



WOLF WANTED

MARK OF LYCOS

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Wolf Wanted

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Warning: This book contains sexually explicit content which is only suitable for mature readers. This story has been rated *Total-e-melting*.

Mark of Lycos

WOLF WANTED

Marie Harte

Chapter One

“Put your name in the goddamn box,” Michael Barton said through gritted teeth, teeth that looked much longer and sharper than they had just moments before. “The Wolf in the Forest is waiting, and you know the spirit has a lot of clans to visit tonight, Anson.” When Anson continued to ignore him, his uncle lowered his voice. “Everyone else is doing it.”

Yeah, and everyone else looked downright miserable. Anson’s friends and cousins dragged their feet, forced into this stupid tradition because their elders had been forced into it. No escaping mandatory happiness, not for any of them.

Except maybe for Anson.

“Boy, move your ass.”

He pretended not to hear his uncle and edged closer to his escape. He now wished he’d listened to his brother’s warnings. A few more steps and he could scurry between the raised dais and the outer edge of the crowd into the surrounding forest. As long as he kept out of sight until the moon waned from its peak in the cycle, he could avoid the matrimonial noose for another ten years.

Everyone else is doing it. Please. He wanted very badly to answer, “If all my friends jumped off a bridge, should I do that, too?” But poking a stick at an angry alpha in front of the pack didn’t make much sense, not since he wanted to live to see his twenty-sixth birthday. Hell, he’d only recently come into his full pelt. The pack barely recognised him as a voting member and wouldn’t have allowed him to the mating ceremony if he wasn’t directly descended from Lycos the Bold.

He tried to step away, to follow his twin who’d made it as far as the woods, when his uncle grabbed his arm and held him there. Anson watched from a distance as Fenris, his mirror image in every way, mouthed something at him, flipped him the finger, and took off while he still could.

“Uh uh.” His uncle pulled him forward. “Don’t worry. Fenris isn’t as free as he likes to think he is.”

“Come on, Uncle Mike. You know this is bullshit. I’m too young to be tied down.” Once mated, a wolf couldn’t stray. And if the great Wolf in the Forest decided against him, he’d be stuck with a shrew for the rest of his life. Considering Uncle Mike was just shy of five hundred, Anson didn’t think his request to wait a while was all that unreasonable. Hell, most of the other matrimonial sacrifices were at least well into their second century. What the hell was Uncle Mike thinking?

He’s thinking the unmated females in this pack want Lycos’s kin. My damn birthmark is no blessing. It’s a curse.

He glared at his right forearm, at the star-shaped mark that glowed like the sun in the face of danger. A direct link to Lycos the Bold, beloved wolf, leader, and harbinger of doom to his enemies. A thousand years ago Lycos had beaten back the sorcerers and claimed the heart of the forest for those with animal blood. Years later, his descendant, Uncle Mike, had thrust the bears, foxes, and the Red Clan beyond the border, where the rest of the magic-bent lived, among the *humans*.

“Boy, you *will* obey me in this. It’s time you passed on your legacy. Lycos lives on in you.”

Shit. As he’d suspected. He was no more than a wolf out to stud. How embarrassing. Anson pretended to falter on his feet and tugged at his arm.

His uncle tightened his grip and muttered under his breath, not impressed with Anson’s dramatics.

“I’ll shrivel into the worst kind of creature,” Anson complained loudly, staring at a cousin who’d recently mated. Poor Shane. “A henpecked shell of a man forced to obey his mate’s every insane whim.” His cousin’s wife didn’t particularly care for his comment, nor did her three ugly-ass sisters hoping to snag him tonight.

“Boy, pup or not, you’re going to obey me in this.” His uncle’s eyes glowed a bright green, a sure signal to back down. Anson could feel his hackles rise as his uncle tried to put the fear of The Wolf into him—an alpha’s power, to instil fear and subservience in those he led.

The pack didn’t know that his uncle’s mojo didn’t work on him, a sign that meant Anson could take up the mantle of alpha when the time came for Mike to pass it on. A circumstance Anson wanted to avoid at all costs. Better Fenris take over. He had the

fortitude, stubbornness and dominance bred into every male alpha of the Silver Clan—probably why he and Uncle Mike butted heads so often.

Anson wanted much less than total obedience for the rest of his life. He wanted to travel the forests, to revel in the chase. He wanted to be Master of the Hunt, a title reserved for a lesser wolf than one who was kin to Lycos, but the job would have afforded him leave to run through the woods and thrill in the chase with some legitimacy, and without his uncle's constant complaining that he didn't do enough for the clan.

His uncle prodded him once more. Realising that if he continued to deny his uncle, wolves would talk, Anson swore under his breath and feigned submission.

When his uncle took a step closer and sniffed him, Anson forced himself to think about mating a wolf like Shane's mate. Fear, pure and strong, wafted from his pores, and he felt his uncle's tension fade.

Apparently satisfied by the display, Mike pushed Anson ahead of him towards the box sitting on a large, green vine. Shaped in a square and made of overlapping brown petals with the strength of solid oak, the box sat above a green stalk of Living Wood, an ancient gift from a time when those in the cities and the wolves had been friends. A dozen bound clumps of hair lay in the box, over which their priest impatiently waited.

"Anson?"

Anson glanced from the priest to his uncle and sighed, long and loud.

His uncle growled, bared his teeth, and Anson hurriedly complied. He vaulted onto the dais, ignoring the steps, and accepted the dagger the priest held out for him. He didn't need the knife, but allowing his fingers to become sharp claws would only further remind the crowd that Lycos lived strong in Anson. The ability to maintain that transitional form between man and wolf, though a font of power, was so rare as to be almost nonexistent. Wolves were either wolf or human, not both at the same time.

Werewolf—the reason his uncle pushed him into this stupid ceremony. Werewolf—the justification for the many prayers their females whispered to the Wolf in the Forest. They wanted the Mark of Lycos for their future progeny. Anson wouldn't have minded a mating if the female truly wanted him. But none of them did. They wanted Lycos's power.

He sliced through a small portion of his hair and watched the golden strands fall into his hand. Anson still had time to escape. He glanced at the Living Wood, then at the forest that beckoned.

A growl interrupted his fantasies, and he glanced over at his uncle and swallowed around a ball of nerves. Mike's eyes looked like twin beacons promising hell. Hurrying to comply before Uncle Mike tore out his throat, Lycos or no Lycos, Anson sighed and tossed his hair into the box. In seconds, all the offerings disappeared, fading into the Living Wood's petals.

The priest stepped forward once more and chanted the words the crowd gathered closer to hear. Praise to the Wolf in the Forest, thanks to the Living Wood, cries of joy that the Silver Clan would continue to thrive and populate a world needing the rawness only natural creatures, like the wolf, could bring.

Anson felt a spark deep within, a burning that seared him from his heart, through his blood and lungs and brain. *No, not the claiming. I have no mate in this pack! None of these females is worthy of Lycos's heir.*

His brother had seen a glimpse of his future, and it wasn't tied to anyone here that he knew. Twin orbs of fire would light Anson's way, whatever that meant.

Concentrating, Anson pushed past the pain filling his body. He jumped to the ground and watched as several women flocked to the dais, around which stood the other helpless candidates. The newly mated wolves tried to look brave. A few managed grins, pretending enthusiasm for their mated status. But Anson knew what they truly felt, what he felt. Dread. Oppression. Doom.

The seconds ticked into minutes as he continued to wait next to his uncle. Another woman claimed her mate, dragging him with her back into the woods. Older wolves laughed, enjoying the ceremony. A few couples began mating in earnest, undressing and fucking before one and all. With their young tended to in the deep forest, what few inhibitions the wolves held disappeared. Soon, the festivity turned downright carnal as an orgy unfolded.

And still, no one stepped forward to claim Anson. The tightness in his chest eased.

"I don't understand how you did it." His uncle growled. "Damn, Anson. You really are a stubborn bastard. Just like your father."

"Who was your identical twin?"

Mike shook his head. "Go find your brother. I'll give you three days. Then I expect you home. And tell Fenris his bride will be waiting for him."

Anson stared in horror. "You contracted a match for Fenris? You can't do that."

Mike shoved Anson to the ground and put his hand around Anson's neck. "I love you, pup, but you really have to stop telling me what I can and can't do."

The urge to snap at his uncle shocked him, and Anson deliberately shrunk into himself. "Sorry, Uncle Mike," he rasped.

His uncle let him go and yanked him to his feet by his shirt. "You don't fool me, Anson. I know you don't fear me," he said in a low voice as he tugged Anson close. "You and Fenris are one day going to fight to rule. And I couldn't be prouder that a Barton will once more lead the clan."

"I'm not sure what you mean." He looked anywhere but at his uncle. No way would he ever fight Fenris to the death, and especially not for a title he didn't want.

He heard a sigh and felt a shove. "Go on. Keep to notions of freedom for as long as you can. But you can't outrun the Wolf in the Forest, pup. It's in your blood. You'll do great things some day, wolf. Great things."

Panicked at the yoke of responsibility drawing close around his neck, Anson tore off his clothing—the damned ceremonial garb that clung to him like a second skin—and shifted into *himself*. He didn't bother going after Fenris just yet. Anson needed time to digest all that had happened tonight. Racing on four feet through the forest, he settled into a comfortable gait, away from the sexual energy frothing in the pack. Unfortunately, some of it remained within him, the urge to fuck, to take pleasure in the joining of souls.

Magic still burned in his blood, and the taste of brewing power called to him. Since he'd never gone through the ceremony before, he didn't know if what he felt was normal or not. But he'd never heard a wolf mention so much heat inside him when he mated.

To his surprise, thoughts of the burn caused it to flare. Enflamed with lust, Anson slowed down. Running with an erection was less than comfortable. Shit, he really ached. Pausing, he wondered just how badly he'd offended the Wolf in the Forest by rejecting the notion to mate. He said a silent prayer asking for forgiveness.

Between one blink and the next, the forest changed. Then it changed again, as if Anson had leapt miles away from the familiar. Beyond the trees he smelled oil, the rot of excess and decay—*humanity*—and knew something was seriously wrong with him. Because despite his alien environment, his body trembled with the need to release.

A sudden blow knocked him off his feet and singed his fur. After rolling to his side, he tried to rise but couldn't. Then his vision faltered, and his nose filled with the overpowering scent of sandalwood – nonwolves. Enemy spore.

Shit.

He snarled but could manage no more than a half-hearted *yip* before strong arms lifted him and pressed him to a broad chest. Muscles rippled against his fur, and without meaning to, he shifted back into his human form. A steady heartbeat thrummed against his ear.

“So pretty,” a deep voice rumbled. Others joined him, commenting on everything from Anson's unusual golden hair to the size of his shaft, which to his embarrassment, swelled with his every inhalation. Thankfully, the man holding him didn't seem to notice. He stroked Anson's forearm, over the mark of Lycos. “My wolf is truly a prize.”

Before Anson could question his circumstances, time and space compressed around him, and he knew nothing more.

Chapter Two

Anson woke in a room that smelled like earth and spice. A trio of candles burned on a table across from the bed on which he lay, illuminating what looked like someone's bedroom. The sheets under his naked body felt soft and silky. But when he turned his head to see more, stars exploded behind his eyes. *Terrific.*

He groaned and clutched his head, irritated that the ache increased with every brush of his hair against his temples.

"Easy, pup."

Pup? Anson blinked in the dim lighting and saw a man's form part from the shadows, appearing as if by magic. Though extremely tall, he moved with an unconscious grace, like a wolf. Yet he didn't smell like kin. At the moment, he didn't smell like much of anything, which was very, very odd. He wore a black pair of trousers and nothing else. Bronze skin covered a broad chest and muscular arms corded with strength. Long, black hair framed a masculine face and stubborn chin. The man's bright green eyes regarded Anson with interest, and when Anson sat up too quickly, the man narrowed his gaze, as if concerned.

The physical aspect of the man said 'I'm human', but those eyes screamed wolf. Anson lifted his head and sniffed again, irritated when the man smiled and stepped closer.

"Stop," Anson growled, perceiving the hidden power of a dangerous threat. When the male moved again, he forced himself off the bed to his feet. Dizziness assailed him, followed by a swift, piercing carnal ache.

"Very nice, indeed," the man murmured, his gaze on Anson's thickening shaft. "The Wolf in the Forest is a blessed lady, isn't she?"

"She?" Anson shook his head, trying to regain his wits. "The spirit has no gender. It's Wolf and all that wolf entails."

"And what is that, my pet?"

"I'm not your pet." Anson shifted to the balls of his feet, ready to leap to his defence if need be. He felt like shit, but he was uneasy that the stranger continued to advance. The door to his left looked to be the exit. "Who the hell are you? Where am I?"

“And why are you here, I suppose? All great questions.” The giant toyed with the waistband of his trousers, forcing Anson to notice the large cock straining the material.

Hell. The guy was huge and aroused. Definitely not a wolf then, because male wolves didn't engage other male wolves for sex. At least, not that he'd ever noticed.

The male continued, “You're just outside the city, near the humans across the world from your precious forest.”

“Sorcerer. I should have known,” Anson sneered, while stunned to be so far from home. But how else to explain his sudden shifts in place?

“Sorry, no. I can't claim any ties to those evil mortals and their dark arts. Unless you're speaking carnally, and then I'm your man.” The male grinned, exposing a set of canines. In human form.

Anson froze.

The large male continued, “My name is Master—”

“Master? Are you fucking kidding me?” Fangs? What the hell was he? Not wolf, not shifter, not human. What else was there?

The man chuckled, and Anson was discomfited to feel an answering jump in his pulse. “My name is Masterson. William Masterson. You can call me Liam.”

“Yeah, okay, *Liam*. You want to tell me what you are and why I'm here?”

“You haven't introduced yourself yet, my golden pet. A rudeness, and one that needs to be corrected.”

In a flash, Liam rushed Anson and knocked him to the floor. They struggled until Liam unleashed a burst of strength and flipped Anson onto his belly. Liam's larger body blanketed his, and to Anson's shock, Liam's cock prodded his ass through the thin material of his trousers.

“Get off me,” Anson snarled.

The scent of sex filled the air and Anson tried to ignore his body's response. He started to transform, then suddenly stopped. Liam didn't struggle to keep him pinned down. If anything, the male lifted up to allow Anson more space. “What are you doing?”

“Seducing you?”

The absurdity of the moment took Anson by surprise, and he snorted with laughter.

“Is it working yet?” Liam whispered into his ear.

The thready sound sent shivers down Anson's spine, and his dick spiked, needing instant relief. *From a male? He's bewitched me!* "No."

"My pet wolf is a liar. Tsk tsk." Liam licked his ear, then thrust his tongue inside.

The sheer carnality of the moment stole Anson's breath and turned him into a mass of need. When Liam took one hand off the floor and shifted his bodyweight, Anson could have escaped. Curiosity, and something else he didn't want to admit to, kept him still.

Liam quickly settled back down on top of him. This time, he shoved his bare cock between Anson's ass cheeks. And by all that was Wolf, Anson *liked* it.

"That's it, pet," Liam breathed and slid his cock along Anson's crack, not penetrating, but increasing the friction of his cock and balls over Anson's flesh. "So soft. So very, very warm." He nipped Anson's neck, the prick of sharp teeth causing pain. But when he licked it away, Anson groaned. "Delicious. Yes, give me a taste more."

Liam placed his mouth over Anson's shoulder and bit down. The pain shocked Anson out of his haze and he struggled to escape. But his bucking only excited Liam to suck harder, to thrust faster against his taut backside. Wishing the erotic play didn't excite him so much, Anson tried to resist but found himself losing the battle as Liam's scent mingled with his.

His young wolf had much to offer. He tasted like ambrosia, and the strength his blood afforded made Liam dizzy with need.

"Your name, pup," he growled.

The wolf growled back in answer, "Not pup. *Anson.*" He tried to pull away but stopped when Liam pressed the rest of his weight against him. Man to man, Liam topped Anson by a few inches. But what his wolf lacked in height he made up for in brawn.

"Anson. My very own wolf." Finally, after all these years. A wolf had returned. Liam groaned and thrust faster, desperate with desire. He wasn't able to stop himself from coming hard over the warm backside beneath him. Caught in the shuddering need, he continued to jet against his wolf's back, leaving his mark with both seed and bite.

Finally spent, he noticed the tension in his young lover. *Selfish, Liam. You're finally gifted with a wolf, and this is how you treat him?* At the thought that the Wolf in the Forest had not forgotten him, that the spirit and his god had gifted him beyond all measure, Liam grew hard again. Time to thank the deities of life with a generous offering of his own.

He lifted himself from Anson's back, removed his trousers and cleaned up the mess he'd made. Then he forced Anson to roll over. The golden wolf turned onto his back, showing Liam a strong, healthy erection despite the uncertainty in his gaze.

"What did you do?" Anson asked, breathing hard. The slumberous look on his face told Liam more than words that the demon element in his blood worked on wolves as well as humans. The bite of blessed Banathmae was true.

"I came all over you." He grinned at Anson's surprise. "Surely you aren't so innocent that you didn't recognise my cock rubbing over your delightful ass?"

Anson tried to wriggle out from under Liam, until his erection brushed Liam's belly. He froze.

"Hurts, doesn't it?" Liam backed up until he crouched over Anson's thick shaft, now wet with arousal. The musky smell of a wolf in need drew him like nothing else. "Let me make it all better," he murmured and closed his mouth over that glistening cockhead.

