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LEWIS'S DREAM

LYNN HAGEN

The
ManLove
Collection

 BRAC PACK 10



Brac Pack 10

Lewis's Dream

Detective Lewis Keating has had enough of cheating men. When a crooked cop steals a stack of files, it's Lewis's job to go through them and close out the ones he can. When a familiar case is found among the files, Lewis decides to question the one person who should be on his list.

Evan Triamade was once told he looked like he breathed pain. A control freak since childhood, the wolf quickly loses his handle on things when his aloof mate shows up to question him about an assault that supposedly happened months ago.

Their relationship is volatile from the start, and Evan is forbidden to see his mate by Alpha Maverick until their differences can be settled. Evan soon finds that convincing his mate not all men are cheaters is harder than he imagined. To make matters worse, Lewis has a drinking problem.

When Lewis is taken by the ex-alpha, Jackson, it isn't Evan who rescues him but the smaller mates of the house and a Xiamen tiger. Lewis thought living among humans was hard, but living in a world of were-creatures tests his very sanity.

Note: Each book in Lynn Hagen's Brac Pack collection features a different romantic couple. Each title stands alone and can be read in any order. However, we recommend reading the series in sequential order.

Genre: Alternative (M/M or F/F), Paranormal,
Vampires/Werewolves

Length: 26,687 words

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A SIREN PUBLISHING BOOK
IMPRINT: Everlasting Classic ManLove

LEWIS'S DREAM
Copyright © 2011 by Lynn Hagen
E-book ISBN: 1-61034-346-8

First E-book Publication: April 2011

Cover design by Jinger Heaston
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DEDICATION

To my dear friend Frank, who has stayed on the right path for a decade now. I'm proud of you.

LEWIS'S DREAM

Brac Pack 10

LYNN HAGEN

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Chapter One

Detective Lewis Keating stared at the file in front of him. It was a case he had worked on months ago.

Detective William Bryce had been arrested and convicted of tampering with evidence, among other things. Many files had been discovered in the detective's home. The one Lewis was looking at was for an assault on one Jeremy Yards, with Cecil Walters being named the assailant.

Lewis remembered this one. He had just been transferred to Brac Village a month prior to investigating the alleged assault.

Lewis had interviewed at least a dozen men who lived in an estate set back in the forest, all corroborating Cecil's alibi.

He could close it. Lewis knew for a fact Cecil hadn't done it. His gut instinct led him to believe this. And his gut usually wasn't wrong.

What harm could it do to talk to the one man that wasn't home at the time? It could be *officially* closed if he did.

There weren't any cases he was currently working on right now that warranted his immediate attention, and a country drive would get him out of the precinct.

Technically, he couldn't close the case until he talked with this...Lewis checked the file for the name of the man he had yet to

Speak with, Evan Triamade.

Sticking his head in his captain's office, he said, "I'm heading out to close this case."

His captain looked up from his paperwork, a gleam of interest in his brown eyes. "Which case is that?"

"The Jeremy Yards assault."

His captain sat back in his seat, his fingers strumming against the arm. "Maverick Brac lives there. He's an upstanding resident here that has done a lot for this community. I know you've only been here under six months, but tread carefully. Do your job, but with caution. I don't want his name turned to mud around here."

"Yes, sir." Lewis left the station, wishing he had just closed the case without further thought. Now he was really looking forward to this, he thought sarcastically.

Lewis was the only detective without a partner. He didn't want one. After his last partner was shot and killed, the department tried to assign one to him, but he found ways around it. He finally put in for a transfer to this small town, hoping they allowed their detectives to fly solo. Thankfully, they did. Shrugging on his bomber jacket, Lewis headed out of the station to his vehicle. A call to assure someone would be there would make sense, but then if this Evan wasn't, Lewis would be stuck sitting behind his desk for the rest of his shift, not something that appealed to him.

The drive took about twenty minutes, the estate located past the outskirts of town, deep into the surrounding forests. It wasn't that bad of a day out. Spring had finally arrived after a chilly winter. The air was warm and the flowers blooming. Pulling his car down the long drive and parking it, Lewis cut the motor and got out, the gravel crunching beneath his wingtip shoes as he made his way to the front door. After knocking, he turned to study the driveway. There were at least ten trucks and a few large SUVs parked there.

"Yes?"

Lewis turned back around, seeing no one until he looked down. A

small Asian man stood there blinking back up at him. At least Lewis thought he was a man. He was so beautiful he was almost feminine.

Shoving his hands in his front pockets, with the file tucked under his arm. "I'm here to see Evan Triamade."

"No strangers." The man-woman wiggled a finger at Lewis.

Didn't this person at least speak English? Lewis remembered the last time he was here. A different male had answered the door, slamming it right back in his face with a look of pure panic in his eyes.

He chuckled at the memory.

"Keata, you're not allowed to answer the door." A gruff voice called out from somewhere Lewis couldn't see.

"I hear knock knock."

"Doesn't matter. You come tell me, mister."

Ah, so he was male. Interesting.

The voice finally had a body to go with it. A large male glared at Lewis as he pulled the shorter man into his arms, a low growl emanating from him. "Who are you?"

Lewis rolled his eyes. As if he would want a twink. At six-three, Lewis preferred his men at eye level, not knee level. "I'm here to speak with Evan Triamade. I'm Detective Lewis Keating."

"I remember you. You interviewed all the wol—men. Something about Cecil beating up his ex."

"That would be me. I didn't get a chance to talk to Evan Triamade. Is he home?" Lewis hated standing on the front steps. Didn't the guy at least have enough manners to invite him in to wait in the foyer?

"He's here. Come on in. I'll go get him." The large man carried the smaller one away with him. The twink smiled back at Lewis over the larger man's shoulders, waving his fingers. Lewis waved back with a smile of his own.

Ten minutes later, Lewis was staring at the most gorgeous man he had ever seen in his life.

The fact that he had an air of lethality to him didn't matter. Lewis wanted to know more about him. This sauntering creature was absolutely magnificent. He looked from the man's face to his crotch then back up at his face again, hoping the guy didn't catch what he had just done.

Mr. Magnificent extended his hand. "I hear you're looking for me. I'm Evan Triamade."

Lewis shook his hand, finding himself temporarily speechless. His amber eyes were intense as he stared at Lewis. They were the most stunning eyes he had ever seen.

They both stood there in the foyer, neither one letting go of the other's hand. Evan was staring at him quizzically, his head cocked to the side. Lewis felt as though he were being measured up.

He cleared his throat. "Detective Lewis Keating, I need to speak to you about this case involving Cecil Walters. Is there somewhere we can talk?" Lewis finally pulled his hand free, blinking to bring himself out of whatever fog his brain was in. He was on duty and a professional. He couldn't let good looks and a killer body that he had an urge to lick all over distract him.

"Sure. Follow me."

Lewis walked behind Evan, staring at the tight fit the denim had over such a sweet looking ass. He had to tuck his hands in his front pockets not to reach out and grab a handful. Could he bounce a quarter off of it? Lewis felt around in his pockets for change. Only his car keys could be felt. He smiled to himself. A guy could try.

His cock was getting rock hard just watching that fine ass move back and forth, hypnotizing him into fantasies. Lewis jerked his head up, nearly running into Evan's back. He was too busy feasting his eyes on the delicious-looking rump.

"We can talk in here." Evan waved his hand over to one of the chairs in the kitchen. Lewis pulled the chair out and sat the file down. He noticed Evan watching him closely.

This unnerved him.

Lewis wasn't here for a date. No matter how much Evan interested him. This was business. Bachelor number one could sit down and answer his questions instead of slowly moving around the table as if stalking him.

Lewis refused to acknowledge the action and the come-hither looks. He now knew how a deer felt when hunted. Not that he was anything like an innocent creature. Far from it.

His pulse raced, and his palms began to sweat, but Lewis refused to let Evan see the slight shake to his hand. Why couldn't he just take a damn seat? Boy how the tables had just turned. But in his defense, he ogled unbeknownst.

Evan pulled two juices from the refrigerator, handing one to him. "Thanks." Lewis took it without looking up. He cleared his throat to get his mind back on track and the purpose he had come here for.

"I know by now you may not remember, but could you tell me to the best of your ability about the night Jeremy Yards was attacked?"

"Cecil didn't do it, and no one in this house would have helped in something like that," Evan replied with quite a bit of hostility in his voice. This surprised Lewis, but he still studied the file rather than drown in those gorgeous eyes.

"So Cecil was here the night in question?"

"Yes." Evan growled low as he reached out and roughly pulled Lewis's head up by lifting his chin.

"Is there a reason you have your hands on me, Mr. Triamade?" Lewis stood, not liking in the least bit someone hovering over him or putting their uninvited hands on his body. Evan was two inches taller than him, hotter than hell, and had a body to worship, but that didn't mean he would tolerate being manhandled by him or anybody else.

Lewis turned his head when the tallest man he had ever seen walked into the kitchen. If memory served him correctly, he was the owner of this home. What was his name again? Lewis glanced down at his file, skimming the names quickly.

Maverick Brac.

“Nice to see you again, Detective Keating. Do you mind if I speak with Evan a moment?”

Lewis was shocked that someone of his stature even remembered his name. Looking from Evan to Maverick, Lewis slowly shook his head.

“I won’t keep him long.” Maverick led Evan out of the room. Lewis took his seat again, wondering what was going on with Evan. Mr. Magnificent was acting as though he owned Lewis, coming off angry for some reason. He tilted his head to the side, trying to see where Evan had gone.

* * * *

“I’m not mated to you, and yet even I can feel the anger rolling off of you. What’s going on, Evan?” Maverick crossed his arms over his chest and leaned against the wall, crossing his ankles.

Evan had not disrespected his Alpha once since joining the pack, but Maverick had no right to pull him away from the kitchen. “Lewis is my mate. He’s in there acting as though he doesn’t even feel the pull, not even acknowledging me.” Evan hissed quietly, his irritation climbing a notch when Maverick’s upper lip lifted into a lopsided smile.

“So the mate bug has finally bitten the Almighty Evan?” Maverick chuckled, shaking his head. “How the mighty have fallen.” His face grew serious in the next breath. “I still don’t understand your anger. You know I do not and will not tolerate mate abuse. Do you expect this human to just fall into your arms, accepting the claiming with no questions asked?”

Evan shrugged. “Yeah.” Even to his ears it sounded stupid. He was used to being in control and having a level head at all times. Lewis was taking that control from him and making him work at getting his attention. Evan wasn’t too happy about that.

“Give him time. Don’t rush this. That man in there”—Maverick

pointed his finger toward the kitchen—"has no clue who or what you are. If I see you bullying him into accepting you, I will step in. Do I make myself clear?"

Evan gave a low growl. He knew Maverick was right, but the urge to claim what was his was riding him strong, clouding his judgment. Not liking it one bit but having no choice, Evan nodded. He watched as Maverick walked away. Rolling his shoulders and taking a cleansing breath, Evan returned to Lewis.

"Is everything okay?" Lewis stood. Evan could see the apprehension in his mate's eyes. Lewis reached down and closed the file he had been reading.

Evan knew Lewis's movements were a signal of his departure. If he wasn't allowed to take what was his, how was he going to keep him? "Everything's fine." Now what? He wasn't just going to let his mate walk out of the front door without a backward glance. He had to think fast.

"I'll let myself out. Thank you for your time." Lewis extended his hand.

Evan stared at it as though it was an alien appendage. He knew he had gotten off to a bad start with Lewis. This situation needed rectifying and fast. "I'm sorry for my behavior. Maybe we could go out to dinner sometime?" Humans liked to date. Tangee, Loco's mate, had proven that. He made the warrior date him a month before moving here from the city, and Tangee was half wolf. Surely Lewis would agree.

"Sorry, I don't mix business with my personal life. It was nice meeting you." Lewis dropped the proffered hand when Evan made no move to take it. Gathering his file, Lewis made for the front door.

Evan watched, feeling helpless. Maverick would stop him if he forced Lewis to come back. Of that, he had no doubt. The only thing keeping him rooted to the spot was the knowledge that he had the detective's card in his room, and that was a way to locate him. Why did the warrior have a feeling that claiming his mate was going to be

harder than he ever thought possible?

“Was he your mate?”

Evan turned to see Blair standing in the doorway of the den. He was mated to the Beta of their pack, Kota. Evan and Blair had formed a bond after the old alpha of the Eastern pack tried to solicit him at the Café. Evan stepped in, saving Blair from the insane wolf. He knew of Blair's past—everyone in the house did, but it didn't matter to them that he used to be a prostitute. The only thing that mattered now was his happiness and well-being.

“Yeah, only he doesn't acknowledge the pull or me. What am I supposed to do? You're human, help me out here.” Evan turned to the mate for guidance. It was a sad day in Evan Triamade's life when he looked to a human for help with his mate. The old pack that he left, being an outcast for being gay, would laugh their homophobic asses off about this one.

* * * *

Lewis drove back to town. *Peeved* because the trip out to talk with Evan hadn't taken as long as he had hoped and now he would be stuck behind his desk for the remainder of his shift. *Pissed* because he couldn't figure out for the life of him why Evan had been so angry. Lewis had done nothing to warrant the attitude toward him. *Confused* at the feeling to turn around and drive right back to Evan, a need so deep to be with him baffled Lewis. *Horny* because it had been what, three months, since the last time he had gotten laid?

When was the last time? Lewis gripped the steering wheel tighter. Patrick, his lousy excuse for an ex. The bastard of a lover had been sneaking around on Lewis. He still wondered how his ex was stupid enough to even try it. Lewis was a detective, for crying out loud. It wasn't just a job. He had a knack for putting puzzle pieces together to solve things. He had the talent since childhood, and that right there was what pissed him off the most about Evan. No amount of

reasoning in his logical brain could figure out why Evan had been so hostile with him.

Lewis hated an unsolved puzzle. Well, it would be just that, unsolved because he wasn't going anywhere near that man anymore. He prided himself on his control and levelheadedness.

When he confronted Patrick about his cheating, listening to the cheating bastard try and lie his way out of it, Lewis had remained calm, in control. It just proved to him how much men couldn't be trusted. They all lied, and they all cheated.

Evan would prove to be no different. With the way that man looked, he probably didn't have a faithful bone in his entire body. No thanks, Lewis had enough of that to last him a lifetime.

He finished up his report, tossing the file on his desk to be dealt with tomorrow. What Lewis needed was a good, stiff drink and a good, stiff cock. Heading out, he steered his car into the city, going to a bar he knew he was sure to get lucky in.

He ordered his favorite drink. Whiskey always made a man forget his troubles. Lewis had the bartender line them up. He needed to forget Patrick's betrayal, Evan's gorgeous amber eyes, and most of all he needed to forget how no man could be trusted.

"Hey, handsome, looks like you're on your way to a good buzz."

Lewis glanced to his right, not even turning his head to the soft voice. He didn't care what the face attached to the voice looked like. All he needed to know was if the guy wanted to fuck. No attachments and no conversation were required. Just a good hard dick.

He felt a vibration on his hip. Now what? Lewis pulled his phone out, holding up his finger to the stranger next to him.

"Keating."

"Lewis. It's Evan."

Like he could forget that deep voice that was darker and smoother than the whiskey he was drinking. Wasn't a fat chance in hell of that happening. "And how may I help you?"

There was silence on the other end for a moment. "Are you

drunk?" Evan asked in a tight voice.

Lewis rolled his eyes. What right did Evan have to sound pissed? It seemed that was Mr. Magnificence's natural state of being. "Why would that be any of your business?"

"Where are you?" Evan demanded.

"The Lucky Seven. Why, you gonna rescue me?" Lewis gave a drunken chuckle. Why should he care if Evan was angry? Wasn't his problem. Evan didn't own him. No one did.

"Yeah, something like that."

Lewis pulled the phone back and stared at it. The shit actually hung up on him. Sliding the phone back into his pocket, Lewis downed another shot, pulling himself off of his stool with wobbly legs. He chuckled again. "Seems I haven't gotten my sea legs yet."

