

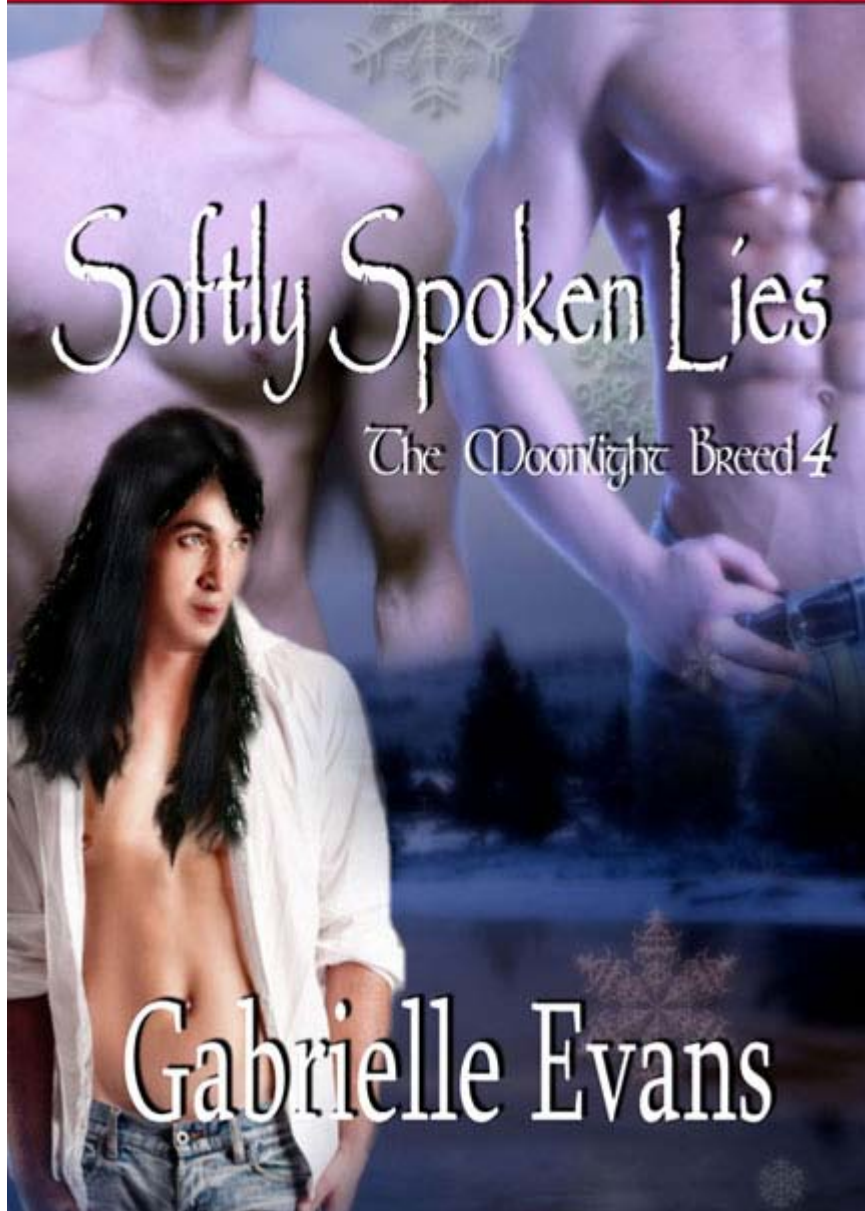
Siren Publishing

Ménage Amour

Softly Spoken Lies

The Moonlight Breed 4

Gabrielle Evans



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Softly Spoken Lies

Hunter for The Council and newly appointed Alpha of a pack he knows nothing about, Blaise Taylor has enough on his plate without adding two mates to the mix. Two mates that happen to be male—and Blaise isn't gay.

Cole Cunningham didn't exactly picture himself mated to two men either, but he's not about to throw away the gift fate has given him. He just has to find a way to bring them all together before their relationship self-destructs.

Free at last after years of imprisonment, Willow just wants to be happy. He's been blessed with two insanely gorgeous mates, but he's got his work cut out for him. Blaise needs to be the hero, and Cole can't resist the urge to nurture. Willow has big ideas to turn his mates' worlds upside down—until danger comes knocking at their door.

Genre: Alternative (M/M or F/F), Ménage a Trois/Quatre, Vampires/Werewolves

Length: 43,270 words

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**MENAGE AMOUR
MANLOVE**



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DEDICATION

Sometimes a kind word can go a long way in brightening someone's day. So, I dedicate this story to Hunter for being that ray of sunshine when I needed it most. I wish you a Happy Birthday filled with all the things that make you smile.

SOFTLY SPOKEN LIES

The Moonlight Breed 4

GABRIELLE EVANS

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Chapter One

His palms sweat. His breathing came in shallow pants. His heart pounded against his breastbone as he fought not to fidget under the scrutiny of The Council. Why did he ever think he could do this?

Long, elegant fingers twined with his, squeezing gently. Blaise looked down at the man beside him and fought to swallow past the burning in his throat. He should be thrilled to have found not only one mate, but two.

He liked Cole and Willow, but there was just a slight problem, and that problem rested between their legs. Fate had screwed him on this one. Hell, his entire life had been turned upside down in the last week, and he found himself stumbling along, never knowing what would be thrown at him next.

Not only had he become alpha of a pack he knew nothing about, but under some nasty circumstances. He still wanted to beat Talon bloody for turning over the responsibility to him. Talon had won the fight, and the position of alpha, fair and square. Why couldn't he just man up and accept it?

Now, he had an entire pack to protect, as well as two mates he didn't know what to do with. He could no more turn away Cole and Willow than he could cut off his own arm, but he still felt uneasy

every time he'd catch their scent and his cock perked right up to take notice.

He wasn't gay, damn it!

Now, he'd just accused one of The Council elders of a whole slew of unsightly charges, sure to land the vampire in prison for the rest of his days—er, nights. Whatever.

If he couldn't provide proof to his claims, he'd be the one shackled to the wall, growing old alone and miserable inside a cell. God, he felt like hurling.

Another hand landed on the small of his back, and Blaise didn't even have to turn to know it was Cole. As much as he hated to admit it, just the presence of his mates calmed him, cleared his head, and gave him the courage to face The Council.

"Elder Cyrus Redway, you are charged with very serious offenses against the preternatural population you have sworn to protect. You are in violation of seven different laws. Laws you took a vow to uphold." Elder Josiah Means, the lycan representative of The Council, stared down his long, crooked nose from his seat perched upon the dais.

Elder Samuel Macintosh, the shifter representative, cleared his throat and pushed his glasses further up his nose. "You have been charged with kidnapping, blackmail, illegal experimentation, unlawful confinement, ownership of blood slaves, inappropriate distribution of Council weapons, and general disreputable conduct."

"Not to mention being a pain in my ass and a nasty son of a bitch," Elder Layke Winters, the elven representative, added.

Blaise almost choked. He'd never heard any member of The Council speak in such a way. Maybe he wouldn't be torn to shreds after all.

"Do you have anything to say against the allegations?" Elder Means asked.

“This is preposterous!” Cyrus exclaimed. “You have no proof. I will not be held responsible for the crimes of an insane man. Former Alpha Roan Cunningham acted of his own accord.”

“Ah, but there are witnesses, members of your own coven even.” Elder Winters spoke calmly as he smoothed his silver blond hair back from his handsome face.

“They lie.”

“Alpha Taylor, do you have anything to add?” Elder Macintosh turned his penetrating gaze on Blaise.

Willow squeezed his wrist again, and Cole smoothed his hand along his lower back. Blaise swallowed loudly, took a deep breath, and nodded. “My mate, Cole Cunningham, is the son of the former alpha. He will testify to witnessing Elder Redway and Alpha Jennings exchanging not only money but members of their own pack and coven.”

Elder Winters smiled warmly at them. “And which one of these men is your mate?”

Blaise swallowed again. “Both, Elder.”

No one seemed surprised by the news. “Ah, I see. Then which is Cole Cunningham?”

Cole stepped forward and nodded respectfully. “I’m Cole, sir.”

“And what can you tell us, Mr. Cunningham? Did you in fact witness the exchange of preternatural beings for money?”

“Yes, sir. They also traded vampires for my father’s experiments, for shifters as Elder Redway’s blood slaves.”

“Do you have proof of this?”

Blaise’s pulse tripped into a wild gallop. Eyewitnesses were great, but without factual evidence, they were royally screwed. He couldn’t let his mate take the blame, though. He started to pull Cole behind him, but the man took another step forward and spoke again.

“Yes, sir. Once I began to suspect my father and Elder Redway were involved in illegal transactions, I started documenting their meetings. I even have photographs.”

“You little shit! I told Roan we should have just killed you off with the others!” Cyrus’s lip curled over his teeth as his fangs elongated and his eyes shone with a wild gleam.

He launched out of his seat and dove across the rail separating them, his arms extended in front of him, aimed directly for Cole’s throat.

Before Blaise could even think to move, his friend and Council Enforcer, Stavion Shogard, pushed Cole roughly aside as the silver tipped blade of his dagger sliced through the air and straight into Cyrus’s heart.

Cyrus’s eyes widened, and he stared down at his chest in a kind of amazement. Then his eyes rolled back in his head, and he slumped forward, limp and very much dead.

Stavion wrenched his dagger from the vampire’s chest and wiped the blood on his leather pants, wrinkling his nose but otherwise showing no emotion.

“Well, that saved a lot of time and trouble.” Elder Macintosh stood from his chair and waved a hand around the room. “We are all witnesses,” he said loudly. “Enforcer Shogard’s actions were justified as he was protecting Alpha Taylor’s mate. No charges will be brought against him.”

Elder Winters stood as well and actually winked at them. “Congratulations, Stavion. You have a new covenant.”

Both Stavion and Blaise jerked their heads up to stare at the Elder. “Excuse me?” Stavion asked.

“The Snake River Covenant needs a new leader. You have slain their former ruler. The responsibility now falls to you.” Elder Means shook his head and frowned. “Your first order of business is to find a suitable representative to replace Elder Redway.” Then he bowed and smiled crookedly. “Good evening, gentlemen.”

Willow stared open-mouthed at the dais as the Elders exited through a door off to the right. “That’s it? It’s over? Just like that?”

Blaise felt dumbstruck. “I guess so. We probably could have saved a lot of time and trouble and just killed him in the first place.”

“Don’t I even get a say in this?” Stavion asked indignantly. “I lead my Enforcers. I don’t want a whole damn coven, though.”

“Yeah.” Blaise snorted. “Tell me about it.”

* * * *

Pulling up in front of the former alpha’s house, Blaise cut the engine and sighed. The house now belonged to him, but he still considered it Cole’s. The man had grown up in the house after all.

Now that Cyrus was dead, and he didn’t have The Council breathing down his neck, Blaise’s attention turned to his new mates. He’d spent the last week gathering evidence, talking to victims, and delivering different pack members to await their own trials. He worked himself to exhaustion, coming home late into the night and dropping on the sofa.

His new status as alpha meant he had a whole new list of things to keep him busy, but Blaise doubted his mates were going to allow him to keep putting them off for much longer. He just didn’t know what to say to them or even how to act.

“Blaise, what’s wrong?” Cole spoke quietly, not looking at him but out the windshield toward the front door.

“Nothing’s wrong, Cole.” Blaise sighed and started to open his door.

“Why don’t you want us?” Willow’s musical voice drifted to him, and Blaise closed his eyes at the uncertainty in his mate’s voice.

“It’s not that I don’t want you...” He trailed off, unsure of how to explain.

“Then what is it? You’ve been ignoring us all week.” Cole’s voice hardened, and he sounded angry. “If you don’t want to be mated to us, fine, but I think we at least deserve an explanation.”

“I just don’t know you yet. Give me a little time.”

“How do you expect to get to know us if you won’t even talk to us?”

Blaise could feel Cole’s intense gaze on his back, but he didn’t turn. “I have responsibilities, Cole. Things I have to take care of as the alpha. We’ll talk later.”

“You’ve been saying that all fucking week. You won’t even look at me.” Cole’s voice rose in volume until he yelled the last word. “Look at me!”

“Please, don’t fight,” Willow whimpered from the backseat.

Blaise looked over the seatback to see the little man with his hands over his ears and his eyes closed. It broke his heart—which only served to piss him off. He never wanted a mate, and most certainly never wanted a man for a mate.

“Sorry, Willow,” Cole whispered. “Blaise, we need to talk. Just tell us what’s going on, and maybe we can help.”

“Unless you can grow a vagina, I seriously doubt you can help me.” Blaise felt the growl bubble up in his chest and pushed out of the driver’s door, slamming it behind him.

Marching up the driveway, he wanted to scream when he heard another set of hurried footsteps coming up behind him. Why couldn’t they just leave him alone?

Slim fingers wrapped around his elbow and jerked him to a stop. Adopting a sneer on his mouth, Blaise spun around, ready to tear into Cole.

It wasn’t Cole. Willow stood with his hands on his hips, glaring up at him, his lips pursed. “You do not just get to run away when things don’t go like you planned. We are your mates whether you like it or not. So, pull your head out of your gigantic ass and stop being a complete dick!”

Blaise just gaped. Since meeting the man, he had never heard Willow raise his voice or curse. He found it a complete turn-on. His dick twitched inside his jeans, standing up to take notice of the little sprite in front of him. *Stupid dick.*

“My ass is not gigantic.”

Cole snorted as he shuffled by, slapping Blaise on the butt. “No, honey. You have a very lovely ass.”

Blaise jumped but didn’t otherwise comment on the tingle that coursed through him at the feel of Cole’s hands on him. “Guys, it’s not that I don’t like you. I do.” He paused, running a hand through his short hair. “I’m just...I’m not...”

“You’re not gay,” Willow finished for him.

Blaise nodded.

“Well, neither was I,” Cole said around a chuckle. He wrapped an arm around Willow’s waist and pulled him close, placing a chaste kiss on the top of his head. “You can’t run away from your mate, though. I really like Willow, and I really like you. I like you both for who you are, not because of what body parts you have.”

It made sense, and Blaise felt like a huge bigot. Hell, his cousin, Keeton, was gay, and he didn’t have a problem with it. The idea of two men loving each other didn’t gross him out or make him angry. He couldn’t care less. This was different, though. This was him.

“Can we just talk? We won’t try to molest you.” Cole smirked at him as he drew an X over his heart with his finger. “Promise.”

A chuckle escaped him, surprising Blaise out of his thoughts. Both of his mates smiled up at him, each so sexy in his own way. The least he could do was hear them out and listen to what they had to say.

“Fine, let’s talk.”

Willow stepped forward and hesitantly wrapped his arms around Blaise’s waist, resting his small head on Blaise’s chest. “Thank you.”

Blaise melted, and some of the uncertainty drained away from him. How was he supposed to resist such open affection? He couldn’t. Slowly, tentatively, he eased his arms around Willow and held him close, dipping his head to breathe in the sweet scent of his mate. Willow smelled like rain and pine trees and drew a quiet sigh from him.

“Can I get a little of that?” Cole looked up at him, biting his lip and looking unsure.

God help him, he just couldn’t say no. Everything in him called out for his mates, yearned for them, and desired their closeness. Keeping one arm securely around Willow, Blaise held his other out, beckoning Cole into their hug.

Hurrying forward, Cole smiled and wrapped one around Willow and one around Blaise, resting his head on Blaise’s chest next to Willow’s. “Thank you.” He echoed their mate’s earlier words.

“I’m so confused, and I don’t know what I’m doing. I don’t understand any of this, and I have the pack thrown on top of everything else. I can’t promise you guys anything.” Blaise didn’t want to start another argument, but he didn’t want his mates to get their hopes up that he’d suddenly start craving a cock up his ass.

“We’ll go slow,” Cole whispered.

“Get to know each other and see where we go from there,” Willow added.

Closing his eyes again, Blaise rested his cheek on top of Cole’s head as his fingers drifted up to stroke through Willow’s hair. What the hell was he going to do?

Chapter Two

Another week passed, and Cole had reached his limits. He sympathized with Blaise, he really did. Hell, he'd almost passed out when he realized the cute little hybrid in the cage next to him was his mate. Never having been attracted to men before, it both confused and angered him at his immediate lust toward Willow.

Seven weeks inside a dilapidated barn, caged next to his mate, had given them time to talk and get to know each other. Somewhere around the fifth week, Cole stopped seeing Willow as a man and identified him only as his mate. Some shifters went an entire lifetime without finding their *sienota*, the missing piece of their soul. He wouldn't begrudge the gift fate had given him.

Willow brought so much joy to his world. Everything about the man, from his tiny little toes to his waist-length raven hair, appealed to Cole. Though they'd yet to be intimate, and he hadn't claimed him as his own, in his heart, Willow belonged to him.

His growing feeling of possessiveness leaked over and extended to Blaise as well. The alpha was just so damn stubborn, though. They had yet to have the talk Blaise promised them. He often stayed out until the early hours of the morning, doing God only knows what, leaving Willow and Cole to sleep alone.

Then Blaise would stumble in, too exhausted to even remember his own name, and pass out on the sofa in the den. Cole wanted to strangle him. He understood Blaise's reluctance to accept them as mates, but it didn't make it hurt any less. Nor did it do anything to cool his building anger.

Willow seemed more despondent these days. He didn't talk as much, he'd stopped eating right, and he rarely smiled. Cole missed those things about his little mate. Willow's incessant need to babble had gotten him through some truly awful nights during their confinement.

Now, Cole just felt more alone than ever. Blaise wouldn't have anything to do with either of them, and Willow had started to pull away. He hadn't waited his entire life to find his destiny just to watch it slip through his hands. He needed a plan to bring them all together, and he needed it fast.

Deciding his first order of business was to find out more about their alpha, Cole pulled his cell phone from his pocket and dialed quickly as he paced the front lawn.

"Hey, little brother!"

Cole rolled his eyes but grinned. "Jackson, I am two years older than you. Would you stop with the little brother nonsense?"

Jackson just laughed. "What's up? Having any luck with Blaise?"

Sighing, Cole shook his head, though his brother couldn't see him. "None. That's why I'm calling. I need to know more about him, but he's not talking. How do I get through to him?"

A long pause met his question, and Cole almost repeated it. Then Jackson's voice drifted over the phone, slow and thoughtful. "I don't really know him well enough to answer that. Keeton would probably be the better person to ask. Do you want to talk to him?"

Cole had only met Keeton for a few minutes just after his rescue, but he liked the guy. At this point, he was willing to try anything. "Sure, let me talk to him."

"Keeton!"

Jerking the phone away from his ear, Cole cursed as his eardrum throbbed. Damn his idiotic brother. Good thing he loved the kid so much.

"Is this about my brainless cousin?" a voice asked into the phone.

Cole smiled. "Yes, sir."

He heard a deep exasperated sigh, and then Keeton spoke again. "Okay, listen good. You ready?"

"Lay it on me. I've got nothing, and I need to get through to him."

"First thing you need to know is Blaise is a total control freak. That's why he's completely losing it over this. He has no control over the situation. Give him that control. He also likes to be right. He craves having people hang on his every word. With me so far?"

The guy spoke so quickly, Cole had a hard time understanding him, but he'd caught enough of it to follow along. "Yeah, go ahead."

"He also has some kind of hero complex. He loves to swoop in and save the day, rescue the damsel in distress, that kind of thing."

Keeton made the man sound like an arrogant prick. Though Cole hadn't had a chance to get to know Blaise well, it didn't sound like the man he'd been sharing his house with.

"Mostly, he's scared and unsure. He prides himself on always having the answers and finding a solution."

Now that sounded more like the Blaise he knew.

"You got all that?"

"Let him be in charge, play the protector and hero, and help him find a solution to our situation without letting him know he was helped. Did I cover everything?"

Keeton laughed. "You got it. See, you didn't need me. If he doesn't come around soon, give me another call, and I'll kick his ass for you."

"You got yourself a deal," Cole said around a chuckle. "Thanks for the help, Keeton."

"No problem. Did you want to talk to Jackson again?"

"Nah, I'll call him later. I have a mate who needs a good smack in the head."

"Don't they all," Keeton muttered then disconnected.

Flipping his phone closed, Cole tucked it away in his pocket and headed for the house. He needed to talk to Willow and see if they

could come up with a sneaky little plan that would allow their alpha mate to be the big, strong hero.

* * * *

Willow sat in the middle of the floor, his legs tucked under him, and concentrated as hard as he could. He felt a slight tingle and a passing warmth but nothing more. Growling in frustration, he banged his fist against the floor, angry tears welling in his eyes.

“Hey, what’s all this about?” Cole came in through the front door and hurried to him, crouching down and cupping Willow’s face. He wiped away the tears that spilled over with his fingertips and kissed the tip of Willow’s nose. “What’s wrong, baby?”

His heart melting to a puddle of goo, Willow nuzzled against Cole’s palm. No one had ever called him baby before, and he loved it. “I’m just mad,” he whispered.

Moving to sit beside him, Cole wrapped an arm around Willow’s waist and cradled the back of his head, urging it toward Cole’s chest. Though not much bigger in size, Cole just had a way about him that made him bigger than life. Willow felt safe, protected, and cherished in Cole’s arms.

“I can’t shift. I know I’m not pureblood, but I should be able to shift.” He moved closer, burying his face in Cole’s warm neck. “If I could shift, maybe Blaise would like me. Then he’d claim us.”

A soft growl rumbled in Cole’s chest, vibrating against the hand Willow rested over his mate’s heart. “This is not your fault.” Cole’s finger stroked through his hair, comforting him. “Blaise’s issues are not yours, nor do they have anything to do with your ability to shift.”

Tugging on Willow’s long hair, Cole leaned away, a slow, wicked smile spreading over his lips. “You did just give me an idea, though.”

“And what’s that?”

“Well, I just talked to Blaise’s cousin, Keeton. You remember him?”

Willow nodded. He'd only met Keeton for a few minutes, but the guy kind of left a lasting impression.

"Well, he gave me some ideas of how to get Blaise to come around to our way of thinking. You want to help?"

Biting his lip, Willow nodded slowly. "What do I have to do?"

"Absolutely nothing. Keeton says that Blaise likes to be in charge, save the day, and have total control. We're going to give it to him."

"Okay, so then how am I going to help?" Willow's brows drew together, and he tilted his head to the side in confusion.

"You want to learn how to shift? We're going to get Blaise to teach you."

Willow's eyes rounded, and he began shaking his head. "I don't know about this, Cole. He's really busy with the pack and everything. He doesn't really have time, and I don't want to bother him with it."

Rolling his eyes, Cole kissed his temple. "He's not that busy. He can take ten freakin' minutes. Besides, that's the problem. He's never around. How are we supposed to seduce him if we can't get him to sit still for longer than it takes him to eat?"

"We could always ambush him in the shower." Willow's cheeks heated, and he giggled. "Wet and naked—just how I like my men."

Arching an eyebrow, Cole gave him a mischievous grin. "Oh, is that so?" Then he pounced, pushing Willow back to the carpet and hovering over him. "Well, it so happens, sexy and giggling are how I like my men." He eased the hem of Willow's T-shirt up, bent over him, and began licking at his belly button.

Willow tried to wiggle free, but Cole clamped down his hips, pinning him to the carpeted floor. "Uh-uh. You're not going anywhere, baby." Cole flicked his tongue like a serpent up Willow's ribs, barely brushing against his skin.

He tried, he really did, but he couldn't hold it in any longer. Little giggles escaped his lips, growing in volume until he rolled and shrieked under Cole's touch. "Stop! Stop!" He struggled to speak through his laughter. "It tickles."

Cole's fingers worked in tandem with his tongue, poking and prodding, pulling more breathless laughter from Willow. "Cole, please!"

Finally, Cole relented, crawling up Willow's body and kissing his panting lips. "No more tears, okay? I don't like to see you sad." Cole peppered kisses across his cheeks, his forehead, his jaw, and down his neck to his collarbones.

"Cole?"

Stopping in his ministrations, Cole looked up at him again. "What is it, baby?"

"Why won't you claim me?" Well, hell. He hadn't meant to just blurt it out like that, but it had been worrying at the back of his mind for weeks. What was it that his mates found lacking in him that they didn't want to be with him? Oh, Cole said all the right things, showered him with attention and affection, but they'd still yet to do more than kiss and cuddle.

Sighing, Cole rolled off him to lie on his side on the floor. Motioning for Willow to move closer, he tucked his arms around him and rested their foreheads together. "I want you very much, Willow. Don't ever think otherwise." He pushed his hips forward, grinding the hard ridge in his jeans against Willow's thigh.

Willow swallowed back a moan, his own cock twitching in interest. Damn, Cole smelled so good, and Willow wanted to run his tongue over every inch of his mate's fit body. "Then why?"

"After we found Blaise, we were supposed to be a triad, all of us together. I don't want to feel like part of me is missing. I just wanted to wait until Blaise came around so I could claim you both."

Well, when his mate put it that way, it all sounded very sweet. "So, it's not because I'm part elf?"

Cole chuckled, rubbing their noses together. "Nope. I think you're perfect from your curly shoes to your pointed ears."

Willow slapped at the man's chest playfully. "You know I do not wear curly shoes. You're being a douche bag."

“How about I just call you Santa’s Little Helper?”

“How about I show you what the inside of your ass looks like?”

Willow glared, lifting his knee to settle it firmly against Cole’s balls.

“Say it again. I dare you.”