Anson moaned and bucked into his mouth, driving his shaft deeper. Liam took the rest of his cock until his nose rested against Anson's belly.

"By the Wolf, what are you doing? Only...wolf...females..." Anson rasped, dazed and drugged with pleasure. Liam ignored his denial. Between his demon venom and sensual skill, Liam would soon have Anson in his thrall. It didn't take long before Anson stopped trying to push him away. Instead, he threaded his fingers through Liam's hair and rubbed his pointed ears.

Delighted with the affectionate caress, even if Anson didn't know what the touch meant, Liam sucked harder and cupped his wolf's balls. The heady scent of magic and need made him greedy to taste his wolf's seed. Caressing Anson's firm sac, Liam felt the tight coil of anticipation, the firming of a body desperate to relieve itself from the ache of desire.

"Oh, fuck," Anson said thickly. "I'm going to come."

Answering with more suction, Liam accepted the burst of semen, swallowing Anson's release with a groan of his own. *So very good.* Pure animal energy entered his body and tore at the magical bars caging his own wolf. Not enough, not yet to be entirely free. But it was a good beginning.

When Anson finished coming, Liam let him fall from his mouth and lifted his head.

Glazed, glowing eyes met his own.

"Holy shit. That was un-fucking-believable." Anson weakly rubbed his forehead and Liam felt a moment's guilt for having attacked the younger man earlier. Had he known what awaited him in the forest, he wouldn't have been so harsh. As it was, the moment he'd recognised the scent of wolf, he'd quickly told his men to stand down.

"And that's only the beginning." Liam considered Anson. "You've never lain with a man before, have you?"

Anson flushed. "Hell, no. Females were made for sex and to carry a wolf's young. What's the point of laying with men?" At Liam's raised brow, Anson turned redder. "I get your point. But we don't do that in the Silver Clan."

"But you're not silver." *You're my golden trophy. The one that's going to show me ultimate victory over my enemy, my young one.*

"They're my clan." Anson glared up at him. "Now how about you tell me what you want and what this is all about?"

Liam rose to his feet, giving Anson a glimpse of his hard cock. "What I want is to spend in your mouth. I want you to suck me dry. Then I want to get hard again and fuck your ass until you can't walk. That's what I want, pet."

"Dammit. I'm not your pet." Yet Anson was semi-hard again and couldn't take his eyes from Liam's groin.

A golden wolf. The perfect playmate for a sexual demon in perpetual lust.

Liam grinned. "You're not my pet yet. But you will be with proper training." He wasn't prepared for his wolf to turn so lethal so fast.

One minute Anson lay on his back, trying to catch his breath. He looked young, vital, and handsome beyond measure. The next, a monstrous werewolf rushed up to tackle Liam and pin him down, fur and fang and flesh a fiendishly clever mix of the best parts of both man and wolf.

"Tell me the truth, and I'll let you live." Anson gripped Liam's neck with huge, powerful hands. When he squeezed, even Liam, with all his strength, couldn't budge the animal.

"My truth, your truth," Liam managed, captivated by this most excellent surprise. So much magic, and all for him. "I cast a spell, and you came."

"Bullshit. You just said you're no sorcerer, and you're not human with ears like that. What are you?" Anson glared, his eyes a bright, glowing green that slowly turned molten

gold, as beautiful as the thick fur on his body. His muzzle made it difficult to understand him, but there could be no mistaking the danger in the fangs that neared Liam's throat.

"My ears are athmae," Liam rasped.

Anson cocked his head, his own ears twitching. But he released the pressure on Liam's throat. "Athmae?"

Liam smiled and licked his own fangs, which were much shorter—though just as sharp—as Anson's. "My mother is athmae. A succubus."

"A demon? But stories tell of the dreaded demons with black skin and white hair. Red eyes of fire that burn the living into ash." Anson shook his head. "Your skin is pale, your hair dark, and your eyes green. A very bright, wolfish green," Anson said, almost as if in question.

"Like my father's." *And I dearly miss him.* Sorrow mixed with anger when Liam recalled how his father had passed. Defending Liam from the same evil that still coveted his power, his soul. A worse fate he couldn't imagine.

"Green eyes that glow with...red?" Anson sounded worried. He quickly released Liam and turned back into the mortal form Liam liked so much.

"You don't like my eyes?"

"Orbs of red," Anson muttered, then seemed to shake off his odd mood. "Either you tell me why I'm here or I'm leaving right the hell now. Athmae, my ass. They're not real, just stories told to scare young wolves into behaving."

"Like werewolves?"

"Don't change the subject." Anson rose to his feet and paced back and forth, keeping his gaze glued to Liam.

"I've been trying to find a true wolf for decades. It seems this incantation finally worked," Liam admitted. He stood and crossed to the bed to sit. Truth be told, he'd much rather have Anson join him there. "Magic led me to my own backyard, which is where I found a most beautiful wolf, trespassing on forbidden lands."

"Where am I?"

"Stuttgart, Germany."

Anson stared in amazement. "You don't sound German."

"Nor do you. Imagine my surprise when my wolf turned into a man with an American accent."

"Shit. I was running around in Alaska hours ago."

"Welcome to Bavaria."

"Great. So what else? You just asked for a wolf and whammo, I arrived?"

"I have no idea how it worked. I've been trying for a hundred years to find one of your kind. You're the first success I've had."

"I don't understand this. My uncle forced me to toss my offering into the box. But no one claimed me. I'm a free man." He glared at Liam.

"And yet you are here, with me."

"How about we try again? You're a demon who got tired of fucking with humans, so you decided to get back at the wolves who kicked your asses in the last millennial war. Somehow, our wires got crossed, and here I am."

"A pretty explanation, but no." Liam stroked himself, pleased when Anson stared at him and didn't look away. "I asked for a wolf, and here you are. A sexy golden male who secretly can't wait to feel this up his ass."

Anson had yet to look away from Liam's arousal. "Never gonna happen, demon," Anson rasped. "I like women." He dragged his gaze away, finally.

"Women can be quite enjoyable. Seems like we have something in common." Liam wanted to laugh at the confusion on Anson's face, but his desire was once again growing out of hand. Anson's flavour addicted him to taste more. Blood or semen didn't matter. "But there's something to be said for a tight, narrow ass, isn't there?"

Anson ignored him. "Just point me to a phone. I've got to call my alpha and get back. If he thinks I took off and disobeyed him, he'll kill me."

Liam shrugged. "Banathmae answered my prayer and accepted my spell. My blood gift must have been enough this year." *And the hair I added did the trick. A wolf tradition that finally paid off. Good thinking, Mother.*

"Banathmae's your what, god?"

"Yes. He insists we celebrate offerings with ceremony. Tonight is the harvest moon, so I'll join in thanks for your arrival."

"Dammit. I'm not a gift."

"You are from where I'm sitting. You look good enough to eat." Liam grinned.

"Look, Liam. I didn't ask to be here."

"And I didn't ask for what's happened to me, but fate will as fate does."

“What the hell does that mean?” Anson scowled.

“It means you’re mine for the time being, and there’s nothing you can do about it.”

They stared at each other in silence, and Liam would have given all he had to know what Anson thought.

“You said you cast a spell. What was it for?” Anson asked slowly.

“For help in defeating a powerful enemy.”

“So if I help you defeat this enemy, you’ll send me back? You’ll help me explain to my pack what happened?”

Liam considered the wolf. “Yes.” Demons never spoke true, especially when in pursuit of something they desired. The falsehood dripped from his tongue like honey, and its sweetness turned Anson’s rage to satisfaction. “But first we have the harvest moon ceremony to attend.”

Liam wanted Anson very, very badly. Wolf or no wolf, the younger man called to him. Though Liam was part wolf, he was also part athmae. He hadn’t asked for a male wolf to aid in his cause. Dealing with deities who considered propagation a requisite form of tribute, Liam had thought that when the day came, he’d find a female wolf to bear his child. He assumed the energy brought forth in the new life of his progeny would break his curse, allowing him to be wolf once more. Only then would he have the strength to defeat the bastards who’d bound his essence in the first place.

While he preferred sex with men, he couldn’t procreate with them. Which made Anson an interesting choice on his god’s part. He could only have faith that Banathmae and the Wolf in the Forest knew their way. They’d finally sent him the means to defeat that bitch of a sorceress. A boon in the form of a wolf who could transform into a werewolf, a rumoured descendant of Lycos. Surely Anson could heal the deep wound in Liam’s spirit.

“Well?” Anson stood with his hands on his hips but wouldn’t look down, trying to avoid Liam’s arousal.

Just to nettle the male, Liam gripped himself hard and sighed. “I don’t suppose you’d consent to swallow my seed once, in case the ceremony interferes with my plans? I’m really going to regret it if I never get to feel my pet’s tongue licking up my cum.”

Anson scowled. “Asshole.”

“We’ll get to that too. Though if you’d prefer to rim me, I’ll happily bend over.”

Fists turned into claws and Anson launched himself at Liam. Prepared this time, Liam caught him and rolled him onto his back on the bed, enjoying the tussle. "How old are you, pup?"

"Dickhead. I'm twenty-five."

"So young." Liam intentionally rubbed his cock against Anson's, pleased when his wolf's eyes clouded with lust. "I'm nearly four hundred years old. Which would make me your senior. Your alpha, yes?" Grinning, he thrust against Anson's shaft, enjoying a bit of good old frottage when someone knocked at the door. "Go away," he yelled, captivated by the challenge in his wolf's eyes.

God, he wanted to fuck Anson raw. He moved faster, pleased when Anson stopped fighting him and started moving with him. The wolf wrapped his arms around his waist and gripped his ass. Liam pulled him as close as they could be, and they rubbed faster and harder, the intensity of carnal need too fierce to deny.

Someone banged on the door again, louder this time.

Lost in his embrace, Liam stared into Anson's eyes. The glow brightened as their breathing grew huskier. Both of them struggled to reach their peak, grinding and touching, fucking in all ways but one.

The door burst open, but Liam didn't care. He pushed and thrust until he heard Anson groan and hot, wet seed hit his belly. Then he shuddered against his wolf, coming hard.

"True homage to Banathmae." He recognised Malem's voice first. As he continued to spend, two of his other guards spoke as well. He could only hope Anson wouldn't mind their lack of privacy.

"Shit. He's doing the wolf."

"Wouldn't you? Didn't you notice when we brought him in? That wolf is seriously hung."

"I wonder how he tastes..."

Liam finished and leant up from Anson. He stared down into the satisfied gaze of a wolf well pleased then turned to his men, noting the change in their skin. Before they'd looked like him, dark haired, light skinned. Now they were the opposite: ink-black skin, white hair and red eyes. Night must have fallen.

"What the hell?" Anson asked, though he made no move to separate himself from Liam. "Demons?"

"I told you. We only look this way at night, though."

"But you still look the same."

"Because I'm only part athmae."

"Oh." Anson stared at him, and Liam could feel the wolf's curiosity.

Malem cleared his throat. "Not that we don't like looking at your ass, Liam, but the queen sent us here to take you to the ceremony. Both of you."

Liam sighed. "Tell her we'll be right there."

"I have to escort you. We'll wait outside. Ryder, Zain, let's go."

When his men left, Liam gave Anson his full attention once more.

"Why does your queen care what you do?"

Might as well tell him now. "Because my mother's a very managing kind of female. If we take too long, she'll probably come down here to get me herself."

Chapter Three

“Mother?” *Queen?* Trust Anson’s luck to land in a demon’s backyard. To top that off, the demon liked to fuck men, and he was royalty. Talk about going from bad to worse. Anson had thought being stuck with a mate would be hell. Turned out he’d landed in a different kind of hell all on his own.

Still, he couldn’t pretend he hadn’t enjoyed Liam’s attentions. No wonder so many humans succumbed to the devilish incubi. Liam threw his libido out of whack with just his scent. Hell, Anson had experienced more physical pleasure in two non-penetrating episodes than he had screwing the Irwin sisters at the same time.

“Come on, wolf. I think we’d better get ready.”

Anson followed Liam into a kingly bathroom. A shower built for four, an expansive jet tub that looked as if it could accommodate Liam and his men, and a double sink all done in creamy marble and gold tones made Anson feel pampered. And way out of his element.

Wolves lived in the forest. They had rudimentary houses and wore clothing when the weather wore on their frailer human flesh, but they had nothing as grand as this. This seemed like something a full-blooded human would live with.

“Like the gadgets and the pampering?” Liam asked as he washed his hair and soaped his body.

Damned if the sight of those muscles slick with water didn’t turn Anson on. His dick spiked and stayed hard.

“I’d love to play too, but if we don’t get a move on, my mother is going to storm in here. Talk about a demon you don’t want to piss off,” Liam muttered.

Anson hurried through the shower and dried off in record time. Liam handed him a hooded gold robe, then donned a similar one.

“Gold, huh?”

Liam grinned. “I’m partial to the colour, what can I say?” He stroked Anson’s hair. As if petting him.

Far from offended, Anson wanted to nuzzle closer to his lover and –

Lover? A male—a *demon*—was his lover. The reality of his circumstances froze him in place, and he wasn't sure what to think. Male wolves didn't fuck other males, did they? It had never been talked about at home, never forbidden, but with so many females in abundance in the pack, fucking a male paled in comparison to shoving inside a warm, wet pussy.

Then why was he still so hard for Liam?

Liam sighed and dropped his hand from Anson's hair. "Come on. We don't want to keep the queen waiting."

The minute they stepped outside the door to Liam's suite, his guards flanked them. The men stood as tall as Liam but seemed much more menacing with their red eyes and demon dark skin. Not the soft cocoa brown of a wolf or the earthy flesh tones of a human, but the ink-black colour of demonkind. Nightmares made real, yet oddly enough, Anson didn't perceive a threat from any of them.

He studied them, noting the way they protected Liam. Strong, lethal and graceful as they walked down several corridors towards their eventual destination. The guards each carried a long silver sword in hand. They wore simple loincloths made of a supple red leather, no place to hide a weapon or hold one. And no way to disguise the powerful muscle underneath that dark flesh.

Anson wondered why they needed swords when they looked dangerous enough with those fangs and the pointed, sharp tips of their nails. "I thought demons were small."

"The females are," Ryder answered. He and Zain looked just alike, but they didn't act like brothers. Not with the subtle, sexual touches they shared.

Malem had more bulk and felt more aggressive than the others. He acted like their leader, and Liam clearly deferred to the male's judgement.

Liam joined the conversation. "Athmae males are large, as you can see. The few females we have are quite tiny in size. But their energy is five times as fierce."

"What about wolves?" Malem asked Anson. "Are they all like you? So muscular? So strong?" His admiration was startling. Another male who sexually preferred men? Perhaps breeding among demons wasn't important. Maybe they procreated through magical means.

Anson cleared his throat. "Most of us are built well enough. We're always running, fighting." *Fucking.*

Liam's sly wink told him he knew what had gone unsaid.

Anson took a step closer to him, aware of the carnal hunger the others made no attempt to hide when they looked at him. "You said the females are few. Do you have females in residence besides the queen?"

"Less than a handful."

That would explain why the men looked to one another for pleasure. Wolves had a hearty appetite. Anson couldn't imagine going without sex for days and weeks on end. These demons were bred to have sex. How much more powerful their appetites must be.

"Our females can seduce thousands of humans a day. We work on a much lesser scale," Zain explained. "The humans call us incubi and succubi. But we're put here to do our job."

"Put here by who?" Anson found the discussion fascinating. Wolves simply existed, yet the demons had a reason for being.

"By Banathmae," Zain answered. The others nodded. "Our kind is born with a strong energy needing an outlet. Sexual copulation releases our stress, while giving life to the dreams and nightmares in certain humans Banathmae has ordered serviced."

Liam agreed. "Mystical sex, the melding of minds and energies, is how we go about serving Banathmae, but that work results in our increased physical desires. The odd Athmae male will take a female for pleasure. But truth be told, most of us prefer the rough touch of a male. The bite of large fangs, the penetrating pain of a thick cock." He winked at Anson. "Few can match our stamina, though the wolves certainly come close."

"Then again, we don't have to have sex to release our energy. Bloodletting is a fun way to drain the need." Malem showed his fangs.

Not impressed, Anson flashed his.

"That's sexy," Ryder said in a thick voice. "He's golden and lethal. Going to share, Liam?"

Anson blinked. *Share?*

"My pet needs a gentle hand first. Then perhaps—"

Anson yanked him to a stop. "Wait just a minute, Liam. I agreed to help you so you'd get me home. I'm not your pet. I fuck who I want when I want." His wolf wanted to bite Liam to prove a point. Except the need didn't feel like an offensive threat, but like the prelude to foreplay.

Liam raised a brow. "Oh?"

"I like your wild pet, Liam. Perhaps a leash and a collar would help," Malem offered, looking more than interested. To Anson, he warned, "Don't even think of showing *me* your teeth, wolf. Or I might take that as an invitation to play." Malem rubbed his erection, and Anson opened his mouth to retort when he saw the mirrored arousal in all of his escorts.

Not afraid, Anson was nevertheless cautious. These men weren't human. And they weren't wolf. He'd already tussled with Liam and had been hard-pressed to hold down the male when not in werewolf form. How would he do when confronted with all four of them at once? The group looked more than willing to take him on. To his shock, the thought of fighting with them made him immediately hard.