"You don't need them. I'll help."

Lewis stared at the blurry man next to him, feeling an arm slide around his waist. He yanked himself back, a consuming feeling of cheating on Evan making him take a step back from the stranger. What the fuck? A growl ripped from Lewis. He didn't belong to Evan. He didn't even like the prick. Why was he even considering his feelings?

Shaking his head, Lewis leaned back toward the stranger who had pulled him closer. He finally looked up, focusing his eyes on the man who held him. He wasn't bad-looking. A little short for his taste, but what did he care? It wasn't as though he was looking for anything permanent. Just a quick fuck and he could finally relax. Drain the tension that had been a constant for the last few months. Hand jobs were never relaxing to Lewis. He needed a hard body to give him the sort of release he craved.

Stumbling forward, Lewis let One-Night Stand guide him outside. A voice in the back of his mind told him that this was insane. The stranger could be a psycho, and he wasn't in his right state of mind to defend himself if something was to happen. "Shut the hell up."

"Who?"

“My brain.” Lewis stumbled against his car, laughing at the ludicrousness of the situation. He was arguing with himself. Maybe he was finally cracking. A wave of nausea hit him. Bending over, Lewis placed his hands on his knees, trying to suck down air to alleviate the bile rising in his throat. He felt a hand on his forearm, trying to pull him away.

“Come on, you can get sick later. I want to fuck you.” The hands tugged harder, making Lewis stumble forward.

“Give me a damn minute, will ya.” Lewis’s head was spinning. Fear of passing out gripped him. Maybe he shouldn’t have drank so much. It wasn’t the wisest thing to do when alone and away from home. At home he tied one on and passed out on the closest soft surface. Out here there was only a paved parking lot or this jackass’s car.

Taking a deep breath, Lewis stood. Big mistake. He stumbled back against his car, his back slamming against the door.

“Just let me walk you. My car is just right over there.”

Lewis tried to focus on the guy’s hand, seeing where he was pointing. It looked a thousand miles away in his inebriated state. Taking an unsteady step forward, Lewis made his way over to the other man’s vehicle, feeling as though ten hours had passed in his journey of ten feet.

“That’s right, just slide in and relax. I’ll take real good care of you.”

Lewis’s brain was screaming for him to get away from the car, get into his, and put a large distance between him and this man. His instincts were never wrong. Lewis dug his heels in. “I changed my mind. I’m going home...alone.”

“That’s what you think.” Rough hands pulled on Lewis’s arm harder, making him trip over his own feet and slam right into the passenger door of the strangers car. The door was standing open, and he could feel hands on his back pushing him down, trying to get him into the car. This wasn’t right. Something was screaming for Lewis to

pay closer attention to this guy. He was a little too strong for his height and weight.

Lewis fought back, throwing an unsteady punch and missing. He shook his head again, trying to clear it of its alcoholic fog.

“Feisty! I’m going to have fun draining you, big guy.”

All Lewis’s senses went on alert at those chilling words. Was this man a serial killer? Did he plan on opening him up and draining all of his blood? And where the hell did this man get all his strength from? Lewis had to put all his efforts in pushing away from the passenger door.

“Fine. Since you want to do things the hard way.”

Lewis groaned when he felt something hard hit him across his head. He fought to hold on, not to black out, which was easier said than done. “I’m a fucking cop.” He growled as he renewed his struggles.

“Goody. I get to eat a pig tonight.” A harsh cackle made a chill run up Lewis’s spine.

Lewis finally broke free, falling square on his rump in his drunken state. He had to get away. If this stranger managed to get him in his car, Lewis knew it was over.

Chapter Two

Evan yanked the steering wheel, effectively blocking in the car in front of him. Anger the likes of which he had never felt before ripped through him at the sight in front of him. Either his mate was too drunk to get himself into another man's car or the other man was forcing him. Either way, it wasn't going to happen.

He slammed his truck door closed, getting the attention of the fucker touching his mate. Evan's head fell back, a howl tearing from his gut when he noticed the fangs. A vamp was trying to take his mate. He tore straight for the undead bastard, claws extending as he ripped four gashes across the vampire's chest. "Mine!"

The vampire hissed, trying to get his own claws into Evan. Half shifting, Evan sank his canines into the vamp's throat and applied pressure until the vampire's struggles waned down, bile rising in the back of Evan's throat at the taste of the foul blood. He dropped his prey when Lewis moaned.

Evan wiped his mouth, approaching his mate cautiously. Lewis was laid flat on his back, holding his head. Had the vampire taken a bite? Was Lewis hurt? Evan rolled Lewis over, checking for any injury but finding none. Pulling his mate up from the ground, he carried him over to his truck.

"Evan. Want Evan," Lewis mumbled.

Evan's chest tightened. His mate had felt the pull. Relief flooded him. For a time today, Evan had feared the worst, Lewis rejecting him and feeling nothing toward him. "I'm right here. You're safe."

Lewis began to thrash around. "No!" he shouted as he tried to free himself. Evan tightened his grip until his mate lost the energy or the

will to fight him.

“No one is going to hurt you.” Evan buckled the unconscious man into his truck. Going back, he heaved the vampire into the bed, not wanting to leave evidence behind. This had been one hell of a day. When he woke up this morning, the only thing on Evan’s mind was finishing the book he had started. Nothing had prepared him for this. After dumping the undead into the bed of his truck, Evan buckled himself in and started the motor, pulling out of the lot and onto the busy city street.

Merging onto the bypass, Evan reached over and slid his hand in Lewis’s, holding it for contact. The need to be near his mate was strong. The unconscious man moaned a few times, fidgeting around then settling back down. What the hell had happened tonight? Did his mate voluntarily go with the vamp? Did he even know what he was getting himself into? Evan shuddered at the thought of what would have happened to Lewis if he hadn’t called.

Why did he get so drunk in the first place? Was he fighting the pull? Evan was frustrated with the lack of answers for the questions bombarding his mind. When his mate sobered up, Evan had a lot of questions for him to answer.

Pulling into the drive, Evan parked his truck, gently pulling the unconscious man out and carrying him through the front door.

“Is everything okay, Evan?”

“No, there’s a vampire in the bed of my truck. I think he was planning on making a meal of my mate. Deal with him, please.” Evan didn’t wait for a reply from Commander Hawk. He took Lewis up to his room and laid him down.

Evan stood by his bed staring at Lewis, getting a chance to look his fill while the gorgeous man slept it off. He was stunning. Evan ran his hand over the cropped hair. Standard cop haircut. It was a mixture between a deep brown and black, as though it couldn’t quite make up its mind on what color to settle on. He was dying for those baby blues to look at him. That would have to wait.

Evan ran his finger down the vein that ran the length of Lewis's biceps. His mate was in shape and very well-defined. His hand scaled over the flat chest down to the tight abs, daring a glance when he pulled Lewis's T-shirt up an inch, his mouth watering at the dark happy trail disappearing into his waistline. If he didn't stop...Evan shuddered once again, this time with pleasure.

Pulling his mate's boots off, Evan tucked the covers around him, effectively removing the temptation of his mate's body. Leaning forward, he whispered his lips across Lewis's, his eyes closing at the sweet flavor he tasted. Pulling back, Evan was stopped when Lewis's arms draped around his neck, bringing him closer. Lewis deepened the kiss, pushing his tongue into Evan's mouth. Cupping his mate's face, he gave in for a moment, sucking on the pink appendage. The taste made Evan crave more than just a kiss. He pulled Lewis's arms from around his neck. His mate was in no condition for anything tonight. Climbing behind the gorgeous man, Evan pulled the cop to his chest, petting his hair as he fell asleep.

* * * *

Lewis woke with the mother of all headaches. Even the pounding of his temples was too loud for his overly sensitive ears. He lay there for a moment, wondering if he was still drunk. That was one hell of a dream he had last night. What made him dream of vampires and wolves? He couldn't remember watching any movies recently with the creatures in it.

Palming his head, Lewis turned over. He stiffened when he felt a warm body pull him closer, cuddling him. What exactly did he do last night? Reaching down, Lewis felt denim on his legs and cotton on his chest. He still had his clothes on, so it must not have been sex.

"Feeling better?"

Lewis smashed his eyes closed tighter. He knew that voice. He would hear it in a room full of a thousand men talking at once and be

able to pick it out easily.

Evan.

What in the hell was he doing in Evan's bed? What exactly *did* happen last night? "Depends on why I'm in your bed and not my own." Lewis inwardly blanched, not meaning to sound so harsh.

He heard a low growl next to him and felt momentarily regretful knowing he had hurt Evan's feelings.

"You are in *my* bed because I had no clue where you live. After getting so drunk that someone tried to kidnap you, fighting him off unsuccessfully I might add, I had to rescue you. At your request, that is."

Lewis searched his brain, coming up blank on last night's events. Had someone really tried to kidnap him? Why? And how did Evan know where he was at? Rolling over to his other side, Lewis tried to sit up, nausea swamping him. A trash can was shoved under his chin at the exact same moment his stomach decided to return everything he had eaten and drank the previous day. Vomiting was a foul reflex. Lewis always felt worse afterward.

"You're in no condition to get up, let alone leave. Lay back and rest. No one is going to bother you." Evan eased him back once he was done donating his used stomach contents.

"What if I don't want to be here? Gonna force me?" Why was he being so damn mean? Evan had driven all the way to the city to help him, made sure he was safe, and was now playing nursemaid, and all Lewis could do was bite a chunk out of his ass? What was wrong with him?

"Doesn't matter, I won't bother you while you sober up. Sleep it off."

Lewis winced when Evan got up from the bed and slammed the bedroom door behind him. The sound ricocheted through his alcohol soaked brain. Jackknifing, Lewis grabbed the can as vomit shot out of his mouth and nose, stinging his orifices. Dropping the can back down, Lewis fell back onto the bed. Maybe a few more hours of sleep

wouldn't be so bad. Thank god he had today off.

* * * *

Evan ran through the woods. His wolf form ate up the miles as he tried to exorcise the demons hot on his heels. He couldn't understand why his mate hated him so much. Sure, he had been a prick on their first encounter, but only because the need to claim what was his had hit him so hard. He apologized for his behavior. Did that give his mate free reign to spit venom at him?

To go to a bar to seek out companionship from another was a slap in the face. Evan knew without a doubt that Lewis had been ignorant of the fact the man was a vampire, so he was willingly going with another man to do...what exactly? That unknown factor, the thought his mate was going to lie with another, was driving him over the edge.

Evan howled as he ran. No one ever dared treat him this way. Not even his old pack. They voiced their opinion on his sexual preference, but none were foolish enough to challenge him. He had left them of his own free will when his friend Gunnar had told him of Maverick's pack. A pack that was for only gay wolves. That was over two hundred years ago, when he was a thirty-four-year-old pup. To take it from his mate now was bitter-tasting, to say the least.

What in life had shaped his mate to be who he was? What had happened to make him such a cynic? Evan knew if he barged into his bedroom and demanded answers that Lewis would only dig his heels in, refusing to answer anything the wolf asked. This mate stuff wasn't as easy as the others made it look. Wasn't Lewis supposed to follow his every word? Behave as a mate should? On second thought, there were a few mates that didn't behave as they should. The Alpha's mate Cecil was the biggest offender.

That mate kept the Alpha in a ready supply of aspirin. Evan wouldn't be surprised if Maverick started to drink because of his mate and his mischievous behavior, if only Timber wolves could get drunk.

Still, Evan would rather deal with that than the rejection he was getting from Lewis. Was he that bad of a mate? Was the thought of being with him that despicable to his cop?

Evan shifted back to human form, jogging up the stairs to take a shower. He prayed his mate was asleep, not wanting to see the loathing in his eyes. The only thing keeping him sane was the fact that Lewis had said he wanted him last night in his drunken state. His mate's defenses had been down, his true thoughts spilling from his lips.

He cursed to himself when he entered his room. Lewis was lying on the bed staring right at him, a look of defiance on his face. Ignoring the pain his heart felt, Evan headed straight into the bathroom and climbed under the hot spray.

Wrapping a towel around his waist, Evan emerged from the steamy bathroom and straight to his dresser, needing to dress himself before the temptation was too much.

"I'm ready to go home."

Just like that, Evan's anger shot through the roof, spinning around he sneered, "Too damn bad. You'll go when I'm damn good and ready to let you leave."

"And who in the hell made you king?" Lewis raised an eyebrow, his voice calm but filled with sarcasm.

Evan watched as Lewis pushed himself off of the bed, dropping to his knees to look for his boots. Feeling his claws extending, Evan rushed his mate. Lewis stood at the last moment, their chests smacking, and his mate stumbled back onto the mattress. With a human growl, Lewis pushed himself up, shouldering Evan out of his way as he made for the door.

"Don't think so." Evan leapt, anger coursing through his veins at his mate's attempt at leaving him, his aloofness, and his downright lack of concern for anything Evan felt. With all the commotion in the room, Evan didn't notice Tank entering.

Evan howled when he was knocked to the floor, rage consuming

him. The warrior Tank grabbed Lewis around the waist and hauled him off of his feet, carrying him out of the room.

Evan shifted, not caring who it was on his back, wanting only to have his mate returned to him. His jaws snapped, saliva dripping from his muzzle as he fought to dislodge his unwanted guest from him. Evan whined when canines applied pressure to his throat, pushing him steadily toward the floor. Flipping to his back, he got his first glimpse of the wolf subduing him.

Maverick.

His anger dissipating and his movements restricted, Evan lowered his eyes in a sign of submission that ate at his gut. No matter how much he wanted to knock his Alpha off of him, it wasn't going to happen. Maverick was six feet from snout to the tip of his tail and four feet from floor to head. In wolf form, he was the largest Timber wolf ever born at three hundred and ten pounds. Evan wasn't being released anytime soon, at least not from any struggling he himself tried.

The pressure eased, and a tongue licked his throat, nipping it in the process. Evan ran human hands through his hair as he watched Maverick. Once the wolf removed his canines, Evan pushed from the floor, grabbing clothes from his dresser. He didn't need to turn around to see who was entering his room. He knew Maverick's mate, Cecil, was bringing the alpha some clothes to put on.

"I warned you, Evan. If you go near him before next Friday, you will be asked to leave this pack." Maverick's tone was deadly, quiet, and brooked no argument. Evan knew there would be no inches given if he violated this.

What was he going to do about his mate for the next seven days?

"He will be watched. No harm will come to him." Maverick turned to leave.

"Who?" Evan growled. "Who is going to be with my mate?"

Placing his hands behind his back, Maverick approached Evan, his face stopping mere inches from Evan's. "That doesn't concern you.

What does concern you is the lack of respect you have shown your mate. If I had not stopped you—" Maverick closed his eyes for a moment, and when he opened them, crimson colored the irises. "Do you understand what just took place? The strength you were about to unleash onto that human? Think about it, and I'll see you in my office in no less than thirty minutes."

"I—"

Maverick held his hand up to stop any further protest from Evan. Closing his mouth, Evan bit the inside of it to stop any further argument. Did Maverick seriously think Evan would have harmed Lewis? Sure, he was angry as hell, but to harm his mate would have been equivalent to chewing his own arm off.

* * * *

"Thanks." Lewis reached for the handle of Tank's truck door, having caught a ride with the massive guy to retrieve his car that had been left behind. His head was pounding, and his mouth felt like he had licked the bottom of fifty trash cans. To top it all off, he missed Evan so badly that his chest was hurting. It didn't matter that it was made clear this morning that Evan didn't want Lewis.

Did he really want Evan? One thing was certain, and that was that the man gave off plenty of mixed signals. Lewis ran his hands over his head. Things were getting too complicated.

"I'll follow you back to make sure you get there in one piece."

At this point, Lewis really didn't care. He waved a hand at Tank, closing the truck door and sliding into the driver's seat of his car. Starting the motor, he blew out a long breath. That was definitely the strangest night yet.