Cole swallowed hard, nodding his head slowly. “You’re a feisty one, huh?”

Winking, Willow rolled away from his mate and rose gracefully to his feet. Sauntering out of the room, he gave his hips a little extra sway and turned to blow a kiss over his shoulder. “Perhaps one day you’ll find out.” Then he smirked and continued into the kitchen to prepare lunch.

Chapter Three

The numbers blurred together, and the words didn't make any sense. Blaise's head pounded, and his stomach growled angrily as he pored over the documents on the laptop in front of him. Rubbing the back of his neck to loosen the knotted muscles, he groaned when he heard his mates just outside the office door.

"You knock," Willow whispered.

"Oh, just go ask him. He's been in there for hours. I bet he could use a break."

"Cole, I don't know. Maybe we should just leave him alone."

Yes, please leave me alone. Blaise didn't know how much more he could take. The pack finances were in desperate need of an overhaul. He still had three members listed on the registry that he couldn't locate. The lab notes for the experiments just made his blood run cold. God, he wanted to curl into a ball and just sleep for the next year.

A soft knock sounded at the door, and Blaise closed his eyes briefly, sighing to himself. "Come in, guys."

Willow entered first, his hands locked together in front of him, his eyes downcast, and his bottom lip gripped firmly between his teeth. Cole followed, looking much more confident. His eyes held a look of determination, and Blaise just knew he was going to regret letting them in the room.

"What's up?" Trying for casual, Blaise eased back in his seat, linking his fingers together over his stomach. Dots danced in his vision, his head feeling as though it would split in two with each beat of his heart.

“You look awful.” Willow swallowed hard, his eyes wide and fearful. “Are you okay?”

“I’m fine.”

Dipping his head once, Willow went back to inspecting his knees. “I’m just going to go. I’m didn’t mean to bother you.”

The dejection in his mate’s voice sent an unfamiliar ache to Blaise’s chest. He didn’t want to hurt the man—either of them. He just didn’t know what the hell to do with them.

Cole rubbed his palm down Willow’s spine then moved around the desk to stand behind Blaise. His hands landed on Blaise’s shoulders, and his talented fingers went to work kneading and massaging the tense muscles.

A soft groan escaped Blaise’s lips before he could trap it. God, that felt amazing. Dropping his chin to his chest, he closed his eyes and tried to ignore the immediate effect Cole’s closeness had on his cock.

No one spoke while Cole continued up Blaise’s neck, working and relaxing the muscles. Then his hands slipped into Blaise’s short hair, pulling gently as he dug his fingers into Blaise’s scalp.

“Damn, that feels good, baby.” Clamping his mouth closed, Blaise cursed himself for letting the endearment slip.

Cole took it in stride, though. “You need to rest more. You’re going to make yourself sick.” Those strong fingers drew soothing circles around his pounding temples. “When’s the last time you ate something?”

Blaise couldn’t remember. He thought he might have eaten breakfast, but he couldn’t be sure.

“That’s what I thought.” Cole’s hands disappeared, and Blaise almost whimpered at the loss. “Willow, see what you can do for our overworked mate. I’m going to get him some food.”

Blaise didn’t deserve them. He’d been nothing but a complete shit to them, and yet they still wanted to take care of him. “Why are you doing this?”

“Because you are our mate,” Cole said simply. He kissed the back of his neck, sending heat racing straight to Blaise’s groin. “Let us take care of you, please.”

Blaise just nodded, not trusting himself to speak. He had the strangest urge to pull Cole into his lap and devour his mouth, force his tongue down the smaller man’s throat, and brand him as taken. Images of doing just that flashed through his mind, scaring the hell out of him.

“Behave while I’m gone. Willow’s a little nervous,” Cole whispered in his ear, sending shivers down his spine and more fire to his growing cock. Then he eased away, moving around the desk, and placed a quick kiss on Willow’s lips before hurrying out of the room.

Blaise wanted to call him back almost immediately. He didn’t fear Willow, but the little guy made him very nervous. Something about him pulled at Blaise’s protective instincts, as well as sending his hormones into hyperactive overload.

Willow moved slowly, shuffling over to stand behind Blaise. The intoxicating scent of spring rain and pine needles grew stronger the closer he came, and Blaise curled his hands into fists to keep from reaching out and grabbing him.

“I can help,” Willow murmured softly. “Please, let me help you.”

Blaise shook his head, turning his chair around and gently wrapping his fingers around Willow’s wrists. “Thank you, but no.”

Willow ducked his head, looking away quickly, but not before Blaise caught the shimmer in his wounded eyes. “Okay. Well...um...I’m just going t-to...to h-help...” His voice wavered and broke, dying away on the last word.

It just wasn’t fair. How could anyone stand against such heartbreaking vulnerability? Willow tried to pull away, but Blaise held firm, locking his mate’s wrists together in one hand and using the other to cup Willow’s cheek. He applied easy pressure until Willow finally turned and met his gaze.

Puffy and red-rimmed, the tears gathered in his eyes, threatening to spill over at the slightest sign of rejection. Blaise swallowed down the lump in his throat, not sure what to do or how to comfort the man.

"It hurt you when you healed Talon. You just dropped." Blaise shook his head again, tracing the soft skin over Willow's jaw with his thumb. "I don't want to hurt you." He tried for a smile but didn't think he quite made it. "It's just a headache. I'll be fine once I eat and get a little sleep."

"Can I sleep with you?" Willow's eyes pleaded, and his lip quivered. He moved closer, pressing himself between Blaise's spread thighs. "Please?"

The warmth, the scent, the musical sound of Willow's voice whirled inside Blaise's head, interrupting his thought process and sending his senses into overdrive. His cock swelled again, filling rapidly and straining toward the man in front of him like a homing beacon. Willow represented home, and his prick was ready for landing.

So, Blaise did what any hot-blooded, straight man would do. He reacted like a startled kitten, reeling backward with such force, he toppled his chair and ended up on his back.

"Wow, it probably would have been less painful to just kiss him." Cole sauntered into the room, setting a plate and a bottled beer on the desk.

"Shut up," Blaise groaned as he rolled to his side, holding his head in both hands. "I just lost my balance. I'm going to take a shower."

He didn't look at either of his mates as he pushed to his feet and stomped out of the room. They were going to kill him. Or worse, break right through his defenses.

* * * *

Sitting the chair upright, Willow turned to face Cole. “Well, that worked wonderfully.”

Cole sighed, resting his hands on his hips and shaking his head. “Did you turn on the waterworks?”

“Yep. I thought it was going to work for a minute. Then I moved too fast.” Blaise’s warm palm on his face, the rich scent of lust permeating the air between them, and the visible evidence of Blaise’s arousal bulging against his zipper, Willow hadn’t been able to restrain himself.

“So, what do we do now?” Cole grabbed the plate and beer from the mahogany desk and jerked his head toward the door for Willow to follow.

Letting Cole lead the way back to the kitchen, Willow watched his tight ass flexing and swaying inside its denim confinement. A small moan escaped his lips as they stepped into the kitchen, and Cole peeked over his shoulder and winked.

“You were looking at my ass, huh?”

“Yes, sir.” What a ridiculous question to ask. Willow rolled his eyes and snorted. “You were practically begging to be ogled shaking your hips like that. What did you expect?”

Cole smirked, placing his hands on the counter and sticking his ass out, wiggling it like a puppy wagging his tail.

Willow bit the inside of his cheek, a sound somewhere between a groan and growl rumbling in his chest. Strolling up behind his mate, he gripped Cole’s upturned bottom in both hands, giving it a good squeeze.

“It’s not nice to tease.”

Cole dropped his head and sighed. Not exactly the response Willow had been hoping to get. “I know,” Cole mumbled. “I’m sorry.” Turning around, Cole enveloped Willow in his arms and kissed the top of his head. “Remember when Blaise held you in his arms out in the woods that night after you collapsed?”

Willow nodded, skimming his nose across the sweet smelling skin of Cole's throat. "Yes."

"Do you remember what it felt like? Did it make you feel safe? Did you feel like for the first time in forever you were completely whole, and nothing in the world could touch you?"

Frowning, Willow eased back to look up at his mate, searching his handsome face for the right answer. What exactly was Cole asking? "Yes, but I feel the same way with you."

"That's what I mean." Cole rested their foreheads together, reaching around to cradle the back of Willow's head. "What would you do if you had to choose between us?"

Willow's nostrils flared, and his throat burned as he tried to tame his runaway emotions. "I couldn't do that."

"Me either, baby. I can't choose. Maybe I'm selfish, but I want it all—not just a slice of happiness but the whole damn pie. Do you see what I'm saying?"

Yeah, Willow understood perfectly. Moving out of Cole's arms, he turned without a word and walked to the back door. Pausing with his hand on the doorknob, he squeezed his eyes closed against the pain that lanced through his heart.

"I'm sorry that I'm not enough for you, Cole." He spoke without opening his eyes. "I hope you get what you want. I hope you find your happiness." Then he opened the door and hurried outside before Cole could speak again.

"Willow! Wait!" Cole's heavy footsteps sounded inside the kitchen, and Willow ran. He didn't know where he would go, but he needed to get away.

"Damn it, Willow! Stop!" Cole's voice came from close behind him, vibrating as he sprinted across the field behind the house in pursuit.

Smaller, quicker, and with the added magic of his elven blood, Willow turned on the speed, zipping across the field, his eyes trained

on the tree line in front of him. His feet flew across the frozen ground, the cold wind whipping through his hair and stinging his face.

“Willow!” Cole screamed his name, but it sounded muffled, distant.

He didn’t want to worry his mate, but he needed to be alone. No one in his life had ever wanted him, not even his parents. Now, he had two gorgeous, kind, wonderful mates, and they didn’t want him either. Yes, it seemed very appropriate to want to be alone.

Chapter Four

Cole stumbled to a stop as he watched Willow sprint through the trees and disappear from sight. Damn, the little shit was fast. He'd briefly thought of changing into his wolf, but by the time it would have taken him to shift, Willow would have been gone anyway.

Dropping his hands to his knees, he doubled over, cursing himself for being such a fool. He'd never meant to imply that Willow wasn't important to him. In fact, he'd been trying to convey just the opposite—to explain that both of his mates were equally important to him. Well, he'd fucked that up spectacularly.

"What the hell is going on?"

Cole stood and turned slowly to find Blaise standing just inside the back door, a towel slung low on his lean hips and beads of water clinging to his tanned skin. The sight both infuriated him and left his mouth desert dry.

"Willow's gone."

Blaise frowned, shivering in the bitterly cold December air. "What do you mean he's gone?"

"What the fuck do you think it means?" Cole stomped toward the house, his feet crunching over the icy grass. "It means he left, he took off, he flew the coop. He's fucking gone!"

Blaise rolled his eyes and backed into the kitchen as Cole approached. "Stop being so dramatic." He waited for Cole to enter the kitchen then shut the door behind them. "Where did he go?"

"I don't know. The last I saw of him was his cute little ass zipping into the woods." Cole shoved both hands into his hair and yanked hard. "This is all my fault."

Blaise stepped forward, his hands twitching and rising slightly as though he wanted to touch Cole but just couldn't find the courage. Finally, he sighed and let his hands fall limply to his sides. "I think you need to tell me what happened."

Cole crossed his arms over his chest and glared at the bigger man. "Oh, so now you're suddenly interested in talking?"

Blaise bared his teeth and growled. "Do you want my help or not?"

"Not," Cole growled back. "You couldn't care less about either of us. This whole mess is because of you. Why don't you just go away and leave us the fuck alone!" His chest heaved beneath his crossed arms and spittle flew from his mouth as he shouted the words.

"Believe me," Blaise said coldly, "I would like nothing more than to leave and never look back."

Despair ripped through Cole's chest at the calmly spoken words.

"Then go. We don't need you." He threw his hands in the air, turning his back on Blaise. "You think I wanted to be saddled with two men for mates? I'm not gay either. I never wanted any of this."

No, he hadn't wanted it, but he'd already dove in head first, and he couldn't turn back now. Confusion, fear, frustration, anger, and sadness welled up inside him. He had little time to dwell on the feelings, though, before a soft gasp drew his attention to the back door. Sometime during his screaming fit, Willow had wandered in from the cold.

His soft face appeared deathly pale in the harsh fluorescent lights. Tears streamed down his cheeks, and Cole had never seen a more miserable sight in his life. "Willow."

Blaise spun around, and he waved a hand in Willow's direction. "See, he came back."

Cole wanted to punch the insensitive prick right in his beautiful face.

So, he did.

In two long strides, he reached Blaise, cocking his arm back and plowing his fist into the man's jaw just as Blaise turned to look at him. His mate's head snapped to the side then turned back slowly, the look in his baby blue eyes lethal.

"You really shouldn't have done that." Without warning, Blaise scooped him up, throwing Cole over his shoulder like a ragdoll. "I've had enough of your shit, Cole." Blaise stomped from the room, slapping Cole's ass hard when he began to squirm.

Though the gesture had been in reprimand, Cole couldn't stop the electricity that tingled through his ass and straight to his suddenly interested cock. And it only served to piss him off more. "Put me down," he snarled.

Blaise flung him unceremoniously to the sofa. "Now, sit down, shut up, and listen for once!"

"Oh, go to hell. You have nothing to say that I want to hear."

"Fuck!" Blaise roared. "Why do you have to be so goddamn stubborn?"

"Me?" Cole shot to his feet, pushing up against his mate until their chests pressed together. "I'm not the one that started this! If you'd just open your eyes and loo—"

"Oh, just shut it! You don't know anything about me."

"No, I don't, because you won't let me. You won't even talk to me!" Cole stared up at Blaise, his heart knocking against his ribs. Maybe he could just hit the asshole again. At least that seemed to get the jackass's attention.

"What do you want me to say? You want me to just tell you that everything's going to be okay? That I'm going to wake up tomorrow and that cock throbbing between your legs isn't going to matter to me? You want me to lie to you?" He threw his arms wide to encompass the room. "None of this is okay, Cole!"

Cole shoved at his mate's chest. "Fuck you! If you want to leave so bad, then why the hell are you still here?"

Placing his massive hands on Cole's shoulders, Blaise pushed him back. "What choice do I have? I'm the alpha now thanks to your idiot brother and his stupid mate!"

"Don't bring Jackson into this." Cole spoke quietly, dangerously. Blaise had no right to drag his baby brother into their quarrel. His fists clenched at his sides and his teeth ground together as he fought to control his anger.

"Stop it, both of you." Willow's voice trembled as he stepped up beside them, placing a hand on each of their arms. "Just stop."

They both ignored their smaller mate. "Damn it, Cole! Use your head. Do you think I'd be here if I had any other choice?"

Blaise's tone, as though he spoke to a child, snapped the thread on Cole's self-control. He leapt at his mate, tackling the man around the waist and driving them both to the floor with a loud crash.

"Stop it!" Willow screamed. He jumped forward just as Cole reached his arm back to deliver a brutal blow to Blaise's panting mouth. His arching elbow connected solidly with Willow's nose, and Cole distinctly heard the crunching of bone precede his little mate's cry of pain.

Forgetting Blaise and his anger, Cole flipped off of the alpha and hurried over to where Willow huddled on the floor, his head tilted back and a hand clamped over the lower half of his face. Kneeling beside him, Cole carefully took Willow's wrist and lifted his hand away from his face.

The bleeding had already stopped, and he watched in amazement as Willow's nose straightened and mended right before his eyes.

"One of the perks of being part of the pointy-eared persuasion," Willow mumbled thickly. He pulled his shirt off over his head and began mopping the blood from his face. "Are you two done now?"

"Oh, God, baby, I'm so sorry." Cole had never felt more awful. He cradled Willow's face, peppering kisses over his cheeks and brow as he apologized again and again. "It was an accident, baby. I never meant to hurt you. I'm so sorry. Please forgive me."

* * * *

Blaise sat up, watching his mates together, and his heart aching to share in the closeness. He hadn't meant the harsh words he'd spoken. Cole just kept pushing him, and Blaise didn't know how to react. So, instead, he'd lashed out, using anger and insults to shield his uncertainty.

Willow stared over Cole's shoulder, his mesmerizing gray eyes pinning Blaise in place and staring straight into his soul. Blaise cringed inwardly at what the man would find there.

Then Willow whispered something into Cole's ear, kissed his cheek, and crawled around him right up to Blaise and into his naked lap. His small, delicate hands came up to palm Blaise's cheeks, and he smiled the most tender, heartbreakingly beautiful smile. "Will you please kiss me?"

Willow's lips ghosted over Blaise's cheeks, down his jaw, and up to gently brush against his own. "Just one little kiss, Blaise."

Shivers raced along Blaise's spine, his heart galloped inside his chest, and a fine sheen of sweat beaded across his forehead. Willow's lips pressed more insistently against his but still with gentle pressure. His tongue traced the seam of Blaise's lips, flickering and teasing, coaxing them to open.

"Let me in, Blaise. Don't be afraid," Willow whispered. "If you fall, I'll be right here to catch you."

Cole crawled across the floor, pressing up against Blaise's side and running his hands over Blaise's back. "We both will. I'm sorry, Blaise. I didn't mean those things I said." He turned to look at Willow. "Any of them."

Willow graced him with a smile before returning his attention to Blaise, pressing their mouths together once more. "Open for me, Blaise."

And God help him, he did it. Blaise parted his lips, gasping as Willow's tongue slid inside his mouth, brushing against his, twirling and caressing. Blaise couldn't stop himself from joining in the dance, circling his tongue around Willow's, hesitantly at first but gaining confidence with each stroke.

The fire built inside him until it erupted into a raging need, and he buried his fingers in Willow's hair, taking over the kiss and dominating the man in his arms. His mate tasted so good, felt so perfect in his arms, Blaise couldn't hold back the moan that rumbled through his chest.

Licking, sucking, and biting, he tongue-fucked Willow's luscious mouth until the need for oxygen penetrated the lusty haze surrounding his brain. Pulling away and gasping for air, he had little time to recuperate before Cole attacked his lips with a desperate hunger.

Oh, hell, Cole tasted just as wonderful as Willow, felt just as right beneath Blaise's roaming hands. More forceful, more aggressive, Cole ate at his mouth, growling and moaning, his hand wrapping around Blaise's neck to deny any plans of escape.

He needn't have worried. Something inside Blaise shifted and realigned, opening up an entire world of amazing possibilities. This was the reason Blaise could never leave—not his responsibilities to the pack or his job as a Hunter, but his patient and persistent mates.

Willow moved in, his tongue sliding beside Cole's and joining in the endless three-way kiss. When the need to breathe finally overwhelmed him, Blaise eased away, chuckling breathlessly as both of his mates followed him, trying to capture his mouth again.

Coming back to his senses first, Willow sat up a little straighter, looking Blaise in the eye. "Does this mean you're staying?"

Blaise jerked Willow forward, planting another searing kiss on his mate's mouth. "Yeah, baby. This means I'm staying."

Chapter Five

Willow wanted to whoop for joy, or better yet, pin Blaise to the floor and devour him. They needed to talk, though—an in-depth conversation that was long overdue. Left to his macho, stubborn mates, they'd never get anything accomplished.

Wiggling out of Blaise's lap, he held a hand out to each of the men on the floor, urging them to their feet. "Okay, now sit."

Blaise and Cole each looked down at the floor then back to Willow in confusion. "We just stood up," Cole said.

Willow rolled his eyes and pointed toward the sofa. "I mean there, genius."

Cole chuckled, slapping Willow's ass as he passed by, and dropped himself on the couch. Willow turned to look at Blaise and lifted an eyebrow. Blaise held his hands up, palms out, and smiled. "I'm going. I'm going."

To Willow's disappointment, Blaise picked up his towel and wound it around his waist again. He settled down on the sofa beside Cole as close as he could get without them being on top of each other, and Willow smiled in satisfaction. Then the smile slowly dissipated as he eyed the nonexistent space between them. He wanted to be close to both of his mates, not just one.

Cole solved the problem by patting his thigh and then Blaise's. "Plenty of room, baby."

Beaming at his mate, Willow hurried over, climbing up in their laps and straddling both of their thighs to face them. "Whoa, watch the knee," Blaise yelled, reaching down to readjust Willow's bent leg.

Cole laughed as he did the same to Willow's other leg. "Yeah, he's lethal with these knobby knees."

Willow crossed his arms over his chest and glared at him. "My knees are not knobby." Watching both of his mates trying not to smile, Willow finally sighed and slapped them each on the chest. "Okay, if you're done, we need to talk."

Blaise's hand rubbed up and down Willow's thigh, his eyes following the movement as though he couldn't believe he did it. Cole's fingertips traced small circles over Willow's abs, and he licked his lips hungrily. It felt amazing, but Willow wouldn't let them distract him.

"Pay attention." He snapped his fingers, jerking them out of their lusty thoughts. The sweet scent of desire lessened marginally but still hung in the air, thick enough to cut with a knife. He rubbed his hands over his midsection in big, fast movements. "Neither of you are getting any of this until we talk. Understood?"

His mates nodded, their faces falling in identical expressions of disappointment. Willow thought they looked adorable, but it wouldn't sway him. "Now, since I'm the only one here who is actually gay, maybe we should talk about that first."

"Willow, I didn't mean those things I said. I was just angry at Blaise, but I don't care that you're a man." Cole spoke quickly, his eyes begging forgiveness.

"I didn't mean them, either," Blaise piped up. "Well, I meant some of them, but not the way you think."

Willow placed his hands over both of his mates' mouths, demanding their attention. "I know this is all new to you, both of you, and not what you were expecting. I also get that neither of you ever pictured yourselves mated to one man, let alone two."

He removed his hands and shrugged when both men nodded at him. "I won't lie and say it didn't hurt, but I'm trying to see things from your perspective and understand how you feel. I can't do that

unless you talk to me.” He took a deep breath and let it out slowly. “So, who wants to start?”

“Can I ask a question first?” Cole waited for Willow’s nod. “Why did you come back? I mean, I’m glad you did,” he hurried to add. “I just don’t understand. You were so mad.”

Willow huffed and rolled his eyes. “I wasn’t mad. I was hurt. You basically told me that you didn’t want me unless you could have Blaise, too. How do you think that made me feel?”

“Cole!” Blaise turned to look at Cole, his eyes wide and his mouth hanging open.

“Don’t even start,” Willow said sternly. They were never going to get anything accomplished if his mates couldn’t hold their tempers.

“Sorry,” they mumbled in unison, dropping their heads like scolded children. “I didn’t mean to make you feel like you’re not good enough,” Cole continued. “I just want our first time together to be special. I want to share it with both of you.”

Blaise pecked Cole on the nose. His eyes looked a little shiny, but Willow decided not to comment on it. “Thank you for wanting to wait for me. I don’t deserve it, but it means a lot.”

Cole nodded before both men turned to face Willow again, looking at him expectantly.

“I came back partly because I have no shoes on, and it’s cold.” Willow wiggled his still half-frozen toes. “Mostly, I came back because I could feel how upset you were, Cole.” He turned to look into Blaise’s eyes. “And how scared you were.”

Cole’s head snapped up to look at Blaise as well. “You were scared?”

“Yes,” Blaise whispered, not looking at either of them. “I don’t know who to trust in the pack. Now that I’m alpha, people will try to hurt you because you’re my mates.” He finally turned and looked Willow in the eyes. “You can’t do that to me again.”

Though Blaise’s tone held command, Willow could hear the plea hidden under the gruff exterior. Blaise’s emotions pushed at him like

a battering ram, the message coming through loud and clear. “*Don’t leave me.*”

Leaning forward, Willow kissed the tip of his alpha’s nose and smiled. “Not going to happen, big guy.”

“Huh? What’s going on?” Cole pulled away from them a little and pouted. “And how could you feel our emotions? We haven’t mated yet.”

“The same way I can heal you. The force is strong in this one,” Willow said with a smirk. “While my shifter is chomping at the bit to claim you both, my elven blood already recognizes you as my mates. I’m only catching bits and pieces now, but it will grow stronger once we’re fully mated.”

“Speaking of healing.” Blaise tilted his head to the side and frowned. “There’s something I’ve been meaning to discuss with you two.”

Cole looked like he would say something but closed his mouth and simply nodded. Willow was proud of his hothead mate and decided he needed a reward. Bending toward him, he licked at Cole’s lips, moaning softly when the man opened right up for him.

A loud groan drew Willow’s attention, as well as the impressive bulge currently pushing against the knee he had nestled between Blaise’s legs. Ending the kiss, he pecked Cole once more and sat up to grin at Blaise. “You were saying?”

Blaise just stared at him for a long time before he shook his head and cleared his throat. “Uh, yeah, you healed Talon, right? You touched him and everything.”

“Yes.” Willow frowned, not following where this was going.

“While he was shifted.”

Willow nodded, still confused. He looked to Cole, who wore a similar expression as Blaise—halfway between confusion and worry. “Would you please just spit it out? You’re starting to make me nervous.”

“You saw what happened to Cole’s dad when Talon shifted. We don’t know a whole lot about Moonlighters, but from what I can gather, only other white shifters and their mates are immune to the same reaction.”

Willow grew impatient. He wished Blaise would quit talking in circles and just say whatever he had on his mind. The longer he talked, the more apprehensive Willow grew. Had he done something wrong? Had he somehow been responsible for Cole’s dad losing his mind?

Then Cole snorted and elbowed Blaise in the ribs. “You are worse than Jackson.” He took Willow’s hand and squeezed it gently. “Neither Blaise or I are Moonlighters, baby. So, that only leaves you.”

