



Brannan Black

WOLFMAN  
APOCALYPSE

Changeling Press

# **Wolfman: Apocalypse**

## **Brannan Black**

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## **Wolfman: Apocalypse**

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What's an independent smartass to do when faced with a pack of violent, over-sexed werewolves?

Life as we knew it pretty much ended with the lightning-fast spread of the plague. The media called it Werewolf Syndrome. Women got sick, many died. They were the lucky ones. Men got sick, too, but those who didn't die... changed. A few immune men, like myself, joined the bands of refugees, scrounging for survival in the post-apocalyptic devastation.

I lived in a fortified compound with a couple dozen women, a bunch of kids and two asshole straight guys. Sounds like a man's wet dream -- unless you happen to be the last gay man standing. At the time, risking my life scavenging in the city sounded like a fucking vacation.

I went out hunting supplies and found something else. Not a quick death, or even a slow, painful one at the hands of the beasts -- no such luck. Instead I find myself captive to the largest, most well-organized gang of beast men ever. Their leader, Mace, wants more than just a generator -- he wants my body. Oddly, a certain part of me likes that idea. The other part -- the part with working survival instincts -- insists I get the hell out of Dodge before my smart mouth gets the shit kicked out of me. Again. Tradeoffs...

## Chapter 1

Loud growls reached my ears as soon as I stepped out of the building. I crept along the shadows to peer around the corner. Son of a bitch! A couple of beasts lounged around my truck.

Four years ago the world ended, or at least that's when the government collapsed. The plague had hit a couple years before that. It spread so fast all the doctors in the world couldn't stop it. The media dubbed it Werewolf Syndrome. Women and children got sick, some died. Older guys or those physically weak didn't survive what the virus did to them.

The men that survived turned into something from the Twilight Zone. They grew larger, with denser bones, stronger muscles, and deadly claws. Slightly elongated jaws came complete with lethal fangs. Their weird yellow eyes could see in the dark, and with the depth perception of a falcon. Faster reflexes and endurance made them a top predator. One of the last newscasts I saw showed one ripping an African lion apart at the local zoo and eating it.

Oh, and aggressive? 'Roid rage is nothing compared to these guys. They either wanted to kill it, fuck it or eat it, sometimes all three, and not in any particular order. No one knows if they lost the memory of who they'd been or if they didn't care anymore. Maybe they just plain went nuts. No one could get close enough to ask, not and live to tell about it. Not that it made them stupid. Might have been containable if it had.

Once it got started the world just tore itself apart. A fucking apocalypse. There just weren't enough women with the combat training to handle the beasts. The women and children who managed to escape joined the few of us immune men in hidden fortresses, fighting to survive.

Unfortunately, despite the danger, sometimes we had to go scrounge for supplies. I'd seen a few bodies. Not pretty. *Night Of The Living Dead* not pretty. But I had the training to find what we needed. Plus, after a winter locked up with two guys I've got nothing in common with, a few dozen lonely women and about a dozen kids, I needed to get away. That's how I ended up alone in that alley staring death in the face.

Two of them were leaning up against my only way out of the city. OK, I suppose I *could* walk the forty-plus miles back to our camp but it'd take forever and leave me exposed to more roaming beasts. I fingered my .45 but doubted I could shoot them both dead before they could get to me. Unless you hit one right between the eyes, one shot wouldn't do more than piss them off.

Shit, my ass was fried.

A subtle breath of air raised the hair on the back of my neck. I whirled just in time to miss the full impact of the blow aimed at the back of my head. Even so, the glancing blow spun me into the wall. They jumped me so fast I had no chance at defense. Within seconds, my face ground into the cracked, muddy pavement, both arms twisted behind me so hard I thought it'd rip them out.

Muddy black biker boots filled my vision. I tried to look up, only to have my face smacked back into the pavement. "You're not rabid, not pack. What are you beside weak and slow?" The boots came with a deep voice that rumbled out in a growl.

I was still puzzling over what he meant by "pack" or "rabid" when boots connected sharply with my ribs. Pain erupted along my hip and ribs from the other side. My yelp set off a round of cruel sniggers and growls. Fuck! Now they'd start tearing me apart for sure.

"Knock it off! Get him up." The deep voice headed in the direction of my truck.

Rough hands with inch and half long claws on each finger jerked me to my feet like a rag doll. I'd never really worked out but at six foot with muscles gained from an active life, I wasn't small, either.

They shoved me along behind the deep-voiced guy. Long black hair pulled back in a loose braid spilled halfway down his back. A worn black leather jacket hugged his

broad shoulders. Tight, worn jeans wrapped an ass that, under other circumstances, I'd be drooling over. Shit, my cock didn't seem to get the message that death, ugly painful death, lay just ahead.

Did I mention I'm gay? So now I could add painfully confined erection to my growing list of aches.

Three more large beasts -- OK, so they're all large -- stood near or leaned against my truck. A shove sent me face first across the hood and a body slammed against me, pinning me there. Shit, the guy's cock felt huge, and more than ready, jammed up against my ass. I was so fucked. Probably literally, and then they'd rip what was left apart.

"So, not pack, not rabid. Human, but not female. Huh. Didn't think any human males still lived." That deep voice moved casually around me as he spoke. The slightest movement when I tried to look at him got me shoved harder into the truck with a clawed hand gripping the back of my neck. I got the message and held still.

"Still nothing to say, little human male?"

Leave out the menacing words and that beast had one of the sexiest deep voices I'd ever heard. It pissed me off how it turned me on. "What, you want me to compliment you on how fucking smart you are?" I groaned inwardly. I couldn't believe I'd just said that. Angry growls closed in around me. I squeezed my eyes shut figuring the end had to be near. Me and my smart mouth, I just couldn't shut the fuck up.

A soft, throaty chuckle hit me like ice water on bare skin, shocking me back to the here and now. "I can smell your fear, and yet you defy me?" The voice leaned so close I could feel his breath on the back of my neck. "Not very smart, little human. Any one of us could rip you apart without raising a sweat."

He nuzzled into my neck more like a lover than someone ready to rip me to shreds. His measured breathing tickled along my neck, the side of my face. I'd never found scared shitless to be sexy before, but more blood rushed south when his lips nibbled along my jaw.

"I wonder if the rest of you tastes as good." Those had to be his fingers grazing my cheek. Shock waves of desire spread out from his touch. How the hell could I find this arousing? It'd been years since I had a lover, but still...

He moved around to the front of the truck where I could stare at the sizable bulge in his low slung jeans and the hint of ripped abs just above. My stupid cock must have liked the view because despite being smashed into a car hood, it got even harder.

"Where are the rest of your humans?"

He wanted to talk before ripping me apart? Unheard of, didn't even know they could hold a conversation. "I'm here alone." Fuck, they just wanted to find more victims.

"No shit, or they'd be joining you. Bet you aren't collecting this shit just for fun. So where are the other humans? Or are you part of another pack?" His voice no longer sounded sultry. It sounded like pain, followed by death.

I swallowed hard and pulled up every ounce of courage I could muster. "I don't know what you mean by pack. I'm alone."

A heartbeat's pause, and then claws yanked me up and slammed me back down, making sure to bounce my face off the hood this time. Son of a bitch! A gush of blood flew from my nose. I didn't think it was broken, but with so many other things hurting, who could tell?

"Fuck! OK, pretend, for a minute, I do live with others like me. Do you really think I'd tell you? And just to speed this up, is this where you promise to let me go if I tell you? Or maybe just kill me fast instead of really slow. Either way, if I did have people I cared about, I would rather you fucked me half to death before eating me for dinner, alive, than tell you anything. I'm pretty damn sure you will anyway but at least my hypothetical friends stay safe."

Silence fell and oddly, I didn't get smashed into the car again. The overgrown beast pinning me down leaned down where I could see him. "We're pack. We don't eat our own kind, or your kind either." He flashed me a wicked grin. "At least not for dinner." The others raked me over with lewd looks and suggestive grins. One went so



far as to lick his lips while staring my ass. So maybe they still wanted to fuck everything. Something of an improvement over being eaten alive... maybe.

A yank at my collar brought me up. Blood still flooded from my nose but now it ran in my mouth. I pinched it with one hand. The deep voice stared at me with the yellow-gold eyes of a beast, but something about that face felt familiar. The strong black eyebrows, high set cheekbones and warm brown skin spoke of Asian or Native American blood mixed in. Hard to tell after the change altered his face.

Shock ran through me. No. It couldn't be. Steven was dead. Killed in action months before the virus broke loose.

The head beast gestured at the truck. "This is how you came here. I can smell you all over it so don't bother denying it. The gas smells weird, different. Where'd you get it?"

Huh. No one had told me they could smell shit like that. I swallowed hard and glanced around, counting six, maybe seven of them. They'd left no opening for even an attempt at escape. A couple carried shotguns and I glimpsed bulges under jackets that could be handguns. Never heard of a group this size, so disciplined or well armed.

The leader's gaze followed my quick darting glances and he smiled. "This is where I offer to not fuck you to death if you can make yourself worth keeping alive. Tell me about your truck, the gas, and all this stuff you tried to steal from us." His gesture took in the stuffed back seat, partly full truck bed, and my pack they'd picked up.

I didn't for one second believe they intended to let me live. So why answer? I drew a deep breath and braced myself. I met his gaze with mine, praying my courage wouldn't fail me now. "Fuck off."

He had hold of me before I could even blink. One hand closed around my throat and the other, my shoulder, lifting, twisting me and slamming my back onto the hood of my truck so hard it knocked the wind from me. He held me down with his chest and the hand on my throat, standing between my legs where I couldn't even kick him. Shit, he had a monster hard-on pressed against my balls! I tried desperately to pull his hand loose so I could suck in needed air before he choked me to death.

Just as suddenly, he let go of my throat and grabbed a handful of hair. He yanked me off the hood and slammed me against the side with his hard body. All I could see were those long fangs as he leaned into me.

I expected him to rip my throat out. I didn't expect him to kiss me. Or that I'd like it. My cock swelled painfully, all crunched up in my jeans, still. His hard-on crushed into me. A half yelp, half moan slipped out of my mouth.

The hand not buried in my hair slid between us. Gripping me firmly through my jeans, he stroked my bent cock straight. I sucked in a breath from the relief followed by pure pleasure. My cock didn't care that he wasn't really a man, or that we had an audience, not as long as he kept rubbing against me like that.

Fuck, the beast could kiss! His tongue thrust into my mouth, claiming it, fucking it. I tangled mine with his as all thought fled in a storm of desire. Shit, I could almost come just from his kiss.

He thrust against me, rubbing his cock along mine like nothing stood between us. He made this guttural groan that went straight to my cock. My balls tightened, so close to release. I couldn't hold back my own sighs and moans of pleasure.

I grabbed at his ass to pull him closer and he backed up with a predatory grin stretching his face. Amusement tinged his deep growling voice. "You liked that. You want me to fuck you."

I didn't bother denying it. My damned cock throbbed with need.

"I'm guessing tits and pussy don't do it for you? Must be hell living with a bunch of women." He licked his lips and undressed me with his gaze. "Answer my questions and I'll give you what you want. Can you make other trucks run like this one? Make the fuel?"

Guess I didn't answer fast enough. A blow from the side knocked me to the muddy ground and a few more kicks connected with my ribs and back. The great kisser stood there and watched.

I rolled away, straight into a pothole full of cold muddy water. Great! I rolled to my side and glared up at him. "So you can hunt down and murder every human left? I

know what animals like you do to people like me. Might as well kill me now." My voice came out more croaking whine than defiant. Now that I was soaking wet, the light spring breeze chilled me to the bone.

One of them jerked me up and held me when my legs refused to work. The leader's eyes narrowed and shone like an animal's does when caught by a flashlight at night.

Only it was daylight.

It freaked me out and I broke, looking away.

"Better. Learn your place, do what you're told and you live. Now, answer. Can you make this gas?"

In truth, he only stood a few inches taller than me, maybe 6'3", but something about him made him seem to tower over me. And my single-minded cock still wanted him. Fuck.

"Yeah, I can, but I won't. Do your worst. I won't help you destroy what's left of this sorry world." The cold spring breeze went straight through my jacket and soaked jeans. Goosebumps rose all over my chilled skin.

The lead beast stared hard at me a few minutes, head slightly cocked in thought. He grunted and headed around the truck. "Keys?" He stood by the open door of the truck with one hand out.

Before I could respond they slammed me back up against the truck with big hands digging through my pocket for my keys. A jerked head, and two of them tossed me in the truck bed while big hands tossed my keys to their leader. *Shit, don't these guys know how to ask?*

Four burly, angry-looking beasts got in the already crowded bed of the truck with me. They shoved stuff out of the way with no regard for what it was and sat on the rails. I wondered how long it would take one to fall off driving on roads with equal parts cracks, potholes and pavement. I hunkered down out of the wind, wrapping my arms around my bent legs, shivering from more than just cold, too stunned at being alive to do more.

The boss and two more sat up front. The guys in the back clung to the side rails like ticks on a dog. So much for that small thread of hope. All four stared at me like I might be their next meal. Or fuck toy. Or both. I had no idea why they hadn't killed me yet. Everything they'd done confused me. They acted more like a bunch of thugs than bloodthirsty beasts. Yeah, I'd gotten beat up a little, but nothing broken. And they hadn't taken turns ass-raping me or tearing chunks out either. These beasts were somehow different.

## Chapter 2

I lost track of the twists and turns to their lair or den or whatever they called the old warehouse they lived in. A tall chain link fence topped by razor wire surrounded a few old brick buildings. One guy hopped out to open the gate and yelled a single unintelligible word toward the building. After an answering holler, we continued forward. The lower windows of the old brick warehouse had been bricked or boarded up leaving just a few high set windows covered with bars. They parked my truck by the front door. Weeds grew around a few long unused cars in the lot.

I stayed hunkered down out of the chill breeze, wondering what they would do with me now. I didn't dare hope they meant to let me live. It just wasn't in a beast's makeup. But then they never lived in well-organized gangs in secure compounds either.

A couple of them grabbed me and dropped me over the side without any chance of finding my feet. Pain shot from my bruised ribs and hip when I hit the dirt. I rolled to my knees to get up but more hands jerked me to my feet. I stumbled along with two sets of clawed hands dragging me between them.

The front door had been reinforced with steel, the jambs too. Once inside, we made a sharp right to enter a short hallway followed by a second secure door. The hall had no roof and railings like catwalks ringed it a good twenty feet up. A kill zone. These beasts took their security pretty fucking serious.

My escort shoved me through the inner door, nearly knocking me down. A sharp pain shot from my abused ribs. Waning afternoon light from the high windows filtered in to create more shadows than light. Dimly I registered a large space crammed with furniture and hallways to the left. Metal stairs headed up to a second floor over the rooms and the catwalk around the entrance. The beasts who'd brought me in handed

off weapons to be locked into a secure weapons locker. Including my .45. Fuck it, I liked that gun.

A dozen or more beasts dropped whatever they'd been doing to stare at me. Shit, I'd never heard of so many in one place. And was that a woman? Fuck, several of them in a kitchen-looking area. Women, in one piece and healthy looking. What the fuck? I stood there wet, muddy, shivering from cold as much as fear. I felt like a rabbit thrown into a cage full of wolves.

"We found this human scavenging in our territory."

Low growls sounded and angry faces riveted on me. A few started forward until their boss raised a hand to stay them.

"He came from outside the city in a truck that runs on some different kind of fuel."

The growls turned to silence.

"If he's smart, he'll be sharing that knowledge with us."

A rude snort came from behind me. "And if he doesn't we can at least have some fun with his soft ass." Another shove sent me to my knees. Every bruise they'd given me screamed in protest. The laughter that followed didn't help any. I staggered to my feet.

"Is there still enough water for a shower? Good, he stinks. Check his truck for a change of clothes." The boss grabbed my shoulder and muscled me toward the far hallway. "Slade, find Doc, I want her to check him over."

"Want some help bathing him?" A bald guy covered with tattoos looked me up and down. He not so subtly adjusted his cock while pinning me with his gaze. Several others sniggered. A few more offered to "help."

The head beast shot him a cold look. "Pull that truck inside. Start sorting the stuff in it, make sure none of it gets broken." He didn't wait to see if his instructions would be carried out, but yanked me along with him.

I glimpsed what looked like a bedroom as he hustled me past an open door. We passed half a dozen more doors, most closed. The half open door at the end of the hall

looked older. I stumbled into the door, knocking it farther open as he hustled me through.

Some of it looked old enough to have been the original bathroom for the warehouse, but someone had updated and added to parts of it. Next to each urinal and inside the stalls sat a bucket of water, to flush with I assumed. City water died with the electricity, but the sewers would keep working until they broke or got blocked.