Liam pulled Anson close and gripped his cock in a firm hand. "So feral, pet." He purred with pleasure. "You're absolutely perfect." Then he let him go.

Anson didn't know what to think. Most people, when confronted with his anger, backed quickly away. These demons seemed to like it. "Where are we going?" he rasped and turned from the red lust flaring in Liam's eyes.

"There." Zain pointed at a large set of double doors. The black wood glowed where runes had been painted upon the ancient bark.

Anson could smell dark magic, but it didn't feel evil. Rich, powerful and very old.

"We've been here for a long time, Anson," Liam said softly. "Before the humans, the sorcerers, and the wolves as well."

"What's this *we*, Liam?" Malem snorted. "Now quit playing with your pet. The queen wanted you here ten minutes ago."

"I'm not his fucking pet." Anson wasn't surprised when they ignored him. He glanced from Liam to Liam's athmae, aware that though they guarded him, they didn't give him the due deference an alpha wolf would be given in similar circumstances. Yet Liam had stated the queen was his mother, making him a prince, a leader. It was all very confusing. When he met Liam's gaze again, he found the large male watching him.

Liam sighed. "I know what you're thinking. No, my men don't bow, they don't grovel, and they rarely agree with their prince."

The others nodded. "We don't have time to coddle our royalty. Not with the threat of danger always at hand," Zain explained.

Anson wanted to know more, but Malem nudged him towards the doors. The others stepped closer, caging him, and he didn't like it.

“Back the fuck off,” Anson growled, his hackles up at being herded like prey.

“Fuck off? Oh, I intend to, pet.” Liam brushed a finger over Anson’s erection again then held up a hand, his fingers spread wide.

All this talk of gods, sorcerers, and sharing didn’t sit well. Because it felt as if the others had begun making his decisions for him. Like living at home all over again.

The doors opened at Liam’s command, and Anson walked forward with the others into what looked like a never-ending cavern. Fiery lanterns had been mounted to the rock walls in what must have been the original underground section of the vast estate. The noise echoed inside, and the scent of ancient wind and the whisper of night penetrated the very ground over which he walked. Everywhere he looked athmae stood waiting, many of them dressed like the guards, while others wore nothing at all. A blanket of red, blinking eyes stared at him and the small procession filtering through the thickening crowd, swallowing them up as they moved through the sea of celebrating demons. Their bodies merged with the shadows dancing in the dim room lit only by flickering candles

Anson followed Liam, humming with unease.

Before Anson could voice his protest, they came to the centre of the cavern where a petite woman with shining white hair, ink black skin, and the brightest eyes Anson had ever seen stood up from the throne where she’d been perched. Wisdom glowed like rubies from within her glorious face. She looked like a feminine version of Liam. His mother – the queen.

Like Liam and Anson, the queen wore a golden robe. In her hand she held a sickle dripping with blood. A bound demon lay at her feet, bone dry, his throat gaping and exposing the white of bone beneath his flesh.

Liam stopped a few paces from her and bowed. “Mother. May the harvest be rich this year.”

Anson couldn’t look away from the dead body.

“Oh, it will be.” She pointed to the deceased demon soon dragged away by other athmae. “This incubus, this thief, has clearly given the ultimate sacrifice for Banathmae.” She chuckled, and the rest of the room laughed with her. Sibilant hisses of joy gave Anson the shivers, because his wolf could feel invisible hands petting and licking at his energy. She turned to the room at large and warned, “Should any of you think to harm another under our charge, such shall you find is your fate. Joy to our blessed god.”

Anson wanted to step back from the energy gathering within her, but he held his place, prepared to attack when the woman's blood red gaze studied him with interest. Then she took a step forward.

He snarled and shifted into his werewolf, clawing through his robe before he could help himself. The press of so much dark power made him thirst for blood, and the star on his forearm burned and blazed with a white light. The crowd uttered their collective appreciation.

The queen clasped her hands together and closed her eyes. A tear trickled down her cheek. "Blessed Banathmae and the great spirits beyond, we thank you." She opened her eyes, and Anson was taken aback at her elation. To Liam, she said, "You've been rewarded, son. Now a perfect offering may be made."

Liam turned to Anson and smiled. "You'll thank me for this later."

"What—"

Before Anson could blink, Liam had him by the throat. The guards and several other nearby athmae grabbed him by his arms and legs, immobilizing him. Anson fought but couldn't break free, overwhelmed by their immense power, which was enhanced by the feminine energy of their queen. He could taste her darkness in the air, the bittersweet lust lingering on his tongue.

As he growled and snapped at his captors, they carried him to the stone altar, where they strapped him down under circlets of energy that appeared when Liam flicked his graceful fingers. Once bound, all but the queen, Liam, and his guards stepped back.

"Easy, Anson. We aren't going to hurt you," Liam whispered and kissed his furry cheek.

But the darkness around them couldn't be mistaken for anything but aggression, and Anson roared his displeasure, much to the delight of the excited crowd.

The queen threw back her head and yelled, "With this wolf we shall set our prince free. With his blood we shall celebrate our harvest moon, my athmae."

The cheer of the crowd echoed around them, and low chanting increased in volume into a crescendo of intent.

"Now I leave you with your prince." She floated over the ground to stand next to Liam, by Anson's head. The queen raised her sickle and jabbed the end of it into Anson's neck. The

bite of pain pushed him to howl like a wolf at war, but to his surprise she didn't push the weapon in any farther. Only the very tip of it entered his neck.

She removed the sickle, and a slight trickle of blood ran down his neck. The weapon suddenly glowed gold, and it made the room light up like the sun before it faded once more. The queen smiled at Anson with a satisfaction that alarmed him. "Welcome, my son, to a brand new world."

Smoke billowed around her, and she vanished.

The chanting grew louder, the language foreign yet compelling. Liam shrugged off his golden robe and stood glowing, his body in rebellious light against the black devilry of the cavern. Around them, the sounds and scents of sex filled the air. Grunting and moaning joined pleas for Banathmae to arrive.

"Let me go," Anson ordered. The star on his forearm felt on fire. His entire body locked up tight, arousal, fear and rage vying for dominance.

"Not yet." Liam's thick voice and erect cock told Anson freedom wasn't to be his, not yet. Liam's slit was wet, his cock shiny with need. His balls were tight, his nipples hard. "Not until we finish this." He leaned close and licked the puncture in Anson's neck closed, replacing the slight pain with a blaze of desire so acute, Anson's arousal throbbed like a sore wound.

Ryder, Zain and Malem stood on each side of the altar and by his head. The three of them looked as hungry as Liam, and Anson felt a sudden surge of lust aimed his way.

Suddenly the crowd's loud chanting droned into a chorus of whispers and groans.

The candles around them flared with fire. Bursts of heat made sweat stand out over Anson's furred body, while a whisper of wind that shouldn't have been there wafted over the altar, stirring Anson's sexual need even higher.

Malem bowed his head and said to Liam, "And so it begins, Great One."

The other guards did the same. Something wasn't right.

When Anson glanced back into Liam's eyes, he saw nothing but bright red orbs and an entity there looking out at him that wasn't Liam. His wolf retreated far inside him, alongside his werewolf, where both shivered with fear. As quickly as Anson had turned werewolf, he was human once more.

Shit. This couldn't be good. Nothing had ever made his werewolf retreat. Ever.

“Ah, the Wolf in the Forest sent me a treat,” Liam said in voice nothing less than godlike. Deep pitches echoed in the large chamber in a concert of command. “A gift fit for a prince. And so hungry.” The entity stared at his cock and licked his lips. Fangs appeared, larger and darker than Liam’s earlier teeth.

Anson tried again to rip free of the magical bonds holding him tight, but without his werewolf, he had even less strength to work with. The damned restraints Liam had placed over his wrists and ankles held fast.

He roared his displeasure, which only made the thing inside Liam chuckle.

“Who the fuck *are* you?” *Where’s Liam?* he wanted to ask. It made little sense, but he felt an attachment, a growing fondness for the handsome half-athmae who’d looked at him so hungrily before.

“I am Banathmae, demon god over my darkling children.” Banathmae smiled at the guards surrounding the altar and at the supine crowd around them.

“Terrific. Now how about you stop preening about how great you are and get me the fuck out of here.” *So not smart, Anson.* Then again, his twin had always claimed he’d gotten the share of the brains while Anson had the muscle.

“I see Liam’s pet needs to learn some respect.” The flame in Banathmae’s gaze burned brighter. “Golden gift or not, you need to earn your place here. The dark is a blessing, not a curse. And Liam is my tool to use as I see fit.” He paused and smiled with wicked intent. “Just like you.”

Banathmae crawled over Anson and sparked hunger in every cell of Anson’s body.

He wasn’t sure he’d survive this ceremony, if that’s what he could call it. Anson had the uneasy notion he was to be sacrificed for the harvest, and for the life of him he couldn’t figure out why the Wolf in the Forest would have allowed this to happen. Granted, he hadn’t wanted to mate, but he’d never been disloyal to the pack or the forest. Why then had the Great Wolf brought him here?

A wet, hot mouth engulfed his cock and drew every bit of his concentration into one precise, hard point. “*Oh, fuck.*” Scalding pleasure leached his will to do anything but feel. Thought, decision, protest, everything faded but the sharp pricks of teeth and the soft caress of full lips around Anson’s impossibly hard shaft.

A thick finger shoved deep inside his ass while the mouth over him drew him even deeper into the dark ecstasy consuming him from the inside out. Bruised and violated, Anson wanted to cry out with pain, but it felt too good to be bad.

His forearm burned, the light of his mark so bright it hurt to look at it.

"Fuck, Anson. You're beautiful," Malem rasped and drew his cock next to Anson's face. The thick shaft was close enough that Malem's fingers brushed Anson's cheek while he jerked off. Ryder and Zain did the same on either side of Anson. Long, fat black cocks being stroked in rhythmic desire amped the primal need all around him.

Inside him. On top of him.

Banathmae sucked harder and shoved a second finger inside Anson's ass, widening him, preparing him for something Anson didn't want.

Or didn't think he wanted.

Then Banathmae lightly bit down, and Anson screamed as he came harder than he ever had in his life.

Zain, Ryder and Malem exploded into climax, the rush of bright seed landing on his body in warm streams of drugging ecstasy.

Banathmae let go of his cock and crawled over Anson to stare into his eyes once more.

"Now that you've felt godly pleasure, young wolf, it's time to give some back."

Anson blinked through heavy lids, his breathing not yet calm. He glanced down between them to see Banathmae's enormous cock. Twice as thick as Liam's normally was, the god's phallus was monstrously big and not at all fitting with Liam's frame.

"Here it comes, wolf." Banathmae panted and pushed the head of it in Anson's hole. The pain mixed with a pleasure so intense Anson had a hard time making sense of anything. His entire being felt like one huge ball of sensation and paradox, where everything mattered and nothing was important.

Black voids filled with creation and the basic tenements of sexuality converged with the physical discomfort of being joined to something not human, demon or wolf, but something much more.

It was too much to handle. Anson couldn't process anything but Banathmae as the demon god laughed and thrust home, tearing through him with such force he felt split in two. Despite the agony, Anson screamed in rapture as his balls convulsed and he spewed

loads of cum over Banathmae's belly. His entire body seized while a demon god fucked him, pushing dark and powerful energy inside him.

Banathmae murmured foreign words under his breath as he shuddered in climax, his balls like stones, his cock like iron.

He's killing me, Anson thought from a distance as he slowly faded into a welcome abyss. But Banathmae wouldn't let him rest. The demon god woke Anson with a command. "Feel me, wolf. Feel *him*." Then Banathmae surged harder again, pumping and reaching for yet another orgasm, until the god unleashed another torrent of cum inside his ass.

Finally, the god withdrew from Anson's body, of normal size and proportion once more.

"Very good, wolf. Your sacrifice has pleased me greatly." Banathmae stepped back and caught fire, his entire body a seething, flaming mass that drew the attention of everyone. To his athmae, he said, "The harvest moon is yours, my children. Enjoy the fruits of pleasure your prince has brought you. And welcome into your folds this precious soul, a wolf like none other who bears the mark of future power." The flames around him vanished, and Banathmae held out his arms. "Great sister, I thank you for your gift. And I give you my child as well. For their two halves will make them whole."

He blinked, crossed his arms over his chest, and lowered his chin. A wave of power exploded throughout the room, knocking everyone but Anson to the ground. Liam's body fell, and Anson realised the god had departed.

Anson wanted to move, to see if Liam had survived a god's possession, but Banathmae's touch had indeed taken its toll. The darkness took him under, and he willingly went with it.

* * * *

Liam rose and blinked into Malem's concerned face. "Anson?" he slurred.

Malem nodded. "Fine. A bit worn out, but alive and well. Blessed by Banathmae," he said with reverence. "Never have I seen such a sight. Our great spirit took the wolf and gave him something more." Malem's eyes teared. "Such beauty I never in my lifetime thought to experience."

Liam blinked, wishing he could have seen it as well. Instead he felt loopy and beyond aroused. His cock ached to feel Anson's tight ass gloving him, but by the look of his wolf, poor Anson had been used readily enough. Cum dribbled from his ass, pooled on the stone between his legs, and seemed to have hit several parts of his body. The magical restraints had vanished.

Malem coughed into his hand. "Banathmae wanted us to mark him, that through our possession another link to you was made. As your scent pushes through us, it now pushes through him. Ryder, Zain and I protect you always, and the wolf now as well."

"I see." Liam stood with Malem's help and looked around at his people, still groggy from their ordeal. "Let's leave the others to finish their celebration. I for one need a break." At a nod from him, Ryder and Zain gently lifted Anson from the altar. "Take him back to my room."

They nodded and left carrying Liam's wolf. Malem helped Liam walk, and the pair followed. "I feel dizzy."

Malem grinned. "As you should. Banathmae used you hard, Liam. You should have seen what he did to your cock."

"I'm only interested in what he did for my wolf."

"Anson will be fine. He's been blessed by the fires of the demon god."

"Not Anson. I knew Banathmae would never abuse such a treasure. I meant my inner wolf. The poor creature languishing inside me, cursed by Danya, that bitch."

Malem paused with him outside in the corridor, well away from the celebration. "Maybe you should wait until your strength returns."

"I have to know. I need to see if the ceremony helped or hindered my wolf." Banathmae's presence had certainly strengthened his dark energy, as well as his appetites. He widened his stance, trying to ignore the pressure building in his balls.

"The energy was much more this year than the last," Malem murmured. "Definitely the wolf's doing."

"And Mother's, I think." Liam rolled his shoulders, hoping that Banathmae hadn't overwhelmed the small power of wolf that had been growing inside him. Liam focused and opened himself, trying to see through the wild eyes of the wolf. For over a hundred years, he'd been blocked from the whole of his spirit. But with Anson so close, Liam knew the end

of his curse had to be near. A gift from both Banathmae *and* the Wolf in the Forest could only mean success.

His inner wolf snapped and growled inside him, taking him to his knees.

“Liam?”

What the hell is that? Liam hadn't felt such wild rage since he'd lost his ability to shift. But instead of the joy he wanted to feel, dread overwhelmed him. “I—I don't know.”

“Oh, hell. We're in trouble. Not a good time to send the others ahead.” Malem stood over Liam with his sword in hand.

Then the voice that could still make him sweat in fear sounded. “Ah, William. My sweet boy, it's been too long. I've missed you...”

Chapter Four

Liam's enemy watched him with clear lust, the evil intent in the sorceress's soul screaming at his wolf to find Anson and run. It made no sense. They'd safeguarded the compound against her kind. Yet here she was, a two-thousand-year-old creature with lusts so perverted even Banathmae wouldn't touch her.

Danya of the Light, a sorceress once beyond the pale, had turned to the black arts and killed her family half a century after her birth. Then she'd plundered and raided demons far and wide, until she'd seen Liam. To get to him, she'd killed his father. She'd taken away a male Liam loved and respected. Then she'd made it worse by smothering the wolf inside him to almost nothing. No matter that he wasn't yet ready to face her – Liam refused to give her the power to hurt anyone he cared for ever again.

The way she looked at Malem told him she had no intention of leaving quietly.

"Let me play with this one, and I'll leave you in peace for a bit. I've always found your kind to provide such wonderfully fun playmates."

Malem sneered. "Unnatural bitch. I wouldn't have sex with you if it meant dying a hundred deaths."

"And it just might." She laughed, a grating sound that made the walls tremble. "You know, that's just what Liam's father said. And look at him now." She shrugged. Petite and pretty, she looked like the humans' version of a fairy princess. But the evil in her soul permeated everything she touched. Plant life withered in her presence, and the notion of joyous sexual union with one such as she made Liam's erection fade faster than a dose of cold water.

She continued in a sing-song voice, "Yes. Poor Wilhelm Masterson is dead and gone, his shell as empty as that puppy inside you screaming to get out." She hummed, and Liam's snarling wolf whimpered in pain.

No! I was closer to freeing him than ever before. I can't lose him now.

The sorceress inhaled and closed her eyes. "You smell so fine, so tasty. Yum." She flicked her fingers and Malem's sword dropped to the ground like a stone. "Come now, Liam. If you won't play with me, at least let me have this one. He's a lot friskier than the last one I played with."

The last one she'd *eaten*. Poor Josiah had died a horrible death a few years ago, when he'd been tricked into visiting Danya's dreams, thinking her a human in need.