“What the hell are you talking about?” Willow shouted, his frustration boiling over. “What is a Moonlighter? What does Talon have to do with any of this?” He dropped his face in his hands and sighed. “I’m so confused.”

Blaise’s huge hands wrapped around Willow’s wrists and pulled his hands away gently. “What do you shift into, Willow?”

“He can’t shift,” Cole said immediately. “He’s been trying all week. That’s what he was supposed to ask you when we came into the office earlier. We wanted to know if you could help.”

Blaise shot Cole a glare before returning his attention to Willow. “Do you shift during the full moon?”

Willow shook his head slowly. “No, I’ve never shifted before. I try. I can feel...well, something, but I just can’t do it.” His cheeks heated at the admission. How big of loser did that make him that he couldn’t even shift?

“This doesn’t make any sense,” Blaise growled vehemently. “The Moonlight Breed is surrounded by some damn powerful magic when they shift. Anyone near them, besides other Moonlighters or mates of Moonlighters, goes completely insane. I’ve seen it happen more than once.”

Willow still didn't understand, but he decided to let it go for the time being. They had more important things to discuss at the moment and had gotten completely off track. "We'll come back to that," he said gently, trying to soothe his agitated mate. "Right now, I want to talk about us."

"What do you want to know?" Blaise didn't seem happy about the change of topic, but at least he refrained from any open hostility.

"I know you said you aren't leaving, but do you want to be here? You said you wouldn't be if you had a choice." The words hurt more than he thought they would, but he needed to know the answer.

Before Willow knew what was happening, Blaise lifted him into his lap and wrapped him up in his big, powerful arms. "I don't have a choice," Blaise whispered. He unwound one arm to curl it around Cole and pull him closer. "This right here, what I hold in my arms, means I don't have a choice."

Willow smiled, snuggling in closer and nuzzling his face against Blaise's neck. He knew it wouldn't be easy for his big alpha. Blaise wouldn't suddenly change overnight—or Cole either for that matter. They were finally talking, though, and Blaise sounded like he wanted to try.

"This feels right," Blaise said quietly as he rested his cheek against the top of Willow's head. "I'm still scared shitless. I don't have any idea what I'm doing, but I promise I'll do my best."

"That's all we ask," Cole said around a smile. "I'm just as clueless as you, big guy, but I've waited my whole life to find a mate. I can't just walk away because neither of you are exactly what I expected. We'll learn together." He leaned up to kiss Blaise's jaw. "I'm sure our little elf can show us the way."

"Oh, I'll show you a lot more than that." Willow giggled and squirmed in Blaise's lap. Oh, his poor mates weren't even going to know what hit them. The thought made him laugh harder.

Chapter Six

“This is bullshit,” Cole growled as he slammed his fist against the refrigerator, rattling the contents inside. He dropped his brow to the cool stainless steel and rolled his head back and forth against it.

Three days since their little talk, and nothing had changed. Blaise still stayed out until all hours of the morning or stayed up late working in the office down the hall. Cole and Willow still slept alone in Cole’s bed. Everyone was pleasant as punch to each other, but it seemed forced and unnatural.

Blaise looked paler by the day, showcasing the dark circles under his weary eyes. He answered when spoken to but otherwise just walked around mumbling under his breath or brooding alone in the office.

Cole didn’t know how much more he could take. He thought they’d finally broken through and made some progress the other day. He really believed Blaise wanted to try and make this work. Apparently, he’d just been deluding himself. The big alpha would never accept them.

He gasped softly when thick arms wrapped around his waist, and a wet tongue licked a path up the back of his neck. Tingles raced down his spine and straight to his groin. Blaise’s rich, warm scent invaded his senses, sending his head spinning.

Cole didn’t move, didn’t want to break whatever spell Blaise seemed to be under. His mate never initiated such contact. Blaise’s palms smoothed up Cole’s bare chest, and his calloused fingertips brushed across Cole’s sensitive nipples.

“What’s wrong, my mate?” Blaise nibbled across Cole’s shoulder blades. “Tell me what’s wrong, baby.”

“Come back to bed with us,” Cole whispered. Turning to face Blaise, he wrapped his arms around his mate’s neck and stared into his eyes. “It’s still early. The sun isn’t even up yet. We don’t have to do anything but sleep. Please, Blaise.” He didn’t want to beg or appear desperate and needy, but he couldn’t stop himself.

To his complete shock, Blaise smiled and leaned forward to lick a slow path along his jawline. “I’d like that.”

“Then why haven’t you been with us?”

“I’ve been busy, baby. I’ve been trying to make things safe for us so I can claim my mates.”

Cole jerked away hard enough to bump the back of his head on the fridge. “Damn,” he hissed. Then a soft moan escaped him when Blaise reached around to massage away the pain, his eyes filling with concern. “Why didn’t you say anything?”

Blaise sighed. “I’m sorry. I didn’t think. I’ve been busy with The Council and ensuring your brother and his pack are protected. I think I’ve found where your dad was holding more preters. I’ve been trying to confirm before we send the Enforcers in to rescue them.”

Cole licked his lips, his cock straining inside his boxers as his wolf howled at their mate’s closeness. “I can help you look through the computer files and the records.”

His eyebrows scrunching together, Blaise nodded slowly. “I didn’t think about that.” He smiled, leaning forward to trap Cole against the refrigerator. “Thank you, baby.”

“What has gotten into you?” Cole panted, squirming against the man as his heart tripped into high gear.

“I can’t take it anymore. I’m hard all the damn time. I can barely concentrate. I don’t care if you have a dick, webbed feet, or a third eye. I’m tired of being without my mates.”

Launching himself into Blaise’s arms, Cole wrapped his legs around his lean waist and beamed. “It’s about fucking time.”

Blaise chuckled as he walked them out of the room, his hands gripping Cole's ass and squeezing as he held him up. "I still don't have any idea what I'm doing. I need you to be patient with me, Cole."

"Whatever you need, handsome. Whatever you need."

* * * *

Cole's lips descended on his, and Blaise nearly lost his balance, bumping them into the wall as he stumbled blindly to Cole's room. His dick hardened instantly, straining behind his zipper, begging for the chance to finally come out and play.

He'd tried to resist. He'd ignored Willow's blatant seduction and Cole's subtle teasing. He'd gone to bed alone every night and awoken alone every morning, more miserable than the day before. No matter what he did, he couldn't stop the longing.

His wolf snarled and gnashed its teeth, demanding he take and claim what belonged to them. Seemed his wolf had no qualms about what equipment rested between Cole's or Willow's thighs. Surprisingly, Blaise didn't much care anymore, either.

Tripping over the threshold, Blaise managed to get them to the bed and flop down on the mattress without injuring either of them. They bounced several times, Cole landing on top of him and laughing like a loon. "Shh, Willow is sleeping." He chuckled.

"Right," came a sleepy voice beside them. "How in the hell am I supposed to sleep through all that noise you're making?" His eyes fluttered open, and a sweet smile spread over his lips. "Hey, Blaise. You ready for your first lesson in Gay Sex 101?" He winked impishly, and Blaise swallowed hard.

Cole groaned loudly, snapping Blaise's attention to the man still straddling his thighs. Seemed someone liked that idea if the tent in Cole's underwear was any indication. A large, dark stain already marred the front of his boxers where he'd leaked pre-cum.

“Oh, fuck, that sounds hot. You can be the professor, and we’ll be your naughty little students who have to stay late for detention.”

Blaise growled, his hips bucking up against Cole as the fantasy played through his mind. “Get naked.”

Cole sprang off the bed and ripped his boxers off in a flash. Willow stood on the mattress, wiggling his hips as he pushed his own underwear down his slim thighs. Blaise’s mouth watered, and his dick jumped at all the smooth skin on display, aching to feel his mates beneath his palms.

Before Blaise could even reach for the button on his jeans, Willow and Cole were there, stripping him quickly as their hands roamed over the bare skin they revealed. “Just look at you,” Willow whispered in awe. “You’re so gorgeous.” He looked up at Cole, his eyes blazing with desire, and claimed his mouth in a heated kiss that had Blaise gripping the base of his cock to keep from coming.

He’d been a stupid son of a bitch. Why had he ever thought to give this up? Watching his men love each other had to be the sexiest thing he’d ever seen. Still, he wanted to play as well. “Come here,” he demanded huskily.

Both men broke apart and turned to him slowly, mischievous smiles on their handsome faces. They fell on him, licking, kissing, and biting at his chest and stomach, driving him wild as his dick screamed for similar attention.

Willow stretched out beside him, gave a slow lick to the side of his neck, and then rolled to his back in the middle of the mattress. “Ready?”

Cole’s head popped up, and he crawled over Blaise to kneel on Willow’s other side. Blaise rose to his knees as well and sat back on his heels as he drank in the sight of his nude mate. Small and lean, Willow’s pale skin almost glowed in the moonlight that filtered through the window. His long prick lay heavily against his belly, twitching and leaking as Willow’s eyes roamed over Blaise before moving on to Cole.

Blaise followed his gaze, his breathing becoming shallow and quick as he devoured Cole's luscious frame with his eyes. Larger than Willow, but still just as lean, his skin a little darker, his muscles more defined—Cole's body was a thing of beauty.

"Lesson one," Willow said with a smirk. "Suck my cock."

"What?" Blaise spluttered. He'd kind of assumed Willow would show him what to do. Kind of a learn by watching type thing. He didn't know he would have to dive into the deep end without a life vest.

Willow rolled his eyes and sighed. "I'm gay, Blaise. I already know how to suck cock. How do you expect to learn if you don't try it?"

Blaise growled, leaning over Willow and pinning his hips to the bed. "No one else, Willow. No one besides me and Cole. Got it?"

Willow nodded rapidly, his eyes wide and his chest heaving. Blaise almost felt guilty for his aggressive display of possessiveness until he saw Willow's cock flex and copious amounts of pre-cum dribble from the slit.

Looking up at Cole to gauge his reaction, Blaise dropped his head again to hide the grin on his face. Cole looked like he'd swallowed his tongue. His eyes half-lidded, his lips slightly parted, he stroked his thick cock as his body shivered with obvious desire.

So his little mates liked it when he went all dominant on them? Oh, he was going to enjoy this. Patting Willow's hip, Blaise rolled away from him and stood at the foot of the bed. "Is that how you speak to your alpha?" he asked sternly.

Shaking his head again, Willow licked his lips, his elegant fingers reaching down to wrap around his turgid length. "No touching." Blaise turned his head to Cole. "That goes for you, too."

Both men pouted but dropped their arms to their sides. Blaise bit the inside of his cheek to keep from smiling. "Come here." He crooked his finger at each man in turn.

They both crawled to the end of the bed and knelt, looking up at him with blazing lust. "Turn around on your hands and knees." While Willow complied immediately, flipping around and presenting his wiggling ass, Cole looked like he would hurl.

Blaise understood the fear, the uncertainty. Though Cole wasn't a virgin, this would be his first time with a man. Cupping his mate's cheek, Blaise bent and placed a tender kiss against his trembling lips. "Trust me?"

Cole looked into his eyes for a long time before finally gulping loudly and nodding. "Then turn around. I'll take good care of you, baby. If you don't like anything I'm doing, just say the word and it stops. Everything stops, okay?"

His nod came faster and more confident this time. Then he turned and presented his ass as well, peeking over his shoulder once before dropping his chest to the comforter. The new position spread him open, his muscled ass cheeks parting to reveal his tight pink hole.

Blaise groaned as he watched Willow do the same, tilting his ass higher in the air and spreading himself to Blaise's view. Taking several deep breaths that did nothing to calm his raging libido, Blaise landed a swat to Willow's ass.

Yelping, Willow tried to wiggle forward, but Blaise caught his hips, holding him in place easily. "No you don't. You were disrespectful, and I think you need a good spanking to remind you who is in charge here."

Willow whimpered quietly but nodded his head, easing his chest back to the mattress. Blaise landed two more quick smacks to Willow's rounded cheeks before switching to Cole. He caressed the globes in both hands, squeezing and massaging the muscles then pulled back to deliver a stinging swat.

Cole gasped but didn't move. "What did I do?"

"Nothing really," Blaise said calmly. "I just like how beautiful your ass looks with my handprints on it." He continued to spank his mate, alternating sides, then moved back Willow to do the same.

Both men writhed and moaned as their skin flushed, and a fine sheen of sweat glistened over their backs. "Please, Blaise. Please, I need more," Willow whimpered.

"Touch me. I need you to touch me, babe." Cole barely got the words out through his panting. "I don't care what you do, I just need you."

Smoothing his palms down his mates' spines and over their scorching bottoms, Blaise whispered words of comfort. "Shh, my mates. I promised I would take good care of you."

And he would. After realizing he wanted his men in every way possible, Blaise had sat down with his laptop and pored over hours of gay porn. The videos were hot, and he'd actually stroked off twice while watching them, but they left him with more questions than answers. Finally swallowing his pride, he called Keeton.

Twenty minutes into the conversation with his cousin, and Blaise felt he was better off with the porn. He didn't understand half of what Keeton said, and the other half just sounded depraved. He learned more in those twenty minutes than he ever needed to know about his cousin and the man's sex life.

Luckily, Logan had come to the rescue, wrestling the phone away from his mate and answering Blaise's question while Keeton giggled in the background. Blaise didn't think his cheeks would ever recover from the half hour of blushing, but at least he'd gotten the answers he sought.

Everything sounded good in theory. Now, he just had to put them into practice.

Chapter Seven

Who knew he was such a kinky little slut and liked his ass spanked? His dick swung between his legs, pulsing and aching, and his balls hung heavy with cum. If Blaise didn't give him relief soon, he was going to explode.

"Turn over," Blaise ordered.

Cole complied, moving slowly and hissing when his abused flesh touched the blanket beneath him, sending heat radiating straight up his leaking shaft. He'd been scared to death at the thought of Blaise fucking him. He'd gotten a good eyeful of the man's impressive erection earlier, and there was no way that monster would fit in his virgin ass.

He didn't care anymore. Blaise could bend him in half and fuck him six ways from Sunday for all he cared. He just needed to come.

Willow rolled over as well, turning to Cole with a wicked grin. His soft cheeks were flushed, his eyes wide with excitement. His plump lips parted as he moved closer, darting his tongue to lick over Cole's lips.

Cole moaned loudly, fisting his hands in Willow's silky hair and dragging him against his chest as he plundered the depths of his sweet mouth. His gums itched and his belly tightened, his wolf banging against its cage and demanding he claim his mate.

A soft brush of wet heat along the underside of his balls had him arching his hips and crying out at the delicious sensations coursing through him. Pulling away from Willow's searching mouth, he pushed up on his elbows, his pulse thundering in his ears as he stared into Blaise's eyes.

Blaise laved his sac before sucking one nut into his mouth and rolling it around with his tongue. Cole nearly came up off the bed. No woman had ever done anything so erotic, so absolutely incredible to him.

Though his alpha mate was no more of an expert than him, the man was a complete natural. Falling back to the bed, he shuddered violently when Blaise's questing tongue moved from his balls to travel up his jerking shaft.

"Oh, shit!" His hands seemed to move of their own accord, reaching down to gently palm the back of his lover's head. Movement to his side caught his attention, and he opened his eyes to see Willow slide off the end of the mattress and disappear as he lowered himself to the floor.

He didn't know what the little elf was up to until he heard Blaise cry out, his fingers digging into the flesh on Cole's thigh. "Fuck yeah. Eat that cock, baby."

The mental picture alone sent Cole into a tailspin of desire, and he arched his hips up, pulling Blaise's attention back to his task. Hell, he'd settle for a quick hand job.

Blaise had other ideas, however. He gripped the base of Cole's shaft, stroked him twice, then dove in to envelop the crown in his hot mouth. His slippery tongue swirled around the head then back up to flicker over his slit. "Damn, feels good, babe."

Better than good, Cole wasn't going to last. Blaise groaned, taking more of Cole's cock in his mouth as he hollowed his cheeks and sucked hard. His fist continued to work the base, gripping and relaxing, twisting just slightly as he dragged his lips along the upper half.

"You're a fucking natural," Cole whispered as his hips jerked and his balls drew closer to his body. "Can't last. Gonna..." He tugged on Blaise's hair, trying to pull the man off of him as his orgasm barreled down on him.

Blaise wouldn't budge. Instead, he redoubled his efforts, bobbing his head faster as his other hand reached down to trace the seam of Cole's ass. He gently parted the cheeks, and his finger found Cole's fluttering opening, caressing it almost lovingly.

Cole exploded. He threw his head back, bowing his back and pushing his prick deep into Blaise's mouth as his climax ripped through him, shooting up his shaft to spill into his mate's waiting mouth.

He wouldn't have blamed Blaise if he'd spat it out, but the man swallowed him down like a champ, even licking him clean as his own body convulsed. Blaise stilled, releasing Cole's flagging erection and groaning loudly as he found his release.

Cole sprawled on the bed, limp and exhausted and utterly content. He'd be happy if he never had to move again, but he still had a mate who needed his attention. With great effort, he pushed himself up and crawled to the end of the bed and froze.

Willow curled in Blaise's lap, a happy smile on his angelic face even in sleep. "But didn't he...I mean...shouldn't we..."

Blaise just shook his head as though he couldn't believe what he was about to say. "He came all over my leg at the same time I came. Then he just kind of passed out."

"Is he okay?" Concern spurred Cole out of bed, and he sat on the floor, running his hands over Willow's naked body, assuring himself that his mate would be okay.

"He's fine. Pretty damn pleased with himself if you ask me." Blaise chuckled as he dropped a quick kiss on the top of Willow's head. "Let's get him cleaned up and back in bed. There's still a few hours before we need to be up."

Cole bit his lip and looked away. "Are you leaving?"

Strong fingers gripped his chin, pulling him back to face Blaise. His mate's mouth covered his, dipping his tongue inside to share Cole's essence with him. Twining his arms around Blaise's neck, he

pushed himself closer, loving the feel of his lover's hard muscles pressing against him.

When Blaise disconnected from his mouth, he didn't move far. He brushed his lips over Cole's, rubbing their noses together. "Just try to make me."

* * * *

Willow woke as the first rays of sunlight peeked over the horizon. He smiled softly as he opened his eyes to find himself sprawled over Blaise's chest and Cole cuddled up next to them with his arm draped over Willow's back. They really needed to get a bigger bed, but he wouldn't mind waking up like this every morning.

Though no one had been claimed, they'd hurdled a big obstacle. He'd do everything in his power to see that they kept moving forward. From his position on the floor, he hadn't been able to see what Blaise did to Cole, but if the sounds echoing around the room were any indication, Blaise had performed brilliantly.

"What are you smiling at, my little minx?" Blaise spoke without opening his eyes, his fingertips drifting down Willow's side, causing him to shiver. "Are you cold, baby?"

"No," Willow whispered, not wanting to wake Cole. "Just happy."

"Me, too," Blaise murmured then drifted back to sleep.

Easing off of his lover and slipping out of bed, Willow's chest swelled with happiness as his mates immediately moved to curl together, seeking each other out even in sleep. Finding his boxers amongst the pile of clothing on the floor, Willow slipped them on and tiptoed from the room.

Yawning hugely, he padded down the hall to the kitchen to make breakfast for his men—right after coffee. The smell drifted to him as he entered the kitchen, the bold scent of a freshly brewed pot of coffee. He mentally patted himself on the back for remembering to set the timer before he'd gone to bed.

Pulling his favorite mug from the cabinet, he filled it with the steaming java. A soft clicking at the window over the sink drew his attention, and he cocked his head to the side curiously.

Reaching the sink in two strides, Willow gasped as ice formed in his veins. He stumbled backward, dropping his mug to shatter on the linoleum. Hot coffee splashed over his bare legs, causing him to cry out as he retreated even further.

The man on the other side of the widow smiled evilly before raising one finger to his lips. Willow would recognize that face anywhere, and it paralyzed him in fear.

The guy's manic eyes darted away from Willow and in the direction of the back door before returning to pin Willow in place with his yellow gaze once more. He smiled again, his upper lip curling over his teeth, then eased away from the window.

Released from the piercing glare, Willow bolted for the back door, crying out again as the broken shards of his cup sliced the bottom of his feet. He reached the door and flipped the deadbolt just as the doorknob turned and a heavy pounding landed on the wood.

Willow backed away slowly, his mouth working to form words, but only a soft croak emitted from his trembling lips as his heart pounded up into his throat. Another jarring blow landed on the door, shaking it in its cracking frame.

"Willow!"

"Willow!"

Both of his mates yelled his name as they thundered down the hall, sprinting into the kitchen still completely naked. The pounding on the door stopped, and heavy footsteps hurried away. Blaise lifted his head, sniffing at the air.

"Take care of Willow," he growled then launched himself across the room, disengaged the deadbolt, and wrenched the door open. He sniffed again, a feral snarl falling from his lips, and sprinted out into the dawn.

Cole hurried to Willow's side, cupping his face and looking straight into his eyes. "What happened, baby? Are you okay? Are you hurt? What did you see?" He fired off questions, his voice growing more frantic with each word.

Willow wanted to answer, but he still couldn't find his voice. His head swam, leaving him dizzy and nauseous. His vision blurred at the edges, and he slumped forward, falling into Cole's arms as the darkness swallowed him.

Chapter Eight

Cole caught his mate with a grunt as he sagged into his arms, limp and unconscious. Easing Willow to the floor as gently as possible, Cole propped him up against the wall and tapped his cheeks lightly. “Willow. Open your eyes, baby. Willow!”

Blaise stormed back into the kitchen, slamming the door and looking mad enough to breathe fire. “He disappeared, but he was definitely pack. His scent is off, though. I can’t put my finger on it, but something’s different about it.”

His chest heaved, his nostrils flared, and his upper lip curled over his teeth as he struggled to control his breathing. While Cole understood his mate’s anger, he had other things to worry about just then. Nodding his head at Blaise, he turned back to Willow and patted his cheeks again. “C’mon, baby. Open those eyes for me.”

Blaise seemed to finally catch up to what was going on, and he hurried over, dropping to his knees and running his hands over Willow’s small frame. “What happened? Is he okay?” Blaise asked, the concern and tension evident in his voice.

“I think he just passed out. I’ve never seen anyone that pale or their eyes that big. Whatever happened scared the hell out of him.”

A soft groan drew their attention, and they watched as Willow’s eyelids began to flutter before slowly pulling back to reveal his beautiful gray eyes. “What happened?” he mumbled.

“We were kind of hoping you could tell us,” Blaise answered gently as he cupped Willow’s cheek and pressed a tender kiss to his temple. “Are you okay, sweetheart?”

Cole's insides melted to sappy goo, and he smiled like an idiot as he moved closer, rising up on his knees to kiss his alpha's cheek. "You're getting really good at this," he whispered in Blaise's ear.

The man's cheeks tinted, but he grinned in return and dipped his head. "It's getting easier all the time."

Before either of them could speak again, Willow scrambled into Blaise's lap, wrapping his arms around the man's neck and pressing his face into Blaise's throat. "Is he gone? Did you see him? You're not hurt, are you?" Willow fired off questions, his voice muffled against Blaise's skin. Reaching behind him with one hand, he gripped Cole's wrist and urged him forward.

Cole moved without thought, pressing his chest to Willow's back and placing soft kisses against his mate's neck in comfort. It seemed the most natural thing in the world to him. He smoothed his palm up Willow's side, sliding around to his chest and resting his hand just over the man's racing heart. "He's gone, baby. You're safe."

Lifting his head, he locked eyes with Blaise, and they each nodded as they communicated silently. Their questions could wait. Right then, their little mate needed them. Climbing to his feet, Cole held his hand out to help Blaise up as the alpha held Willow tight to his chest and he rose.

Scrambling to stay attached to his mate, Willow locked his ankles behind Blaise's back, and his arms squeezed tighter in a choking hold on Blaise's neck. Blaise petted his hair and kissed the top of his head before looking over at Cole in clear desperation. "What do I do?" he mouthed.

Cole bit the inside of his cheek to keep from laughing. He wouldn't embarrass Blaise when the man was trying so hard. "Just hold him," he mouthed back.

Blaise nodded firmly, a determined look covering his handsome face. He grabbed Cole's hand and pulled him from the kitchen, leading him down the hall and back to their bedroom. Releasing

Cole's hand, he eased into bed, maneuvering Willow to sprawl over his chest, and patted the space next to him on the mattress.

Cole climbed into bed and slipped under the blankets, curling around Blaise's side, and pulled the covers up over Willow's slim shoulders. He and Blaise stroked and patted their tiny mate, calming his fear and reassuring him they would always be there to protect him.

Within minutes, Willow's breathing evened out, becoming deep and restful, and his hold loosened around Blaise's neck. "Is he going to be okay?" Blaise whispered, still stroking Willow's long hair where it fanned out over his back and down his sides.

"Yeah, he's fine." Cole worked his fingers through Blaise's much shorter blond hair, massaging his scalp as he spoke quietly. "So, what did you find?"

"Absolutely nothing," Blaise growled. "The guy had completely disappeared by the time I made it outside. There was a faint scent of wolf in the air, but mixed with something else. Something harsh, acrid, almost like burning rubber."

Cole wrinkled his nose and frowned. "That sounds gross."

"We'll talk to Willow after he wakes up." Blaise arched his neck to the side to stare at the window just beside the bed. "The sun will be fully up within the hour. We'll get a little more sleep, and then I need you to help me go through your father's records. Something is going on, and I intend to find out what it is."