In the corner stood an open shower. A shower? Could it really have running water? Where the hell did they get running water? A cistern. He'd asked about water in a cistern. If it were on the roof, it could gravity feed a shower.

"Strip, little human. Time to get clean." His eager look focused on my cock, which must have liked the attention since it twitched back to life. Fuck no. Not a good time to have an erection.

"Unless you want me to do it for you." He ran a hand down the very large bulge in his jeans.

"What the hell do you want with me?" Would they really let me live? At what price? Fuck it, I wasn't ready to die yet.

His fang-filled grin did nothing to soothe my nerves. "Like I said, if you're smart, you'll be showing us how you got that truck to run on something other than gas. Otherwise, I'm sure we can find a use for a thief." He gestured at the shower.

No way did I miss his implied threat. "I don't suppose I can have some privacy?"

He laughed and shook his head, looking me over with lusty hunger.

Son of a bitch! I was about to get fucked by a beast. My half-frozen hands trembled as I pulled off my jacket and muddy T-shirt. My best hope was to play along until an opportunity presented itself. And pray they didn't kill me first.

He stepped past me. "Wet down by pulling the chain, soap up everywhere before you rinse. Water's precious." His tongue dabbed against his lower lip as he stared at my bare chest. Nipples hard from the cold peeked out of my curly brown chest hair. Blood rushed to my cock. How the hell could I be turned on by a beast looking at me? Shit, he'd probably tear me to pieces without even meaning to. I turned my back to

him and stripped my jeans and briefs off. I hadn't felt this self-conscious since high school gym! And talk about inappropriate erections, this one beat all.

The shock of cold water did what imminent death hadn't. My erection shriveled and my balls tried to crawl inside me to avoid the frigid water. Already cold, I wetted down as fast as possible. I couldn't stop the shaking of my hands or shivers chasing goose bumps all over me. The bar of soap slipped from my nearly numb hands. I stared at it, and every lewd story I'd ever heard about bending over in a group shower poured through my mind.

Clawed hands bent to pick it up. My lungs forgot how to breathe and my heart tried to leap out of my chest. He stepped close enough I could feel the heat of his body on my back.

Fear wrapped cold fingers around my spine and stroked shivers up and down it. I squeezed my eyes shut, waiting for the rake of claws across my skin. The bar slid softly across my chest. His other hand pulled me tight to him. The length of his huge cock pressed hard against my ass. His naked cock. Shit, fuck! A small flame of need flickered under my cold skin.

The soap made its way lower. With a shaking hand, I blocked him from heading down to my cold-shriveled genitals.

His words caressed along my neck, the side of my face. "If it runs, we want to catch it. If it fights or resists, we want to dominate or subdue it. Better if you just relax. You answered my question, now I'm going to give you want, what you need." His gentle touch shocked the hell out of me.

Pain shot from my ribs and my breath sucked in when he grazed his hands up my side. He splayed his hand over the area, barely touching my skin. "They're not broken, just bruised."

"That makes me feel so much better. So, don't run, don't argue and just hold still while you and your gang take turns raping me."



He stiffened against me. "Rape? What was that when I tongued your mouth and you kissed me back? Or that thick hard cock rubbing against mine? Sure felt to me like you want it."

"So if I said no, what, you'd back off? Or is that resisting?" Another shiver of cold shook me.

He nuzzled my neck again. "You need to understand our instincts, what drives us. That was all I meant." He wrapped himself tighter around me. "You're freezing."

"Really? Hadn't noticed." He felt like a fucking furnace by comparison. "Something tells me you aren't going to leave me alone, are you?"

I swear he sniffed along my neck and then licked where he'd nearly choked me.

"Hmm. Your smell intoxicates me and you taste like sex. We have strong needs and right now, I need you as much as you need me."

Shit, was this guy for real? "I see, don't run, don't fight back and don't shower so you won't want to fuck me?"

He chuckled and pushed me slightly forward. "Sorry, little human, at this point, nothing you do would change how much I want you." He yanked the chain.

I sputtered and shivered under the sudden deluge of icy water. "What the fuck!"

He bared his fangs in a clear threat. "Don't raise your voice, little human, unless you like getting thrown around. The soap was drying on you."

"Well, warn a guy next time." Fuck, my mouth was gonna get me killed yet.

He handed me the soap. "Finish your front. I'll work on your back."

He said it with such authority I found myself complying. I quickly wished he'd stand close enough to share his warmth again. His strong hands used the soap like massage oil, kneading my back while he washed it. Damn but that felt good. That cold hand of fear let up under his firm but gentle touch. And not a claw scrape anywhere.

His hands slid over the curve of my ass. A deep rumble echoed from his chest. I felt his body heat close against my upper back while he washed my ass. My shriveled cock twitched to life. He slid a soapy finger between my cheeks and over my puckered hole. I bit my lower lip, holding back a soft moan. How could that feel so good?

He lipped my earlobe. "Hmm. You do like that."

"Look, it's just a physical reaction because I haven't had a sex in a really long time. That's it." God, I hoped that was it.

He snorted and stepped back. "Even so, why not enjoy what I'm offering?"

"Uh, you'll tear me to shreds in the process, you know, fangs, claws and all." I braced myself and pulled the chain. Fuck, that water was cold! He joined me, sluicing soap from my hair and body before rinsing himself. Water flowed over his head and down through his long black hair and over that glorious ass. His hands stroked back from his face and down along his hair, back arched into the water and proud cock jutting into the air. The cold didn't seem to bother him one bit. Fuck, that cock made my mouth water. I forgot how cold I was imagining taking it in my mouth and sucking him down.

He shook off much like a dog while heading for a stack of towels. He tossed me a towel and started drying. My gaze kept straying to him. Damn, he had a fine body, covered in hard, chiseled muscles. A thin dusting of black hair crossed his chest, flowing over an impressive six-pack and down to the curly thatch at the base of that ruddy pole, thick with veins. His lean hips balanced on muscled thighs. He moved with a grace no human could match. Heat pooled in my groin, starting to thaw my cock. What was so wrong about releasing some pent-up sexual frustration? Not a God damn thing.

I'd heard the phrase *heated gaze*. His burned, the odd glow burning brighter in his eyes. They scrambled my brain, leaving me unable to think, only to feel the need to touch him, be touched by him.

"You can't look at me like that, little human, and claim you don't want me." In a single stride he crossed to me. Taking my towel, he started drying me in long sensuous strokes. My chest heaved with desire. My cock rose against my belly, thick and hard. He cupped it with the rough towel, a light squeeze, and my breath caught. The towel moved on to rub my sack, rolling my balls as he dried me. My heart missed a beat. Shit, that felt so damn good.

I rested my hands on the firm muscles of his chest, splaying my fingers through the black hair. His breath hissed in, then rumbled out. His eyes flared brighter yellow. He slipped the towel around my hips to stroke my ass, pulling us closer. His cock rubbed along mine and a small gasp escaped my lips. Fuck, it had been so long!

Deep, guttural whines rumbled in his chest. I could feel them more than hear them, feel them rumbling through my cock, throbbing between us. The towel dropped and he gripped our cocks together in his big hand, amazingly avoiding pricking either one with his long claws. He jacked us in an ever-increasing rhythm. A soft moan rose in my throat. God, I wanted more!

Fingers twining into his silky hair, I pulled him down for a kiss. His firm, hot lips crushed possessively into mine. Our tongues dueled for supremacy in an erotic dance. My moans and sighs mingled with his chuffs and whines of pleasure.

My cock swelled with my seed, balls tight and ready. "Fuck, I'm gonna come!"

He grunted and pumped harder. I buried my fingers in his hair, my other hand gripping his shoulder as I jerked with my release. My head fell forward onto his shoulder as my body shuddered through another pulse of pleasure.

I felt his cock pulse against mine. Most men screw up their faces as if in pain when they come. His held a look of pure rapture, head slightly back, lips parted so sexily as he pumped hot jiz onto my cool belly. My cock softened in his hand, his hardly changed despite the intense release that left cum dribbling down me.

"Shit, does that thing ever go down? I mean, it looked like you enjoyed it." The uncertainty I felt crept into my voice.

He snickered and toweled his cum off me. "You could say that." He cupped my chin and kissed me, soft and slow. "Felt amazing. So good, I want more, a lot more." His voice dropped even deeper. My spent cock twitched even as I shivered from a cold breeze up my backside.

"Mace, you wanted me to look at the new guy?" A soft woman's voice intruded. A brown-haired woman, looked mid-thirties, poked her head in the door.

"Yeah, Doc, take him to my room." He backed up and nodded his head for me to follow her. Even wrapped in a dry towel, I could feel his gaze on my ass as I walked away.

"Oh. My. God. You really are human. Damn it, and they stuck you in a cold shower? Those your clothes?" She barely paused long enough for me to nod yes. "Damn it! And they made you ride in the back of a truck soaking wet? Good God, you're lucky not to have hypothermia! Come on, let's get you dry and warm." She grabbed my arm, dragging me down the hall.

\* \* \*

A couple of beasts leaned up against the wall, smirks on their faces as she hauled me past. More filled the end of the hall. I managed to hang on to the towel despite my shivers.

"Look at the poor little human shake!"

"Fuck, I'm surprised he can walk after Mace finished with him."

The tattooed guy blocked our path. He sniffed the air. "I can barely smell Mace on him. Guess he didn't fuck the little shit after all." His lips twisted in a sneer.

"Tat, would you move, please? Mace wants me to check him over." She started past him.

Tat stepped between us, cutting me off. "Such a weak little human to be making a fuss over." He grabbed the wrist holding my towel. His smirk turned nasty as he yanked hard enough to wrench my arm. The towel jerked loose from my hips, leaving me shivering and naked in front of all of them. Cock-sucking bastard.

"No wonder Mace didn't fuck you. That's the most pathetic little thing I've ever seen." It sounded like the whole bunch of them laughed. High school flashbacks hit me again.

"That's enough! Back off, Tat. The rest of you've got stuff to do. Move it!" Mace's deep, angry growl echoed down the hall, scattering beasts. Except for the bald guy with the tattoos, Tat -- he still had a death grip on my wrist. He glared over my shoulder at

Mace for a few very tense heartbeats. A smile crossed his face, and he dropped his gaze and my wrist. He turned and sauntered toward the main room.

I hurried to wrap back up. Heat seemed to be in even shorter supply than water. Not that a skimpy towel did much more than keep a draft off my ass. Mace's clawed hand gripped my shoulder, shoving me after the woman. She led me into a smallish bedroom with a huge bed, an armoire and not much else.

"Let's get you wrapped up and warm first." She whipped a blanket off the bed and around my shoulders, urging me to sit.

Mace came in behind us and kicked the door shut. He crossed the room and leaned up against the wall. Despite the less than warm spring temperature, he hadn't bothered with a shirt or shoes. I couldn't help notice he hadn't zipped his pants all the way up, leaving the tip of his still hard cock visible. Oh, man, did that look sexy.

"You can call me Doc, everyone does, though I was an ER nurse. What hurts the most? And what's your name?" She'd already started poking around my nose.

"Ow, fuck! Now that does. I'm Daniel." I tried to hold still for her despite the pain.

"Well, Daniel I don't think it's broken. It's barely swollen at all. I'm going to check you over a piece at a time so you can stay wrapped up. OK?"

I just nodded. She started with the fingerprint bruises on my neck. She darted a furtive glance at Mace before moving on. I wondered what she thought of him nearly choking me to death.

"So, what brings you to the city?" Her question seemed benign enough on the surface, but with the boss man listening I had my doubts. I shrugged.

He snorted. "Stealing from us, looked like," Mace answered for me. "Is he going to live or not, Doc?"

She carefully checked over my ribs. "If he doesn't die of the cold or have hidden internal injuries, that would be up to you, Mace. I would like to give him something for pain and try that ointment on him."

Mace grunted noncommittally. "Make sure he finds some clothes and bring him out for dinner. Smells like it should be ready soon."

He strode over to the large armoire and retrieved a clean shirt. He left the room with his toe claws clicking softly on the floor. How he could stand the cold concrete floor I had no idea.

As soon as he closed the door, I turned to Doc. "Look, how the hell do I get out of here? Help me and you can come too. I know someplace safe."

She started to chuckle. "First, you assume I want to leave and second, if they want you, they'll find you. And next time they won't settle for a few love pats."

*Love pats*? Shit, she was right though. They could have hurt me a lot worse without killing me. Compared to what I expected, they *were* love pats.

Wait. "Uhh, you don't want to leave? They're fucking beasts, tame compared to what I've seen, but still..."

She stopped at the door and turned back to me. "They aren't animals. Especially not this pack."

Before I could ask her about the whole *don't run, don't argue* thing, the door opened and my travel bag smacked into my lap. I never plan on staying overnight or getting filthy wet while scavenging, but it happens. It pays to be prepared, so I always carry spares.

While I was getting smacked by my bag, someone had handed Doc a mug and a jar.

"I know you're hurting and no doubt pretty freaked, but the last thing you want to do is run." She came back over by the bed.

"Yeah, got that lecture, if I run, they chase me down and beat the crap out of me, if I defend myself, they beat the crap out of me. Basically, I'm gonna get the crap beat out of me." I decided to ignore the whole shower scene. I had no clue what I thought or even felt about what'd happened. What the hell should I feel about sex with a guy who wasn't quite human?

She smirked. “Nothing’s ever that simple. Drink this tea and then I’ll put some of ointment on your bruises. It speeds healing.”

It smelled kind of like whiskey. Yup, burned like whiskey, but had an odd taste. I bet she’d mixed something in it. I just hoped it helped the pain without leaving me wasted and vulnerable.

Her fingers rubbed lightly over my bruises as she applied the ointment. It smelled really odd, not bad, just odd. When she’d finished, I dressed and we headed to the main room.

## Chapter 3

Old couches, comfy-looking chairs, cushions, floor pillows, ottomans and mattresses littered the floor of the open living area. A raised platform sat against the far wall. A huge sectional held the center with a couple chairs big enough for two and a scattering of pillows, cushions and plush rugs. Looked like a cross between a college dorm and a sex den.

With the high ceilings, lack of insulation and huge room, heating in the winter must be a bitch. I noted at least six flue pipes from what looked like wood-burning stoves.

Most of the warehouse seemed empty, but oil lamps lit a construction zone crawling with beasts. I had no idea they could build stuff. Didn't those claws get in the way? Then I remembered how easily Mace had avoided ripping me open.

A number of women and a few beasts worked in the kitchen area. More came wandering in, along with nearly a dozen kids, most between ten and puberty, but I caught sight of a couple younger girls. The woman with the baby shocked the shit out of me. How the hell had that happened?

"Hey," I nudged the doc, "I thought beasts were sterile?"

"First, unless you like getting smacked, refer to them as pack. Second, obviously not sterile. Although that's the first baby that made it to term. She seems extremely healthy so we are hopeful."

She grabbed my arm, dragging me forward when I would have stopped and stared at them.

A couple of beasts blocked our path, arms crossed over their chests. One bared his fangs at me. I had been keeping an eye on the ones closing in from the side. None of



them looked friendly. Fuck, I wished I had my .45 in hand. Not that I could have taken them all, maybe not even a few, but I wouldn't have felt quite so helpless.

A short whistle from the end of the room and the group broke up. Mace sprawled on the sectional like a king holding court. It had been arranged in a U shape with him at the back. He patted the spot next to him. "Up here, little human."

Doc joined another beast sitting on one end of couch. She smiled and pressed into his arms. I nearly fell over some cushions littering the floor but couldn't tear my gaze away. Lips devouring each other, they fell more than sat. Shit, she wanted to be mauled? Strange, when they finally came up for air, his gaze looked more adoring than animalistic.

I swallowed and picked my way to Mace. His eyes crinkled at the corners and his lips twitched like he'd suppressed a laugh. Mace's spot allowed him to see the whole room, including everyone on the platform.

I didn't sit any closer than I had to, until another beast nearly flopped on top of me, one of the ones who'd joined Mace in the truck cab. He grinned at me, raking me with his gaze.

Tat curled his lip in a snarl at me before choosing the other end of the sectional. A few others joined him, including one very tough-looking woman. She shoved a couple of them aside to take her place right up against Tat, not kissing but rubbing suggestively against him before curling up at his side.

A plate of nondescript meat cooked with obviously canned green beans arrived. The woman who'd brought our food settled on a cushion nearby to eat, sharing a bottle of wine with me. What I wouldn't give for a real beer, but it didn't keep like wine. Mace's cup held something clear but herbal-smelling. Did beasts drink? Fuck, just the thought of a room full of drunken beasts scared the shit out of me.