Danya had used him, but instead of discarding him, she'd eaten his soul piece by piece. While Josiah lay dying, withering away to nothing, he'd described the sorceress's method of torture. Apparently, Danya had begun consuming *athmae* to preserve eternal life. She stupidly thought that by killing and consuming demons she'd live forever.

"Hellspawn." Malem cursed her. "Such weak human flesh. You're nothing without that impure magic. Nothing as grand as the *athmae*, and you know it."

Danya's eyes narrowed. Liam knew she didn't like reminders that no matter what she did, she couldn't escape her mortal beginnings.

"So pale and plain." Liam took up the gauntlet and soothed his inner wolf with visions of Anson. "No wonder my father refused you. You're not good enough for me. And you never will be."

"You can't hide forever, William."

He tensed, ready to spring.

"The time is coming, sweet, when you'll beg for my attentions. I'll see you again soon." Then she smiled, blew him a kiss, and vanished as if she'd never been.

"A projection, I think," Malem said and helped Liam to his feet.

"A powerful one if she took your sword through an illusion."

"I know." Malem frowned and picked his weapon off the ground. "We must reinforce the wards." He glanced at Liam. "How do you feel? Did Anson help your wolf, or did Danya make it worse?"

Liam didn't know, but he didn't like thinking of Anson so soon after Danya's visit. He couldn't even think about losing Anson to the sorceress. It made no difference that he'd only just met the wolf; Anson had a place in his heart. "It's too soon to tell. And though I hate to admit it, you're right. I'm weak and tired from Banathmae's visit. I think I need rest." Exhaustion suddenly leached his will to fight.

Malem's touch gentled. "Come, Liam. We'll get you back to your pet and let you recover from the ceremony." They walked for a bit and had nearly reached Liam's room when Malem chuckled.

"What?"

"I just realised something." The wicked grin on Malem's face only reinforced his notion he needed to worry. "Your mother really took to Anson. She called him her son. Sounds to me like you finally got that mate you've been wanting."

Liam tripped over his feet. "Mate? No, I wanted a wolf, not a mate. Someone to break the curse." He frowned at the satisfaction on his guard's face. "What do you know that I don't?"

"Nothing you won't soon find out for yourself." Malem put Liam's arm over his shoulder and walked him the rest of the way back to his room. "I can't wait to help you on your journey, Liam. As your royal guard, I just want you to know Ryder, Zain and I will be with you every step of the way."

* * * *

Anson woke up with a need to fuck. His cock was on fire, his balls strung tight—full, plump and ready to release.

But the scent that should have been there wasn't. He growled low in his throat as he caught the smell of familiar demons. "Zain? Ryder?"

"Hey, Liam. Nice to see you awake," Ryder said in a gritty voice.

He glanced over to see Zain on his knees sucking Ryder's shaft and taking him to the back of his throat.

Stunned by the show, Anson forgot everything but watching Ryder's cock disappear between Zain's lips. The athmae had no issue with sex, and no qualms about privacy. Recalling some of the sexual antics from the ceremony, Anson wondered if they always fucked in public, or if that had been a special occasion. At home, wolves tended to be a private lot. Occasionally, like during a mating ceremony, or if a female was stranded in the forest during a heat, sex happened. But coupling without privacy was rare.

"Fuck, yeah," Ryder said as he thrust his hand into Zain's hair and caressed his ears. Zain sucked louder. "Open wider. A little bit of teeth. That's it." Ryder groaned. "Now keep still while I fuck your sweet mouth. Good demon."

Anson couldn't look away as Ryder's powerful thrusts sank his cock between Zain's lips. Ryder suddenly groaned and shuddered at the same time Liam and Malem entered the room.

"Well, well." Malem's smug grin warned Anson to be wary. "I guess the celebration was too much for you two, hmm?"

Zain grunted as he swallowed, and Anson took note of the frantic motion of his arm. The bed blocked the sight of him jerking off, but Anson smelled his cum as the demon groaned around Ryder's shaft.

"Such busy boys," Liam drawled.

"You look like shit." Anson couldn't help noticing. Liam was drawn, his features pale, and he dragged under Malem's sturdy hold.

"Thanks," Liam said dryly as Malem lowered him to the bed.

"We'll leave you here, under guard." Malem motioned to the door, and Ryder and Zain departed with a nod. "I'll alert the queen to what transpired, if she doesn't know already. I highly doubt her magic wouldn't have noticed Danya, unless the harvest moon has interfered. At any rate, someone will be on watch at all times, my prince."

To Anson's shock, Malem bowed to Liam. The large guard winked at Anson, then left them alone together, shutting the door behind him.

Danya? Who was that? And what exactly had happened that Liam now needed to be more closely watched?

Anson didn't know what to think. His time at the ceremony was hazy. He remembered walking into the grand room with Liam and the others. There was a stone altar, the scent and sounds of sex, then nothing.

He felt somewhat sore, but he couldn't make out the vague smell overlapping his own. It was Liam, and something else. Something powerful. He didn't see any marks on his body though he did feel a slight twinge in his ass. Had Liam or one of the others taken him against his will? Because despite his attraction for Liam, he never would have consented to anal sex. He didn't think.

He couldn't help feeling antsy. So much sex going on around him. Sexual demons. An orgy for a ceremony. And not a female in sight except for mention of Liam's mother, the queen. Had he seen her? He had a faint recollection of a slight female with dark skin, but he couldn't remember.

Anson wanted to ask Liam his questions, but Liam's eyes were already closing. The poor demon looked beyond tired, so Anson left him alone.

The ache in his cock refused to abate, though. He palmed his erection, needing to get a handle on his desires. That celebration must have played havoc with his libido. For twenty-five years Anson had lived with wolves in the Great Forest. Males fucked females. They fucked for pleasure, they made babies, pups. End of story.

Except here, in this place, sex meant something more. Incubi and succubi used sex as a means to relieve energy. But where were all the females? Did the fact there were only males around necessitate lust for the same gender? Then why did Anson not feel the pull as strongly for other demons the way he did Liam? Though watching Zain and Ryder had turned him on, he lusted for *Liam's* cock. To feel Liam's balls between his lips.

The thought could not have been stranger.

"Shit. I need to get out of here." The demons were screwing with his mind, obviously. He needed to get home, to join with his kind and run through the forest, with the deer and other wolves, under watch from the birds in the sky.

The energy here was dark, foreign. It scared him because now he sensed a part of Liam inside him. Demon essence didn't belong in a wolf. Especially not in a wolf that was expected to someday fight to become alpha.

The thought of Uncle Mike made him panic. How long had Anson actually been gone? A day or more? Had his travel across continents really taken place in the blink of an eye? He didn't trust the stink of unnatural – demon – magic all over the place.

Forcing himself to look away from Liam, Anson decided to leave. He'd contact his uncle for the money and papers to return home. He just had to figure out a way to escape these blasted athmae.

An unwilling glance at Liam made him shiver. Such beauty was unexpected in a male, and just as unexpected to sense for one of not only a different species, but the same gender. How could Anson have allowed himself to think sex with Liam might be okay? What would Uncle Mike say?

"He'd be horrified," Anson murmured. "Shocked and disgusted that his nephew would never breed the line of Lycos into another generation." On the one hand, annoying his uncle had become the highlight of his recent days. And Anson was in no rush to sire young, if he ever felt the desire. Personally, he'd always thought to leave pups to Fenris, while he hunted and worked in the Great Forest.

Still, Anson's alpha deserved his respect. Though Anson didn't necessarily agree with everything his uncle wanted of him, he knew he had a duty to the pack and the Wolf in the Forest. A duty that included taking a mate.

Shit. Fucking a male demon didn't exactly go hand in hand with finding a she-wolf to bear young. Anson really needed to leave before things got more out of hand.

He searched through Liam's armoire and found a pair of trousers and a shirt to wear. He'd forego shoes if need be. But a sack to carry the clothes with him, should he need to shift, would be ideal. Needing nothing else but some luck and opportunity, Anson opened the door, hoping against hope Liam's guards would be reasonable.

Just his luck to find Malem posted outside.

"Going somewhere, pet?"

Anson gritted his teeth. That pet nonsense annoyed him. "I'm leaving." He took a step outside and stopped a breath from Malem's immovable frame.

"I don't think so." Malem's soft voice preceded his grim smile. "I take it Liam's resting?"

"Yeah. And he shouldn't be disturbed." Anson frowned. "What the hell happened to him?"

"The sorceress who cursed him returned."

"What curse? Sorceress?" Perhaps that Danya Malem had mentioned earlier?

Malem shook his head. "Wait until he wakes, then he'll explain."

"Look, I'm sorry for Liam. Really. He seems like a good guy—ah, demon." Anson caught the faint smell of wolf and had an urgent need to bond with pack. He needed to be around fellow wolves. His kind, not these dark beings. "I have to get home. My people aren't here, Malem."

"In that you're wrong. You have a life here, now." Malem suddenly whisked the tip of a silver blade under Anson's chin. Most wolves didn't fear silver, but Anson was that rare creature, a werewolf. And that beast didn't like Malem's weapon at all.

"Get that the fuck away from me." Anson didn't flinch, even when the tip of the sword burned his flesh.

Malem's brows rose. "Interesting." He lowered his blade and stepped closer. "I don't want to hurt you, pet. But you belong to my prince, and he's not ready to part with you."

"I'm not his pet." Liam grew past the clothing, ripping it as his werewolf took over.

"You're so pretty when you're like this." The lust on Malem's face alarmed him, because Anson felt an echo of it deep in a new part of him that shouldn't have been there. "I'll pray to Banathmae Liam decides to share you."

Anson took another step forward, until he and Malem stood flush against one another. To his alarm, he felt Malem's erection pushing past his loincloth, into Anson's belly. But before he could push past Malem, two other sets of hands grabbed him, someone bit him—more than once—and he fought harder. Unfortunately, he soon lost his will to fight in his hunger to fuck.

His vision hazed. A flash of the past, of a dark cavern, the scent of lust, and that stone altar gave him one hell of a headache. He blinked it away and found himself back in Liam's room, now chained to the wall, and still werewolf.

"There you are. Took three of us to get you in here, even after I bit you twice. Didn't think anyone could resist that much venom for so long." Malem smiled and flashed his fangs. Then the asshole had the audacity to stroke Anson's cock. "You're a big one, aren't you? And that pretty gold fur is so handsome. So rich."

"*Let me go.*" Anson strained but couldn't break the collar around his neck or the bracelets attached to the chain fixed to the wall.

"As soon as Liam commands it, I will. Now you need to settle down and wait for your prince to wake."

"Settle down?" Liam stared in amazement. "This isn't my place, you aren't my people, and I—*Shit.*"

Malem's hand worked his cock, stroking and rubbing faster with the perfect amount of pressure. "Banathmae left you frustrated, didn't he?" Malem chuckled, his eyes intent as he watched Anson's face. "You need some ease. Take it, wolf. Come hard in my hand. Your prince wouldn't want you hurting. Do it for him."

Just thinking of Liam made everything right. The wolf inside him churned for freedom. The werewolf didn't like being bound, but when he glanced at the bed and saw Liam lying there, he gave himself up to Malem's hands, imagining Liam riding him, Liam touching him.

He choked off a cry and surged against Malem's hand, coming in great jerks over the demon's flesh, his white seed a stain upon Malem's black flesh.

"You smell good," Malem murmured and continued to ease him until Anson had nothing left.

He sagged in his chains.

“Now rest and wait for Liam. He’ll help you, pet.”

“I’m not a fucking pet. I don’t need any help. I need to get home.” Too bad he didn’t sound threatening with his voice so hoarse. He watched, hypnotised, as Malem lifted his hand and licked Anson’s cum from his fingers.

“So good.” The demon’s erection was impossible to miss beneath that slight loincloth. “I can’t wait to ease you again. Until later, pet.”

Anson wanted to roar at him, to argue his position. But oddly enough, he didn’t want to wake Liam. So he watched Malem leave in silence. And he waited.

Liam awoke feeling...different. He couldn’t put his finger on it, but something had changed. A glance around showed him alone, the room empty. Then he noticed the pull of chains on the wall and sat up. The chains were connected to a sleeping, naked man.

Apparently his pet had tried to leave sometime during Liam’s nap. He smiled. Spying the magical chain, he’d bet Malem was behind Anson’s incarceration.

Liam rose quietly from his bed and stretched. He focused inward and felt his wolf nipping playfully to come out. How extraordinary. Not yet ready to shift, Liam still felt more of his wolf than he had in decades. Banathmae hadn’t hurt his wolf in the least, though Liam thought his animal’s resurrection owed more to Anson than it did anything else.

After a soothing shower, Liam dried off and returned to his room to find Anson still asleep.

“My poor pet.” Liam smiled at the golden male, so taken with Anson’s colouring. The wolf’s shredded clothing—Liam’s clothing—must have come as a result of turning from man to werewolf and back again.

The cuffs he wore changed with the user’s shape, so Anson couldn’t have escaped regardless of what form he took. Not wanting his pet and soon-to-be lover uncomfortable, Liam removed his restraints and carried Anson to the bed.

Anson moaned and rolled his neck. Sensing his discomfort, Liam turned him onto his side and began rubbing the stiff muscles.

“Hmm.” Anson slowly woke, the scent of his arousal permeating the air.

Liam breathed in the heady perfume. Despite the sorceress's arrival yesterday, he felt in fine spirits. Anson lay naked next to him. Liam had been possessed by his beloved Banathmae, and his wolf spirit had begun to return – like his hard-on.

Anson rolled over to face him and opened his eyes. "Liam?"

The husky voice called to him. Liam leant forward for a kiss, but Anson turned his head at the last minute.

Delighted by Anson's play, Liam chuckled. "Tricky wolf."

"Tricky demon." Anson's gruffness enthralled him. The wolf sounded like gravel and sex in the same breath. "Great, you're awake. Hold on." Anson left him for the lavatory. After a few minutes, he returned looking refreshed. "Okay. Now how about you let me out of here so I can go home?"

Not the words Liam had wanted to hear. "Why?"

"You wanted my help. I'm thinking I helped you a bunch yesterday." Anson's eyes narrowed. "My ass is sore. I've been jerked off by you, Malem and who the hell knows who else. I'm tired of playing the fuck-toy. I have a pack that needs me, a mate waiting for me and an uncle sure to kick my ass for leaving without his permission. Playtime is over."

Liam started. "You're mated?" The thought made him physically ill.

Anson flushed. "Somewhere. You know the Living Wood?"

Liam glanced at Anson's erection.

Anson frowned. "Not *that* wood. The mating ceremony? Every ten years we're forced to put a sacrifice in the Living Wood. The Wolf in the Forest asks for a piece of us, which we give in a lock of hair. The priest does his thing, the Wolf in the Forest hears prayers, and our mates are found."

"So you cut some hair, put it in a box, and your spirit finds your mate?" Liam wasn't sure what to think. His mother had been after him for some time to bond, but he'd put it off. Then he'd been cursed by Danya and had an ever better excuse not to settle down.

But he'd been growing desperate to feel his wolf once more, and his mother had offered her help by giving him a spell. A box of wood she'd found from Fae friends. A hank of his hair, some words a neighbouring wolf had muttered. But nothing had happened, or so he'd thought.

And a few hours later, Anson appeared.

"The Living Wood," Anson repeated slowly. "How we find our mates? How do the athmae find theirs?"

My mate. A male wolf. He's mine.

His inner wolf howled with delight, and Liam suddenly knew what he had to do.

"Ah, Liam? You're looking a little wild. Your eyes are ...glowing." Anson sniffed and swore. "You smell like wolf."

"I am wolf." Liam licked his growing canines, beyond pleased he'd been gifted with not only his spirit wolf, but with a hardy mate as well. For so long he'd waited, restless, not ready. But seeing Anson, he now knew what—or who—he'd been waiting for. "I was long cursed by an evil sorceress. But you're freeing my wolf, Anson. Help me break this hold on my power. I need you."

To his surprise, Anson looked nervous. "You mean you didn't already do that last night?"

Liam shook his head. "I'm a little fuzzy on the details, but I remember Banathmae possessing my body before he took a real...*liking* to you."

Anson groaned. "Are you telling me I was fucked by a god?"

"I guess you could say you sacrificed your virgin ass. Pity. I was hoping to take it myself." Liam couldn't wait to taste the morsel staring up at him with dismay.

"About that." Anson swallowed audibly. "I'm a wolf, Liam. We don't fuck men."

"Yes we do."

"We don't—what do you mean?"

Liam shrugged. "I'm wolf, and I fuck other males. Years ago, I ran with a few of the packs around here. The non-mated wolves fucked with males and females. Gender didn't matter. Though wolves aren't as sexual as athmae, it was my understanding alphas traditionally fuck anyone they please, mated or not. Surely you saw this in your own clan."

Anson blanched. "Hell no. I don't want to think of my uncle having sex with anyone. Besides, he's mated."

"So?"

"So mated wolves can't stray."

"He's not straying. He'll only father young with his female. Doesn't mean he can't take physical pleasure with another male so long as his mate agrees."

"*What?*" Anson looked stunned.

“You didn’t know?”

Anson shook his head.

“It’s no big deal. Athmae give each other joy all the time.”

“Right. You like to *share*.”