"You want my help?" Cole couldn't keep the astonishment from his voice. Blaise never asked anyone for help and especially not him.

Looking back at him, Blaise's eyes softened, and his lips twitched at the corners. "If you're anything like your brother, you could save me a lot of time and headaches. So, yes, I want your help. Please, Cole?"

"Of course," he answered immediately as he pressed closer to Blaise's side and kissed the bare skin on his alpha's shoulder. "Now, go back to sleep. You've been working too hard, big guy."

“Yes, sir.” Blaise chuckled softly and kissed Cole’s forehead. “I’m sorry, yeah?”

“Hush.” Cole smiled as Blaise’s arm slipped under him, wrapping him in his strong embrace. “We’ll figure everything out when we wake up.”

* * * *

“How’s he doing?” Cole asked when Blaise walked into the office and moved to stand behind him.

Blaise sighed, scrubbing a hand over his face. “He’s seems okay, but he still won’t step foot in the kitchen. I’ve tried talking to him, but he’s not telling me anything.” Damn, he felt so useless.

Cole shook his head sadly. “He won’t talk to me either, and he jolts at the slightest noise. Do you think he knows something?”

Blaise thought it over for a minute before nodding slowly. “It makes sense. I just don’t understand why he won’t talk to us. I can’t protect him if I don’t know what the threat is!” He growled in frustration, shoving a hand through his hair and tugging it roughly. “I really suck at this whole mating thing, huh?”

Rising from his chair, Cole turned to face him, pressing up against his chest and resting a hand over his heart. “You’re doing fine. It took you a little while to come around, but Willow and I both know you’re trying. That’s all we’ll ask of you. Just don’t shut us out again, and you’ll hear no complaints.”

“How can you say that?” Blaise’s eyebrows shot to his hairline in surprise. “I completely fucked this up. I ran scared like a fucking pussy. No matter how hard I try, I keep screwing shit up. How could you possibly be so understanding?”

“Because you’re our mate, and we care about you,” came a softly murmured reply from the doorway.

Blaise looked up to find Willow standing there, his fingers twisting together nervously in front of him. Cole rested his forehead

against Blaise's chest and snorted. "The runt's pretty feisty when he doesn't get his way. I'd just smile and agree."

Willow's nose wrinkled, and he stuck his tongue out at Cole's back. "Am not," he grumped, his arms crossing over his chest. "You're being a prick, Cole."

"Told you so," Cole whispered.

Blaise couldn't stop the laughter that bubbled up inside him. His mates were adorable when they bantered back and forth like this. He was just sorry he'd missed out on it for so long. What else did he not know about the men in his life? Rolling his eyes inwardly, Blaise figured the answer to that would fill several books.

"Okay, down to business," Cole said suddenly, pulling away from Blaise and tripping back over to his seat. "We really need to have a little powwow. You included." He pointed at Willow, his voice brooking no argument.

"Oh, fine." Willow huffed and grumbled but padded further into the room. "Did you find something in your dad's files?"

"Yep." Cole beamed his million-watt smile. Snatching the laptop up from the desk, he hurried across the room and out the door.

Blaise watched him go, enjoying the view of his tight, rounded ass but feeling more confused by the second. "Why did he just leave? I thought he had something to show us."

Willow slapped a palm over his mouth to muffle his laughter. "That's just Cole. You'll get used to it. He just assumed we would follow him."

"Hey! Are you guys coming or what? Did you get lost?" Cole called down the hallway from the living room.

Willow cocked his head to the side and lifted both eyebrows. "See?"

Rather than make him smile, the action caused Blaise's chest to tighten and his heart to hurt. He swallowed down the burn in his throat and nodded curtly, unwilling to show any signs of weakness. Willow and Cole knew each other so well, yet he knew nothing about

them. Granted, they'd had a few more weeks together, but not really a huge amount of time.

"Hey," Willow whispered, shuffling across the carpet in his bare feet to stand in front of Blaise. "What's all this about?" His delicate little hand traced over Blaise's chest as he looked up into his eyes pleadingly, begging Blaise to open up to him.

"Nothing's wrong," Blaise said gruffly, placing his hand over Willow's to stop its roaming.

The man's face fell, his eyes turning sad and wounded. He bit his lip and pulled away, nodding his understanding before turning to leave the room.

"Motherfucker!" Blaise yelled. Why couldn't he just get this right? He fought demons, vampires, and werewolves. He could plot and execute rescue missions, demolitions, and search and seizures. He was proficient in the use of thirteen different weapons ranging from specially designed Council electroshock guns to a freaking samurai sword.

Talking about his feelings or keeping his mates happy, though? He might as well be shooting himself in the foot for all the progress he was making with that.

Though he sloshed through muddy waters when it came to the more intimate parts of their relationship, Blaise was beginning to see the men in his life as his mates and nothing more. He didn't know the first thing about being with a man in or out of the bedroom, but then again, he didn't really know much about being with a woman either.

Not that he would be begging for a cock up his ass anytime soon, but he now understood what Cole had been trying to tell him. He cared about his mates because they were kind, generous, smart, funny, and made him feel special.

So, why couldn't he do the same for them? He didn't know how long he stood there arguing with himself before he realized Willow had left the room. With a deep sigh of resignation, he went to find his men and apologize. Maybe grovel if needed. He should probably just

invest in kneepads because he had an idea he would be spending a lot of time on his knees begging forgiveness for one misdeed or another.

“Look, I’m sorry, okay?” He spoke without preamble as he marched into the living room. “I suck at all these feelings and sharing and crap. I was upset because you guys seem to know each other so well, and I missed all that. I know it’s my own stupid fault, but it still hurt.”

Cole and Willow sat side by side on the sofa, staring up at him in shock. Their mouths moved, but no sounds escaped either of them. Blaise wanted to smack himself in the forehead. Shit, maybe he could just go back to bed and start the day all over.

“I didn’t mean to yell,” he mumbled. “I just get so frustrated because I never know what I’m doing, and I’m always messing this up. I want to be with you—both of you. I just don’t know how, and it pisses me off. I don’t like not having the answers.”

His mates looked at each other then back to him as Willow scooted away from Cole, creating a space between them and patting the cushion. Blaise hesitated for a moment then hurried around the coffee table to ease down on the edge of the sofa between his lovers.

Willow pushed on his shoulder, urging him to lean back, then crawled up in his lap and kissed his lips sweetly. “We’ll figure it out together, yeah? Just stick with us.” He winked impishly. “We’d never steer you wrong.”

Blaise rolled his eyes, and some of the tension eased from his body as he gripped the back of Willow’s neck and pulled him forward for another kiss. “Together then,” he whispered over the man’s soft lips.

He turned to Cole, finding him waiting and willing, staring at Blaise’s lips and licking his own. Tamping down his instant lust, Blaise bent, pressing his mouth to Cole’s, but keeping the gesture short and chaste. “The things you do to me,” he whispered huskily.

Willow’s fingers snapped between him, and he snickered. “Focus, gentlemen. We can play later. Right now, Cole has something to show us.”

Chapter Nine

Snuggling into his big alpha mate's embrace, Willow kissed the underside of his jaw and smiled. Blaise was so damn cute when he got flustered, and it made him want to rub himself against his lover and purr.

"That's hot." Willow peeked his head out from beneath Blaise's chin to look at Cole with a frown. "Do it again, baby."

Willow's eyebrows drew together as he tried to figure out what Cole wanted him to do. Finally giving up, he shrugged and smiled crookedly. "I don't know what you mean."

"I have an idea," Blaise said as he began stroking Willow's hair and rubbing his cheek against the top of his head.

Oh, that felt great! Nuzzling back, he soaked up the attention his mate lavished on him, wiggling in Blaise's lap and arching against him. A soft groan drew his attention, and he looked over at Cole again uncomprehendingly. Why was Cole looking at him like he was the special on the menu?

Blaise groaned as well, shifting in his seat as the hard ridge beneath his zipper rubbed against Willow's ass. "What has gotten into you two?" Willow demanded.

With trembling hands, Cole reached out, caressing Willow's neck with his fingertips as he eyed him intently. Closing his eyes, Willow strained toward the touch, dropping his head back on his shoulders and purring.

Purring. His eyes flew open, and his lips formed a small *O* as he stared at his mates in shock. "I've never done that before."

Shaking his head, Cole scrubbed a hand over his face and groaned. “Okay, we’ll add that to the ever growing list of shit to figure out.”

“The list isn’t the only thing growing,” Blaise mumbled as he squirmed beneath Willow in apparent discomfort.

Willow couldn’t stop his giggle at the strained look on both of his mates’ faces. Maybe he should feel guilty, but it made him giddy right down to his toes that he could pull such a reaction from the men. “Okay, show us what you found.”

Pulling the computer to the edge of the coffee table, Cole clicked through the open files and brought up a spreadsheet. “Okay, this is the most recent document I have. It’s dated three days before Alpha Cunningham locked me in the barn with Willow and the others.”

Though his voice didn’t sound bitter or even sad, Willow’s heart ached for Cole. It didn’t escape his notice that his mate had referred to the former alpha by title rather than calling the man his father.

“I thought you turned these in to The Council.” Blaise readjusted Willow in his lap so he could lean forward to study the document.

“I gave them copies. Since Cyrus Redway was an elder of The Council, I wasn’t sure we could trust them. I wanted to have backups in case things went downhill fast.”

“I love that beautiful brain of yours.” Blaise smiled brightly and nudged Cole with his shoulder. “Okay, so what do you have here?”

Willow listened intently since the words on the computer screen held no meaning to him. He glanced at it once or twice, but it was just a jumble of letters as far as he was concerned. None of it made any sense to him.

“There’s a lot of information here, so just stop me if you need me to clarify or expand on something, okay?” Cole didn’t even wait for an answer before he launched into explaining the spreadsheet. “Okay, you see the section breaks here?” He pointed to a couple of different blocks of text. “Each section is for a different pack, coven, or circle.”

“Circles?” Willow’s eyebrows drew together in confusion.

Cole and Blaise turned to look at him, their eyes wide and their lips slightly parted. Willow couldn't decipher their expressions, and it made him nervous. He didn't think he'd asked anything out of line, but what did he know. "I'm sorry," he muttered.

"A circle is a group of elves," Cole explained quietly. He and Blaise shared a look before they each nodded once, and Blaise wrapped his arms tightly around Willow. "We'll talk about it later, okay?"

Nodding reluctantly, Willow burrowed into Blaise's chest and closed his eyes. He should have kept his big mouth shut. He could already hear the questions his mates would hurl at him, and he had no desire to answer any of them.

"Anyway." Cole cleared his throat as he turned back to the computer. "This column is a list of the names of each person either taken from or brought into this pack for the experiments. Next to that is their classification—werewolf, elf, shifter, vampire, and so on." He clicked on the page to scroll down before continuing. "Here we have where they were taken from, the date they arrived or departed, and a schedule of testings."

Blaise pointed to the last column and scowled. "What are these dates?"

"Dates of death," Cole answered sadly. "I told you that there had been hundreds of preters through here in the last several months. These are only the ones I know about. I can't say what happened to the pack members Alpha Cunningham traded to the Redway Clan."

"What about these others?" Blaise tapped the screen. "Why would they offer up their people like sacrificial lambs?"

"For money," Willow whispered. "It's amazing what you can buy for the right price."

Blaise petted his hair, and Cole's hand came up to rest on his thigh, but they didn't comment on his statement. "I don't have a listing of which circle you came from, Willow. There are a few other

names on here that I couldn't trace either. Do you think you could take a look and tell me if you recognize any of the names?"

Willow's heart slammed against his sternum before trying to make a break for it by climbing up through his throat. "Uh, sure. Who are they?"

"Here, look for yourself." Cole pushed the laptop toward him. "I'm going to make us some lunch while you look. Just highlight a name if you recognize it." Then he rose from the cushions and stretched, placed a kiss on Willow's forehead, and then Blaise's before hurrying out of the room.

"Willow?"

Biting his tongue to keep from babbling in panic, Willow lifted his head to meet Blaise's eyes.

"Can you read, baby?"

Closing his eyes against the shame, he shook his head fractionally. "No," he whispered. "Servants were not allowed to learn such things. Our masters believed that it gave us too much power."

* * * *

"You were a servant?" Cole stepped back into the room, crossed his arms, and leaned against the doorframe as he fought his instincts to rush across the room and pull his mate into his arms.

Willow's distress showed in the tight lines of his face, the red puffiness of his eyes, and the way he chewed his bottom lip vigorously. He wouldn't look at Cole but stared down at his fidgeting fingers in his lap as he nodded.

"I thought you were making lunch?" Blaise accused as he pulled Willow closer to his chest in a protective embrace.

"I came to ask what you wanted on your sandwiches." Cole pushed away from the doorframe and shuffled into the room. "You, stop glaring and snarling at me," he said as he pointed a finger in

Blaise's face. "I wasn't trying to make him feel bad, but I think I have a right to know."

"You didn't have to just charge in here and demand he spill everything, though," Blaise shot back. "Can't you see he's upset? You could have given him a minute."

"He knows he can tell me anything. I was there for him long before you came into the picture." Cole fisted his hands on his hips and snarled. "And even after you showed up and decided that you didn't want either of us."

"How long are you going to keep throwing that in my face, huh?" Blaise picked Willow up and deposited him on the next cushion as he stood and towered over Cole. "How many times do I have to apologize for that? Will it ever be enough for you?"

"This isn't about you!" Cole roared. "You are acting like a total butthead! I asked our mate a simple question, and you completely freaked. He's mine, too!"

"Enough!" Willow screamed as he scrambled to his feet and stood on top of the coffee table. "I'm sick to death of your constant bickering. It's like being a single dad with two hormonal teenagers!" He crossed his arms over his chest and huffed. "I happen to be in the same room, and there is nothing wrong with my hearing or my vocal chords. You will not talk about me like I'm not here."

Cole knew he'd crossed a line and had landed himself into some deep shit with his little elf. Still, he had to bite the inside of his cheek until he actually tasted blood to tame the urge to laugh. Willow looked damn adorable when he was pissed. Cole nodded his head once and waited. Judging from the heaving of Willow's chest, he had plenty more to say to them.

"You screwed up," Willow continued icily, glaring daggers at Blaise. "You didn't accept our mating. You hurt me, and you hurt Cole, and you did it more than once. So, forgive us if we have some minor trust issues."

Cole slapped a hand over his mouth to muffle his laughter, hoping he would go unnoticed by his irate lover. Unfortunately, he quickly realized he'd have no such luck. Willow spun in his direction, pointing a finger at him as his face flushed with his irritation.

"With that being said," Willow began, "you need to cut him some slack. Blaise is trying, and you are not helping by bringing up every single discrepancy. He apologized. He's trying to do better and making damn fine progress if you ask me. So, lay the fuck off!"

Cole felt guilty for a split second before he glanced over at Blaise and saw the man sticking his tongue out at him like a toddler. Before he could say or do anything in response, Willow's hand shot out and connected with the back of Blaise's head.

"Really? How old are you?"

Blaise rubbed the back of his head as he stared back at Willow petulantly. "Twenty-nine," he mumbled.

"That was a rhetorical question, dumbass," Cole replied with a snort. Then he yelped as a sharp smack caught him in the ear. "What the hell, Willow?"

"You are being a douche bag. We are supposed to be a team, but you two can't make it through a fucking day without snapping at each other and arguing like two bullies on the playground. Now, get your heads out of your asses, or I swear I will walk out that door and never come back. Do I make myself clear?"

"You can't leave," Blaise answered immediately.

Cole closed his eyes and fought the urge to groan. He may not know a great deal about relationships, but he did know that had been the completely wrong thing to say. Willow didn't sound like he'd be open to demands just yet.

Then he opened his eyes and immediately had to swallow down the lump that built in his throat when he saw the fear in his alpha's eyes. Blaise moved as close to Willow as the furniture would allow and rested his hands on their mate's hips as he stared up at him with

desperation evident in his eyes. “You can’t leave,” Blaise repeated in a whisper.

Sighing heavily, Cole made his way over to the pair and wrapped an arm around Blaise’s waist as he nuzzled against his chest. “Willow’s right. I’m sorry, big guy.” To his immense relief, Blaise’s arm encircled him, pulling him tight, and a brief kiss landed on top of his head.

“I’m sorry, too.”

“Okay, now that we have that settled, I’m starving.” Willow rubbed his hands together as he beamed at them.

“Nice try,” Blaise snorted. “We’re not feeding you until you come clean with what you know. Starting with why we’re just now finding out that you grew up as a servant.”

“And if you were a servant, where did you come from? Because your origin isn’t on any of those lists.”

“I wonder if you’re even listed in The Council registry,” Blaise said slowly as though working a puzzle out in his head.

Willow shrugged halfheartedly as he stared down at his bare toes. “Until a couple of weeks ago, I didn’t even know a council existed. I just did what I was told and tried not to make trouble.”

He squealed when Blaise abruptly lifted him into his arms and spun him around before flopping down on the sofa with Willow in his lap. Cole laughed at the men, diving onto the cushions to snuggle up next to his lovers. This was how he’d pictured a mating should be. Not the constant arguing and miscommunication that seemed to haunt their relationship.

“I know you probably don’t like talking about it, but this is important, baby. It could help us find the other missing preters.” Blaise spoke seriously, all traces of playfulness gone.

Willow seemed to think it over for a minute before nodding firmly. “I want to help.”

“Nothing you can say will make us think any less of you,” Cole hurried to add.

“I know.” Willow graced him with a crooked smile. “I don’t really know where to start, so maybe you can just ask me what you want to know.”

“When did you become a servant?” Blaise asked first.

“I was sold when I was a five, I think. It’s been so long ago, I can’t really remember.”

Cole’s eyes widened, and he reached out to take Willow’s hand in his own. “How old are you?”

“I’m not really sure. I think close to one hundred, though. One of the maids taught me my alphabet and how to count to one hundred. I know it’s been at least that many winters since I was born.”

The evident pride in his voice at learning his alphabet and numbers—something most people would take for granted—pulled at Cole’s heart, and he blinked rapidly to dispel the tears he felt gathering there. “That’s great,” he said with as much enthusiasm as he could.

“Will you teach me to read?” Willow blurted as his cheeks flushed. He didn’t look away, however, and a fierce determination flashed in his eyes.

“I think that’s a great idea,” Blaise answered before Cole could speak. “Since you already know your alphabet, that will help a lot. We can order some children’s books online and start with those.”

“Thank you.”

“Willow?” Cole waited for the little man to look at him before continuing. “Who was the master of the house that you served?”

“I’ve served many houses over the years—been sold more than once. The last house, I served a Mistress,” Willow whispered. “Mistress Glenna Cunningham.”

Cole gaped at him in shock. “My mom? You’ve seen my mom? Is she okay? Where is she? Did she ever talk about me?”

Willow just looked at him sadly. “I don’t know where the house is located. She never spoke of you or your brother.” Willow cupped

Cole's cheek as his eyes filled with tears. "I'm sorry," he whispered. "She has another family."

His heart shattering at the news, Cole struggled to draw in air to his aching lungs. How could she have just abandoned them then started a whole new family? Did they mean anything to her? "Does she have any children?"

Willow nodded slowly, his eyes never leaving Cole's. "Two sons." Willow paused and closed his eyes as he took a deep, shuddering breath. "They're older than you, Cole."

It didn't escape Cole's notice that his mate trembled when he spoke of his mother's offspring. It hurt more than he could say to find out that not only did his mother have another family, but that family had apparently come before him and Jackson. What other secrets was his mother hiding? And why did Willow look so frightened? "Did they...Did they hurt you?"

Willow looked away then, letting his hand fall from Cole's face. "It's in the past."

"I will kill them if they hurt you," Blaise growled. He shook his head, his eyes rounding as though shocked by the vehemence in his own voice. Then he looked down at Cole and winced. "I'm sorry, baby. I know they are your siblings. I didn't mean it."

"Yes you did, and I agree completely. They are not my family, and no one has the right to put their hands on our mate." He kissed Blaise's jaw and sighed. "Thank you for wanting to protect him."

"I'd give my life to keep you both safe," Blaise whispered huskily. "I'm sorry about your mom."

"Me, too," Willow offered as tears streaked down his soft cheeks. "I didn't know. I swear I didn't."

"C'mere." Cole gathered Willow into his lap and wrapped him up tight as Blaise's arms wrapped around them both. "It's not your fault, and I'm glad I know now. I want to know if they hurt you, though. I need to know, Willow."

“Only Azeal, the oldest brother,” Willow murmured thickly as sobs wracked his small body. “He said I belonged to him, and then he would beat me if I tried to get away or scream for help.”

“You mean, he...Oh, God.” Cole looked up at Blaise, and they shared a look of heartbreak and despair, saying more with their eyes than words would ever express. “He will never touch you again.”

“Never again,” Blaise vowed. “What did he look like, Willow? Do you know where we can find him?”

“He found me.” Willow hiccupped against Cole’s neck. “I won’t go back there. I’ll never go back there.”

“Shh, baby. You’re not going anywhere.” Cole stared at Blaise again, pleading for the big alpha to do something to fix this.

Blaise looked like someone had clobbered him over the head, though. He stared off into space, his mouth moving, but no words escaping his parted lips. When he finally snapped out of it, he placed a gentle hand on the back of Willow’s head and cleared his throat. “That was him, wasn’t it, Willow? The man from the kitchen was Azeal.”

Willow nodded his head frantically. “I’m not going back there!”

Chapter Ten

“Did you send the invitations to the Snake River Coven Enforcers?” Blaise asked as he struggled to knot his tie. He was in no way looking forward to the evening. “Tell me again why we’re doing this.”

Cole rolled his eyes, and Willow giggled as he hurried forward to help Blaise with his tie. The man had been grumbling all week about the party. Willow, on the other hand, felt he’d burst with his excitement. He loved parties, the lights and music, the happy laughter as people put aside their differences and came together to celebrate unity.

“We always have a pack gathering at the beginning of the year,” Cole explained for what felt like the hundredth time. “It should have been on New Year’s Eve, so we’re already about four weeks behind.” Cole grumbled about this for a moment before continuing. “Besides, you’ve been alpha of the Cloud Peak Pack for nearly two months, and you have yet to introduce yourself to the members. Everyone is anxious to meet you and size up their new leader. Plus, it’s the perfect excuse to celebrate your birthday.”

“That’s just it,” Blaise yelled as he threw his hands into the air.

Willow tugged on his tie, gaining his attention and staring at him sternly. “Be still.”

“But what if they don’t like me? What if they think I’m hurting the pack rather than making it better?”

“You’ll be fine,” Willow whispered. “Just be yourself, and everyone will love you.” He patted the knot and smoothed the tie down Blaise’s chest. “You look very handsome.”

"I look like an idiot," Blaise grumbled under his breath.

Willow's eyes traveled over the dark pinstripe suite, the silver silk tie, and the deliciously hard muscles that filled it all out and licked his lips. "You definitely do not look like an idiot." He rubbed his palm against the growing erection inside his slacks and moaned. "I can't wait to get you out of that suit."

"Who said you had to wait?" Blaise growled as stepped closer, devouring Willow with his gaze.

"I do," Cole huffed from the other side of the room. "Our guests will be arriving any minute, and you will not get your nice suits all wrinkled and covered in man-juice."

"Man-juice?" Willow stared stupidly at Cole for a few seconds before doubling over in laughter, gasping for breath, and clutching at his aching side. "Oh, say it again. That was too funny."

He looked up in time to see Blaise stalk across the room and push Cole right up against the door, covering his smaller body as he pinned him to the wood. His mouth descended, laying siege to Cole's and growling softly as he demanded a response.

Cole whimpered, opening for their big alpha and wrapping his arms around Blaise's thick neck.

Willow's cock perked right up in response. He'd never seen anything sexier in his life. He enjoyed watching his men love on each other almost as much as he liked joining in the fun.

Reaching down to unzip his pants, Willow groaned loudly when the doorbell rang. "To be continued," he mumbled as Blaise and Cole broke apart, wide-eyed and panting. "I'll get the door and give you two a chance to pull yourselves together. I expect you by my side in five minutes." Then he stuck his nose in the air and drifted out of the room.

Hurrying through the house, he paused at the front door, taking a moment to smooth his hair back and calm his nerves before plastering a smile on his face and pulling open the door. Five huge men and one

shrimpy guy not much taller than Willow stood on the front steps with huge smiles on their face. “Hey,” they chorused.

“Welcome,” Willow returned. “Come in, come in. Blaise is so happy that you could make it.” He dropped his voice to a conspiratorial whisper. “You didn’t hear this from me, but he’s a little nervous about meeting the pack.”

The vampires all laughed as they trailed into the house and began removing their jackets. Willow had only met them twice, and just briefly each time, but he liked the Enforcers. They never made him feel inferior or used their size to intimidate him. They believe in justice and equality, and not one of them would stand idly by if they could help right a wrong.

“Hey, Malakai.” Willow patted the smaller vampire on the shoulder and grinned. “How goes it?” The guy always looked so sad, like someone had shot his puppy or something.

“I’m fine. Thank you, Willow.” Malakai spoke softly before moving away and wondering over to the corner of the room by himself.

“Is he okay?” Willow whispered, stepping closer to Stavion. “He seems really down.”

The Enforcer leader glanced toward the corner and sighed. “He’ll be fine. I hope,” he added under his breath.

