

Evernight Publishing

PACK
SEDUCTION

CLAIMING THEIR
MATE

STACEY ESPINO



Evernight Publishing

www.evernightpublishing.com

Copyright© 2011 Stacey Espino

ISBN: 978-1-926950-42-6

Cover Artist: LF Designs

Editor: Marie Buttineau

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

WARNING: The unauthorized reproduction or distribution of this copyrighted work is illegal. No part of this book may be used or reproduced electronically or in print without written permission, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in reviews.

This is a work of fiction. All names, characters, and places are fictitious. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, organizations, or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

DEDICATION

I'm dedicating this book to my two fabulous cover artists, Jinger Heaston and Dara England. They manage to capture the essence of my books with their mad skills and creativity.

CLAIMING THEIR MATE

Pack Seduction, #1

Stacey Espino

Copyright © 2011

Chapter One

“Who’ll get to have her?”

“We’ll worry about that later. Right now we need to get her back to the cabin before she wakes up.” Marcus carried the unconscious woman over his shoulder as they navigated down the fire escape. The night sky was abnormally bright considering the moon was full, displaying the kidnapping for anyone who happened to peer out one of the seedy motel windows.

Blue leapt from the last rung of the metal emergency ladder, landing softly on the ground eight feet below. He held up his arms for Marcus to pass him the woman. Carefully lowering her dead weight, his friend transferred her to Blue’s waiting arms. She was soft, feminine, and her scent was unlike anything he had ever experienced. The legends were true. The potent, pure blood coursing through her veins brought with it the scent of sex and perfection, something no male shifter could resist. Even now, he was tempted to steal off into the night with the woman and forget the pack of eager shifters waiting for him and Marcus to return.

The fact they found one of the three Demori sisters was unreal. The women had disappeared a decade earlier, seeming to fall off the grid. Every male shifter in the known world hunted for them, desperate to mate with one of the three females of pure blood. It was some inbred desire that couldn’t be ignored. Yes, there were other female shifters, but they were a sore substitute if a man had a chance at perfection, to become a part of history.

Marcus landed heavily beside him on two booted feet. They used to work together at the same lumber camp for years, along with

three other shifters they grew to call close friends. When Caleb had found a clue to the whereabouts of one of the royal sisters, they all acted immediately. They agreed to work as a group and figure out the rest once they had the female. Now that they had her, Blue couldn't ignore the possessive instincts flaring within him. She had to be his mate, *only his*. The fact that she put up one hell of a fight when they tried to kidnap her, made him more desperate to claim her. He liked his women feisty and this royal female was an untamed beauty.

Breaking into her hotel room had been easy since she left the window by the fire escape ajar. With the heat outside, and no air conditioning, most windows in the motel were open. However, getting in had been the only easy part about the capture. She had been waiting for them, coiled low in a corner, prepared to pounce. Her yellow-green eyes glowed in the darkness, squinting a warning to stay back. He expected her to shift forms, but she remained human, even when they converged on her. She fought with honor, growling, striking, and taking both of them down a couple times before Marcus plunged the tranquilizer needle into her flesh.

"You'll be sorry!" Those were the last and only words she spoke before her eyes were too heavy to stay open, and she slumped forward into Marcus' arms.

They loaded her into the back of the black SUV, careful not to harm her. Since Blue wouldn't allow anyone else to drive his ride, Marcus sat in the back and cradled her head in his lap.

"Which one is this?" asked Blue, glancing at Marcus through the rearview mirror.

"I'm pretty sure she's Carna, but I'm not certain."

"Why would she be all alone like that? No guards, no family, not even her sisters. And staying in that shithole when her family's swimming in money? It doesn't make sense."

"Considering how hard those girls were to track, I'm assuming they're in hiding."

Blue chuckled. "They obviously didn't expect Caleb and his geek skills with a computer."

The roads were bare at this hour, not a vehicle in sight. With the full moon shining down on him through the windshield, his skin crawled with the urge to shed his human skin. Though shifters didn't mutate into their animal form by the power of the moon alone, as folklore portrayed in books and movies, the urge was still present.

The beast craved to take over the man. Emotions were heightened at this time of month, making anger and sexual desire harder to control.

Although Marcus resided in the city, the CEO of a thriving import/export company, Blue liked to stay away from the big smoke. He only had limited control of his beast, so living amongst humans was not a viable option.

They travelled up the highway for nearly an hour before cutting off onto an unused dirt road, the forest canopy blocking out most of the moonlight. The SUV bucked and jolted as they navigated the rugged terrain toward their hideout in the woods. It used to be the old headquarters for the lumber camp they worked at years earlier. Now it stood abandoned and forgotten—the perfect place to take a kidnapped princess and not be found.

The light from the shelter came into view, as did several shadowy figures waiting for their arrival. With no electricity, the group must have managed to get a fire going in the old stone fireplace. Jacob's large frame was easy to spot, being a bear shifter. Blue didn't want them rushing the SUV to take his prize. He felt a growl rumble in his chest with the need to keep the woman as his own. He'd lived alone all his life, a drifter, taking jobs here and there, but never setting down roots. The mere thought of mating with the princess and starting a family gave him an inner spark of life he'd lacked all these years.

He turned to Marcus after cutting the engine. "Nobody's hurting her or forcing her to do anything against her will, you understand?"

"I do." They didn't need to expand on the topic. The look they shared said it all—if one of their friends couldn't control themselves, they'd work as a team to defend the female. Although Blue felt he could trust his friends, the full moon, plus the scent of the pure blooded princess, may prove too much of a temptation for one of them. Even now, Blue had difficulty holding onto his humanity. His cock rubbed painfully against his jeans. He'd never been so aroused in his life and that was from just her scent. What would he feel like after a touch, a taste?

Caleb, the young fox shifter and computer guru, was the first one at the vehicle. He poked his head in the open driver's side window. "You get her?" As soon as he noticed what Marcus guarded

in the backseat, a smile pulled at his mouth. “*No way!* We actually have one of the princesses?”

The other two shifters closed in on the vehicle, blocking out the gentle light cast from the cabin windows in the background. Blue felt caged in the metal box. Somehow knowing they came to collect the woman each hoped would be their mate, made him bristle. His urge to shift, bare fangs, and threaten his friends clawed at his innards, making him shake his head to clear the idea. He would be no match for four males. Besides, these were his closest confidants, men he trusted with his life. They had lived together day in day out, working at the same company for years—so the thought of a single woman breaking apart their friendship brought reality back like a splash of ice water to the face.

“Good work, Caleb!” Austin cheered, as he opened the rear passenger door. Without asking permission, he pulled Carna into his arms and easily cradled her against his chest.

“Careful there. She’s a live one. Nearly clawed my eyes out.” Marcus slipped out of the vehicle, staying close to Austin as he carried the woman toward the cabin.

“I wouldn’t expect anything less from a princess of pure blood. She’ll make a worthy mate and mother to my pups.” Being an alpha wolf shifter, Austin had a superiority complex. He didn’t rule this forest or lead a pack. This was the fucking twenty-first century and humans dominated both rural and urban landscapes. Blue wouldn’t allow him make a claim without a fight.

“Pups? We didn’t track the princess for months just to hand her over to you, wolf,” Jacob challenged, blocking Austin’s path. Blue got out of the SUV and observed, leaning against the hood. Perhaps they’d wipe each other out and he’d take the spoils without needing to lift a finger.

“Get out of my way!” roared Austin, flashing lethal incisors. Blue couldn’t help but chuckle. The very idea that the group of them believed they’d be able to decide who would claim her was a joke. He knew his friends better than that—and himself. They may have worked well together to find the female, but the headaches had just begun.

“Make me,” Jacob challenged. Blue was prepared for a regular brawl, but when the female moaned and twisted in Austin’s arms, everyone silenced.

“I told you she’s a wild one,” reminded Marcus. “If she wakes up now, she’ll disappear into the forest before we can blink.”

Jacob moved to the side and Austin rushed the female to the small shelter where they could better guard her.

Chapter Two

Carna shifted in and out of consciousness. Her limbs felt heavier than lead when she attempted to move. There were voices around her, male voices. As she tried to puzzle her predicament together, she began to recall the two shifters sneaking in her window at the Lorelet Hotel. The shitty room had been her sanctuary for the past few weeks, successfully hiding her whereabouts from a world gone mad. She was always on the run, hiding, cover her tracks, and keeping a low profile when she had to venture into town for necessities. It was all a small price to pay for her freedom to choose. Her only regret—being separated from her two sisters, Freya and Delia.

When she decided to mate, *if* she decided to mate, it would be with males of her choosing. The mere idea of men believing they could capture and claim her made her nauseous.

Her head cleared more with each passing minute. There had been two of them. She could remember fighting—and then a sudden stab of pain pulled her into oblivion. The last thing she remembered seeing before her eyes were too heavy to keep open, were the bluest eyes she had ever seen.

“Should we tie her up?” asked a male voice.

“Good idea.”

She would not allow herself to be bound. With all her power, she tried to pull out of what she assumed to be the drug-induced grogginess. Had these barbarians also found the location to her two sisters? She had to get her faculties back. *Fast.*

Carna growled deep in her chest. If her human form was too weak to awaken, then perhaps her wolf could power through the haze.

“Did you hear that?”

“Hear what? We’re in the middle of nowhere. Pass me the rope,” said another male.

“Look! She moved.” Thank the gods the moon was full. Her strength and ease in shifting peaked at this time of month...along with her hormone levels. Even without the ability to open her heavy lidded eyes, she began to shift forms. Her bones mutated, elongated and twisted. She felt the beautiful black coat of her wolf begin to break through her skin. As the transformation continued, she felt her energy

returning and was able to open her eyes. She'd neglected her wolf for too long. It felt good to be back in her fur, feeling the power radiating through her body.

In an instant, she assessed the room and its occupants, still in the throws of shifting. She counted five males total, and there was no sign of her sisters. Knowing they were likely free and still in hiding brought her a measure of relief in such uncertain times.

Carna never shirked her responsibility to carry on the legacy of shifters, but she wanted to choose the men she mated with. Just because nearly every unmated male wanted to be a part of history, didn't mean she was some nameless, heartless creature that could be used for their glory. No one besides her sisters, mother, and the women before them could truly appreciate the complexity of their role in shifter society. Without Carna and her two sisters, all races of shifters would die out in time. Only the pure blood running in her veins could bring stability and the hope of a future.

Marcus matched the beautiful raven-haired woman shift into an even more magnificent wolf. Once fully transformed, she backed herself into a corner, teeth bared. The only way out was getting past the five of them, which would be impossible, especially with how hard they had worked to find and capture her. He looked to his best friend, Blue. His trademark eyes already blazed an inhuman hue as he prepared to shift. No doubt he expected her to bolt and he planned to make chase.

He admired her spunk in both human and wolf forms. She was a true female shifter—strong, capable, and deadly when provoked. In the city, Marcus lorded over countless employees. He had wealth, power, and status. Any female he wanted was his. But this little she-devil wolf sparked a unique interest that burned inside of him. He felt the male urge to claim her, something he'd never experience in his life. Was it just the lure of her royal blood or had fate intervened to bring them together?

"Shhh. It's okay sweet thing." Austin, the only wolf shifter amongst them, stepped forward with slow, steady movements. "I know what you're feeling. We aren't going to hurt you."

She growled and snapped, warning him to keep his distance. *What a beauty.* He knew she'd kill herself in a rash escape attempt if they tried to bind her now, so he allowed Austin to have a try at his

charms. The Texan had a dirty-blond mop of hair and a harem of women that followed him around like puppies whenever they ventured into town. If anyone could sweet talk a female, it would be Austin.

"How about I shift too? Or you shift back and we'll talk?" He took one step too close and she lunged forward and sank her teeth into his thigh. No mercy. With a roar, he shifted, mutating with Carna still latched to his leg. Once transformed into the golden-haired wolf, nearly twice her size, he took control. With a gentle, but dominant grip, he stilled her as his teeth gripped the scruff of her neck. Her chest rose and fell in heavy succession, but she didn't move otherwise. The seething mass of black fur lay frozen on the wooden floor boards under the alpha wolf.

"Let her go," ordered Blue.

Together, both wolves shifted, still locked in a tangle of arms and legs. Austin lay over the most deliciously naked woman he'd ever seen, her clothes torn on the ground around her. Marcus wanted to switch places with his friend, just to feel the heat of her flesh against his.

"Relax. I'm not hurtin' her," Austin assured as he flipped her to her back and held her arms upstretched over her head with one hand. "Now... You need to calm down before you hurt yourself, princess."

The shocked look on her face and increased struggles proved she hadn't expected they knew her true identity. It also proved they had the right woman. "Try and mate with me if you dare. I'll bite your dick off before you bat an eye."

All the men began to laugh—except Austin. "Hey, I'm not an animal—well not at the moment." He winked at her and she writhed like a wild woman.

"Okay, enough's enough." Marcus stepped in. This show could go on all night and the princess would soon lose steam, and trust, if someone didn't take charge. Being a leader came naturally to him in business and pleasure. After leaving the lumber camp, he hit it big in business and never looked back. He shrugged off his jacket and squatted next to the two wolf shifters. "I've got her. Go get some clothes on," he told Austin as he shoved him aside. Immediately, Carna shot up into a sitting position. He draped the extra-large jacket over her slender shoulders and pulled her to a stand. Wrapping her in

his arms, surprisingly, she didn't struggle. Rather she glared at the rest of the men standing around and pressed against his chest.