In total, six beasts and three women ate up on the platform with Mace. They all slouched back, totally relaxed as they rubbed against each other. I sat stiffly on the edge of the couch. No fucking way I could relax, but I did feel a bit more confident that they weren't preparing to have *me* for dinner.

"So you're some kind of smart geek? How fucking smart can you be to come into our territory and get your ass kicked?" Tat nailed me with his hard stare.

Several men sniggered. They all seemed to be waiting for some kind of response. One even set his plate aside and leaned forward, ready to jump in. Looking for another chanced to kick my butt, I assumed.

"Fang, eat your dinner." Mace glanced at me and cocked a brow. The eager one shot me a dirty look but picked his plate back up.

Shit, what could I say? "Didn't expect any bea... um, of your kind out during the day. And especially not a large, well-organized group. To be honest, this whole thing you've got going here is a bit of a shock."

Tat snorted. "Fuck, bet you think we're all a bunch of rabids!"

I frowned. "I heard that before but I don't know what you mean."

"See, Mace, not so fucking smart after all! Bet he wouldn't last the night playing with the pack either. Fucking useless waste of space."

"Is that a challenge, Tat?" Mace sounded casual but everyone in earshot got very still.

Tat met his gaze then dropped it. "Just wondering what's so special about this thief."

Mace stared for another minute before turning back to me. "We are pack. Changed by the virus, yes, but not mindless animals. Rabids can't or won't control their impulses. They run on pure instinct and are mostly nocturnal. You know, the kind of vicious monsters humans think we all are."

I nodded. "So you aren't like that. I never heard of any who were so, umm, civilized."

"Takes a while to get a handle on all the new stuff -- sights, sounds, smells. We got at least a little crazy at first. But with effort and time, we learned to control ourselves." A soft-spoken man, one of the smallest I'd seen, making him about my height, chimed in.

Something about him seemed familiar. Like their boss, Mace. Shit, I'd known a guy called Mace but Steve Mason died in action before the virus took off. I stared at the smaller guy, looking for some identifying mark. Had I known them both before the change? Seen them around Denver? The guy's eyes narrowed dangerously and he bared his fangs.

"Unless you're looking for another beating, you might want to stop staring at Hawk." Mace casually poked my shoulder.

"Um, sorry. No offense intended." Pack, like wolves? Rumor had it some experiment gone wrong had combined wolf genes with human ones. I had thought that ludicrous, until now. What the hell did I know about wolf behavior? I didn't even own a dog.

Mace handed his plate off and kicked back. His gaze rested on my face. I darted a few glances but made sure not to look him in the eye. The corner of his lip twitched like that amused him. He tugged at me, urging me to relax against the back. I scooted farther back on the seat but still couldn't find it in me to relax.

"We have no interest in hunting more of your kind. As you can see, we've our own territory, home and women here. Our territory supplies us with what we need. That is unless some prick comes in and steals from us."

Mace's easy tone did little to soften the thinly veiled threat. Ah huh, mister nice guy was getting ready to take the gloves back off. The others seemed to sense it too. A group started to gather on and around the platform. A shiver of fear ran down my spine to settle in the pit of my stomach.

"So you've a choice. Repay us with your knowledge, or the pack takes it out of your hide." Thankfully, Mace ran the back of his hand down my arm instead of raking me with his claws. Amid lewd snickers and lewder suggestions, his hand came to rest on my thigh, nearly touching my crotch.

Someone whistled. "Oh, yeah, I'd like to have a little of that soft ass!"

"Wait your fucking turn, asshole! I'm ahead of you," another snarled.

"Fuck you!"

"You're both fucked. He won't last long enough to get to you little pricks." Tat leaned forward and raked me over with his gaze. "I doubt there'll be anything left by the time I'm done with this worthless sack of meat."

Dinner felt like a lump of lead in my gut. Tat glared at the guy next to me in a clear effort to make him move. He cocked a brow in return and simply stared back. Tat growled and glanced at Mace, who seemed to be ignoring it all. The woman chose that moment to distract Tat, running her tongue down his ear and her hand across his cock.

Mace drew casual circles on my thigh. Fuck if my cock didn't like that. I'd always found fear a turnoff, until now. With Mace, it didn't matter.

"Can you convert any engine to that fuel of yours, like say a generator?"

I swallowed and stared at my hands. Shit, I'd have to answer this time. "If it's in good shape, not rusted out or something, maybe. Making ethanol's not hard, but there may be better options." I glanced at him. "Are you talking about generating electricity?"

He smiled. "Lights would be nice."

An older woman with dark, grey-streaked hair folded onto a cushion and leaned up against the couch next to Mace. Surprisingly, the beasts shuffled to make room for her. "Lights, hot water, hell what I wouldn't give for a microwave!" She tapped a finger against her chin in thought but never turned to face us.

Several more suggestions for home improvements rang out from the crowd. Mace shifted and they quieted. "Everyone here earns their keep. One way or another." A claw tipped my chin up and around to look at him. "I won't ask again."

A chill ran down my spine, tying my stomach in knots on the way down. "I know how to do a lot of the things you want. But I'll need parts, wiring, tools and a place to work. I do this and all of you keep your fucking hands off me, right?"

"Let's just say you won't be a toy for the pack to play with as long as you make yourself useful." His hand trailed along my thigh again, making his intentions crystal clear and sending waves of pleasure pulsing into my cock.

I nodded. Not like I had a lot of options here, and the way my cock hardened, it liked the idea of sex with a beast.

Mace trailed his hand up my body and slid it softly across my shoulders to pull me against him. I started to resist but a quick shake of Doc's head reminded me not to fight. Letting out a deep breath, I relaxed into his hold. His claws trailed up and down my arm, not digging, just stroking absently.

I had to shift again to keep the seam of my jeans from strangling my cock. Tat kept staring at my crotch, until the woman next to him jerked his head around and planted one on him. Catcalls and howl-like whoops followed.

She crawled on to his lap and started grinding against him. She threw a snarling look over her shoulder at me, showing both fang and the odd yellow eyes of a beast! I jerked up. Fuck me sideways! Women did not succumb to the change! But there she sat in Tat's lap. Her message seemed clear -- this one's mine. I gave her a slight nod and dropped my gaze. Suited me fine. I had no desire to become Tat's toy.

I watch Tat and the woman through lowered lashes. Shit, I'd seen lap dancers with more restraint! They licked, kissed and stroked as much of each other as they could reach. Another beast sidled up and started rubbing her back with his hands and Tat's side with his front. The woman pulled back and planted a wet one on him. Now it was a three-way frof. A fucking hot three-way! I wasn't the only one watching or getting turned on. Groups of beasts clumped together, stroking, rubbing and/or wrestling. Sort of like piles of puppies tumbling around. Really big scary puppies with fangs and claws.

A scrape of boot and Doc's beast rose, dragging her with him. She paused and turned to Mace. "Mace, human males aren't like you."

Mace snorted and took my hand, tapping my fingertips to show my lack of claws. "Really? I hadn't noticed how fragile he is." He dropped my hand to caress along my bruised face. "Guess I better treat him like a woman, huh?"

She swallowed and dropped her whole head in a very submissive move. "In some ways, yes. Like China." She glanced at a couch with a small and very nervous-looking young woman flanked by two beasts. They sat on some cushions close to one of

the hallways and well away from anyone else. Their vigilant stares reminded me of bodyguards. They sure as hell weren't watching her like she might run.

Mace grinned up at her. "Then I've little enough to worry about. That fragile looking woman-child survived for months among the East 'Burb pack. She's a lot tougher than she looks." His voice grew more serious. "I get it, Doc. Not to worry, as long as he's as handy as he claims..."

I felt a shiver of fear clutch my spine at that less than veiled threat. Damn it, I hoped I could deliver.

"I'll send something later to help him sleep. He's taken a good beating, Mace." Doc and her beast left, along with the nervous-looking woman and her escorts. I looked around but couldn't find the mother and baby. Maybe they'd already bugged out.

A hard growl nearby called my attention back to Tat and his partners. Clothes had started coming off and others pressed around. A new beast thrust his hips into the bare back of the beastwoman. She snapped, literally snapped, her teeth at him like a dog. Or a wolf.

Tat erupted from beneath her and the two beasts tore into each other with claws and fangs, snarling and growling. This looked like the rabid beasts I'd expected. The only kind I'd known existed.

They tumbled from the platform. Beasts jumped out of the way of the combatants. Howls, catcalls and growls echoed around the room as blood flew. It lasted only moments. Then Tat had the other pinned to the ground, claws at his throat. The one on the floor looked away and went limp. Tat yanked him over onto his belly and jerked his hips up. He leaned over him, pumping his hips hard like he was fucking him. The loser braced to keep each brutal thrust from driving him face first into the ground. Tat paused to undo the loser's fly. Shit, these monsters ever hear of talking it out?

Mace stood. "Enough! He submitted. It goes no further, Tat."

Tat snarled and shoved the loser flat to the floor before standing. The beast woman leapt off the platform. Her hands tangled in his hair and her body rubbed along his. He jerked her tight, dry humping her, but not nearly as brutal as he'd been with his

rival. His hands slid into her pants, cupping her ass. Her bare breasts crushed into his bare chest. Shit, it looked like they would fuck right here!

"Tat, Alpha, take it to a room. We don't need another fight." Mace's deep voice held an edge of steel. The woman, Alpha, glared at him before yanking Tat by the waist of his jeans to follow her. The third beast followed until Tat whirled with bared fangs at him. He stopped without a sound. Tat's eyes fairly glowed, adding to the feral look of his face. The face of a beast, the kind I knew, wild and deadly. A brutal reminder not to let my guard down no matter how tame they might seem.

All around the room I saw beasts touching, some sexual, some not. The bolder of the women had already found partners. Others looked nervous and made their way quietly toward the hallways. Most got snagged on their way. They didn't fight, but didn't return the touches and kisses that followed.

More groups of beast became sexual in their play. Shit, Roman orgy anyone? Not one of my fantasies. Despite what my head wanted, my "little head" had other ideas. Fan-fucking-tastic! Like I really needed a hard-on with all the beasts staring at my crotch.

"Hmm, smells like you want to join in. Might get a bit rough for you." Mace spoke so close to my ear I felt every syllable. Scared the living daylights out of me. Which he and several others found seriously funny.

He wasn't kidding about rough. Some looked like serious naked wrestling matches, with claws. On the platform, they'd tangled their arms, legs and bodies so tightly I couldn't tell what belonged to who. They didn't seem to care.

A loud crash made me jump again. A threesome had turned the chair they were in over. Shit, way too rough for my tastes! I glanced at Mace but he paid them no mind. His attention flowed to each of the women still in the room. A yelp and his head snapped to the very feminine sound. All I could see was the frightened and pain-filled eyes of a woman pinned under two beasts. Mace stood up, but before he had to say anything a group of all males nearby sprang up and pulled the beasts off.

"Jeff, Mutt, if you can't play nice, play with each other. Let her go." Mace stared at each one until they dropped their gaze and their shoulders.

The woman pressed into the cushion like she wanted to fade into the floor.

"Fawn, you all right?"

She nodded somewhat shakily.

Mace turned to the older woman that now stood next to him. "Den-mom, see to it she has a gentle partner if she's willing."

Den-mom nodded and I caught a good look at her face. Yellow eyes glowed over a fang-filled smile. Shit, two beast women!

She stalked through the crowd like the predator she no doubt was. Not one beast touched her, though several gave her appreciative looks. She gathered the frightened-looking Fawn up and headed her toward the stairs that led to the second level. Beasts made way for them. She called to two other women to join her, without beasts in tow. A couple of beasts looked unhappy but didn't try to stop them.

Mace thumped back onto the couch. He turned those funky eyes on me, one brow arched in question. I looked away. What the fuck did he want me to say? *How nice you don't rape them outright?* And that would be me if I didn't deliver a few gadgets. Fine. I'd make stuff for them, but nothing they could use to hunt more human toys. And only until I could find a way out of here.

Very shortly, the remaining women left the room escorted by one or two beasts. Some looked more than eager, a few looked nervous, the rest seemed matter-of-fact about it. Guess this happened every night. The beasts left returned to their wrestling and sex play. Only now the clothes started coming off in a hurry.

Mace let out a sigh and pulled me half into his lap. That monster of his pressed hard against me. He slipped a hand along the inside of my thigh. I squeezed my thighs to give him a hint when he reached the top. He didn't get it apparently. Next he started on the button of my jeans. I set my hand over his, twining my fingers between his so he had to stop.

"Ah, Mace, um, I thought you wanted me to set up a generator for you."



He leaned in close to my neck, nibbling across it to the corner of my jaw. "Uh huh, you can start in the morning, little human. Right now, I want to taste you again." He kissed across my jaw.

I felt the couch dip as more weight settled practically on top of me. The soft-voiced guy, Hawk, leaned into me, sniffing my hair, stroking my arm. I jerked when another hand started up my leg from the ankle. My breath caught, and not in a good way. I leaned away from Hawk and tried to pull my leg away. The one on the floor growled and latched on, claw tips pricking through my jeans.

"Fuck, Mace." I fought the urge to jerk my leg loose. Damn beast would probably rip it off. Shit, fucking son of a bitch! Dread rose cold in my throat.

A deep growl rumbled from Mace's chest, not the sexy one but the scary one. The claws pulled back but the floor beast continued stroking up my leg.

"Shit, Mace, I thought you said I wouldn't be a pack fuck toy." Somehow I kept my voice steady.

"Relax, they're just getting to know you."

"Yeah? Ever hear of exchanging names and a hand shake?" Laughter flowed around us, the sheer loudness startling me. Fuck, half a dozen of the bastards ringed us! Each one looking me over with hungry eyes and a few already mostly undressed with fucking huge cocks thrusting out of their pants. I felt that cold squeeze on my spine again. Any arousal I'd felt shriveled under the weight of my growing panic. I couldn't shake the image of Tat's vicious fight. They'd kill me in seconds.

Mace glared around and every one of them backed off, even Hawk and the floor guy. "Easy, little human. They won't hurt you." Farther off, the sounds of men enjoying each other filled the room.

"Look, I've never been into the orgy thing, you know?" I hated how nervous I sounded. Then again, he said they could smell fear. I bet I reeked of it by this point.

Mace waved and space formed around us. He set me off his lap. He started off the platform. The floor beast shifted enough to subtly block my path.

Mace turned, and his gaze dipped briefly to the floor beast. “Unless you want to sleep here, with all of us, you’d best follow me.” Floor beast casually moved out of my way but his hungry gaze followed me. I picked my way after Mace. Hands touched and stroked but didn’t grab or stop me from following Mace.

## Chapter 4

He took me to the men's room first then back to his bedroom. He had his shirt undone before I'd even gotten in the door.

"Close the door, or we're likely to have company." Claws clicking down the hall had me shutting it way faster than I intended. The wall rattled with the force.

"Anxious to be alone with me again?" He stripped off his shirt.

I leaned back against the door, arms crossed over my chest. "I'm guessing I let you fuck me or I can get fucked by every beast out there." His eyes narrowed when I called them beasts. I didn't care. Every God damn bruise they'd given me ached. The constant state of fear had worn me out. Smartass just came naturally under the circumstances.

He padded across the room to stand over me, those glowing eyes searching my face as if looking for something. The gentleness of his touch on the side of my face caught me off guard. I'd been ready for more threats or even blows, not tenderness.

"I could have fucked you, as you put it, in the shower. God knows I wanted to. Instead, I gave you pleasure, yes?"

I stared at the floor. Nothing I could say to that really. I shrugged. He caressed along my cheek, under my jaw and gently brought my face up.

"I want you, little human, more than you can imagine. You want me, I've smelled it." He leaned close, lips brushing my forehead, kissing his way down to my mouth. Fuck, that was so hot! My cock surged in my pants. The brush of his lips across mine sent more blood rushing south.

"I want to touch you. I need to touch you, little human. We crave touch, to umm, have sex? Does that sound better to you than fucking?"

I snorted softly. "Might sound better but I still don't get a choice, do I?" Fuck, how could I be so horny, so fucking needy? Maybe just misplaced adrenaline. That had to be it.

He leaned close, his lips breathing onto mine. "You chose to come to my territory knowing rabids would tear you apart if they caught you. This is the consequence and I would think much more pleasant than what rabids would do. God, little human, you fire my blood. Can't you feel how much I want you?" He traced my lips with his tongue, stepping close enough to warm me with his heat.

Desire flowed from his teasing tongue down to my painfully hard cock. I searched his face and saw only truth and need. My breath caught. His hands stroked down my arms and around my ass, pulling me into his hard cock.

