—large, blue, and almond shaped—so much like Evin's. His heart stuttered.

"I'm fine," he whispered. "Please, tell me about Evin. I don't think we have much time."

A shy smile curled her lips. "You care very much for him, don't you?"

"You know I do. Or you wouldn't have come." Mason gave her hand a gentle squeeze. "This..." He glanced away, unable to meet

her knowing gaze. "What he's done is tearing me apart inside." Mason swallowed past the lump that had suddenly appeared in the back of his throat, making room for his voice. "I don't know what hurts more—the change in my DNA or knowing that Evin has to pay for the rest of his life by saving mine."

"My brother is a good man, and Evin would not have done this if he didn't care very much for you as well. He will survive."

Mason swung his head back in Rosa's direction.

"Knowing you also survived will be from where he pulls his strength," she went on to say.

"Then he is going through with this tonight?" Mason nodded in question. "He's going to mate Jocelyn?" A renewed wave of nausea kicked up in his gut at the thought. That, and a violent urge to tear the fucking place apart until he found Evin and got the hell out of there.

"Evin gave his word..." The sad knowledge of what that meant resided in her gaze. *Damn.*

"What about Jocelyn? She's perfectly fine with mating a man who's essentially being blackmailed to do so?"

Rosa's hand slipped from his, and for the first time, what looked like a snarl curled on Evin's sister's lip. "Her entire family is power hungry, but Jocelyn wasn't always like that. As children, she and I spent a lot of time together. I even thought we were friends. But over the years, her father and brothers have brainwashed her to the point that all she cares about is achieving queen status for the Lathan clan."

Mason cursed under his breath.

"I'm going to have to leave soon." Rosa scooted closer to the bed. "But before I do, Evin wanted me to tell you that he wanted to be here with you, but our father and Jocelyn have kept him at their sides, planning for the transition of power in the pack."

The air stalled in Mason's chest. Evin had tried. He'd been on his mind. Knowing that somehow eased the ache behind his breastbone.

She reached out and squeezed the back of his hand once more. "He wanted to make sure you know that, no matter what, he will come to you tonight." Rosa nodded with a hint of a smile.

"Thank you, Rosa. I appreciate your relaying that, and if you see Evin again this evening, please tell him that I'm fine. The healers are doing their job, and I'm going to be okay."

Rosa gave a brief nod of understanding and then made her way to the door, leaving him in silence that was way too short-lived.

Time passed by quickly after she'd left. Mason didn't think the sun had ever set as fast as it did this night. Even if the blinds had been

completely closed and he had no clock, no one would have had to tell him that darkness had fallen outside his window. Sweat popped through his pores and sat like large drops of rain over every inch of his burning flesh.

The five healers had gathered together and pushed his bed to the center of the room. Mason watched as they formed a circle around him by connecting their hands, his body on the mattress the center of the ring.

"Try to relax now." The monotone voice of one of the healers penetrated the buzzing in Mason's ears. "The moon is rising, but we will create a shield to help you resist its pull. We need you to focus on your wolf inside." Mason dragged his gaze to hers, attempting to focus on her words. Sweat burned his eyes, and a strange haze blurred his vision. "Picture him in your mind. Allow him to come forth. Our barrier will protect you from the change if it's coming too fast."

His joints ached. His skin felt too tight over his bones. Mason writhed over the sheets. Fuck. The cloth felt like sandpaper against his flesh. He ran his tongue over the dry surface of his lips. Even his teeth throbbed. Christ. How long would this go on before he lost his fucking mind? And where was Evin? He said he would come. *Evin*. Mason repeated his name inside his head, as if somehow he could will Evin to hear him. What the hell was he doing? Yeah, he had gone damn nuts. He needed to man up, because from this point on, Mason Thorne II was on a solo ride to Wolfville.

A knot seized Mason's stomach, the pain drawing him double. "Shit," he hissed, clutching his midsection. His gut was on fire. Cramps twisted the backs of his thighs, his calves. "Oh God," he gasped, unable to straighten from his fetal position to ease the pain in his legs. His mind fogged. Fuck. He was going to pass out.

"I've got you, Brown Eyes." Large, cool hands sank into the backs of Mason's legs, kneading the tightened muscles. "I'm here."

He was hallucinating. That had to be it. Mason could feel the half smile forming on his lips. Yeah, he'd blacked out, and this was a fantasy. Evin was here. Touching him. Easing the pain like he'd done before after he'd bitten him. He sighed at the conjured memory. Evin licking him. His tongue traveling over his skin. Damn. The wonderful things Evin could do with that piece of his anatomy. And that wasn't the only fabulous tool in his arsenal...

A stabbing pain in his skull jerked Mason back to reality. He cried out, his fingers slicing through his hair, bracing his head as if the pressure could keep his brains from bursting.

"Evin..." Mason groaned, his eyelids squeezed tight.

"I'm here." The familiar voice at his ear drew his eyes open. Mason blinked, trying to clear the fuzziness of the dark profile of the man sitting on the bed beside him.

"Evin?" The name came out croaked, barely recognizable.

"Yeah." He nodded. "I told you I would be here. I promised."

Mason reached out one shaky hand and wrapped his fingers around a lock of the dark hair falling over Evin's shoulder. "You're not a hallucination?"

"Does this feel like your imagination?" Evin pulled Mason's hand away and then brought it to his mouth. The soft touch of his lover's lips on his palm, followed by the heat of his tongue swirling in its center, had Mason arching from the bed. Too much.

"Evin!" He collapsed hard against the coiled springs of the bedding. "Coming fucking apart," he cried out.

"You can do this," Evin commanded, his voice hard. "The first time is a bitch, especially since you're an adult." Hard hands gripped Mason's face. Mason met Evin's glare. "But I promise you, it will never be like this again."

Mason opened his mouth, then wet his lips before uttering the words. "I can feel the moon. She's here." So freaking crazy, but the moon had become a physical presence in the room. She called him. The pain inside his head like a beacon. A throbbing siren's song in his brain.

"Get that fucking barrier up!"

Somewhere far away, Evin's deep voice shouted commands. He was right beside him a moment ago.

Don't go.

Mason jerked; reflex had him reaching out, grasping at nothing. The world—his reality—was slipping. Colors, shapes, narrowed to a pinpoint. And then he was moving, arching off the bed and flipping onto his hands and knees. His fingers curled, digging into mattress. The *crack* and *pop* of bones ricocheted inside his skull. *Oh, God.* How the hell would he ever come back from this? But there was no fucking way it could be denied.