Carna had to pick her battles. She wasn't in the position to make demands, and though she desperately wanted to get free, she had to bide her time. The best thing she could do now was gain an ally. Of all the men in the room, the bear shifter would be the best choice. His size and strength could aid her well. But whatever male she befriended would likely want sexual favors, and bear shifters had the reputation of having monster cocks. She didn't think she could handle his size, so the tiger would have to do. When she'd glanced up at him as he crouched next to her, she wasn't disappointed. Although she recognized his scent as being one of her original kidnappers, he was sinfully handsome. Golden eyes and blond brush cut with full, sensual lips. *Damn the full moon!* Her hormones raged despite her predicament. Each man was more delectable than the next and she wanted an intimate sampling.

Carna fought for inner strength. This wasn't her first full moon and she could get through this without begging for sexual release. When the wolf had nipped her scruff, she nearly lifted her rear, signaling her readiness to be fucked. She adored his strength and confidence, and the scent of his alpha wolf.

No matter how much her body wanted to control her actions, she had to consider her future, and the future of her two sisters. Giving in to a moment of lust could change her life forever. She wanted to choose her mates. Being kidnapped and forcibly confined was not something a good male would subject her to. She had to get free.

"She's in heat," said Jacob. "I can smell it."

"No, it's just her. It's her royal blood." Marcus held her tighter. The glazed over looks in some of the others' eyes didn't make him comfortable. He shared a quick glance with Blue, who gave him a tight nod. They'd defend the female against the other three—if it came to that.

Austin dropped down on the worn fabric loveseat near the fire, now wearing a pair of dark workout pants and nothing else. "Well, who gets to keep her? I vote for me since we're the same species."

"Fuck you, wolf," spat Jacob. "I ain't handing her over to any of you."

Marcus couldn't believe how fucked up the situation had become. "Both of you, shut-up. Don't you think she should have a say?"

As much as he could relate to the other men, what they were doing went against his better judgment. These were modern times. You didn't just run around kidnapping women.

They all lost their bravado and stared at the woman huddled against Marcus' chest.

She turned to face the lot of them. "Whose brilliant idea was it to kidnap one of the royal princesses? Don't any of you know the legends and how important it is for the princess to choose her mates?" The sound of her voice seemed to stun them all further. She was real, a living, thinking being—not just an icon to possess.

"That was Caleb." Jacob pointed a thumb to their in-house computer expert.

"Sure. Blame me!" Caleb crossed his arms. "I'm not the one who decided it was a good idea to drug her."

"Like she would have come along willingly," snapped Blue.

While the men argued amongst themselves, Carna twisted in his arms and looked up at him with those hauntingly beautiful wolf eyes. "What are you going to do with me?"

"We hadn't planned that far in advance." He tried to think out his next words carefully. "I don't think you realize how valuable you are."

"I do. Why do you think I was hiding?"

He expected a royal would feel honored with their lot, not avoid their calling. "What of the future? Isn't that important to you?"

She narrowed her eyes and spoke with the venom of a cobra. "So because of who I am, I have to live my life in a loveless relationship?"

Marcus exhaled. Not one of them considered her feelings. They were so excited once Caleb found her whereabouts online, that nothing else mattered. There were five of them and they hadn't even discussed which one of them would get to keep her.

"This is messed up—"

"Set me free then. They're not paying attention. Please, set me free. I can't mate without love." His friends would kill him, but

the pleading look in her eyes moved him to comply. Marcus wasn't a barbarian and regret being involved in such a primitive plan. He wasn't even sure what his friends were capable of at this point. The whole kidnapping was a huge mistake. Carna wasn't an abstract idea, but a living, breathing woman with needs and wants.

He ushered her to the door, opened it, and watched her disappear into the night.

"What the fuck!" hollered Austin and Jacob simultaneously.

"Idiot!" chanted Blue as he stripped off his outer garments.

"Like I need to be tracking her through the forest at this hour."

"I'll come too," offered Austin, shucking his pants and shifting before Blue.

Marcus watching them bound off toward the darkened tree line—one golden wolf, one black panther. Part of him hoped they'd find her, while the other part prayed she'd find the freedom she sought.

Chapter Three

The forest was unfamiliar. Thick underbrush obscured her vision. She wasn't scared, but felt vulnerable and anxious. If only she could stop and get her bearings, but she knew she had to keep running. They wouldn't allow her to escape so easily if they went through so much trouble to find and capture her in the first place. Her wolf reveled in the sight of the full moon peeking at her through the thick canopy of leafy branches above. It gave her a measure of comfort as she desperately attempted to outrun her captors on all fours.

Why had the tiger let her free? The simple act of kindness made her question the whole ordeal. Was he different than the other four, or did they all have redeeming qualities? It didn't matter. They had kidnapped her which disqualified any of them as life partners, in her opinion.

She halted at an outcropping of rocks. Low mountains decorated the distant landscape and the terrain grew more and more difficult to navigate. Native wolves howled in the distance, making her heart beat faster. She wanted to join in, to call out to the moon, but had to gain her freedom above all else.

Her peripheral vision warned her of potential danger, and she twisted around in a flash. A set of blue eyes, ones she remembered well, moved down the slope toward her. The black panther was large, sleek, and muscular. It moved with a predator's grace and she froze in her tracks. Another presence at her rear signaled the end of her escape. Would they kill her? Rape her? She didn't want to find out, but knew she'd never outrun them in this strange, new forest.

"Shift. You aren't going anywhere," said the human voice behind her. It was the Texan who had forced her to submit in the cabin. Why did the sound of his voice make her stomach flutter? She complied. With the panther eying her every move, she'd never get away. Once human and naked, the chill of the night nipped at her exposed flesh.

"What do you want from me?"

She received no reply which only made her more leery. The panther circled her and the blond man beside her.

"Let's head back." The wolf shifter reached for her hand. The momentary contact, before she jerked away, felt hot and pleasant. She craved to nestle herself against his male heat for warmth and comfort. *More than that.* The sight of his perfect male form, muscled and shadowed by moonlight, made her veins burn hot with erotic need. Why was she cursed to have these desires every full moon? Could they sense her lust? Did they feel the same way?

"Are you going to be difficult?"

"Tell me. How do you plan to take me back if I don't follow like a good little puppy?"

He snorted. "I'll throw you over my shoulder. Either way, I'm good."

"You're forcing me into confinement. I'm not gonna go all nice-like." She folded her arms and his eyes darted to her generous cleavage. Why hadn't she sensed it before? She blamed her heightened nerves for not noticing the sexual signature snapping like electricity in the air. He wanted her and so did his friend, now watching her with inhumanly blue eyes.

"There's food and a fire back at the cabin. You look like you're freezing." She was freezing. Her bare human skin provided little protection from the elements. The offer was tempting, but she wouldn't make it easy for them. Once they got her back in the cabin, there would be no way out. The tiger may have had a soft spot for her, but the others wouldn't make the same mistake again. She couldn't do confinement. Not after what she had gone through in the past at the hands of heartless hunters.

Carna stood still, in a state of indecision. The dark forest surrounding them appeared daunting, an unfamiliar maze that could take her forever to navigate. She had little choice.

"If I go back, what will you do with me? What do you want from me?"

A new set of hands rested on her shoulders from behind. She whirled around, ready to strike. How had she not heard the panther shift and move up next to her? He had abnormal stealth for a shifter.

"We won't hurt you. But you're important, you have to know that." His blue eyes blazed even in human form, highlighting the sharp planes of his face.

"Maybe. That doesn't mean I'm up for grabs, either. You can't just keep me a prisoner forever." *Or could they?* She cringed at

the thought of being caged long term. *Caged at all*. Her only solace was imagining her sisters free. If she had to forfeit her own life, she'd gladly do it in their place.

The panther shifter brushed her thick black hair off her shoulder, examining her neck. "Have you chosen your own mate? You're not marked."

Carna pulled away, her back slamming into the Texan's hard body. She felt cornered, but in a twisted way, it felt good. *Too good*. Their male heat, the dominant vibe they each gave off, and their sexual desire—it all pulled her into a web that she soon became tangled in. Her breathing picked up just as the clouds parted to reveal the full moon. Standing near the rocky outcropping, no forest canopy stood in the way to diminish the beauty of the massive white sphere. It called to her, filled her with untamed desires that she could barely contain. As male shifters, they had to feel the same thing.

As if on cue, they all looked to the sky, and then traded glances with each other.

"Carna, answer me. Have you chosen a mate?" The sound of her name in the panther's deep, gravelly voice made her pussy swell and pulse. She wanted to ask him to repeat it, over and over again.

"No. *If* I choose a mate, it won't be one that drugs and kidnaps me."

"Little one, we never thought that far in advance. I suppose we thought we could convince you of our intentions once we had your full attention."

"And what intentions would those be? Mate with five shifters I know Jack-squat about?"

"Of course not," snapped the Texan.

"So who gets the prize?" She lowered her brow in suspicion, knowing they had no answer. *Stupid males*. They thought with their dicks half the time. No wonder royal blood was only passed down to females.

"Finder's keepers," said the panther.

They pressed tighter against her as they challenged each other. "You think so, Blue? Good luck with that thought. If anything, I'm the best choice. I'm wolf. I'm what she needs."

Blue growled and wrapped an arm around her waist possessively.

"Are you gonna rip me apart and share the pieces?" Both of them gripped her hard, too hard, not hard enough.

"You're hurting her, Austin. Back off!"

Carna could feel the determination of each man, their desire and possessiveness like a living force all around her. She reveled in it, basked in the attention that she usually tried to escape from. Something about these males, or the presence of the full moon, inspired wicked thoughts to swirl in her head.

Facing Blue, she dared to trace her finger over his firm pecs. The temptation to feel him was just too strong and she reacted on impulse. Such a beautiful body needed to be touched. His breath caught and the four hands holding her loosened. Knowing how much she affected them spurred her on, and increased the tightness in her womb. Once she trailed her fingertips away, she reached up high and placed a hand on each of his shoulders. They were broad with a thick cord of muscle.

She wasn't daunted by the prospect of taking two men. Her own mother had three mates, which was the norm. Each generation of royal women took three males as mates, usually from different species of shifters. It kept the bloodlines strong and diverse. Although she craved one night of hard fucking with the two virile males, they weren't mating material. She wasn't sure what she wanted in a life partner, but it wouldn't be a man who tried to force her to love them. You couldn't inspire love in a person—at least not from her.

"That's it. Take what you want, baby." Blue nuzzled her face with his cheek, rough with stubble. She wanted to lose herself in the moment, in the dizzy heat surrounding her. "I'm all yours." Carna liked the sound of that. Her wolf wanted to own him, to mark him as hers alone. *What was she thinking?* Before she could evaluate her thoughts, a gunshot fired in the near distance, forcing her acute senses to the surface. Her eyes grew large and adrenaline fired through her blood making her muscles rigid.

"Hunters," Austin growled.

"They're not far off. Let's get out of here while we still can." Blue moved fast, grabbing her hand and pulling her toward the rocky cliffs behind him. She stumbled, but Austin was right behind her, pulling her to her feet.

"Where we going?" She followed along, unwilling to meet any hunters face to face.

She received no reply. Both men moved about and navigated the rock face with determined focus, assisting her into a low cave opening. The rough surface scraped her knees as she crawled in behind Blue. The rock was cold and unforgiving against her soft skin, but she pushed forward as the sense of urgency radiated around her.

Once the three of them were safely inside, only the sound of heavy breathing filled the cramped space. Carna felt trapped, caged, and desperate to stand up straight, to get the hell out of the confined hole in the rock.

She gulped the air, certain the oxygen diminished by the second. Her wolf senses could hear the hunters nearing their hiding place, their heavy footfalls against the forest floor, and sharp scent of gunpowder. Despite the danger, she craved to burst out of the cave into the open air. She had to stretch, to breathe.

"Where do you think you're going?" A strong hand grabbed her by the ankle and tugged.

"I can't stay in here," she mumbled as she tried to crawl away.

"Ah, ah, ah, little lady. You're staying put until those hunters pass by." Austin was right, of course, but she couldn't help the panic surging to life within her. "It's too cramped in here. I can't breathe."

Blue tucked her up into the crook of his arm. "You're fine. You're safe. Now calm down and wait it out." She took measured breaths, focusing on slowing her rate of breathing. With her eyes closed, she tried to imagine she was back home, running through the forests she knew well, in her wolf form. The wind would flow over her fur, caressing her like a mother's touch. She'd savor the rich scent of pine and earth as she twisted and turned around new saplings and underbrush. Back in those days of her youth, she had no worries, no fears. She could just be herself and not have to worry about unwanted male advances or human threats. Now her world was a mess. She wasn't sure who she was anymore, and craved to lose herself in daydreams of the past and never face reality again.

When she calmed a degree, she realized someone was stroking her hair. The act soothed her, helped her to focus on maintaining control. "You don't have to be afraid of the hunters, Carna," Blue whispered in her ear, a deep throaty sound that travelled through her body, warming her from the inside out. "If they find us, I'd never allow them to harm you. Don't you believe I can protect you?"