He made it home in one piece, and Tank honked as he pulled away. Lewis had never been more grateful in his life to see the inside of his apartment. Untying his boots and tossing his clothes into a pile on the floor, he crawled between the covers. The only thing he wanted

was to sleep the day away. He tugged the covers over his shoulder as he closed his eyes.

One hour later, Lewis cursed as he flipped the blanket back, no closer to sleep than when he first shut his eyes. His brain wouldn't shut down, and thoughts of the chestnut-haired man with those beautiful amber eyes plagued him. He didn't want to be in a relationship, didn't want to get involved, so why on god's green earth couldn't he push Evan out of his mind? Evan was anger personified, violent and aggressive, and those were things Lewis couldn't and wouldn't stand for.

Lewis dug into the back of the closet and pulled out the last pack of cigarettes he had. Going over to the cabinet, he poured two fingers of whiskey into a tumbler, grabbed a few ice cubes from the freezer, and perched himself on the balcony. He rolled the cigarette between his fingers, watching the wisps of smoke dance upward in a hypnotic swirl. Where had his life taken such a rough-ass turn? Patrick had been the beginning of his downfall. He knew that much. His ex had Lewis believe in such things as love, happiness, and a home. It wasn't the fact that Patrick had cheated on him—well, mostly not—but the thing that cut Lewis to the core was the betrayal. Had Patrick come to him and told him he wanted out, that he no longer wanted to be in this relationship, Lewis could have handled that better. The deception was what sent him over the edge.

His dad had done the same thing to his mom, cheated on her left and right, and she always forgave him. Lewis watched how a once strong woman became nothing more than a living shell and lost herself inside a bottle until, one day, she killed herself.

Since then he knew control was the only thing that kept him from going insane. Needed it, craved it. Without control, he would have killed his father, would have allowed his life to fall apart all around him. Instead, he finished school, went to college, and pushed himself to be the best damn detective he could be...until Patrick.

That man had brought home every feeling he had buried from his youth.

Lewis hated the hurt he watched his mother endure, and the lies his father had told, until it no longer mattered. His father would just shrug when confronted, and his mother eventually stopped asking. His home was broken.

Downing the whiskey, Lewis refilled his glass, lit another cigarette, and lost himself in the bottom of the amber liquid. Amber. Evan had amber eyes. Why did that man get under his skin like no one else he had ever met? All he wanted was to be left alone, to protect his heart. He had done a piss-poor job of that with his last lover. He wasn't about to repeat that same mistake. Evan wouldn't be allowed in to wreak havoc and kill what sanity he had left.

Lewis flicked his cigarette and set his glass down. He stumbled from the balcony, tumbled onto his bed, and fell into an oblivious sleep. A quiet sleep...without parents, betrayal, or amber eyes.

* * * *

Gunnar watched from across the street. It disturbed him how haunted the human's eyes were. The cop was finding solace with liquid demons, and even Gunnar could feel his pain radiating from across the street.

What the hell was his best friend doing? He knew Evan had always been a brooder, but to push his mate away like this was unacceptable. What drove a man to act this way, to treat the one person meant for him like an enemy instead of the treasure that he was? Gunnar felt for Lewis, but it wasn't his job to counsel his friend. It's not like Evan would listen right now anyway. His job was to sit quietly and make sure no harm came to him for the next seven days.

Gunnar laid his head back against the seat. This was going to be a long week. What he wouldn't do to have his mate by his side. Nothing would make him treat what fate had deemed as his yesterday's trash.

Evan needed his ass kicked.

* * * *

Lewis grabbed his head. It was pounding out a staccato beat. He needed to get ready for work. He had second shift today, and his pounding headache wouldn't stop. Popping two aspirin, he showered and tried his best to look presentable.

The empty whiskey bottle called to him, begged him to notice it. With a sound of disgust in the back of his throat, Lewis chucked it into the trash can. No more. That shit was taking over his life.

Grabbing his keys, Lewis headed out to get some lunch. There was a diner in the small town he lived in. It was cozy and quiet. Since coming here six months ago, Lewis had never taken the time to get to know anyone. Being anonymous was perfect right now. It gave him the opportunity to nurse his hangover undisturbed. Lewis sat in a booth eating his lunch. He hoped the day remained boring after the events that had taken place. The sun was out, glaring into the diner window, making him sweat profusely. He asked the waitress to change his booth, away from the stifling rays. It was hot in this place. Lewis downed a few glasses of ice water, trying to cool off. Maybe he was getting sick.

Turning around in his booth, Lewis tossed his arm onto the back of it. "If you're going to follow me all day, at least come sit with me." Watching the man with black and blond hair grab his plate and slide into the seat across from him, Lewis extended his hand. "Lewis Keating."

A large hand extended to shake his. "Gunnar Sadena."

"So, why are you following me?" Lewis sloshed his biscuit through the gravy, took a bite, and chewed as he waited for an answer.

Chapter Three

“No one has ever made me before, you’re good.” Gunnar was impressed. He had stayed to the shadows, ever out of sight. There should have been no way Lewis spotted him. He didn’t even take a seat until the human’s back was turned. If the warriors found out about this, he would never hear the end of it, especially if Remi got wind. The wolf was a loudmouth to the ninth degree.

Lewis shrugged. “It’s my job to see the unseen, put the pieces together to solve the puzzle. So who are you?”

“Maverick is going to hand me my ass for this.” Gunnar grunted.

“Maverick. So you’re one of Evan’s guys?”

“Hardly. We’re both Maverick’s *guys*, in a manner of speaking. I can’t answer too many questions. Sucks, but I’m being honest. So let’s make this simple. I babysit you, and you stay out of trouble until Friday when we go meet with Maverick.” Gunnar knew it was a long shot. No grown man wanted a babysitter, and he expected Lewis would bristle at the idea of being followed around. Gunnar expected Lewis would tell him to go screw himself or something in that manner.

“Who says I’m going back there?” Lewis asked as he sipped his water.

Gunnar chuckled. “You’ll go. The question is will you go willingly or make a fuss and a show of yourself before finally giving in, so let’s cut the crap and just go, shall we?”

Lewis began to laugh. “I like you. Straightforward. You’re my kind of man.”

“Don’t let Evan hear you say that. He’ll try and chew my throat out.” Gunnar hated this. The cop seemed really nice. No one should have their privacy invaded because another person was too childish to control his temper tantrums. At least he would get to know Lewis better. He was one of the mates after all, and the oldest of all of them to boot. He didn’t think the warriors would have to worry about this one following Cecil and his harebrained schemes, but one never knew. Cecil could be very persuasive.

Lewis studied him for a moment, taking a sip of his water as his eyes scanned Gunnar. “I’m guessing you’ve been sitting in your car?”

Gunnar grinned widely as he chewed his food. The cop was good. “Yeah, sucks. The seats don’t even recline back far enough for my body mass.”

“Come see me when I get home. You can crash on my couch.” Lewis waved for the waitress to bring him his check. “Although it may not accommodate your body mass either...but you’ll be lying down.”

“Why are you being so calm about this?” The human baffled Gunnar.

“You’re gonna follow me anyway, so why not make it comfortable for you.”

And that’s all he had to say about it. Gunnar was shocked. He liked Lewis. Guy was a decent man. The human didn’t throw a fit and cause a scene because he had to be watched. He took it in stride. Once again Gunnar wanted to go home and kick Evan’s ass.

“I have a few errands to run. You gonna follow me, or do we ride together?” Lewis tossed a few bills onto the table. Gunnar looked over at Cody, who was grinning. The warrior owned half the diner, and his mate Keata was sitting at the counter. He was really going to catch hell for this.

“I’ll be right back. We can ride together.” Gunnar slid from the booth, walking over to the smiling pair.

“Busted.” Cody chuckled.

"Busted," Keata repeated.

"Are you going to rat me out?" Gunnar smoothed his hands over his head. "How much?"

"What are you talking about?" Cody eyed him as though he were speaking Keata's language instead.

"How much do you want to keep your mouth shut?"

Cody burst out laughing. Gunnar was getting more aggravated by the moment. Would Maverick kick him out of the pack if he throttled the last breath out of the wolf?

"Is this a common practice with you? Maybe this isn't the first time you've been busted. Must get awfully expensive to cover it up."

"Never mind." Gunnar turned to see Lewis opening the diner door. "Shit, gotta go."

* * * *

Gunnar gave a low laugh as Lewis grumbled about having to pump the gas. He was the one chauffeuring his babysitter around, the least the cackler could do was get *his* hands all smelly with gasoline. The odor always made Lewis nauseous. And to make matters worse, the handle was leaking gas right onto his hand. "Don't pout. I'm sure they have sani-wipes. I'll go check." Gunnar headed into the gas station as he yanked the nozzle from its cradle and shoved it into his tank. He was getting edgy again. The feeling was creeping into his chest.

"Here you go."

Lewis threw his hands out to catch the small white packet. What the hell was this rinky-dink thing supposed to clean? Lewis tossed it back at Gunnar. Replacing the cap then the nozzle, Lewis went into the station to ask for the bathroom key. The only thing that was going to halfway get the smell off was soap and water.

Gunnar chuckled behind him as he made his way over to the soft drink cooler.

“Your gas pump is leaking. Do I need a key to the restroom?” he asked the clerk as he watched Gunnar in the large mirror hanging by the counter. Gunnar shut the cooler door and headed back to the counter. He had three drinks in his hand. How long did the guy think they would be out?

“Here you are, sir.”

Lewis stared at the key that had a large piece of wood dangling from it. “Am I supposed to use the wood to beat off any attackers as I wash my hands?” Why in the heck would somebody attach something like that to a key?

“No.” The clerk laughed. “The key has been lost twice already. You can’t misplace the block of wood.”

“Guess not.” Lewis held the key up as the wood dangled in front of him. Shaking his head, he walked out and around the building. The block of wood tapped into the door when Lewis inserted the key, almost pulling the key right out of the tumbler. “Stupid wood.”

He clicked the light on and stood there with mouth agape. The bathroom was horrendous. The toilet hadn’t been flushed and paper towels littered the sink. It looked as though someone used the wall as a urinal. Maybe he could get a dozen sani-wipes. Lewis backed out of the bathroom allowing the door to close. That was just nasty.

“Excuse me. The clerk said you had the key.”

Lewis turned to see a gentleman standing there smiling at him.

“Go in at your own risk.” He dangled the piece of wood in front of the guy.

The gentleman shrugged as he pulled his hands from his pockets and grabbed the drift log. “You wouldn’t happen to be single, would you?”

Was he? Thoughts of Evan appeared in his mind. They technically weren’t an item. Lewis shook his head. “Sorry, I’m not,” came out before he even thought about it.

“Pity. You are one good-looking man. Very masculine. You wouldn’t consider a quickie in the bathroom, would you?” The

stranger took a step closer to Lewis. If there was one thing he hated, it was his space being encroached upon. The stranger perused his body with his eyes, smiling as his eyes finally landed on Lewis's face. Lewis felt like placing his hands over his groin to hide it from the unwanted attention.

"First of all, I already said I was taken. And second,"—Lewis pointed to the restroom—"it's just nasty in there." He shuddered as he walked away. Just nasty.

He wasn't prissy, but a clean bathroom was something he demanded, even if it was a public one. Lewis began to scratch his jaw, but the smell of gasoline hit his nose first, and he quickly pulled his hand away.

Rounding the corner, he almost ran right into Gunnar. He held his hand out with a dozen little white packets in his palm. "Thought you might change your mind."

Lewis noticed Gunnar looking toward the bathroom. "You know, being my babysitter means watching me, not stalking me."

Gunnar grinned. "Technically, they are the same. Stop whining about it."

Lewis growled as he walked over to the outside trash can and started ripping open the packages. He tried his best to get his hands clean, but the only thing he managed to do was make them smell like gasoline and disinfectant. Just great.

"Are you ready, or do you want me to go get some hand sanitizer?" Gunnar teased as he rounded the car.

"Stop making fun of me. Gasoline stinks." Lewis slid into the driver's seat and slammed the door shut.

"Got a nasty little temper, don't you?"

"You would, too, if you saw that bathroom." Lewis started the car, thinking maybe he should have let Gunnar just follow behind him instead of sitting next to him, annoying the crap out of him.

They made it back to his place in under an hour with Gunnar making a few more jokes about his soft, delicate hands.

“You can carry the bags up. My hands are too delicate for such work,” Lewis teased as he left the car and Gunnar to do the grunt work.

Lewis headed straight for his bedroom and the bottle of whiskey he had stashed in his closet. He unscrewed the cap and took a large swallow. His nerves seemed to even out once that first swallow hit his stomach. After taking one more for good measure, he placed the bottle back on the shelf before closing the door. He placed his hand on the wall and stood there for a moment, feeling the burn as he thought about Evan.

“Where do I put this stuff?”

Lewis spun around to see Gunnar standing in the doorway. “This is my bedroom. You may be my unofficial babysitter, but I get privacy in this room,” he snapped. Lewis didn’t like the fact that he was fast becoming an alcoholic, and he didn’t need an audience to witness his downfall either.

“Sorry, didn’t mean to intrude,” Gunnar snapped back and walked away grumbling about rude fucking people.

Lewis felt like shit, of course. Gunnar had been nothing but easygoing and friendly all day. The guilt had hit him of hiding his stash away, and Gunnar almost saw his hand shaking before he hid the bottle. This was becoming a bigger problem than he first thought.

No longer was it an occasional drink or even a nightcap. Now it seemed to be to the point where he needed one because his day was going bad or because he was feeling stressed. They were all excuses, and Lewis knew it, but he couldn’t seem to stop.

Closing the closet door, he sighed as he made his way out to Gunnar. “Look, I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to snap at you.” He dropped down on the couch, feeling edgy as hell and missing Evan like crazy. He couldn’t understand the second one. Why was Evan affecting him this way?

“Ah, forget about it. Let’s eat.” Gunnar slid two plates onto the kitchen table and waved for Lewis to join him.

* * * *

Evan watched as Drew draped himself over Remi. They were sitting in the den watching some chick flick that Drew had wanted to see. Evan wasn't even paying attention to the movie. He was watching the mated pair. His thoughts went to his own mate, wondering what he was doing right now.

He hated the ultimatum Maverick had laid on him. The need to go to his mate was driving him mad. The only thing he could do was watch the others suck face and wish his mate was here to do the same. If a wolf didn't need a pack, then Evan would have been out of the doors days ago.

Why did he let the cop get under his skin like that? He was the only person to ever rattle Evan's nerves. The feeling of coming unglued and not in control hit him in Lewis's presence. Did all the warriors go through that when they found their mates?

"You're gonna bite that thumbnail off if you keep at it like that."

Evan looked up to see Murdock standing beside the couch. He removed his thumb from between his teeth as he sat up straighter. He was ready to climb the walls with the need coursing through him to claim what fate had deemed as his, except it seemed every time they were in the same room tempers flared and animosity hung thick in the air.

He didn't want that. What he wanted was to hold his mate in his arms as he made love to him. Yeah, it sounded wimpy to him, but he didn't care. It was the truth. Lewis was the only man to both drive him crazy and bring out his gentle side. It was confusing as hell.

How did the other warriors make it through the claiming sane? He wondered about Micah most of all because his mate had been underage when he came to live with them. Waiting a week was driving him mad. He didn't know how the other warrior waited months. Micah must have the patience of a saint.

“Come on. I feel like a burger.” Murdock tapped his shoulder. What the hell, he had nothing better to do than sit around and mope. He pushed up from the sofa, taking one last look at the mated pair. Drew was drying his eyes. Evan assumed it was something in the movie. Remi pulled his mate closer as he rubbed his back. The feeling of longing hit him hard.

Evan turned away. He couldn’t bear to watch it any longer. Grabbing his coat from the hook in the hallway, he followed Murdock.

Fresh air would do him some good. Evan climbed into the truck as Murdock slammed the driver’s door. He wondered what Lewis was doing right now. He thought of those beautiful blue eyes and that short brown hair. Fate had definitely given him a gorgeous male.

Too bad they couldn’t get their act together because Evan would love to feel that hard body under him as he felt Lewis’s body swallow his cock.