"Calling me 'little human' is like me calling you beast. My name is Daniel." I couldn't believe how breathy I sounded.

He kissed along my collarbone while his hands worked their way under my shirt. "Daniel, umm, God, you taste as good as you feel. I can't wait to taste the rest of you."

My cock pulsed its approval despite the rest of me begging for sleep. I shrugged out of my shirt as he lifted it. As horny as he seemed, hopefully this wouldn't take long.

His hands swept down my chest, teasing both nipples as he passed. I groaned and arched into him. One hand swept back up to palm my nipple, rubbing it in circles. My lids fluttered shut. Heat from his touch flowed down to flood my cock. OK, much better than getting shredded.

I ground my hips against his, trapping his hand at the top of my jeans. Somehow he still managed to pop the button open on my jeans. His long fingers teased under the band then around back. In the tightness of my jeans, his claws scratched across my skin, not hard enough to draw blood and somehow very erotic. He cupped my ass, holding me while he pressed harder against me. Our cocks lined up and were sliding along each other. Fuck, much more of that and I'd come in my pants.

The hard muscles of his back flexed under my stroking hands. Damn, he felt good. I gazed up into those yellow-gold eyes lit with passion. My lungs forgot how to breathe for a few heartbeats.

A clawed finger slipping between my ass cheeks had me sucking in a big gulp of air. Only the pad of his finger rimmed my hole. How did he keep those claws out of the way?

Ohh, man, that felt good. But I needed to take control as much as I needed release. I'd made the mistake of letting a stranger fuck me once, never again.

"One more thing, I don't bottom." I leaned in to kiss and suck along his collarbone. His chest heaved and that sexy rumble vibrated under my lips. Damn, he tasted amazing!

I made my way down his lightly haired chest to search out a nipple. He gasped, one hand pulling my head tight to him. The other left my ass crack to cup a cheek. He rocked his cock against me, quickly matching the rhythm I set as I licked circles around and across his nipple. His growls increased, becoming almost a whine with need.

"Daniel, oh shit, suck me. God! That tongue, unnn." The rest of his words devolved into deep moaning whines. He urged my head down. His cock peeked from his unzipped pants. I shoved them down as I worked my way down his body, kissing, licking and stroking. The big man quivered, hands opening and closing in my hair.

I licked up the inside of his thigh, one hand following, seeking deeper to stroke between his sack and tight puckered hole. I sucked his sack, rolling a nut gently into my mouth.

"Unn, shit, yeah!" His cock leaped, curving up to his taunt belly.

I lapped up the underside of it and circled the broad head. Salty precum flooded my mouth. Fuck, yeah. Even that tasted amazing. My own cock wept with need, still strangled in my pants.

I backed him with firm pushes and tugs until he sat on the edge of the bed, leaving his rumpled pants behind. Perfect! The bed stood higher than most so would

make taking him so much easier. My cock twitched at just the thought of burying myself balls deep in his ass.

I sucked his cock down deep in one motion. He grasped my head and exploded in my mouth. Fuck! I hadn't expected that and choked on the first spurt. I gulped over and over, milking his cock of every last drop. His moans and howls filled my ears, his body shook and quivered with each spurt. Shivers of hot lust pulsed hard into my aching cock.

"Daniel! Unn, Oh. Shit! God you're good!" He flopped back on the bed, aftershocks shuddering through him as I kept working his length. And still he stayed hard.

He pulled free just long enough to pull a tube of lube out of a drawer. I licked his slit and he hissed and dropped it on the bed next to him. His hands clutched at my hair, holding me to him.

I reached for the lube, never stopping my licking and sucking. I lubed a finger and slid my hand down, using my other fingers to slightly part his ass cheeks. I rimmed his hole.

"Fuck!" His hips thrust off the bed. He curled up to stare at me with eyes far from human. His breath growled in and out of his chest, lips curled to show plenty of fang.

I captured his gaze with mine and thrust just my fingertip inside. He growled but let me reach deeper. Swiftly I found the hard nut of his prostate. One stroke and he fell back again, hips quivering and bucking. I stroked out then added another finger, stretching him. Fuck he was tight! My cock swelled so hard I thought I would burst my jeans. I managed to pull the zipper down with one hand, which also served to pull both pants and briefs down far enough to set my aching cock free.

I bent over and swallowed him down again, stroking his hot spot as I did. He howled, thrashed and thrust up. His ass spasmed around my finger. So close... I pulled my fingers almost out, just in enough to keep the first ring of muscles stretched. I lapped at the slit of his cock.

Groans, growls and needy whines flowed from his lips in a continuous steam. I watched his face, eyes heavy and glazed with lust, mouth parted as he sucked in ragged breathes. So fucking hot! Yeah, he was ready.

I lubed my cock, more on my fingers to work deep inside him. He groaned and pushed into my fingers telling me how ready he was. I replaced my fingers with the tip of my cock, thrusting just enough to seat the head. I grasped his thighs and pulled him slowly onto my cock.

A loud growl rumbled so deep I could feel it through his ass. I nearly shot my load right then. Fuck he was tight! And so hot it felt like fucking a sauna.

I clasped his cock, sliding my lube-slick hand up and down it. Using small thrusts I searched for just the right angle. His howl of pleasure told me when I found his sweet spot again. I thrust slowly over it a few times. His hands grasped at the bedding, trying to shove himself farther onto my aching cock. I took that as permission to fuck his ass into the bed.

I wrapped my arms under his thighs, pulling them up and started pounding. Fuck, he looked gorgeous as I plundered his ass. Lips parted, just the tip of his tongue grazing his lower lip. His eyelids fluttered, then opened wide with a wild look. His lips curled to show fang and his whole face went feral. His body tightened. I clenched to hold off my own orgasm until he peaked again. I had something to prove at this point. I was going to get that monster cock satisfied one way or another!

I angled my body to rub his cock with each thrust. It only took two before he howled and came. His whole body joined with strong convulsions, his ass clenching on me so hard I screamed and shot deep into him.

"Fuck, Mace!" I couldn't remember the last time I came so hard. I shuddered through each pulse of cum I pumped into him. My knees finally buckled and I slid out of him. My face nuzzled into the curve of his hip as my heart rate started to slow.

His body still pulsed with aftershocks. But instead of quieting down, the tension in his body rose, his breath came hard. I rose up to see what might be going on. Our gazes met and with a speed no human could match, he yanked me up on the bed and

pinned me. His clawed hands wrapped over my shoulders, pressing them down. His lower body held me down, his legs between mine.

The look on his face, in his eyes, pure predator. His lips curled in a snarl full of fangs and his eyes glowed that eerie yellow. The scary growl rose from deep inside him. Fuck! What the hell happened?

He leaned closer, growling louder, gaze locked on mine like a wolf about to devour a sheep.

"Mace, what's wrong, man? Take it easy. Mace." My voice rose in pitch the closer he got to me with those bared fangs. "Fuck!" I clinched my eyes shut, swallowing hard and preparing to get my face ripped off.

He nudged my jaw with his head, moving it up and to the side, baring my throat to his bite. He closed his jaws over me. That cold hand ran down my spine again in a shiver of fear. He bit just a little harder, growling. Fuck! What did he want?

He let go just enough to snarl out one word. "Submit."

Oh, like that guy with Tat. What'd he do? Yeah, go limp it had looked like. Shit, how exactly could I do that when I was one heartbeat from having my throat torn out? I took a deep breath and let it out, forcing my limbs to relax as best I could.

The growl softened and the teeth pulled back. Lips kissed where he'd just been biting me. His hands slid from my shoulders, one to hold him up, the other stroked down to find a nipple to stroke in circles. My breath caught and my cock twitched. How I could get turned on so fast after nearly getting savaged, I had no idea.

He ground his still hard cock along my limp one. His growl softened to a needy whine. He bent to lick and nip at my nipples, raising one to an achy peak before moving to the other. My lids fluttered shut as lust-filled heat spread from his lips. Blood rushed to my cock until it slid hard along his soft belly hair and hard abs. Oh, fuck that felt good!

I ran my hands up and down the hard, flexing muscles of his back. Damn, I loved the man's ripped body! My cock throbbed hard and ready.



He pushed himself up off me with one arm, lips parted, eyes glowing with passion. My breath caught and cock rose up against his hard body in approval. Until he started to roll me over.

"Mace, I don't bottom, I told you that." His eyes narrowed and that dangerous growl rumbled deep in his chest. He jerked me over and pulled my ass up.

Fuck. This had nothing to do with sex, this felt like pure domination. It scared the shit out of me to be so vulnerable. Without a high level of trust, I just couldn't do it. Only one man had ever earned that trust from me. The only man I'd ever bottomed for.

"Look, not like that, please?" I hated how my voice trembled with fear. He let me go and I rolled back over. I fought back the rising panic. I could do this if I could take control again.

Was that worry in his eyes? He ran a gentle caress along my cheek.

I dropped my gaze and rose up to lick along his collarbone. I ran a hand down to stroke his cock.

He rumbled with passion and leaned down to kiss me.

I opened and darted my tongue against his lips until he let me in. He tasted sweet, hot and sexy as hell. My cock surged back to hard like I was sixteen all over again.

Precum welled from the broad head of his cock. I spread it with a finger around and under the rim. His chest heaved and whined moans flowed from his mouth to mine. He shifted, searching for the lube. I kept my hand busy rimmed his cock head.

He reared back, poured a bit of lube on his cock for me to spread. Those deep whines and groans he made as I stroked him rumbled into my groin, adding to the heat in my cock.

He bit the tips off a couple of his claws then rimmed my tight hole with cold lube. I sucked a breath. His hot finger slid inside. The blunt end of his claw dragged across my gland. I bucked up, gasping and shaking with the pleasure. A smile of masculine satisfaction curled his lips, his gaze glued to my face.

He withdrew and inserted two fingers, stretching my hole and stroking my need higher. Just as I tensed to blow he froze, leaving me hanging. Fuck! I groaned and tried to fuck myself on his fingers but his other hand held me still. Precum dripped from my slit in a long string. So much for being in control. All I could do was enjoy the ride. Right now, that didn't scare me.

"Fuck, Mace, just do it already!"

As soon as I relaxed a little, he pulled out his fingers. I raised my knees and dropped them wide. He grasped my hip with one hand and positioned that huge, dark head against me. Slowly he pressed in. I hissed in a breath as the burn hit. Ah, fuck, he was big and hard as stone!

He bent to suckle a nipple. I moaned and he pressed deeper. I could feel his tension as he worked slowly into me, checking to make sure I was OK before pushing deeper. Fuck it had been a really long time.

Finally, his balls slapped softly against my ass. He tensed over me, chest heaving and eyes wild, waiting for me to adjust to his size.

I rolled my hips, sliding my cock along his belly. He pulled back and thrust, a whine rumbling from his lips. His lids closed and he threw his head back, lips parted in ecstasy. I nearly came just watching his pleasure. He tensed and shook as he came. Fuck, his jiz felt hot in my ass.

"Uhhh, yeah, Mace. Give it to me. Oh, fuck, yeah."

Most guys would have been done but his still hard-as-rock shaft still filled me. He groaned and let his weight sink onto me. God, I had missed this!

He started to thrust in a slow rhythm, shifting until he found just the right angle to send me moaning higher. Close, so close! Heat burned inside me until all thought fled and only the need to come remained.

I pressed up, seeking pressure on my aching cock. He rolled his hips with each stroke so his belly stroked my length. Fuck, yeah!

I clutched his ass, urging him faster, harder until his balls slapped against my ass with each brutal thrust. I had two handfuls of bedding to keep from getting pounded

into the headboard. Aching to come, I met each thrust. Ecstasy pushed up from my balls. I'd never been a screamer but I couldn't hold back a bellow as I came. My body convulsed and shook with each electric pulse.

He thrust harder, grunting and whining until he too, tensed and shot. God, I could have almost come again watching that angelic look on his face!

He collapsed onto me, chest heaving, and nuzzled my neck. We lay there, catching our breaths until his cock shrank and slid from me. A surge of pride filled me at finally taming the monster.

As the passion receded, the aches in my body reasserted themselves along with a few new ones. I groaned and pushed against him.

He rolled off me. "Daniel, are you OK? Did I hurt you?"

The real concern in his voice surprised me after all the growling and hard fucking.

"It's OK, just a little sore." I groaned as I levered myself into sitting. Sticky cum dried on my belly and thighs. I hated sleeping covered in spunk.

"Here, Doc left this for you. For pain and to help you sleep." He handed me a cup with more of that strong whiskey. It tasted even harsher than I remembered. I gulped it down and wished I had something stronger.

I bit back on my groans as I wormed my way off the bed to make use of the nightjar he showed me. Mace handed me a damp rag. The guy kept his room stocked for sex: lube, rags and a pitcher of water for clean up. Nice.

By the time I'd finished, he'd already tossed the wet cover off and slid under the remaining blankets. I gingerly slid in beside him. I preferred to sleep on my side but my sore ribs and bruised hip had other ideas. With a sigh, I settled on my back. Mace rolled up against me, draping an arm over my chest. I had to shift it a little to avoid a bruise. Shit, I was gonna hurt in the morning!

My thoughts started to cloud as the pain receded. Whatever she'd put in that last dose was way stronger! I sighed and let it pull me under.

## Chapter 5

For those first few moments upon waking, I thought I was back in my loft. The warm body curled against my back was Steve and everything was OK. Then I stretched and every muscle in my body twinged in response. My ribs ached as much as my nose. A sobbing groan escaped my mouth before I thought to stifle it. Show no pain, isn't that what you do with wild animals?

"Hey, little human? Daniel? You OK?" Mace's large hand on my shoulder rolled me to my back.

I squeezed my eyes shut against the pain. I don't do pain well. "Just peachy. Never been better. You'd never know I got the shit kicked out me yesterday or fucked within an inch of my life last night." OK, that had felt good but it did leave me a bit sore this morning.

Gentle hands stroked along my face, my neck and across my shoulder. "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to hurt you."

Seriously? "Was that when you were choking me or fucking me?"

A low growl and a not so gentle grip on my chin reminded me I really needed to learn to shut up. He gave my chin a little shake and I opened my eyes to see his glowing with anger.

I bet he didn't say sorry often and I'd just thrown it back at him. "Mace, man, I'm sorry. I know you didn't mean to hurt me last night, but we did go at it pretty hard. And somebody kicked the shit out of me yesterday." I couldn't meet his cold stare any longer. A twinge of fear knotted deep in my belly, which meant I'd really have to watch my smart mouth.

He stroked along my cheek with his thumb, then down along my neck. I couldn't help but wince when he touched the bruises ringing my throat. The ones he'd put there.

He pressed against a particularly sore, fang-shaped spot. My breath hissed in but I held still. He swept the blanket off me, looking me over. Running a finger over my bruises.

I levered up on my elbows and carefully bent to look at my ribs. "Nice, huh? The ones on the right there hurt like a son of bitch." His brows and lips twitched down in a frown.

Mace stroked along the edges of the huge purple blotches decorating my ribs. His hand trailed lower, along the line of my hipbone. Just a hint of boot-shaped bruise showed there. Most of it lay farther toward my ass. But he wasn't looking at my hip. His gaze locked on my cock, nestled in its nest of dark crinkly hair. His fingers tickled up the inside of my thigh. Fuck, even after all we did last night? My suicidal cock said, "Yes!"

"Turn over." His deep voice growled up through his chest.

"Shit, Mace, I..."

He cut me off with a sharp look and his hands lifting under my hip to make me move. A grunt of pain worked past my clenched jaw as I rolled over on my sore ribs. I buried my head in the pillow. I didn't have the strength to fight him this morning.

His hands ran up my inner thighs. Yeah, got a few tender spots where his hipbones ground into me. It happens. I tried not to tense as he cupped my ass cheeks and parted them. "Mace, God, please, I can't, not so soon." I knew I was begging. I didn't really care at that point. I remembered quite clearly him driving into me over and over. Gave me the best orgasms ever, but there's a limit to what a body can take. I'd reached mine.

The bed creaked as he shifted. A shiver ran up my spine.

"You smell of fear again. And pain." He stood and drew the blanket up. "Stay here."

I turned my head enough to watch him step out the door and call to someone. I couldn't hear what was said but damn what a fine ass he had! My cock surged harder in agreement. Damn thing had no common sense. But I sure as hell wasn't hanging

around to get fucked again. Gritting my teeth, I dragged myself into sitting. Now where the fuck were my clothes?

The door snicked closed. Mace leaned against it with his arms crossed over his chest, one brow arched.