"You're not my mate," she said. A mate would protect their other half with their life. A male shifter would happily die protecting his woman. But Carna was nothing to either man. She was a fantasy. A living character from the history books, not a woman, not something to be loved or cherished.

"But I can be. Only say the word." She could feel his pulse, his desire. The small space could barely contain the male heat and sexual energy emanating from the two alphas pressing against her front and back.

"You don't even know me. You should think twice before committing yourself to a woman for life."

The hunters neared the cave. They had dogs.

"Fuck!" Austin growled and moved toward the entrance of the cave, blocking Carna from any potential harm. Why? Why would either of these males risk themselves for her? No, they weren't saving her, only her bloodline, she reminded herself.

"The dogs will find us in here," she insisted. "We have to get the hell out of here. We're sitting ducks."

"I told you not to worry." Blue nearly growled the words. He sounded insulted. "You think we can't handle a few dogs? Hunters? You don't know us very well." The massive size and rippling muscle of the male beside her was a testament to his capabilities. She had no doubt he'd be a good protector for a female.

"No harm will come to you, sweet thing. Nothing's getting past me," said Austin. Even with her keen night vision, in human form, it wasn't as developed. She had difficulty focusing on the men, gauging their expressions. The rocky floor beneath her, covered with leaf litter, burned cold into her bare hip and leg. She huddled against Blue's heat. Although she was out in the night to escape these men, they were now the ones protecting her. It felt good to be cared for, protected, even if it was only temporary, and because they wanted something from her.

"You're shivering." Blue rolled over to his back, pulling her up on his body. With her nudity pressed against his hard manflesh, she couldn't help the traitorous desires whirling around inside her. Her pussy pulsed strong and demanding. The thick cock prodding her thigh reminded her exactly what she had been missing all these years. Only a real man could quench her needs, especially when they ran rampant during the full moon.

"This is bullshit! She's scared and cold. I'm not cowering in this fucking cave another second." Austin shifted forms. She sensed the wolf and felt an instant connection to the beast. Its coarse fur brushed her leg before he darted out of the safe haven.

Chapter Four

Jacob paced the small cabin as he waited for Blue and Austin to come back with the woman. He regret not going himself because waiting without word was driving him mad. He was a shifter of action, and sitting around doing nothing was unacceptable, especially when his future mate was out there somewhere. Jacob had taken a week off work to help his team follow through with their plan. He didn't like being out of the loop.

"It's been too long. Something's wrong," he finally said. The other two had been silent for the past two hours and he couldn't stand being quiet for another second.

"You think Blue won't be able to track her?" Caleb scoffed. "He could find anything. You know he's the best tracker amongst us."

It was true that Blue was an unparalleled predator. He could locate and stalk a victim for hours and they wouldn't have a clue, only aware of his presence when he decided to move in for the kill. But if they ran into trouble, no one could match Jacob's strength. He was a rare breed, a bear shifter. Of all races of shifters, bears were the most endangered. It was one of the reasons he was so desperate to mate with Carna. She could help ensure his race lived on, long into future generations.

If something happened to her, even Caleb wouldn't be able to find one of her sisters. Finding Carna had been a miracle in itself. Jacob wasn't disappointed with the little wolf. From the moment Blue and Marcus brought her back, he'd been mesmerized by her beauty. Her thick raven hair draped her shoulders and back in a dark cape. When she finally awoke, it was those wolf eyes that held him captive. Just thinking about Carna ignited an arousal deep within.

Jacob continued to pace the room.

"I'm going to look for them," he finally announced. He wasn't asking permission, but the others appeared to disapprove of his choice. Caleb rolled his eyes.

"Just be patient. They know what they're doing." Marcus shouldn't be the one to talk, considering he let her escape. Part of him wanted to crush the tiger for his stupidity.

Ignoring his friend's plea, he opened the door to the cabin and set off toward the treeline. He owned the night and had no fear. He may not be as good a tracker as Blue, and not nearly as stealthy, but he'd find them all soon enough.

"I don't want him getting hurt," said Carna.

"You're worried about him now? Didn't you try to rip off his leg back at the cabin?"

"He's trying to protect us. If the dogs had our trail before, they'll track his wolf scent twice as easily."

He cooed in her ear. "Austin ain't a pup. He knows what he's doing." Blue tugged her back down, but she couldn't calm her tense muscles. She wanted to be sure the wolf was safe, and wouldn't be able to breathe until he returned unharmed.

Warm lips trailed kisses along her jawline. Her focus shifted to the man beneath her. "What are you doing?"

"You don't like it? Your body says otherwise."

So, he *could* scent her desire. She didn't like to be such an easy book to read. "You don't know me."

"Then change that," he whispered as he peppered kissed down her neck. His hands had a mind of their own, roaming over her back and sides, leaving a trail of warmth and desire in their wake. She didn't want to push him away, but wished he wanted her for the woman she was, not what she represented.

"I don't want a mate." Okay, it was a lie. Of course she wanted a mate, but ones that loved and cherished her. Since maturity, every male shifter had their eye on her and her sisters because they, as constantly reminded, were the future. Carna knew she'd always be suspicious of any man she chose as a mate, forever wondering what their true intentions were.

"Don't want a mate?" He flipped her over, his arms caging her beneath him. The move came so fast that she barely caught her breath. "You need me as much as I need you, sweetheart."

"I can take care of myself just fine." His rigid body hovered over hers. She could feel his heat and craved to pull his body atop hers, skin to skin. With the cold rocky floor chilling her back, she wanted to heat the place up enough that it wouldn't matter, until she begged for the cold to ease the rising temperature of her blood.

"It's a dangerous world for a princess to be roaming alone." He ran a hand through her hair and studied her face. Was that adoration in his gaze? "Once I mark you, other males won't dare touch you. I'd kill anything that threatens you."

She shook her head to deny him, but couldn't speak. Such a powerful male would make an excellent life partner. Shifters, especially alphas were lethal once bonded to a female. Carna could imagine that kind of loyalty and devotion, craved it. Her heartbeat ran all the way down to her clit. Damn, why did Blue have to be so irresistible? Every toned muscle tempted and teased her. Why not indulge in the virile male? She made no promises for a future. With the power of the full moon sending its soft glow through the entrance of the cave, she was more wolf than woman. Sex. She needed sex to extinguish her overwhelming need growing stronger by the second.

"You can kiss me, but don't you dare bite me, panther. I belong to no one." His blue eyes flamed brighter and a wicked grin pulled at his mouth. She couldn't wait. Carna hooked her hand around his neck and pulled his mouth to hers. His lips were full and warm, molding to hers perfectly. Closing her eyes, she savored the electricity sparking between them. He tasted like a male, all power and dominance. She wanted him to take her, to master her body. Relief from the steady pulse in her pussy was so close, but not close enough. She squirmed beneath him, willing him to drop that beautiful male form over her. Her breasts ached, her whole body screamed out for attention.

He broke their kiss, leaving her empty and needy. Blue ran his tongue along his upper lip revealing sharp canines. Her eyes rolled back in her head momentarily as she envisioned him sinking those fangs into her flesh. The natural desire to mate, to bond, pulled her under its spell, but she had to resist the call.

"Touch me. *Please*." The need in her voice surprised her. Close to the point of no return, her control snapped back to attention when a new male voice replied.

"You don't have to beg, darlin'."

"Back already?" asked Blue, not shifting his position, only turning his head to the entrance of the cave. "Your timing is impeccable."

"Good thing, too. I don't want you starting without me."

"The hunters?" Carna managed to ask. She never felt so naked, so emotionally exposed in her life.

"Taken care of. I told you not to worry." Austin crawled over to them, still strong with the scent of the wolf which only served to spike her desire. "Now it's time to take care of you."

Blue bared his teeth once Austin closed in. The show forced liquid heat to seep between her thighs. Male dominance displays never failed to arouse her.

"Move over." Austin appeared unfazed by the threat, casually shrugging his friend over shoulder to shoulder. "I heard her begging when I came in, so obviously you're doing something wrong."

"Watch it, country."

Blue shuffled over slightly, only to drop his head. When he sucked in her taut nipple, she gasped. "That's right, darlin'. So responsive." Austin kissed and nipped her side as he travelled lower and lower.

She didn't fight the wondrous sensations assaulting her. Rather, she allowed her body to go pliant, to absorb the pleasure from the two hungry mouths and numerous hands. They touched her everywhere, sometimes with a gentle caress, other times with firm authority. Every act brought her dangerously close to a spontaneous orgasm. If she pressed two fingers to the strong pulse at her clit, she'd detonate. No doubt about it.

"Blue, our girl's wet and looks mighty appetizing." Austin spread her legs and rubbed his face, rich with new stubble, against her folds. She bucked off the ground, needing him to work some magic on her pussy. It would be cruel to tease her and leave her hanging on the edge.

Blue wanted to rip Austin's head off. He just got through to the dark beauty, when his friend returned to the cave. If he had a little more time to work his charms, Carna may have offered him a fighting chance. All he wanted was the opportunity to prove he was a worthy mate and protector. Now the Texas Romeo tried to steal all the attention. If anyone was going to drown in her sweet pussy, it should be him, not the wolf.

"Do you want me to get rid of him?" Blue whispered in her ear.

"No!" She gripped his shoulders, her nails digging deep. "I want both of you." Her breathing was heavy and her scent alive with pheromones.

"Honey, two men for your first time may be a bit much."

She smiled seductively, pulling him to her waiting mouth. Carna devoured him, her tongue playing with his, exploring and tasting. "I'm not a virgin," she said, only breaking away to convey the message.

Not a virgin? With no mark it seemed impossible. What kind of man could enjoy such a woman and not want to claim her for himself? A heated anger rolled through Blue as he imagined another male taking what was his, or would be his. He should have ditched Marcus back at the hotel and disappeared with her while he had the chance.

"You've had another man?" He had to know the details. Regardless of his dick being harder than the stony walls around them, he had to find out who touched her.

She pulled her hand away, only to wrap it around his cock. He shuddered as she pumped him once, twice. "He wasn't nearly as big as you. You have nothing to worry about." She smirked against his mouth. What a little vixen!

"She knows exactly what to say, doesn't she?" Austin growled before burying his face between her legs. Carna's body jolted as if she'd be electrified. She held on to Blue like her life depended on it. He would have stopped Austin, but the feral noises she made were sexier than sin. Her glazed over eyes and swollen lips made her irresistible. Princess or not, he had to have her.

"I need to come. *Please!* No more playing."

Austin tossed her legs over his shoulders and adjusted his position to better service her needs. What surprised Blue was that he wanted his friend to hurry up and give Carna what she wanted. Every instinct within him screamed to eliminate the competition, but another part of himself, one he didn't recognize, found a perverse pleasure in watching Austin greedily suckling her cunt.

Chapter Five

Austin tested her folds with the tip of his tongue only briefly. Carna arched into his mouth, smearing her irresistible fragrance across his face. He delved in, taking what she willingly offered. With his skilled tongue, he teased and tormented her, enjoying the desperate cries and strangled moans echoing within the cave walls.

"More," she cried.

He nipped her clit before sucking deeply, knowing she was only seconds away to finding her release. The scent of sex was thick in the air, and he nearly forgot Blue was in the cave with them. He shared a bubble of passion with Carna, just the two of them sharing her perfect body. Yes, he wanted her for himself, but sharing her didn't seem to bother him as it should. Perhaps it was because Blue was an old friend, or maybe because his intentions were just as honorable. *Could it be fate?*

Her orgasm was punctuated with a loud squeal. Her body convulsed, her pussy pulsing against his mouth. He didn't dare break free until her body calmed, but savored her essence and loss of control. When she finally did still, Blue brushed him to the side, taking residence over her prone body.

The panther plunged his cock into her wet heat. Carna took in a deep breath, letting the air out in a delectable moan that sent shivers skittering over his skin. As his friend worked her willing body, Austin moved up to lie beside her. He turned her face to the side to kiss her. The she-wolf nipped his lips, piercing the skin, and sucked his tongue with a fevered frenzy. With his own cock swollen stiff to the point of discomfort, watching the two lovers fuck beside him was the ultimate tease.

"Share." A simple enough word, but it carried the weight of the world in significance. Would they be able to share her as a mate? Or just tonight?

They shifted Carna to her side until her petite body was sandwiched between their large, hard frames. She wrapped her arms around Blue's neck, still connected with him intimately. It was time for Austin to join in the party. He massaged the full globes of her ass, savoring the feel of her soft flesh in his palm. Then he trailed his fingers closer and closer to her nether hole. When he painted a

pattern over her tight puckered rosette, she grew more excited, kissing Blue and wiggling against his probing fingers.

Maintaining control as he prepared her for his invasion was the ultimate test. He slowly inserted one digit, holding it in place. She clamped down around him, so fucking tight. She'd feel like heaven around his cock. He added a second finger and gently scissored his fingers to loosen her tight entrance.

"Oh gods, fuck me, Austin!"

He growled, a primitive sound, a mix of man and beast. Her invitation was not to be ignored. Austin reached toward her cunt, Blue's cock still pistoning in and out of her body. He collected some moisture and dragged it back to her ass until he felt she was properly coated in her overflow of natural juices.