Evan shifted around as his cock filled. He wondered why he was torturing himself with thoughts of what he couldn’t have right now.

They pulled into the drive-thru, Evan seeming to get his cock to go down just as Murdock began to order.

“Let me get five burgers, three orders of fries and a large strawberry shake. Oh, and let me get a side order of onion rings and a slice of that chocolate pie for desert.” Murdock turned to Evan. “What do you want?”

“Holy shit, man. Where do you put all that?” Even at six five and two hundred thirty-four pounds, Evan didn’t eat that much. “Just give me a burger and fries.” Murdock shrugged and repeated Evan’s order to the speaker box.

Murdock flirted with the guy at the window, giving his phone number and promises of coming back to see the guy when he got off of work. The wolf seemed to always have an endless supply of willing males. Evan couldn’t think of anyone but Lewis. That was the only man he wanted, and the only man he couldn’t have. This shit sucked.

Once they had their food, Murdock pulled into the lot of a building for lease next to the post office. They sat there quietly eating, with Murdock scarfing down his food. Evan was surprised the wolf didn't weigh more with the calories he was consuming. That milkshake alone should be about twenty pounds.

"So, tell me, what's up with you and your mate?" Murdock asked after swallowing his bite. He held his hands up as the bottom of the bun flapped. "You don't have to tell me, just thought maybe you could use me as a sounding board or whatever you want to call it."

Evan shrugged as he ate another fry. He tried to think of the best way to describe what it felt like when he and his mate were together. "I'm still trying to figure it out myself. It's like a hurricane and an earthquake colliding together when we are in the same room. I don't get it."

"Maybe fate made a mistake. Never heard of it happening, but it could. I think." Murdock took another bite of his burger, shrugging when Evan looked over at him with his brows pulled together.

Just what Evan didn't want to hear—that he and Lewis weren't meant to be together. It would seem that way from the volatility they experienced, but Evan didn't think fate made a mistake. Mates were paired together from compatibility and need. The other mates had issues they were dealing with when the warriors found them. He knew in his gut that it was the same for them.

He just couldn't figure out what his mate needed.

"I'm just talking out the side of my head. Don't pay me any attention," Murdock offered. "I'm not even mated, so who am I to give advice?" He shoved a handful of fries into his mouth at the same time he sucked down his milkshake.

"Don't you want to be?" Evan asked as he stared at the way the warrior was eating.

Murdock snorted. "Hell, no, have you seen the way the other wolves lose their damn minds? Nah, there are too many men out there to be had. Sex was the best invention ever."

Evan looked at Murdock with squinted eyes. Was the wolf serious? Who didn't want to find their mate? And since when was sex *invented*? The wolf had a few screws loose in Evan's opinion. "One day that's gonna bite you in the ass."

Murdock chuckled. "That's what Maverick keeps telling me. Until I cross that bridge, I'm gonna fuck anything that moves. Okay, maybe not the ugly ones, or maybe I will. They need loving, too."

"You are one strange shifter." Evan looked out of the windshield at the town. Tank had refused to tell him where Lewis lived. Evan wondered if it was in one of the apartment buildings on the other side of town. There were a few of them. Or did his mate own his own home? Where? Maybe it was a good thing he didn't know. The police station was located on the other side as well. Knowing where his mate worked was a big temptation to stalk his mate at work. But he couldn't. He knew Maverick meant business, and as hard core as Evan thought himself to be, he wasn't going to play around with the Alpha. He was in charge for a reason, and Maverick didn't fuck around when it came to taking his job seriously.

"So maybe you two can go to one of those marriage counselors." Evan watched as Murdock opened the fifth burger wrapper. He could only imagine how the wolf put it all away.

Strumming his fingers on his leg, he thought about what Murdock had just suggested. Would it help? He was willing to do anything right about now. Evan pushed the thought away. Wolves didn't go to counselors, not any that he knew of, and he wasn't going to be the first. He just wished he could figure out what Lewis's problem was.

Chapter Four

“Come on, Evan. Shoot some pool with me.” Oliver grabbed his arm, pulling him into the den. This was the same mate that had once kissed him out of confusion. He wasn’t so sure this was one of his better ideas.

“Your mate still gives me the evil eye when I’m anywhere near you.” Evan grabbed a pool stick as Oliver set the game up.

“We’re in the den, not your bedroom. He’ll be fine. Besides, you look lost. I know that feeling.” Oliver took his shot, watching him at the same time.

“I don’t get it. He acts as if he doesn’t feel the pull, doesn’t want anything to do with me,” Evan confessed as he bent at the waist and hit the pool balls, the cracking sound echoing in the den. It seemed that no matter how much he examined the reasoning behind why his mate acted aloof, he couldn’t come up with a feasible answer.

It just didn’t make sense to him.

Oliver smiled. “You do remember how I was when I first got here? Swore everyone was a faggot, hatred running threw my veins, didn’t want anyone near me. It was all an elaborate front. I was fighting it. Fighting the pull, fighting the confusion. Maybe your mate is doing the same thing. It isn’t about him *not* wanting you. It’s about what is going on inside of him. Work on that instead of the rejected feeling.”

Evan stood and stared at Oliver in amazement. “Since when did a pup get so smart?” Evan chuckled. It made sense.

“I fought the pull, too.”

Evan turned to see Cody entering. "I never understood that, Cody. Keata never gave you any indication that he would refuse you. He's a sweet guy. Why would you refuse him?"

"Exactly, he was too innocent. I was terrified of not measuring up, afraid I would hurt Jasper's feelings, afraid I would hurt Keata. All bullshit, and I damn near lost my mate because of it." Cody walked behind the bar, grabbing a beer and leaning his elbows on the counter. "I don't think it's about not wanting you, but more about what he's fighting."

"Drew didn't think he was good enough for Remi. Blair didn't think he was worthy enough for Kota's love. You see the pattern here? Everyone was suffering from something in their past. When you're allowed, talk to your mate and find out what's in his past that's preventing him from accepting you." Oliver laughed. "Next lesson is tomorrow, young grasshopper."

Evan growled. "Smartass."

"I had been hurt by someone. I didn't trust anyone not to screw me over. Maybe that's his story," George volunteered as he joined them. "Jesse swore he would stay by my side, but when things got rough, he skedaddled, 'bout tore me apart, and I swore off men."

"Think someone hurt him?" Evan didn't like that idea. He wanted to kill the person who put all the doubts in his mate. A small part of him stung from the knowledge his Lewis had given his heart to someone other than him.

"Possible," Oliver offered.

"Who's with him?"

Cody looked past the archway from the den. "If you tell that I told you, I'll kick your ass this side of Sunday."

Evan nodded. "Promise."

"Gunnar."

Evan was relieved his best friend was watching over his mate. He knew Gunnar would look out for him and make sure nothing

happened. The wolf was good at what he did. Lewis would never even know he was there.

“Hang in there, big guy. You’ll get to see him tomorrow.” George squeezed his shoulder.

* * * *

Lewis stumbled to the counter and poured his fourth glass of whiskey and then stumbled back to the couch and dropped down onto it.

“He’ll betray me.” Lewis talked to the glass in his hand.

“Who?” Gunnar asked as he watched Lewis drink his life away. Arguing with the cop to step away from the bottle had been useless. He wouldn’t touch another’s mate, but the urge to throttle Lewis was there when he had struggled with him to wrestle the bottle out of his hands. For a human, the fucker was strong. Gunnar could only hope Evan would help him. He hadn’t put all of his effort into it, deciding to let Lewis’s mate handle this, though it was sad to see such a smart man drown his life away.

“Evan. He’ll betray me like all the rest, cheat on me. No man can be trusted.” Lewis scrubbed his face. “Don’t go running your mouth either. This is between you and me.” Lewis pointed a finger at Gunnar. His eyes slanted to slits as he took another swallow of the amber liquid.

“He won’t betray you, Lewis. It’s not in him to do that.” So now he was getting to the root of Lewis’s problems. The human guarded his feelings well. He had tried to pry, but it was like trying to get a steak out of a lion’s mouth.

“They all do.” Lewis curled up onto the couch.

Gunnar walked over to the balcony, watching as the cars drove by. He had a good time this week with Lewis. The man was funny, intelligent, and handsome as hell. His best friend had done well with this one. Fate smiled on Evan with Lewis. It was a shame the two

couldn't get along for five minutes in the same room together. They both were control freaks. Gunnar had figured that much out on his own. Now he knew a small part of the reason Lewis needed control in his life. To give your trust over to someone who abused it was a crushing blow. The human needed control to rationalize the act. Controlling everything now made him feel as though he was the one who walked away with his heart intact, which couldn't be further from the truth.

Lewis was jaded against love now and thought the concept didn't exist. Evan had his work cut out for him. The alcoholism would only add to the existing problem. Why was he telling Gunnar all this now? Maybe Lewis was finally telling because he was going to see Evan tomorrow. The fear of facing him once again may be the catalyst in telling all his dark secrets. Whatever the case may be, Gunnar was glad Lewis was letting some of his demons out.

"Why can't I get him off of my mind? It's like a deep need to be near him," Lewis mumbled from the couch. "Why? I don't understand why I want to be with him and want to turn around and walk away at the same time."

Gunnar turned around, watching as Lewis fell asleep, snoring lightly. He reminded Gunnar of a little lost pup, always so sad.

* * * *

Lewis poured a small amount of whiskey into the flask he was holding, screwing the cap on as his hands shook. He shoved it into the inside pocket of his leather. Downing a large swallow from the bottle before setting it onto his dresser. Lewis opened the bedroom door. "Ready." He called out as he took a deep breath to steady his nerves and walked into the living room.

He saw Gunnar scrunch his nose up. He must smell the alcohol. Lewis didn't care. He was going somewhere he didn't want to be, yet he couldn't wait to be there. The mixed feeling had been with him all

week. He closed the door behind him as he followed Gunnar to his truck.

"I'm going to follow you." Lewis walked over to his car and opened the door.

"Nope, you're riding shotgun." Gunnar opened the passenger door and waited. Lewis grunted his displeasure as he slammed his car door shut and climbed into the waiting vehicle.

His fingers itched to take the flask out and have a small sip, but he knew Gunnar would say something. Did he care at this point? Not really. The only thing stopping him was the disapproving look Gunnar was shooting at him as he drove. He had enough on his mind without hearing a lecture about his drinking habit.

They pulled into the drive, and Lewis's palms began to sweat. He rubbed them on his jeans as he got out of the truck. Why was he here? He really didn't have to come. It was a request, not a demand. Lewis had the urge to tell Gunnar to take him home. The only thing that stopped him was the need to see Evan once again.

Although they didn't seem to get along, Lewis wanted another glance at the man, another chance to look at that gorgeous face.

Gunnar led him up the walkway. They passed the foyer and entered what Lewis remembered from his previous visit as Maverick's office.

Lewis's heart rate picked up. Evan was even more gorgeous than the last time he saw him. The need to reach out, to touch him and be touched, was overwhelming.

"Please have a seat, gentlemen." Maverick waved his hand at the leather couch.

"Why am I here?" Lewis asked no one in particular. Lewis looked around to see a few more men standing in the office. He couldn't understand why they were going to have an audience, but at this point, he didn't care.

"To settle things between you and Evan," Maverick stated like it should have been obvious.

“There’s nothing to settle. He doesn’t like me, and I don’t like him,” Lewis snapped childishly. It was the only thing he could think of to say. Evan was standing there so confident that it pissed Lewis off. Why should he be the only one affected by all of this?

Evan turned to him. “That’s not true, Lewis. Why would you think that? I know I have been a prick, but I tried to apologize for that. I can’t figure out for the life of me why you hate me so much. What have I done?” Evan pleaded. He must have tossed his pride out of the window in Lewis’s opinion. The man sat there looking stunned.

Lewis hadn’t a clue how to answer that. He thought Evan was unflappable. To see the vulnerability in Evan’s eyes unnerved him.

“I don’t have to listen to this.” Lewis stood, wanting to get as far away as possible from the man chipping away at his armor. Lewis didn’t like the way Evan was making him feel. He felt his resolve slowly crumble, and he couldn’t allow that. Evan was just another Patrick. He had to be. No man could be trusted. Not even when they looked at Lewis as though he were their entire world. How could Evan look that way at him? Lewis was becoming confused.

No, he couldn’t trust him.

“Go ahead and tell him, Lewis.” Gunnar spoke softly.

Anger the likes of which Lewis hadn’t felt in a very long time surfaced at those words. He forgot there was a room full of people as his anger took over. “Don’t you dare!” Lewis turned and shouted at Gunnar.

“He thinks you’ll betray him, cheat on him,” Gunnar told Evan.

Lewis wanted to reach over and throttle Gunnar. He was seething at those words. How dare he reveal what was spoken in private. Lewis stood there with no clue how to react. His anger was boiling inside of him.

“Is that what you think?” Evan looked dumbfounded. “You think I would betray such a sacred trust?”

Lewis couldn’t deal with this. He stormed to the office door, Tank blocking his exit. All the years of bottled up resentment toward his

father and the betrayal Patrick had shown him came to the forefront. He didn't care who was in the room. Lewis exploded.

He spun, shouting at the top of his lungs, "I trusted you, Gunnar. Trusted you with that, and just like everyone one else, you betrayed me! I should have known better than to trust anyone, especially a man. The only thing you managed to do was confirm my belief."

"We don't keep secrets here. You need to tell him." Gunnar blew out a breath. "If you and Evan are to have a fighting chance, things needed to be out in the open. I would have preferred you two worked it out in private, but you became tight-lipped when alone with Evan or sarcastic as hell, which doesn't help the situation."

Was Gunnar serious? Lewis was too enraged to listen to what he had to say. Why in the fuck did he trust someone? Once again it came back to bite him in the ass. When was he going to learn?

"I won't betray you, Lewis. Ever," Evan said. "How could you even think a thing like that?"

"They all do. Everyone does, and just when you think you're safe, they twist the knife in your heart. The pieces slowly reveal themselves. Once put together, do you know what that puzzle reveals? What the picture shows? It shows my fucking lover in another man's arms!" Lewis shouted at Evan, his finger pointing at him accusingly. The injustice of what Patrick had done to him was making his insides twist. How could he trust Evan?

"You need to sit down and talk about this like an adult," Gunnar advised Lewis.

Maverick held his hand up, speaking up for the first time since Lewis's tirade began. "Let him get it all out."

Lewis turned toward Maverick, some survival instinct deep down inside of him warned him not to lash out against the man sitting behind the desk.

"You're just like my father." Lewis spun around and decided to take it out on Evan instead. "Controlling, manipulative, and a cheating

bastard. She killed herself because of his betrayal. I won't go down that road. I won't allow you that power!"

"Who killed herself?" Evan pushed.

Lewis grabbed the front of Evan's shirt. "That's none of your damn business. Just let me the fuck out of here!" Lewis shouted inches from Evan's face, pushing him further back. Evan grabbed Lewis and wrestled him to the floor.

"Let me go! I won't let you in. I won't let you hurt me." Lewis cried the last part, the floodgates finally bursting after so many years of pushing it down, forcing it behind a door in his soul and never allowing it to see the light of day. Evan just held him, cradled him. Lewis never knew how much he needed those strong arms, the tenderness this man was sheltering him with.

"My mother killed herself. She couldn't take the betrayal anymore. I can't. I can't allow you that much power," Lewis whispered. "Patrick betrayed me. I let my guard down, and he betrayed that trust. Never again." Lewis went stock still when the weight holding him down changed. There was no way he felt fur under his hands. This had to all be a dream. He closed his eyes, wishing the wolf away. "You were just a dream. Not real."

Maverick stood, walking slowly around his desk, kneeling at Lewis's side. "He's real, as are we. This is the reason he will never betray you, Lewis. We are Timber wolves, granted only one mate per lifetime. You are his mate. He will desire no other, never leave you, and will put your health and happiness above his. We are not human. We do not have that treacherous trait in us. Not when it comes to our mates."