His jaw unhinged and then shifted, stretching forward as if someone had tethered a cord to his chin and yanked. He threw his head back and cried out. But the sound that left him was anything but human. Mason howled.

He jerked his gaze forward and lifted an arm. Instead of finding his hand, he found blond fur covered thick paws. His heart raced.

Hard pants left his chest. His skin crawled as fur erupted over his body. Mason dropped to the bed, his strange new legs unsteady. He swung his muzzle around, taking in the sights, the smells of his surroundings. So bright. The lights in the room hurt his eyes, the scent of each individual overpowering.

Especially one.

The wild pine essence of his lover teased his nostrils, awakening the primal nerve endings inside his brain that remembered the man and wanted to lay claim.

"Mason..." Evin's voice rolled down his spine, lifting the fur. Damn. He sounded even more delicious in this form. The bed dipped and Evin was next to him, digging his fingers into his fur and tilting Mason's head in his direction. "God...look at you." Evin's gaze raked him. "You're beautiful," he breathed.

Chapter Eleven

HONEY-GOLD fur covered Mason's wolf form. So different from the snow-white or dark colorations typical of his pack. It gleamed in the room's lighting, and it was all Evin could do to resist burying himself in the soft coat. Large, chocolate-colored eyes met Evin's gaze and powered straight into his heart.

"Damn..." Evin shook his head and sank his fingers deeper into Mason's fur. "You take my breath away," he whispered. Mason's muzzle brushed the side of Evin's face. His heart stuttered.

"Excellent." One of the healers spoke, reminding Evin they weren't alone. "He should be fine now that he's past his primary shift."

Evin glanced up as the circle of women released their joined hands. "Thank you for what you've done." He nodded at the senior healer. "Please, give us a few minutes alone." He glanced back in Mason's direction. "I can take it from here."

"As you wish." The women bustled about for another moment, gathering various items, then filed out of the room.

"Hey, Brown Eyes." Evin smiled, holding Mason's head in his hands. "I'm going to help you change back now." Mason's muzzle lifted in understanding, and something of a whimper escaped his throat. "You can do it. All you have to do is close your eyes, picture yourself—your human form—in your mind. Will it to happen."

Mason's eyelids lowered, and then a shudder raced over his body. A guttural sound released from the wolf, followed by the morphing and shaping of shortened limbs returning to their original length.

"That's it, Mason." Evin stood, watching as the tight, muscular lines of his lover's form returned. "You've got it."

Mason stretched, then reached low and tugged the ripped remains of his shorts back in place. "Damn," he groaned.

Evin pulled the sheet over Mason's hip, then sat on the bed beside him and slipped his fingers around the other man's hand. Mason opened his eyes.

"Hey," Mason whispered, a small smile curling his lips. "Missed you."

"Yeah." Evin's gaze darted to the wrinkles in the sheet, the knot in his esophagus strangling his words. He cleared his throat and glanced up. "Missed you too." Evin reached over and smoothed the damp locks away from his lover's face. "I told you you'd make it, didn't I?"

"Yeah. You did." Mason squeezed his hand.

"I wish I could have been here sooner, but my father and Jocelyn were determined to keep me occupied."

"I know." Mason nodded. "Rosa came to see me," he said, followed by a yawn.

"You need to rest." Evin lifted Mason's hand and clutched it between both of his. "Shifting won't ever be this hard again. That I promise." He lowered Mason's arm back to the bed. "I'll come back to check on you later." Evin moved to stand, but Mason grasped his wrist, halting him.

"You're going to her, aren't you?" His words seized Evin's chest like a vise. He turned to Mason and eased his weight back onto the mattress.

"I gave my word," Evin said, meeting Mason's dark eyes, his voice low.

"Five minutes."

"What?" Evin studied Mason's expression.

"Lay with me. Don't go." Mason shook his head. "Five more minutes." Evin watched as Mason pulled back the sheet and made a place for him.

A groan bubbled up in the back of his throat. Christ. If he allowed himself to wrap his arms around Mason, it was going to be excruciating to pry himself away. The mating ceremony was scheduled to take place in thirty minutes.

"Please," Mason breathed. "Don't go like this. Let me hold you one more time before you're hers."

Evin's gut rebelled at the statement. Hers. Jocelyn's. His father's brilliant idea of what was best for the pack. And what was best for him. The alpha's ulterior motives were clear. He believed if he succeeded in getting Evin mated—physically bound to Jocelyn—that over time, it would "cure" him. Yes, sexually he would be impotent to any other—male or female. But in his heart... Evin leaned in and brushed his knuckles over Mason's shadow of a beard.

"Nowhere else I'd rather be," he whispered, then kicked off his boots, maneuvered onto his side, and wrapped his arm around Mason's waist. Mason turned in toward him.

"Thank you," Mason uttered right before his lips glided over Evin's. Whether his thanks were for staying or for saving his life—maybe even both—Evin couldn't decide at the moment, because the sweet heat of Mason's mouth was melting his brain. Mason abruptly pulled back with a gasp. "God, I want you so damn bad." His hand traveled over Evin's abs and then back up to capture Evin's cheek. Mason met his gaze with a weak smile. "But I'm so fucking tired. So sorry." His head dropped to Evin's chest. "Just don't go yet."

Evin tossed his leg over Mason's, bringing him closer. "We don't have to do anything but lie here. Not going anywhere yet, Brown Eyes." Evin repositioned himself to find a comfortable spot. Yeah, this felt right—Mason's head over his heart, their legs tangled together. It would be perfectly fine with him if he never had to move again. But that was a fantasy.

Less than five minutes later, the rhythmic sound of Mason's breathing confirmed he was asleep. Evin uncurled himself from Mason's hold and slipped from the bed. He turned and burned Mason's image into his brain. His blond locks were wild. His skin glowed from the surge of his new DNA. Lean muscle layered in sharp relief along his arm, shoulder, and abs. Evin's cock stirred in memory of how responsive Mason was to his every touch and command. *Perfect*. But it wasn't only in his bed where Mason would be missed.

Evin pulled the sheet over Mason's shoulder, brushed a strand of hair from his eyes, and whispered, "When did you become the thread

that holds my soul and my heart intact?" He placed a kiss to Mason's cheek, taking the familiar scent into his lungs once more, then whipped around and headed for the gardens.