Replacing his fingers with the head of his ready cock, he prodded her tight bud. He twisted, pushed and retreated until he'd speared her impossibly tight anal ring with a couple inches of his erection. Austin held her hips to steady himself, to restrain his urge to thrust forward without holding back. No matter how sexually aroused Carna was, he still wanted her to stretch enough to accept his cock without undue pain. He counted the seconds, his patience wavering. Before he could inch further into her beautiful body, she impaled her ass over his cock, embedding him to the hilt. She growled and he joined her, beginning to work her willing body.

"You're tight, Carna. So tight and perfect." He nuzzled the back of her neck as he pumped his cock in and out of her ass. Blue slid back and forth against his dick, only separated by a thin membrane. The added stimulation of having her body packed tight with cock, brought out his beast. He gripped her hip and fucked her harder. As the minutes passed, his fangs elongated. How easy it would be to sink his teeth into the smooth, milky plane of her neck and mark her as his. He wanted to, craved it like nothing else. Carna was a wolf shifter, like him, and they belonged together. He could already envision the future. As soon as he'd taken in her scent, he had no doubt she was meant for him.

These shifters didn't know who they were dealing with. Carna was no stranger to sex, even ménage sex. Austin took his time with her, attempting to stretch her ass before fucking her. There was no need. She was too lost, too far gone in the haze of lust to worry

about pain or discomfort. All she needed was the fullness, the pleasure of their two big dicks occupying her body at once, fighting for space, and hitting every sweet spot inside her. And they were big, bigger than she'd ever had in the past. Their dominant alpha auras, their masculine scent, roaming hands, and untiring male bodies had her spiraling out of reality entirely. She closed her eyes and held on, savoring every sensation and wicked pleasure they offered.

When the erotic heat began to travel up her legs from the tips of her toes, she braced herself for a monumental release. The pulse in her pussy rivaled the one in her heart, growing in urgency with every thrust by Blue and Austin.

She peeked open her eyes. "Don't stop now," she warned. If they left her hanging on the brink of orgasm, she'd shred them both to scraps. Blue's electric eyes lit up the darkness, her lighthouse and anchor when her body was about to lose all control.

Her fangs lengthened and her upper lip twitched. *No*. She didn't know these shifters. If she marked either one of them, she'd be condemning herself to be their mate for all time. A love bite was eternal. Why had she never had this urge with her past lovers? These men, the ones who kidnapped her no less, appeased her wolf and brought out this new desire to bite.

"Carna, *come!*" The gruff demand by Blue lit the fuse and she detonated. Her pussy and ass throbbed and milked each man in deep waves of release. She panted, her claws digging into Blue's shoulders as she rode out the most beautiful orgasm she'd ever experienced. It hummed within her—spreading its liquid satisfaction through her veins. When the moment passed, she collapsed, no energy left to even move a muscle.

"You do want us." Blue used the pad of his thumb to lift her lip just above one fang. She was too tired to care or push him away. "Fangs equal mating. But I'm sure you already know that. Don't you, princess?"

Her body felt pleasantly used, sticky, and relieved...for now. The moon's strength wouldn't let up, but at least she'd had a reprieve from her sexual hunger. Once she recovered, she'd have more control over her actions. Carna planned to get the hell out of Dodge as soon as her energy returned. The fucking had been great, but she would never be owned, never be a prize to a male seeking fame through her blood.

"Leave me be. I'm tired."

"That's good, darlin'. You rest up. As soon as the hunters are out of range, we'll return to the cabin."

Carna smiled, knowing she wasn't going anywhere but the dense forest in the opposite direction. She'd get free, lose her kidnappers, and find her sisters to ensure they were safe and sound. Stupid males—they were clueless to her intentions. They probably assumed she felt committed to them because of the sex, because of her fangs. But it was just sex, nothing more. *Wasn't it?* Sex had never felt like this. She pushed away her doubts because she needed to rest her body and mind to be able to exercise her plan.

When she woke up from her sleep, she sat up with a start, not remembering the time or place. Her body had been warmed by the two male bodies on either side of her, but sitting up, the early morning chill made her skin break out in gooseflesh. Everything came back in a flood.

She had to escape before the shifters woke up. The sunrise only peeked on the horizon, a glow not much stronger than the moon had been when radiating into the cave. Carna carefully disentangled herself from the males and stood. They looked so peaceful in the depths of sleep, their muscled bodies covering the stone floor in a tempting carpet of manflesh. But she was free of the moon's pull now that night was transforming to morning.

Once outside the cave, she stretched out her nude body and took a deep breath of crisp morning air. Already the forest birds were chirping, everything coming to life after hiding from predators during the night. She was usually one of those predators, but not with these shifters determined to capture her.

She couldn't wait to shed her human skin and absorb the warmth her fur coat could offer. Her body would heat up in a hurry as she ran the miles it would take to get free of the old growth forest. Once she got back to civilization, it would be easier to blend in with the multitude of humans. She'd get to a bank, withdraw some cash, and get a new temporary place to stay.

Roots would be nice—her life was constantly on the run these days. Returning home wasn't an option as her mother had a list of suitors she wanted to hook Carna up with, not able to understand her desire for the freedom of choice. The future was more a mystery to her than her feelings for her captors.

After testing the air for anything threatening, she dropped to her knees and allowed the change to envelope her. Her body transformed—bones shifted, fur emerged, and in one minute she turned from woman to wolf. Once in her fur, her senses were heightened. She could see further, sense and smell everything for miles around. The slight change in Austin's breathing was her warning to get moving. They'd both awaken soon, and if she was not in the cave, they'd no doubt begin a search. She needed as much of a head start as possible considering the terrain was foreign to her.

She ran non-stop for over half an hour, finally slowing to catch her breath. The pine needles under her paws were soft, and the rising sun between the leaves of the forest canopy was warm and comforting. After scanning the area, she was no closer to figuring out how to escape the labyrinth of greenery. Carna decided her best option was to continue forward on a straight course. Eventually she'd have to reach a road or settlement. Figuring out how she'd blend into human society completely nude was a problem she hadn't yet addressed. Getting free was her only concern.

She walked through the underbrush, sniffing and listening for anything out of the ordinary. Not many shifters knew about the unique abilities Carna and the other royal women possessed. Their most guarded secret—they could convert a full human into a shifter. Royal history was long and colorful. The first werewolf was a human female bitten by a wolf with a rare virus. All her descendents had the ability to shift, but only her select female heirs carried pure wolf blood. The sole ingredient for continued shifter lines.

Some early generations tested their pure blood on other wild animals, creating new shifter species—lion, tiger, panther, coyote, bear, and a few others. Only royal wolf blood could sustain the new species. Without it, their lines were too dilute, slowly returning to full human after generations passed. Even wolf breeds needed the influx of royal blood to maintain their genetic strength. Carna's foremothers usually took three mates of different races, as was the custom, ensuring maximum infiltration of their blood into the world. No males carried the original blood, nor did females of non-wolf species. It was extremely rare that Carna's mother birthed three full-breed wolf-shifting daughters. Their mere existence created a whirlwind of excitement amongst the races. More royal daughters meant more

chances for males to join the royal family, their heirs capable of carrying on the shifter legacy.

As much as Carna wanted to help keep shifter races strong with the power flowing through her veins, she also despised having such responsibility.

She plodded on, her mind elsewhere. Rather than consider her future, she should have focused on the present. In a rush, the ground left her in a blur, and she was sailing through the air toward the tree tops. She yelped and struggled, but her legs only tangled in the thick netting. *Trapped*. Horrible memories came back to Carna as she remembered being captured and caged in the past by cruel hunters. She'd been saved by her sisters weeks later in a bloodbath of a rescue, and could never handle confinement after the ordeal. Now she had no one, not even sure where she was.

As the netting was lowered to the ground, she desperately tried to test the air, evaluate the threat, and look for a way free. Once about six feet from the unforgiving forest floor, the net dropped. She landed hard, her haunch bruised by the impact. Carna leapt into a stand despite the pain radiating up her leg and the heavy netting over her body. She had lethal teeth and claws and planned to use them to gain her freedom.

A rumbling laughter seemed to echo all around her. She twisted about, becoming more entangled. Hunters closed in on her from all directions.

"A black one. She's a good size, too." A red-bearded man in hunting gear crouched low and stared at her. "Should we kill her or keep her?"

Carna growled, baring her teeth.

"Mikey'd pay good money for one like her. She's unusual. I say we keep her until he comes by next week."

"Where the fuck we gonna store a wolf?" asked another burly mountain man.

"We've got tons of cages out back. We'll have to bring one inside in case the rangers happen by. If they found out we touched one of their protected wolves, we'd lose our hunting licenses in a hurry." The red-head stood and pulled a shotgun out of a holster on his thigh, aimed at Carna and fired.

Chapter Six

Blue opened his eyes, the bright light streaming into the cave felt too strong for his sensitive vision. He preferred his nocturnal lifestyle for the most part. As he tried to sit, he noticed no female body resting beside him, just his friend, Austin. He tensed, a thousand thoughts flitting through his head. Was she captured? Hurt? Did she try to escape from them even after what they all shared? They'd made love half the night. The she-wolf was insatiable.

He shook Austin's shoulder. The other man only groaned and shrugged him off. "Let me be."

"Get your ass up, wolf. She's gone!"

Austin twisted, his tired eyes attempting to focus on the surroundings. "What are you talkin' about?"

"Carna's gone. I can't believe she managed to get passed the both of us."

The wolf shifter stood and hit his head on the low six foot rocky ceiling at the center of the cave. "Fuck! Let's get on with it then. We'll have to track her." They both emerged into the morning light, the forest alive with the chatter of wildlife. With his human senses, he picked up nothing. No trail or strong scent, just a dull lingering signature. She must have left in the night and her trail had gone cold as the hours passed. His hackles began to rise, literally. The shift pulled at him, no different than a mated male losing his woman. He had to find her, to know she was safe. It was a foreign sensation, especially considering they hadn't even marked each other. She must truly be the female fated to him. Blue could sense the same urgency from the wolf shifter. It felt good to have a team mate, a man as equally determined to protect Carna from harm.

"Still can't control your beast, eh?"

Blue's shifter friends knew he had issues living amongst humans. They loved to tease him about the weakness. His control over his beast had always caused problems for him. It didn't take much irritation for Blue's change to nip at him. Shifting in front of a group of humans, or in his SUV while fighting traffic, would not go over well.

He scowled at his friend. Austin's tone was patronizing and he didn't appreciate being constantly reminded of his feral tendencies.

"Follow if you want." Blue leapt off the low rock face and landed on strong panther paws below. He turned back briefly, noting Austin crossing his arms and shaking his head.

Blue inhaled deep, hoping he could pick up a trail in his panther form. *Nothing*. He'd have to track her. If anyone could find her, it would be him. He wouldn't stop until Carna was safely in his arms again. This time he wouldn't hesitate in marking her as his.

It had taken Jacob hours of exhaustive searching to find Carna. He'd trailed her scent to a cave, but quickly discovered she'd only been there temporarily. Those idiot friends of his were asleep when they were supposed to find the princess. If they wanted to lie down on the job, they didn't deserve her—he did.

He'd wasted hours in his hunt, though. It's not that his bear senses were off, he just wasn't used to life in his animal form. He lived in the city as a bouncer for Club Frenzy after being laid off from the logging company years earlier. Only on rare occasions did he visit the forest to shift and bond with his bear. The concrete jungle was his home now.

Jacob finally had her location. Her sweet, feminine scent overpowered the pine and earth of the forest surrounding the one-story structure. Carna was inside, no doubt about it. The problem was she wasn't alone. The putrid odor of males, hunters, and gunpowder infiltrated his finely tuned senses. As he neared the structure he began to pick up the distinct signature of fear—Carna's fear. Anger boiled up inside him, making his bear more dangerous than a female stripped of her cubs.

He loped around the perimeter of the building, looking for the entrance. Heat burned in his veins. He needed to get to Carna, to defend her from the males keeping her against her will. If one hair on her was harmed, he'd take his time and make them suffer. She was the woman he planned to mate, so he'd defend her to the death if need be. Love in the shifter world couldn't compare to how humans perceived it. It wasn't developed by dates and dinners, but a deep seated bond gifted by the gods. Only fate could truly bring together life mates, instincts took over from there.

Jacob couldn't count the number of women who tried to pick him up at the club. He had no desire for a delicate human, no matter how beautiful or buxom. Even close to thirty, he was yet to mate,

making him wonder if he'd ever find that special someone. When his old crew of friends suggested they work together to find one of the Demori sisters, he was all for the idea. But it wasn't until he saw Carna in person, took in her distinctive scent, that he knew she was his. Her beauty rivaled any of the club patrons that flirted with him each shift, and her wolf was wild and untamed, just the way he liked his women.

The wooden structure only had a few barred windows. Stacks of rusted cages and unused traps littered the rear of the building. *Bear traps*. These humans were not on his happy-list right now. Once he reached the door, it only took one thrust from his massive bear shoulder to knock the barrier off its hinges. It thundered to the wooden floorboards, the sound echoing in the nearly empty room. The interior was open concept. He scanned everything, sized up the threat, and searched for Carna. She cowered in her wolf form in a metal barred cage in the far corner. Four homely-looking males sat around a wooden table playing a casual game of cards. Once their initial shock wore off, they bolted from their seats. Chairs fell over and scraped the floor as the men scrambled away or dashed for a weapon. Playing cards danced in the air, falling to the ground like leaves in the fall.