"So the vampire was real, too?" Lewis's head was in a swirl over this news. How?

"Yes," Maverick stated.

"I need a drink." Lewis just lay there. The warmth of the wolf lying on top of him was comforting. He felt like a small child, so damn frightened. The weight shifted again, and a naked Evan was

lying on him. No one else in the room seemed to care about his nudity. The rabbit hole just seemed to go deeper and deeper.

"You don't need a drink, love." Evan smoothed his hands over Lewis's hair, as he kissed his temple.

"Yes, I do." Lewis tried to push Evan off of him, wanting to go to a bar and lose himself. This was all too much to wrap his head around.

"You're an alcoholic. You need help." Remi knelt in front of him. "My mate is a recovering drug addict. He attends meetings once a week, more if it gets too bad. I sit with him, but I can honestly say I don't understand. I've never been an addict. You are. You would understand him. Will you go with him? I'd feel better knowing someone who knew what he was fighting was there to watch over him."

Lewis nodded. He had come to the realization that his drinking was out of control, and he needed help. It was no longer a thing of I-can-stop-when-I-want-to. He couldn't stop. The call of the bottle was taking over his life. Lewis swallowed. "I'll go with him." He didn't want to end up like his mother. He didn't want to lose who he was, the potential of what he could have. Lewis slid his hand into his jacket, extracting the flask and handing it over to Remi with trembling hands.

"Thank you." Remi stood, leaving him with Evan.

A soft kiss caressed his neck. "Thank you."

Lewis heard the others leaving, closing the door behind them. He rolled over, staring into those deep amber eyes. "A wolf, huh?"

"Not exactly how I wanted to tell you." Evan chuckled.

God, that smile. It was breathtakingly beautiful. Lewis lowered his eyes. "I have a long road ahead of me. Are you sure you're prepared for it?"

"Baby, nothing will stop me from being there for you. Your pain is my pain, and your grief mine. Whatever you need, I'll provide."

Lewis bit his bottom lip, struggling with himself to let a small part of Evan in. Trust wasn't something he was used to giving so freely. His eyelids lowered and a groan escaped his lips when warm lips touched his neck. Lewis let all thoughts go as Evan kissed his way down, pulling his T-shirt from his waistband and shoving it up under his arms, as he circled one taut nipple with his moist tongue. There, on the floor of Maverick's office, Lewis gave himself over to Evan, mind, body, and soul. He moved his hips around as Evan settled his weight between Lewis's legs.

Lewis grabbed Evan's hair, pulling him up so he could get lost in those deep amber eyes, eyes that had haunted him all week. "Kiss me."

* * * *

Evan gave Lewis a throaty growl, climbing up Lewis's body in a slow and seductive prowl, drinking his mate in with his eyes.

Evan did a reverse push up, holding his weight on his arms as he lowered his mouth to Lewis.

Lewis placed his hands on Evan's arms, holding them there loosely as Evan tilted his head, running his tongue over Lewis's lips, nipping the bottom one. He pulled back when Lewis tried to take more. Evan had waited so fucking long for this that he feared it being over in a heartbeat.

Evan lowered his upper torso back down.

Lewis's wide-eyed innocent look was merely a smoke screen, and Evan knew it.

Lewis's hands moved from Evan's arms and wrapped around his neck in one swift motion. Raw lust glittered in those beautiful eyes.

Yeah, it had been a smoke screen. Evan pushed up, grabbing Lewis's shirt and lifting it to his wrists, locking them in place.

Lewis licked his lips as he panted, staring up at Evan.

Evan's hand snaked between them, unfastening Lewis's jeans and pulling his heavy and aching cock free. He gave one last nip to Lewis's lip before leaning back and devouring his mate's cock. Evan didn't take lightly, and he wasn't one to hesitate. He sucked his mate's crown, circling his tongue around, and then backed off. He needed in his mate now.

"Tease," Lewis hissed.

"Take these jeans off, and I'll show you a tease." Evan pulled at the waistband, bringing the fabric down to Lewis's ankles, removing his shoes. Evan yanked them the rest of the way off.

"Socks...get rid of my socks. Can't have sex with them on. It's just weird."

Evan quirked a brow at Lewis but did as he asked. Evan stood over Lewis, giving his mate an eyeful of what he had to offer.

"I'm impressed," Lewis tried to joke, but the lustful way his mate was staring at him made Evan rock hard.

Evan lay back down over Lewis, fisting his mate's cock in his hand. He kissed Lewis, pouring all his emotions into that one intimate act. A web of arousal spun around him as he squeezed his mate's shaft, his thumb caressing over the leaking head.

Evan growled when the door was cracked open, and a bottle of lube tossed in before the door clicked closed.

He chuckled.

"Damn, any privacy around here?" Lewis asked as Evan leaned over him, grabbing at the bottle. His mate took the opportunity to lick across Evan's abdomen, the moist tongue taking him close to the edge.

"Are you complaining when it will get us both what we want?" He moaned.

"Guess not."

Evan grabbed both of Lewis's ankles in one hand, swinging Lewis's legs up and over, and then pushing them back to Lewis's

chest. Lewis's tight hole smiled up at him, and Evan's teeth began to ache in desire to sample it.

Later.

He needed to be inside Lewis now, damn it. Now wasn't soon enough to Evan. He lubed his cock with one hand, getting the slick stuff all over the place and giving a shit less about it.

He threw the bottle down and walked forward a step on his knees, his heart racing as his cock got closer to coming home. And Lewis was home. Evan knew it in his bones.

After their shaky beginning, he wasn't taking any chances on waiting.

"Oh, god," Lewis moaned as Evan thrust hard and deep. His mate bucked, wrapped his ankles around Evan's neck, and bowed his back for him to go even deeper.

"Do you accept me as your mate, Lewis?"

"Yes, Evan." Lewis groaned. "Just don't stop. I'll shoot you if you stop." He gave a lust-driven warning.

Evan grabbed Lewis's wrists, pulling him up and over to Maverick's desk, dropping his mate on his back as he lifted his right leg and planted it on the desk, driving into Lewis's ass. Evan's head fell back, his canines lengthening as his head rolled from side to side.

Evan lifted his head, staring down at the passion on Lewis's face. That one look had Evan craving the bond.

Lewis howled when Evan sank teeth into his shoulder, sucking the bite wound as he powered his pelvis into Lewis's ass.

"Fuck, yeah," Lewis shouted, grabbing Evan's shoulders as he came hard. Evan's balls were aching for a similar release. He was relentless, plowing into Lewis as he drank from him.

Even felt the individual souls untwine from their bodies, dancing around each other then slowly settling back in, a piece of his mate with him forever. His heart thumped loudly as they also synchronized. They were bound mates.

"Did you say you were wolf or vampire?"

Evan smiled around his mate's neck and sealed the wound finally, throwing his head back as a howl ripped from his chest. He drove harder, faster as his mate cried out again. Evan collapsed on top of Lewis, sweaty, sticky, and sated.

"Mine." Evan kissed the wound, pushing his hands under Lewis as he held him close.

"What did you just do?" Lewis pushed Evan back, staring him into his eyes.

"I claimed you as my mate." Evan's guard was slowly going up, Lewis looked pissed.

"Without asking me?"

"I did, and you said yes." Evan pulled himself up, standing over his mate.

Lewis rolled over and off the desk, getting to his feet.

"What does this claiming mean?"

"It means I'm it for you. No other." What the hell had his mate's panties in a bunch? Evan braced himself for the fallout, clenched his fists preparing himself for the venomous words.

"And what about you?"

The light went on over Evan's head. "You are my last stop, train doesn't go any further. I won't cheat, Lewis. *Ever*. I don't desire anyone else."

Lewis stared at him for a moment, a smile breaking up the dark look that had just marred his beautiful face. "I can live with that."

Evan blew out a breath. He had thought for a moment they were going to have another knockdown-drag-out argument.

Lewis stared into Evan's face. "I really did think you were a dream."

Chapter Five

“Can I touch it?” Kyoshi stared at Lewis.

“No, you can’t touch it. It’s not a toy.”

Kyoshi pleaded, “But it’s so...so tempting.”

Lewis rolled his eyes. How many times had he heard that before?

“No, Kyoshi. Not gonna happen.”

“Just once. I won’t tell anyone you let me.” Kyoshi clapped his hands together in a prayer-like manner.

“No, you say just once, but once is never enough. They always beg for more.” Lewis wasn’t budging on this.

“I promise not to grab it too tight.”

“No.”

“Please.”

“No.”

“Fine, I’ll go play in traffic since you want to treat me as a child. I can handle it, I swear.”

Lewis growled. “Storm, come get your mate,” he shouted into the den.

“What’s going on?” Storm looked from Kyoshi to Lewis.

“Kyoshi is begging to touch it. Tell him it’s loaded, and it will go off with the slightest touch.”

“Dragonfly, you cannot play with guns.” Storm picked his mate up, carrying him back into the den.

“I need to get a trigger lock for this house,” Lewis mumbled as he went in search of Evan. He was feeling a bit edgy. He needed to take his mind off of the thirst starting to claw at his throat.

"I feel it, too." Arms skated around Lewis's waist and shoulders as a kiss was whispered across his nape. "Come on, let's go for a walk."

Evan pulled Lewis along, taking him out of the kitchen door. "This place has been in Maverick's name for over two centuries. It's home to wolves that have been shunned by their own packs for their sexual preferences—a safe haven—although we Timber wolves are the strongest of the breed, everyone needs a pack."

Lewis looked around at the beauty of the forest. The backyard was expansive with a garden off to the right and a child's small playground. "It must be nice to shed who you are and run free." Something Lewis wished he could do when the craving hit him hard. To be able to run free sounded unbelievably perfect.

"I'll admit it's nice to feel the ground beneath my paws as I tear up the miles. Clears my head, focuses me."

"Will I become a wolf now since you bit me?" The question had run through Lewis's mind. If it was anything like those old horror movies that made it look painful as hell, then he didn't want any part of it. Would he have a choice?

"No, you have to be born that way. Although now that we're mated, you won't get sick, and injuries will heal faster than in a non-mated human."

"Cool. I always seem to get the flu." That was lame, but Lewis couldn't think of anything else to say. Never get sick? That was pretty fucking great. "What did you mean when you said you felt it, too?"

"If we are in the same room, close by one another, I can feel your emotions." Evan led him onto a path leading into the dense forest.

Was that a good or bad thing? Lewis couldn't decide, but it made it hard to lie that everything was fine when it wasn't.

"Come on, I want to show you a favorite spot of mine I like to go to when my head needs focusing. I've never shared this spot with anyone else. You would be the first, as you should be."

Lewis followed Evan for a few miles until they came to a clearing.

"It's beautiful, Evan." Lewis stood at a rock ledge where a mini waterfall cascaded down into a small pond. Toads and fish swam around. Plants decorated the circumference of the little slice of heaven. It was a peaceful scenery, and one Lewis knew he would be back to visit. The atmosphere was peaceful, a place to just sit and take the time to reflect.

"Now it's also your spot."

"You would share this with me?"

Evan chuckled. "Don't look so stunned. As the humans say, what's mine is yours."

Lewis took a steady breath. "Can I ask you something, Evan?" When the larger man nodded, Lewis continued. "When we first met...why did you hate me?"

* * * *

Evan led Lewis over to the rocks that sat at the edge of the pond and pulled his mate down to sit between his legs, Lewis's back to his chest as Evan laid his chin on Lewis's head. "I didn't hate you, never hate. I was frustrated because you didn't feel the pull and wouldn't acknowledge me."

"But I didn't even know you, Evan."

Evan closed his eyes at the truth. It was the same thing Maverick had told him.

"Is that what that feeling was, a pull?" Lewis asked.

"Yes."

"It made me want to turn around and run right into your arms," Lewis confessed.

"I wish you would have. I was also angry because I pride myself on control, always a clear thinker, and you were taking that from me."

Lewis chuckled. "Seems we both were pissed about that. I was angry for the same reason."

"You're a control freak, too?"

“Yep, had to be. When my mom killed herself, I knew I didn’t want to end up like her, to let someone have so much control over me that I would do something out of character. I ate control for breakfast. Pushed myself to finish school, better myself, you know?”

“I can see why you would need it.” Evan kissed the top of his mate’s head. “For me, I had anger issues growing up, if you couldn’t tell already. I almost killed a boy my age when I was younger because he made fun of me for liking another boy. I knew if I didn’t take control of my emotions that I would be dead before I was old enough to leave my pack.”

They both just sat there for awhile, lost in their own thoughts. Lewis broke the silence. “I started drinking when my partner was shot and killed. It was a routine questioning, and the punk didn’t want to go to jail. So, instead, he pulled out a small handgun and shoved it right at my partner’s chest. The bullet lodged into his heart, and he died instantly. We were just questioning him about a robbery next to where he worked. Kid didn’t even have a record. Come to find out, he was the one who pulled the job.”

Evan ran his hands up and down Lewis’s arms, letting him release the demons he’d held in for so long. This would be healthy for him to let his them go. What would it have been like to live his mate’s life? Would he have turned out the same? A person, and a human at that, could only take so much stress.

“The realization hit home that we really never have control over our lives. That, one day, we just blink out of existence. Scary shit when you think about it.” Evan had a feeling Lewis just admitted his greatest fear. The fear of giving someone everything that you are and then lose them.

Evan agreed, but he had to let his mate know how he felt. “But you can’t let the fear of dying or losing the one you love control your living.”

Lewis laughed. “You make it sound so easy.”

Evan nipped his ear. "It is when you let go of that fear and give the one you love your trust, mate."

Lewis settled back against his chest. "I like that word. *Mate*. It sounds different from boyfriend or lover, or even partner. It makes what we have feel worlds away from what I've experienced before. It feels closer, deeper...and, god, I sound like a girl."

"You sound good to me. I like that you feel that way, that what we have is different. There's one more advantage to being mated to me." Evan saved this for last, hoping Lewis didn't freak out on him.

"And that is?"

"I'm two hundred and thirty-four years old, and I will live to be one thousand...and so will you." He held his breath, waiting. When his mate just lay against him, not saying a word, Evan's anxiety began to reach an all new high. Sometimes silence was worse than ranting and raving.

"Huh. One thousand. I can't even get my head wrapped around how long that is."

Evan started breathing again.

"You're old." Lewis laughed as Evan squeezed his arms around his mate tighter. "You have been around long enough to see our modernization take shape."

"You wouldn't believe how happy we Sentries were when the cell phone was invented. Beat standing in a phone booth naked making a collect call."

"Naked?"

"When we shift, clothes go bye-bye, and when we return to our human form, no clothes."

Lewis huffed. "You won't be shifting around anyone else, buddy."

Evan tilted Lewis's head back, laying a soft kiss against his lips. "You're sexy when you get all jealous."

"And the image of you in a glass phone booth naked is hot as hell, almost as if you would be on display for me." Lewis laughed softly.

His mate moaned into the kiss, stretching himself out to reach Evan's lips. Evan picked him up...then threw his mate into the pond. "Hey, what was that for?" Lewis asked as he sputtered, wiping the water from his eyes.

Evan stood there laughing, Lewis was gorgeous wet. His mate swam to the edge, yanking Evan's leg, unbalancing him, making him fall in next to Lewis. Lewis laughed and tried to swim away as Evan growled, chasing after him.

* * * *

Lewis pulled at the hem of his T-shirt. He looked around, praying no one called on him. He wasn't ready for that.

Drew grabbed his hand, lightly squeezing it to show Lewis he was there with him and wasn't going anywhere. Lewis held onto that small hand, not sure if it was to reassure his friend or himself. Either way it didn't matter. It felt like a lifeline that Lewis needed right now.

They were in a room at the local recreation center, where ten people were sitting in a circle telling their story. Lewis knew alcoholism was widespread. He just didn't have a clue how many people in a small town were afflicted by it. It was sobering knowing five of the people in this group suffered as he did.