"You're late." Jocelyn's scowl met Evin as he rounded a large shrub that formed a pathway to the garden and entered the designated spot for their ceremony.

"I needed a change of clothes." Evin tossed out an excuse even though he couldn't care less whether he had her approval. He just wanted her to stop moving her mouth. "And I'm not late, by the way," he added with his own glare. "I'm five minutes early."

Jocelyn huffed and brushed past him, heading toward the small altar that had been placed at the head of the garden path. The setting faced the large fountain that anchored the grounds and displayed life-size granite sculptures of two wolves reared back in battle as jets of water sprang up from a basin around them.

"Let's just get this over with," she grumbled from over her shoulder.

Evin sucked in a steadying breath and joined her on his knees before the narrow bench and the pack's holy man, Master Jacob, who would lead the mating. The alpha moved in and took his place behind the ceremonial leader.

"You can move straight to the bonding," his father stated flatly at Jacob's ear. "There's no need to drag this out."

"As you wish, Alpha." He nodded and stepped closer to them. "Please, pick up your cups and drink."

Jocelyn glanced at Evin, then wrapped her hand around the small teacup sitting next to its twin on the bench in front of them. Evin grabbed his, took it to his lips in one move, and swallowed the contents in a large gulp. The bitter concoction burned a path to his stomach, then hit it like a lead-filled anchor. He couldn't remember the last time he'd eaten, so the small amount of mind-altering fluid infiltrated his bloodstream in seconds like a missile on a collision course with his brain.

"Open your minds to each other," the master began. "Allow the herbs to aid you in connecting to your mate's inner thoughts, dreams, and soul."

The holy man's words hummed in Evin's ears. Colors warped around him, blurring Jocelyn's image in swirls of yellow, red, and

green. *Is she wearing green?* Yes, green. She was wearing a green dress with a red something splattered on the front. *Mason looks good in green.* Evin smiled. But he looked damn good in anything—or nothing. Yeah, especially nothing. *Stop it!* He shook his head. That wasn't going to ever happen again. Not after tonight. They were over.

"Evin... Damn, Evin. I miss you already."

The sound of Mason's voice whispered inside his head. Evin's breath hitched, and his eyelids fluttered. Just like before... Before Mason's shift, Evin could have sworn he'd heard Mason calling him. He shook his head again. Shit. He was supposed to be tuning in to Jocelyn here, but instead, his mind was tripping over memories of Mason. His chest ached, and his gut twisted, yanking a grunt from his throat.

"Evin, do you hear me? Evin?" Master Jacob's voice sliced through his drug-filled haze.

"What?" Evin's gaze darted from the frown on Jocelyn's face to the two men staring at him over the altar. "Yeah. Yes, I hear you."

The holy man cleared his throat, then continued. "Under the light of the full moon, declare your oaths and taking of each other."

Jocelyn thrust her arm in front of his face and gave him an expectant look. Evin rolled his sleeve up and jutted his wrist toward her. Jocelyn coiled her fingers with his and jerked, snagging his gaze before spouting the words of bonding.

"Take of me, my essence is yours. See into my soul, as I see into yours. Forever join me on this path. Forever bond with me in this life and beyond. An eternity sealed in blood."

Evin followed suit, murmuring the pledge, his tongue thick as if he were regurgitating the words.

As the last syllable left his lips, Jocelyn threw her head back, revealing her elongated canines, and then jammed them into his flesh. The sharp bite into his vein triggered his matching response. Evin sank his teeth into her exposed skin. Warm blood filled his mouth and clogged his throat. The foreign, metallic taste of Jocelyn's essence overwhelmed his senses. So wrong. Every fiber of his being screamed in rebellion. Evin jerked his head back on a cough, but managed to force enough down his esophagus, fulfilling his duty.

"Well done, my son." His father's voice cut through the air, drawing their attention.

Jocelyn was the first to jump to her feet, a large grin on her face. Evin straightened, and the alpha joined him at his side.

"Congratulations," Barron said. "You have yourself a mate. As it should be."

Slowly Evin turned and met the other man's smug gaze. "You have your mating. Why don't you go celebrate with your new daughter? You two deserve each other." Evin didn't wait for a response; he swung around and headed toward the house.

"Where are you going?" Jocelyn's footsteps tapped behind him, matching his pace.

"I need a shower," he growled and glanced at the bloodied wound on wrist, forcing back a cold shiver. He could do this. Mason was alive. If he held on to that thought, Evin could make it through anything.

"And then what?" The sound of her heels ceased on the pavement. "Don't forget we have the alpha exchange of power at dawn—six a.m. sharp." Evin stopped but didn't look back. Like he could actually forget? After tonight, he had the rest of his life to deal with the woman standing behind him and the responsibility of the pack. But the next few hours were his, and right now, there was someone he had to see. One more time. He had to say good-bye.

"I'll be there," Evin said. "That's all you need to know."

Forty-five minutes later, Evin made his way through the breezeway that took him to the exterior guest quarters. Anticipation sat like a hard knot in his chest. He couldn't wait to see Mason again. Yet the thought of saying good-bye was suffocating him. During his shower, Evin had gone over and over in his mind what he was going to say when he saw Mason, all the while doing his best to wash away the evidence of his mating. A futile attempt. Over time her mark would fade somewhat, but the shadow of a scar on his wrist would be a permanent reminder of this night.

On a deep breath, Evin grasped the doorknob to Mason's quarters. With a twist of his wrist, he discovered it was still unlocked. Good. He didn't want to have to knock, in case Mason was still sleeping. Evin stepped inside and found that would not have been a problem.

Mason sat on the loveseat with his back to him, unmoving, facing the dark void outside his window. He'd changed from his tattered shorts into a pair of charcoal running pants, leaving his chest bare. Evin's heart rate leaped at the sight. Would there ever come a time when Mason wouldn't affect him? Evin braced his hand on the door, watching, then leaned his temple onto his knuckles.

"You going to just stand there, or are you coming inside to get whatever it is off your chest?" Mason's words jolted him from his trance. He had no idea how long he'd been there, studying the other man's form.

Evin pushed the door closed and strode the rest of the way in. Mason braced his elbows on his knees, still not meeting Evin's gaze.

"It's over, I take it?" Mason asked, addressing the floor more than Evin.

"Yeah," Evin uttered. "About an hour ago."

Mason nodded. "Let me see."

"What?" Evin shoved his hand into his jeans pocket.

Slowly Mason lifted his head, his brown eyes meeting Evin's gaze with a glare that said *try me*. "I want to see. Show me where she bit you."