"Don't suppose you could toss me my pants?" I swallowed hard, dropping eye contact. Which had me staring at his semi-hard cock. He snorted softly and beamed me in the face with my briefs and jeans then leaned back against the door to watch me struggle with dressing. I clenched my jaw as sore, stiff muscles screamed in protest.

A soft knock and he pushed himself off the door. Doc stepped in with a cup of something and a jar of that ointment stuff. "How do you feel this morning, Daniel? This will help with the pain. It doesn't have any narcotics like last night but does have a bit of muscle relaxant." She offered me the cup and barely waited for me to down it before poking at my nose.

I think her idea of muscle relaxant was about 100 proof. The shot burned all the way down. "Hey, easy on the nose, Doc. And yeah, I hurt pretty much everywhere."

She slathered my ribs and tried to strip off the pants I'd struggled so hard to get on. "Doc, I'll live. Nothing down there needs your help."

She gave me a haughty stare then actually glared at Mace when he started laughing. "I'm the doc here. Now drop them."

Mace gave me an amused look and inclined his head toward her. "Guess you should have stayed where I told you to."

I sighed and unzipped.

A few *humphs* and a bunch of ointment later she let me dress. She kept her head dropped but her voice was anything but submissive. "Mace, he's not pack! You need to take it easy with him."

His deep growl and narrowed eyes shut her up. A real testament to his status. She nodded and left without another word.

"Finish dressing. Breakfast is up. Then you have work to do." He sauntered over to his own pile of clothes.

\* \* \*

The smell of coffee brewing blew me away. Where the hell had they found coffee? I found the old-fashioned percolator on the antique wood stove and helped myself. Hmm, heaven!

I wondered how long oatmeal stored? It looked OK and smelled tasty, but it had to be at least four or five years old. The women and kids were eating it without apparent concern so I dove in. Didn't taste quite the same without raisins and brown sugar but hey, we'd all learned to do without those little luxuries.

The woman manning the kitchen pointed me toward Mace. They had set up trestle tables and benches for breakfast. Two women in work coveralls joined us at Mace's urging. "Gadget and Wrench will show you around. Once you've seen what we have, I want to know what you can do for us."

Gadget's real name was Patty and Wrench was Lori. They gave me a tour of what they'd done. Cisterns on the roof gravity-fed water to the showers and kitchen, when not frozen in the winter. They collected rainwater and snowmelt in them but also hauled water up with a bucket system from the nearby river. Heating consisted of wood burners in the main room. Most of the rooms they'd built themselves and had no heat. The old offices had been converted to living quarters for the women and children. Those rooms were old enough to have the original radiators and the boiler still worked. Lori'd built a water supply to replace the city water. She'd earned her nickname the hard way.

The building looked more like a factory than the warehouse I'd first thought. It had a square shape with a nice southern exposure and solid brick construction from around the late eighteen hundreds, maybe early nineteen hundreds. They'd boarded over all the ground-level windows for security.

The building next door housed a diesel generator and an old steam engine. The old boilers still sat next to the engine. How fucking lucky was that? A little repair work, hook the generator to the steam engine and they'd have lights. Assuming there was good wiring, transformers... light bulbs... Sigh.

A cold, stiff wind kicked up as we made our way to the main building midday. A bank of dark clouds raced towards us from the northwest. Smelled like snow. Not uncommon in April along the Front Range. I just hoped it wouldn't be a bad one.

The main room swelled with activity. Piles of scavenged scrap wood beside each wood stove grew larger. Guess I wasn't the only one who thought those clouds meant snow.

I'd almost forgotten all the beasts around. They'd left me alone while I was working with Patty and Lori in the outbuildings. Now, the fuckers must've decided I was fair game. One went out of his way to shove me into the wall as we passed and then bared his fangs and growled. I jerked my gaze to the floor, fighting the fear-induced urge to mouth off. I didn't need to start a fight, especially since I knew I'd lose.

In the men's room, I found myself surrounded at the urinal. Shit, hadn't they ever seen a guy go before? Barely finished, I jerked back when one grabbed for me. "Hey, no touching."

A loud growl and I found myself shoved hard into the wall, whacking my loose cock into the porcelain. Claws dug into my shoulders and the fucker tried to reach around to fondle me. Fear or not, some things I wouldn't stand for.

Snarling and shoving me against the wall, he made another grab that I managed to block. That really pissed the beast off. Claws bit into my shoulder and the beast used his body to slam me harder to the wall. A fucking hard cock jammed into my ass. Thank God, Hawk walked in and broke it up, hauling me off to give Mace an update.

I spent much of the afternoon with the ladies digging around the plumbing and electrical systems. A couple beasts from the men's room followed us for a while, looking for any opportunity to knock me around.

After a particularly hard shove, I tensed to turn and confront the fucking jerk.

Patty grabbed my arm. "Don't! Keep quiet and don't make eye contact unless you're looking for an ass-kicking."

Lori nodded vigorous agreement. God damn beasts. I gritted my teeth and went back to work.



The asshole beast walked away laughing his fucking ass off. I didn't know how long I could keep it up.

\* \* \*

By the end of the day, I had a bunch of new bruises to go with the old ones. At this rate, I'd be one big purple splotch by the end of the week.

Over dinner, I gave them my assessment of their situation. "The generator will put out more than you need for lights so you could use it for other things." I explained around a bite of pretty damned good mystery meat. As well as the beasts, packs of former pet dogs had ravaged the city, destroying the urban deer and rabbit populations. To survive, you learned to eat whatever you could catch. As top predators, everything was on the menu for them, even other predators.

"I heard you talking hot showers." Den-mom looked at me expectantly. "I think that should have priority. Along with running water."

For several minutes, everyone on the platform discussed what projects they wanted or modern luxuries they missed most. One even wanted to get a TV running, like there'd be anything to watch. It didn't take long for the discussion to get heated.

Mace sat forward from his usual sprawl. "Water, heat, lights. Those we need most."

All eyes turned to me.

"So, Brainboy, can you really do all that?" Tat had claimed the spot next to me tonight with a pissy-looking Alpha on his other side. He made every word sound like an insult. His imposing body leaned toward me in a clear attempt at dominance. Hard to tell if he wanted to kick my ass or just fuck it. Shit, with my luck, both.

"I already told you about the generator and what's needed. As for the water, once the generator's running, you can power a pump. Drill a well, hook up a pressure tank and there you go."

"How the fuck do we drill a well without a drilling rig? Got one of those, smartass?" Fang sneered. He was the one that had nearly clawed my leg off last night.

I smirked back. "The Amish drill wells all the time without modern equipment. Lucky for you, I know a few tricks. It's not rocket science, just finding parts." Fang's eyes narrowed and he snarled at me. Maybe I shouldn't have sounded quite so smug.

Mace slipped an arm around me and pulled me to his side. I shifted closer, more than happy to put a little distance between me and Tat. Mace's hand trailed up and down my arm. "We need an inventory of what we have on hand and what you need. Since we'll need to do a lot of scavenging, I want one of those stills as soon as the generators up. Your truck will come in handy."

Shit, just what I didn't want to give them, even though I could see Mace's logic. I'd just have to stall that project while delivering on something else. Getting electricity for them wouldn't hurt anyone.

Discussion apparently done, they started breaking up into horny puppy piles. Great, orgy time again.

Mace's hand wandered from my arm to my neck and then down my other arm to my thigh. I sucked a breath as the back of his fingers skimmed my not so flaccid cock. Without a downward glance, he settled his hand between my legs. His gaze roamed over the room like last night, watching his beasts play and settle with the gathered women.

Alpha snuggled up to Tat, but tonight he gave her no more than cursory attention. Instead he slipped closer to me. Thigh to thigh, he pressed against me but didn't wrap an arm around. Mace's hand moved higher, nearly cupping my balls.

Fuck! My cock surged hard. I risked a glance at Mace. The slight smile that twitched at the corner of his mouth indicated he damn well knew what he was doing.

Tat's breath heaved in my ear. I turned to find him close enough to kiss. Eww. His gaze stayed glued to my crotch. His tongue darted along his lips and he reached across to stroke my thigh. I fought the urge to flinch, knowing it would just egg him on. Still casual, Mac's hand moved languidly to block his path to my cock, cupping it possessively. The heat of his hand sent tingles of pleasure shooting along the length. I stifled a groan, and my eyelids fluttered shut for just a moment.

Not deterred, Tat turned to face me. He started at my shoulder much as Mace had and stroked down my arm in more of a firm exploration instead of a sensual caress. He slipped his hand under mine, raising it to examine it. He dropped it with a snort that said he'd found me lacking. I could live with that. Now if he'd just leave me the hell alone...

No such luck. He leaned closer, like he was sniffing my hair. I couldn't stop my gut reaction, jerking away and shooting him a dirty look. His lips curled in a snarl and his hand darted for my neck. Mace deflected it. Tat scowled, but backed off.

Mace pulled me down with him on the couch, curling around my back. His hard length settled against my ass cheeks and his thigh slipped between mine. Fuck, I needed looser pants around this guy! My cock strained the seams, eager to repeat last nights fuck fest.

His hand went back to teasing up and down my arm. Without warning he moved to my ribs. Caught off guard, I winced.

"Still hurting, little human?" Mace rose up on one arm to look down at me.

I shrugged. "I'll live."

Mace snorted and with no more than a glance at Doc, she scrambled up. A few minutes later she brought me a cup of that medicinal whiskey.

I levered myself up into sitting, biting back my groans. "Umm, are we sleeping here tonight?" I'd noticed fewer seemed headed to the back rooms.

"Most rooms don't have heat. Those few that do are reserved for the women and children." He tapped the cup. "Drink up. You've got another busy day tomorrow."

I turned to look at him then down at his hand draped so casually over my hip and almost touching my cock. Tat and a few others lingered near, looking at me like dessert. "Yeah, is this the strong stuff?" I asked Doc as she settled down with her beast, Slade.

Mace snickered. "Don't worry, little human, you earned your keep today. Unless you want to join in?" His claws grazed lightly across my cock.

Much to my embarrassment, the damned thing got even harder. At least I squelched my gasp. Mace's throaty laugh and steel rod thrust against my ass didn't help. He stroked along my length. I clutched that cup and fought back a moan.

"Mace, please, not here." I swallowed down my pride and tried to sound submissive enough.

Tat snorted. "I'd be embarrassed to show off that pathetic little cock, too. Can't imagine what anyone would want with it."

Mace shifted enough to give Tat a hard stare then his lips twisted in a grin. "Just shows your lack of imagination. The man's got a mouth on him, and I'm not talking about his smart-ass remarks. Not that he's lacking in other areas, either."

He sat up behind me. One single finger pressed under the cup, urging me to drink. With a sigh, I tossed it back in a single swallow. The familiar burn warmed me all the way down.

"Up. Let's get you set for the night." His tongue licked the rim of my ear. A nip on my neck and a firm push on my back got me looking for somewhere to put my feet. Hawk, Den-mom, and a couple others sprawled on and around cushions in front of the couch. We picked our way through the throng, headed for the men's room.

\* \* \*

I was finishing washing up when I heard the door shut. Fear spiked through me. Had Tat or Fang cornered me? No, Mace leaned against the door, chuckling. The head of his cock peeked out of his unzipped jeans. My breath caught and all that adrenaline went south, reheating my cock to its former rock hardness. He pinned me with his gaze as he stalked toward me.

Lust pooled deep in my groin. My hands shook slightly as I dried them on my shirt. All I could think about was how good he'd tasted last night. How fucking good he'd felt around me, in me.

His hand slid around my neck, pulling me in for a deep kiss. His hot lips slid along mine. Our tongues tangled. Our cocks rubbed against each other as we ground together.

I clasped his face between my hands, holding him as I plundered deep into his sweet, hot mouth. He ran his hands through my short hair, then down my back to clasp my ass tight to him.

Need boiled inside me. I slipped my hand along his side then between us, teasing the head of his cock. His hips jerked and he tossed his head back, lips parted on a sexy rumble. Fuck, he looked hot. My cock pulsed even harder. I needed to taste him, now.

Pushing his hips back while kissing my way down his neck, I zipped his jeans down, freeing his erection. Ran a finger along the underside and he moaned that deep whining sound. My cock throbbed in answer.

I dropped to my knees, thumbing his precum around the wide head. His hand grasped at my hair, all but shoving me into his groin. I looked up as I licked the head like an ice cream cone. His eyes widened before the lids drooped in pleasure.

"Unngh, Daniel, God, suck me!" I loved his breathy voice when he begged. I sucked just the tip. He gasped, head thrown back again. Holding me in a vice grip, he thrust into my mouth so hard he rammed the back of my throat. The suddenness had me gagging. He jerked back.

"Sorry, Daniel, your mouth is just so damn hot, so wet." He looked down at me with something more than lust.

"Just caught me off guard is all." Just to prove it, I relaxed my throat and took him down. His growls and whines urged me on. I swallowed around him. He gasped and trembled. He was close. I could feel his cock swell with his seed. I sucked harder, gave his tight balls a firm roll.

Howling, he jerked and came deep in my throat. I swallowed rapidly, milking his cock. He shuddered with each pulse of jiz. I ran a finger back to stroke the spot between his balls and ass. A gasp and he bucked harder into me. He whined as I pulled off his still hard cock.

I sucked on a couple of my fingers, gaze locked on his. He panted with need, his hard cock brushing the side of my face. I slid my wet fingers between his ass cheeks. He whined and shuffled his feet wider in a blatant invitation.

He sucked a breath when the first finger breached his hole. His thighs trembled with need. More cum welled from his slit. I licked it off. He jerked into me, groaning out his pleasure. I sunk a second finger, seeking his prostate. Watching his face when I found it nearly made me come. Fuck, he looked like a fallen angel with fangs!

Opening wide, I pressed my tongue against the underside of his cock as I took him back in. When I closed around him, his knees nearly buckled. I sucked up and down his length while I fingered his prostate. His chest heaved, hands clenching and unclenching in my hair.

"Oh, God, faster, harder." Needy whines and groans poured from his mouth. I grabbed a handful of ass and sucked hard. With a howl more wolf than human, hot come spurted into my mouth. I sucked and licked until he quit jerking.

"Damn, Daniel, you have the best mouth!" He leaned over, arms braced on the counter, while his breathing slowed.

Fuck, I felt ready to explode right through my tight jeans. He pulled me up into a deep kiss. His hands worked my zipper down.

"Ahhh, fuck yeah, Mace!" His big hand closed around my cock and gave me a couple hard strokes. He lifted me to sit on the counter as if I weighed no more than a child. My breath caught, balls tightening with need.

He wasted no time and dove down on me hard. I arched up, a scream hovering in my throat. Just before I shot he pulled off.

"Fuck! Man, don't stop." I thrust my needy cock at him, pumping my hips.

His eyes narrowed slightly. I realized that must have sounded like an order. Shit, these guys were more prickly about taking orders.

"Please, Mace." I switched to begging. That worked, and he lazily stroked me. Fuck, I needed more.

He smiled down at me before leaning down to suck a nipple hard. One hand supported me behind so I could arch into him.

“Fuck, yeah, Mace! Uhn, yeah.”

I thrust up, reaching to rub myself on his hard belly but he stayed just out of reach.

“Son of bitch, Mace! You’re killing me.” He chuckled around my nipple, giving it a good hard pull and nip. Pain and pleasure shot through me. I threw my head back and cracked it against the wall. I didn’t care. He’d reduced me to incoherent moans and panting breaths.

I opened my eyes to his feral grin. He captured my gaze and holding it, finally bent to lick the swollen crown of my shaft. I thrust up and he pulled back. Fucking control freak. I gritted my teeth, determined to stay still. His lip twitched almost into a grin.

The tip of his tongue lashed my slit. I groaned but stayed still, waiting, praying he’d finish me.

He took the head in slowly, watching me, poised to pull away if I so much as twitched. I braced both hands behind me to keep from grabbing his head and shoving it down.

Seeming satisfied, he sucked me in with such force I thought my balls would turn inside out. Two strong pulls and I couldn’t hold back. My whole body arched then convulsed in spasms as my jiz shot down his throat. Every time he sucked I pulsed more seed, pleasure so intense it nearly hurt. Shouts turned to moans that died back to whimpers. Fuck, no one had ever dragged my orgasm out that long.

After what felt like forever, he let me go. I collapsed back on the counter, legs trembling and breathing like I’d just run a marathon.

Mace caught me as I slid off the counter and my legs gave out. That shit the doc gave must have kicked in with a vengeance. The room swung around for a few minutes before I got my legs under me.

“Thanks, Mace.”

He chuckled and yanked my jeans up, helping me zip them when my fingers proved unwilling to obey even that simple command.