Remi and Evan were waiting outside. Lewis had insisted he could get Drew back safely, but once Evan explained to him about rogue wolves and vampires, Lewis felt better knowing two full grown shape-shifting wolves waited for them.

He may be a tough cop, but he was far from stupid or suicidal. He had Drew to think about as well.

The meeting wrapped up after an hour. Lewis was thankful no one called on him to give his story, but he had listened to the others, even Drew's, and it made him look at his little friend in a whole new light. He understood more clearly where Drew was coming from. He didn't feel so alone in his problem.

Evan had also told him about the other mates and their struggles. He wanted to kill Oliver and Blair's father. He never understood child abuse, molestation being the worst form of it. To rape your own child was the vilest thing in Lewis's book.

He had learned a lot over the past weeks. The wolves were referred to as Sentries, guardians of the mates. They were more commonly referred to as warriors, and Lewis could see why. They were all huge, except for the one they called Caden. He looked like the runt of the litter.

Maverick was their Alpha. He looked like he could stop your breathing from just a glance. Then there was the Beta, Kota. The warrior who commanded the Sentries was Hawk. Lewis wouldn't want to run into that man in a dark alley. But Evan was the one who put fear in many hearts. He had an air about him that warned you away, but Lewis was falling in love with him. He saw the other side to the wolf that many never had a glimpse at.

"How did it go?" Evan asked as the four walked over to the Café.

"Okay. I don't feel as though I'm the only one going through this, like the problem is uniquely mine."

"Do you think the meetings will help?"

Lewis looked over at the other couple, at the way Remi was wrapped around Drew, cuddling him. From Drew's description of how his life had been to seeing him now with his mate, he knew the meetings would make all the difference in the world. "Yeah, they'll help."

Although Drew still struggled with his problem, still tasted the craving, he told Lewis that it was less frequently.

When Lewis asked how he got through the cravings, Drew said that living in the Brac pack had helped tremendously.

He told Lewis that every single person at the Den gave one hundred percent of their support. That help went a long way in the healing process.

Lewis had gone to his captain, explained his addiction. His captain had given him leave without pay to get the help he needed. It sucked that it would be in his record, but getting his life back was more important.

He was just now starting to get back to work, and with a clear head, things seemed more optimistic. Evan wasn't too crazy about him going out every day and risking his life, and he had stewed about it for days, but in the end he agreed that sitting around would drive Lewis back to drinking. He needed to be out there, helping the community out. Besides, how much drama happened in a small town?

All four entered the coffee shop and ordered their drinks, settling back to enjoy the evening.

Lewis locked eyes with Evan then darted them to the bathroom. His mate caught on quick. Gotta love him for that.

"Excuse us." Evan grabbed Lewis's wrists and pulled him along. The snick of the bathroom lock put Lewis in a lust-filled frenzy. Dropping to his knees, he pulled Evan's jeans to his knees, taking the underwear with them. "My, what a pretty boy you are." Lewis licked his lips then grabbed the base of his mate's cock, pushing Evan's hardened manhood to the back of his throat.

"Fuck. Lewis," Evan hissed, his head thumping back onto the mirror. "Wait." Evan pulled away from Lewis, repositioned himself on the other wall. "Better."

"Kinky bastard." Lewis chuckled, noticing the new position allowed Evan to watch the back of Lewis's head in the mirror.

"Tease." Evan ran a knuckle down Lewis's face as he sucked the glorious cock back down. Hypnotized by Evan's touch, Lewis's skin tingled under Evan's fingertips.

Lewis looked up to see Evan's head fall back again, watching in the mirror as Lewis bobbed his head. He could just imagine what he looked like.

Lewis pumped Evan's cock as he sucked the engorged head. His tongue swirled around the spongy head then licked at the bundle of

nerves at the V just underneath, the other hand grabbing his mate's ass cheek, enjoying the feel of that wonderful rump. He wondered once again if a quarter would bounce off of it.

"Close, baby. Real close."

Lewis slowly pushed the cock to the back of his throat, further still, letting his throat muscles relax until pubic hairs tickled his face.

"God, Lewis." Evan grunted as warm liquid quickly filled Lewis's mouth. Evan's hips hitched a few times. Lewis didn't release him right away. Instead, he cleaned every drop before allowing the softening shaft to leave his mouth.

"What were you saying about a tease?" Lewis grinned up at his mate. Evan ran his hand over Lewis's head, his hair too short to grab.

"I said get up."

Lewis pushed himself up, Evan pulling Lewis's aching cock free. The wolf turned him, pressing Lewis's back into his chest. "Watch."

Lewis lost himself in the erotic picture in front of him, Evan's large hand wrapped around his dick, pumping it faster and faster. Lewis went to the tips of his toes as he came. It shot out to the floor, wetting Evan's hand. His eyes rolled back, satiation setting in, making him sleepy now.

"You are one hell of a sight when you come." Evan kissed his neck, walking over to the sink to wash his hands then grabbing a few paper towels to clean the spunk off of the floor. Lewis just leaned against the wall, enjoying the afterglow.

All Lewis could do was grunt as his mate tucked him back in. Evan smiled. "Come on, babe." He unlocked the door, dragging along a boneless Lewis.

"We'll be right back." Remi snatched Drew's hand, taking him in the same direction.

"I think we started something." Lewis smiled at Evan.

"Any more mated couples show up, and children will be banned from here."

Lewis leaned over, kissing his mate. "Thanks, I needed that."

“You started it. I should be thanking you.”

* * * *

“You have to abestigate my room.”

Lewis looked down to see Melonee standing in front of him, her arms crossed over her tiny chest. This was the mate Tangee's little sister. A truck had crashed into her mom's car, leaving the woman in need of physical therapy and Melonee's care in the hands of the wolves.

“And what am I investigating, princess?” She was too cute when she had that serious look on her face, as though she was determined to get to the bottom of something.

“Mr. Peepers is gone.”

“Show me the way.” Lewis followed behind the little bouncing head of brown curls. Drew soon followed, making himself Lewis's honorary junior detective. Drew had started reading spy novels and watching James Bond movies. The mate needed to get out more. Lewis wasn't going to crush his dreams of one day becoming a secret agent. It was a phase he would outgrow.

“What's wrong?” Drew asked as he pulled out his small steno notepad.

“Mr. Peepers has gone missing.” Lewis kept the chuckle to himself. He wanted to remain professional for Melonee.

“See, he isn't there.” A little finger pointed to her child-size sofa in her bedroom.

Lewis looked around the room. This was a little girl's fantasy bedroom. Whoever decorated it spared no expense. Lewis walked over to the sofa with Melonee. He bent down as he studied all the animals lined up. One obviously empty spot used to hold one of her animals. “Did you ask these guys if they saw anything?” Lewis pointed to the stuffed animals sitting there.

Melonee rolled her eyes. Lewis smiled. She was so dramatic.
“They can’t talk. They’re not real, silly.”

“My apologies. I was thinking of my room.”

“You have talking toys in there?”

“I have a wolf that won’t shut up.”

Drew giggled behind him.

“Can you tell me what Mr. Peepers looks like?”

Melonee splayed her small hands in front of her, gesturing toward the couch. “Like a stuffed animal.”

“Okay, what kind of animal was he?”

“He was my lion.”

“What color was he?”

Melonee pinched the bridge of her nose. Lewis could see who she was hanging around all the time. Maverick did the same thing when he dealt with the wolves.

“Duh, a lion color.”

“That’s not very nice, princess.” Lewis gently admonished her.

“Sorry. I just want him back. He is all alone and scared without me.”

“We’ll get him back, angel,” Lewis said.

Lewis caught a chill. Rising up to his full height, he walked over to the window, pushing the dainty pink curtains aside. “Drew, get her out of here.”

Chapter Six

Evan shot out of the house behind his mate. Drew had run into Maverick's office with Melonee in his arms saying Lewis had told him to get her out of her room. No one had a clue what was going on.

"There was a man standing under her window," Lewis yelled over his shoulder as he tried to round the house. Evan caught him around his waist. There was no way he was letting his mate run into the unknown. That's what he was for.

"Damn it, Evan. I do this for a living. Let me go." His mate tried to elbow him, but Evan pulled back in time.

"What's going on?" Maverick asked as he caught up with them.

"Lewis saw a man under Melonee's window."

Maverick roared as he shifted and took off around the side of the house. His Alpha was one big wolf. Evan could see it a thousand times and still be amazed at the wolf's size.

Evan pulled his arm from around his mate. Lewis just stood there staring in the direction Maverick had taken off in. "Are you okay?"

Aside from blinking, his mate didn't move. "Uh, no."

Lewis's face was blank. Evan snapped his fingers in front of the cop's face a few times, but it didn't help. He started to become concerned. A light went on over his head. His mate had never seen one of them shift before.

Evan steered him around and led him into the house. Lewis didn't protest. He just followed as Evan gently tugged him by his elbow.

"What's wrong with him?"

"He saw Maverick shift."

Cecil snorted. "Oh, that." He waved his hand. "Seen it enough myself. Doesn't shock me anymore."

"It was his first time." Evan guided his mate upstairs. If Lewis wasn't an alcoholic, he would fix him a drink to steady his nerves, but that option was out.

Evan closed their bedroom door behind him. "You're starting to scare me, babe."

Lewis looked at Evan and blinked. "He turned into a wolf."

"That's why we are called shifters, love." Evan did the only thing he could think of. He kissed the stunned man. Lewis was unresponsive at first then slowly started to flick his tongue around Evan's mouth. He rubbed his hands up and down Lewis's back, trying his best to bring his mate around.

"Want you." Evan spoke against delicious kiss-swollen lips. Lewis snaked his arms around Evan's waist, pulling him closer. He could feel his mate's erection pressing into his own. The friction was maddening. Evan would never get enough of feeling his mate's hard cock against his body.

Evan pushed his hands down the back of Lewis's jeans. He ran his hands over the flare of his mate's buttocks, squeezing both nicely rounded globes. Lewis moaned, hitching a leg up onto Evan's hip, pressing even closer. Parting the cheeks, Evan tapped at the hidden entrance with his index finger.

"Tease." Lewis's breath caught on a hiss. Evan pulled back to see his mate's flushed cheeks, lust eating up his irises. Lewis's aroused passion was making Evan's grow stronger. His cock was burning to take possession of his mate.

"I'll show you *tease*, Lewis." Evan picked his mate up by his rounded ass cheeks and laid him on the bed, crawling over Lewis to taste those sweet lips once again, consuming them as his desire was consuming him.

His canines elongated from the fire racing through his blood. His mate. This was his mate he was going crazy to get inside of. After two

hundred and thirty-four years, he finally had his mate under him. There was no way in hell he would ever let Lewis go.

Evan pulled Lewis's jeans down and off, removing his shoes. And don't forget the socks. Evan mentally chuckled at his cop's idiosyncrasies.

Evan went straight for his mate's erogenous zone, his inner thighs. Lewis definitely was a strange human, but Evan found himself falling deeply in love with him. It was a feeling he had never experienced before. Evan pulled Lewis's sac aside as he licked the apex of his mate's thigh. Lewis shuddered under his hands.

He inhaled deeply, his fingers digging into Lewis as the need to come overtook him. How could one man be his undoing? Lewis was the beginning of his downfall, his control no longer his own.

Evan's tongue weaved a path from Lewis's inner thigh to his hip bone then around to his abdomen.

"Evan," Lewis whimpered.

"Hush, let me take care of you." Evan scrapped his canine up to one of Lewis's nipples, lapping at it as if it were cream. His mate's legs pulled up then circled around him, trying desperately to connect their cocks. Regretfully, Evan pulled back. He needed to pull free of his clothes, to clear his head before he came in his jeans.

The sight that lay before him was magnificent. Evan pulled his shirt over his head and tossed it aside, ridding himself of his jeans. He licked his lips before hovering over his mate, tucking his head into his mate's neck, nipping at the tender flesh.

"Make me come, damn it," Lewis cried out in a fit. Evan sunk his teeth into his shoulder, Lewis gasping then crying out his orgasm as the heat of his seed warmed Evan's stomach. Lewis panted in his arms as Evan reached under his pillow and grabbed the lube. Trying his best to balance his hold on his mate with his teeth, Evan coated his cock and then tossed the bottle aside as he angled himself and pushed in.

Evan grabbed his mate's ass as he thrust deeply as his mind scrambled at the whimper Lewis gave. Evan pulled his hands up, plunging them into Lewis's hair as he sealed the wound, caressing Lewis's face with his. He never realized how lonely he had been until Lewis, until the hurricane blew into his life.

"I love you." Evan kissed his eyes, his nose, his chin, and his lips. Evan held his man close as he rocked in and out, losing himself in the feelings of desire as they took pleasure in each other's body. .

"I love you, too." Lewis whispered so low Evan almost didn't hear the softly spoken words. He knew how hard it was for Lewis to say them. He probably never had before, and the gift was more precious to him than any action could have told.

Evan rose up, crying out as he came, his pelvis rocking Lewis's body. He locked eyes with his mate, shocked to see such love staring back at him. Evan dipped down, kissing the very breath out of his lover.

Evan pulled Lewis to his body, succumbing to the sleep of a satiated lover.

* * * *

"She is no longer allowed to roam the house by herself. Someone is to be with her at all times." Lewis heard Maverick decree as he walked into the office with Evan at his side. The Alpha was standing in front of the window, his hands clasped behind his back, staring out into the night.

There wasn't much Lewis could do, only catching a glimpse of the stranger standing below Melonee's window holding Mr. Peepers in his hand. No other evidence was found. But the face of that stranger was etched in Lewis's memory, and he would know him if he saw him again.

Heading into work the next morning, an eerie thought struck Lewis. What if that man took the toy for her scent? But why? Lewis couldn't think of any reason someone would want to harm her.

Lewis pulled his cell phone out, smiling when he thought of Evan telling him about them being invented. "Maverick, I think it was a warning."

"For what? Who?" the deep timbre voice asked.

"Not sure. But I kept going over the scene in my head. That guy *let* me see him, had an evil fucking grin on his face. It was as if he was waiting for someone to look out."

"Question is how did he get past my Sentries? Their hearing is superb," the Alpha asked. Lewis couldn't think of an answer to give Maverick.

"I'll call if I can think of anything else." Lewis hung up, wondering how they got into her room and why.

As the station came into view, Lewis pulled over to the side of the road. This was his first day back. Could he handle it without sneaking to the bathroom for a quick drink from his flask? He didn't have that flask anymore—he gave it to Remi—but the urge was still there.

He sat there for what felt like hours until he slowly directed the car into the parking lot, cutting the motor. He stared at the battleship gray building, wondering if he wasn't making a mistake.

Pocketing his keys, he jogged up the front steps and pushed past the door into the noisy chaos. He used to love coming to work every day. He chomped at the bit for a new case to slide across his desk. Now all he could do was stand there, watching everyone else get on with their own lives, feeling as though his had just stalled out.

"Good to see you back, Keating," Jones called out. "We're heading out after work, want to join us?"

Heading out meant going drinking, and Lewis would never head out again. Begging off an excuse, he headed straight into his captain's office. The captain had kept to his word, not telling anyone why he'd been absent.

“Hey, you look a hundred percent better.” Captain Foster waved him in. “Have a seat.”

Lewis spent the rest of the day going over cases he’d been given. Still more recovered files. They were things he could do in his sleep. It was obvious he was being given the easy cases. That pissed Lewis off. He was a damn good cop. He didn’t need coddling.

He took the files back to his desk to look through. Most of them just needed closing out.

The desk drawer rattled as Lewis opened it to drop some of the files in, seeing the hidden bottle of whiskey toward the back. He slammed it closed, looking around to see if anyone caught a glimpse of what lay inside. *Call Evan, Drew. Anyone.*

Lewis slowly opened the drawer back up, his mouth watering instantly at the sight of the amber liquid. Just one taste. He could handle one taste.

Tossing his coat onto the drawer, he extracted the bottle with shaky hands, using the coat to cover up what he was taking out. Making his way down the front steps, Lewis got into his car, heading for the park.