Jacob roared, rearing up on his hind legs in a display of sheer dominance. His bulk blocked the entrance and his head grazed the ceiling. The look of fear in the men's eyes gave him a measure of satisfaction. He dropped and charged Carna's cage, ramming his thick muscled frame against the low door, twisting the lock and denting the bars. Jacob continued the sequence, rattling the cage and shaking the entire wooden structure they occupied. The hunters behind him were not his concern at the moment. Watching Carna caged and sensing her fear turned him feral, completely one-sighted.

"Get the tranquilizer gun!"

"Let's get the fuck out of here!" The men clamored behind him as he tried to free his woman. Finally the mutilated metal door swung open with a groan. Carna crept out, exercising caution with each step, her head bowed low. Now he could focus his attention on the bastards who dared to cage his mate. *His mate*—he liked the sound of that. Jacob barreled forward, knocking one hunter flying to the side. The others hid behind the table or dashed for the open door. He

wasn't out to kill, but definitely wanted to send a message to the hunters. Don't mess with his little wolf.

Jacob charged after the men once they ran from the shelter. They scattered into the clearing, boarded their pick-up truck, and sped off with a spray of gravel in their wake. He gave chase for a few minutes, his large, bulky body surprisingly limber. Then he stopped dead in the middle of the dirt road, huffed, and returned to the cabin.

Carna was still rooted in place at the entrance to the cage. He shifted forms, returning to his familiar human skin. "Carna. Shift."

She looked up at him with those haunting wolf eyes. Her submissive stance morphed into something new. Her shoulders squared, her head rose, and her gums lifted off her killer fangs.

"Hey, I'm not the enemy here," he insisted. He reached forward and she lunged at him, sinking her teeth into his forearm. Jacob winced at the sharp sting, but battled his instinct to grab her scruff and toss her across the room. She was still his mate, and tiny compared to his bear. Even in his human form, not many males rivaled him in size or strength. He didn't want to harm her, so he used his weight, dropped to his knees and secured her front legs in one large hand and her hind legs in the other. She struggled futilely, forced to pull her mouth from his flesh. He held her still until she tired and calmed a degree. "Shift, God dammit!"

Carna finally complied, her body changing from black wolf to soft-skinned human. She scrambled to her knees, her chest heaving from exertion. "Don't touch me!"

"I just saved your ass, sweetheart."

"You're one of them. One of my kidnappers. I want nothing to do with you, bear." She eyed the open entryway and he knew she'd make a dash for it at any second.

"I'm not a kidnapper. Your only enemies were those hunters. Who knows what they would have done to you if I hadn't show up."

Carna wouldn't admit that the bear's presence comforted her, made her feel secure and protected. His rugged power and intensity made her body respond like a wolf in heat. After spending half the day caged and tormented, she thought she'd seen her last days of freedom. She never expected to see her sisters again or run free with the pine needle carpet under her paws. It was over. Then *he* showed up. The shifter had no fear, no hesitation. He rescued her with brute

force sending her captors running away like the limp dicks they were. Being confined in that cage had been the final straw. Carna had gone mad, thrashing against the bars, snarling and snapping at the human males when she woke up from the second drug-induced stupor in only a couple days.

Being free was reward enough, but after the bear shifted into his human form, Carna had to control her urge to throw herself at him. She felt a pull, a deep attraction that she couldn't push away no matter how hard she tried. His dark hair and eyes, golden skin, and solid, muscled frame were only part of her attraction. He emitted that dominant aura, a pure male presence which reminded her of her Texas wolf, and panther from last night. These males were unlike any humans or shifters she'd ever met before. What did it mean? She couldn't blame the moon in the light of day. So why was her stomach cramping with erotic need?

His big, strong hands holding her down turned her on in wicked ways. She wanted him to control her, to demand her compliance. Fighting the foreign urges was difficult. The only thing she could do was lash out and feign indifference, which she was doing frequently lately. No matter how much her heart told her to submit, her pride wouldn't allow her to give in without a fight.

"You can try to run past me, but I'll catch you." They both rose to a stand. His dark eyes bore into hers. Was that a smirk on his lips?

"What do you want from me, bear?"

"My name's Jacob. Remember it because it's the name of your future mate."

Carna wanted to laugh out loud at his gall, but she got the impression he wasn't playing. She made the mistake of glancing down. He already towered over her in height, the largest male she'd ever seen. But what caught her attention was his fully erect cock. She knew he'd be hard with the scent of arousal lingering around him like an invisible fog, but not that goddamn big. Although she had the urge to reach out and squeeze him just to confirm his manhood was real, it also intimidated her. She wanted Jacob to force her to the ground and fuck her raw, but with a cock that big and thick, he'd probably tear her apart.

"Like what you see?"

Had she been staring? She quickly averted her gaze to his too-handsome face. "I've seen bigger." Carna tried to replicate disinterest.

He smirked. "No you haven't."

She lurched for the door, anything to get away from the cocky bastard and his tempting body, but his thick arm blurred into movement, barring her way. "You saved me. Thank you. Now let me free."

He wrapped a hand around her upper arm, securing her in place. "I'm not letting you go. All my instincts are screaming to me that you're mine, Carna. Don't you feel it?"

"No!"

"You're lying." He grabbed her other arm and pulled her against the length of his solid frame. The skin to skin contact scalded her, made her desperate to touch him, taste him. He laughed, a deep rumbling sound only a bear shifter would be capable of. "I can scent your desire, little wolf." Jacob leaned down from his impressive height and nuzzled her neck. His heat and rough stubble made her pussy tingle. She wanted to be taken, but didn't want to surrender, to give up her fight. After leaving home in the night with her two sisters, long ago, they vowed to stay off the radar, to stay free. They'd never be forced to mate, never be forced to maintain the royal tradition because of their pedigree. If she gave in now all their sacrifices would be for nothing.

"You know nothing about me. Nothing at all. You and your friends only care about mating a royal, but you don't know *me*—my dreams, my desires."

His face turned serious, his brow lowered. "I know what they've taught you. But it's not all true, princess. If you don't carry on tradition, what happens to all the shifter species?"

She shook her head, trying to shift from lust to a logical discussion. "Their blood runs dilute. In time their children won't be able to shift. They'll become fully human again."

"Wrong." He tilted her chin up, forcing her to look him in the eyes. "We die. Without new royal blood added to the species the blood does run dilute. But we don't turn human because we aren't human. From birth, we're different, and that can't be undone. It may take countless generations, but extinction is inevitable without fresh blood."

"No. Why wouldn't my mother tell me?"

"I'm assuming to protect you. That's a lot of responsibility riding on a young woman's shoulders."

Carna had already fled because of the duty thrust upon her. If she had of known the full weight of the truth when she reached maturity, who knows how it would have affected her. "So I'm guessing that's why you're involved in this. You're bear, a species close to extinction. A mating with me would ensure continued growth and strength in your line." She scoffed. "I'll only ever be a tool."

"I don't want you for just your blood, princess. It may have started out that way, but once I met you that all changed. I can feel it right down to my marrow—we're destined for each other. No male will take better care of you than me." He took a breath at her neckline as if savoring her unique smell. With his bulk and muscle leaned into her, she began to slip away. She closed her eyes, pulled by invisible strings into the very web of lust he appeared to be lost in. Then she did the unthinkable, the one thing that would ensure her surrender. *She touched him.*

Jacob's body was all male. His skin was firm and thick, warm and supple. She lightly squeezed his bicep, surprised by the power she found. This shifter would indeed make a good mate, a good defender. She smoothed her hand down the length of his arm. Her wolf was attracted to the point she felt her incisors threatening to break free, but the woman knew better. Lust and love were two very different beasts.

"I'm not an animal, Carna. I'm not like the others," he whispered. "Let me show you who I am. Give me a chance."

Without thinking, she nodded, mentally scolding herself the next moment.

"We'll get out of the forest. Return to the city. You'll see I'm only looking for my mate, not a saving grace." He scooped her up in his arms as if she were two pounds. She could have fought, but she was exhausted and didn't have the energy to keep going. Sleep pulled at her, and Jacob's warmth and strength lulled her as he strode out of the cabin. As soon as they passed the threshold, her body went pliant. The cabin represented confinement and torment, and being in the open forest with her protector pulled free the final threads of her consciousness.

Chapter Seven

Austin and Blue stood on the sidewalk across the street from the notorious Club Frenzy. The full moon could scarcely be seen in the city that never slept, the skyline unnaturally lit, blocking out even the stars. Patrons lined up along the sidewalk for more than a block, dressed in barely enough clothing to cover their intimate parts. Caleb told them they'd find Carna and Jacob here, and Austin hoped he was right. He was surprised Marcus didn't insist on coming with them to find her. But it didn't matter now because there was no doubt Carna belonged to him and Blue. They came to collect *their* mate. Being separated from her was painful and they hadn't even marked each other.

When Blue tracked their woman to the hunter's shack, Jacob's scent was overpowering. They both knew the bear had found Carna and had a sudden lapse in memory—they were supposed to be a team, suppose to share the spoils of their quest.

Austin wouldn't give up so easily. They'd driven for hours to return to the club district of the city where Jacob worked. It wasn't an exclusive shifter club, which was the reason security was of utmost importance. If a shifter got too drunk and began to shift or want to fight, they'd need to be dealt with before inadvertently revealing themselves to a human—or worse. No better security than a bear, but bear or no bear, Jacob wasn't stealing their woman. Austin and Blue came to an easy understanding about Carna. After their night of unforgettable lovemaking, they both knew they'd be able to share her for life. Menage relationships were the norm for royals, so they were confident Carna would be okay with the arrangement...if she ever accepted them.

"We'll never get passed the front doors," said Blue. "Jacob will stop us."

"Yeah. Some friend he turned out to be." Austin crossed his arms over his chest. They were both dressed in black, hoping to blend into the crowd, take what was theirs, and get the hell out. Carna may have run, but she wanted them. Her lust and desire had filled the cave like a living force. They just needed to convince her that their intentions were honorable.

"You think he marked her?"

"I don't care if he did or not. We didn't go through everything just to hand her over to him." Austin stepped onto the roadway, crossing the different lanes of traffic when the way was clear. He followed the lineup toward the dark rear of the club. Women raked their eyes up and down his body with a familiar hunger. The glitter and glam of the painted females nipped at his libido, but he wasn't here for them. One woman had his attention now—the one he planned to mate.

The solid metal door of the club was set in a lonely alleyway. Dumpsters blocked them from view, but getting into a locked entrance wouldn't be simple.

"So what's your plan?" asked Blue, leaning against the brick wall next to the door. He ran a hand through his black hair, his eyes glowing an inhuman blue in the darkness.

"If Jacob were here, he'd be able to break the door down."

Blue rolled his eyes, pushing off the wall with his boot. He used his fist to bang three times on the heavy door. "Jacob's the enemy now. Don't forget it."

A bouncer opened the door, the bass of techno music permeating into the night. "This ain't an entrance," barked the overgrown human male.

"It is now." Blue grabbed him by the scruff of his t-shirt and pulled him into the alleyway. Austin was quick to keep the door from closing tight. He watched as Blue knocked the man unconscious with a single, calculated punch. He'd wake up with a headache, but no lasting damage.

"Come on." Austin stepped into the chaos of Club Frenzy, followed by Blue. The door echoed shut behind them. Colored lights flashed overhead and randomly across the vast dance floor. Fleeshy bodies gyrated in the near darkness. The air was thick with sweat, alcohol, and lust. Austin and Blue towered over the human males as they pushed their way through the crowd. It didn't take long for him to pick up the scent of the she-wolf. Even with the multitude of distractions—sex, perfume, humans, and shifters of all races—he could pinpoint Carna.

By the time Carna woke up, she was in the backseat of a moving car, covered with a warm quilt. She sat up and peered out the tinted windows. The lights of the city flashed by her vision, a foreign

sight when she fell asleep to the moon and stars. "Where am I?" she muttered.

Jacob shifted in the driver's seat to face her. "Finally awake, princess? We'll be there in a few minutes."

"Be where?" Although Carna was still naked beneath her blanket, Jacob was dressed in faded blue jeans and a lime green shirt which highlighted his dark features.

"Club Frenzy. I have a room in the back. I don't have a shift tonight, but Gideon will let us hang out until I can figure out what to do next."

Her mind was a jumble. She remembered offering Jacob a chance to prove his intentions. But what other choice did she have? Now she was in the heart of the city, with witnesses and places to hide. If she could get free, she could go back into hiding. Finding her two sisters wouldn't be so easy with no way to contact them. They hadn't planned this far in advance, too afraid to keep cellphones or email addresses in case they were tracked.

She kept quiet, even when Jacob opened the car door to help her out. With the blanket shrouding her body, he led her to a rear door which he unlocked before urging her inside. They entered a bustling night club with minimal lighting. The music dominated her senses, vibrating in her chest. She clung to Jacob, afraid of becoming lost to the multitude of revelers around her. Everything was new and unnerving after going so long in isolation. Once upon a time, life used to be fun and carefree. Would it ever be again?