“Never actually fucked a guy stupid before. Think you can walk?”

I snorted. “That shit of Doc’s packs a wallop. And I have no idea.” My words slurred slightly and I stumbled my first step. Mace took my elbow and steadied me down the hall.

All those cushions and bodies tossed around the room proved to be a fucking obstacle course. After I fell the second time, Mace heaved me over his shoulder. I’m sure there must have been all sorts of barbs and insults hurled at me but I couldn’t hold enough thought together to care.

I laid on something soft. Good, now if they’d leave me alone, I could get some sleep. Gentle hands took my wrist and looked in my eyes.

“Pulse is strong, he’ll be fine by morning. I didn’t think the medicine would hit him so hard. I’ll be more careful next time.” It sounded like Doc but my eyelids felt too heavy to lift. A warm weight curled along my back and a blanket covered me in drowsy darkness.



## Chapter 6

I jerked awake with someone's hand wandering across my ass. Fuck, it didn't feel like Mace. Tat arched a brow at me in challenge and kept up his exploration. I started to roll away and found myself yanked off the couch, onto the floor and under Tat before my mind caught up.

His lips pulled back in a feral snarl. One hand gripped my neck, the other looked poised to rip me apart. Fucking beasts. The moment I raised a hand his grip tightened and his growl grew louder.

"Relax and look away, Daniel. Now." I rolled my head to see Doc watching with a worried expression.

*Submit.* I hated these fuckers. I closed my eyes and let out a deep breath, hoping that would pass for going limp. Tat snorted. I felt the back of his claw as he started on my pants. My eyes flew open and I'm sure my anger showed.

"Tat, he submitted. Let him go. Isn't that the rule?" Doc's voice sounded soft and confident even though she looked worried. She kept giving me little shakes of her head. I got it all right. If I didn't let this fucking beast paw me, he'd tear me apart. No fucking way would I let him touch me.

If she'd looked worried before, now she looked downright freaked. Tat popped the button on the top of my jeans and started on the zipper. That did it. I'd had several years of self-defense training. I didn't go for his face, though. I went for his balls, hard.

He yowled like a cat in heat but instead of jerking back, his hand tightened around my throat, nearly crushing it. I yanked harder and aimed my other hand for his nose. It never connected. He caught it and damn near ripped my arm off slamming it to the ground. His growls echoed around the suddenly quiet room. Death clawed deep into my neck.

“Tat!”

At the command, he eased up a bit, but didn’t let me go.

Mace towered over us. He looked from my loose zipper to Tat and back. “Did you miss me saying he wasn’t available to the pack? As long as he puts that brain of his to work making life better around here, hands off!”

Tat snarled and shoved off me. He turned to stand toe to toe with Mace. “The little human shit challenged me. I have a right to take him down.”

“Really? I clearly heard Doc say he’d submitted. You know the rules.”

Tat puffed up. “He struck at me!”

Mace’s chuckle sounded downright mean. “Yeah, we all heard you screaming like a little girl. You made your point. Let him up. Doc, get Brainiac bandaged so he can get to work on our generator.” He snarled the words into Tat’s face. “I’m looking forward to some God damn lights and running water. Aren’t you?”

Hawk and Slade took a stand on either side of Mace. I couldn’t see Tat’s face from my place on the floor but I did see the tension in his back. The way he rocked on his feet, I thought for a minute he might attack.

Tat finally looked away and dropped his head. “Yeah, sure.” He didn’t even bother looking at me before stalking off to the breakfast line. Fuck, that was close.

Doc helped me up under Mace’s angry stare. He grabbed my arm hard as I started past. “Do not ever strike at one of us again. Understand?”

My jaw nearly bounced off the floor. I nearly get my throat ripped out and I’m at fault? My face must have given away my thoughts.

“If it resists, we subdue it. That could get you killed. Unless you really think you can take one of us?” He sounded so cold, hard, angry cold. Those inhuman eyes glittered.

When he growled low, I realized I was staring at him in shock. How could this be the gentle lover who’d given me more than one mind-blowing orgasm? I dropped my gaze and gave him a nod. I didn’t dare say a word or I’d likely get the shit kicked out of me, again. Fucking beasts.

\* \* \*

Doc took me to the ladies' room to clean up my newest injuries. It had a wood burner in the corner. Warm heaven!

"Daniel, what the hell were you thinking? He could have killed you."

"Maybe something like I didn't want to get fucked by him?" I glared at her as she wiped gently at the blood on my neck.

"He wouldn't have gone much further. He knows the rules."

Birds could have made nests in my mouth. "Oh, my bad. Next time I'll just let him feel me up. Yeah, fucking never. Unlike some of your women, I won't ever let whatever beast takes a fancy drag me off. Fuck me like some cheap whore."

For a moment, I thought she'd slap me. "It's not like that, and they aren't animals."

"No? Could have fooled me. Fucking beasts."

"No, they aren't! They're men who got sick with a terrible virus. It's not their fault and they're doing the best they can."

For the second time that morning, I just stared at her in blank amazement. "You have got to be fucking kidding me. Rabid dogs are just sick, but that doesn't mean I'll let one bite me."

"Daniel, most of these men were good men before, but now they've got a whole new set of programming they have to learn to deal with. They're like kids learning not to throw temper tantrums."

"Kids with fucking sharp claws and fangs. And they won't learn a fucking thing if you let them get away with it. They can start by learning to keep their fucking paws to themselves!"

"I'd appreciate it if you watched your language." She glared at me before continuing. "They bond with each other through touch, Daniel. Asking them not to touch you is like putting a rabbit in front of a greyhound and expecting it not to chase it."

"Greyhounds kill the rabbit when they catch it, Doc. How long before they rip any one of us to shreds?"

She shook her head, not willing to hear what I said. I leaned up against the sink studying the good Doc. "How long have you been with these... guys?"

She raised her chin. "I worked at the quarantine facility they were brought to. Mace, Slade, Hawk, Vegas and Cowboy, they came in together. I watched them go through the change. Saw what it did to the men they were." She took a deep breath. "They were different from the start. If one lost it the others were there to put him back together. When everything finally went all to hell the powers that be, or what was left of them, ordered them all killed. I couldn't do it. Not to them. They'd already shown they could control themselves. So I let them out."

Fuck me, no way. She let them loose? Crazy bitch.

"They saved my life, along with a couple others from the facility."

Her steady gaze bore into me. "Something drove Mace and the others who followed him. In the months it took to get here, we helped dozens of survivors escape the cities. A few joined us, including some infected men. They don't want to be mindless animals. They just need someone to show them how to control it."

"Yeah, well while you were playing footsie, I watched men tearing their wives and children apart to dine on their bloody flesh. What about the women chased down and raped to death? Huh? They are fucking brutal animals. No matter how you dress them up."

She shoved me off and drew herself up to glare back at me. "Maybe if someone had tried to help them that wouldn't have happened."

My laughter sounded strained even to me. "Guess you didn't hear about the quarantine camps? Yeah, we tried. They broke out and Armageddon happened. Better if they'd all been shot."

Her look could've peeled paint. "Even Mace? Or Slade? How can you say that?"

Patty poked her head in. "You okay? We got stuff to do."

I arched a brow at Doc. She finished bandaging my neck without a word, her lips pursed in a tight, angry line.

\* \* \*

I didn't see Mace at lunch. In fact, Tat and Slade were missing too. I stuck close to Patty and Lori. Hopefully, that would keep the beasts at a distance.

I had only eaten half my thin soup when someone shoved my face in it. Hot soup splattered all over me, Patty, and the woman across from me. Fucking beast.

"You think you're so much better than us, Brainboy? You're just a fucking weakling." Fang and his close buddy, Spike, snickered from behind me. Fucking bullies.

The woman across from me gave me a little shake of her head. I swallowed down my pride and just wiped up the mess and stood to leave.

"Hey, we're talking to you!" Spike shoved me before I even got my feet under me. I crashed into the table, causing spilled bowls all over. They all glared at me. Fuck, like it was my fault!

"Fang, Spike, shove off. Now." Hawk might have been the shortest beast at just 6' but he was broad as a pro tackle. His relaxed tone and attitude seemed at odds with his close-cropped fire red hair. The yellow glow of his eyes held the faintest tint of green.

For a minute I thought Fang would challenge Hawk, but a cocked brow from Hawk sent him scowling off. "Get a move on. Better have something to show by the time Mace gets back."

I didn't miss the implied threat in his soft voice. Covered with broth, I headed for the door.

\* \* \*

Several hours later, Fang and Spike sauntered into the generator building. Son of a bitch! What now? I kept my head down and focused getting the timing set. We had to turn the engine by hand or risk busting it when we started up the boiler. Valves had to fire and exhaust at the right times just like with a gas engine. Steam packed a hell of a punch when done right.

It took all my self-control to ignore the insults the two sent my way. The door opened and more beasts joined us. Didn't they have something better to do?

Apparently not.

We'd almost got it set when Fang decided to get involved. He grabbed the gear and yanked as I yelled, "Stop! Fucking son of a bitch! You nearly broke it!" In my anger I completely forgot he could not only break solid iron but shred me in a heartbeat.

In an instant he jumped me. Claws raked across my side and shoulder as he spun me to the ground. Loud growls and howls filled the building, deafening me to what Lori kept trying to yell at me.

Twisting as I fell, I rolled to put some distance between us. I sucked a breath and screamed it back out when his claws bit deep into my thigh. My jeans shredded under them. I kicked back, landing a good one on his jaw. A kick slammed me into the engine, driving all my breath out.

He followed with a kick to my head that rattled my teeth and damn near broke my jaw. I wrapped my arms over my head only to have him almost rip one from its socket. Blood poured down my arm from five deep claw marks. I curled into a ball, trying to protect myself as best I could. Claws raked deep across my ribs. A wave of dizziness swept over me. With sudden clarity, I knew I was going to die and there wasn't a damn thing I could do about it.

A roar shook the rafters and someone yanked Fang off me. I drew a shuddering breath. Mace!

"Damn it, little human. Are you too stupid to live? All you had to do was submit. God damn stupid." Mace stood over me, fists clenched at his side so hard blood welled under his claws.

This was my fault? Fucking beasts! I guess I whispered that last. Mace squatted in front of me. "I don't think I heard you right."

Something inside me broke. The man I was fucking didn't give a shit I was broken and bleeding. Darkness edged into my vision as cold crept up my body, dulling

the screaming pain in every bleeding gouge. Every shiver pulled a whimper from my lips.

"Mace, oh God, there's too much blood. He's going into shock. He could bleed out if we don't get it stopped, now! I just hope he doesn't have any internal injuries." That sounded like Doc. Someone tried to roll me to my back. My body screamed in pain. Or was that me screaming? I blinked hard, trying to focus on the face hovering over me. Doc?

"Get some pressure on those gouges. Blankets, warm water and my sewing kit."

Sharp burning pain shot from my thigh. I flinched but something strong held me tight. My eyes refused to focus but for a moment, I thought I saw Steve staunching the blood pulsing from my leg. I blinked. Not Steven, the beast, Mace. God, how I wished it was Steven!

"Daniel? Stay with me, Daniel. How are you doing?"

I couldn't seem to do more than moan when they shifted me again. Darkness closed in on my vision until it faded all the way to black.

\* \* \*

"Daniel?" Hands shook me roughly. "Daniel. Wake up. I need you to look at me. How's your head?"

I blinked slowly. "Hurts. Leg's worse," I choked out.

"Follow my fingers." For the next eternity, she fired questions at me when all I wanted to do was rest. And get warm.

"Cold." A shudder wracked me and pain radiated from every cut and bruise. Something burning hot slid up against me. I rolled my head to see. Mace! What the fuck was he doing?

Guess I said that out loud, too.

"Getting you warm, stupid little human. You nearly got yourself killed."

Was that worry in his voice? Fuck him. I turned away, refusing to look at him. I'd have pushed him away if I had the strength.

Finally, Doc gave me some of that magic whiskey and sweet oblivion claimed me.



## Chapter 7

Pain pulled me from sleep. A bit of déjà vu struck me. Aching ribs, bruises everywhere only this time it was way worse. And my leg throbbed. "Fuck, not again!" My voice sounded whiny and thin.

Mace rose up on his elbow to look down at me. I was back in his bed. Great. Just fucking great. "Stop fighting with those who can kill you and this won't happen again."

Slowly I turned my head and glared at him. "The fucking bastard ruined hours of work and could have busted parts we don't have replacements for. Excuse me for trying to stop him."

Mace's eyes narrowed dangerously. Cold fear gripped me as hard as the first time I'd seen him. I turned away and almost managed to roll over without groaning. Might not be so bad if he did kill me. At least I wouldn't hurt any more.

"All you had to do was submit, go limp and offer your throat. He would have stopped."

I looked over my shoulder. "You're fucking kidding me! Go limp and offer my throat? To a fucking monster that's bent on ripping it out? No fucking way." His face got even colder and he shoved off the bed.

I nearly died and he wanted to blame it on me? Fuck him. Getting pissed might not be smart but I hurt too fucking much to care. I needed to find a way out of here.

Shortly, Doc followed Mace back in. I sighed with relief to see a mug in her hand but she didn't give it to me right away. She started with my leg. I levered up to see four parallel lines of stitches across my thigh. No wonder the fucking thing hurt.

Mace started in with the ointment on my numerous bruises. Shit, I hated him even touching me. I grabbed for the jar and winced with pain as he jerked it back. "I can do that myself, thank you."

“Keep talking to me like that and you’ll have a new set of bruises, little human.” The angry growl accompanied his words.

Why did his anger hurt so fucking much? It’s not like I cared what he thought. I shut my eyes and gritted my teeth. Despite his angry sounds, his touch felt light and gentle, almost a caress. Even his tone softened. “You have to learn not to challenge and to submit, Daniel. It is our way, our instincts.”

“Yeah, well, my human instincts tell me to fight like hell when threatened. Or run if I have to. This whole submitting thing, not even on the radar.”

“Then you will keep getting hurt.”

“And you won’t get your fucking generator running or a still to make ethanol for my truck.”

For several long moments, no one said anything.

“Daniel, you have to learn our way. Soon enough you will be like us, after you change.”

I rolled to my back and stared at him. “I’m immune, asshole. I will never be like you.”

He shook his head. “All men become rabid, pack or die.”

I snorted rudely. “A few of us didn’t and never will, Mace. I was exposed same as everyone else. Never gonna be a fucking beast, ever.”

The confused look on his face struck me as funny. I bit back on the urge to laugh in his face.

He looked to Doc. “Is that true? He won’t change?”

She sighed hard and took the time to finish re-bandaging my leg. “I would say it has to be if he hasn’t changed after all these years. And, Mace, human instinct is to fight or flee. It’s not a female thing but a human one. Takes time and trust, Mace.”

I snorted again. “Hate to ruin things, but anyone who knows me will tell you I have authority issues. Which is why I ran my own company. Don’t expect me to suddenly learn how to sit down and shut up.”

Mace’s brows drew down. “You led your own pack?”

"That's one way of looking at it, yeah. Had eleven employees just before the plague hit."

"Huh." He didn't elaborate, just finished treating my bruises.

Doc handed me the mug of super whiskey. Yes! "Today you need to rest. You lost a lot of blood. If you have to stand, do it slowly. I have something else for you. Should help you heal faster." She pulled out a syringe, cleaned a spot on my thigh and shot it straight into my vein. Felt like fucking fire in a shot!

"What the fuck is that?"

"Blood plasma from the guys. When China came to us, she was near death. It was a Hail Mary pass but it worked."

"You got to be fucking kidding me. And since I'm immune, which technically women aren't, did it ever occur to you I might have a reaction?"

She gave me the haughty Doctor look.

I'd seen that look too many times to be intimidated. "Hey, my mother's a surgeon, my dad was a endocrinologist. I do know something about the human body." I gave her the look right back. Shit, I felt pissy this morning.

She shrugged. "I hadn't really thought about it. But I gave you a shot last night and you're fine now, so I assume it's all right."

Mace tossed clothes at me. "Get dressed. Breakfast time." He leaned a pair of crutches against the bed.

"Don't try walking on that leg or you'll pull the stitches out and you could bleed out." From her tone and the sharp look she shot Mace, I got the feeling Doc didn't think I should be getting out of bed.

Just sitting up wore me out. Head in my hands, I sat on the edge of the bed, hoping to find the strength to stand. Mace slid the night jar toward me. I drew a breath. At least I wouldn't have to drag myself down the hall. My first attempt to stand failed, my bad leg screaming its protest. Strong hands reached down to steady me on to my feet, balance me while I relieved my overfull bladder.