“Where’s the birthday boy?” Raven demanded with a wicked glint in his eye. “We’re hungry.”

“And he owes us,” Cassius added with a chuckle.

Demos reached out and smacked both men in the back of the head. “Play nice, children.”

Willow just laughed. Yeah, he really liked these guys and hoped they’d be around a lot in the years to come. “Food’s in the kitchen, boys. Go help yourselves, but save some for the other guests, yeah?” He tilted his ear toward his shoulder and frowned. “I thought vampires didn’t eat real food.”

“Myth,” Varik spoke from the back of the group. “Everything you have ever heard is probably a myth. Well, other than the fact that we can’t walk in the sunlight, and we need blood to survive.”

Willow grinned and nodded then shooed them toward the kitchen before hurrying toward their bedroom to find his missing mates. They’d better be dressed and on their way, or he was going to flog them bloody. He made it halfway down the hall before the doorbell rang again, causing him to sigh as he turned on his heels and hurried back to answer the door.

Guests began arriving steadily then, each bringing gifts and greeting him with warm smiles. Willow welcomed them all graciously, thanking them for their gifts and joining them for the party. By the time he’d ushered in the last guest, his cheeks burned from smiling so much. He was going to kill his mates for this.

Ducking through the crowd and stopping only twice to offer idle chitchat, he wound his way into the kitchen and stalked right up to Blaise, interrupting his conversation as he poked him in the chest. “Where the hell have you been?” he hissed. “You threw me to the wolves, asshole.”

Blaise, Cole, and all the vampires looked at him for a moment before laughing. “Nice pun,” Raven called.

Willow glared at them all. “You know what I meant.” He poked Blaise in the chest again before waving his hands around wildly. “Get your ass out there and be sociable.” Then he turned on Cole, jabbing him in the stomach. “You, too, mister.”

“We have business to discuss,” Blaise argued.

“Not now you don’t. No business until after the guests leave. Now move! This is your pack, Blaise. You’re pissing me off, and believe me, that is not something you want to do.”

Blaise’s eyes darkened, and his lips pressed into a thin line as he breathed in deeply through his nose. Willow gulped audibly, afraid he’d crossed some invisible line. He yelped when Blaise’s fingers wrapped around his elbow and jerked him forward. “You are fucking

sexy when you're angry." Blaise growled as he nosed the side of Willow's throat.

Shivering visibly, Willow arched into his mate's touch, not caring who saw them. "You're trying to distract me," he panted.

Cole moved in behind him, plastering his chest to Willow's back and running his hands over his hips. "Is it working?" he murmured against the sensitive skin on the back of Willow's neck.

"Uh-huh." Willow rocked back and forth, grinding his pelvis against Blaise's groin and his ass against Cole's. Screw the guests and the party. He needed his men. "Please," he whimpered when Cole's hand traveled up his inseam to cup his swelling cock.

"Party first, then business." Blaise chuckled evilly just before he nipped Willow's earlobe and pulled away.

"Party first," Cole repeated, scraping his teeth over Willow's neck then moving to follow Blaise out of the room.

It took several seconds for Willow to shake off the lusty daze surrounding his brain. Staring down at his throbbing cock tenting his slacks, he shook his head and moaned pathetically. "I hate them. I hate them both."

Demos stepped up beside him and bumped their shoulders together. "Payback's a bitch, little one. Maybe they deserve a taste of their own medicine."

Cassius stepped up to his other side and crossed his arms over his heavily muscled chest and grinned. "I think we need a little entertainment."

Willow rubbed his hands together and cackled. "I like where this is going. What do you have in mind, gentlemen?"

Demons looked over his shoulder at the other vampires and arched an eyebrow in question. The group turned to each other, murmuring too soft for Willow to hear, before Stavion nodded his head and smirked. "We're in."

* * * *

“Yes, I understand.” Blaise nodded thoughtfully as he listened to one of the pack members outline the problems he was having getting feed supplies for his cattle. “I’ll get everything straightened out first thing Monday morning. You’ll have your supplies by the end of the week.”

“Thank you, Alpha Taylor. I knew you would be a good alpha the minute I set eyes on you.”

Blaise’s cheeks heated, and he shook his head. “I’m trying, sir. I don’t really know what I’m doing, but I’m willing to listen. I’ll help wherever I can.”

“And that right there makes you not only a good leader but a good man. You’ll do fine, Alpha Taylor.”

“Please. Call me Blaise. There’s no need for titles amongst family.”

The man smiled warmly and clapped him on the shoulder. “I like that. This pack is a family. Has been mine for more than forty years. It broke my heart to see Alpha Cunningham run it into the ground the way he did.” He turned to Cole and gave him a slight nod. “No offense to you, young man.”

Cole smiled and waved away the man’s concern. “None taken, Mr. Gentry. I’m only sorry that I didn’t see what my father was up to before it was too late. I will do everything I can to help my mate sort out any pack issues.”

Mr. Gentry removed his lined hand from Blaise’s shoulder and placed it on Cole’s, squeezing gently. “You’re a good boy, Cole. Don’t burden yourself with the sins of your father. You have a good mate here and a damn fine Alpha. We’ll get everything straightened out in due course.”

“Thank you, Mr. Gentry. I appreciate it.” Cole dipped his head as his eyebrows drew together. “Do you hear that?”

“Hear what?” Blaise lifted an eyebrow in question. He didn’t hear anything. He’d been so busy greeting his guests and listening to

problem after problem that he hadn't really paid attention to much of anything. Cole had been glued to his side the entire night, but he had no clue where Willow had gone. He just hoped his little mate wasn't too peeved at him for his earlier teasing.

Cole frowned and tilted his head to the side as he pushed his way through the crowd, heading in the direction of the dining room. Blaise excused himself, saying a quick goodbye to Mr. Gentry, and hurried after his lover. The closer he came to the dining room, the louder the noise level grew.

Music blared and raucous laughter and cheers exploded inside the small room. Catching up with Cole just as they stepped inside the dining room, they both froze, and a loud, feral growl rumbled in Blaise's chest, clawing up his throat and escaping through his snarling lips. "I'm going to spank his ass."

"Not if I get to him first," Cole threatened.

Willow stood in the middle of the dining room table, shaking his ass to the music as he ran his hands seductively over his bare chest. Blaise had no idea where his jacket and shirt had gone, but the man still wore his red tie. The sight left Blaise hard and wanting, even as he fought the urge to punch out several of the onlookers.

Men and women alike gathered around the table, cheering and laughing as their eyes roamed over Blaise's mate. Though he couldn't blame them—Willow looked damn sexy twirling around on that table—that didn't mean he had to like them ogling what belonged to him.

Cole reached down to adjust himself inside his pants as his eyes ate up every shimmy and sway of Willow's hips. His tongue darted out, wetting his dry lips, and his eyes glazed over with obvious desire. "Get him down," he hissed. "Or I'm going to take him right here in front of everyone."

Blaise locked eyes with Stavion, comprehension dawning as he watched the vampire smile slow and wicked. The Enforcers were in

on this—helping their little elf with some payback for the earlier episode in the kitchen. He'd deal with them later.

Marching across the room and shoving his way through the bystanders, he reached the big oak table just as Willow popped open the button on his pants. Cheers went up around the room and several shouts of, "Take it off!" which Blaise thought came from the Enforcers. God, he was going to kill them.

Growling, Blaise leapt onto the table and snatched Willow's hand away from his fly. "What the hell are you doing?"

"Dancing," Willow slurred as he smiled happily and began humping against Blaise's thigh.

"Are you drunk?" Blaise bent and inhaled deeply, groaning at the strong scent of liquor wafting from his intoxicated mate. "Who the fuck gave you tequila?"

Willow just giggled, fumbling with the buttons on Blaise's shirt. "Raven. He's a really great guy. Cute, too. Can we keep him?"

That did it. Blaise lifted Willow off his feet and threw him over his shoulder as he whirled around and pointed a finger at Raven. "You are dead," he warned. Then he jumped down from the table, smacking Willow's ass hard when he started to wiggle. "Stavion, see everyone out. I have a naughty little mate that needs my attention."

Stavion smirked and nodded his head. "I'll take care of it."

"Oh, and don't leave," Blaise said frostily. "We're going to have a little talk when I'm finished with Willow."

"I look forward to it."

Blaise glared for a second longer then turned and marched across the room as people parted to make way for him. He paused next to Cole, giving him a little nudge in the back to get him going, and followed his tight ass down the hall to their bedroom.

"What is wrong with you?" Willow stared up at them innocently after Blaise deposited on the bed. "Are you going to spank me?" he asked hopefully.

Chapter Eleven

Willow's cock swelled and strained inside his boxers, and his ass tingled just from the thought of his mates' hands on him. His men stared down at him with such open lust and desire, he could practically feel their gaze like a physical touch.

He had to remember to buy the Snake River Coven something really nice as a thank-you present.

Rising slowly to his knees, he loosened his tie and pulled it from around his neck, letting it slither to the bed in front of him. Neither Blaise nor Cole moved a muscle, just watched him with their mouths slightly open.

Crawling down from the bed, he flipped open the button on his slacks and slid down the zipper, keeping his eyes on his mates the entire time. Wiggling his hips, he let the material fall down his slim thighs to pool on the carpeted floor around his ankles. "Are you just going to stand there?"

His words seemed to snap the men out of the paralysis, and they began undressing at lightning speed, practically tearing the clothes from their bodies. Willow giggled at their eagerness, delighted with their response to him. Pushing his boxers down his hips, he stood naked, his hands on his waist, shaking his hips to make his dick slap against each thigh in turn.

Looking up, he smirked and pointed to the swollen cock between his legs. "Well, it's not going to suck itself."

Blaise looked to Cole, and they both nodded before grinning evilly and stalking toward the bed. Willow stumbled backward, his

body trembling under the intensity of their combined gaze. “What are you doing?” he squeaked.

Neither man spoke as they split apart, coming at him from both sides to prevent his escape. Oh, he liked this game. Giving into his mates’ need to chase and catch him, he ducked around Blaise’s reaching arm and danced across the room.

“Damn, I forgot how fast he is,” Cole mumbled, shaking his head.

“If you step one foot outside that door, I promise you will not be able to sit down for a week. Do I make myself clear?” Blaise spoke authoritatively, his voice deep and commanding.

Willow looked at his alpha in confusion. “I thought you wanted to chase me?”

“I do,” Blaise conceded. “But I don’t want half the fucking pack to see your dick or that gorgeous ass.”

Debating for only a split second, Willow jerked open the door and sprinted down the hallway, back toward the dining room. Most everyone had cleared out, but ten or so pack members still mingled about, chatting with each other as well as the Enforcers.

Several people gasped as he streaked by, making a beeline straight to the dining room table. He heard his mates thundering down the hall, calling his name as they came. The gasps turned to chuckles and giggles as everyone hurried to follow them.

Willow spun around, inching backward toward the table as his mates advanced on him. Smiling like a loon, he turned to run again but collided with a solid wall of rippling muscles. “Time to pay the piper, man.” Raven shook his head sadly, but his smile gave him away. He spun Willow around to face his lovers and gave him a little push before stepping out of the way.

Blaise pounced, scooping Willow into his arms and carrying him over to one of the chairs. Instead of placing him in the seat, though, Blaise set him on his feet and pointed toward the floor. “On your knees, and lean over the chair.” His voice brooked no argument.

Nodding reluctantly, Willow slowly lowered himself to his knees and rested his chest against the cold wood of the dining room chair. Damn, he really hadn't thought this through. He didn't think so many people would be around to witness his punishment.

Cole appeared behind the chair, crouching down to wrap a black tie around Willow's wrists then securing it through the slats in the back of the chair. Nodding in satisfaction, Cole winked at him before rising to his feet and walking away. "He's good."

"Ass in the air, little one," Blaise commanded.

Whimpering at the deep, sultry sound of his alpha's voice, Willow complied, arching his hips and pushing his ass in the air. Blaise's large hand smoothed over one cheek as Cole's much smaller hand traced circles with his fingertips on the other. "How many?" Cole asked.

"Let's see," Blaise said thoughtfully. "One for saying Raven is cute. One for asking if we can *keep* him. One for dancing on the table."

"One for disobeying and leaving the room," Cole continued. "One for running."

"So, that's what? Five? Let's just make it an even ten."

Without another word, Blaise's hand landed on Willow's left cheek in a stinging swat. Not ready for it, Willow cried out before quickly clamping his mouth closed as electricity raced through his body to pull and burn in his balls.

Cole's hand delivered the next smack on his right cheek, not as hard as Blaise but enough to send copious amounts of pre-cum dribbling from Willow's slit. Applause went up around the room as people laughed and cheered.

His mates continued to spank him, alternating on each swat, until Willow's ass burned, and his dick felt in danger of snapping off. His breaths came in shallow pants as he rolled his sweaty forehead against the seat and tried to stave off his orgasm.

Blaise leaned over him, covering his damp back, and whispered his lips along the back of Willow's neck causing him to shiver. "One more, baby, and no coming. You did so well, and your sweet little ass looks like heaven right now. I can't wait to sink my cock inside the pretty little hole and fuck you until you scream my name."

Then his hand landed on Willow's ass once more, and it took everything in his waning control not to blow his load then and there. "Please," Willow pleaded.

"That's it, baby. Beg for it. Beg for my cock in your ass." Blaise's fingers trailed down Willow's flank and around his hips to grasp his throbbing prick. "This is mine, Willow. Me and Cole are the only ones who will ever have this. Are we clear?"

"Yes, sir," Willow panted as he rocked into Blaise's hand. Blaise released him immediately, and Willow cried out in frustration. "Please, Blaise. I'll do anything you want. Please."

"I'm going to take good care of you, little one." Blaise nipped at Willow's shoulder. "First, I'm going to bend Cole over this table and take him while you watch. Would you like that?"

"Yes." Willow gasped as images bombarded him of Cole's gorgeous body, laid out and open for the taking. Blaise pounding into him as their tight bodies glistened with perspiration in the overhead light.

"Okay, baby. Let me clear the room." He gripped Willow's burning ass and squeezed hard. "This ass belongs to your mates. No one else should ever see how beautiful you are when you come."

Though his lust blazed out of control, Willow's heart softened, melting to a puddle of goo at his mate's possessiveness. Plus, he wasn't too keen on half the pack seeing his mates naked. Hypocritical considering he'd been the one to sprint naked down the hall and lure them into the room in the first place. He didn't much care, though. People seeing him nude and people seeing his mates in all their glory were two completely different things in his mind. "Hurry," he whispered.

* * * *

“Out,” Cole growled, not taking his eyes or hands away from Willow’s rosy red ass. The stark contrast against his otherwise pale skin was striking. “You are breathtaking, baby.”

He continued caressing Willow’s firm bottom as Blaise stood and moved about the room, herding people toward the front door. His dick throbbed and ached, jutting out from his groin as it strained toward Willow’s hole. Blaise needed to hurry, because Cole didn’t know how much longer he could wait.

As though his thoughts alone had summoned the man, Blaise hurried back into the room, his long, thick length bouncing between his legs as he moved. “Up,” he commanded.

Cole nodded and reached around the chair to untie their lover.

“Not him. You,” Blaise clarified.

Cole looked over his shoulder, his eyes bulging when he saw the small bottle of lube in Blaise’s hand. Was he ready for this? While his mind rebelled at the idea, his cock had no such qualms. It jerked and pulsed, weeping from the slit as his ass fluttered at the idea of having his alpha connected with him so intimately.

Slowly pushing to his feet, he turned and faced Blaise, his arms falling limply to his sides, and his body vibrating with barely contained desire. Yes, he wanted this. Pushing away his nervousness and placing his trust in Blaise’s capable hands, he spread over the dining room table, hissing as his heated skin touched the cool wood.

Blaise came to him slowly, gripping his hips and maneuvering him around the table so they could see Willow watching them. Then Blaise pressed his palm flat between Cole’s shoulder blades, urging his chest back to the table as his other hand roamed his skin, mapping out the contours of his body. “I would never hurt you,” Blaise whispered.

"I know." Cole arched his neck to the side, giving his mate more room to lick and nibble along the sensitive flesh there. "Need you, Blaise."

He heard the click of the bottle cap, and his ass clenched as his heart hammered inside his chest. Blaise's hand smoothed down his spine, soothing him and exciting him all at once. Then his lover's lips followed the path, laving wet kisses down his back and leaving a trail of fire in their wake.

Slick fingers parted his cheeks, skimming along his crease and brushing over his virgin entrance. Blaise kept the touch light, caressing the ring of muscles as he continued to explore Cole's body with his hand, teeth, tongue, and lips.

He tensed as one lubed finger prodded his opening and slipped inside. "Shh, relax, baby. Deep breaths," Blaise coaxed. Cole did as instructed, taking deep breaths and willing his body to relax and accept the invading digit.

Blaise's finger pushed in further, gently working in and out of Cole's tunnel. Cole moaned, arching his hips and pushing back against his lover's hand. "More," he demanded. Holy hell, it felt amazing, sending him into a tailspin of desire.

A second finger worked its way in beside the first, and Cole hissed at the slight burn. "Keep going," he panted, wrapping his fingers around the edge of the table and gripping it tightly.

Blaise pumped in and out, twisting his wrist and scissoring his fingers, driving Cole out of his mind with pleasure. Then his fingers curled, brushing over Cole's prostate, causing him to cry out as his balls pulled up tight to his body. "Do that again."

"Bossy." Blaise chuckled, working in a third finger as he reached around Cole's shaking body to grip his pulsing shaft, stroking him in time to the movement of his fingers.

Fire built inside his belly, fanning out to set his entire body aflame as Blaise's talented hands rocked him to his core. "Now. Fuck me, Blaise. Oh, damn, please," he begged.

Whimpering had Cole's head snapping up, and he locked gazes with Willow, almost spilling his load at the blatant lust shining in his mate's gray eyes. "You look good enough to eat, Cole," Willow whispered. "God, I want to taste you. Please? I've learned my lesson." He struggled against his bonds, almost sobbing in his desire to be free.

"Blaise?" Cole asked. He couldn't stand to see his mate in pain.

"Okay." Blaise kissed the back of Cole's neck and gently eased his fingers from his hole before hurrying over and releasing Willow from his confinement. He helped the little man to his feet then lifted him into his arms and attacking his mouth like a starving man.

Cole groaned, dropping his forehead to the table as his hole twitched, begging to be filled again. "Please," he pleaded.

Standing straight just as his mates broke apart, Cole watched Willow gasp for breath. He shimmied down Blaise's body and hurried over to slide up on the table. Positioning himself in front of Cole, he eased his back to the gleaming surface and wrapped his legs around Cole's waist. "Fuck me, Cole."

"Demanding little thing, aren't you?" Cole couldn't hide the desperate longing in his voice, though. The need to bury himself inside his mate clawed at him, demanding he take the offering.

A small plastic bottle slipped over his shoulder, and Cole caught it, flipping open the cap and drizzling the lube into his palm as three thick fingers pushed back into his needy hole. With shaking hands, he quickly coated his cock before running two fingers over Willow's tight entrance and pushing inside slowly.

"You won't hurt me," Willow said as he stared into his eyes. "Stretch me fast because I need that thick cock in my ass soon."

Moaning at the naughty words pouring from his lover's mouth, Cole pumped his fingers in and out, working to loosen the muscles as quickly as possible without hurting his mate. By the time he'd slipped in a third finger, Blaise had worked a fourth into Cole's ass, and his orgasm hurdled toward him like a tidal wave.

“Enough,” Willow gasped. “Fuck me.”

Nodding once, Cole eased his fingers from Willow’s clenching channel, gripped the base of his demanding prick, and nudged the head against Willow’s entrance, rocking his hips until he slipped through the first ring of muscle.

Willow moaned, throwing his head back on the table as he pushed down on Cole’s prick, his hungry ass sucking Cole in to the root. “Damn, you are so fucking tight, baby.”

“Now, Blaise,” Willow whimpered. “Hurry, big guy. I can’t last.”

One of Blaise’s large hands grasped Cole’s hip in a bruising grip, the head of his cock pushed against Cole’s hole, breaching him slowly, and sliding home in one smooth glide. He froze when his thighs brushed against Cole’s ass, groaning and growling his approval.

Cole closed his eyes, breathing through the burn as he tried to adjust to the huge shaft lodged in his ass. When Willow’s ass clamped down on his cock, Cole’s eyes snapped open, and he gasped, his body jerking and pushing back against his alpha.

“Move,” Willow whispered, reaching up to caress Cole’s cheek. “Make love to us. We belong together, Cole.”

Heat spread throughout his body that had nothing to do with the intense physical pleasure he was receiving. His heart swelled, growing and shifting to allow room for these two amazing men. “I love you.” The words tumbled out in a strangled whisper before he’d even registered the conscious thought to voice them. He wouldn’t take it back, though. He couldn’t.

“I love you, too,” Willow murmured around his smile. “Claim me.”

Nodding, Cole pushed back against Blaise, sliding out of Willow’s body until only the flared crown remained. Blaise hissed behind him, digging his fingers into Cole’s hips as he thrust forward, setting the rhythm and urging Cole to follow.

Within seconds, they'd synchronized their thrusts, moving together as one while growls and moans filled the room and echoed off the walls. Pushing Willow's knees to his toned chest, Cole slammed into him over and over, loving the dual sensations of the heat encompassing his shaft as Blaise plowed into his aching channel.

Tilting his head back and to the side, he released one of Willow's thighs and reached around him to palm the back of Blaise's head, twining his fingers in the short blond curls. "Claim me," he whispered. "I love you, Blaise."

Blaise fumbled in his thrusts for just a moment before leaning forward and scraping his lengthened canines over the jumping vein on the side of Cole's neck. "Mine," he growled then sank his fangs through the supple flesh.

Cole cried out as wave after wave of fire coursed through his body. Then Blaise released his neck, pushing forward as he drove home again and froze, roaring out his release as scorching lava coated the inner walls of Cole's ass.

"Mine," Willow repeated Blaise's words, tangling his fingers in Cole's hair as he bit into the other side of his neck.

Cole screamed, his body jerked, and his orgasm ripped through, spraying the inside of Willow's convulsing channel as instinct took over, his canines elongated, and he bit into the smooth skin on Willow's shoulder.

Moaning at the sweet taste of his mate's blood bathing his tongue, he heard Willow's muffled cry against his neck as the space between them filled with warm, sticky ropes of seed. Extracting his canines, he licked over the wound then placed a soft kiss on his mating mark.

They all slumped together, panting and sweating, trying to find the motivation to move apart. Cole didn't think he would ever be able to move again.

"*We need to claim Blaise.*" Willow's voice sounded inside Cole's head. "*He's sad because we claimed each other and not him. I can feel it. He needs us. Do we have to do it during sex?*"

“No.” Cole used his own mental link to push his thoughts into Willow’s mind. *“It just usually happens that way because the instinct is stronger then.”*

“Then let’s do it now. I can’t stand to see him unhappy.”

Cole kissed the tip of Willow’s nose and smiled. “Me either,” he whispered. “I love you both so much.”

“It’s not nice to keep secrets,” Blaise grumbled as he gently pulled his flaccid cock from Cole’s hole.

Cole eased out of Willow’s body and helped his little mate down from the table. Then he turned and pushed at Blaise’s chest, steering him toward one of the chairs until the back of his knees hit the edge, and he plopped down on his ass. “What the hell, Cole?”

Smirking, Cole moved to straddle one of Blaise’s thighs, leaving room for Willow to do the same on the other side. “I love you, Blaise,” he whispered as he nuzzled against the side of his alpha’s neck.

“And I love you, too, big guy,” Willow added as he skimmed his nose along the opposite side.

“I love you, too. Both of you,” Blaise panted. “I didn’t think I could, but it’s as easy as breathing once I stopped fighting it. You’re everything to me.”

“We belong to you,” Cole murmured.

“Just as you belong to us,” Willow whispered. “Happy Birthday, Blaise.”

Cole felt Blaise tense and glanced over to see Willow sink his canines into the man’s flesh. Smiling, he nipped at Blaise’s neck before pushing his fangs through the skin and moaning.

Blaise whimpered softly, his hand coming up to cradle the back of Cole’s head as his hips jerked, grinding against their thighs. He took Willow’s wrist in his other hand and brought it to his lips, biting into the jumping vein there and completing the connection between the three of them.

Cole could feel their bond snap into place, and pleasure swamped him, stealing his breath and making him gasp around the flesh in his mouth. Then everything stopped, and Blaise slumped back in the chair, unmoving.

Retracting his fangs, Cole sat up and looked over at Willow. “Did we kill him?” Willow looked so concerned as he glanced between Cole, Blaise, and his healing wrist. Cole couldn’t help but chuckle.

“He’s just asleep. I think we wore him out.”

“Oh, okay.” Willow shrugged as he eased off of Blaise’s lap, careful not to wake him. “We are so doing that again. Soon and repeatedly.” He winked like the imp he was. “But I get to be in the middle next time.”

Chapter Twelve

“It’s cold out here.” Willow shivered as he stood nude in the moonlight.

“You’ll be fine,” Blaise soothed. “It’s better to do it outside. Your beast will be drawn to the moon.”

“If you say so.”

“I’ll warm you up when we’re finished,” Cole murmured, wrapping his arms around Willow’s waist and rubbing his cheek over the top of his head. “You ready?”

“I suppose. It’s not like I have a choice.” Willow pouted as his mates stepped away and stood in front of him. “Do you really think this will work?”