"Fuck, Mason," Evin groaned. "Why?"

"I need to see." Mason's voice rose. "Now, dammit. Show me!" He lunged to his feet, going for Evin's hidden wrist.

"Fine," Evin huffed and wrenched his hand free.

The other man latched on to his arm, his gaze falling to the crescent-shaped wound. Mason's grip tightened, and a low growl rolled from his throat.

"Fuck. How could you do this?" Mason yanked his hand away. "I still can't wrap my head around why. You know what my life's been like." Mason whirled, stabbing his fingers through his hair as if he were trying to claw the reality from his mind. He halted, then swung his head in Evin's direction. "Did you really think I'd want to survive at the cost of your living a miserable lie? Shit! I know what that's like. It's fucking hell."

"I did it for you," Evin muttered, looking everywhere else but at the accusatory glare Mason threw his way.

"There could have been another way." Mason marched closer. "But you didn't even try to find out."

"I couldn't take the chance." Evin snapped his gaze to Mason.

"Something else might have worked," Mason spit back.

"And it might *not* have, and I wasn't willing to take that risk."

"It was *my* life to risk," Mason shouted. "Why would you sacrifice yours for me?"

"Because I love you!" Evin reached out and grabbed Mason's upper arms, then jerked him to his chest. "Dammit. You're mine," Evin growled against Mason's lips and buried his fingers in the hair at his nape. "Mine."

Their mouths clashed. Teeth clicked against teeth, the sharp edges nipping at tender flesh. Their tongues soothed away the sting and the coppery taste of blood that followed. Hot. Hungry. Hard. The only

words that could describe the need Evin had for the taste of Mason at that moment.

Yes. So damn hard.

Evin sucked in a breath on a hiss and jerked back.

"What's wrong?" Mason inched forward, closing the distance between them.

"I-I..." Evin looked down to the front of his jeans, where a very distinct ridge pressed against the fly, then back at Mason. "That."

Mason's eyebrows shot up. "*That* shouldn't be possible, right?"

Evin shook his head. "Unless..." But that couldn't be. Could it? Mason had still been human when he'd bitten him. But how else could he be aroused right now? The vows, the holy man, the exchange... It should have been ironclad.

"Unless what?" Mason's palm glided over Evin's bicep. "You're freaking me out here."

The memories of Mason's voice inside his head over the past twenty-four hours replayed in his mind. The fierce protectiveness he'd felt over him. It had to be... That night, when he'd marked Mason the second time, *after* his DNA had already been introduced...

"This has never happened before. At least, no one has ever revealed something like this to me." Evin grasped Mason's face. He couldn't fight back the grin he knew was blossoming if he tried. "Unless I was already mated."

"What? Are you serious?" Mason's eyes grew large. "Are you saying you think you're somehow mated to me?"

"That's exactly what I think is going on. It's all making sense now." Evin planted a hard kiss to Mason's lips before continuing. "I never mated Jocelyn." He licked the seam of the other man's mouth. So fucking sweet.

"Thank God," Mason breathed. "But tell me why you think you're mated to me."

"First"—Evin thrust his hips into Mason's—"I shouldn't be hard as a damn rock and about to lose my mind if I can't have you in the next few minutes."

"Likewise." Mason winked.

Evin went on to reveal how he'd heard Mason telepathically more than once that day and how he'd wanted to kill anybody who'd touched or threatened him in any way, including his father. Evin stroked his thumb over Mason's lower lip. "It had to have happened the other night when I bit you—twice—along with the incredible sex

we had. I'd never felt so connected to another living soul as I did that night." He smiled. "Now I know why."

"So the ceremony with Jocelyn tonight—"

"Didn't work. It couldn't, because I was already taken," Evin said, his voice suddenly deeper, raspier.

"Fuck. Me." Mason released the words on a sigh.

"I'd be more than happy to."

Before Mason could ask twice, Evin had him pressed into the wall, his hands over his head, Evin's mouth devouring his. God, touching him, knowing he didn't have to walk away, had Evin's head spinning. Evin dropped his head to Mason's shoulder, needing to lick the evidence of their mating.

"I love you," Mason breathed into his ear.

The declaration jerked Evin back to center, his heart thundering against his chest. Mason stood there, desire smoldering in his gaze, his lips swollen and parted. Gorgeous.

"You don't have to say it—" The rest of his words stuck in his throat. Evin dropped his hold on the other man's arms.

Mason cupped Evin's cheek, the tips of his fingers digging into his hair. "I'm saying it because" — Mason cracked a smile — "I'm so fucking in love with you."

Evin didn't know what to say. In the last five minutes, his world had spun out of a cesspool in hell to smack dab in the middle of his wildest dream. There were no words.

"I would have said it earlier," Mason added, "but your tongue was too far down my throat at the time."

A laugh bubbled up and out of Evin's chest, breaking a bit of the spell the man in front of him had cast on his soul.

"Now come here." Mason slid his hand around to the back of Evin's neck and pulled him closer. "I need you so bad, I think I'm going to lose my mind if you don't fuck me right now."

A growl tore from Evin's throat as he slammed his mouth into Mason's. Evin kissed his lips, his cheeks, his throat, then moved lower and flicked his tongue over Mason's nipples. Mason squirmed in approval.

"My skin is so sensitive," Mason groaned, hard pants leaving his throat. "Driving me crazy."

"It's the full moon combined with your first shift." Evin grabbed the elastic band of Mason's pants, knelt, and pulled them down until Mason could kick the material away. The thick, hard length of the

other man's cock sprang forward, then flexed up toward his abs. Pre-cum leaked from the flushed head, making Evin's mouth water for a taste. "The effect makes your cock burn for release." Evin leaned in and licked the glistening drop from the tip, then pulled back.

"Don't stop..." Mason's hips rocked forward, begging for more. Evin lifted his chin and quirked his lips.

"Your skin turns hypersensitive, and your senses sharpen." Evin opened his mouth, allowing a burst of warm air to skate over the leaking slit, wringing another moan from his lover. "Your mind and body become a primal beast that wants to fuck so bad, you're nearly insane from need."

"God...yes," Mason hissed.

Evin straightened to his full height and stepped away.

"What are you doing?" Mason moved from the wall toward him, confusion and desperation written on his face.

"I'm going to give you what you need, Brown Eyes." Evin's thighs bumped the mattress. He made quick work of removing his clothes before lowering onto the bed and leaning back on his elbows, his knees bent over the edge.