Without a word, he helped me dress, carefully avoiding my numerous cuts. He urged me to sit. "Daniel, rest a moment. I'll take care of your socks and shoes. You shouldn't bend over and that leg needs to stay straight."

What the fuck? Now he was worried about me? Shit, he sounded tender even.

"I know it will be hard, but you have to make it across the hall on your own. Show as little weakness as possible."

Fuck, that really was worry on his face. Show no weakness? "I thought I was supposed to be submissive?"

He shook his head. "Submissive, not weak. They aren't the same. You'll spend the day resting where I can see you, on the platform." He leaned up and brushed a kiss across my lips.

*What the fuck?*

He offered me the crutches and steadied me until I got set.

\* \* \*

The journey across the gathering room felt like a fucking marathon, through landmines. Crutches, cushions and plushy rugs do not make a good combination. Cold sweat beaded my forehead and upper lip by the time I got to the platform. Nausea roiled my stomach and my hands shook. How the hell was I going to get up on that fucking platform?

"God damn it, Daniel. I said rest! You shouldn't be walking with all that painkiller in you!" Doc grabbed one arm and Slade took the other. Between them, I found myself sprawled on the couch with my leg propped up in no time. The minute I landed I closed my eyes, not quite asleep but not fully awake either. A loud whistle jerked me back to reality.

"Fang, Spike!" With no more than their names growled out, Mace had them running to face him. The rest of the hall grew quiet and still.

"You will take Brainiac's place today. I want that generator running by tonight."

I sat up straighter. Was he serious?

Fang and Spike shared a worried look. "Ah, Mace, we can't, um we don't..."

"Don't what? Want to follow my orders?" Standing on the edge of the platform, he towered over them. The cold anger in his voice came through loud and clear.

"No, Mace, it's just that, you know, we don't know about that shit." Fang sounded more than a little worried.

"I see. Yet you felt fine messing with 'that shit' and tearing into the one person who does know." Mace's voice grew even colder.

Fang raised his chin in defiance. "The prick yelled and jumped at me. A clear challenge."

Mace jumped down and grabbed Fang by the throat. His angry growl put his sharp white fangs inches from Fang's face. "Pack can challenge. Does he look like pack?" Mace turned to look at me, shoving Fang forward and nearly tripping him on the platform. "Do you see any claws? Fangs? No? Because he's human! Like the women, and therefore you broke pack law."

Mace tossed him on his ass hard enough he skidded a good foot across the floor. A few muttered protests and cutting jibes about my manhood rumbled through the room.

Mace jumped back on the platform and the room grew quiet. "No, he's not a woman. What he is, is the human that knows how to give us lights and water and fuel for our trucks. A talent I value. Treat him under the same rules as a new woman. Anyone else lays a claw on him and I will consider it a personal challenge." Several gasps and growls sounded around the room. Fang's face paled and he looked down when Mace turned his gaze on him.

Damn, I'd really hoped to see Mace rip him a new one. But at least he'd stuck up for me, sort of. Because of what I could do. I was a fool if I thought he might have any other feelings for me, no matter how gentle he could be.

"Until our brainiac heals up, Fang and Spike, you two will be his muscle. And you will teach him about our ways just as we do with the other humans. You are responsible for his health."

Oh, fuck that. Like I wanted to spend any time with those two jerks! Mace turned to me with an expectant look, just daring me to say one word. For once, I thought better of opening my big mouth. I closed my eyes and let the drugs pull me back under.

Most of the day I spent sleeping. After helping me navigate the cushion and rug minefield to the men's room, Spike actually cleared me a path. Fang snarled at me every chance he got. I wondered just how much trouble they'd get in if Fang lost it again. Might not matter to me. I had a feeling next time he'd finish me.

Mace nudged me awake about dinnertime so he could claim his normal space. Tat chose the end of the couch tonight with Alpha next to him. Something in the way he watched me had changed. For better or worse I couldn't say. Then again, maybe the super whiskey had me seeing things that weren't there. I'd been high most of the day thanks to Doc.

Hawk settled next to me instead of the other guy. I'd learned his name was Cowboy. Doc made sure my leg stayed elevated and one of the women brought me dinner. It should have felt good to be waited on. I hated that shit. I hated being weak. Maybe ordering Fang and Spike around tomorrow might make up for it. Yeah, I've got a little mean streak. A stupid mean streak, as I knew anything I did to them would come back to bite me, literally.

## Chapter 8

Doc had me on the couch for another day and then I had to stay sitting while directing my work crew. Patty and Lori understood my directions easily. Spike at least didn't try to screw up stuff. He very grudgingly helped me around if I needed. Fang on the other hand took every opportunity to fuck with me. And he didn't seem to care if we got that generator running or not.

Several other beasts went out of their way to mess with me. Stupid shit like bumping me into someone else or "tripping" so they shoved me into my breakfast or lunch. I lost count of how many times I'd been jostled while peeing. Felt like fucking high school where the gay geek just couldn't get a break.

Mace seemed tender and firm by turns. While helping Doc change bandages he treated me with care. During dinner on the couch, he paid little attention to me other than the constant stroking. Except for a report on the day's work, I kept pretty quiet. I might have an attitude but I'm not stupid. Keeping a low profile could keep me alive long enough to find a way out.

After a couple days, he insisted I sleep with him in his room. After all the petting, my cock ached for the release he could give me. What the hell was it with this not quite man? He could get me hard with just a look. In bed, he proved to be a considerate and consummate lover.

If the world hadn't gone to shit, Doc could make a fortune on that plasma shit she shot me up with. Within a week, I could walk short distances without crutches. By then we had the generator running, but lacked what we needed to hook up the compound. And parts for both a still and drilling rig. We'd be going out scrounging soon.

\* \* \*

Late that afternoon, Mace took Hawk, Tat and four others on patrol. They'd seen signs of rabids in the area and he wanted to either run them off or see if they could be brought into the pack. Apparently half the beasts here had joined him that way.

As soon as the pack had settled for dinner, I headed for a shower. Without Mace around, I didn't trust the others to leave me alone. Closing the door, I hurried to get the grunge of the day's work off me. Shit, warm water would be so nice. Deep in thought about finding and hooking up a tankless heater, I didn't hear Fang and Spike come in. Fuckers can move amazingly quiet when they want to.

I looked up from soaping my legs to find them staring at me. Fuck. From the look on their faces, I was in deep shit.

"What a pathetic piece of meat you got there, Brainboy." Fang pointed at my cold shrunken cock. Like I cared what he thought.

Hoping they'd give up if I didn't offer any fight, I kept my eyes down and my mouth shut. I had to turn to reach the chain to rinse so I could leave.

"Shit, Fang. Look at how he trembles. Scared little human." Spike's voice filled with derision. I felt very proud of how well I held my tongue. It would only start a fight to tell them I was freezing. OK, and a little afraid.

"Maybe he's actually learning his place."

Not trusting the reasonable sound of Fang's voice, I rinsed in record time.

"I think it's time for a test, don't you?"

Fuck, I didn't like the sound of that at all. Head down, I tried to slip by them to the towels. No such luck. Faster than a snake can strike, Spike grabbed my arm and twisted it behind my back before shoving me into the wall. That all too familiar choking cold settled in my gut. At least Spike didn't have a hard-on digging into me.

"What do you say, Brainboy? Got any orders for us? Something too heavy for a runt like you to move? Huh? Can't hear you." Fang's foul breath roiled my stomach when he jerked my head around to face him.

I kept my eyes down. These two were just spoiling for a fight. Fuck, I was in so much trouble.



"Well, well, Fang, I think he has learned a thing or two." Spike didn't let up on my arm so I knew they weren't done with me.

"We'd better make sure. Mace told us to teach him, right?" Fang's breath could have choked an elephant. Hadn't he ever heard of a toothbrush?

Spike's nasty laugh sent chills running down my spine. Fuck! One thing Fang had made perfectly clear, he'd love any excuse to finish tearing me apart. I closed my eyes and gritted my teeth to keep from saying something to set them off. Mace would be proud for a change.

I bit my cheek to keep quiet as Fang ran his claws down my back. Not hard enough to tear skin but not fun either. Pressing close to my side, he clawed the other one down my chest. I sucked in a breath and held my tongue. Fuck, the fucking son of a bitch kept going right on down to scrap a single claw along my flaccid cock. *Fuck, fuck, fuck. Got to keep quiet.*

"What's the matter, stupid Brainboy? Cat got your tongue?" Fang curled his claws around my balls.

"More like wolf's got him by the balls!" Spike snickered.

Fucking bastard! One move and I'd sing soprano the rest of my life. A very short life cause I doubted he'd stop there. Now my shivers had as much to do with terror as cold. And the smug fuckers could no doubt smell it.

The sense of relief when he released my sack was short-lived. The sound of his zipper crawled up my spine like fingers on a chalkboard. He jerked me out of Spike's hold and with hands on both my shoulders, shoved me down. "Kneel, brainboy!"

Like I had a choice? I resisted just enough to keep from smashing my knees on the concrete. The still healing cuts on my thigh screamed in pain. I had to play for time and pray someone else came in, or this would end badly, bloody badly.

"Good boy." He stroked my head like a dog. "Now suck my cock like the good little piece of shit you are."

Fuck, so much for playing for time. If I gave in now it would only get worse. I spoke softly but firmly. "No."

Claws dug into my shoulders. Fucking beast!

"Fucking little shit! I'm beginning to think you like getting the crap beat out of you. Now suck me good!" He yanked on my shoulders, wrenching my thigh wound and gouging into my flesh. Warm, wet blood trickled down my back.

"Go fuck yourself." If I was getting a beating, I might as well earn it. Sure enough, he slammed me onto the floor, his snarling face just inches from mine. Knowing it was coming, I kept my head from slamming into the floor, just barely. He pinned both my arms at my sides, claw tips pricking into skin.

"Fucking little shit, think you're too good for me?"

"Well, maybe if you brushed your teeth once in a while..." I didn't have to fake my disgusted look.

Growling like a rabid dog, he lunged at my throat with his fangs bared. Fuck. Teeth closed on my windpipe. Fuck, I didn't want to die like this. I bit back on my pride and turned my head, giving him full access to my throat. Like Mace had taught me that first night. Relaxing proved to be much harder but with a couple shaky exhales, I managed. For a few tense moments, he held onto my throat, growling the whole time.

Finally he got off me. I took a deep breath, thinking it was over. Lightning fast, he flipped me to my stomach and yanked my naked ass up. Fucking son of a bitch! I scrambled to get away. Claws bit into my hips yanking me to him as he thrust. Fuckin A! His hard cock slammed against me and slid between my ass cheeks and legs. Full-blown panic set in, but he held me too tight for me to move, much less fight back.

"Fang, let him up, man. He submitted. You know the rules. Even Tat will have your ass." Spike actually sounded worried.

Still snarling, Fang shoved me hard against the floor, but stood. I didn't dare move. *Please God, let it be over!*

"Just remember this next time you even think about giving me orders, you little shit!" Drops of his spit splattered against my bare back.

They'd been gone several minutes before I got the courage to move. My thigh screamed in pain when I tried to stand. It took two tries to lever my way up on my shaking legs. Anger, fear and humiliation warred in my head. Fucking beasts!

I grabbed a towel to wipe off the blood from my hips and shoulders. Fuck, what was I gonna tell Mace? Not the truth, he'd just get pissed at me for getting hurt again. I choked back something that felt uncomfortably like a sob. Shit, Fuck. Why the hell did I care what he thought of me?

The noise from the main room filled the hallway. I leaned my head against the wall. I couldn't do it, couldn't sit with those monsters like nothing happened. My stomach turned at the mere thought. I whirled and fled as fast as my bad leg could take me back to the bathroom. Bile rose in my throat but I held onto it until I reached the toilet. I puked so hard I thought my stomach would come up.

For several long minutes, I just sat there, curled up on the floor. Fuck, I'd nearly been raped. Old memories I thought I'd long gotten over rose to torment me. Never again would I let someone treat me like that. I'd promised myself and I don't break my promises. I had to find a way out of here. Claws clicking on the floor warned me a beast approached. I scrambled up and head down, headed for Mace's room.

I curled up under the covers, still shivering from cold and the letdown from the fight. My thigh ached and the new claw marks stung. Somehow, I slipped into sleep.

\* \* \*

I jerked up, covered in sweat. Disoriented, for a few moments I thought I was back in the bathroom with Fang and Spike. I took a few shuddering breaths as one hand soothed over the aching in my leg.

"Another bad one?" Mace lay propped on one elbow watching me.

I wished I could believe the concern I saw in his face. Then he trailed a finger over my chest and circled my nipple.

"I know how to make it better." The sultry sound of his voice and arousing touch warred with the knot twisting my gut.

I twisted away to hang my legs over the side. Morning wood, that's what made my cock hard, not desire for this monster. Only I knew in my heart that wasn't it. Something sounding almost like a sob wheezed out of my tight chest. I didn't know how much more of this I could take.

"Daniel, are you OK?" Mace's voice sounded really worried. Could he be that good at faking it? Shit, one minute I had the concerned lover and the next the alpha wolfman ready to rip me a new one if I didn't toe his line.

The touch of his hand on my back sent shivers through me, half revulsion, half desire. No way could he miss the new set of claw marks. "I'm fine. Just, ah, got a lot to do today is all. Need to get going." Part of me hoped he'd call me on my obvious lie. But after a long moment, he got up to dress.

"Yeah, we've got a lot of stuff to find." The alpha made an early appearance. "Grab a quick breakfast."

I avoided his gaze as I dressed. I could feel him looking at me but I really didn't want to talk about it. Not now. Not knowing he'd make it all my fault, my weakness.

"Are you sure you're OK? Anything happen I need to know about?"

*Like your fuck toy almost getting raped by the very beasts you forced to work with me?*  
"Nope." I shrugged on a shirt and ducked out the door as fast as possible.

\* \* \*

Fuck, facing Fang and Spike in the main room proved harder than I thought. But I wasn't going to give the satisfaction of seeing me cower. I limped past them as if nothing had happened. A low growl from Fang almost undid me.

"Daniel! Where the hell are your crutches?" Doc's tirade provided a much needed distraction. She hustled me to a seat and served me breakfast, all the time grumbling about how I didn't take care of myself. It made me smile. At least someone here cared about me.

Breakfast didn't sit well with Fang and Spike circling around. I couldn't wait to get out of there. Spending the day away from those two sounded like a fucking vacation!

\* \* \*

Halfway to the truck, Fang came up from behind me. Spike flanked me on the other side. Fuck, I hadn't thought they'd be going.

"I bet you can't wait to snuggle up between me an' Spike, Brainboy." His lips twisted in a sick grin. He laughed and kicked one damn crutch out from under me. Spike snickered as I struggled to regain my balance. Then that fucker kicked the other one and I went down.

I braced for the kicks sure to follow. I heard the door slam and scuffed black biker boots stepped past me.

"I hope you can keep on your feet better out there, Brainiac. I'd hate for one of us to have to carry you." Mace's deep voice rumbled straight to my cock, like always. His words flayed my already tender ego. Fucking son of bitch, did he really think I was that clumsy? Did he care?

Snide comments and jeering laughter swirled around me. I should be used to it by now but it still roiled my already upset stomach. Couldn't the fuckers just leave me be? I climbed to my feet, careful not to look Mace in the eye. Mace grunted and waved us all toward my four-door truck.

Mace stood by the driver's door, and Hawk took shotgun, leaving me to squeeze between Fang and Spike. I couldn't do it. Not today. Not with them. Not after last night and this morning and the day before and... I could go on. I turned back.

"Where the hell do you think you're goin'?" Mace turned with his hand on the door.

"Ah, I forgot something." I kept going. I'd gotten pretty damn fast on those crutches.

Mace's irritation ratcheted up a few notches. "Forget it and get your ass in the truck, Brainiac. Unless you're looking for another beating?"

I turned and for once looked him right in the eye. "Go ahead, beat the shit out of me, again." I threw my arms out wide. "It's not like I can stop you. Being a weak little human and all." The growing crowd sniggered. A few added crude comments but I

ignored them. "Or better yet, just shoot me and get it over with. I'm done bowing to you sick fuckers." A shocked silence followed. Mace stood there, mouth open, staring with the rest of them. I yanked the door open so hard it bounced off the wall.

I had no idea where I was going. I just had to get away from there.

## Chapter 9

I almost made it to his room before he caught me and slammed my back into the wall. "And just what's so fucking important?" A deep growl rumbled under his words.

"I think I might have left a little self-respect under the bed. Or maybe some of my pride hasn't been flushed down the drain yet." Apparently Fang had knocked all sense of self-preservation out of me.