“I do,” Blaise answered. “I think you just need a guide to help you.”

“Okay, then let’s hurry. I’m freezing my balls off.”

Cole chuckled and took a few steps away from Blaise to give him room to shift. “Just watch Blaise first, okay?”

Willow nodded, concentrating on his mate as Blaise lowered himself to the ground and began his shift. Within moments, a large black wolf sat where Blaise had been, his head tilted to the side and whining softly.

“Wow! You’re amazing,” Willow gasped in awe. He’d seen his mate shift once before, but he hadn’t exactly had time to admire the power or beauty of his wolf. “You make it look so easy.”

“It is easy.” Cole crouched low to the ground and stared up at him. “Since we don’t know exactly what your animal is, just picture a wolf. Your beast will find its way to the surface. Now watch me.”

Then Cole dropped his head and let the change take him. Willow smiled down at the smaller wolf beside Blaise, his fingers itching to caress the silky-looking silver fur. *Focus.*

Kneeling down on the ground, Willow looked up at the moon, feeling a tug in his belly as though the lunar goddess was calling to him, pulling him toward her. He stared at each of his mates for a long time, his eyes darting back and forth as panic roiled inside of him. What if he couldn't do it? He'd never been able to before. What made this time any different?

Taking a deep breath for courage, he closed his eyes and pictured himself as a wolf. First silver, then black, then back again. Something began to happen, a slight tingling in his limbs, and Willow prayed he was doing it right. Concentrating as hard as he could, he squeezed his eyes tight, gasping when he felt his bones and muscles begin to reform.

Keeping his eyes shut, he continued to flicker back and forth between images of his mates. Silver. Black. Silver. Black. His skin itched, his body heated, and pain lanced through him as he felt his nose and mouth elongate into a muzzle. Too overjoyed that it was finally happening, he decided to be pissed at his lovers later for not warning him that it would be painful his first time.

It seemed to take forever—much longer than Blaise or Cole—but when the pain finally ebbed, Willow opened his eyes and stared down at his paws.

Paws? Yes! He'd finally done it. He'd finally found his beast!

Cocking his head to the side, he whimpered softly as he continued to examine his feet. Something wasn't right. They didn't look like wolf paws. Well, one didn't. The right one looked like a wolf paw, but the fur covering it looked like zebra stripes. Silver and black fur streaked together, wrapped around his foot and up his leg.

Whipping his head around, his mind reeled at the strange shape of his body. Long like a cat but with the tail of a wolf, his entire torso

seemed to be covered in the strange striped fur. Crap! He'd done it wrong!

Turning to look at his mates, he saw they had both shifted back to their human skin and were struggling not to laugh. Opening his mouth to bark at them, he quickly snapped his jaws shut when a loud screeching sound emanated from his mouth.

"What's going on?" He pushed the thought into his mates' minds, desperate to know what had happened. "*I don't like this.*"

"Calm down, baby. Everything is fine." Blaise hurried over to him and knelt on the dew-covered grass, stroking the fur on his flank. "I think you just got a little confused."

Cole came over and squatted down beside him as well, scratching behind his ears. "You did it." He beamed like a kid on Christmas morning. "You shifted, baby."

"*But I did it wrong,*" Willow whined.

"No, sweetheart. You did fine," Blaise cooed, continuing to pet him. "I think you may be a *shenhari*—a true shape-shifter. *Shenhari* can take on any form they choose and are exceedingly rare. You are special, Willow."

"*Shenhari* generally have a beast they favor. I'm assuming yours is a cat. That's why you got confused and ended up as half cat and half wolf." Cole ran his fingertips between Willow's eyes. "I know you have an animal in your head. Just picture that animal and let the change flow. Don't fight it."

"*I'll try.*" Closing his eyes, Willow pictured the strange little cat he'd seen on the nature channel weeks ago. Almost immediately, he felt his body begin to shrink, his bones reforming once again, as the ground rushed up to meet him.

The change came much more quickly this time and barely hurt at all. Opening his eyes, Willow looked down at his tiny paws covered in chestnut fur and purred loudly. *Ah, much better.*

"A jaguarundi," Blaise muttered. "Interesting choice."

"I like it. I think they're cute." Willow defended his chosen animal.

"I think you're adorable," Cole hurried to assure him. "And damn, do I love the purring. Can you do it again?"

Willow jumped up to put his front paws on Cole's shoulders and rubbed his face over Cole's neck, shoulders, and chest, purring as he covered his mate in his scent.

"Come give me some of that," Blaise said around his chuckle. "I'm getting jealous over here."

More than happy to shower his big alpha in attention, Willow loped over to him, jumping up in Blaise's lap and rubbing against him as he continued to purr. "Okay, you're right. You're cute as hell," Blaise finally agreed. "We've had enough fun for one night, though. I have to meet with the Enforcers in a couple of hours, and I'm exhausted." He tickled the fur under Willow's chin. "What do you say to a quick nap, sweetheart?"

Closing his eyes, Willow shifted back to human form and grinned up at his mate. "Oh, yeah. I can't wait to try out the new bed we bought for your birthday."

"We slept in it last night after the party." Blaise's eyebrows lifted to his hairline as he smirked.

"Yeah, we slept," Willow agreed. "I have better ideas on how to christen your gift, though."

Blaise laughed, shaking his head before leaning down to place a quick kiss on Willow's temple. "I do like the way you think, baby."

* * * *

"Have you told Jackson?"

Cole froze in the act of pouring creamer into his coffee. Closing his eyes, he took a deep breath and let it out slowly. "Told him what?" Okay, he knew exactly what Blaise was talking about, but he had no desire to delve further into the discussion.

“You have to tell him, Cole.” Blaise’s hands came to rest on his shoulders, massaging the tense muscles there.

“I know,” Cole whispered. “You don’t know what it was like when Mom left, though. I was ten, and Jackson had just barely turned eight. He worshipped the ground our mother walked on.” Cole turned to face his mate with a heavy heart. “Dad never paid much attention to Jackson, just kind of pushed him off to the side. I took care of him, made sure he ate, had clean clothes, got to school on time. I did that!”

Gathering Cole into his arms, Blaise rocked him from side to side, holding him tight as he slowly fell apart.

“He wouldn’t talk for months after she left. He’d wake up screaming at night, crying out for our mother, but other than that, he didn’t say a word.” Cole clung to the front of Blaise’s shirt, resting his forehead on his lover’s shoulder, and broke down. “I hate her for what she did to us.”

“I know, baby. I’ve never met the woman, but I hate her, too. I’m sorry that you had to go through that, but you did a damn fine job of raising your brother. Jackson’s a good kid and smart as hell. He has you, Talon, and the rest of his pack—his family. You need to tell him.”

Moving away and wiping his eyes roughly with his forearm, Cole nodded. “Thank you. I’ll tell him when we go visit next month. I don’t think it’s a conversation to have over the phone.”

Blaise kissed his forehead and trailed his knuckles over Cole’s cheek. “I think you’re right. Face-to-face will be better.”

Clearing the roughness from his throat, Cole turned back to the counter to finish doctoring his coffee. “So, when are the Enforcers supposed to be here?”

Blaise opened his mouth to answer, but a loud banging on the front door interrupted his reply. “Now?”

Cole chuckled and shooed his mate away. “Go play with your friends. I’m going to see what Willow’s doing. I’ll be around if you need me.”

“Actually, could you get Willow and meet us in the living room? I think we all need to be there for this.”

Cole eyed his mate suspiciously. “Is this going to upset him?”

“It might.” Blaise sighed and ran a hand through his hair. “It’s important, Cole. We need to figure out who is still being held and where.”

“What does that have to do with me and Willow?”

Pounding at the door sounded again, and Blaise glanced over his shoulder before quickly returning his attention to Cole. “I’ll explain everything in a minute. Please?”

Cole slowly nodded his agreement, though he didn’t like walking blindly into the fire. “We’ll be there in a minute.”

“Thank you,” Blaise breathed before hurrying out of the room to answer the banging at the door.

“Where are we going?” Willow yawned as he padded into the kitchen right up to Cole and took the coffee mug from his hands. Taking a cautious sip, he closed his eyes, and a happy smile spread over his lips. “You make the best coffee.”

“Glad you think so, but that’s mine.” Cole laughed as he took his coffee back and winked.

“So, where are we going? Do I need to change?”

Looking over his mate, from the top of his tousled head, down over Blaise’s T-shirt that hung to his knees, the flannel pajama bottoms, and right to the tips of adorable, bare toes, Cole shook his head. “The Snake River Coven is here, and Blaise wants us to sit in on the meeting. He said something about having questions for us.” Kissing the tip of Willow’s nose, he pushed his mug into Willow’s hands again. “You keep this. I’ll make another one.”

“Mmm, you’re too good to me.” Willow leaned up on his toes and kissed Cole on the lips. “Good morning, handsome.”

“And good morning to you, baby. Go find Blaise, and I’ll be along shortly.” Cole swatted his mate on the rump, lingering a little longer than necessary to give it a hard squeeze.

Willow giggled as he scurried away, turning and wagging his finger at Cole as he backed out of the kitchen. “None of that, Mr. Cunningham. You know what happened the last time you teased.”

“Yes, I do,” Cole growled. “And there will not be a repeat performance, or you won’t be able to sit for a week. Yes?”

Willow just laughed, blew him air kisses, and hurried out of the kitchen.

* * * *

“Cole and Willow will be here in a second, and we can get started.” Blaise powered up the laptop on the coffee table as he spoke with the vampires huddled around the living room. “Basically, we need to organize the list of captives as freed, deceased, or missing. Then we need to locate and, if necessary, free the ones that are missing.”

“That sounds too easy,” Stavion said, moving closer to Blaise to look at the computer screen.

“Because it is,” Blaise sighed. “We have several names on the roster that have no known origin or destination listing. Unfortunately, locating is the easy part. After that we have to actually save these men.”

“Men?” Varik asked from his place on the floor.

“There are only male names in these files. I’m not sure if Cyrus actually had a heart and didn’t want to hurt women, or if he felt men were stronger and more likely to survive their imprisonment.”

Before anyone could speak again, Willow flounced into the room, waving cheerily at their guests. He set the mug he held down on the coffee table and climbed into Blaise’s lap, snuggling against his chest and kissing his chin. “Good morning, love.”

Blaise’s insides melted at the endearment while his cock twitched in interest at the firm ass wiggling in his lap. Locking his arms around

his mate, Blaise held him still as he dropped a quick peck on the top of his head. "Behave," he whispered.

"Cole already threatened to paddle my ass if I pull a repeat of your birthday party," Willow murmured around his smile.

Swallowing back his groan, Blaise closed his eyes briefly as memories of that night flashed through his mind. Several loud groans reached his ears, and Blaise snapped his eyes open to see every man in the room eyeing Willow with unhidden desire.

Baring his teeth and holding his mate closer, Blaise growled. "Mine."

Malakai was the first to come out of his lusty haze, blinking rapidly as he pushed away from the wall he had been leaning on. "Sorry, Blaise. You can't possibly understand how intoxicating your scent is."

"Me?" Blaise stared around the room stupidly. "You're all looking at me?"

Willow snorted against Blaise's throat and patted him on the chest. "Well, you are rather gorgeous, love."

Demos scrubbed a hand over his face as if to wipe away unbidden thoughts. "Yeah, you're all right to look at, man, but that's not it. I don't know what he said to you or what went through your mind, but it was like instant hormone overload." He waved vaguely over his shoulder in Malakai's direction. "Little man is right. The scent of your lust is mouthwatering."

Willow popped up on Blaise's lap and pointed a finger in Demos's face. "He's mine, and I don't share with anyone but Cole. So, you can look, but don't touch." Then he crossed his arms over his chest and slouched back against Blaise with a huff.

Damn, his little man was hot as hell when he felt his status as Blaise's mate was in jeopardy. His possessive attitude had Blaise's cock filling rapidly and straining against his zipper.

“Blaise,” Raven groaned pathetically. “Maybe Willow should sit somewhere else, yeah? We’re never going to get through this meeting if I keep thinking about sinking my cock into your tight ass.”

A menacing hiss sounded from Willow’s parted lips while loud, feral snarling came from the doorway as Cole entered the room. Within seconds, Raven lay on his back in the middle of the floor, a silver wolf and a sleek clouded leopard standing over him threateningly.

“Blaise, I don’t want to hurt them, but you need to get them off me,” Raven said tightly.

“Then I suppose you should apologize,” Blaise answered calmly.

His mates, however, didn’t look like they’d be open to rational discussion. Willow climbed up on Raven’s chest, pinning him to the floor as he pawed him in the face. Cole circled around the vampire, his hackles raised and dangerous growls and barks echoed around the small room.

“Apologize for what?” Raven’s head whipped to the side as Willow smacked him with his paw again. “Dude, if he bitch slaps me one more time, I swear I’m go—” Willow hit him again with a bit more force this time.

“I’m sorry, okay? I’m fucking sorry!”

“*Let him up, guys.*” Blaise used their mental bond to speak to his mates.

They both fell silent and snapped their heads around to look at him but didn’t move to release their prisoner. “*Mine,*” Cole growled inside his head.

“*I think we should cut his balls off,*” Willow offered as he lifted a paw and stretched his lethal looking claws.

“*Let me bite him,*” Cole argued.

Blaise had the insane urge to laugh. Who knew his sweet little men could be so ferocious? “Cole. Willow. Come here.” He let the steel creep into his voice, demanding rather than asking. He had no

doubt that things would turn ugly if he didn't put a stop to their aggressive display of possessiveness.

Slowly, reluctantly, Willow eased off of Raven's chest and backed toward Blaise, his eyes never leaving the prone man on the floor. Cole snapped at Raven's face once more before turning and trotting over to Blaise's side. He looked up at Stavion and growled, and the vampire held his hands up in surrender as he stood cautiously and moved across the room.

Both leopard and wolf jumped up on the sofa and curled on either side of Blaise, their furry heads resting in his lap as they watched the other men in the room with a keen eye. "Anyone else have anything to say?" Blaise asked as he stroked his mates lovingly.

Everyone shook their heads quickly but didn't make a sound. "Good. My babies are a little territorial if you haven't noticed." Blaise scratched behind Willow's ear as the cat arched into his touch and purred. He eyed the tattered remains of his lovers' clothing and sighed. "Go to the bedroom, shift back, and change."

With one last glare at the Enforcers, Cole and Willow slinked off the cushions and disappeared down the hall.

Chapter Thirteen

“Do you think we overreacted?” Willow asked after they’d shifted back and began dressing.

“Well, I missed the beginning of the conversation, but hearing Raven talking about fucking our mate...” Cole trailed off and shook his head. “I’d do it again in a heartbeat.”

“I’ve never really had anything.” Willow slipped one of Cole’s plain black T-shirts over his head and sighed. “You and Blaise, though, you belong to me, ya know?” He pulled on a pair of gray sweats and nodded firmly. He would hunt down anyone that threatened his family.

“Feisty little thing, aren’t you?” Cole chuckled as he finished buttoning his jeans and walked over to kiss Willow on the forehead. “We do belong to you, Willow. Just like you belong to us. Everything is going to be fine, baby.”

“I never said it wouldn’t.” Willow spoke softly, hoping to keep the fear and uncertainty from his voice.

“You didn’t have to say it. Your eyes are so expressive.” He kissed Willow’s lips and took his hand, pulling him toward the door. “Let’s go.”

They made their way back to the living room, and Willow immediately went to Blaise, curling up beside him on the sofa and laying his head against his alpha’s chest, letting the steady thrum of Blaise’s heart calm him. Cole took his seat beside Willow, resting a hand on his thigh as Blaise began to speak.

“Okay, now that we’ve all whipped our dicks out and compared sizes, maybe we can get down to business.” He waited for everyone to

nod, including Willow, before he continued. "There are seventy-three names on our list. Twenty-four of those are listed as deceased." He shifted slightly to face Stavion. "Thirty-one are listed as being sold to the Redway Clan."

Stavion frowned and nodded. "The transition hasn't been easy. Cyrus's clan is...resistant to recognizing me as their new leader. There are only a few dozen members of the clan left, they're scared, and I'm an outsider."

"Well, thirty-one men need you to hurry things along. Have you searched Cyrus's house?"

"Of course," Stavion answered as he nodded. "We haven't been able to find anything."

"What classification are the men being held?" Cole asked.

Blaise eased Willow to the side and pulled the computer into his lap. "Twelve shifters, eight hybrids, three werewolves, an elf, and seven vampires."

"Okay, so he needs to keep the vampires away from the sun," Cole said slowly. Willow didn't have a clue what was going on, so he just sat quietly and listened. "It would be too much work to keep all of the prisoners separated without drawing attention to them." He looked up at Stavion and tilted his head to the side. "Have you checked the old silos?"

Stavion shook his head then turned to face his men. "Cassius, Raven, and Demos. Go now." The trio didn't argue but rose gracefully to their feet and left the room without comment. "Okay, what else?" he asked once the men had disappeared.

Blaise looked down at the computer again as he scrolled through the names. "Six were sold to the werewolf pack in Cheyenne." He tapped a few more keys. "Eight to a shifter colony in Montana."

"What about the other four?" Malakai asked.

"We don't have any information on them." Blaise sighed. "We don't know where they came from, where they went, or what classification they are. Hell, we don't even know if they're still alive."

“Well, that’s helpful,” Varik grumbled.

Willow couldn’t agree more. How were they supposed to find the missing men if they didn’t even know where to begin looking? Blaise’s anger and frustration pushed at him, as well as Cole’s sense of hopelessness. Neither did anything to help calm Willow’s own anxieties. Sometimes this *sienota* business could be a real pain in the ass.

“Willow, I’m going to read some names, and I need you tell me if you recognize any of them, okay?” Blaise bent close, speaking softly in Willow’s ear.

Swallowing hard, Willow sat up a little straighter and nodded. “I’ll do my best.”

“That’s all I ask.” Blaise stared at the screen and frowned. “These four only have first names listed.”

“It makes sense,” Willow whispered. “I don’t have a last name either.” Acknowledging the fact hurt more than it should. So much had been taken from him in his lifetime—even something as simple as a name.

Clearing his throat, Blaise looked like he would comment on Willow’s lack of a surname, but Willow shook his head, not wanting to discuss it. “One thing at a time. Give me the names.”

Nodding once, Blaise turned back to the computer and began to read. “Kendall. Aslen. Jory. And Galen.”

Willow’s heart plummeted to the pit of his stomach, and he felt like he would hurl. He knew those names. Each and every name Blaise had read of the list—he knew them. “Jory is just a boy,” he whispered as tears pooled in his eyes and overflowed to stream down his cheeks. “He’s so young that he still remembers his family, his birthday, even what it was like before he became a slave. He had his eighteenth birthday just before I was taken and placed in the barn with the other captives.”

“Shh,” Cole soothed as he gathered Willow into his arms and patted his back. “How do you know him, baby?”

“They were all servants of Mistress Glenna.”

He felt Cole tense around him, but he was so lost in his own misery he didn’t know what to do to comfort his mate. “I’m sorry.”

“Stop it,” Cole ordered. “It’s not your fault.”

Blaise’s hand settled over his shoulder, squeezing it gently. “Baby, do you remember anything about the outside of the house? Were there a lot of trees? Did it snow a lot? Maybe there was a lake or a pond.”

Willow shook his head quickly, pushing his face further into Cole’s neck. “I didn’t see the outside.”

“Not even through a window?” Cole sounded appalled, but Willow didn’t understand why.

“I stayed in the basement with the other servants unless I was needed.”

“Needed how?” Blaise asked, the strain evident in his voice.

“To serve the house, of course.”

“To clean or cook, something like that?” Cole sounded hopeful, and Willow almost lied and said yes.

“No,” he sobbed. “I was only allowed to leave the basement when Mistress Glenna required entertainment for her sons and their friends.”

“Entertainment,” Cole said slowly as if he didn’t know what the word meant. “You mean...all of them...oh, fuck.”

“All this time?” Blaise asked.

Willow only nodded, unable to form words around the constriction in his throat. He flinched, burrowing closer to Cole when Blaise jumped up from the sofa and roared. A loud crash followed Blaise’s outburst, and Willow whimpered, unsure of whom his alpha’s rage was directed at.

“Blaise,” Malakai said softly. “Calm down. This isn’t helping, and you’re scaring the shit out of your mate.” Then he came and knelt down in front of them and placed a gentle hand on Willow’s knee.

“Willow, did you ever see a man with the mistress? A husband, or lover—someone who shared her bed?”

“No,” Willow murmured as he frowned at the vampire. “She would leave sometimes, though. The maids would sneak us food and teach us things when she was gone.”

“What about the sons?” Stavion asked.

Willow wiggled out of Cole’s embrace to turn and stare at the vampire leader. “What about them?”

“I understand enough to figure out that Glenna Cunningham is Cole’s mother. Yes?”

“Not by choice,” Cole growled.

“I’m assuming the sons who live with her would have a different father.”

Willow nodded. He supposed that was true, but he didn’t understand what Stavion was trying to ask. “I’m not very good at riddles, so could you maybe just spit it out?”

Blaise slumped down on the cushions and turned to cradle Willow’s face in his hands. “Do you know what Azeal’s last name is?”

“Oh, yeah, that’s easy.” Willow smiled through his tears, happy that he could finally be helpful. “Azeal Redway.”

Blaise’s mouth fell open, and he stared at Willow in shock for a long time before he found his voice. “Stavion?”

“We’re on it.”

“Wait!” Blaise turned and looked at Malakai. “Come here.”

Malakai looked confused but shuffled forward until he stood in front of Blaise. “What?”

Rising up, Blaise sniffed at the man’s neck, drawing a deep growl from Cole. Willow soothed his agitated mate by rubbing circles over his stomach. He didn’t like their lover being so close to another man either, but there was nothing sexual about the act.

“You’re part shifter right?” Blaise asked when he’d finally finished sniffing Malakai.

“Yes.” Malakai’s brows drew together as he went to stand beside Stavion. “Why?”

“You smell like Azeal. Pack, but not quite.”

“So, we’re looking for hybrids?” Varik asked.

“Looks that way.”

* * * *

“I have a plan,” Cole announced, plopping down on the end of the bed.

Blaise paused in the act of taking off his boots and looked up in question.

“We need to find my mother before we can hope to find the last four captives, right?”

Frowning, Blaise slowly sat up and eyed his mate suspiciously. “Yes, but she could be anywhere. Stavion is trying to find out more information about Azeal and possible houses that Cyrus had in secret. It could take weeks, though.”

“Exactly, and we don’t have that kind of time. Even if Willow was the first taken, the others had to follow shortly afterward. Otherwise, they wouldn’t have ended up on that roster. I don’t understand why we don’t have more information on those four or Willow.”

“You think they’re hiding something.”

“I don’t know, but I intend to find out. That’s where my plan comes in.”

Blaise didn’t like this. He hadn’t even heard the plan, but he knew he wouldn’t like it. Cole had that stubborn gleam in his eyes, his jaw set determinedly, and everything about him screamed that he would do something foolish. “I’m not agreeing to anything, but let me hear it.”

“Willow is a *shenhari*, right? He can change into anything.”

“Yes, in theory. He still gets confused when he tries to shift into anything other than a cat, though.”

“Well, he’s going to have to practice then.” Cole lowered his voice and tilted his head to the side. Blaise mimicked the action, nodding when he heard the soft clanking of pans in the kitchen. “Azeal isn’t going to give up. He’ll be back for Willow.”

“I’m not following, Cole. You want to just turn Willow over to that asshole?”

Cole rolled his eyes in exasperation. “Don’t be an idiot. It’s not a good color for you. No, I’m saying, I go.”

Yep, Blaise knew he wouldn’t like this. “Absolutely not. You’re not putting yourself in danger like that.”

“Think about it,” Cole pleaded as he grabbed Blaise’s hand and squeezed.

Blaise bobbed his head a few times as he stared at the floor then back up at his mate. “Thought about it. Not going to happen.”

Growling, Cole released his hand and jumped to his feet, pacing around the room as he waved his arms in the air. “If Willow can shift into a silver wolf like mine, then maybe we can confuse Azeal. We’ll lure him to where we want him and make sure he takes me instead of Willow.”

“Fine.” Blaise stood as well and stepped in front of Cole, blocking his forward progress. “Then I’ll do it.”

“No, that won’t work,” Cole shot him down immediately. “We’re going to need Jackson for this.”

“Wait. What?” Blaise felt his brows draw together in a shallow V. “Why do we need Jackson?”

“Our mating link will only stretch so far. We have no idea where my mother is or where they’ll take me. I was able to reach Jackson across thousands of miles. It has to be me.”

“I don’t like this. I really, really don’t like this.”

“Well, do you have a better plan?” Cole fisted his hands on his hips and glared. Blaise thought he looked adorable and downright lickable.

Sighing, Blaise dropped his chin to his chest. “No,” he mumbled.

“Good. I’ll call Jackson in the morning.”

“So, how are we supposed to find Azeal? How do we get him to come to us?”

“He’s been hanging around for days. I haven’t seen him, but I’ve caught his scent twice. I found footprints under our window the other day, too.”

“Okay, but how do we get him to come to where we want him?”

“Shouldn’t be hard,” Willow whispered from the doorway.

Blaise’s head shot up, his eyes taking in Willow’s pale and shaken form. “Baby, what’s wrong?” He started toward his mate, but the elf shook his head and pointed across the room.