Mason positioned himself between Evin's legs. "What are you saying?"

Evin spread his thighs wider, and his rock-hard shaft flexed as if drawn to the man in front of him. He pushed back farther onto the bed, making his intention clear.

"Come and claim your mate, Mason."

Mason's nostrils flared right before he crawled onto the mattress and loomed over Evin, his hands braced on either side of Evin's head.

"The alpha is submitting?" One blond brow lifted.

"Only for his mate," Evin growled. "Tonight."

"I think I like this." A hint of a smile curved Mason's lips, and then his weight redistributed as he shuffled forward and placed his cock at Evin's lips. "Suck me," he demanded, his voice deep, animalistic. Evin shivered. Fuck, yeah. He thought he was going to like this too.

Evin opened wide and took Mason's full length. The sound of a muttered curse rolled from Mason's lips, and the broad head hit the back of Evin's throat. He swallowed, massaging the thick shaft.

"Yes. Fuck." Mason pulled back, then pistoned forward. Over and over. The salty flavor of his lover tantalized Evin's tongue, pushing the limits of his own need. His ache for release—to be touched by Mason—was maddening.

Suddenly Mason yanked free from Evin's mouth. "No more." His words were ragged. Sweat beaded on his forehead. "Have to be inside you." Mason scrambled to the side of the mattress. "There were some oils left by the healer." The bedside table rattled; then a corked bottle landed beside Evin. "That should work." Mason straddled Evin's hips once more, and after opening the bottle, poured some of clear liquid into his palm. "I believe they said this was coconut oil."

The cool, slick feel of Mason fingers slid between Evin's cheeks. He arched, opening his thighs wider, wanting more. Evin couldn't drag his gaze away from Mason as he slathered his own cock with the substance while probing Evin's tight ring. Mason's wet, rigid shaft shone in the low lights of the room. Damn. Evin realized he couldn't wait to feel the width of Mason's rod burning him, filling him up inside.

One finger, then two, slipped in deep. Evin groaned. "So good." He pumped his hips in time to Mason's exploration. Then Mason's hand was on him, stroking him. "Yes," he hissed. But it wasn't enough. "More." Evin rocked onto the thick presence in his rear, then lifted, meeting each glide over his shaft. "Shit. Mason." He was so close. "Fuck me. Dammit. Need it," he gasped. "Fuck me."

The thick head of Mason's cock replaced his digits.

Yes.

"Are you ready for me, lover?"

Evin's gaze locked with Mason's dark, hooded one. "Yours," Evin breathed. "Fill me."

Pressure...so much, the width burning and stretching him. His pulse pounded in his ears. *So good.* Nothing had ever felt this good. Evin bore down, needing it all. Wanting to feel every inch of Mason invading him, possessing him.

"Ah, fuck... Evin," Mason groaned and surged forward. His balls tapped Evin's buttocks, and he fell forward, his palms landing on either side of Evin's head. "Tight. You're so damn tight," he panted. "Killing me."

"Shut up and kiss me," Evin growled. Mason's tongue darted out and teased Evin's lips. He played along, chasing Mason with his teeth. Finally Mason's mouth crashed down onto his, and their tongues mimicked the action of their hips. Evin threw his legs around Mason's thighs and wrapped the other man inside his arms. He couldn't get enough.

In and out, Mason pounded him, striking the sweet spot inside and brushing the back of his shaft with his abs. His balls were so fuck-

ing taut, the cum inside hammering against the dam walls. Evin jerked his mouth away.

"Can't stop," he cried out. "Don't stop." He clamped down on the rigid feel of Mason inside him, shuddering under the exquisite sensation that shot through his cock. Stream after stream of his own hot cum jetted onto Evin's chest and abdomen. But Mason didn't let up.

His lover's head dropped to Evin's shoulder, and the warm, wet touch of his tongue bathed the skin there.

"Christ. Evin," he moaned, shoving his cock deep. "I'm dying to sink my teeth into you." The sharp edge of his lover's canines grazed Evin's flesh. "Need to"—Mason thrust hard again—"mark you."

"Do it," Evin managed to grit out. "Fuck, yes." Evin tossed his head farther to the side, making sure Mason knew he wanted this more than his next breath.

Mason pumped once, then twice more before his spine arched, and he groaned, filling Evin with the warmth of his cum. Evin ran his palms up Mason's spine, reveling in the orgasmic ripples rolling through his mate. Mason's head snapped forward, and the hot sting of his bite seized Evin's shoulder. The room blurred. Chaotic swirls of little white dots swam across his vision, and pleasure swamped his mind, his body.

"Ah, shit!" Evin didn't know if he'd actually made a sound of not. All he knew was the endless orgasm that had gripped his balls and cock, milking him dry. Every hot lick of Mason's tongue ricocheted down his spine, resulting in a spasm that had him squeezing the other man's shaft over and over. Damn, there couldn't be another drop of cum left in his body. Using what little strength he had left in his limbs, Evin rolled, taking Mason to his back, and pulled away from the sucking hold his mate had on his neck.

During the change of positions, Mason's rigid cock had slid free, but the man beneath him continued to thrust as if his need to fuck were insatiable. Mason had already come, but the stimulation of the moon combined with his primary shift and the all-consuming need to bond with his mate rode him hard. A deep growl emanated from Mason's chest, and he clawed at Evin's arms.

"Shhh, Brown Eyes." Evin planted kisses at the corner of Mason's mouth, and the metallic taste of his own blood seeped onto his tongue. "I'm right here. I've got you." Mason shivered under his touch. His hips slowed but continued their gentle rubbing action, working the hard ridge of Mason's cock between Evin's cheeks. Not that Evin was complaining.

"Sorry," Mason breathed, his voice hoarse. "Hard to stop."

"I know. Just breathe." Using the weight of his body, Evin held Mason in place, giving his mate the time he needed for the tremors and the lust to pass.

"God, did I just...?"

"Mate me?"

Mason nodded.

"Yeah, I think you probably did, judging by the intensity of that bite." Evin brought his gaze to Mason's and smiled. "You're having one hell of a day, Brown Eyes."

"You think?" Mason chuckled.

Evin dropped onto the bed beside Mason. "Fuck the formal ceremonies. This was a whole lot more fun."

Chapter Twelve

“KINKAID!” A loud, deep voice penetrated the silence of the room, jerking Evin from a sound sleep. Early morning sunlight poured through the open curtains. Mason looked up from where his head rested on Evin’s chest.