"You don't really want to challenge me, little human. Get in the truck, Brainiac." He towered over me, fangs bared. His voice took on that tone, the one that said blood would soon flow.

I shook my head. "I can't. I can't fucking do this any more." I stared at the worn toe of my work boots, braced for the blow that had to be coming.

He grabbed my chin and forced my head up. Instead of rage I saw something else, something odd. His brows drew down into a frown and he just stared at me with that weird look. "Who hurt you?"

I shrugged and looked away. I couldn't tell him about it. His anger I could handle but his pity or disgust? No, not that.

"Someone hurt you, touched you, fucked with you. Even after I told them not to. Who was it?"

"Do you mean metaphorically or physically?" I wanted to tell him *he* had. Every time he treated me like a fucking possession in front of his pack. Every time he held me, acted like he cared. I couldn't find the words.

He tilted his head and stared with the most confused look. He shook it off and like a dog after a bone, dug harder. "Was it Fang and Spike?"

"All of it, no. Most of it, yeah. Shit, I feel like I'm back in fucking high school getting my face shoved into the locker between classes or gym where the jocks snapped me with towels or..." My throat suddenly seemed too full for words to pass.

He stared, brows drawn down, lips pursed in thought. "I had a feeling those new bruises weren't from being clumsy. Why didn't you tell me?" He had the audacity to sound hurt. Fuck him!

"Are you fucking kidding me? Think I'd run to you like some little snot-nosed kid whining about the school bully? Besides, you'd just yell at me again. 'Too fucking stupid to live.' Like I asked for it." Now that I'd started it all just exploded out. "It's not like you give a shit. As long as I keep working and let you fuck me, it's all good, right?"

Confronting him in front of the entire group wasn't the best idea. Right now, I didn't care. Even a painful death sounded better than living like this even one more minute. Shit, sooner or later one of them would lose it anyway and I'd be dead. I'd let fear keep me in a destructive relationship once. Never again.

"Why would I yell at you? Unless you provoked it."

"Fuck, Mace, my mere existence provokes half your so-called pack! Ask them, why do they think it's so fucking funny to shove me into walls, doors, even the fucking urinal? Or knock these fucking crutches out from under me? Huh? What the fuck did I do to them? Not a God damn thing!" My voice had raised to a pretty good yell now. Inner rage fueled my courage in the face of the growing rumbles of anger around us. "I tried, Mace. I really did, tried to keep my head down, mouth shut and not challenge anyone. Even though it goes against everything I am and makes me feel like a fucking coward."

Mace's brows drew down and he let up on my throat.

"And last night, you'd have been proud, Mace," my voice sound strained even to me. "I just wanted a shower. Didn't do a God damn thing to provoke them. At least not until Fang shoved me down to suck his fucking cock! But in the end, I rolled over like a good little bitch and almost got raped for it. Never again." Righteous anger overrode



my humiliation. I leaned forward, drew myself up and challenged them all. "The next one of you beasts touches me, be prepared, I won't fucking cower any more."

Eyes dark and stormy, Mace spoke coldly. "Are you so tired of living?"

"This hell isn't living, Mace. I tried to tell you but you don't fucking listen. I ran my own damn company for a reason. I don't take orders well. I don't back down and cower, ever!" He'd backed away enough I could slip away. Or so I thought. Just one of his hands pinned me to the wall before I'd taken more than half a step.

His grip softened and he turned to look around the room. "Did I not say to treat him like the women?"

Tat snorted. "You may fuck him like a woman but he's not. Although he's as weak as one."

Mace looked right at Tat as he spoke. "Didn't you get it before? He's human, just like our women. And like them, he doesn't have our instincts or claws or brute strength. Would any of you treat one of our human women like you have him? Ambush one in the shower and force them to suck you? We protect what's ours or we're no better than rabids."

Somehow he knew which ones had bullied me. His feral gaze bore into each one until they dropped their heads. Even Spike looked guilty and maybe just a bit sorry. Fang shot me an angry glare before dropping his gaze. A not so subtle nod from Mace and Slade knocked Fang on his ass and held him down with his large booted foot.

"It may be easy for you to see him as female, Mace, but to the rest of us he's just another male that needs to learn his place. It's just too fucking bad he's not strong enough to defend himself. Not the kind of mate a strong leader would choose."

Even I couldn't miss the insult and challenge in Tat's tone.

Mace stalked forward, shucking his leather jacket on the way. Tat waited with a slight smile on his face, like he'd planned this all along. He shook out his arms and a tense circle formed around the two men.

I couldn't see Mace's face but whatever Tat saw on it wiped the smile from his face. Hawk, Cowboy and another I assumed was Vegas formed a loose circle behind Mace. Slade kept Fang firmly pinned to the ground.

Around them, beasts shuffled around, most bunching behind either Mace or Tat. Taking sides. A few, mostly younger beasts and some women, stayed where they were. A number of other women, Den-mom, Doc, Patty and Lori included, joined Mace's group. I didn't need to count to see that Mace's side outnumbered Tat's. The painted beast looked good and pissed as he watched them shuffle around.

So fast their moves blurred together, they clashed. Blood flew, growls and howls filled the air. In minutes it was over. Tat lay face down. Mace ground one knee into his back and his arms wrapped around Tat's neck, ready to snap it.

"Yield or die, Tat." Slowly Tat's body relaxed. Mace released his hold and Tat bared the side of his throat. Mace raked his claws across it hard enough to leave a trail of blood. "I won't tolerate you causing more trouble with my chosen. You or your groupies even think about touching him again, I will end you all. If you can't deal with it, leave, now."

He shoved off Tat and stood. Blood ran from clawed welts all over him and several deep bites. He surveyed Tat's supporters. To a man, they lowered their gaze, slumped their shoulders and turned their heads, offering their necks.

Tat looked little better and when he stood, favored one leg. Slade let Fang up. The bastard smirked at me. Seconds later, he lay bleeding from long gashes in his thigh.

Mace towered over him. Blood dripped from his claws onto Fang's face. "I told you to *teach* our Brainiac. His health was your responsibility, and you failed. Worse than failed. You took advantage, caused him trouble and pain. If I didn't know Tat had encouraged you, you'd be bleeding to death here and now."

White-faced, Fang let go of his bleeding leg and rolled to his back, stomach and throat bared. Completely vulnerable. "Forgive me, Mace. Won't happen again." The fear in his voice sounded sweet to my ears.

Mace growled, then slammed his boot toe into Fang's side hard enough to break bone and send him sliding across the floor. "Apology accepted. I won't be so generous again." A cold, feral, grin twisted Mace's lean face as he looked around the room. "To anyone."

Mace swaggered back to me, grasped my head and kissed me hard. Fuck, my cock leaped to attention. It didn't care that he was showing off and laying claim to me. He jerked me tight, his hard cock grinding into the hollow of my hip. Shit, he made me so hot I could almost forget our audience. I just wanted to rip his clothes off and get my hands and mouth on that monster hard-on.

He kissed his way around the side of my face. I stroked his back and ass. His back felt wet through his ripped shirt. "Fuck, Mace, you're bleeding all over me." I pulled blood-covered hands up for him to see.

He shrugged. "Doc, check out Tat and Fang. I'm going to shower and then we have scavenging to do." He slipped his hand under my arm and urged me toward the shower.

\* \* \*

As soon as he'd kicked the door closed, Mace sagged against it. He pressed his hand over his blood-soaked side.

"Mace?" I pried at his hand to get a look. "Fuck! Mace!" Blood still oozed from the deep gouge in his side. Tat had gotten him pretty good. The pain he'd hidden showed plainly on his face.

"It'll heal. Help me get in the shower, Daniel." Starting at one big rip in his shirt, he tore it in two while crossing the room. His jeans hadn't fared much better. Fucking son of a bitch, the cold light of the bathroom showed just how badly Tat had torn him up. And he'd still won.

Once I had him stripped he leaned against the wall and pulled the chain, letting cold water sluice over him. Seeing him weak like this shocked the hell out of me. "Fuck, Mace. He tore the shit out of you. We should call Doc to sew you up."

Mace shook his head. "I'll heal, Daniel."

"Is this one of those 'show no weakness' things?"

Mace chuckled thinly and nodded yes. "Really, I don't need Doc. This is nothing compared to the first time we tangled. We couldn't either one stand without help. Frankly, I'm surprised he gave up so quickly."

I hazarded a guess. "I think he didn't like the numbers of your supporters."

Mace nodded. "Could be. He knows if he gets me down he'll have to go through my team to kill me or take the pack. He already tried to take Hawk and lost badly."

"Hawk? The little guy?"

This time his laugh held real mirth. "Amazes me how everyone underestimates him. Honest? He could take me anytime he wanted. Slade too. They just don't want it."

He rinsed while I ripped his shirt into strips to bandage him. Fuck, even with him torn up, his cock jutted out hard and ready. He watched me with that hungry look. His hands stroked me the whole time I wrapped his worst injuries. Soft, sexy growls echoed beneath my fingers. By the time I'd finished, my hard-on matched his.

He pulled me into a kiss, a last-man-standing kiss. Mouths parted and tongues danced. Moans of pleasure flowed between us. He stroked down my body, grasped the hem of my T-shirt and caressed it up my body. My lips felt cold and lonely without his, until he put his to good use sucking one of my nipples stiff.

Careful to avoid his cuts, I stroked his chest, tweaked his nipples into hard points before traveling down to his jutting cock. "Ummm, yeah, Daniel." Firm strokes along his length, my thumb falling into the dip where his cock head met the shaft. His breath caught and he turned to fall back against the wall for support.

I licked circles around one nipple. Sinking slowly to the floor, I kissed my way around his bandages. His chest heaved with panted breaths. Precum beaded from the slit on his broad cock head. Fuck, that looked so tasty. I licked it off, savoring his salty musk.

"God, suck me. Please." He dropped his head back against the wall, eyes closed and lips seductively parted like some gorgeous porn star. I gave him one last lick before sucking him deep. He moaned, hips thrust off the wall.

"Hmm, yeah, deep, hard. Oh, shit! Daniel." He grasped my head with both hands, hips thrusting into my mouth.

I relaxed and sucked him deep as I could, swallowing around the thick head of his shaft. He tensed then shook with release. I swallowed pulse after pulse of hot jiz. I licked him clean while his breath settled back.

He offered me a hand to help me stand. My leg groaned in protest but I made it. I chuckled. "Quite the pair we make now, almost matching cuts and bruises."

He chuckled, softly traced around each claw mark Fang left before kissing it. He walked me back and back until my ass hit the counter. I propped a hip on the countertop, taking the weight off my bad leg.

Jerking my pants open, he freed my ready cock. The cool air sent erotic shivers up my body. He cupped me on his palm, lightly stroking. He claimed my mouth with a demanding kiss. Our tongues danced and my cock swelled even harder as he trailed kisses down my chest to suck my nipple hard.

"Uhggn, yeah!" I tangled my fingers in his hair and urged his head lower.

The tip of his tongue flicked across the head of my shaft. Pleasure shot through me. I braced one hand on the counter as he licked up and down my length, swirling around the head each time. My heart raced and my chest heaved trying to keep up.

"Ah, fuck, Mace. That's so fucking good." He sucked me deep. My hips shot up of their own accord. If Mace hadn't been holding me, I'd have fallen face first on the floor. He bobbed up, down sucking so hard I thought my balls would turn inside out. Strangled sounds came out when I tried to warn him I was about to shoot.

"Fuck!" I bucked hard into his mouth, sliding off the counter in the process. He sucked a few more waves of pleasure out of me. Collapsing back against the counter, I struggled to stay upright.

"You OK, Daniel?" A shit-eating grin covered Mace's face.

"Yeah, fucking great for a guy who just had his balls Hoovered out his cock. Fan-fucking-tastic." I smiled right back at him.

Mace chuckled, shaking his head. I stared in wonder at the emotion shining up from the depth of his odd eyes. For once, he didn't growl at me. He stretched and stared glumly at his clothes. "I think I need some fresh clothes."

"You hang here, I'll get them. Just as soon as my rubber legs start working." I groaned dramatically.

With a sly snicker, Mace teased, "Weak little human can't take a good fucking."

Fuck, he sounded so much like Steven just then. My heart clenched. I shoved up and limped to the door, intent on getting his clothes.

"Daniel, I was just joking." He sounded hurt, worried even.

I stopped and turned back to him, trying to find the words to explain feelings I barely acknowledged to myself. "I know. It just struck me, you've never teased me before. When we're alone like this it's like we're just two guys enjoying a good fuck. But as soon as we go out there, it's all different. You get so distant. Cold. It hurts."

Mace hugged my back to his chest. "I never want you to hurt. I don't remember how to treat a lover and still be a pack leader others respect."

I leaned into him. "Right, show no weakness. I guess I look weak to all of you."

I hadn't noticed the door slowly open. Hawk slipped in with an armload of clothes. "That may have been true but I've never seen anyone face Mace down like you just did. Trust me, weak is not what they're saying about you right now, Brainiac."

"Good. Finally others are seeing the inner strength you carry, Daniel. The strength I saw the first time you looked me in the eye and told me off."

I felt my jaw bounce off the floor. "Wait, then why all this 'learn to submit' shit?"

"Inner strength won't save your life against those like Fang or Tat. But it can earn you the same kind of respect Doc gets. Things will be different now, Daniel. And I'll try not to be so harsh."

Hawk snorted. "Yeah, right. You, my friend, need to be harsh or Tat will use it against us."

I nodded, deep in thought as I dressed. Could I deal with Mace being cold in public? Well, he wasn't cold exactly, but bossy, domineering, touchy-feely. If the others stopped harassing me, yeah, I thought I could live with that.

"I see your wheels turning." Mace pulled on his blood-spattered boots.

I shrugged. "It may suck but I do understand your need to be seen as strong. I, uh, will work harder to keep my mouth shut."

"Not if you're getting hurt or harassed again." Mace held up a hand to stop me from speaking. "When anyone comes at you, they're coming at me. I can't let that go."

Shit, I hadn't thought of it that way.

Hand on the doorknob, Hawk added, "Especially now that you've officially chosen him."

"Wait, what's that mean?"

"I claimed you as my chosen mate. No other can have you. Like Slade chose Doc."

Oh, fuck. "Uh, is that like being married or something? And don't I get a say?"

They both stared at me with blank looks. Hawk's lips moved as he repeated the word *married*.

"I guess, sort of. If married means you don't have sex with others," Mace offered hesitantly.

Fuck! And I'd just met the guy. Not to mention he didn't even ask. Fucking shotgun wedding.

Mace must have read my mind. "If you don't want to be with me, Daniel, I won't force you." He shrugged and grinned wickedly. "I might try to seduce you, but not force you."

Hawk started to protest but Mace cut him off. "He gets a choice, Hawk. I shouldn't have chosen him without his consent. I'll deal with the fallout."

Shit, if I refused him, he'd look weak, and Tat would just love that! Did I really want to refuse him? Never sleep with him again? Go back to the compound full of

horny women and two fuckhead guys? No. No fucking way. And as much as I hated to admit it, the thought of leaving Mace hurt. But did he feel the same?

"Is this because you like me, or just to protect me so you can use me? Cause the way you get mad and disgusted with me makes me wonder."

He winced as if I'd struck him. "I don't have to sleep with you to protect you or to get you to work for me. I was never mad at you for getting hurt. I was mad that you got hurt. I was mad at me, too, for not keeping you safe. It scared me, Daniel. You could have died. That's when I knew you meant something more to me. A lot more. I can't imagine not having you with me."

Well, fuck me sideways. He might as well have used the L word. "Oh. Well, OK then. Look, I don't know about the whole till death do us part thing but yeah, I like being with you, too. And if I'm not getting kicked around, it could work. Worth a shot anyway." A short burst of laughter broke from me. "Hell, who could turn down sex this good?"

OK, that wasn't the most romantic acceptance speech ever but no one's ever accused me of being romantic. Mace seemed to understand. He certainly kissed me enthusiastically enough. "Then we have some scrounging to do, little human." Mace's lips twitched, trying not to smile.

I chuckled. "OK, Beast."

Hawk snarled at that term even though Mace snickered.

"OK, I won't call you that if you don't call me *little human*. How's wolfman sound?"



## **Brannan Black**

Brannan Black grew up dreaming about epic adventures with strong men and women doing heroic deeds. She's been a belly dancer, horse breeder, mom, Reiki master and crazy. Really, certifiable crazy. That's what folks say when the people in your head won't leave you alone. When their worlds and lives seem as real as this one. Now she writes their stories, making them happy, and people call her an author instead of nuts. She lives quietly, more or less, on a small ranch with her husband, multiple cats, dogs and horses.

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