"Don't be nervous. Nothing will happen when I'm with you." Jacob cleared a path, not allowing another body to even brush against her. She felt like a fool in the old car blanket, tired, and looking a mess with so many beautiful women in the club. They stared, judged, and her hackles rose in response. When she noticed them appreciating Jacob, smiling seductively at the bear shifter, her fangs lengthened and she knew her eyes were no longer human.

They entered a small room past the rear bar. When the door closed, muffling the music and cutting off the stale air, Carna took a cleansing breath. "You'll be surprised what they find when the club closes. There should be something for you to wear in here." Jacob rummaged through a trunk marked *lost and found*.

"You've been with human females before, haven't you?" Being surrounded by so many women each shift, Carna couldn't

imagine a male resisting for long. She shouldn't care...but she did. The thought of another woman enjoying the bear shifter's impossibly masculine body and big cock brought out the uncomfortable burn of jealousy.

"I have." His eyes darkened and he turned his attention to her, rising slow as dough. Jacob backed her into a corner with measured steps. "What about you, little wolf. Have you been with a man?"

She'd been with both humans and shifters, but never a bear. As much as the prospect of fucking a male with such an impressive cock excited her, it also made her leery.

"I've been with plenty." Maybe the truth would turn him off. Males coveted a virgin, something she was not. It wasn't easy battling the sexual craving that came every full moon, but she did most months. The few times she'd slipped up may now come back to haunt her. Jacob wouldn't want a used woman, but she desperately wanted him to accept her. Why?

Jacob's eyes narrowed. "But you're not marked." He pushed the blanket off her shoulders, which fell down around her feet, and tilted her chin to each side to view her neck.

"I never said I was mated."

"I won't be so foolish. Once I fuck you, I plan on marking you properly." They stared at each other, the world disappearing, leaving them in a private bubble of time and space. He stroked her hair, tucking it behind her ears. "You're beautiful." His fingertips traced her jawline, then down her neck. When a single finger painted an invisible trail down her cleavage, her nipples tightened, and pussy clenched.

She had nothing to say. Carna could tell him she couldn't compare to the sluts on the dance floor, or tell him he only wanted one thing from her and nothing more, but instead she reached up on her tiptoes and nipped his jaw. She wanted Jacob, needed him. She wanted him to forget his other lovers and become lost in her scent alone.

"That's right. Don't fight it." He wrapped his big, warm arms around her waist and pulled her against his body, the rough material of his jeans grazing her swollen clit. Although she couldn't see the moon from the windowless room, she blamed her heightened hormones on its energy. If she didn't, it could mean she had feelings

and desires for the bear shifter, and her life was complicated enough without adding unnecessary emotions into the mix.

He leaned down to kiss her. His mouth was warm and dominated hers with sensual skill. She had to concentrate on keeping her legs upright when her body became instantly bombarded with wicked sensations. Carna may be independent and not quick to trust a male, but she was also hungry. She recalled her night with Austin and Blue which only added to the heat already flooding her veins.

"You're mine, Carna. I'm gonna take good care of you." He squatted down on his haunches, grabbing her ass in each hand while covering her nipple with his hot, wet mouth. Jacob was so quick to pleasure her, so confident in his actions. She liked a take-charge man, a mate with the strength to protect her from any threat and the tenderness to be a perceptive lover. Her breasts were so sensitive, her nipples tight bundles of nerves. She liked getting her own way, and right now she wanted Jacob.

There were three quick, light knocks on the door before it swung open. Jacob rose to his feet in seconds, blocking her naked body from view. She peered past his shoulder to see the intruder. A cute blonde in a red corset and miniskirt put on her best seductive smile.

"I didn't know you were scheduled for tonight, Jacob. I've missed you." The woman was human. The longer Carna studied her, the redder her vision became.

"I'm not really here." He didn't dismiss her which further irritated Carna.

If Jacob's intentions were honorable he shouldn't have to hide their relationship from a co-worker. Carna was no wallflower. "The door was closed, sweetheart. Keep it that way." Her words held the full potency of venom she felt. She moved enough to the side so she could glare at the girl, goading her to fight for the bear, but covered enough to hide her nudity. And she'd fight without hesitation.

"Oh. I didn't know you had a visitor. Should I go?"

She dug her claws into Jacob's biceps. "Yeah. I think you better, Angel."

"Angel?" Carna spat, her fangs lengthening behind her lips. The door clicked shut.

"It's her name—" Jacob didn't have time to finish speaking. Somewhere, soul deep, she had the intense, undeniable urge to mark

Jacob. *Hers*. She wouldn't share him. Had to claim him. Carna pulled his neck down to her level and sank her fangs in deep. She bit through muscle and tendon, tasting the sharp metallic flavor of his blood as it pooled around her tongue. Her eyes lolled back in her head as she savored the connection, his taste, and the overwhelming feeling of warmth and belonging.

She'd never bit a male before. When the act was complete, the weight of what she'd done came crashing down around her. They were connected, bonded, and she hadn't even ascertained if he wanted her for status and nothing more. Men were geniuses at lying and deceiving women. She wasn't born yesterday, which was why she continued to remain skeptical...not to mention the fact she'd been kidnapped for being a princess.

He stared at her with no expression, just intensity. She licked the rivulet of blood on her lower lip, maintaining eye contact. "I like possessive women. They turn me on."

"It doesn't mean anything. It's the moon, nothing more."

"You're a shifter, so I don't have to explain the significance of the love bite to you." He ran his fingertip along the smooth plane of her neck. Did she want to be marked? "What's good for the goose..."

"I'm not an icon," she whispered. Her body demanded to be sated, but she was terrified of being used as a status ticket. The more she thought about it, the more she realized how draining it was to keep running and hiding. She had no roots, no attachments, and no security. Jacob represented safety and they had a unique connection through their mating. Was it really that simple? Could she let down her guards to trust the bear shifter with her heart?

He tugged off his t-shirt and unzipped his jeans, securing her wrist with his free hand. "Of course not. You're my little wolf. Mine." Once his cock was freed, she couldn't resist looking down. Jacob appeared even larger than the last time she saw him naked. "And now I'm gonna make you mine." Yes, her wolf howled within her.

Jacob lifted her up against the wall with ease. This wasn't going to be sweet and tender, but hard and fast. She couldn't disagree with his intentions, she needed to be fucked. Whether it was the moon's pull or her desire for her new mate, she needed release in the worst way. She wrapped her legs around his hips, arching against

him. When he began to prod her pussy with his impossibly thick cock, her heart rate picked up and she tensed.

She didn't realize her claws dug into his shoulders. He didn't even flinch. "You like it rough, do you?" He smirked. "I can give you rough." He fed his cock into her pussy, an inch at a time. The moisture from her arousal guided him deeper. He filled her, stretched her like never before, and continued to press until balls deep in her heat. Carna couldn't help the guttural moan that escaped her lips. His cock quenched the fire in her cunt, but also ignited her desire for more.

"That's not very rough," she dared to mutter. Now that she'd accepted his cock, she wanted the party to begin. She needed Jacob to ride her hard, ram into her pussy with the stamina she knew his beautiful body was capable of.

"I haven't even started yet, little one." He nipped her ear, his breath hot against her hypersensitive flesh. "You don't have to beg."

She growled, but he shut her up with his hungry mouth. Kissing was so much more intimate than sex alone. She dared to close her eyes and absorb his affection. It felt good. When he began to thrust in and out of her body, without breaking their kiss, her world spiraled out of control. Every pump of his hips sent a ripple effect of sensation scattering through her body. Heat built up in her extremities, and the feel of his firm, muscled skin under her touch was erotic as hell. She wanted to kiss, nip, and lick every inch of his masculine body, but right now her body wanted release.

"Yeah. Like that," she grated. "I'm almost there."

Her looming orgasm swelled inside her, so close to breaking free. As she neared that point of no return, her pussy spasming around Jacob's erection, he pulled her closer, nearly cutting off her air. His strong arms enveloped her. Then she felt it—his bite. She gasped, but didn't pull free. The sharp stab of pain mixed with erotic pleasure set her orgasm loose. Wave after wave of pulsing heat washed through her. Jacob didn't release his bite. His fangs and dick connected them in one trembling mass of sweat glistening flesh.

She may have had her doubts about Jacob before he marked her, but not now. As soon as he broke her skin, their bond was cemented. Carna could sense his emotions, his intentions. She wasn't sure if she was more afraid now or when she thought he was playing her. Love would change everything.

Chapter Eight

Carna burst out the doors at the rear of the club. She needed to think, to breathe. Her recent orgasm had literally rocked her world and she needed to anchor herself and contemplate the future. She was now a marked woman, forever bonded to Jacob. Not that she was complaining. Life on the run was tiring. Jacob may have been involved in her kidnapping, but sometimes fate worked in mysterious ways. She was sure they were meant to be together. But what about the others? Carna had strong feelings for Austin and Blue when they were together. Even now, thinking about them, sent her pulse racing with new desire. *Stupid moon*. She looked up at the white sphere and cursed. Somehow that otherworldly mass controlled her every month, increased her sexual need until she was willing to bed nearly any male.

Normal shifter females lost their urge to roam once they mated. They desired their mate and no one else. But Carna was far from normal. Being a royal meant she was destined for more than one lover—the more the better. It offered more fresh blood, more diversity, into the world. Her mother had three mates, as did most of her foremothers.

"That color looks good on you."

Carna whirled around. In the dark shadows lingering along the brick building was the silhouette of a man. He leaned casually against the wall, one leg bent up.

She pinched the shirt Jacob gave her, feeling the soft material between her fingers. Purple. "Who are you?" It took a lot to frighten Carna. Her greatest fear was imprisonment, but anything else she could deal with.

He pushed off from the wall. When the moonlight highlighted the handsome planes of his face, she audibly gasped, "It's you..."

"Marcus." He walked a half circle around her, sizing her up. "I helped you escape, but I guess it didn't do you much good." Marcus tilted her chin up and ran his finger over Jacob's bite mark.

She shrugged away, allowing her long hair to fall forward. How could she forget her tiger? He'd comforted her, defended her, and set her free from her kidnappers. The last couple days had been

such a blur that she'd forget the sexy blond with the golden eyes. Now he was here, wearing a sleek business suit, his short hair gelled back. "Thanks for that," she said.

"I haven't stopped thinking about you. I thought the others were nuts keeping you confined, trying to decide who'd get to keep you." He licked his thick lips. "But now I understand."

"Oh?"

"You're more than worth the effort. But unlike my friends, I can provide everything you need." Marcus smoothed her dark hair from scalp to tip, his hand gently brushing the outside edge of her breast. Her nipples tightened and a shiver crept up her spine. "A princess must be used to the best. Nice home, nice clothes, jewelry?"

"I've had enough of trinkets and bribes. What I need is real love. Are you capable of loving me, tiger? As you've seen, I'm a mated woman. That's usually enough to turn off a shifter."

"I don't give up easily. Besides, if I remember correctly, a female of royal blood will never be satisfied with one mate."

True. The fact she craved Marcus in carnal ways, even after being marked within the hour, proved the theory. Had fate led the four shifters to search for Carna and find her? It was beginning to seem more and more likely considering no other males held such power over her. It had been easy for her to satisfy her libido and walk away from a male in the past.

"So you think you're up to being one of my mates? You'd be able to share me with other men?" She scoffed. The tiger was an alpha and she doubted he'd be able to watch his woman being passed around. But weren't Austin and Blue also alpha males? They'd shared her without issues.

"I'm sure we could come to an understanding. I've never met a woman so full of life before." His golden eyes stared at her with heated intensity. "From the first time I saw you, I knew you had to be mine. No matter what."

"Jacob won't go for it." He was such a dominant male. She could already envision a fight breaking out and she wouldn't have it.

"I'm a business man. We'll all talk. If he really cares about you, he'll want what's best for you."

Blue easily tracked Carna's scent to a room near the back of the club. The door was locked, so he kicked it open. Inside the small

space, Jacob rose from a sofa, his eyes narrowed. "What are you two doing here?"

"We should ask you the same thing, *friend*." Blue wanted to rip Jacob a new one for stealing their woman away. She belonged to him and Austin. They'd all shared something special, and he wouldn't allow the bear to just take her without a fight.

"I saved her from hunters. Without me she'd probably be dead by now. Where were you guys? Having a nap in a cave?"

"So she owes you?" Blue scoffed. "How about I pay off her debt?" He'd pay him back with teeth and claws. Already his panther screamed to escape, and he had difficulty reining it in. Even with Club Frenzy packed with an equal amount of humans to shifters, he'd expose himself to protect his woman. Marked or not, Carna was still his.

"You're a little late. She's a mated woman now." He ran his tongue over his upper lip. "Sweetest thing I've ever tasted." The bastard tried to rub it in, taunting Blue with narrowed eyes and an evil smirk.

"Close the door," he barked to Austin. The shift was coming whether he wanted it to or not. In less than a minute his body morphed into the large black panther. With lips curled up in a vicious snarl, he dared Jacob to step an inch closer. He tear him limb from limb if he tried to keep Carna away from him and Austin. Somewhere along the way, he and the wolf shifter decided they were meant to share the princess, just as history intended for royal she-wolfs. Working as a team felt natural, both with the same drive to rescue and keep her. Austin may have been a playboy before, but Blue could sense his sincerity, his new devotion for Carna.