“Who is that?” Mason ran his fingers through his hair and rubbed his eyes.

“KinKaid!” The male’s voice boomed again, coming from outside. “Show yourself.”

“Son of a bitch,” Evin hissed and jumped from the bed to his feet. His gaze darted to the clock on the bedside table—6:15 a.m. He was so screwed. Evin snatched his jeans from the floor, jammed both feet in, and pulled hard.

“What’s going on?” Mason followed suit, leaving the bed and yanking on the running pants from last night.

A loud bang hit the room’s door, cutting off Evin’s reply. The sound quickly turned into a feverish pounding of fist to wood. “Evin!

Are you in there?" It was Rosa. "Evin, please... If you're in there, answer me. There's trouble."

Evin rushed to the door and swung it open. Rosa stood on the other side, dressed in the red and gold colors of the KinKaid line, her eyes wide, her face pale.

"Evin..... Thank goodness I found you." She darted into the room, her gaze swinging from Mason, then back to him. "When you didn't show up this morning, I knew there could be only one other place you'd be."

"Is that who I think it is out there?" Evin closed the door and approached his sister, Mason at his side.

"Yes." Rosa nodded. "It's the Lathans." She paced between the bed and loveseat like a caged animal. "When you didn't appear at six sharp to announce your claim on the title, word traveled fast to the rest of Jocelyn's family. Now, not only are her father and mother here, but her two brothers and cousin as well."

"Greedy opportunistic bastards," Evin spit, not holding back the resulting rumble from his chest. "Obviously having Jocelyn as their queen wasn't enough to satisfy her family's desire for power. They must have been lying in wait, hoping something like this would open the door for them to completely take over."

Rosa slowed, then turned, her gaze settling on Mason. "Since Evin didn't announce his alpha status at dawn, pack law gives them the right to try to take it. They've come for my father's and brother's heads."

"That won't be fucking happening," Mason growled. "They'll have to go through me first." Mason whirled on Evin. "Come on."

"Hold up." Evin braced his hand against Mason's chest. "You're not going anywhere."

"What the hell do you mean?" Mason knocked Evin's hand away. "If this is your battle, then it's mine too. No one is going to come here and threaten what's mine."

Warmth spread through Evin's chest like wildfire. He'd never get tired of hearing Mason stake his claim. Blood surged to his groin, and he had to push back the urge to take his mate, bend him over the bed, and fuck him into submission right there. But damn if this was the time to teach his lover who was in charge. Especially not with his sister in the room.

"After what you went through last night, you're not ready for this kind of fight. No way." Evin shook his head, pivoted, and headed toward the door.

"I'm fine." Evin could have sworn he'd heard Mason's teeth click as hard as he'd bitten out those words. "I'm not sitting back and watching like some damn pansy while someone tries to kill you."

"I'm not arguing with you on this." Evin gripped the door handle and glanced back. "I need for you to keep an eye on Rosa. I can handle this if I know you two are safe."

"Evin..."

Mason surged in his direction, but Evin was out the door before the other man could get another word in. Yeah, he'd pay for that one later.

Barefoot and shirtless, Evin ran through the breezeway, then cut over onto the grounds of the garden. Out of the corner of his eye, he spotted his father stepping from the house and onto the large stone patio. His mother, the queen, stood behind him, and Evin didn't miss the pleading hold she had on the alpha's arm. Their personal guards would never interfere in this fight. Pack law said it was Evin and his father's battle to win.

Jocelyn was out the door next. "What are you doing?" She cried out at her father. "No..." Jocelyn shook her head. "I did everything precisely as you said. I'm about to be queen."

The Lathans had formed a shallow V formation at the rear of the mansion, with Jocelyn's father, Victor, leading the mob. "Yes. You did fine, Jocelyn," Victor replied, meeting her confused expression. "But fate cannot be denied. This is all too perfect."

Victor's eyebrows shot up at the sight of both KinKaid males closing in, his gaze flicking from one man to the other.

"Well, well," the senior Lathan began, his words directed at Evin. "I'd almost given up hope that this day would come, when you returned to the pack to stake your claim. But what were the odds that you wouldn't show up on time for the transfer of power?" A smirk slashed Victor's mouth. "My lucky day."

The older man dropped to all fours, clothes splitting down his sides as he shifted. His posse followed like dominoes toppling in a row, morphing into their wolf forms. The sounds of ripping cotton and denim filled the cool morning air. His father's howl rang in his ears.

Evin sprang, his wolf shape overtaking him midflight.

He and his father were grossly outnumbered. But no way in hell would they go down easy. The Lathans would feel their teeth and claws, leaving several of them dead before a KinKaid would fall.

Dark paws hit the grassy surface amid three of his enemies. Evin snarled, turning, never allowing his back to remain in one spot. Each clawed the ground, snapping for a piece of him as he moved. Then it was his turn.

He lunged.

Jaws wide.

The foul taste of sweat and hot fur filled Evin's mouth. He clamped down hard, sinking his canines deep in the wolf's throat. A yelp rang out from the other beast, and his legs buckled. Evin held on, rolling with the twists and turns of his enemy's body. Without warning, the weight of the two wolves slammed into his torso, one on each side. Evin locked his jaw tight. No fucking way were they going to knock him loose.

Blood spilled into his mouth, nearly choking him. His neck and shoulders burned from the relentless amount of jaw pressure. The other wolves hammered at his back and legs. Pain raced up his spine from their attack, but he refused to go down.

From a distance, a familiar growl released then grew in intensity.

Louder.

Closer.

His father was coming. Two snarls followed by shrill cries of pain filled Evin's ears, and then the bombardment against his flesh ceased as well as the struggles underneath his muzzle. The battle had been won, but the war still raged on.

Evin wrenched his jaw free. He whirled just as a blow landed against his head. Stars burst in his vision, and Evin stumbled. His ears rang. In a haze, Evin could barely make out the alpha's shape. He had one wolf pinned, but the other chomped at his father's neck, determined to find an opening.

Another blow sent Evin tumbling. Victor, Jocelyn's father, had him targeted. Evin clawed at the ground and scrambled back onto all fours. His vision swam, but the bastard wasn't taking him down that easy. If he wanted blood, Evin would give him a taste.