Liam smiled when he caught the heavenly scent of Anson’s increased desire. “Say what you want, but the thought of it excites you. Don’t worry, Anson. I have every intention of sharing your beautiful cock once I’ve had my fill.”

Anson glared. “I hate to break it to you, but I’m not your pet.”

Liam was glad for Anson’s resistance. “Not my pet, no. But, Anson, you’re mine all the same.” *My mate, by all that’s holy*. A golden gift from the spirits of his ancestors. Liam gave in to his wolf and pounced.

He had Anson under him on the bed, naked, his for the taking. “Now it’s time to show you what you were made for. Me.”

Chapter Five

Anson wanted to argue the point, but Liam's flesh against his robbed him of speech. Dear Wolf, how could he feel this way for a male? A demon? He wanted to chalk up his sexual attraction as nothing more than the physical response to pleasure. He wasn't bothered by the sexual act. Truth be told, it turned him on in a big way. Liam was right about wolves being sexual creatures. But the look in Liam's eyes called to Anson on another level. The genuine affection he saw there lit an answering fuse within him.

It made little sense. He'd just met Liam, and he'd never had sex with a male before this visit to demon central. Yet for this strange hybrid male he felt something more. Not the tepid lust for the females in his pack, but a huge wave of confusing emotion, yearning and need he was hard-pressed to understand.

"Easy, Anson. Just let yourself go. Take what I freely offer, and you'll break the curse even now weakening within me."

Liam kissed him, a full meeting of lips and tongue that made it impossible to remain still under the hard body rocking against him. As the larger male stroked inside his mouth with that skilled tongue, Liam's cock rubbed against his belly with insistent hunger. Anson groaned and met him thrust for thrust, taken with the urge to spread his legs and wait for the intrusion he couldn't deny.

Breaking from his mouth, Liam moaned his name and ran kisses down his cheeks to his chin, his throat, and lower. He sucked hard on Anson's nipples, biting and licking the small punctures of blood.

Anson hissed and gripped Liam's head, his fingers accidentally brushing the pointed tips of Liam's ears. Enthralled with the foreign shape, he lingered there, especially when he noticed Liam's reaction. The male panted and surged harder against him. The suction of his lips brought Anson arching off the bed in ecstasy, his need to fuck overwhelming.

Liam rasped, "I'm hurting with the need to shove myself hard inside you. So deep, my golden wolf. Fuck."

Anson groaned with denial. He didn't belong to Liam, but he couldn't stop himself from wanting the connection. His hole puckered at thoughts of Liam's thick cock wedging deep. The burn of penetration, followed by the bliss of deep belonging.

"You're my golden gift, Anson. My own wolf. Come on, mate, I dare you. Bring my wolf out to play." Liam nipped his ear and sucked the sting out of the tender lobe.

Barely able to think past the desire flooding his body, Anson widened his legs and thrust up into Liam's belly. Liam's tightly muscled stomach had no give, perfect for the rough friction his cock demanded.

Then what Liam said penetrated. "*Mate?*"

Instead of answering, Liam trailed his mouth to Anson's neck, his teeth scraping with teasing licks. Then he bit hard, the way a wolf did to mark another.

Anson wanted to protest, but glorious sensations burned through his body, alighting between his legs.

"My venom will help us along." Liam licked the bite, and Anson yelled as his balls tightened and his seed burst from his body, slicking their bellies as Liam continued to rock over him. "Very responsive, pet. And so powerful. Still hard? Good."

Anson moaned, his relief a small one as the carnal desire inside him built once more.

"But I can't wait any longer," Liam breathed. He quickly sat up and straddled Anson, using Anson's cum to lube his shaft. He ran his large fingers over himself, accentuating the girth and length he intended to shove into Anson.

"Do it," Anson growled, needing it. He'd deal with this mate nonsense later, when he could think past the urge to come again.

Liam shifted, and his hair brushed over his pointed ear. His eyes shone an unearthly green, wolf green and shifter bright. But it was the clear love shining in them that froze Anson in place.

"Mine," Liam claimed as he moved off Anson to position himself. He tilted Anson's hips and guided himself to Anson's hole, then pushed inside.

Liam didn't let up. He shoved bit by bit, past Anson's pain and resistance, until the whole of him rested inside Anson's throbbing ass.

"Stretching me," Anson managed, arching up and crying out as Liam slid deeper.

"My balls are touching you. I'm inside you all the way. Mine, Anson. You're mine now."

The echo of power showered over them both as Banathmae repeated the vow in their minds, then the Wolf in the Forest teased them with a slight, earthy breeze in a room where there shouldn't have been one.

Liam pulled out with excruciating slowness, exacerbating his size when he pushed back in. Anson hissed in pain even as his rectum softened in pleasure. By the Wolf, Liam felt so sexy, so good inside him.

"That's it. Watch me." Liam grunted as he continued to thrust, fucking Anson with a steel cock and an iron will that wouldn't tolerate anything but his submission.

That Anson intended fully to surrender shocked him as much as it pleased his lover. A werewolf, a descendant of Lycos himself, Anson had few equals when it came to power. But he sensed Liam could match him. The wolf part of Liam fit with Anson's animal self, yet it was the sexual demon, Liam's other half, which drew such strength from Anson's energy.

"Demon wolf." He clutched Liam's waist and held on.

"Yes, mate. Yes," Liam hissed as he continued to pump, thrusting harder and faster, stirring Anson's own hungers anew. "I'm going to come, Anson. Inside you. Marking you as mine."

Anson couldn't look away. "Let it out, Liam. Let me see your wolf."

Liam yelled as he came, shuddering with real force as his seed bathed Anson from the inside out. As he did, Anson saw a hint of the wild thing trapped inside Liam. A large, black wolf snapping desperately at the frail wards still holding him back. So close, yet he needed more.

And like that, Anson knew how to break the spell.

"Fuck. I'm so close. I need you so much." Liam clawed at the sheets on either side of Anson's head.

Not need *it*, as in needing his wolf back, but Liam said, "I need *you*." Anson heard the difference and knew exactly what Liam meant. Because against all odds, against all sense, Anson needed Liam just as much. And Anson would do whatever it took to free Liam's wolf from the cages binding him.

He waited for Liam to pull out before he made his move. Still slick from their spent passion, Anson used their joined cum to make his cock wet. Then he rolled Liam over, onto his belly, and yanked him to his hands and knees.

"Anson, wha—"

“Let’s free you, once and for all.” Anson wasn’t gentle, but he instinctively knew Liam didn’t want him to be.

He pulled Liam’s ass cheeks apart and shoved himself balls deep inside Liam’s ass.

Liam cried out and moaned, but the male didn’t move away. If anything, he backed into Anson’s pounding thrusts, meeting him jolt for jolt.

Anson had never felt anything so right. Liam’s ass wasn’t supple, but had a man’s toughness, so firm and masculine. The warmth, the tightness around him, and the scent of Liam so aroused made him lose his fucking mind.

“Mine. Nobody owns you but me,” Anson roared as he took Liam hard enough to do a normal person some damage. But Liam was athmae and wolf, and the wolf was tired of his cage.

Anson felt Liam begin to shift and joined him, magically changing form from man to wolf while continuing to fuck. Anson couldn’t stop. He had to come inside Liam, to seal them tight.

It was with great pleasure when he did so, full spurts which relieved that burning ache deep inside him. He knotted, giving Liam enough of himself to break the curse’s hold.

Anson had always been a big wolf, but he’d met his match in Liam. The gold of his fur brushed Liam’s black pelt, and the mixture of light and dark looked to him like the perfect balance between souls – *lovers*, he hastily corrected – so hot for each other they could barely breathe.

When Anson finished, he withdrew, changed back to a man’s form, and lay down next to Liam, who remained as wolf.

Liam smiled at him, a genuine grin as he panted and woofed. He licked Anson’s chest and cheek, and nipped his fingers playfully. But unlike Anson, all his canines looked sharper than normal. And there, in the glowing green of his eyes, a spark of red flashed in his pupils.

His enthusiasm was contagious. But as much as Anson wanted to go run and play with him, exhaustion set in in a big way. He opened his mouth to suggest a romp in the outlying woods and yawned. When he tried to rise from the bed, he didn’t have the energy to do more than slur a question. “Liam?”

Quickly shifting back into the form of a man, Liam looked at him and breathed out a sigh. “You expended a lot of energy to heal me, pup.”

Instead of the annoyance Anson expected to feel being called pup once more, he registered Liam's loving tone. Somehow, *pup* and *pet* sounded like endearments. He wanted to argue, just for the sake of arguing, but his eyes closed.

"Sleep, Anson. You're safe."

Anson wasn't sure, but he could have sworn he felt lips on his mouth and the added whisper of "You're loved" before he fell asleep.

Liam stroked his mate's chest and stared, thoroughly besotted with the much younger wolf. Damn him if he hadn't just been thoroughly fucked, a centuries-old demon schooled by a much younger werewolf. By Banathmae's Blade, Liam's heart pounded for Anson. Love, lust, whatever he wanted to call it, he knew he'd never felt this way about anyone. It wasn't magic, not the relief of his curse, or his sexual attraction for the powerful werewolf. It was something else.

Not sure what to make of it other than to simply accept this gift, he pressed a kiss over Anson's heart. His golden wolf smiled in his slumber.

"Rest now, love." Saying it while Anson slept was so much easier than he expected it would be once the stubborn male woke. Anson knew only the traditional concept of male to female mating. But the golden wolf hadn't overly protested Liam's touch. That was something, at least. *And he'd had no problem fucking me*, Liam thought with a grin.

Liam stood and stretched, ready once more to run on all fours. Gods, it had been so long. He didn't bother to dress and opened his door to find Malem standing guard outside, sharpening his blade with demon bone, the toughest stuff on the planet.

Malem glanced at him and smiled with a genuine pleasure Liam hadn't seen on his face in some time. "By Banathmae's Balls, you've been blessed. I can see the wolf shining in your eyes, Liam."

Liam nodded. "I'm going for a run. Need to stretch out my legs, but I don't want to leave Anson alone."

"I'll watch over him while you go."

Liam studied Malem with curiosity. "You know he's mine, and you're not at all surprised about this, are you?"

Malem's left brow rose, dark against his pale skin. "Now, Liam, why would you say that?"

"I don't think I want to know." Liam paused, recognising the scent of his mate on Malem's hands.

"I gave him ease earlier," Malem murmured, following Liam's gaze to his long, graceful fingers. "Your wolf was hurting. Banathmae rode him hard and left him hungry."

"Thank you." Liam took his guard's hand and kissed the centre of his palm, pleased when the stalwart giant shivered. "You'll be richly rewarded later for your generosity."

"That wasn't why I did it." Malem frowned.

"I know. Now go watch after my wolf. And behave yourself. He spent a lot of energy to help me, and he's earned a rest."

Malem's lips twitched and he did the oddest thing. He tilted his head in the semblance of a bow. "As you order, so shall it be done."

"Hell, you're starting to scare me." Liam wasn't sure what to make of Malem's sudden deference, but he could no longer deny his wolf. Deciding to deal with the male later, he allowed his inner wolf the freedom he deserved and shimmered onto four feet.

Scents sharpened, the feel of the cold stone under his paws made him want to dance, and he licked Malem when the guard leant down to pet him.

"Just don't make me play tug of war with you and we'll get along." Malem gripped his fur with a reassuring tug and let him go. "I'll watch your precious mate, my prince."

With another unexpected bow, Malem left Liam in the hall and closed the door behind him, sealing the protection wards as he stood over Anson once more.

Liam trusted no one more than his mother and Malem, and he knew Anson would be in good hands. But to his surprise, Liam didn't like knowing Anson's seed lingered on Malem's skin. The scent didn't belong there, not yet. Though he knew Malem had done Anson a service, the wolf in him hated the thought of sharing his mate.

The wolf might reject the idea, but the incubus half of Liam wanted nothing more than an all-out orgy surrounding Anson with pleasure. Liam had to find a way to blend both halves of himself together again. It had been so long since he'd felt his wolf this strong that he was a bit stymied at how to balance the two.

He smelt a fresh kill and followed his nose through the halls. Along the way, he passed many of his brethren who paused whatever they were doing to shout and cheer their newly healed prince.

Liam strutted with arrogance, knowing he made a handsome wolf. His father would have been so proud.

With a sad smile, he sought his mother and found her in her favourite place—in the kitchen directing the many cooks in preparation for the next bulk of celebratory feast.

When she spied Liam, she stopped and clasped a hand to her heart. “Blessed Wolf, you look just like your father, Liam. So handsome.” She knelt, and he rushed into her arms, awaiting her hug with trembling joy. “Go on and run. I know you want to.” She wiped tears from her eyes. “I’m so pleased you found your future, finally.”

She meant Anson; he understood. He woofed once and left her, nimbly racing out the back door, past cheering athmae into the forest. The scent of earth and wilderness and life overjoyed him, and he sang to the Wolf in the Forest and Banathmae as he hunted game for the first time in a century, the way he’d been born to.

First a rabbit, then a small squirrel. He crunched through bone and licked at tender flesh, enjoying the pleasure of his animal magic. His senses had been muted for so long, stifling him from being the athmae prince he’d been meant to be. The leadership mantle he could now fully assume.

And all because of Anson.

Pure love overwhelmed him as he became a part of the natural world once more. He couldn’t wait to run through the trees with his mate at his side. Now he just had to figure out a way to convince Anson to stay and to defeat an evil that hadn’t been beaten in two thousand years. For some inexplicable reason, he thought convincing Anson might be the harder of the two.

* * * *

Anson woke to find Malem and Liam talking quietly in a corner of the room. He felt refreshed, glad the draining of his energy had been replenished by a heavy sleep. As he lay there, he watched Liam interact with Malem, now skin-dark with white hair. Night must have fallen. Yet Liam remained pale with those bright green wolf eyes and black hair that just hours ago had been thick fur.

A shiver of desire hit him hard, and he wondered if the magic that had brought him here and helped him to cure Liam had rebounded to make him feel so attached to the athmae

prince. Anson had never felt drawn to the male wolves at home. Then again, his attachment to the female wolves was nonexistent. Mostly they satisfied his sexual urges, but he'd never wanted to take any of them to mate. Even after that ceremony his uncle had forced him to endure, he hadn't wanted any of the available wolves around him the way he wanted Liam.

And what about Malem? The large athmae had taken him in hand and eased him. Anson had needed the sexual release, but thinking about it made him hot all over again. It had to be the demons. The athmae were sexual creatures used to drawing out the sexual energy from the beings they visited. He had a feeling the longer he stayed here, the further he'd be lured into such dark desires. To Anson's surprise, the thought didn't bother him at all, until he comprehended the untenable position he'd be put in with his pack if he continued to avoid reality.

I'm screwed if I don't get out of here soon. Uncle Mike has to be wondering where I am. Has Fenris returned yet? Has my idiot brother gone and found himself mated to one of the she-wolves in the clan?

Anson didn't want anything but happiness for his twin. He could only hope Fenris found his place without doing too much damage. Unlike Anson, the more easygoing of the two, Fenris didn't do anything he didn't want to do. He'd probably make a fine alpha.

"Anson?"

He glanced up to see Liam approaching. Malem left and closed the door behind him.

Anson sat up, not surprised to once again find himself aroused in the presence of the alluring male who now smelled like home. A flicker of longing filled him, but he couldn't tell if it was for Liam or for his clan.

Liam's smile faded. "Do you feel all right?"

"Yeah." Anson coughed to clear his throat of nerves, bunching the sheets around him to hide the evidence of his arousal.

Liam's lips quirked, but he said nothing about Anson's current state. "I was out running, Anson. For the first time in a hundred years, I felt the earth under my paws and tasted pine and cedar on the wind. It was a gift you've given me, and I can't thank you enough."

Liam's eyes filled and Anson understood how hard it must have been to have his wolf caged for so long. "I'm glad I could help." His dick ached at remembrances of how he'd helped. Surging inside Liam's tight ass had been perfection, no two ways about it.

"I want to show you how much you mean to me."

Anson blinked. Liam had moved closer, and the wolf inside him peered out at Anson with hungry eyes. "That's not necessary." The notion to ask Liam to return him to the Great Forest couldn't penetrate the fog of lust building inside him.

"No, Anson. Let me thank you properly." A spark of mischief lit Liam's eyes before he yanked the bed sheet off Anson's lap. "Now that's a prize worth fighting for."

Anson flushed. Especially when he felt himself throbbing in anticipation of Liam's touch. "I—it's early. I just woke up."

"Mmm hmm." Liam crawled on the bed, the loose cut of his shirt and trousers clinging to every hard part of him. His long black hair hid his expression but not his intent as the demon wolf gripped Anson's thighs and dragged him down the bed to meet him.

In a breathless voice, Anson asked, "Liam?"

Liam answered the way Anson secretly hoped he might. Spreading Anson's thighs wide, Liam lowered his face to Anson's cock and took the whole shaft in his mouth. The scrape of his fangs only made the intensity richer, and Anson couldn't help jerking with the pleasure.

When Liam pulled away after a few sucks, Anson groaned in protest.

"Don't worry. I'm right here." Liam licked his sac before turning to sink sharp teeth into Anson's thigh.

Anson jumped but soon eased under his lover's mouth.

"That's it, pup. This will only enhance your pleasure. Now give me that hot cum you've been holding just for me."