"Cute little kitty cat. How about I let my bear loose to play with you?" Jacob stood up and crossed his arms over his wide chest. He may be able to shift, but it would take him a minute, just enough time for Blue to exact some lasting damage. If Austin joined in, they'd be able to double their efforts and take down the threat.

As expected, Jacob lowered into a crouch, the energy in the room charged as he began his transformation. Already the bear began to show through, so Blue acted immediately. He leapt forward, sinking his teeth into the shifter's mutating arm. The bear-man roared, pulling Blue into the air, still latched on his flesh. The bass of the

music suddenly dominated the space, silencing the sounds of their struggle as the door to the small room opened.

Austin reacted before Blue could glance over to the entrance. "How the hell did you get here?"

"Car service." Marcus, his best friend, had found them. Blue thought the tiger had no interest in Carna when he didn't tag along with him and Austin earlier. But, apparently, he had his own agenda.

Then he scented her before he even knew she was there. *Carna*. Her sweet, erotic perfume tantalized him. He loosened his hold on the bear and turned to her direction—a near fatal mistake. A heavy, clawed paw came down over his back leaving a searing streak of pain in its wake.

"Both of you! Shift back now!" Carna slammed the door shut and put herself between him and Jacob without hesitation. They could kill her by accident in their wild state, but she appeared unfazed, no fear lingering in her eyes, only anger.

Blue complied with her wishes, as did Jacob, which surprised him. He grabbed a scrap of fabric from the floor and held it against his body to cover his nudity. Jacob didn't have the same modesty, charging over to Carna, and pulling her into his arms. "Don't be mad. It was his fault, not mine."

"In case you've both forgotten, this club is swarming with humans. Are you that selfish that you'd expose your race over some macho, territorial bullshit?" Carna seethed, attempting to shrug out of Jacob's arms—unsuccessfully. "Look... You're both hurt."

"Who cares about us," said Blue. The pain in his back was only an afterthought. He needed to claim his woman. The mere idea she'd reject him and stay with Jacob, sent his heart racing and his blood running cold. "You're what matters. Me and Austin came here for you."

"As did I," said Marcus. His best friend remained calm, casually watching the drama unfold in front of him. Being a massive Siberian tiger, and filthy rich, could give a shifter that level of confidence. Who would Carna choose?

"None of you give up easily, do you?" Carna slipped away from Jacob and paced the room. Her long dark hair, reminiscent of her untamed wolf, fluttered as she twisted back and forth. "I don't have a problem mating with each of you, because I'll admit, my wolf wants all four of you. But—"

Austin snagged her sleeve and pulled her against his frame.
"What about the woman? Do you want us too, sweet thing?"

The room was small, too small. Were the walls closing in on her? So much erotic, male heat swirled around her, making her feel lust drunk. Not just any males either. These were the four who'd pulled at her heartstrings. Jacob was already hers. *Her bear*. But the scent of the alpha wolf holding her was impossible to ignore. Blue and Marcus also had an intimate pull on her.

Moisture pooled between her legs. Could they smell her heat? Their hooded eyes and parted lips gave her the answer. They converged on her like moths to a flame after they became aware of her arousal. *Four mates*. Had it ever been done, was it possible? She realized she could never choose between them. The thought of losing just one made her anxiety level skyrocket. They were each a piece to a puzzle that she needed to keep whole.

"She wants us," said Marcus. *Yes*. Four perfect, beautiful, dominant men...just for her. Her pussy sparked to life from the possibilities. Would they share her? All of them?

"Why do you want me, tiger? Looking for more status?" She couldn't just ignore the fact they'd tracked her down for being a royal. Being only a breath away from committing to these males, she had to know.

Austin leaned down and kissed her on the lips, his tongue invading her mouth. When he pulled away, he shook his head in disapproval. "The status talk is gettin' old, darlin'. Is your wolf that out of tune? Can't you feel our desire, our love? Fate's in control here. I believe that with my heart and soul."

"Stop being stubborn, Carna." Blue pressed against her side, his hard cock nudging her. "We want you. All you need to do is accept us. Allow us to make you ours."

"We promise to take good care of you," said Marcus. This time she knew he wasn't just talking about money. Wicked desires swirled in his golden eyes. She tried to imagine the things these four males could do to her body, but stopped herself. Reality would be far more pleasurable in this case.

Chapter Nine

She watched as Marcus slipped off his dark suit jacket and set it on the arm of the sofa with care. There was a hunger in his eyes that excited her. She wasn't a delicate human, but a royal wolf shifter, and she could take a hard fucking. After tonight, these four males would be hers, her property, her future. If any woman dared to try and tempt them away, she'd fight for them—and she wouldn't lose.

Carna remembered how good it felt to have two cocks filling her body. Now four shifters vied for her attention. No more running. She'd let it all go tonight, and allow them to ravish her body how ever they desired. Heat already warmed her lower stomach, the familiar cramping becoming more and more prevalent.

Austin began to undress her, slowly. Her skin was so sensitized. The brush of the material over her stomach as he lifted it off, the gentle caress from the backs of his fingers as they grazed her breast—every touch drove her mad.

"After tonight, you'll have four love bites, not just one." Austin ran his tongue along the shell of her ear. "Which means you'll have four devoted males ready to protect you and make love to you on a moment's notice."

She liked the sound of that. No more hiding from the world and the crazed shifters hoping to mate with a nameless face. These men may have sought her for the wrong reasons, but fate intervened somewhere along the way. She knew they'd love her, even if she decided to turn her back on her calling and never have pups. Her world was finally coming together. After their mating was sealed, she could focus on finding her sisters without worrying about being captured. With Jacob, Blue, Austin, and Marcus guarding her like overprotective lovers, she'd be able to walk the streets in peace. She knew they wanted to please her, so she had no doubt they'd help her protect her sisters until they found their own mates.

Marcus loosened his tie, a devilish smirk playing on his lips. Her wolf whined within her, eager to sample the tiger's decadent body. Carna had yet to bond with Marcus, and couldn't wait to feel his cock sliding home.

They stripped her naked. Their hungry eyes roaming over her curves stoked the fire burning in her core. She stifled her growl

because she didn't want them to know the depths of her desperation. Watching them unclothe brought out her beast. So much male muscle and flesh, all finely toned and powerful. They towered over her in height, their broad shoulders creating a virtual wall of heat around her. She closed her eyes and drifted—the scent of sex in the air acting like an aphrodisiac.

"You're beautiful, Carna." Blue's voice was a sweet caress, lulling her into submission. They carried her body, so many hands supporting her as they transferred her to the small bed in the corner. Once she was flat on her back, she dared to peek open her heavy eyelids. The glow from the panther's eyes was right in front of her as he moved in for the strike. His teeth sunk deep into the side of her neck. As she arched up and took in a deep breath, another mouth clamped over her clit. There were hands everywhere—rough, strong hands of alpha shifters. Her legs were held open, her breasts kneaded and toyed with. As their desire grew, their gentle handling diminished, and their beasts were set free.

They nipped too hard, not hard enough. Fingers splayed in her hair before curling into a tight fist, pulling her hair to the point of pain, but it hurt so fucking good. She loved it rough, loved it wild. If her mates were all sugar and spice, she'd die of boredom. These men were true males, true shifters, offering her a wicked mix of pleasure and pain.

"You might want a taste of this, Jacob. Her pussy's sweet as honey." She opened her eyes and watched Marcus and Jacob trade places between her legs. Despite trying to pull her knees together, the other men held her legs apart. Their fingers bit into her flesh as eager tongues teased her nipples. Her sanity was held together by a thread as her body was bombarded with every kind of pleasure. She wanted to scream and beg, but maintained the little composure she had left and panted through the wicked onslaught of Jacob's skilled tongue.

As she entered the heavenly realm of pre-orgasmic bliss, the men flipped her over until she straddled Blue's ripped body. His hard cock sat between her legs, the impressive length pressing against her stomach.

"Good girl, Carna," Marcus whispered in her ear from behind. "We're going to make you feel good tonight." He nipped her earlobe, sending erotic shivers throughout her body. "I can't wait to feel your ass squeeze the seed from my dick."

"Sit on Blue's cock, darlin'. Look how hard he is for you." Hearing Austin so willing to share her, opposed to the usual male posturing, allowed her to truly relax and enjoy their attention. She rose up on her knees, and grabbed Blue's thick cock. Even before she impaled herself over the steel-hard erection, she imagined how it would feel filling her, quenching the fire. When she lowered herself over his length, she gasped at the intensity of sensation wracking her body. Sitting on Blue's cock, Marcus' hard body behind her, and the audience of males watching her every move nearly brought her to a spontaneous climax.

She dropped down until her breasts squeezed flat against Blue's hard chest. Skin to skin, heat to heat. She whispered in his ear, "What's your real name?"

"Sebastian," he grated, as he secured her hips with his hands.

"Well, Sebastian. Now you're mine." First, she licked the golden plane of his neck, tasting and testing. *Then she bit.* The blood, the connection, the sweet, unique flavor brought her orgasm to the surface. By the time she sat up straight, a trickle of blood running down her chin, her pussy pulsed strong and urgent. She rode him hard, rising up and slamming down until she could feel his cock nudging her womb. He filled every inch of her, making her feel pleasantly full...but she needed so much more.

Marcus reached around her body and pinched her swollen clit. *She ignited.* Her pussy began to spasm in deep, rhythmic waves, milking Blue's thick cock. She panted as the pleasure held her captive, stole her last shred of control.

"Now you're ready for me, beauty." With her body pliant and her mind in a lust-filled haze, she only jolted to the present when Marcus' lube-covered dick prodded her ass. With the effects of her orgasm still strong, she eagerly accepted his invasion. She wiggled against the firm head of his cock as he attempted to wedge it into her body. Blue's cock was still thick and ripe within her, so squeezing in proved difficult. She braced her forearms on Blue's chest as Marcus worked himself into her nether hold. Her body tensed as he passed the tight anal ring of muscle, but she held on, knowing the pleasure that awaited her once she received the full length of his cock in her ass.

Her lovers must have sensed her trepidation because Jacob quickly pulled her higher so he could suckle her breast, like a starved

cub. Austin reached between the tight space separating her body and Blue so he could toy with her clit, sending a much needed rush of hormones through her body. Moments later, Marcus was fully seated in her ass, two cocks crammed balls deep in her body. Her cunt began to spasm again, every cell in her body a live wire.

"*Fuck me.*" She barely recognized the deep tone of her voice, a feral threat by a woman on the edge of shifting.

Before Marcus began to thrust, he bit into the meaty part of her shoulder with razor-sharp fangs. As soon as she gasped from the connection, he pumped his hips. A multitude of sensation transported her out of reality, out of her skin. She felt as if she were floating, and every beautiful spark of pleasure added to a rainbow of color behind her closed eyes. Both shifters rocked her body with untiring stamina.

"Carna. Open your eyes, sweet thing." Austin stood on the mattress beside her, bracing a hand on the ceiling. His cock bounced in front of him, thick and proud. Her mouth watered from the sight. Carna licked her lips, the other two men still working her body. Austin pulled her head forward, guiding her mouth to his waiting cock. She latched on, trying her best not to nick him with her fangs. His erection felt like hard steel under a layer of silk between her tongue and pallet. Carna sucked deep, expelling her energy on the thick meat in her mouth. Austin's strangled moans, and Marcus' masculine grunts, spurred her on.

She knew Blue was close to coming, his pace becoming urgent. Every thrust massaged her sensitized clit, making it difficult for her to hold off a second orgasm. And she did want to hold off. This experience was one she wanted to savor. Carna didn't hold back tonight, but allowed herself to let go and enjoy what the shifters offered. This was it, the real deal—this was forever.

Where was her bear? She needed all four to make the moment perfect. To make their ménage a cinq complete. As if sensing her need, Jacob was there, opposite Austin. She released the wolf shifter and grabbed both hard cocks in her fists, using them to stabilize her.

"Suck me, Carna. I want to feel your lips around my dick." She wanted to taste Jacob, so didn't wait. Leaning toward him, she licked the smooth head of his erection. He tasted earthy and rich, exactly what she expected a bear shifter to taste like.

Blue suddenly gripped her hips harder, his fingers biting into her flesh and jostling her off the cock she was busy sucking. The

panther rode her hard, her breasts bouncing and swaying with each mighty thrust. Marcus reached around her and plucked at her clit while fucking her deep and hard from the rear. She loved the fullness of being penetrated by two men, every inch of her stuffed full.

"Carna, come!" Marcus demanded. She could hear the growl of his tiger in his voice which helped her reach her peak.

The three of them exploded as a group. Powerful bursts of cum filled her pussy and ass. Her orgasm blinded her, pulled her into another plane of pleasure. She gasped for breath, digging her claws into Blue's broad shoulders. With her pussy convulsing and milking the men, she couldn't keep upright, and collapsed forward. Marcus slipped gently away, leaving a kiss on her back. *What a rush.*

Blue tucked her into the crook of his arm, and she settled in, needing to rest. She could barely open her heavy lidded eyes, but continued to watch as Jacob and Austin pumped their beautiful cocks to completion. White arches of ejaculate sprayed over Carna's stomach and breasts. She growled, thoroughly turned on as her men marked their territory—her. Unlike a human female, she wasn't offended by their raw display. Semen was intimate, precious, the virility of a male.