He sat in the gazebo, staring at the bottle. Lewis unscrewed the lid and inhaled deeply. The intoxicating aroma made his chest tighten and his saliva glands work overtime.

Lewis took a deep and shaky breath.

His heartbeat racing and his hands shaky, Lewis looked around at the small town he called home. How had he ended up here? How had his life taken such a wrong turn? Rolling the bottle in his hands, Lewis stared as the whiskey sloshed around in the bottle.

He could handle one drink.

* * * *

Evan walked around the gazebo, approaching his mate slowly. Lewis had called him, told him he couldn’t stay dry anymore, that the

struggle was just too damn hard. Evan raced from the Den, finding his mate sitting with his face in his hands.

"Are you...?"

Lewis looked up, his eyes bloodshot. Obviously, his mate had been crying. "No, I poured it out."

Evan took a relieved breath. He knelt in front of the sober man, cupping Lewis's face in his hands. "You did good, baby."

"I feel like shit."

"Because of the fight or because of the temptation?"

"Both." Lewis leaned forward and laid his head on Evan's shoulder. "I feel so damn lost. I feel like I'm breaking inside. I don't want to lose what we have. Nothing seems clear anymore. Just so damn lost."

"I can buy you a GPS."

Lewis smiled as he dried the tears from his eyes. "If that would help, I would let you."

"Do you want to come home? No one will think any less of you. Drew had a relapse when he was in the first stages of his recovery." Evan kissed his mate. He was thankful to the heavens that Lewis had reached out to him and called him instead of getting lost in the bottom of that bottle. The glass container lay on the grass, the cap nowhere in sight. He could smell the dark odor, and he wanted to get his mate away. Surely, he could smell it, too.

"No, I need to get back to work. Captain will notice me missing after awhile. I didn't tell him I was heading out anywhere." Lewis made no move to stand. Instead, he held on tight to Evan.

"Come on, baby, I'll go back with you. You can tell the guys I'm some journalist or something doing a story on detectives." Evan stood, pulling Lewis up with him. He was proud of the way his mate had handled this. He was proud he was so damn stubborn he wanted to return to work.

"I don't need a babysitter." Lewis nipped his neck.

“Keep that up, and we’ll need the fire department to hose us down.” Evan pulled Lewis away from the deep whiskey scent, getting him over to his car and clean smelling air.

“Just don’t send Gunnar to watch me again. That wolf was busted within twenty-four hours of his surveillance work.”

Evan threw his head back, laughing his ass off. “He didn’t tell me that. You’re good, baby. No one has ever known he was watching them.”

“How do you think he ate so well that week?”

“He was in your house?”

* * * *

“Now who’s sexy when they’re jealous?” Lewis felt better. Evan hadn’t focused on what just happened. Instead, he tried to take his mind off of it. God love him.

“Let’s get you back to work before I hunt dear old Gunnar down.” Evan followed Lewis to the police station. It wasn’t a large building, with this being such a small town, and a lot of poor families lived here, but Maverick had donated a large fund to update the precinct, which enabled them to add on a detective’s division. His captain had always raved about Maverick Brac. At the time, Lewis had no clue who he was talking about. He chuckled to himself now. If the captain only knew what Maverick really was.

Lewis had worked in the city for his first years as a rookie. When he learned there was an opening here, he jumped on it. The cases were less seedy than the crime in the big city, but Lewis didn’t mind. He enjoyed the small town feel.

“Hey, Evan, what brings you here?” Jones shook his mate’s hand.

Lewis studied his mate’s face. Bastard had a smirk on it. “Just stopping in.”

Evan shrugged at Lewis when Jones left them alone.

“You know him?”

“Are we playing jealous tag? I guess that means you’re it.”

“Spill.” Lewis glared at him.

Evan took a seat at Lewis’s desk. “Not too many people don’t know us around here. We help out the community a lot. Maverick is big on giving back. I was a part of the renovations crew when they gave this building an overhaul.”

“You worked construction?” Lewis was impressed. He imagined Evan in a hard hat. Fuck, he was hard now.

“I am a man of many talents.” Evan wiggled his eyebrows, his gaze dropping down to the bulge in Lewis’s jeans. “I can show you one of my talents if you want me to take care of that.”

“Tease. I’m on duty. No hanky-panky.” Lewis sat in the chair next to his desk, liking the fact that Evan sat in his seat. He looked good sitting there. He would make a hot ass cop.

“You’re no fun.” His mate pouted. Lewis reached over and pulled on Evan’s bottom lip. “Hand me those files in the bottom drawer, sexy.”

Evan twisted around, grabbing the handful of files and dropping them in front of Lewis. “What are you working on?”

“A few months ago one of the detectives got greedy, took a bribe to make a whole mess of files disappear. We recovered them, he went to jail, and now we have the fun job of going through them and closing most of them out.” Lewis flipped the top file open. “That’s how I ended up on your doorstep a few weeks ago. Cecil’s was in the lost batch.”

“You know he didn’t do it. His ex was a real piece of work.”

“I figured that out the first time I came out there. I just wanted to get away from my desk.”

Evan grinned. “I’m glad you did.”

“Leave me alone, I’m trying to work here, and you’re distracting. Go look hot as hell over there.” Lewis pointed to the janitor’s closet.

“Only if you join me.”

“Evan.” Lewis growled.

“Fine, what are you working on now?”

“Three men are missing. The foreman called it in when they didn’t show up for work. It’s like they fell off the face of the earth.”

* * * *

Evan watched as Lewis went into detective mode. He was thanking the heavens his mate was so thorough. If he hadn’t been, he would have just closed Cecil’s case out, never coming to him. Evan looked around the second floor of the station. There were only five other people there, one being the receptionist, one a delivery man, and three detectives to solve the crimes in their town.

The police force did a fine job in keeping the crime rate down, and they were outstanding men and women, but when a mystery arose, his mate was the one called in. Hell if that wasn’t hot. The detective unit helped out the city as well when they became backed up. Half the files Lewis had in front of him were city files.

He checked Lewis out. The cop was sex-on-a-stick. Nice, chiseled chest, dark, military-cut hair, and he wore his jeans like he owned them. The gun holster around his shoulders was even sexy. Evan liked the badge that dangled around his neck. It made him seem official. And Evan got to keep him.

“I can feel you watching me,” Lewis warned.

Even his mate’s deep voice was seductive, making Evan hard in zero point five seconds. His mate had that detective look about him, that look that made you sit up and take him seriously. Evan had the urge to crawl over the desk and knock his mate to the floor, claiming him in front of everyone.

“Not happening.”

Evan grinned. Hell if the detective wasn’t smart. He even knew what he was thinking about.

They spent the rest of the day that way, with Lewis going over notes and Evan ogling him, wishing he could pull Lewis into the

janitor's closet. By quitting time, Evan was ready to nail his hard cock into his mate's soft hole. Fuck, he was horny.

"It's your own damn fault, shouldn't be such a dirty old man." Lewis grabbed his jacket. They were heading over to the diner for dinner. Everything was in walking distance once you got into town. Evan patted his ass as they walked out of the station, wishing they had just a little more privacy.

They walked down to the diner, Evan trying to grope Lewis as his mate stayed an arm's length away. They entered the diner with Lewis protecting his butt from being pinched again.

"Hey, Keata." Lewis took a seat at the counter with Evan sitting right next to him, still horny as hell.

"Hi, Lewis."

"Find anything out about the man in Melonee's room?" Cody asked as he straightened.

"Nothing yet."

Just then a man walked through the door. Lewis jumped up and tackled the stranger.

Evan and Cody ran over, grabbed the downed man, and dragged him into the kitchen. Thank goodness the diner was empty of customers at the moment.

"Mind telling me why we just hauled a stranger in here?" Evan asked as Cody pinned the guy's arms behind his back.

"He's the one that was in Melonee's room. You're under arrest, pal." Lewis pulled his cuffs out.

Evan cocked his arm back and decked the intruder, knocking him unconscious. George handed them some twine, binding the guy's hands and feet.

"Oh, hell no. You are not dumping him in my trunk. I'm not going to jail for kidnapping. I'm too pretty," Lewis said.

Evan and Cody rolled their eyes, pulling the unconscious man out of Lewis's trunk and dumping him into the bed of Evan's truck. Evan turned to his mate. "Either you can go back to the station, acting as

though you know nothing about this, or you can follow me. Those are the only two choices at the moment.”

Lewis looked between the two wolves. “Are you sure Cecil didn’t beat that guy up?”

“No. Now which choice are you taking?” Cody walked through the back door of the diner, leaving the two alone.

Evan opened the driver’s door and waited on his answer.

* * * *

“Damn it, I’m with you.” Lewis cursed his stupidity the whole ride to the Den. Apparently Cody had called ahead. Maverick and a few Sentries were already waiting outside. Maverick had a look about him that screamed demon from hell.

“Follow me,” Maverick ordered the wolves as they pulled the unconscious man from the truck. Lewis’s eyes widened when Maverick pushed something on the bookshelf in his office and a secret passageway was revealed. He followed them down, stopping in a small room with dirt walls. A chair was sitting in the center, and a lantern was on the floor. Lights had lit up the passageway so Lewis assumed the lantern was for special effects only.

“Lewis, stay behind him. I don’t want you losing your job,” Maverick instructed as he had the man dumped unceremoniously into the chair.

Lewis did as instructed. That part of him that was cop was screaming in his head to take the perpetrator in, follow procedure by the book, and not let the wolves have him. Then he thought of little Melonee’s face and how this man would probably walk after screaming for a lawyer. He leaned against the dirt wall, crossing his arms over his chest and just observed.

Maverick smacked the hand of god down on the stranger’s face, the sound of skin on skin echoing throughout the chamber.

“I don’t think that’s gonna wake him up. Maybe you busted a few teeth and broke his jaw, though,” Hawk stated.

“No, but it felt damn good.” He looked at the stranger. “That’s for scaring my Melonee.” Maverick began to walk away. “Let me know when he wakes up. I doubt if he will be able to open that eye from the looks of it.”

Lewis peeked around to the man’s face. Evan had blackened both eyes and broken his nose with one punch. Damn, his man was hot when he was forceful.

Chapter Seven

The perpetrator sat there with his jaw stubbornly set. After hours of interrogation, they were no closer to finding out why he had been in Melonee's room.

From the methods Maverick used, Lewis was grateful down to his core that he wasn't the one sitting in that chair. The Alpha in full torture mode was a force to be reckoned with.

"I ain't telling you fucking fleabags shit," he finally spat out when Maverick used his latest creative way to make him talk. Lewis would have been singing like a canary hours ago. The stranger had some balls. Lewis would give him that.

"Fleabag? So you know we're wolves. Interesting." Maverick turned to Commander Hawk. "Go get Jason. Let's see if a wolf from the Eastern pack can identify this piece of shit."

Twenty minutes later, Lewis looked up as he heard footsteps approaching.

"You!" Jason leapt forward, jumping onto the man and punching him repeatedly. Maverick grabbed the Sentry under his arms, hauling him off of their prisoner. Jason kicked the scumbag in the head before he was out of reach.

"He killed my brother!" Jason shouted at Maverick.

"Who is he?" the Alpha asked calmly.

"One of Jackson's followers." Jason leaned forward and spat in the wolf's face.

Evan had explained to Lewis that Jackson was the former Alpha of the Eastern pack, defeated by Zeus. He had tried to kidnap Maverick and Hawk's mates, but Oliver brought him down, enabling

his reign of madness to end, or so they thought. A small number of the pack had broken off, with some following Jackson instead of staying with the new Alpha.

“Why would Jackson’s men want Melonee?”

Jason turned to Maverick. “He used to make me do a lot of his dirty work, and when I refused, he had me beaten by three or four of his men. If I know him, he wants to use her as bait. Didn’t Oliver bring him down?”

Maverick nodded.

“He’ll take her. Use her to trade for Oliver.” Jason spat again at the glaring man in the chair. Maverick roared in the man’s face, his canines fully extended as his eyes turned red as blood. He was half changed, and it was the scariest shit Lewis had ever seen in his life.

The Alpha slammed the man across the room, and no one interfered. No one was suicidal enough to try. “Call Zeus and hand him over before I snap his fucking neck,” Maverick commanded as he stormed from the chamber.

“Fuck me, man.” Lewis stayed where he was. If even the tiniest part of his brain ever thought of pissing that man off, the scene that just took place froze that thought permanently.

* * * *

The house was in full lockdown mode, and Maverick himself had called Lewis’s captain, getting him excused for the week. The diner had been closed. A sign hanging out front stated they were on vacation and would return in a week, and Frank was sent on a real vacation to get him away from town.

Maverick was on the phone with Zeus, coordinating a wide search for Jackson, who they had learned escaped. If he was still giving orders, then the wolf had to be in the area somewhere to know about Melonee and which room was hers.

Maverick had Loco and Tangee change rooms, putting them, and Melonee, on the ground floor close to his bedroom. The Alpha wasn't playing when it came to her safety.

A few followers were caught in the traps they set, but Jackson was still out there somewhere. Although Melonee was Tangee's sister, Maverick kept her by his side. The only time she wasn't with the Alpha was when Tangee bathed her or at her bedtime. They considered telling Olivia, Tangee and Melonee's mom, what was going on, but with her recovery just starting, they didn't want to worry her. They did inform Tangee's uncle, the man taking care of Olivia, of the situation.

They promised to keep him updated.

* * * *

Lewis rubbed his eyes and yawned as he closed the bedroom door quietly, intending to go downstairs for something to drink, when he heard small yowling noises coming in his direction.

Creeping forward in his pajama pants and bare feet, Lewis rounded the corner to find what looked like a baby tiger coming at him.

Throwing his hands in front of him, he said, "Okay, kitty, no need to be alarmed." The tiger tilted its head sideways, watching him.

He knew wolves lived here, and he also knew for a fact it was wolves after the little tyke, so how did a cat tie into this? Lewis took a step back as the tiger tried to pad toward him. He braced himself when it leapt.

Lewis started to wrap his arms around its neck to protect himself when the cat started licking him in his face then rolled off of him onto its back and started twisting its body around, playfully batting at him.

"What is going on here?" Lewis asked as he reached over and scratched behind its ears. The tiger lapped at his hand, pouncing on him then rolled around.

He didn't remember taking a drink. Maybe he was still asleep in Evan's arms and was dreaming all of this.

The tiger nipped at his pants, batting at his feet.

"There you are." Cody came around the corner. "Stop scaring Lewis."

"House pet?"

Cody laughed. "No, my mate."

"Keata is a tiger?" Boy, he must be drunk. Things just got more and more bizarre around here the longer he stayed. It felt as though he had stumbled into another world. Well, technically, he had, but a tiger?

"He and his brother Keata are tiger-shifters from Japan. We didn't discover this until after they were mated. Seems the mating triggered it."

"Wait." Lewis held his hand up. "I thought they were cousins?"

Cody sat down while Keata nuzzled him on his lap, and Cody scratched his belly. "Shifter genes are carried by the male. The theory is that the same tiger-shifter was lying with numerous women, trying to populate his area with his seed. He impregnated both Kyoshi and Keata's mother's unbeknownst to them that the same man lay with both. We can't prove it since Keata's mom died giving birth to him, and Kyoshi's mom has passed on as well, so the secret died with both woman."

Lewis scratched his jaw. "So they really are cousins, but they're brothers, too. Sounds kinda backwoods to me."

Cody smiled. "They're so used to referring to each other as cousins that they automatically introduce themselves that way. We know the truth, so that's all that matters."

"I guess." Lewis reached over, tugging on Keata's tail as it swished back and forth. "It's funny. I can honestly say now I pulled a tiger by its tail."

Keata yowled over at Lewis, batting at his own tail. He rolled off of Cody's lap, wrestling with it.

Both men laughed as they watched Keata try to best it, but his tail seemed to outwit him. “Anymore magical creatures I should be aware of?”

“Nah, just dogs and cats. Well, there are you humans.” Cody chuckled as Lewis flipped him off.