"Fuck. What are you doing to me?" Anson rasped as he watched Liam take him deep to the back of his throat again. The hot, wet sensation enveloped him and wouldn't let him go. He bucked and squirmed but could do nothing but ride out the pleasure of Liam's tongue, teeth and lips. Such firm suction, then the press of Liam's tongue on the underside of his shaft made him go out of his mind.

Liam grazed his balls, cupping the taut sac with one hand while he shoved a finger inside Anson's ass with the other.

Anson gripped Liam's head as he cried out and came hard, emptying the magic inside him.

More than his seed flowed into Liam, but a burst of powerful emotion he was hard-pressed to name. The flow of pleasure seemed never ending until Liam pulled away and licked a remaining drop of Anson's cum.

Anson was reassured to see Liam's neon eyes burning with excitement. The alpha was far from affected as he breathed hard, his dick tenting the fabric of his trousers.

So sexy, that wet spot growing as Liam stared down at Anson.

"Come on me," Anson demanded, hungry for more. "Let me see you shoot all over my belly."

Liam hurriedly straddled Anson's waist and lowered his trousers to free his shaft. "All over you," Liam agreed in a thick voice and pumped his fat cock. In mere moments he stiffened and jetted over Anson's body, the warmth of that life-giving seed like a balm to Anson's enflamed flesh.

Without thinking about it, Anson rubbed the cream into his skin, loving the mingled scent of them, together.

The thought of having a male lover no longer bothered him, not when he'd found such incredible pleasure with Liam. Then Liam's hair shifted and a pointed ear came to view, reminding Anson that for all their togetherness, it wouldn't last. Anson had to get home to his clan, and wolves that could barely tolerate their own kind would never take to a half-breed demon wolf. Inexplicably saddened by the thought of never seeing Liam again, Anson forced himself to enjoy the here and now. He only had so much time before the Wolf in the Forest found his mate. But until the spirit did, Anson vowed to enjoy Liam to the fullest.

He smiled at Liam, and Liam smiled back. There would be time enough for regret later.

Chapter Six

Two weeks later, as Anson ran in athmae forest, he still couldn't get over how freeing it was to live with demons so far from the Silver Clan. Initially he hadn't wanted to stay so long, but the threat of the sorceress possibly following him home made him see that taking care of her was the wisest course of action to take. He couldn't chance bringing danger back to the Silver Clan. So he'd called his uncle, left a brief message on his cell phone to ensure him of his health, and hadn't called back since. Anson didn't regret a moment of his decision.

As wolves, he and Liam hunted each morning and evening, accompanied by a score of Liam's trusted guards. They played and raced while Liam introduced Anson to the wonderful forest all around them. Though humans lived within hours from the athmae, demon enchantments kept all but the stalwart far away.

The natural flora and fauna smelt fresh, as southern Germany was much more agricultural and less industrial than the north. The few sorcerers in the area gave the athmae a wide berth. Though the wolves didn't think of demons as real, it seemed the rest of the world knew them for what they were. The athmae were only one type of demon, the most amicable of the bunch, from what Anson had learned, and the most fun.

It was nothing for him to stumble over demons fucking in the hallways, in the living areas or spell rooms of the large castle in which they all lived. The lower levels of the fortress expanded underground for miles, allowing for the huge numbers that called this place home.

Malem grunted and nudged Anson's furry flank. "How much longer, pup? Aren't you getting tired sniffing asses and chasing your tail?"

Anson gave him the equivalent of the finger with a rude bark and snapped at the guard when he laughed. Since Liam's curse had broken, the entire compound teased Anson, the way they did one another, yet still gave him the same respect they showed Liam and his mother, the queen.

The niggling suspicion that Liam had indeed claimed him as a mate refused to abate, even though Liam shrugged his concern away as unimportant. He hadn't referred to Anson as his mate since that first night after the harvest moon ceremony.

Still, Liam constantly watched out for him. He gave Anson every courtesy, treat and desire he wanted. The sex was incredible, each and every time. The bonds between them continued to grow, and Anson only wanted more of the demon wolf. Liam acted possessive, and Anson liked the fact that for all his bluster about sharing, Liam kept Anson as his and his alone.

Ryder and Zain walked out to meet them in the woods, where Anson knew another dozen athmae remained armed and alert, ready for the enemy to show her face again.

"The queen wants to see you, Anson." Ryder smiled. "You really are a handsome wolf. And you're fierce on a hunt, just like our prince."

Anson huffed and shifted back into man's form. "Liam needs more practice. He spends too much time chasing rabbits and not enough time hunting real prey."

Zain laughed. "He's too happy to be himself again, thanks to you. Everyone's been talking about what a difference you've made in the castle. Can't you feel it?"

"The burgeoning joy, the songs and dance, the never-ending sex?"

Malem shrugged. "The sex has always been there, but yes. You've alleviated much of the queen's stress, and it shows in her subjects. We've been much more productive lately. I think we've gathered twice as much energy this past week as we did all last month, and that's saying something."

Anson felt uncomfortable with all the praise and took the trousers Malem handed him. He dressed, ignoring the speculation the others gave him. It no longer made him uncomfortable when they stared and grew aroused. The athmae were sexual, he accepted that. But he hadn't yet accepted Liam's plan that Anson remain at the compound until the danger of the sorceress passed. What if it took years before she attacked again? Did Liam expect Anson to remain here all that time?

"You said the queen wanted to see me?"

Zain nodded and led the way. He, Ryder, Malem and Anson passed friendly athmae as they returned to the keep. Anson missed the open forest, but he'd grown to like the familiar scents and sounds in the castle and its grounds. Here, there was no play for dominance, no challenges or fights for conquest. Just sex, food and games to fill the playful hungers of demons with raw needs.

He admitted how much he liked it here. When he ran in the woods, he pretended he was Master of the Hunt and that Liam was his beta as they chased down the night's meal.

Anson sighed and walked deeper into the heart of the athmae keep. Down another flight of stairs into the bowels of rock and dirt and magic. Malem cautioned him to wait as he went first through the queen's meeting room. Lately, he'd taken to protecting Anson at all times while Zain and Ryder watched over Liam. Which begged the question...

He turned to the guards. "Where's Liam?" What he should have asked ten minutes ago. "With the queen." Ryder motioned for Anson to follow Malem inside.

He did and found Liam smiling at another athmae, one he didn't recognise. A burn of rage took him by surprise, and he growled low in his throat and took a step towards Liam before he realised what he'd done.

Zain and Ryder grabbed him. "Easy, Anson. All's well," Zain reassured him.

Malem had a smug look on his face and said something under his breath to Liam, who glanced Anson's way with satisfaction. When the athmae stranger reached out to grab Liam by the shoulder, something inside Anson snapped.

"Anson," the queen said sharply, easing his sudden, inexplicable rage.

He shook his head and settled down, surprised to see his fingers had become claws. He flushed and said to Ryder, "I'm fine."

Ryder and Zain released him.

The queen sat some distance away with three females he'd first seen on the grounds a few days ago. "Anson, dear, would you come here a moment?"

He wanted to. He liked the queen very much. She had a maternal air about her despite the clear sexuality she wore like a second skin. But that male had yet to move away from Liam.

Slowly, as if daring Anson to say something, Liam stepped away from the male, closer to Malem. Freeing Anson from the need to protect, maul, and stake his claim.

Which made no sense.

Dizzy from the speeding emotion ripping through him, Anson made his way to the queen. As he did, Liam tensed. Malem whispered into Liam's ear and grabbed his arm, holding tight. Then he told the athmae stranger to leave. Finally.

Anson shouldn't have been so pleased to see a potential rival leave. And since when had he begun viewing other athmae as rivals? Rivals for what, Liam's affection?

What the hell was going on in here?

The athmae stranger looked disappointed but left the room without a backwards glance.

Relieved Liam stood with Malem, and that Ryder and Zain moved to stand with him as well, Anson walked to the queen with a sure step. "Yes, Queen Shöen?"

"Anson, you've done more for us than you can know. You've brought Liam's wolf back, and you've made him happy. Everyone is thriving, and I couldn't be more pleased."

The female athmae sitting with her beamed their approval. The way they eyed Anson made him feel like their next meal, and he took a subtle step back, not sure why the distance calmed him. No one had tried to hurt him while he'd been here.

If anything, he should be more worried about his own behaviour.

He and Liam had fucked – *a lot* – as both man and wolf. It didn't take much more than what they'd already been doing to establish a mating between wolves. But Anson's werewolf demanded he take his mate in all forms. Lately, it had been all Anson could do not to shift into his werewolf to take Liam as his own, and the notion surprised and scared him.

What if he bonded to Liam as a mate, then had to deal with the Wolf in the Forest when his mate found him? He just knew when he returned to the clan he'd find a starry-eyed female waiting for him. Instead of filling him with the dread he expected to feel, he experienced disgust and horror at the prospect.

"Anson?" the queen said again, and he realised he'd been woolgathering.

"I'm sorry, Your Majesty, what's that?"

"Our greatest and most talented succubi have returned from some duties abroad, and I wondered if you'd allow them to reward you, as befitting the saviour of my son?"

Anson's skin itched when one of them stood and neared him. She was gorgeous, sexy as sin, and lust sparked off her creamy flesh with the promise of endless pleasure.

He took a hasty step back. "That's not necessary, Queen Shöen. I've been amply rewarded just by being here."

"And pleased as well, I suspect," she murmured with an odd smile on her face.

He glanced over his shoulder at Liam, who looked none too pleased with Anson. *What the hell did I do?* Anson frowned back at him and almost jumped out of his skin when the female touched his forearm. He didn't like it, and the werewolf within him snapped at her to back away.

Her eyes widened, and she raced behind the queen in fear.

"Oh shit. I mean, I, uh..." Anson stammered as he quickly thrust his werewolf back down and tried to ignore the burn on his forearm. The Mark of Lycos only swelled when something threatened his very nature. Yet he could scent no danger from the female athmae.

"Anson, are you all right?" the queen asked softly.

"I think so. I didn't mean to startle you," he said to the succubus now cowering behind the queen. "The Spirit knows you're a beautiful demon."

She preened and sent him a small smile.

The queen gestured to the other females. "Perhaps one of my others will do?"

"Do?" he said stupidly.

"To serve you, dear. In the few weeks you've been with us, you haven't seen any females except myself, and though my incubi are exceptional when it comes to sexual pleasure, I was mated to a wolf. I'm sure you've been hungry for a female, having been starved for them since your arrival."

Yet he wasn't. Anson didn't want any of the beautiful females before him. Nor did the thought of fucking a female do anything for him, unless he imagined her between himself and Liam. Now that thought had him growing hard. Hell, anything having to do with Liam aroused him.

"No, I'm fine." He cleared his throat, a bit embarrassed when Liam's mother continued to watch him with such interest.

"Liam, dear, come here." The queen motioned to her son, and he hurried to stand by Anson.

A slight touch of Liam's hand against his side and Anson found himself relaxing when he hadn't sensed himself tensing.

"Which of them would you like, Liam?"

Personally, if Anson had to choose, he'd take the succubus still standing behind the queen. He'd fuck her pussy while Liam took her ass, because he well knew Liam had a thing for asses.

Liam shifted to stand closer to Anson, and Anson wondered if Liam realised they looked joined at the hip.

"I'm fine, Mother. Allow your subjects the rest they're due."

The females looked disappointed by Liam's offer, not relieved. Anson wondered if any of them had lain with Liam before, and the notion annoyed him.

He deliberately crossed his arms over his chest, knowing his elbow would brush Liam's arm, adding another point of contact between them.

"Ah. So I see." She cleared her throat and waved to the female athmae to leave. Neither Liam nor Anson moved, standing impossibly close to one another. "Liam," the queen continued, "the time has come to announce your mate."

Stunned, Anson turned to stare into Liam's sober gaze. "You're mated?"

Liam nodded slowly, not blinking. "Apparently, so are you. You didn't take the females' offer, and no one can resist the Blane sisters. They've conquered kings, presidents and godlings. You must be mated, Anson." Liam smiled and stepped closer. "What do you think?"

Anson didn't know what to say. Mated? When the females had touched him, he hadn't wanted anything to do with them. It made sense, yet it didn't. "But I can touch you. I don't mind when we..." He paused, mindful of Queen Shöen. "You don't bother me."

He ignored Malem's snicker behind him.

"That's good to know." Then Liam shocked him by leaning close and kissing him full on the mouth in front of his mother. The drugging kiss filled Anson with desire and a strange, deepening affection he'd only ever felt with Liam. "Pet, there's something I need to tell you."

"I'm not your pet," Anson denied, his response automatic. He'd been saying the same thing ever since he'd arrived here.

Liam grinned. "That's up for debate." He cupped Anson's chin, the gesture clearly possessive. "But you're my mate. Now and forever, wolf. You're mine."

Anson blinked, stunned when his werewolf wanted to howl, not with anger or mistrust, but with delight. "Holy shit."

Malem slapped Anson hard on the back. "You said it."

Ryder and Zain joined them. "Welcome to the family, Anson." Ryder laughed. "If you could see the look on your face."

Anson turned to the queen, sure she'd correct her son.

But she only smiled. "We've been waiting a long time for you, Anson. Not only to break Liam's curse, but to free his heart."

"But I...I'm wolf. We can't breed."

The queen huffed. "Really, Anson. You can do better than that. I have any number of breeders in residence when you and Liam are ready. Of course, you'll both have to agree to her, as you've seen. Only those you allow into your circle may stand with you without stirring the wrath of your animal spirit. The mating bond is such that sharing is only allowed when true hearts are in harmony."

Anson glanced at the guards who stood so close to them, aware he'd never once been bothered by Ryder, Zain or Malem protecting Liam.

"Yep, we're your new pack, pup," Malem teased as he leant close. He ignored Liam's soft growl. "Your mate is a bit high strung. You might want to help settle the wolf down."

"You think Liam is high strung?" He was one of the most laid back people Anson had ever met.

"Only when it comes to you," Liam answered in a gritty voice. "I know it's a lot to expect, Anson. But I want this to be your new home. You and me, together."

Malem cleared his throat, not to be ignored.

"And them," Liam snapped. "Yes, yes, my guards go everywhere with me, unfortunately."

"Now, Liam, I taught you better than that. As did Malem." The queen tried to bite back her smile, but Anson could feel her delight as clearly as he felt the connection between him and Liam.

Did he dare believe Liam could keep him? That the pleasure he'd felt being here for the past two weeks could be his for as long as he lived? Everything inside him screamed at him to say yes, but a lifetime of submitting to his alpha wouldn't let him agree yet. He needed to think.

Frowning, he stepped back from Liam, not liking the pain he could see in Liam's—in his mate's—eyes. "I think I feel it. But I need time. This is...I'm not sure. We're not mated yet." Not until his werewolf had his say, and the damned beast wouldn't stop pressing him to finalise the claiming right now, here, in front of everyone.

"I'll give you time, Anson. I'll give you anything you want," Liam vowed. "Just promise me you'll accept our protection while you're thinking it over."

"Because Danya isn't done with you yet?"

Everyone nodded.

“But I still don’t understand why she’s so persistent. I mean, you said no. What does she expect to happen?” Anson knew what Liam had told him about Danya. The sorceress wanted Liam as her own, and in her bid to win him, she’d killed his father and cursed Liam to an eternity without his precious wolf. Granted, Liam had that sexy something about him that called to everything in Anson, but wouldn’t a sorceress as powerful as Danya have access to other males in her life?

The queen answered, “Danya has gone mad from the Darkness. Her power continues to grow at the expense of demons and sorcerers alike. She’s obsessed with Liam. It makes little sense, but I fear she won’t stop until she has him.”

“Surely you can stop her.” Anson had seen the power the slight queen held, and it awed him. “You speak with Banathmae.”

“I do, so I know he cannot interfere. Danya called upon Banathmae’s twisted brother, and that demon god has ripped holes in the very fabric of this world, at our expense. Banathmae can only enter during times of sacrifice and celebration, or he fears permanently damaging the athmae. Already the sorcerers are having problems thanks to Danya. I would not have our kind maligned as well. It’s up to us to rid the world of her evil. The time draws near.”

Anson looked at the sober group. “I understand.” The mating confused him, even as he wanted to truly accept it. But one thing was certain—this Danya bitch would find out the hard way that Lycos’ descendants could get pretty possessive about those they considered under their protection. The Spirit save the sorceress if she returned to grab Liam. Anson would kill her without a second’s thought.

Liam’s hand on his arm stilled his instinctive growls. “It’ll be okay. I won’t let her hurt you.”

Anson scowled. “Hurt me? Fuck that. I won’t let her hurt you or anyone else here. She’ll be lucky if I kill her quickly the next time she shows her face.”

The queen grinned. “Welcome to the family, Son.”

Chapter Seven

Two *celibate* days later, Liam felt as if he walked on pins and needles. He sensed Anson's gaze on him all the time. More than the man watching him, he swore the spirit of Anson's werewolf reached out through the odd bond Liam and Anson had formed.

Though Anson had asked for some time to figure out his future, he wouldn't let Liam out of his sight. The golden wolf had grown very possessive, to the point of glaring at Malem if he stepped too close. All signs that Anson intended to acknowledge Liam's mating claim. And thank Banathmae for that. Because the space Liam continued to give Anson made everything so much more painful.