With canines bared, Evin dipped his muzzle and charged. The heavier wolf met him halfway and rammed him, the force causing Evin's ribs to cave in. The resulting *snap* echoed in his ears. Evin reached inside, calling upon every ounce of reserve strength, then reared back and slammed forward once more. Victor sailed backward, his paws leaving the ground. His spine hit and curved at an unnatural angle over the rim of the garden's fountain. His body slumped onto the surrounding concrete.

Evin's diaphragm contracted, dragging the breath back through the pain and into his starved lungs. He swung around to find his father once more engaged in a fight for his life. One of the wolves was down and unmoving from the alpha's attack on his throat. But the other—the other had Barron pinned.

Hell no.

Barron KinKaid may be a bastard, but he was still his father, and Evin would not see him destroyed.

Dirt and grass flew from beneath his paws as Evin ate up the distance between himself and the two wolves. With his prey marked and in sight, Evin leaped. The force of the impact dislodged the other wolf from the alpha. Evin crashed on top of the final Lathan in a frenzy of claws and teeth. Blood sprayed. Fur flew. Until the world was a blur, and Evin knew only primal instinct, an animal driven to dominate. Driven to defend his territory.

The Lathan wolf flipped beneath Evin, reared his head back, mouth wide, going for the jugular. But it was a fatal mistake. In his stretch to reach Evin's throat, he exposed his own, giving Evin the perfect winning strike at his windpipe.

"Father!" Rosa's scream wrenched Evin from his prey.

Evin spun at the same moment a golden blond wolf sprang into the air. "*Mason!*"

His mate collided with a conscious and charging Victor mere seconds before the large beast pounced on his father's injured form. What the fuck? The damn wolf had been down.

Mason and Victor locked and rolled, tumbling across the grass in a whirl of blond and gray-speckled fur. Evin couldn't breathe. His heart thundered in his ears. *Shit. Shit.* He couldn't get to them fast enough. It was as if he were moving in fucking slow motion.

A loud yelp ricocheted inside Evin's head.

No! Fuck, no! Mason.

Evin's hind legs collapsed, and he pitched forward. Somehow, he regained his balance, snatching his muzzle up seconds before eating dirt. Mason's blond form was down. Victor's larger size held him to the ground, his jaws pinning Mason's head to the grassy surface. This time, the son of a bitch would die.

At full speed, Evin collided with the other wolf. Victor's grip on Mason failed, and his head whipped around from the impact as his body rolled over Mason's. Victor was a dead man. Evin leaped over Mason's still form and landed beside the senior wolf's torso. The

sound of an automatic pistol being locked and loaded froze the dueling pair.

"Hasn't enough of our family died today?"

The sound of Jocelyn's dead-calm voice sent a shiver down Evin's spine. Evin shifted and remained crouched but swung his human gaze in her direction. Tears streaked her pale cheeks, but her expression contained no mercy. Victor's wild stare met his daughter's. Even though he held the face of a wolf, shock was written in his eyes.

"Go home, Father. No more." She shook her head. "I can't take anymore," she whispered.

The other wolf rolled to his feet but stood there as if in challenge.

"I don't want to shoot you." Jocelyn's voice wavered, and her hand shook. "But I will do it—I swear I will if that's what it takes to stop this." Victor's gaze held Jocelyn's for what seemed like minutes before he finally turned and walked toward the tree line. Jocelyn's arm dropped, taking the gun to her side. Her knees collapsed, and she sank to the grass. Her gaze drifted to Evin.

"I didn't think they would actually take it this far." Jocelyn trembled, her loose blonde hair swaying. "I swear, I didn't know."

"We don't have time to play the blame game right now." It was all he could do not to spit the words at her.

Mason's human groan had Evin spinning back around. Damn, his throat was a mess, but the shift had at least stopped the bleeding. If the attack had occurred while he was human, a shift would have healed the damage. But since he'd been in his wolf form, the shift back to his human state saved his life, though the injury would need more time to heal.

His father's shadow moved over Mason. Evin glanced up. Rosa and his mother stood by his side, having wrapped a blanket over his shoulders.

"We'll get your friend inside and taken care of. See to your mate, son," the alpha instructed, lifting his chin in Jocelyn's direction.

"I *am* seeing to my mate," Evin bit back in return. He slid his arm beneath Mason's neck and another under his knees, cradling him against his chest before standing. Mason hissed, and a grimace formed on his face.

"What are you trying to say?" Barron's puzzled expression moved from Jocelyn's distressed form still sitting on the ground to the man in Evin's arms. "You're confused right now..."

Evin marched past his family and headed toward the KinKaid home, Mason secure in hold. "I've never been more clear in my life."

Epilogue

One week later
Evin KinKaid's cabin on pack grounds

MASON propped his guitar over his thigh and strummed a chord, testing the strings. He'd lost count of how long it'd been since he'd last played. But today, the time felt right. *He* felt right. As if he was exactly where he was supposed to be and who he was supposed to be. He sat back, allowing his shoulders to rest against the headboard of the bed. Evin had left earlier, needing to make sure what remained of the Lathans, including Jocelyn, departed the grounds without incident.

After the battle at the mansion and once Mason had received the care he'd needed, Evin's father hadn't wasted another minute transferring his position to his son, even though the shock of learning about his son's ineffective mating ceremony hadn't worn off. Mason had been half out of it, but he'd never forget the shade of red Barron KinKaid's face had turned when Evin informed him of their unique bond. He'd seemed ready to explode, but Evin reminded him that if

it hadn't been for his mate, his father would have been dead. That sudden recollection had seemed to quickly sober the alpha.

"What? No welcome-home kiss for your mate?" The deep and delicious sound of Evin's voice kick-started Mason's pulse, sending a surge of lust to his groin. He glanced up. Evin stood in the doorway, one shoulder leaning against the wood frame. The *you're mine* grin he sported told Mason the other man knew exactly how he affected him. And that he loved every minute of it.

"Hi there, yourself," Mason said. "Didn't hear you come in."

"I could tell." Evin strolled over toward the bed, kicked off his shoes, and plopped down beside him. "You looked pretty deep in thought." He leaned over, brushed the surface of Mason's lower lip with his tongue first, then gently covered his mouth with a kiss that said more than any words could hope to reveal. Mason knew his moves. His touch. Evin filled the void in Mason's heart and completed his soul.

Mason lifted his head, catching his breath. "I love you," he whispered.

A smile spread across Evin's mouth—one that lit his eyes, making the blue sparkle. "I love you too." His thumb smoothed over Mason's chin.

"Hate to change the subject here, since we're talking about how much you love me." Mason bit back a chuckle. "But I have to ask. How did it go with Jocelyn?"