Keata batted at Lewis’s finger, chewing lightly on it.

“Come on, mate. Let’s leave the human alone.” Cody stood, Keata following close behind him.

“Some strange shit,” Lewis mumbled as he made his way downstairs. Just as he closed the refrigerator door, he noticed movement outside. He hit the light switch to darken the kitchen then grabbed a large knife from the block, grasping the handle, the blade parallel to his arm.

He wished he had his gun, but going back upstairs meant he would lose sight of the intruder. The shadow crept closer. Lewis made out a shape but then the shadow broke apart and became two men creeping closer to the back door. Were they that stupid to try and break into a house full of wolves?

Pressing his back against the wall next to the door, Lewis waited. When the handle finally turned, he swung the knife at the first to breach the threshold. He made contact and heard a grunt. Apparently, they didn’t want to alert anyone to their presence.

The second man grabbed Lewis’s arm, and the injured man shoved a rag into Lewis’s mouth as he struggled to free himself, but the suckers were strong. Tape secured the rag as they dragged him from the house, hauling him through the back yard. Lewis could hear wolves fighting in the distance. They must have used a diversion tactic so these two men could get past the Sentries.

He found himself shoved into a waiting vehicle and his head shoved down on the seat.

“Keep him down. I don’t want anyone to spot him,” the driver grumbled as he pulled away. Lewis stayed motionless, listening to

their conversation. He knew at this point that fighting was futile anyway. There was no way he was getting away, not like this at least.

"He won't be happy. He wanted the little girl," the passenger riding shotgun said as he twisted around and peered down at Lewis.

"It's still a mate, good for a bargaining chip," the thug in the back seat argued. "He'll be satisfied."

They must be talking about that dethroned leader, Jackson. Lewis wasn't going to allow himself to be used as a trade for Oliver. He had to bide his time and think of a way to escape.

The car finally came to a stop after about twenty minutes, which told Lewis they weren't in the town limits.

"Get him out, take him into the barn."

Lewis was pulled from the backseat. His feet began to hurt as they led him over gravel then into a large barn. After a moment his eyes adjusted, and he saw that more men stood around watching as he was brought in.

"She looks to have grown and sprouted muscles," a large man said, his voice heavy with sarcasm as Lewis was shoved into a chair.

"We couldn't get the girl. This mate was in the kitchen. He stabbed Keeves," the driver informed the ominous figure standing over Lewis.

"Too bad for him. Go shift and heal yourself." The scumbag waved off Keeves as if he were an insignificant bug.

And he used to be an Alpha? No wonder he was challenged. He was heartless, Lewis thought as his hands were tied behind his back. If this was indeed Jackson standing over him. Even Lewis felt for the guy he stabbed. It was twisted, but he did.

"So, you're the detective that took out one of my men? From my understanding, he didn't tell Maverick anything." The wolf Lewis assumed was Jackson squatted down in front of him. "I wonder whose mate you are? I know you won't tell me, so it's no use asking. And if you are wondering who I am." The man stretched out his arms out in a show of narcissist glory. "*I am the one and only Jackson.*"

Jackson stood, walking toward an access door. "Make sure he doesn't escape before the tradeoff." He glared at Lewis, irritation evident on his face as he left the barn.

"Didn't say we couldn't have fun with you?" One of the other lackeys licked his lips at Lewis, palming his crotch, letting Lewis know the fun he had in mind.

"Leave him alone He's a tool for Jackson, not a fuck toy," the driver growled.

"Whatever," the lackey grumbled as he and a few more men left the barn. Lewis let his eyes scan the place. There were only two men in the barn with him now. The others must be guarding the place from the outside.

He thought about Evan. If these kidnappers got their brains to work properly, he just may be in trouble. Would he see his wolf again? They had gotten off to a rocky start. Two control freaks out of control, but it seemed they clicked after all. He had shocked himself when he told Evan he loved him. That was the first time he had ever told that to another. Patrick hadn't even been granted access to those words.

Lewis thought all of this while he worked the knot loose. His eyes darted around, placing where the men were. Jackson had come in twice to check on him, but other than that these men seemed lax when it came to the detective. If this is how the ex-Alpha ran things, how had he not been caught by now? The wolf sucked at being a bad guy.

Lewis caught something out of the corner of his eye. *Please tell me I'm not seeing this.*

Up in the loft, an orange head peeked out. Was it Keata? No, this one looked a little different, so it must be his brother. Lewis closed his eyes for a moment, praying the mates had *not* gotten it into their heads to rescue him.

Evan had told him about the Alpha's mate, Cecil, and his mischievous side for adventure, like sneaking the others out for a little

bit of fun. This situation wasn't an adventure, and the little brat was going to get the other mates killed.

Damn it!

The tiger watched the men, sniffed the air, and then leaned back. Shit. Lewis had to move before it pounced. He had a feeling these men could shift in under a second then the fun would really begin. His rescuers couldn't take on full grown wolves. Hell, most of the mates were human.

"My shoulder itches. Come over here and scratch it for me," Lewis called to the scumbag furthest from the tiger.

"Too damn bad."

"Gonna let a guy suffer like that?"

The assailant twisted his mouth up in irritation and walked forward. Lewis swung at him as the tiger jumped onto the other inept guard directly below him. Lewis managed to knock his guard out before he could yell. The other punk struggled as Kyoshi clamped his canines on the exposed throat and covered the mouth with his paw and effectively neutralized him before he could shift.

Lewis quickly tied the men up, shoving the rag that had been used on him into the conscious man's mouth before knocking him out as well. Kyoshi backed away, removing the threat.

"You are in big trouble," he whispered to the tiger as they made their way up to the loft and out onto the roof. He didn't see anyone else and wondered if the small mate had come on his own. Kyoshi leapt to the tree whose branches hung closest. Lewis wasn't as smooth about it, but he managed.

"When we get down, run," Lewis whispered to Kyoshi, and the cat nodded. As soon as their feet hit the ground, they were off and heading toward the forest.

"Oh, crap." Lewis was pissed when he spotted the rest of the mates hiding amongst the trees. "Do any of you have an idea of how dangerous this situation is? You should be at home where it's safe."

“Duh, that’s why we’re out here. We’re tired of being cooped up. And the fact you got yourself kidnapped. Safe at home wouldn’t have gotten you free.” Cecil pointed out.

“Okay, funny man, let’s get out of here.” Lewis was relieved to see Oliver with them. Jackson hadn’t gotten his paws on him.

“This way.” Blair waved them on, all running toward the paved road. An SUV sat running on the soft shoulder.

“Just how did you manage to find me, and where are the warriors?”

“Kyoshi sniffed you out. We ran before...oh, shit.” Cecil ran behind Lewis as truck after truck slammed their brakes on the road. Seemed the driveway had emptied out and was now sitting in front of them.

“Get in, now!” Maverick yelled at them, the rescue party scrambling to obey.

“You okay?” Evan asked as he pulled Lewis into his arms.

“Good. I’m good.” Lewis was thrown a little off by the way Evan clung to him. No one had ever felt that way about him.

Lewis watched as Maverick leaned into the vehicle, his face filled with rage. “If I see one fucking toe come out of this truck, I don’t care who you’re mated to, you don’t even want to know what I’ll do.” Maverick slammed the door closed and took a deep breath, turning his attention toward Lewis.

“What are we looking at?” Maverick asked the detective.

“Jackson is there, and he has about ten other wolves with him. Kyoshi and I knocked two of them out and tied them up.”

Storm growled. It seemed Kyoshi’s mate wasn’t too pleased to hear the tiger risked his life.

“He did an excellent job.” Lewis found himself defending the tiger.

“Mates don’t fight. We do.” Storm’s voice was coldly disapproving.

“Whatever. Anyway, they are northwest of here, about a mile. If we...”

“There is no *we*. You go join the other mates.” Evan pulled on Lewis’s arm, trying to drag him over to the truck.

“Hold the hell up. I’m not going anywhere,” Lewis snarled in Evan’s face, yanking his arm from his mate’s grasp.

“Yes, you are. Now.” Evan shot his arm out, pointing at the vehicle holding the shorter mates, his eyes demanding Lewis do as he said.

“If you think for one damn second—”

“Stop,” Maverick commanded. “We don’t have time for this.” The Alpha turned to Evan, his eyes narrowing as he spoke. “Learn how to communicate with your mate. Stop ordering him around, and try talking to him.” Next, he turned to Lewis. “They are wolves. As much as I respect your strength, you are no match for them, so please protect the others while we deal with this.”

Lewis frowned. He didn’t like being relegated to the you-can’t-be-a-part-of-this truck, but Maverick had a point. He glared at Evan, hating to concede. “That wouldn’t have been so hard to say, now would it?”

Evan threw his hands up in the air, looking totally exasperated. “Damned if I do, damned if I don’t.”

Maverick rolled his eyes as the other warriors chuckled. “Let’s move, men.”

Lewis huffed as he climbed into the driver’s seat, watching the men strip and shift. Damn, but that was an eyeful. His cock hardened just looking at all that naked flesh. Although he only wanted one of them, a guy could drool. He wasn’t dead, after all.

George slapped him in the arm. “Stop staring at Tank’s side of beef.”

Lewis started laughing at the ridiculousness of it all. “How the hell do you handle all of that?”

“A secret I ain’t sharing with ya, young grasshopper.” George smiled.

“Hey, no funny,” Keata piped up from the back.

“Quiet back there. You men are in enough trouble.” Lewis turned back around, watching for the warriors. An hour later they came running out of the forest, shifting and dressing. George held his hand up in front of Lewis’s eyes.

Lewis chuckled at the cowboy as Maverick approached the driver’s window. Lewis rolled it down.

“We took care of most of his followers, but Jackson got away. We’ll be on the lookout for him now. Stay close.” Maverick and the other wolves climbed into their vehicles as Lewis followed them home.

* * * *

“Are you sure you’re okay?” Evan asked as he rinsed the conditioner from Lewis’s hair.

“Better now.” Lewis slipped his arms around Evan’s wet waist, pulling him in for a kiss.

“Turn around, tease.” Evan grabbed the waterproof lube from the soap dish, squirting in on his fingers as Lewis grabbed the wall.

Spearing two fingers in, he stretched his mate as his other hand glided over Lewis’s wet skin. “You’re so damn sexy. Is your gun waterproof?”

“No, so don’t even think about it.” Lewis poked his ass out, spreading his feet apart as Evan slid a third finger in. “I’m ready.”

Evan pulled his hand away, lining his cock up. With his thumbs, he spread his mate’s cheeks apart. “Mmm, looks good.” Evan pushed forward as he watched his cock being swallowed by the tight hole.

Evan grabbed Lewis’s shoulders, thrusting into him repeatedly as he cried out Lewis’s name. Reaching around, he only had to tug a few times before Lewis shot his seed to the wall, slumping into a pile of

goo. Evan caught him, pulling him from the shower and laying him on the bed.

“Rest, baby. You had a long night.” Evan wrapped himself around his mate, thankful he was back in his arms. “We’re still on lockdown, so you can sleep in,” Evan mumbled as he drifted off to sleep.

* * * *

The night finally came when Maverick got the call, and Lewis stayed out of it. He already felt like a conspirator. He had been through too much already. Evan did everything he could to shelter him from what was going on. The less the cop knew, the better.

The house was eerily quiet the next day, no noise coming from the den. Everyone was in their rooms.

“Is it over?” Lewis asked Evan when he couldn’t take it anymore.

“You don’t want to know. Let’s just say the mates are safe. The lockdown has been lifted.” Evan informed him.

Lewis nodded. That’s all he really wanted to know. Maverick and Zeus had eliminated the threat. Grabbing his holster, Lewis adjusted it before sliding in his gun. He needed to get back to work.

“Fuck, you look sexy as sin with that gun. Come here.”

Lewis walked across the room, standing in front of his mate.

“I’m gonna fuck you while you’re wearing that.” Evan growled into his ear. He pushed him onto the bed, pulling Lewis’s pants to his ankles, tossing Lewis’s legs onto his shoulder. “No, keep the badge on, too.”

Lewis grinned. Kinky bastard. Evan prepared him, lubed him up, and then sank in deep. It felt different with his ass cheeks pushed tight together, both his legs over one shoulder. All he could do was fist the sheets as Evan plowed into him. His mate hadn’t bothered getting undressed either, his pants down at his ankles. Lewis liked quick and fast just as much as slow and steady. There was a certain thrill to what the wolf was doing now.

Evan bent Lewis's knees back, leaning over him as his mate thrust deeper. Evan reached for a kiss. "Kiss me, you fool."

Lewis grinned. "Someone's been watching late night television again. Classics?"

"Later. I'm trying to fuck you into the mattress." Evan pulled at Lewis's hips, pegging his sweet spot on every down stroke. Lewis cried out his release as Evan filled his tight hole with sweet, warm come.

"Don't you dare fall on me, fat ass." Lewis pushed at Evan's chest, panting to catch his own breath.

"Stop crying like a baby." Evan pulled out, yanking his pants up enough to walk to the bathroom and clean up, bringing out a hot rag for Lewis.

"Thanks." Lewis grabbed the cloth, cleaning the cooling seed from his stomach then handing it to Evan to wipe the seed that was coming back out.

"Fat?" Evan pulled his shirt up to show Lewis an amazing eight-pack, and Lewis's mouth watered at the sight. "Where do you see fat?"

"Back fat." Lewis laughed as he rolled off the other side of the bed, pulling his pants up as he took off out of their room with Evan close behind.

"I'm ready, Lewis," Drew said as Lewis nearly plowed him over. Evan caught him in time before Drew was knocked down.

"Sorry, buddy. The old man was trying to catch me." Lewis panted.

Drew giggled. "Remi hates when I call him old."

Lewis stuck his tongue out at his mate. "See, I'm not the only one that thinks you wolves are ready for rocking chairs." Lewis gave his mate a quick kiss before walking off with Drew.

"You ready to go to work with me?" Lewis asked as he led Drew downstairs.

"Yeah, but Remi is insisting he tag along." Drew nodded toward the warrior heading their way.

"No big deal. I'll just tell my captain that I have a young recruit."

Drew laughed as he followed Lewis from the front door, Remi close behind. "And what are you going to tell him about our shadow?"

"Okay, two recruits."

Remi snorted from behind them. "I don't think so. Being a cop isn't high on my to-do list. I'd probably shoot the first person who pissed me off."

Lewis looked over at Drew and winked. "And that is a lesson in what not to do."

Drew covered his mouth as he laughed, looking back at his mate. Lewis thought it hilarious the way Remi was scowling at both of them.

"Are we going to go out and catch criminals?" Drew asked excitedly as the three climb into Lewis's Sedan.

"There's not much room back here." Remi tapped Lewis on his shoulder. "Why don't we take one of the SUV's?"

"Because it's not a cop car," Drew pointed out.

Lewis listened to the two go back and forth as he drove to the station. He was glad Drew was taking an interest in what he did for a living. For too long he started to feel like he wasn't contributing anything, like he was burning out.

With Drew's newfound interest, Lewis was actually excited to introduce his new friend the non-exciting world of law enforcement.

Lewis's gut told him Drew wouldn't stay interested long. It wasn't as glamorous as the movies made it out to be. But the guy was trying to find his way, and with both of them having addictions, they hopefully could help each other out.

"Don't forget we have our meeting tomorrow night," he reminded Drew before they got out of the car.

"I know. Thomas called to let us know it would be an hour early."

They exited the car, Lewis pausing for a moment as Remi laughed, chasing his mate up the precinct steps.

He reflected back to the night in the parking lot, the night he thought he had dreamt of a wolf and a vampire. It was still a dream to him. Evan was the dream man he had always wanted. It just took for them to set aside their controlling natures to see how good they were together, and a little trust to give his dream man his heart.

THE END

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Lynn Hagen loves writing about the somewhat flawed, but lovable. She also loves a hero who can see past all the rough edges to find the shining diamond of a beautiful heart.

You can find her on any given day curled up with her laptop and a cup of hot java, letting the next set of characters tell their story.

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