“I hope this is where you wanted him.”

The window shattered inward just as Blaise spun around. Azeal smashed into the room, catching Blaise around the waist and tumbling them both to the floor. Before he’d even stopped rolling, the vampire leapt off of him, throwing himself at the door as Willow screamed and took off down the hall.

Faster than Blaise could blink, Azeal’s hand sprouted fur and long, deadly claws, and he reached out to snatch Cole around the neck. Pure fear pumped through Blaise’s veins as he watched the claws pinch into his mate’s neck deep enough to send blood trickling down Cole’s throat.

“Let him go,” Blaise snarled, prowling around the intruder, looking for an opening. Pain pinched in his own neck, exactly where Azeal’s nails dug into Cole’s skin.

“Willow!” Azeal bellowed. “Are you really going to let me kill your mates?”

“Willow, no,” Cole gasped as he struggled to breathe.

“Hide, Willow,” Blaise called, praying his little mate would listen and get out of the house. All hope fled, and Blaise’s heart seized in his chest when Willow stepped back into the room, his head high and his back straight.

“No. Leave him alone, and I’ll go with you.”

“Willow,” Blaise hissed. “Get out, now!”

Willow ignored him, still focused on his former tormentor. “I’m not going to let you hurt him. If you want me, then let him go.”

A cold smile spread over Azeal’s face before his arm shot out, his fist connecting with Willow’s temple and knocking him out cold in one shot. He caught the man before he hit the ground and hauled Willow’s limp body over his shoulder. “I think I’ll just take them both.” His tongue licked a wet line over Cole’s ear, and Blaise watched his lover shudder in revulsion. “Remy needs a new toy to play with.”

Blaise roared, ripping his clothes off and preparing to shift as red rage descended over him. “I will kill you.”

“*Blaise, let him go.*” Cole stared straight into his eyes without a trace of fear as he pushed the words into Blaise’s mind. “*Call Jackson. I’ll protect Willow.*”

“I can’t do that,” Blaise responded out loud. He’d never been more furious in his life. He’d walk through hell to protect his mates, and shred anyone stupid enough to stand in his way.

“*Let me do this. It’s the only way to put an end to it once and for all. Get Jackson and come find us.*”

Azeal began moving toward the doorway, tugging Cole along with him as his nails bit further into Cole’s flesh. “Don’t try to follow me, shifter. I’ll kill them if you do.”

Blaise watched them ease out of the room, his heart breaking and his wolf howling for vengeance. “*I’ll find you. I’ll be there as soon as I can, baby.*” He sent the words to Cole. “*Take care of Willow. He won’t understand. I love you. Both of you.*”

He waited several minutes for a response, tears welling in his eyes when he received none. Blinking rapidly, he shook off his misery and tried to pull himself together. He didn't have time to fall apart.

Diving across the bed, he snatched his cell phone from the nightstand and dialed quickly, fidgeting impatiently as he waited for an answer. How long would it take Jackson to get there? Did he really need to be there? Probably not, but Blaise knew wild horses wouldn't be able to keep the kid away when he learned about his mother.

"Hey, Cousin!" Keeton sang into the phone. "You haven't called me in forever. Happy late birthday, by the way. So, have you worked things out with your mates yet?"

"I need Jackson," Blaise demanded as soon as Keeton paused. He must have gotten the point across that he wasn't in the mood for a thousand questions because Keeton didn't argue. Blaise could only thank God for small miracles.

Within seconds, Jackson came on the line. "What happened?"

"They took Cole and Willow. I need you to help me find them."

"Who took them? Who has my brother?"

"Your mother and her bastard offspring."

"Hold on." Several minutes passed before Jackson came back on the line. "There's an overnight flight leaving in an hour. There's a layover in Denver, but we'll be in Sheridan by three in the morning."

Blaise glanced at the clock and almost choked. Seven hours before Jackson arrived. Swallowing back his grief, he nodded, though Jackson couldn't see him. "I'll meet you at the airport. Thank you."

"You have a lot of explaining to do when I get there, but right now I just want to find my brother."

"I'll tell you anything you want to know when you get here. I can't lose them, Jackson. I just can't."

"Shut up. You're not going to lose anyone. Cole is tough, and he's fucking smart. I'll be there as soon as I can, and we're going to get them back. Don't flake out on me, asshole."

"Just get here."

Chapter Fourteen

Blaise's eyes rounded as he watched not only Jackson and Talon, but Xander and Logan as well, walk through the terminal with bags slung over their shoulders. "I didn't expect all of you."

"Well, you got us anyway," Logan said as he clapped Blaise on the back. "Keeton is fit to be tied right now, so you owe me big time after we get this mess straightened out. I couldn't really understand him through all the screeching, but I'm pretty sure I'm going to be sleeping on the couch for a while."

Blaise winced in sympathy as he led the way out of the main lobby and to the parking garage. "Sorry, man." A little inadequate, but he didn't really know what else to say. Yeah, it sucked, but it wasn't like he'd asked the big blond to come. He didn't want to be a prick, but really, he only needed Jackson.

"I can see what's going on in your head, and you're wrong," Xander said as they reached Blaise's pickup, and everyone began dumping their bags in the bed. "Jackson can find Cole, but you're going to need all of us to help get them back."

Blaise closed his eyes and sighed. He'd been so focused on finding his loves, he didn't even think of how he'd get them back. It's not like he could just waltz in and ask politely. "You're right. Thank you."

"We're family. It's what families do." Talon cuffed him in the back of the head before climbing into the backseat with Jackson. Logan slid in beside his brother, and Xander hurried around to climb into the passenger seat.

"So, how far are we from your place?" Logan asked.

“Not far, just twenty minutes or so once we get out of the airport.”

“Do you want to tell me what the fuck is going on now, or should we wait until we get there?” Jackson spoke for the first time since he’d gotten off the plane, and he didn’t sound at all happy.

“I think we should probably wait until we get to the house. I’d rather you not hit me while I’m driving.”

“What did you do?” Jackson growled.

“Nothing,” Blaise yelled. “I didn’t do a damn thing, okay? I just stood there and let that fucker take them.”

To his surprise, Jackson actually snorted. “This was Cole’s idea, huh? It has his fingerprints all over it.”

“Yes, but I shouldn’t have listened to him. I should have done something.”

“Man, let it go. I told you, Cole’s smart. He wouldn’t put himself in danger without a plan. Apparently, I’m that plan. So, let’s find them.”

“Then we’ll start strategizing about how to get everyone out of this alive,” Talon mumbled under his breath.

“Everything is going to be fine,” Xander spoke from beside him. “It’s not the first time we’ve been in a situation like this. At least we actually know what we’re walking into this time.”

A small comfort, but Blaise figured it was better than nothing. “So, where’s Boston?”

“Babysitting,” Xander and Logan said in unison before breaking into laughter. “I don’t think he wanted to run the risk of seeing Malakai again,” Logan added quietly.

That was something they needed to address, but it could wait until he had his mates home and safe. “How’s Flynn fitting in with you guys?”

The entire pickup rang with snorts, chuckles, and snickers. “What? What’s wrong? Don’t you like him?”

“Oh, we like him fine,” Jackson gasped through his laughter. “Some of us more than others.”

Looking at the kid in his rearview mirror, Blaise lifted an eyebrow in question. “What exactly does that mean?”

“It means Boston’s going to kill him,” Talon answered. “They’ve been at each other’s throats since Flynn arrived. It’s becoming a real pain in the ass. Do you think maybe he can go back to where he came from now?”

“It’s been almost three months and nothing has happened? No one has come looking for you?”

“Nope,” Xander supplied.

“Fine. I’ll find somewhere to reassign Flynn. Let’s just get through one crisis at a time, okay?”

“Hey, I like the guy!” Jackson said indignantly. “It’s Boston who can’t get his head out of his ass.”

“What’s Boston’s beef with Flynn?” Blaise had spoken with the Irishman on several different occasions, and he always seemed to be lively and jovial. He didn’t think the man had yet to meet a stranger. Anyone who met him instantly adored him.

“He’s Boston’s mate,” Jackson cackled, and the cab erupted into laughter again.

“I thought Malakai was Boston’s mate?”

“You have two, don’t you?” Logan asked.

Blaise snorted and dipped his head in agreement. “Point taken.”

* * * *

Willow groaned as he rolled over on the hard stone floor. The smells, the dankness, the soft sounds of dripping water told him where he was before he even opened his eyes. Memories of Azeal’s claws piercing Cole’s neck assailed him, and his eyes flew open as he pushed to a sitting position, desperate to find his mate.

He swayed a little, grabbing at his head as the dizziness swarmed him. Sitting still for a moment in hopes of regaining some of his

equilibrium, he felt a hand cover his and gentle fingers stroke over his cheek.

“Hey, baby. How you feeling?”

“Cole?” Willow whipped his head around, hissing at the ache in his temple and neck. Cole’s slender arms reached through the bars separating them, caressing him as he smiled sadly. “Are you okay? Let me see your neck. Do you need me to heal you?”

“Hush, baby. I’m just fine,” Cole cooed. “We’re going to be okay. Blaise will come for us.”

“What if he can’t find us?” Willow voiced his biggest fear. “I never wanted to come back to this place, but I’d gladly stay if they’ll let you go.”

“None of that. We’re both getting out of here. Remember when we were in the barn, and I needed to shift sometimes so I could talk to my brother?”

Willow nodded slowly. “Are you going to do that now? I don’t know if that’s a good idea, Cole. Don’t you have to be asleep?”

“Not always. It’s been a few hours. I’m sure Jackson is on his way by now. The closer he is, the easier it is for him to hear me.” He continued petting Willow’s face and hair as he spoke. “I’m going to shift and try to reach him, okay?”

“I’m cold,” Willow whispered as he closed his eyes and nuzzled his cheek against Cole’s palm. “It’s always so cold in here.”

“Willow, I want you to listen to me.”

Opening his eyes, he slowly lifted his head and looked into Cole’s eyes. He could barely see his mate in the dim, flickering light of the candles, but he could see the expression on Cole’s face, and he didn’t like it.

“I want you to shift, okay? Shift into something small that can fit through the bars, and then find a way out.”

Willow started shaking his head, his throat burning with the effort to hold back his tears. Cole caught his chin and held his head immobile as he continued. “Once you make it outside, just run. I

know how fast you are. Just run until you find a place with a phone and call Blaise. He'll come for you."

"I'm not leaving you here," Willow whispered.

"Listen to me," Cole demanded. "I passed out on the way here. I don't know where we are. I need you to find Blaise and bring him here. Do you understand?"

"I can't. I can't do it. I'm not brave like you or strong like Blaise. What if I get caught? What if I get lost?"

"Remember when we went to buy that Christmas tree?"

Willow frowned in confusion but nodded. What the hell did a Christmas tree have to do with anything?

"Remember how the city was all lit up at night?"

Willow nodded again, still not understanding where Cole was going with this.

"Just follow the lights, baby."

"Why don't I just get out and get the keys? We can go together," Willow said hopefully.

Cole smiled, but it looked kind of sad. "I'm too big. They'll see me. You can do this, Willow. I know you can, but you have to hurry, okay?"

Wracking his brain for any other solution that didn't involve leaving his mate, Willow finally sighed in defeat and dropped his head in defeat. "I love you, Cole."

"I love you, too, Willow. Now go." Cole kissed his own fingers before pressing them to Willow's lips.

Gripping Cole's hand for just a moment and placing a soft kiss against his fingertips, Willow moved to the middle of his cage and closed his eyes, thinking of something small that would fit through the bars and get him out of the house.

Once the shift was complete, he opened his eyes and wiggled out from beneath his clothing, looking up at his mate and chirping.

Cole chuckled, reaching through the bars again to pet the top of his head. "Very clear, little sparrow. I'm going to try to reach Jackson now. Do you remember Blaise's number?"

Willow thought over the numbers Cole had taught him weeks ago and chirped. *"I'll be back as soon as I can."*

"Safe flight," Cole whispered.

* * * *

Cole waited until his mate hopped through the bars and took flight toward the rafters, squeezing through a small hole in the roof that emitted a narrow stream of moonlight before quickly stripping out of his clothes and shifting. Huddling in the shadowy corner of his cage, he closed his eyes and tried to clear his mind.

He couldn't see much beyond his small circle of light, but he could hear scurrying in the corner and the muffled sounds of tiny feet against the stone floor. Pushing away the sounds, he voided his mind of all thoughts but Jackson. He didn't find the task easy, but eventually a peaceful calm settled over him, and his tired brain settled into a dark nothingness.

"Jackson? Can you hear me?"

"I'm here, little brother."

Cole sighed mentally, thankful he could count on Jackson. *"Knock it off, asshole. I'm still older than you."*

"And you're still a runt. Deal with it."

"Where are you?"

"We landed in Sheridan about half an hour ago. We're at the house. What took you so long?"

"I wanted to get Willow out of here first. Who's with you?"

"Everyone except Boston, Keeton, and Braxton. Where's Willow?"

“I sent him to find you. He’s a shenhari, Jackson. You wouldn’t believe what that little elf can do. He shifted into a sparrow and flew out through a hole in the roof. He’s on his way to find help now.”

“Where are you? And what’s this shit about Mom?”

“I don’t know where I am. The asshole that took us clocked me upside the head, and I passed out like a pussy. I woke up in a cage in some basement. I don’t even know which direction we went.”

“A lot of help you are,” Jackson said around a snort. “So, what about Mom?”

“I’ll explain what I know later. I need you to find Willow. Please, Jackson. He’s so scared.”

“Stay safe, Cole. Stay in wolf form for as long as you can. If someone comes after you, bite their balls off.”

“No problem there. Just get my mate.”

“We’ll find him, and then we’ll come for you. Don’t be stupid and try to play the hero. Wait for backup.”

Breaking the link, Cole opened his eyes and stared about his dank prison. Resting his head on his paws, he watched the dancing flame of the candle, sending up prayers that Willow would make it safely, and help would come before someone discovered him missing. Or before they decided Cole would make an excellent substitution.

Chapter Fifteen

“Willow did what?” Blaise yelled. “Where is he? I have to find him!” He flew around the room, not even knowing what he was looking for until he found his car keys on the kitchen counter. He turned to head toward the front door and collided with Logan. “Move,” he snarled.

“Would you calm the fuck down?” Logan gripped his shoulders and shook him roughly. “Dude, you are a Hunter. You know you can’t just go charging in there as much as I know you’re dying to play the white knight.”

“Cole said that Willow is coming to find us. I think we need to stay here until we hear from him,” Jackson said.

“But he’s out there all alone,” Blaise whispered. “He’s so little. What if something happens to him?”

“Just calm down. There’s no use in getting yourself worked up until we know something.” Xander pulled a chair out from the table and turned to straddle it. “We all have mates, man. We know what you’re going through. We have to have a plan, though.”

“Easy for you to say when your mates are home and safe,” Blaise grumbled. He would never forgive himself if anything happened to Willow or Cole. He needed his mates more than he needed air. Hell, his mates *were* the air he breathed. He would suffocate under a blanket of misery if he lost them.

“Yes, because it was so easy watching Braxton crumpled on the floor with a gunshot wound when his dickhead ex-boyfriend shot him.” Xander growled before pulling himself together again. “I’ll

never forget that day if I live forever. I'll never forget what it felt like to think I would lose him."

"Or sitting by Keeton's side in the hospital while he lay unconscious and bleeding, not knowing if his little body would be able to fight off the infection from a demon attack." Logan narrowed his eyes at Blaise. "No, I can't possibly imagine what you're going through."

"Or having your mate fall over when his heart gave out," Jackson whispered as he looked at Talon with tears in his eyes. "I never want to feel like that again."

Talon pulled Jackson to him, holding him tightly as he stroked his hair. "Or watching your impetuous mate rush into battle and knowing that you can't do anything to stop him," Talon murmured as he nuzzled his cheek against the top of Jackson's head.

Looking around the room, meeting each man's eyes in turn, Blaise felt about three inches tall. "I'm sorry."

"We know," Logan answered immediately. "We're here to help, though."

"So, let us help," Jackson added.

The room went silent, each man lost in their own thoughts, when a soft chirping drew their attention to the kitchen window. Turning around, Blaise smiled at the cute little sparrow perched outside on the windowsill, the light over the sink shining off its glossy feathers.

"Blaise, open the window," Jackson said excitedly.

"What?" Blaise chuckled and shook his head. "He's a cute little guy, but I don't want a bird in the house."

"You do this one." Jackson rushed over and threw open the window, holding his hand out and grinning like a fool when the little bird hopped right into his palm. Closing the window with his other hand to keep out the cold February wind, he carried the little sparrow over to the kitchen island and set him down gently. "It's nice to see you again."

Blaise rolled his eyes. The kid had obviously lost his mind. “Jackson, it’s a damn bird.”

The sparrow hopped around to stare at him, turning its head one way and then the other before it began chirping a mile a minute. It kind of reminded him of Willow.

Then the proverbial lightbulb went off in his head, and he hurried over to the island, scooping the little bird up in both palms and kissing the top of its head. Kneeling gingerly to the floor, he placed the sparrow on the tiles. “I missed you, baby,” he said as his head spun with relief. “I really need to hold you, but I’m going to squish you like this.”

“You are such a dork,” Willow said inside his head. “How could you not know it was me?”

Giddy with relief, Blaise laughed, tapping his mate on the beak. “I’ll do dishes for a month. Just change back, please.”

Tucking his head under his wing, the tiny bird began to grow, shifting much more quickly than Blaise had ever done, until Willow knelt in front of him, smiling and naked. Whipping his shirt over his head, Blaise pulled it down over his mate before practically jerking the man into his lap.

“I did it,” Willow whispered excitedly. “I did it, Blaise. I found you!”

Blaise crushed Willow to him, peppering kisses all over his face and head. “You did it, baby. You were so brave and smart. I’m proud of you, sweetheart.”

Willow flung his arms around Blaise’s neck and squeezed him tight before letting go and scrambling out of his lap. “We have to get Cole,” he announced to the room. Blaise actually shivered at the fierceness in his mate’s voice.

“We’re going to get him. Can you show us where he is?”

Willow turned and nodded eagerly. “Cole said to get to a telephone and call you, but I wanted to find you instead.” Willow shrugged innocently. “I don’t know. I could feel how worried you

were about Cole and me. The closer I came to you, the stronger I felt it.”

Blaise kissed Willow’s lips, lingering a little longer than polite while in company. “You did amazing. Now, let’s go get Cole.”

“Which way?” Jackson asked as he grabbed his jacket from one of the kitchen chairs.

“Uh...” Willow looked confused for a moment before the expression cleared, and he pointed out the window he’d just entered. “That way.”

“We’ll shift and go through the woods,” Blaise said immediately. “I’ll call Stavion, and his Enforcers can follow our trail.”

“It’s not far,” Willow piped up. “I was really surprised that it was so close.”

“I think you’re forgetting one important little fact,” Xander spoke as he rose from his seat. “We can’t shift,” he motioned around the room to his pack brothers, “unless you two stay here.”

“I think you can.”

“Explain,” Talon demanded, forever impatient.

“Remember when Willow healed your heart?”

“Yes.” Talon’s face softened as he looked from Jackson and then to Willow. “I’ll never be able to repay you,” he said quietly. “Thank you.”

Willow smiled in return, his cheeks heating as a very becoming blush worked its way up to the tips of his slightly pointed ears.

“Well, neither Willow, Cole, nor myself need to be fitted for straightjackets.”

“So, which one of you is a Moonlighter?”

“You know I’m not,” Blaise said with a sly grin. “Neither is Cole. And you just saw that Willow isn’t.”

“Yeah, Cole said he’s a *shenari*. That’s wicked cool, dude.”

“Wait a minute.” Xander waved his hands around to get everyone’s attention. “How is that possible?”

“I have a theory,” Blaise began but was cut off when everyone groaned, including Willow.

“Can we cut to the chase, babe? I’d really like to get Cole home so I can sleep. Flying is exhausting.”

“Fine. How about everyone just trusts me, and we can test my theory when Cole is safe.”

“If you say so, dude.” Jackson dropped his jacket to the floor and began stripping out of his clothes. “Can someone just tell me if my mom is a victim or the bad guy?”

“I’m sorry, Jackson,” Willow said quietly. “She’s definitely one of the bad guys.”

Jackson just shrugged and pushed his jeans to the floor as everyone followed suit and began to undress. “I haven’t seen her since I was eight. If she hurts my brother, I will kill her myself.” Then he finished undressing and knelt to the floor. “Let’s do this.”

* * * *

Cole woke from a fitful sleep when heard the sounds of metal scraping against metal. His nose twitched, wrinkling at the smells that permeated his small space. Cracking his eyes open, he watched Azeal and some man that looked a lot like him crouch down in front of his open cage.

“Come on, little puppy. Rise and shine,” Azeal sang. “Remy wants to play with you.”

“You didn’t tell me he was a shifter,” Remy muttered. “You know I like the little ones.”

“Oh, he’s a little guy, brother. Aren’t you, little puppy?”

Opening his eyes fully, Cole lifted his head, pulling his lips back over his teeth, and snarled. If the asshole called him “little puppy” one more time, he was going to lose his left nut.

Azeal laughed at him, reaching into his cage to grab him, and Cole lunged forward, sinking his canines into the meaty part of the man's forearm.

Azeal screamed, flailing his arm as he tried to shake off Cole's hold. "Get the little fucker off me," he commanded his brother.

Remy hurried to help, shoving his arm into the cage to swat at Cole. If he'd been able to snicker in wolf form, he would have. Releasing his hold on Azeal's arm, he turned on Remy, giving the man's searching hand the same treatment, biting clear down to the bone.

Remy screamed, jerking his arm back and tearing the tendons as he ripped his hand from Cole's mouth. "Go get the dart gun and the whip. I think someone needs to learn a lesson in manners."

Azeal smiled evilly before jumping to his feet and hurrying off with his still bleeding arm clutched in the other hand. "Should have played nice, huh, pup?" Remy leered at him as he plopped down on his rounded ass in front of the cage opening and just watched him.

Cole wasn't afraid of the whip—well, not much. He didn't like the sounds of a dart gun, though. He needed his wits about him, and tranquilizers were not the way to do that. Worse, if they dosed him with Inducers, he'd be forced to shift back to his human skin and lose the weapons of his fangs and claws. He knew because his dad had been the one to formulate the drug.

Then again, if the tranquilizers knocked him out—which they most likely would—he'd be even more helpless.

He was still debating himself on which would be worse when a dart hit him in the cheek, narrowly missing his eye and sending lightning bolts of pain through his face. Yelping and whimpering, he pawed at the small dart, trying to remove it from his cheek as the brothers laughed and cheered.

It took only seconds for him to feel the effects of the tranquilizer. His limbs felt numb, his brain went fuzzy, and his eyelids drooped

heavily. He staggered forward one step, then two, and then flopped to the floor unconscious.

* * * *

Willow soared through the air—an eagle his chosen form this time—as the others raced over the frozen ground after him. The cold wind whipped over his face as he dipped and dove, circling back every now and then when he'd gotten too far ahead of the pack. Man, he really liked flying. It was sex and fudge brownies all rolled into one.

He'd just begun another upward spiral when sickening heat lanced across his back, causing him to tumble several feet through the air before he could steady himself. The pain came again and again, swift and brutal, until he had no choice but to descend or risk falling from the sky.

A loud, painful yelp rent the night air, and Willow looked down just in time to see Blaise stumble before falling to his side and howling out in obvious distress. Landing on the ground beside his mate, Willow nudged him with his beak.

"Cole's hurt." Even in his head, Willow could hear Blaise panting through the onslaught of pain.

"I know, but we're almost there. Block it out. It's just over the next hill."

Blaise took a couple of deep breaths and laboriously pushed to his feet. *"Lead the way and hurry. We're running out of time."*

Willow closed his eyes and spread his great wings as the magic shimmered over him, transforming him into the clouded leopard he'd used to terrify the Enforcer, Raven. Once he'd stopped trying to force the shifts and just let it happen naturally, they had become as easy as breathing.

Purring softly, he rubbed his head under his mate's chin before stepping away and darting off through the trees. He ran like death

itself nipped at his heels, knowing the others were right behind him. Fiery pain continued to ripple across his back, but he pushed it away, turning on the speed as he crested the last hill and stopped.

The pack gathered around him, breathing heavily from their exertion as they gazed upon the large brick house at the bottom of the embankment. Heading the group, Willow descended the slope, converging on the house and preparing to wage battle if that's what it took to reclaim his mate.

"There are cellar doors around the back of the house. I don't know if they're locked or not."

"We'll find a way in." Blaise assured him. *"Whatever it takes, we'll find a way in."*

Chapter Sixteen

Biting his lip until he tasted blood, Cole refused to make a sound as the sharp sting of the leather whip snapped against his naked back. He'd woken up groggy and confused, his hands bound together with rope and looped over a hook that dangled from the rafters. His toes barely skimmed the ground, and the muscles in his arms and shoulders ached and screamed in protest.

"Scream for me, little puppy," Azeal jeered as the whip cracked, slicing into Cole's back once more. "I'll let you down if you scream for me."

The next slap of the whip caught him across the ass, wrapping around his thigh and missing his ball sac by mere centimeters. Still, he refused to cry out as he sagged limply against his restraints. Blood and sweat mingled together, dripping down his body to puddle on the floor beneath him.