Evin propped up a couple of pillows, then leaned back, his head turned in Mason's direction. "She's taking it pretty hard, since she's lost not only her brother but her place as queen as well." Evin swiped a hand over his face, as if the whole topic exhausted him. "But she's strong, and I'd expected worse, considering how many years her family groomed her for power. It's amazing she's stable at all." Evin turned his gaze away. "I think getting her away from the pack was the right thing to do. For a moment the other morning, when I saw her standing there with the gun pointed at her father, I glimpsed a little of the compassion that used to exist in her when we were kids." He rolled to his side, facing Mason. "Maybe this time she can really start over."

"Yeah. That would be good." Mason reached out and smoothed a palm over Evin's cheek. "You never cease to surprise me."

"Good." Evin grinned.

Mason shoved at his shoulder, rocking the other man back. "So did you get a chance to discuss your ideas with your father about amending the laws about who can succeed?"

"No. There really wasn't time." Evin fixed his gaze on Mason. "But I'm not going to let this go. Our pack needs to join the twenty-first century. There's no reason the son of an alpha's daughter shouldn't be considered to one day assume power. And my sister's children will carry KinKaid DNA. Maybe not the surname, but the dominant trait could be passed to her sons. One of her offspring should be allowed to take my place in the future."

"It's excellent logic, Evin. Unless it's just stubborn pride keeping them in the dark ages, I can't see why the elders wouldn't agree."

"Very true." Evin reached over and traced his finger along one of Mason's guitar strings. "Are you sure living here, in these small quarters instead of the alpha mansion, is enough? I just wanted to keep it simple. Just you and me for as long as we can get away with it."

"Me, you, a roof... It's all I need." Mason met and held Evin's gaze.

Evin's hand left the guitar and brushed Mason's cheek. "Ditto." His expression morphed from one of warmth to concern right before adding, "You looked like you had a lot on your mind when I came in. Did you have another *conversation* with your dad?"

"No. Thank goodness; I think that's settled. The threat I'd talked about possibly having to use has taken care of that problem. He won't be interfering in our lives unless he wants information about his gay son fed to the media." Mason rolled his eyes. "In reality, it's an empty threat. I couldn't risk anyone finding out about our world or potentially causing my mother or sister pain." Mason quirked a smile in Evin's direction. "But my dad doesn't know that."

"I do love it when you're bad." Evin narrowed his eyes. He wrapped his fingers around the guitar's neck, which rested on Mason's thigh, and then slowly allowed his palm to slide down over the strings. "You know, I never realized how sexy it could be to watch a hot guy's hands glide over an instrument." His gaze flicked to Mason. The pink tip of Evin's tongue moistened his lips. *Damn*. Mason's cock pulsed.

"Are you saying you think I'm hot?" Mason lifted a brow.

Evin grinned. "Most definitely."

"Wow." Mason feigned surprise. "I think you're kind of cute too." He smirked.

"Cute?" Evin yanked the guitar from Mason's lap and tossed it behind him on the bed.

"Hey, give that back." Mason laughed.

He loomed over Mason, one hand on either side of his shoulders, and gripped the bed rails. "I've been a lot of things over the past few years, but cute is not one of them."

"What? Are you going to punish me for calling you cute?" Mason brought his head forward and planted a kiss on Evin's pouting lips.

A low growl vibrated off his mate's chest. "You'd like that, wouldn't you?"

"Yes sir," Mason breathed, then nibbled his lover's mouth.

Evin grunted, then pulled back and stood from the bed. "Naked. Now."

The command sent chills skating over Mason's flesh, lifting the hairs on his body. Quickly Mason lifted his hips and pushed off his shorts. He hadn't bothered putting on a shirt that morning, so his bottoms were the only item that needed to go. Mason watched as Evin stripped in front of him. He took his time, knowing the show would drive Mason wild. And Evin was right. His cock burned. Mason stroked the hard length, spreading the precum over the head, enjoying the beautiful sight of his lover's body.

Nude and erect, his rigid shaft bouncing with each step, Evin moved to end of the bed, reached out, and nabbed Mason's guitar. What was he up to?

"On the edge of the bed."

Mason looked up, met Evin's commanding gaze, then dropped his legs over the edge of the bed. "You mean like this, sitting?"

"Yes. Good." Evin held the guitar out in front of Mason.

Reflex had Mason taking the instrument. What the hell? Did Evin want him to play? Now?

"Scoot farther over the edge," Evin directed.

With guitar in hand, Mason rocked his hip until only a portion of his ass remained on the mattress.

"Excellent." A devilish smile sat on his face. "Now, open your legs."

Mason complied.

"Wider."

The cool wood of the guitar sat against the top of Mason's rock-hard cock, but it in no way chilled the fire in his veins. Mason spread his thighs a little more. The look on Evin's face had his balls taut and

the blood pounding through his length. Fuck. If he'd only come a little closer. One touch, and shit, he'd lose it.

Evin eased onto the chair beside the bed, facing him with his legs apart. His large palm worked a slow and steady rhythm over his thick girth. His gaze raked Mason. "Have you ever been fucked or blown while you played, Mason?"

Holy shit!

Biography

Almost every author's bio states they've been writing since they learned how to read. It's what they've always wanted to do. Well, my journey wasn't so straight and narrow. I've been a nurse for over twenty years and hold a bachelor's degree in science with a major in biology. So as you can see, my career path had originally gone in the opposite direction. I didn't discover my passion for the craft until after I'd had my son and decided to work part-time.

I've always loved to read but had never read a paranormal romance. Then one night at work on break, I began reading Karen Marie Moning's *Spell of the Highlander*. I couldn't believe what I'd been missing, and I immediately fell in love with the genre.

I wanted to write like that. I wanted to create worlds where others could find the same excitement I did when I read my first sensual paranormal romance.

And I hope that is what I've accomplished in my work. Please dive in, hold on tight, and enjoy the adventure. Just be careful in the dark—you might find more than you expected waiting for you there.
wink

Jessica Lee lives in the southeastern United States with her husband and son. She loves writing and can't wait for that quiet time each day when her son is in school and she can get lost in another place and world with the fantastical, sexy creatures in her head.

She's a member of Romance Writers of America, FF&P, Carolina Romance Writers, Rainbow Romance Writers, and Passionate Ink.

Other Books by Jessica Lee

Bloodlines

All She Wants 4 Christmas

Make Me