"You're not as delicate as you look." Marcus smirked, returning with a small towel to carefully clean her body. All she could think about was sleep because once she was rested they could continue their mating party.

Chapter Ten

Jacob pushed himself up off the floor and looked around the darkened room. The only light came from the thin line under the doorway. The air was thick and humid and he needed to get out for a breather. He pulled on his jeans and leaned over his bed to check on Carna. It felt good to have someone to care for. Life would no longer be just about him and his needs. Everything would be about her now and he reveled in the feel of being a mated male.

When he didn't see his woman, only Blue's bare back and Austin's feet, he searched the rest of the room. Marcus had chosen to shift into his tiger form, curled up asleep at the foot of the bed—but no sign of Carna.

"Hey!" He kicked the big cat and flicked on the lights.

Blue sat up with a start and Austin lifted his head, his eyes heavy with sleep.

"Turn the lights off," Austin groaned, pulling a pillow over his blond head.

"Where's Carna?"

"She went to the bar for a drink of water," said Marcus, already shifted back to his human form.

"What?" Jacob bellowed. Club Frenzy was a mad house. Not the kind of place he wanted his mate wandering around unattended. His protective instincts soared within him, making his claws break free. He reined in his bear—he was probably overreacting.

"She's not exactly a helpless puppy, Jacob." Austin had a lazy grin on his face. Yes, she'd be able to protect herself from a threat, but she shouldn't have to with four men devoted to her. In the least, she should be monitored from afar.

"When did she leave?"

"I can't remember. I fell asleep." Now a streak of worry crossed Marcus' face, which only served to heighten Jacob's need to find Carna.

Blue and Austin must have sensed the change of energy in the small room because they both began to pull on shirts and pants. Jacob burst from the room, bare-chested and ready to raise hell. The colored lights and techno beat of the music danced around him in a

blur. Everything only impeded his task of finding his mate. Her scent was masked by the multitude of smells and hundreds of bodies.

The black painted bar at the back of the club was crowded with club patrons. Most of them recognized Jacob, attempting to greet him, but he was only focused on his task. He brushed two human males aside with disregard and leaned over the bar. "Paul, you see a she-wolf recently? She might have asked you for a drink."

"There're plenty of wolves in the place tonight, Jacob. Cougars and foxes, too. What's your flavor? Blonde, brunette? Let me know and I'll set you up." The human male was one of the popular players that hung out at the club on weekends. Right now he only annoyed Jacob. The bartender was a shifter and would know what he was talking about.

"I was just on my break. Ask Steve. He relieved me."

Jacob bound through the revelers, pushing the sweaty bodies aside as he bee-lined to the front entrance. Normally he loved his job, loved working at Club Frenzy, but now the darkness, lights, and music only inhibited his need to track down Carna. Hands reached out and caressed his bare flesh as he passed. The other three shifters followed behind him now.

Steve was guarding the front entrance. He was a wolf-shifter like Carna and Austin. If anyone had picked up her scent, it would be him.

He landed a heavy hand on his co-worker's shoulder. Steve spun around, a scowl on his face until he recognized Jacob. "What's up?"

"You see a she-wolf at the bar earlier? Long black hair."

"Yeah I saw her alright. More like scented her. Who is she?"

Jacob bristled. The light in Steve's eyes, and desire in his tone, brought the dire reality to the forefront. Every shifter was a potential threat. They'd be able to scent Carna's royal blood and they'd do anything to possess her. "She's my mate and she's missing." He ground his teeth together, awaiting the man's response. If someone had dared to touch her, he wouldn't hold back. No one touched his little wolf.

After the sex marathon, Carna had fallen asleep, only to awaken with a nagging thirst. She whispered in her magnificent tiger's ear that she'd be right back. He only purred when she stroked

his head, his eyes never opening. No doubt her men would be tired after what she put them through for hours.

"Can I get an iced tea?" she asked the bartender at the rear of the club. She sat on a swiveling stool and looked around. Did these people ever go home? The club was in full swing with scantily clad women grinding up to multiple men everywhere she looked. She wasn't used to this lifestyle. Back home, in the royal palace, she'd been doted over and sheltered from the outside world. Once on her own, she kept in hiding, only venturing out when necessary. Although the vibrant, erotic energy around her pulled her in, she resisted, eager to return to the protection of her four mates.

"Here you go, pretty lady." The wolf shifter set her glass, with a wedge of lemon hooked to the side, in front of her, and eyed her with interest. She was used to men falling all over her. Her royal blood carried a unique scent, irresistible to male shifters. She'd hoped the effect would wear off once she mated, but apparently not. In fact, there were many eyes on her. She sipped her iced tea while scanned the crowd. Was every shifter staring in her direction or was she being paranoid?

"Thanks. Give Jacob the bill for me, will ya?" He nodded, and she slipped back into the crowd, carrying her glass. As she navigated the dancers, her wolf growled within, raising her hackles. She was being followed.

Carna moved as fast as she could considering the wall of bodies surrounding her. Her wolf wanted to take over, and she'd like nothing more than to shift and feel the safety of her fur. Teeth, claws, and animal strength were often a good deterrent for unwanted suitors. When the dancers began to pull at her clothes, touching her body, her claws broke free against her will. The revelers wanted her to become one with the bass of the music, as they were, but she wanted no part of it. She shrugged them off, plowing forward as best she could without inflicting damage on the soft-skinned humans.

"*Princess!*" When she heard the single word, her blood ran icy cold. She froze before turning toward the voice. Two male shifters stood side to side, their faces a blank slate.

Should she ignore them? Maybe it was a coincidence and they weren't actually addressing her. She was so close to Jacob's room. If she could only get there, her mates would protect her. These two shifters wouldn't think twice about kidnapping her if they knew

her true identity. They'd force her to mate with them without an ounce of regard for her feelings or safety. Her four lovers may have stolen her, but they never forced her to do anything. She could hardly blame the inbred desire for males to seek a royal female, but that didn't mean she wanted any part of these two strangers.

She bolted, weaving her way to the one door that symbolized safety. So close. Before she could make her escape, strong hands wrapped around both her arms, and lifted her from the ground. She kicked and struggled, but they moved like a machine toward the rear exit. Why didn't anyone try and help her? If these massive males got her alone in the rear alley, they'd have complete control. Even if she shifted and got in a few good bites, there were two of them and one of her.

The dark-haired shifter kicked open the emergency bar of the rear door, and they spilled out into the cool night air. With the full strength of the moon shining down on them, Carna's strength grew. She was about to shift when a black sedan sped down the laneway and braked right alongside them. The door opened and Carna was shoved inside.

"For the love of the gods, where is she?" Austin dragged a hand through his tousled hair, but wanted to rip it out by the roots. She'd just disappeared. The bouncer, Steve, had seen her leave the bar, but nothing more. Blue, Marcus, and Jacob had split up. They planned to scour every inch of the club's interior for a sign, and then they'd do the same for the outside perimeter. Austin had never seen his friend, Jacob, so intense. He liked that Carna's other three mates loved her as he did. No way would he tolerate a male using her because she was royalty. The four of them were committed, soul deep.

They met at the rear of the club where her scent was the strongest. Austin didn't like it. He knew she'd never try and run from them again, not after receiving four love bites and giving back in return. If she was missing, it was against her will.

"I'm shifting," said Blue.

"You can't. This place is swarming with humans. You'll start a panic if they see your panther prowling the streets." Marcus stood in the center of the lane way, just as distraught as the rest of them.

"You think I give a shit at this point," said Blue. "My panther will be able to track her better than any of us. Are you okay with the idea of other males assaulting her right now, as we speak?"

"Just do it!" growled Marcus, now pacing the tight confines behind the club.

Austin was never one to be open with his feelings. He'd dated countless women, shifters and humans, and enjoyed his bachelor lifestyle. But he wasn't just a pretty face. He had needs, dreams, fears, and insecurities like anyone else. His own mother had been killed by a hunter when he was a pup. The thought of losing the only other woman that meant anything to him, crushed his chest like a vice. He had to find his little mate. The alpha wolf inside him howled to be freed, to seek revenge for what he considered the highest crime. It may have taken a lifetime to find his true mate, but now he'd found her. Nobody fucked with his woman.

Chapter Eleven

"He's onto something!" Jacob, Marcus, and Austin chased down the street after the panther. Blue had suddenly perked to life after sniffing around the rear of the club, and took off in a soundless pursuit down the side street. He slowed behind a car with deeply tinted windows parked on the side of the road by the curb. Now Jacob could scent what had enticed the panther—Carna. She wasn't scared, which was good, but her energy was volatile.

Without thinking, Jacob pounded his fist onto the trunk of the vehicle, denting the metal. Austin attempted to open the side doors, but they were locked, and the engine suddenly started. No way would Jacob let them get away with his woman. He'd never find her if they drove her out of tracking range. His only thought was to grab the rear fender and lift the car so it couldn't get traction with its rear-wheel-drive, even if it tore the ligaments from his arms. But it wasn't necessary.

Marcus leapt into a seamless shift, replacing his skin with the massive body of his Siberian tiger. He guarded the front of the car, the wheels burning rubber as the car tried to overpower the dead weight barring its escape.

"Get the door open, Austin!" shouted Jacob as he attempted to slow the car down from the rear.

But the door opened, and Carna's sweet voice carried out into the night. The engine died and the four shifters converged on the open door. "Carna!" shouted Blue. He pulled her out of the car and held her in a tight embrace. Jacob proceeded to pull the first male shifter from the car by the scruff of the shirt. Austin was eager to handle the second.

"Thought you could get away with stealing out mate, did you?" Jacob narrowed his eyes, hoping to the gods the male would try and fight him. His entire body felt like a coiled spring of volatile energy looking for a target to unload on.

"It's not what you think, Jacob," said Carna. As he turned to his mate, a second woman exited the vehicle. She had long blonde hair, unlike Carna, but their frames and facial features were strikingly similar. The strange woman had eyes nearly as blue as the panther's. "They aren't kidnappers. Well, not exactly. My mother sent them to bring me home."

"The royal queen sent them?" asked Marcus in disbelief.

"They already tracked one of my sisters before finding me."

She continued to hold the other shifter tight around the waist, directing her anger to the two henchmen. "But I'm not going back. Like I've told them numerous times, I'm a marked and mated woman now, and they can't force me to return home!"

"No need to fret, darlin'." Austin smiled in the devilish way that always got him into trouble. "If you choose to be with us, that's where you'll stay. If these two fellows have other ideas...well, that's just too bad for them." Austin winked at the first male, continuing to hold the second in a not-so-friendly hold.

"Of course I don't want to go back. I've finally found my place in the world, and the only place I belong is with my four mates." Then her eyes beseeched Jacob. "What of my sister? Will you let them take her back against her will?"

The other female wasn't their concern, but Jacob couldn't ignore Carna's wishes. When she looked up at him with those beautiful wolf eyes, he'd do anything she asked.

"I think these two jokers should head back to where they came from before they find themselves in a world of trouble and hurt." Blue and Austin both released their victims. The two male kidnappers didn't even argue, just dashed for the car doors and took off down the street in the dark sedan.

Carna could stay nestled between her mates forever—their warmth, love, and protection cocooned her as she rested.

"We can't stay here forever, sweetheart." Marcus tucked her hair behind her ear. "We'll all move to one of my properties. There's enough space for all of us."

She knew they couldn't stay holed up in Jacob's little room in Club Frenzy forever. But leaving meant moving away from the memory of her sister. She'd only just gotten Freya back, and she promised her protection and peace. But as soon as the threat had passed, her sister took off like a bat out of hell. Was she used to running? Did confinement scare her? Carna knew her sisters loved her as much as she loved them, so she hadn't run out of hatred. Perhaps she had to follow her own path, her own destiny, as Carna had.

All these years, her main goal had been to find Freya and Delia. Although splitting up had been their original idea—the best course of action if they wanted to stay off the radar—it turned out to be the most detrimental choice. Living alone, missing the companionship and love of her sisters, was too much. As soon as she saw Freya in the back of that car, she'd thanked the gods just to see her sweet, angelic face again. Now she was gone.

For the past twenty four hours of unrelenting depression, her mates had never pushed her to smile, or demand she move on. They only loved her, comforted her, and waited until she was ready to take the next step. Losing Freya was similar to mourning a loss. But she knew she'd have both her sisters back at some point—she wouldn't give up until that day. Once all the madness had ended and they were all mated with males of their choosing, they'd reunite and never be separated again.

"She's a big girl. I know she can take care of herself. I just wish we had more time to spend together before she left again." Carna sat up, the men shifting to give her space.

"What can we do for you?" asked Blue. He nuzzled her neck, the heat from his breath teasing her sensitive nerves. "*Anything*. Just say the word."

"Just love me. Love me for who I am, not what I am."

"Always," said Austin. He stood and pulled a fitted white t-shirt over his delicious chest. "That goes without sayin', darlin'." She hated to see him get dressed, but they couldn't stay in bed forever.

"I'll miss my room, but Marcus is right. This place isn't fit for my little she-wolf." Jacob pulled her to her feet. "We'll make a new beginning, the five of us."

She loved the sound of that. Together they'd set down roots, build a future for themselves, and for shifters everywhere. No more hiding, no more running. Carna Demori had found her own little piece of heaven.

The End



Evernight Publishing

www.evernightpublishing.com