Athmae breathed sex, yet Liam hadn't touched or even looked at another male while waiting for Anson to make up his mind. His wolf cried out for his mate, while the demon inside him demanded Anson's surrender. The sooner he fucked Anson, the sooner he could tie himself and his guards to the sexy werewolf.

His men kept nudging him along, no doubt lusting after Liam's pet. Pet, pup, mate—it was all the same to him. Love didn't care what name he called Anson. The emotion simply existed for the beautiful male he wanted with his entire being. For that reason he wanted to give Anson all the time he needed to be at peace with his new future, a future that would demand a lot from the young wolf.

Anson would have to walk away from everything familiar to fold into Liam's way of life. No more Silver Wolf Clan, no more Great Forest. And Liam hadn't even discussed Anson's potential to be alpha. Anson had mentioned it in passing and acted as if he didn't want the position. But for a wolf as young and fiery as Anson, not wanting to be alpha made no sense.

Liam fidgeted as he sat with Anson in the middle of a grassy field—Anson's favourite place to relax away from the castle. His guards gave them privacy, fanning out around the perimeter of the small field, just itching for a chance to meet Danya again.

"What's your problem?" Anson muttered. He sat with his legs spread before him, leaning back on his hands as he stared at the fading sun. "I'm the one with the big decisions here."

"Really? Because I always thought a mating took two."

Anson wouldn't look at him.

"Anson, I know this is hard. Believe me, it's not like I asked for you to be here. I just wanted an end to my curse. I hadn't thought to mate for at least a few hundred years."

Anson finally looked at him, his eyes wide. "Just how long do you live?"

"A few thousand years, give or take. Unless something unnatural happens to put me in an early grave." Visions of Danya came to mind.

Anson scowled. "She's not your worry. I am."

"Oh?"

Anson scrambled to his feet and paced. His jittery nerves made Liam feel better, that he wasn't the only one out of sorts. "I don't know how to feel, Liam. I wasn't ready to mate either. I'm barely a member of the pack at my age. My power comes from a great dynasty, from Lycos himself. But I haven't done much to earn it yet."

"I think you have," Liam said quietly. "You don't understand what you've done for me. Anson, for years I couldn't touch my wolf. Do you know what it's like to lose a part of yourself? To know you're much more than you are, but that you can't be who you were meant to be?"

Anson gave him a strange look. "I think maybe I do."

Liam said nothing, curious.

"I told you I came from the Silver Wolf Clan. My brother and I are twins, descendants of Lycos. There are one or two born every generation." He glanced at the mark on his arm. "To be honest, it's a blessing and a curse. Everyone wants a piece of me for it. Our females were dying to match me at the mating ceremony, but it wasn't for me. It was for this fucking mark."

Liam felt bad, especially since he'd been the recipient of Anson's power himself.

"I don't lump you in with them," Anson said, putting his mind at ease. "I think you're like me. Pawns in some puzzle the Great Spirit and your god are playing." He paused in thought. "But you know, their game saved me in a way. I was so scared I'd be paired with one of the females in the pack. And my uncle is all over my ass to assume the role of alpha. He expects me to fight Fenris to the death to take the position. That I could kill my twin to rule." He sounded incredulous, and Liam understood far more about Anson than he'd said.

"You care for your brother."

"I do. No way I'd fight him for a title I don't want. Hell, I've had more fun hunting in your forest for the past two weeks than I ever did at home. I wanted to be Master of the Hunt, you know."

Liam studied his mate, taken with Anson's passion. "I don't understand."

"In the pack, we each have our roles. When a wolf doesn't fear his alpha, it's a given that wolf will challenge for the position. Losing means death or starting your own pack. But even though I have plenty of complaints about the clan, they're family. I have cousins, my brother, my aunt and uncle. They raised me ever since my parents died, when I was young.

"I love my uncle, my alpha, but he doesn't care what I want. I want to be in charge of the hunt, to form parties to scout the forest, to live as a wolf lives."

"Free and wild," Liam said softly.

"Yeah. But at home, it's all about duty and dominance. Don't get me wrong, I want to contribute to my clan, but I get tired of always having to defend my status. I'm young but powerful, and it's constantly one fight after the next when I'm there."

"It's not like that here," Liam offered.

"I know." Anson stared down at him, his eyes intense. "It's too easy to like it here. You're all about fun. I've been hunting every day. Running with you is like nothing I can compare to. Sheer pleasure with the wind through my fur and my mate by my side."

Liam's heart raced. "So you acknowledge our tie."

Anson frowned. "I'm not an idiot. I know only the Wolf in the Forest could have allowed this to take place. With all due respect to Banathmae, the Great Spirit takes care of the wolves."

"So...you're okay with us?"

Anson sighed. "Yes and no. Fucking you is no hardship. Shit, I've never come so much with anyone before. And the fact that you're male has strangely worn on me. I think it's all that demon venom you give me when you're biting me."

Liam grinned. To his delight, Anson grinned back.

"I never thought about having pups, but I find I don't mind. Fenris can continue our lineage. According to my uncle, his days are numbered. Poor wolf has a mate thanks to my uncle."

Liam stood and walked to within a hand span of Anson. "So this mating no longer worries you?"

"I won't lie. It's scary as hell to think of this as my new home. Everything's different. You're the only wolf here, and I'll miss that."

"You need your own pack." Liam took a step closer and enveloped Anson in his arms. He tilted the wolf's chin up to meet his gaze. "Once we truly bond, you'll feel the threads of family weave tight."

"What?"

"I know you've been holding back. We're close, but not quite mated all the way. You have to accept me. Once you do, you'll feel the pull from the others."

"Others?"

Liam nodded to his men discreetly tucked into the forest. "Malem, Ryder and Zain are mine. Before my wolf vanished, I kind of claimed them. Not like mates, but as honorary wolves. Like you, I need a pack, a community to soothe my wolf. They may be athmae, Anson, but they function as family. You'll see."

Anson considered him, speculation in his bright green gaze. "You mean it? All of it? You really want me to be yours, don't you?"

Liam nodded and kissed Anson on the mouth, not a seductive, carnal exploration, but a tender show of acceptance. "I'd like nothing more, Anson. I love you."

Anson blinked, but before he could reply, the ground shook underneath them. Oozing black tentacles shot from beneath the grass and wrapped around Liam and Anson in seconds. Muffled screams and shouts sounded all around them, and Liam could only imagine what was happening to his men.

"Well, well. Liam and his new toy out here all alone," Danya's smug voice intruded.

"You." Anson growled, his eyes turning before the rest of him did.

Terrified the sorceress would do something to Anson, Liam drew her attention. "What will it take you to go away, Danya? My surrender? Is that what this is all about?"

"Yes," she hissed and floated over the ground on a burst of magic. "For years you've scorned me. Tossed me aside like nothing. Why? I would give you everything. Yet you spurn me." Her disbelief soured the surprised hurt in her voice.

With a muttered incantation, Liam pushed through the rotted vegetation holding him captive. He subtly stepped between Anson and Danya and answered her. "You killed my father, Danya. Cursed me to a shell of my former existence. You thought I would reward you for that?" He glanced past her at his men engaged with several dark, shadowy creatures.

“You think to destroy those I care about, guards here to protect me. Why then would I go to you?”

“Because I demand it.” Her bright blue eyes darkened with madness. Balls of lust burst from her energy like a pestilence. “Because I want you, and I always get what I want. Your blood is the key to everything, Liam. Sex, blood and magic from a demon who’s also an animal, yet a man at the same time. And all for me.”

She narrowed her gaze and shoved him out of the way with a thought. “That you could choose this male over me makes little sense. I grant you he’s pretty, but he’s nothing but an animal. Push that creature aside, and he’s as pitiful as any human I’ve ever tasted. Let’s see, shall we?”

“No!” Liam tried to go to Anson, but suddenly half a dozen armed mage-held, human servants enspelled by dark arts, surrounded him with moonblades—specially crafted for killing demons.

“Don’t worry, love. They won’t hurt you. Well, they might, but they won’t kill you.” Danya laughed and drew closer to Anson, who stood very still as he watched events unfold.

Liam fought like the demon he’d been named, but he was too late to stop Danya.

The evil sorceress held out a hand and chanted the haunting verse that had caged his wolf for so long.

But to Liam’s shock, Anson shifted right there into his werewolf. The golden creature lit with an inner fire that caused Danya to back up a step.

“Liam, you all right?” Anson asked on a snarl. He cut through the bonds holding him tight with little effort.

“Good. You?” Liam continued to plough through the mage-held, learning too late that once struck down, they reanimated and duplicated themselves. Now instead of six enemies, he was surrounded by a neat dozen.

Anson didn’t answer. Liam couldn’t see—he could only hear as he fought the threat closing in. He prayed his guards broke free to save Anson. Because without his golden wolf by his side, Liam didn’t consider life worth living.

Anson glared at the petite female before him. She’d cast a dangerous spell against his mate and now threatened to hurt him with her dark magic. His fury grew, and with it, his power magnified. Her spell bounced off him like a breath of wind.

"I don't understand. What is this?" she shrieked as he rejected her hold on him and pushed through it, step by step, in her direction. "You shouldn't be walking."

"I'm werewolf. I'm immune to dark magic, bitch." To her spells, but should she conjure something else dark, he might find his ass in a sling. Better to kill her before she figured that out.

"He's mine! My incubus, you cur. Go back where you belong."

Her spell struck hard, then shattered into beads of energy he greedily absorbed.

She struck at him with fire, ice and hail.

He heard Liam and Ryder calling his name. Saw Malem out of the corner of his eye fight to get to him.

But nothing would stop him from gutting this danger and casting her aside.

The sorceress withdrew a silver dagger from within her voluminous cloak, but Anson didn't pause. He felt the dagger pierce his shoulder and continued his attack.

His fingers bit through the silk of her robe, then the flesh, muscle and bone of her neck. He thrust hard and fast, cutting tendons before they could rejoin. Time seemed to stand still as Danya's head separated from her neck.

Around them, bodies fell to the ground. Her mage-held, no longer powered by her sorcery, lay inanimate. Danya blinked, but he could see the life slowly leaving her.

Her lips moved, parted, then a dark cloud of smoke shot from her mouth and body, streaming up and away, dispersed with a swift wind that cleansed the area of all evil.

The rush of bodies hurrying towards him turned him around, and he readied for more battle.

"Easy, Anson." Malem held up his hands in surrender. "Just wanted to make sure you're okay." He and Liam shared a glance.

Liam.

Anson took several steps closer and flinched at the burn in his shoulder. The damn dagger protruded, the tip buried into his joint.

"Let me." Liam closed the distance between them and pulled the weapon free.

Anson groaned. "Better." He opened his mouth and scented blood, death and lust on the air, and zeroed in on his mate. "Much better."

"Now this I don't want to miss." Ryder grinned, holding Zain up under his shoulder. The pair had sustained a few injuries, but nothing that looked major.

"You three need to get to the healer, and make sure the others are tended as well. I don't think we lost anyone, thank the spirits." Liam glanced around him at the athmae coming out of the woods to rejoin them. He did a head count and sighed with relief. "That's everyone. And all up and breathing still."

Anson didn't like so many others around, not when he planned to finally claim Liam as his own.

But his mate must have read his mind, because Liam grabbed hold of his hand, and the next thing Anson knew, he was in another place. Liam's room in the heart of the athmae castle.

Liam pulled him into his arms, no longer taller than Anson, but a few inches shorter. "I was so worried for you." Liam pulled back to smile into his face. The demon wolf petted his face and stroked his furry chest. "But I shouldn't have worried. You saved the day, Anson."

"Mate," Anson corrected and licked his teeth. He wanted to bite, to mark Liam. And by the glint of Liam's own lengthening canines, he thought his mate wanted the same. "I want my prize. My reward."

Without giving Liam time to respond, Anson tackled him to the bed, conscious his mate put up a good fight. The challenge only made him burn brighter.

"Me first," Liam snarled.

"No." Anson stripped Liam naked, content to let his mate rip his clothes off as well. Then he muscled Liam onto his belly on the bed. The male's luscious ass was so tight, so well-rounded, Anson had to taste.

He spread Liam's cheeks wide and shoved his muzzle into the male's hole, absorbing his scent.

"*Fuck.*" Liam arched back, rubbing against him, flesh to fur. The contrast was so sexy, the friction perfection. Anson took the opportunity to reach under Liam's body and grab his stiff, fat cock.

"Nice. My mate's hot for me. You smell like sex, Liam." Anson rumbled low in his throat and let Liam go. "Need to fuck you hard. Right now."

Swiftly losing control, it took him a minute to see Liam pointing to a jar on his nightstand.

Anson grabbed it and slathered oil all over his cock. Then without another second, he lifted Liam's hips and shoved hard and fast.

"Anson."

Unable to stop, Anson pushed until he stretched Liam wide. So much bigger in this form, Anson knew nothing but hunger as he fucked his mate. Such a tight, hot ass. So warm and giving.

Anson pumped hard, ramming faster and deeper as he listened to the voice inside him urging him on. He needed to come, to mark the male as his own. As his mate.

Man, wolf and werewolf joined to bond with this special male, a demon and wolf, who'd been created to complete Anson's heart and soul.

The essence of Banathmae and the Wolf in the Forest flowed through the air as Anson took what was meant to be his. He howled with delight as he came in hard spurts, filling his mate and fucking him even harder.

"Again. More," Anson cried, lost to the lust and affection casting its own spell.

Liam yelled and shuddered under him in his own pleasure, but Anson couldn't stop. He rammed his still hard shaft inside Liam's taut ass, every press of his sac against Liam like a breath of anticipation, making him lightheaded.

When his second climax hit him, he raked Liam's hips with his nails and ground into his mate. But before he finished coming, he pulled out and jettied all over Liam's back, his ass and legs. A werewolf's release was so much more than a man's, or even a wolf's.

"Shit, Anson. Gods, you're huge."

Liam shifted under him, and Anson growled at him to remain still. Anson leant close and rubbed his cum into Liam's skin, sealing their scents together. Then he bit Liam's shoulder hard, drawing enough blood to leave a mate mark, a sign that Liam belonged to him and him alone.

As soon as he released his fangs from Liam's body, he let his werewolf slide deeper into his body, letting the form of the man take over.

Now his normal size again, Anson groaned and sank onto the bed next to Liam, who was a mess.

"You're covered in me," Anson murmured, more than satisfied that Liam now smelled like Anson. He ran his hand over Liam's back, conscious that his semen had been absorbed into his mate's body. *"My mate."*

Liam sighed and turned onto his side to regard Anson with sleepy eyes. Wolf eyes that were bright despite his clear exhaustion. "My mate." He kissed Anson, licking his mouth before pressing his tongue between Anson's lips. "You taste perfect. My wild, golden wolf."

Taking Anson into his arms, Liam snuggled tight against him. "Sleep, mate. It's been a long day."

Anson closed his eyes, content for the first time in a very long while. Man, wolf, and werewolf eased into rest, protected by a powerful demon's love.

Too bad he couldn't have slept through what happened next. Ryder and Zain entered Liam's—and now Anson's—bedroom. The room lay empty except for Anson in the middle of the bed. But the demons weren't content to leave him alone. Not even a thanks for saving their sorry asses.

"Hey," he protested as they dragged him into Liam's lavatory, shoved him inside, and shut the door behind him. He noticed they'd resumed wearing the traditional blood red loincloths all the athmae favoured. They'd come out with a few scratches, but all in all, they looked magnificent.

Magnificent?

He hurried in the bathroom, washed his hands, and opened the door to exit as the demons pushed their way in. He took a delicate sniff and scented something different about them.

Zain smiled. "Good to see you up and about, Anson." He glanced at Anson's cock, half stiff from the scent the pair exuded. They were incubi, after all, but he hadn't been this aroused around them before.

Slightly embarrassed that his mate might find him excited by his guards, Anson tried to ignore his growing desire and leave the room. Ryder and Zain wouldn't let him.

"Time for your bath, pet."

Anson grimaced. "Not pet."

"Would you prefer Prince's Consort?" Liam asked from behind them.

"How about just Anson?" Anson tried to break free from the grabby guards, but they wouldn't let him go. Just as he was about to get angry, Malem joined the small gathering. The large guard stood behind Liam wearing nothing at all. And the sight of him took Anson's breath away.

“What the fuck?”

“There we go, pet,” Liam said with no small amount of satisfaction. “Time to collect your pack.” The others chuckled. “Or should I say, time for us to collect you?” Liam slowly removed his clothing until he stood tall, proud and aroused.

Malem stepped up behind him and circled his large arms around Liam, resting his hands around Liam’s thick cock.

Anson wanted to be angry, but instead he groaned when Ryder and Zain did the same to him. Stroking, petting and fondling until he wanted to burst.

“You see, Anson. This is our pack. You’ll play alpha here, in our bedroom, while I see to the running of our compound, under mother’s command of course. Only queens may rule lust demons.”

Anson leaned his head back against Zain’s – or was that Ryder’s? – shoulder. One of the athmae ground an erection against Anson’s backside while the other stroked Anson’s cock with firm hands. The scent of desire frothed against the scent of wild wolf.

Anson was in heaven.

Liam murmured to his guard, “Malem, on your hands and knees.”

Malem let go of Liam and knelt on hands and knees before Anson. Before Anson could question anyone, Malem took Anson’s cock to the back of his throat.

“By the Wolf,” Anson moaned, unable to keep from jerking as someone shoved a finger up his ass while another cupped his balls. Malem worked his cock, deep-throating him and licking with strokes intended to induce one massive orgasm.

To make it even more intense, Liam watched it all with a pleased smile. His slit beaded with cum and he held himself as he approached the lusty foursome. Then he knelt between Malem’s legs and put his cock at Malem’s asshole.

Anson felt on the verge of orgasm. The incredible moment stretched before him, hedonism at its best. “Do it. Fuck him hard,” he rasped as Ryder kissed his shoulder, nipping him with that potent aphrodisiac the athmae possessed in abundance.

Groaning at the burn of desire racing through his bloodstream, Anson watched as Liam pushed forward until his cock disappeared inside Malem.

Malem groaned around his shaft, sucking harder and with a furious rhythm as Liam pounded into him.

Then the fingers in Anson’s ass were replaced by something thicker.

"Ah, oh fuck," Anson moaned as one of the demons shoved inside Anson and stayed there, adding so much sensation Anson could barely think.

Liam arched back and groaned as he came inside Malem. Zain rounded to stand before Anson and masturbated.

"My offering, Anson," he gasped and shot all over Malem's back. Then he reached under Malem and took him in hand.

Ryder started moving, slowly, then faster, at an angle Anson wouldn't have thought possible. Yet somehow the athmae fucked him.

The pleasure built, watching his mate and his new pack find their bliss. He groaned as Ryder hit that sweet spot inside him. Then Malem sucked hard and grazed him with sharp teeth.

"Mother Night," Anson groaned as he exploded in Malem's mouth.

The demon greedily sucked his seed just as Ryder pulled out and came over Malem as well.

The scent of sex filled the air, and the group stared at one another with sated smiles.

"Now let's move this into the bathtub," Liam suggested. "Anson, that's just the beginning. With the amount of venom and athmae semen inside you, you're going to become a lot more like me than you know. Your life is now tied to mine, and you'll need sex more often."

"And you'll be our master until the end of our lives," Malem said with his head bowed.

Ryder and Zain joined him on the floor, kneeling before Anson. Liam stroked them all, soothing them with his hands. Except his touch had their flagging erections returning with a vengeance.

"Good, then no more of this 'pet' nonsense," Anson said in a thick voice, overwhelmed with love and happiness. He met Liam's gaze and blurted without thinking, "I love you."

Liam grinned, his eyes never as bright as they were now. "Love me, love my pack."

Anson nodded. "I think it's hard not to, even if they are the biggest pain in the ass I've ever met."

"Anson, that's a compliment where we come from." Malem chuckled. The others joined him. "Now about Liam's idea of the bathtub. I have a few more tricks up my sleeve to impress our new pet." He ignored Anson's frown. "Now, now, Consort. You belong to us just as much as we belong to you. Our loyalty, our lust, our affection."

“Their love,” Liam added.

Ryder grimaced. “He’s a little too emotional. Probably the wolf in him, but that suits you, doesn’t it? You’ll be good for him, pet.”

“Yeah. And from the look of that one, I think it’s my turn to blow you.” Zain wiggled his brows and motioned to Malem. “Malem looks like he’s about to fall asleep. Must be some sweet cum inside you, hmm, pet?”

Anson supposed he’d have to get used to their frank talk.

As they filed into the bathtub suddenly filled with water and laughed, teased and fucked once more, he knew his life was starting anew. But before he could grow maudlin, Liam distracted him by bending over the tub’s ledge. Lust fogged all thought. *I am becoming more and more like them.* Anson grinned and ordered the others to hold Liam down while he rimmed that delicious ass, then filled him once more.

Ryder alternated between sucking off Zain and Malem. The sound of fucking, groaning and swearing was as satisfying as the warm water flowing around them in the giant tub that was more like a pool. Anson grunted as he worked his mate, so in lust he couldn’t think straight.

“I’m coming, Liam. Oh fuck, yes, I’m coming.”

Good-byes to the past could wait until much, much later.

Chapter Eight

The Great Forest, Alaska

"Stay close. Something's not right." Anson frowned at the odd scents flooding the Silver Clan holdings. The periphery of the Great Forest used to be empty, but he swore he'd seen a few felines scrambling through the forest away from them.

Two months after he'd first arrived at the athmae keep, Anson, Liam and their small pack walked through the woods in the deep of night, when Anson thought it would be safest to travel. His handsome athmae were dark black, their white hair glimmering under the full moon, all dressed in their warrior's garb. Knee-length black trousers, sleeveless black tunics and their blades for defence. They looked raw and dangerous, just the impression Anson wanted them to portray.

He had no idea what his uncle would think of his new pack, but he knew wolves respected strength. Better to go in looking like killers than puppy dogs begging for forgiveness.

Liam's gaze glowed in the darkness, like Anson's eyes, he imagined. So strong and powerful, Liam walked in the Great Forest with wonder on his face.

"It's sacred," he whispered. "So full of wolf and animal spirit. I envy you your time here, Anson." Liam's gentle smile faded into a frown. "Perhaps we should stay here after all. I would not wish to take you from your true home."

Anson stopped and dragged Liam into his arms. It aggravated him that the athmae was taller than him, but he pulled Liam's handsome face down to stare at him eye to eye. "My home is with you. Not here. Not anymore." He kissed Liam to make his point and almost forgot himself when their needs surged.

Malem cleared his throat. "Sorry, pet, but we'd best keep moving."

Anson had grown used to the name, knowing they used it to show acceptance. The guards' devotion was unquestioning, and they gave him as hard a time as they gave Liam, concerned with his welfare and happiness.

He thought perhaps they'd claimed him as much as he'd claimed them. And the Wolf knew, he'd 'claimed' every single one of the demons walking with him, sometimes more than once in a day.

Anson turned and led his small party deeper into the forest. To his dismay, they didn't run into anyone. "Something's not right." He automatically shifted into his werewolf, stretching the magically altered cloth the queen had gifted him as a betrothal present.

Taking their cues from him, Liam hurriedly stripped and turned into a large black wolf. Malem gathered his clothing while the guards flanked them, ready to defend their prince and his consort to the death.

Anson continued on a faster pace, listening to the odd whisper of peace on the wind.

The dichotomy of emptiness and ease confused him, so he was nearly upon the heart of his village when he noticed the large bonfire, as well as the clan standing behind it, gathered by the alpha's cabin. Hundreds of wolves waited for him in silence.

Then he spied Fenris. His twin stood next to Uncle Mike on one side, and on the other a beautiful redhead looked proud and eager to battle. He didn't recognise her, and she wasn't the type one could easily forget.

"Anson!" Fenris grinned and waved to him. "By the Wolf, it's about time you returned home." He strode forward and held out a hand.

Anson took it, and their handshake quickly turned to a hug. The murmuring in the village grew to a loud cheer as wolves began speculating about Anson's past whereabouts.

Anson grinned. "You look good, Brother."

"So do you." Fenris glanced behind Anson, enthralled.

Anson had assumed the athmae would spark notice, but he couldn't get over Fenris. His twin seemed happy, right. At one with himself. And he somehow knew Fenris had found his mate. He automatically glanced at the redhead, who met his gaze without flinching.

"Who's the alpha?" he asked.

"My mate." At his words, she drew abreast of them and put her hand in Fenris's. "Anson, this is Rudra. Alpha of the Great Wolf Clan."

A large grizzly rumbled behind the pair.

"Hush, Jericho." She smiled at Anson. "I don't have to ask who you are. It's so good to finally meet you, Anson."

“Ah, you too.” Anson looked at his uncle, who beamed with pride as he stared at Fenris and Anson standing together. “Alpha, you said?” Dazed, Anson slowly shifted back into his man’s form. The crowd murmured appreciation when his clothing shrunk with him.

Wolves loved magic.

When Liam shifted into a man’s form and they saw his pointed ears, the noise in the village grew deafening. The wolves pointed at Anson’s small pack while they whispered and questioned all at once.

“Liam, get dressed,” he said gruffly, not liking the looks of several of the she-wolves eyeing his mate like a tasty treat.

Malem and the others chuckled.

“Who are you friends?” Fenris asked. “I never seen their like before.”

The noise around them ceased, as if someone had thrown a switch. Do or die time.

Anson took a deep breath and exhaled on a sigh. Liam joined him, placing a telling arm around his waist. His new pack surrounded him, and Anson felt their support, their love.

“Fenris, I’d like you to meet my mate, William Masterson, Prince of the Athmae.”

Fenris blinked. “Athmae?”

Rudra explained, “They’re demons, Fenris. Incubi, correct?”

Liam nodded. “And part wolf.”

Rudra smiled. “Me too. Well, wolf and sorceress. Aren’t our mates lucky to have found such well-rounded partners?”

Anson continued as he introduced the others. “Malem, Ryder and Zain are all part of my new pack.”

“I don’t understand. We’ve been waiting for you, Anson. So much has changed.” Fenris eyed Anson’s group with confusion. Then their uncle joined them. He said nothing, just studied Anson and his pack with interest.

Fenris cleared his throat. “Uncle Mike passed on the torch. I’m alpha now. And Rudra too. We lead the clan together.” After saying the words, he quieted, searching Anson for something.

Uncle Mike had passed on the torch? No fight to the death, no waiting for Anson to return and take part? Instead of being upset they’d gone on without him, Anson felt nothing but relief. That and shock. Because a female had never been clan leader before, and Rudra didn’t look Silver to him...

Liam nudged him and whispered, "Your brother is waiting for you to either challenge or congratulate him. What are you going to do, pet?"

Fenris scowled. "Pet?"

"A term of endearment." As soon as he said it, he flushed.

His uncle gaped, Rudra tried to hide a grin, and his pack laughed softly, Liam's chuckles louder than the others. He squeezed Anson's waist.

Anson sighed. "I'm happy now, Fenris. I'm not here to challenge you. I'm glad to know the clan is in good hands." He eyed Rudra with curiosity. Then he took harder note of the grizzly growling under his breath behind her. And there, a few foxes and a red wolf or two. What the hell?

Fenris followed his gaze and explained. "That same night I took off in the woods, the Wolf in the Forest sent me to the Red Clan, where I met and fell in love with Rudra. She was the alpha there, but now that we're all one clan, she leads with me. There's no more us and them, Anson. We're all sharing the Great Forest now."

"Even the cats?" He had to know.

His uncle let out an aggrieved groan. "Even the damn cats. But I tell you, one thing I never thought to see in all my years were athmae in the village." His gaze continued to stray to Malem.

Anson shook his head. "Why am I not surprised you know the athmae, Uncle Mike?"

"I know everything, pup. Thought you knew that, at least." His uncle grinned and stepped forward to hug Anson. "I'm glad to see you again. Your aunt missed you."

"Oh?"

"And maybe I did too. I'm glad you're not upset Fenris and Rudra are leading the clan. You never seemed to want it, you know?"

"I don't. Never did." Anson shook his head. "I have a new home now. I wanted to come back before, but we had a few things to tie up before I could get away to visit."

Liam clarified in a droll voice, "He means he had to help me defeat a sorceress threatening to kill me. Then he routed a few rogue hunters in the area. Anson is our own Master of the Hunt, and our forests have never been freer."

"Hot damn, son. Knew you had it in you." His uncle slapped him so hard on the back Anson would have stumbled had Liam not been holding him. "And you. You're athmae, but you're too light by half. Must be the wolf in you."

Anson wanted very badly to make a crass comment, and he could see by Fenris's smothered grin he knew it as well.

Anson cleared his throat. "Yes, well. Liam's a strong wolf, Uncle. Took down a buck with little fuss last week. And you should see what their cooks do with food. I've never had better."

"Not *their* cooks, *our* cooks," Liam whispered in his ear. Then without turning around, he said, "Malem, don't stare. It's not polite."

Uncle Mike lingered on Malem with confusion. "Do I know you?"

Malem stepped forward and eyed Mike from top to bottom. His grin warmed. "Michael Barton. It's been a few years, but oh yes, I remember you well." The hungry look he shot Anson's uncle spoke volumes.

Uncle Mike muttered something under his breath and hurried from the group.

Fenris and Anson held up their hands to forestall any comments and said at the same time, "I don't want to know."

The others laughed.

"Incredible," Liam said.

Anson turned to his mate. "What?"

"You two look so much alike, yet you're so very different."

Strange, because no one had ever thought them very different at all.

"I was thinking the same thing," Rudra murmured. "Could I interest any of you in some food and drink? We were just readying for a celebration." She shared an intimate smile with Fenris. "The wind told us to expect great news."

Anson nodded to the others to go, leaving him alone with Fenris. Liam smiled at him over his shoulder, then followed her into the waiting crowd.

"A lot has changed." Anson stared at the many wonders around him. Bears and wolves of different colours and sizes, foxes, eagles. His uncle was no longer alpha and hadn't once questioned Anson's choice of mate. Would wonders never cease?

"No kidding." Fenris clapped Anson on the shoulder. "Rudra's the one for me, Anson. She's carrying my child."

"Really?"

"Really." Fenris paused. "I happened to notice a flash of red in Liam's pupils."

"Orbs of red," they said together, recalling what Fenris had once told Anson would be his future.

Anson sighed. "I never thought it would happen, but I've found my mate. A male demon, if you can believe that."

"I wouldn't have believed it if I hadn't seen him and your entourage with my own eyes. They look at you rather possessively, Anson."

Anson flushed. "We're a pack."

"A tight one, eh?"

"Bite me."

"I would, but I don't think that big one would like it much."

Anson glanced over to see Malem, a head taller than almost everyone, keeping a steady eye on him.

"My pack, Fenris. It feeds the wolf what he needs, and they give the man in me what I need."

"And what's that?" Fenris asked, as if he didn't know.

Anson didn't mind saying it loud. The more he said it, the more he believed it. "Acceptance, affection, submission sometimes." Anson smiled. "I'm an alpha too. But my clan is much, much smaller."

"A werewolf leading demons."

"And an alpha leading wolves, bears and foxes with a female alpha by his side."

Fenris grinned. "We're not conventional, are we?"

"No, sir." Anson watched his mate talking and laughing with Fenris's. "Fenris, I came to tell you goodbye. Not forever, but you have to know I'm not staying here."

Fenris sighed. "I figured as much. Guess it's time we grew up, hmm?"

"I suppose." Anson slugged his brother in the arm. "But I expect to see your newborn the minute he's out."

"Of course. And I get invites to your palace. What are you, their princess?"

"Dick. I'm officially the prince's consort. And when, not if, you visit, don't be alarmed if you feel the need to get laid, *a lot*. I live with lust demons. It's pretty much something we live with there. "

"So, ah..."

"Yes?" Anson knew Fenris well enough to know his brother had to ask.

"Liam. He's a guy."

"Yeah. So are my guards."

Fenris's eyes widened. "All of them, huh? What's it like?" he asked in a lower voice.

"It's different, that's for sure. But holy shit, Fenris. You wouldn't believe how good it is."

"Oh." Fenris blinked, then laughed. "You don't even want to know what I imagined. Anson, I just want you to be happy. It's pretty obvious your prince loves you. I could feel it just looking at the pair of you."

"Back at you." He nodded to Rudra. "I look forward to being an uncle."

"So can you stay for a few days?" Fenris asked as they rejoined the others. The clan was making merry in a big way, wolves, bears, men and women mingling and laughing as they celebrated life. Rudra, Liam, and the athmae welcomed them back with wide smiles.

"A few days, then we have to get back. But Liam crafted a spell for you. You only need to say it and I'll hear you. Then he can teleport you to us."

"Handy."

"Yeah, he's a handy guy." Anson grinned at his mate.

"You love him, don't you?"

"I do." Anson said loud enough for Liam to hear.

His mate smiled back at him before turning back to Rudra.

"Then we've both been blessed, haven't we?" Fenris asked.

Liam and Rudra made their way back to their mates' sides. Fenris clasped Rudra's hand in his, and not to be outdone, Anson slung an arm around Liam's shoulders.

At that moment, a cool wind whispered words of praise, and a beam of moonlight lit the night sky.

The figure of a large wolf appeared, a ghostly image with sparkling green eyes. "I'm pleased with you, sons of Lycos."

Next to her shimmered a dark shadow that obliterated the night. It took the guise of a giant male, but no one seeing him could mistake the form as anything but godlike. "I'm pleased with you as well, young wolf." He nodded to Liam and the athmae gaping at the spirits. "Greetings, Prince. My children."

"Who the hell is that?" Fenris rasped.

“Our god, Banathmae,” Liam answered and wrapped his arms around Anson’s waist. The support made Anson feel ten feet tall, especially with the rest of his pack surrounding him.

“God?” Fenris shook his head. “Damn, Anson. You went big, didn’t you?”

Banathmae grinned at Anson and winked before he and the Wolf in the Forest faded away. Liam tried to bury his chuckle, no doubt remembering tales of how large Banathmae had been when dealing with Anson at the harvest celebration.

“Big? You have no idea.” Anson groaned when his pack laughed, joined together by the recent past and the promise of a bright future. “But I wouldn’t trade it for the world.”

About the Author

Marie Harte is an avid reader who loves all things paranormal and futuristic. Reading romances since she was twelve, she fell in love with the warmth of first passion and knew writing was her calling.

Twenty-plus years later, the Marine Corps, a foray through Information Technology, a husband and four kids, and her dream has finally come true. Marie lives in Georgia with her family and is constantly typing away at her keyboard.

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