Muffled footsteps approached, and a large calloused hand smoothed over his abused skin, gliding over his hip before cupping his ass and squeezing roughly. "Maybe we can find another way to make you scream, little puppy."

Fear lodged in his throat, cutting off his air supply, as Cole struggled against the uninvited touch, swinging from the hook as he kicked out weakly at his attacker. Hard knuckles smashed over his cheek, ending his attempt for freedom and finally drawing a surprised yell of pain from him.

Remy waved a finger in his face, smiling nastily as his other hand skimmed down Cole's chest and abs. "Play nice, pup."

“Blaise is going to kill you,” Cole murmured. “He’s going to pull your balls out through your throat and wear them around his neck.”

“Your alpha mate? The one who stood by and did nothing?” Azeal leered at him. “He’s not coming for you. He doesn’t want you, pup. You’re ours now.”

Azeal’s hands began roaming his body once more, and Cole felt his stomach lurch in disgust. He tried to hold on to his conviction that Blaise would come for him, rescue him, but a tiny part of his brain argued against the hope.

There were so many things that could go wrong. What if Willow had gotten lost and hadn’t been able to warn Blaise? Oh, God, what if Willow had been captured, and he was still inside the house somewhere?

Panic bubbled inside his chest, and Cole began jerking and wrenching his body, trying desperately to free himself. He had to get out of here and find Willow. Why had he been so stupid to send his little mate out on his own? It had seemed like a smart idea at the time, but now Cole just felt like the world’s biggest idiot.

Azeal’s and Remy’s hands were everywhere, skimming over his skin as they made appreciative growls. They licked their lips, their eyes devouring him, as their fingertips traveled lower and lower.

“Don’t touch me,” Cole snarled. Only his mates had the right to touch him in such a way. He’d rather feel the biting pain of the whip than have to endure their touch for a second longer.

“Oh, we’re going to touch you in a lot of places.” Azeal squeezed Cole’s ass, kneading the muscles and pulling the rounded cheeks apart roughly.

Cole kicked out behind him, using the last of his waning strength to deliver a solid blow to Azeal’s stomach. If he was going to die, he’d die with his dignity intact.

Azeal grunted and stumbled back a step. “You stupid bastard!” he roared. Then a large fist landed square in the center of Cole’s back.

The pain radiated from his spine, spreading throughout his body in sickening, nauseating heat. Cole squeezed his eyes closed and clamped down on his tongue as he fought against the debilitating pain.

“Get him down,” Azeal ordered as he slapped Cole across the lashes on his backside with an opened hand. “I want to find out if this ass is as tight as it looks.”

“Please, Blaise. Where are you?” Cole whispered inside his head. His strength was fading fast, running from his body to mingle with his blood that puddled on the floor. He knew he wouldn’t be able to fight off both of his attackers. He didn’t even have the energy left to be afraid anymore. All he felt was a burning ache in his chest for the loss of the men he loved.

“Cole, we’re close. Can you hear me?” Blaise’s voice drifted into his head, and Cole gasped in shock and relief before lifting his head and grinning wickedly.

“He’s *coming*,” he sang, dragging the words out eerily. “Run, little vamps. Run and hide.”

“What are you talking about? Who’s coming?” Remy asked, unable to conceal the slight quaking of his voice.

“Cole, are you okay? I know you’re hurt. Please talk to me,” Willow pleaded.

“I’m here, baby. I’m so proud of you.”

“Hang on, little brother. Willow’s going to melt the lock. Just a few more minutes.” Jackson chimed in. Cole felt a little dizzy from all of the voices swimming in his head.

A brutal backhand caught him in the mouth, whipping his head to the side as Azeal snarled and hissed at him. “You are fucking creepy, man. Stop it.”

Cole turned back to the vampire slowly, smirking as blood poured from his busted lip. “Run,” he whispered.

“Azeal, what the hell is he talking about?” Remy trembled, moving behind his brother and eyeing Cole as if he were possessed. “What’s wrong with him?”

“Nothing,” Azeal spat. “He’s just trying to mess with our heads.”

A loud boom sounded from the other side of the basement as the cellar doors flew open, bathing the cement steps in moonlight. A massive black wolf barreled through the opening, leaping down the steps and sprinting across the room as feral growls emanated from its snarling lips.

Cole had never seen a more gorgeous sight in his life. “Run,” he repeated with a nasty smirk just as Blaise flew through the air, tackling Azeal to the ground.

A white wolf emerged next, followed closely by two sleek snow leopards. Cole knew one was Talon and the other Logan, but he couldn’t for the life of him tell them apart. Xander entered next, enormous and almost majestic in his white tiger form. They each hurdled the stairs and prowled across the room as a unit, growling, snarling, roaring, and barking.

Remy squeaked in fear as he spun quickly and bolted across the room toward the other set of stairs that would lead him into the main house. He didn’t make it more than a few steps before the two leopards swarmed him, jumping on his back and bringing him down easily.

Jackson stood beside Blaise, staring down at the gruesome mess that had once been Azeal. Cole couldn’t dredge up even a tiny spark of remorse. “Can someone get me down? I can’t feel my hands anymore.”

Xander shifted immediately, hurrying over to lift Cole off the hook and set him gingerly to his feet. “You look like shit.”

“Feel like shit,” Cole mumbled around his smile of gratitude. “Thanks, Xander.”

“Can you stand?” Xander asked as he quickly unknotted the rope and unwound it from Cole’s wrists.

Cole nodded, rubbing at the raw flesh. "Yeah, I'm fine." The look on Xander's face said he had a hidden meaning behind his words. "Why do you ask?"

"Because someone is very anxious to see you." Xander stepped aside, revealing a very bouncy Willow.

"I think I can handle it," Cole whispered as he smiled tenderly at his little mate. "Come here, you."

Instead of throwing himself into Cole's arms, Willow stepped forward slowly, his eyes red and puffy as unshed tears shimmered in the moonlight. "I'm going to heal you now," Willow said firmly. He held his hand up, silencing Cole when he opened his mouth to argue. "You will let me do this." His voice held a finality that sent a wave of desire washing over Cole's battered body. Damn, his little elf was a sexy beast.

"Fine, but then I get to take you home and pamper you. Deal?"

Giggling, Willow nodded. "Deal."

"So, what do we do with the garbage?" Talon asked as he sauntered to them in his human form, splattered in blood and smiling from ear to ear. He pointed toward Remy's prone figure across the room. "Do we just leave it?"

Cole shrugged, completely unconcerned. "I told them to run."

* * * *

Blaise closed his eyes, breathing deeply as the change washed over him, transforming him to his normal six-foot-two height. Blinking back his eyelids, he stared down at Azeal's limp body, fighting the urge to rip the man's throat out and finish the job.

"Is the other one dead?" he asked no one in particular.

"Naw," Talon answered. "He's going to be feeling it for a while, though." He beamed widely. "This was fun. We should get together more often."

Blaise snorted, kicking Azeal in the thigh and pulling a soft groan from him. “Well, I think Jackson took care of this asshole.”

“I didn’t touch him,” Jackson panted after he’d returned to his human form.

“Nope, but just look at him.”

Everyone turned to stare. Azeal’s eyes were open and glazed, looking up at the ceiling as though the secrets of life were hidden in the rafters. Shudders wracked his body occasionally, and a thin line of drool mixed with the blood as it flowed steadily from the corner of his mouth.

“Oops.” Jackson snickered.

“Stop fidgeting,” Willow snapped, pulling Blaise’s attention to him.

“It feels weird,” Cole pouted as he shifted from foot to foot. Willow’s hands drifted over his back, a soft, golden glow flickering under his palms, and Blaise watched in amazement as the gashes on Cole’s back began to close and heal before his eyes.

“You’d be able to heal yourself, but it would take longer. Do you really want to be in pain for the next few days?”

“No,” Cole mumbled as he looked up at Blaise and winked.

Blaise moved in front of his lover in two long strides, cupping his cheeks in both palms and just stared. “Don’t ever scare me like that again.”

“Sorry,” Cole whispered, though he didn’t look a bit repentant. He smiled softly, his eyes dancing over Blaise’s lips with longing. “Kiss me.”

Brushing the pad of his thumb just under Cole’s cracked lower lip, Blaise shook his head. “I can’t.”

Willow stepped in between them, the strange light still covering his hands, and pressed one fingertip to Cole’s swollen lip. Within seconds, the wound healed, the puffiness faded, and Willow stepped away and giggled. “All better. Now, kiss the man.” Then he went back to healing Cole’s remaining injuries.

“You heard him.” Cole smirked impishly. “Kiss the man.”

Fisting his fingers in Cole’s hair, Blaise jerked him forward, loving the soft moan his mate gave him in response. “I love you, and I want to kick your ass all at the same time.” Then he crushed their mouths together before Cole could respond, devouring his mouth and reaffirming his claim on the man.

The kiss seemed to go on forever, everything fading away around them as Blaise reveled in the feel of his lover’s lips beneath his and the soft, slippery tongue that slid in and out of his mouth.

“That’s some pretty good kissing for a self-proclaimed straight man,” Jackson mumbled from behind them. “I think if they tried, they could shove their tongues a little further down each other’s throats.”

Talon chuckled lightly. “You’re ruining the moment, pup.”

Blaise broke the kiss, resting his forehead against Cole’s and gasping for breath. “Mostly, I think I just love you,” he whispered.

“Love you, too,” Cole breathed.

“Okay, all done,” Willow announced as he moved to stand beside them once again. “Now, gimme.”

They each turned to look at their lover, and Blaise groaned when Willow wrapped himself around Cole like a second skin and melded their mouths together in a scorching kiss. They really needed to get out of there and find a nice, flat surface big enough for the three of them. He had some very naughty ideas about how to welcome his mates home.

“It’s like the fucking Love Boat around here,” Talon whispered in his ear, repeating the words Blaise had spoken only months before when he learned of Talon and Jackson’s mating.

“I know.” He turned and lifted his eyebrows at Talon as Willow and Cole broke apart. “Isn’t it great?”

“Well, if everyone is sufficiently slobbered on now, I think we have a little family reunion to plan,” Jackson interrupted.

“Could we maybe find some clothes first?” Cole looked down at his naked cock as it jutted between his thighs, swollen and straining.

“I know she’s a bitch and all, but there are just some things mothers should not see.”

“Yeah, she definitely wouldn’t want to see this,” Willow moaned as he leaned back against the wall, his legs spread wide, and stroked his leaking shaft quickly.

“Willow!” Blaise and Cole yelled at the same time.

Willow glared at them mutinously but released his engorged prick and sighed. “You’re making this up to me when we get home.”

“Anything you want, baby,” Blaise offered as his eyes darted around the room looking for something to cover his mischievous little mate.

“Then I want to fuck you.”

Blaise’s attention snapped back to Willow as his heart tried to climb up through his esophagus. He heard several soft chuckles behind him but ignored them as his mind tried desperately to come up with an answer to Willow’s demand.

Willow giggled and rolled his eyes. “I’m kidding, Blaise.”

The tightening at the corners of his eyes told another story, however. “We’ll talk later,” Blaise offered before turning to the other men in the room. “Time to pay a visit to Mommy Dearest.”

“Oh, hey, wait a minute!” Willow took off in a flash, bolting up the concrete steps and out into the night.

“Wow, he’s fast,” Logan whistled.

“I’m going to kill him,” Blaise growled, jogging over to the staircase to go after his mate.

Before he cleared the first step, however, Willow returned, carrying a bundle of clothing. “I don’t know how much of this will fit, but I figured it’s better than nothing. I saw them hanging on the line when we came in earlier.” He pushed past Blaise and dropped the assorted garments to the floor.

“Mm, smart and pretty,” Cole mumbled, nuzzling his nose against Willow’s neck.

Blaise grumbled, and he marched over and swatted them both on the ass. “Get dressed and try to behave yourselves, hmm?” He plucked a pair of jeans from the pile and tugged them on as Willow stuck his tongue out, and Cole wrinkled his nose.

“Spoilsport,” they chorused.

“Azeal, Remy,” a feminine voice called from the top of the stairs that led into the house. “Stop playing with that mangy dog and come eat something. It’s almost sunrise.”

A small, willowy woman floated down the steps, freezing at the halfway point and staring at them in shock.

“Hello, Mother,” Cole said calmly.

Chapter Seventeen

“Cole?” His mother gaped at him. “What are you doing here?”

“Oh, please, just cut the crap.” Jackson stepped forward to stand beside Cole, presenting a united front.

“Jackson? Baby, is that you?”

Jackson lifted his arms to his sides and shrugged. “Not much of a baby anymore. I guess you kind of missed the formative years.”

Glenna hurried down the remaining steps and walked toward them, curling her lip and wrinkling her nose as she passed by Remy’s still unconscious body without comment. “I’ve missed you,” she whispered.

Cole held his hand up, his stomach churning in revulsion. “Just stop. We’re not children anymore, Mother, and we’re not stupid. Honestly, have you even thought about us at all since you left all those years ago?”

“Every day, I thought of you and missed you. I didn’t want to leave, Cole. I had no choice. He was going to hurt you.”

“Who?” Jackson demanded.

“Cyrus. He said he’d hurt you and your father if I didn’t come with him.”

Cole snorted loudly. “Right.”

“It’s the truth,” Glenna whispered. “I love you boys.”

“Then please explain to me how both Azeal and Remy are older than me. Explain why they share Cyrus’s last name.”

“It’s true,” Glenna conceded. “I was with Cyrus for many years before I met your father. He was cruel and vile, and I hated every day

I lived with him. Your father helped me escape. We were so happy together until Cyrus found me again.”

She sniffled, tears streaming down her rounded cheeks. Jackson moved forward, his arms outstretched to embrace their mother, but Cole stopped him with a hand on his chest.

“So, first you abandoned Azeal and Remy. Then you abandoned us to return to them? Something doesn’t add up, Mother.”

She just stared at him blankly.

“I have someone I’d like you to meet,” Cole said innocently. He turned and motioned Blaise forward. “Mother, this is my mate and the new alpha of the Cloud Peak Pack, Blaise Taylor.”

Glenna looked Blaise up and down and licked her lips, her hands actually twitching as though she wanted to touch him. “It’s nice to meet you,” she finally mumbled.

Cole turned again and crooked a finger at Willow, giving him a reassuring smile when his little mate trembled in fear. “She can’t hurt you, baby.”

Nodding, Willow shuffled forward, grabbing on to Blaise’s arm and half standing behind him. “And this is my other mate, Willow. You know Willow, yes?”

Cole watched as surprise, anger, and hatred flashed through his mother’s eyes before she plastered on a fake smile and dipped her head. “We haven’t met, I’m afraid. It’s nice to meet you, Willow.”

“You are such a shitty liar.” Jackson snorted from Cole’s other side. “How about we just cut to the chase because I’m fucking tired, and I just want to get the hell out of here and pretend you never existed.”

Glenna gasped, her hand going to her mouth as her eyes filled with tears again. “How can you say that? I’ve sacrificed so much for you. I love you, Jackson.”

“Please tell me what exactly you sacrificed on your back with your legs in the air.” Cole barely got the words out of his mouth before his mother’s hand shot out, connecting solidly with his cheek.

Shaking his head and rubbing the sting from his face, he glared at the woman. "I'm getting really sick of people slapping me."

"I've told you the truth. I don't know what more you want from me."

"So, the names Kendall, Jory, Galen, and Aslen mean nothing to you?" Blaise asked.

Fear crept over Glenna's face as she shook her head quickly. "I don't know what you're talking about." She looked at Cole, to Jackson, and back once more. "You have to believe me. I would do anything to protect you. I had to leave." A gentle smile played over her lips as she stepped forward to embrace Cole. "I love you so much, baby boy."

Cole stood motionless, his arms hanging limply at his sides. "You know something, Mother?"

"What is it, Cole? You can tell me anything." She kept her arms around him, hugging him fiercely.

"No matter how sweetly you whisper the words, they're nothing more than softly spoken lies." Anger leaked into his voice, seeping through his calm façade. "Now, tell me where the others are, or you'll find out just how much Jackson has changed since you left."

Glenna jerked back and glared at him. "You understand nothing," she spat.

"Have it your way." Cole waved a hand toward his brother.

Jackson pushed the borrowed sweats down his legs, knelt to the floor, and shifted.

Glenna screamed, stumbling backward as her hand went up to shield her eyes. "Get him out of here!" she screeched. "Abomination!"

"Tell us where the others are," Cole said dangerously. "Just because you can't see him doesn't mean his magic won't affect you." He clucked his tongue twice. "I suggest you remember quickly."

"It was Roan and Cyrus's idea," she blurted, still shielding her eyes as she continued backing away. "We were lovers, all of us. Your

father's heart broke because Cyrus could never see the sunlight or feel the warm rays on his skin. He became obsessed with finding a cure."

"A cure for being a vampire?" Xander snorted.

"When Azeal and Remy were born, Roan swore he'd find a way for our children to play in the sun."

"So, where do me and Jackson fit into this?" Cole asked, losing patience with his mother's long-winded tale.

"The Council became suspicious of your father's experiments. Cyrus arranged for the former alpha of the Cloud Peak Pack to disappear, and Roan took over as leader. He set up a clinic so that he could continue his work under the guise of treating the pack. We knew we were being watched, so we married, had children, and presented ourselves as a normal, happy family."

"You have got to be kidding me," Blaise mumbled angrily.

"So, why did you leave?" Cole asked, ignoring his mate.

"Because Cyrus needed someone to take care of his children while he tried to overthrow The Council," came a deep masculine voice from the cellar doors. "Isn't that right, Glenna? He needed a keeper for disobedient children."

"Glad you could make it, Stavion," Cole called to the vampire.

"Well, we heard there was a party, and we were invited," Demos answered as all five Enforcers filed into the basement. "You know how we like a good party."

"Who is that?" Glenna squeaked, still covering her eyes with her hands.

Huffing in exasperation, Cole turned back to his mother and frowned. "Your story breaks my heart, it really does," he said sarcastically. "I don't really give a shit about why you left or how this all began. I just want to know where Willow's friends are."

Jackson trotted over to their mother and brushed against her legs, nudging her sideways. Glenna yelped, jumping away from the wolf as she began to shudder. "The Redway Clan," she wailed.

"Did you check the silos?" Blaise asked.

“Yeah,” Raven answered. “Nothing, man.”

“Where are they?” Cole repeated as Jackson brushed against their mother again.

“There’s a little cabin on the edge of the property. Please, that’s all I know.”

“Fuck,” Cassius breathed.

“We’ll check it out,” Stavion assured them. “What do you want us to do with these three?” He pointed between Glenna, Azeal, and Remy.

“Take them to the ICPI,” Blaise ordered.

“What? No!” Glenna finally dropped her hands from her eyes, looking around the room frantically. “You can’t arrest me! I didn’t do anything wrong!”

“Maybe not,” Cole muttered. “But you did nothing to stop it either.”

“This sucks.” Varik kicked at the floor with the toe of his boot. “We get here late. Miss all of the fun stuff. Now we have to take some crazy bitch to those old fools at the International Council for Preternatural Justice.”

Wrapping one arm around Blaise, and the other around Willow, Cole sighed in contentment. “Let’s go home.”

* * * *

“I’m exhausted,” Jackson mumbled around a yawn as they all trudged in through the back door. “I still have a million questions, but they can wait until morning.”

“I want to know about this theory of yours.” Talon rubbed the back of Jackson’s neck as he spoke to Blaise. “Obviously, you know more than you’re telling. This has to do with all of us, and I think we have the right to know.”

Blaise held his hands up at Talon's demanding tone. "I never said it was some big secret." He motioned toward the kitchen table. "Everyone, sit, and I'll explain what I think is happening."

Quick to comply, everyone sagged into chairs, Willow climbing into Cole's lap as they all watched Blaise pace the kitchen. "I think you've already proven my theory, but I'd like to test it once more under more controlled conditions."

Looking up just in time to see his mates share a look and roll their eyes, Blaise pointed a finger at them. "Don't start."

"We didn't say a word," Cole replied sweetly. "Please, continue with your lecture, professor."

Blaise gave them one last glare before turning to Jackson and Talon. "I need you to come here." He motioned to Jackson, waiting until the man moved over to stand beside him before pointing to Talon. "And I need you to shift."

Talon grumbled and grouched but stood and began undressing once again before kneeling on the floor and shifting. "Okay, just stay there." Blaise turned his back on the leopard and whispered out of the side of his mouth to Jackson. "I'm going to kiss you. I promise I'm not coming on to you, but we need to sell it, okay?"

Jackson looked back at his mate before grinning and nodding. "I love it when he gets jealous."

"Well, if my hypothesis is correct, I'm going to need you to calm him immediately. I really don't want to spend the rest of my life in a padded cell."

"No problem. He's really just a big pussy cat."

Blaise chuckled without much humor. He seriously doubted that. "Okay, so everyone sees that Talon is in his Moonlighter form, and me, Willow, and Cole are perfectly fine."

He waited for the men to nod before taking a deep breath, jerking Jackson into his arms, and sealing their mouths together. Jackson pressed against him, moaning like a slut, and Blaise almost jumped back in surprise. Damn, the kid could act.

“That is the most unconvincing kiss I have ever seen,” Willow teased inside his head.

Apparently, Talon had other ideas. A loud snarl filled the room, making Blaise shudder as ice froze in his veins. Voices began talking inside his head, just quiet mumbling at first, but growing louder with each passing second. He felt his eyes start to glaze over as horrific depictions of war and death flashed inside his mind’s eye. “Go,” he whispered to Jackson.

Jackson dove to the floor, wrapping his arms around Talon’s neck and whispering something in his ear. The cat instantly calmed, purring loudly as he nuzzled against his mate and licked his cheek.

The voices in his head died away, the visions faded, and Blaise shook his head to clear the last of the buzzing from his ears. “Wow. I see how people go insane.”

Talon shifted back, marched up to Blaise, and punched him right in the jaw. Then he calmly began dressing before sitting in his seat once again and pulling Jackson into his lap. “You deserved that.”

“Yeah, I guess so,” Blaise agreed. “But it does prove my point. Did either of you feel anything?”

Willow nodded. “I felt a pressure inside my head. Kind of like a headache, I guess. But it was coming from you. I didn’t personally feel anything.”

“Same here,” Cole agreed.

“Okay, apparently, I’m missing something here.” Xander pushed a hand through his long, black hair. “What exactly are you saying?”

“When Braxton’s ex lost his marbles, you were angry at him when you shifted.”

“That’s an understatement,” Xander mumbled. “I wanted to rip his throat out. Still do. Too bad the fucker’s dead.”

“And when you faced the Arsidian demon, you were each angry for whatever reason.”

“No one fucks with our family,” Talon agreed.

“When you shifted and attacked Alpha Cunningham?”

“He hurt my baby,” Talon whispered and pulled Jackson down to kiss his lips. “I wanted to kill him.”

“And in the basement when Jackson was standing over Azeal?”

“I hated him for what he’d done to my brother,” Jackson said slowly. Blaise could almost see the wheels turning in his head. “And Talon was pissed when you kissed me. So, you think our power revolves around our anger?”

“Bingo.”

“And our mates are unaffected because it’s instinctual to protect them,” Logan added. “It makes sense.”

“Well, that’s good to know, but it still doesn’t change anything.” Xander stood from the table and stretched. “We’re still going to be outcasts. We’ll still be hunted.”

Hanging his head, Blaise sighed. “I know. Maybe I can talk to The Council and find a way to spread the word. See if we can change people’s perceptions on the breed.”

Xander walked around the table and thumped him on the back. “You’re a good man, Blaise, but sometimes you just can’t win. I think this is one of those things you just have to leave alone.”

Jackson stood as well, stretching his arms over his head and yawning hugely.

“C’mon, I’ll show where you’re sleeping.” Blaise chuckled.

“Actually, I’m starving.”

Groans went around the table, and Talon shook his head as he laughed. “Some things never change.”

Chapter Eighteen

“Cole, can you help me with this word?”

Putting aside his own book, Cole looked down at the page to the word where Willow’s finger rested. “That one looks hard because it’s long, but it’s really just a compound word. Remember we talked about how you can take two words and put them together to mean something else?”

Willow nodded as his finger traced over the word. He covered half of it, and a big grin stretched over his face. “Through.” He moved his finger to cover the other half. “Out. Throughout.”

Kissing Willow’s temple, Cole’s heart swelled with pride at Willow’s determined attitude. He had progressed quickly, zipping through the children’s books and working hard, never complaining, until they were now buying books at a fifth grade reading level. “You are so smart. I can’t believe how much you’ve learned in just four weeks.”

“Well, I’m sure the blowjob rewards have nothing to do with it.” Willow giggled as he snuggled down further in the blankets.

Rolling his eyes, Cole picked up his book again and settled back against the headboard. The blowjobs hadn’t really started out as a reward. He’d just been so excited by Willow’s progress, he’d jumped him right in the middle of the kitchen.

“Who taught you how to read, Cole?”

“My mom.” Surprisingly, the mention of his mother neither angered nor depressed him. It was as though he spoke of a stranger.

Glenna, Azeal, and Remy had been taken before the ICPJ and charged with various crimes against the preternatural world. Azeal

had a nice little padded cell with a comfy jacket, fitted tightly around him, so that he would always have a hug. Glenna and Remy were banished, sent to live in the wilds of Siberia. Cole smiled every time he thought of his mother freezing her evil ass off in the Russian Federation.

The Enforcers had found Willow's friends and fellow slaves, as well as the other thirty-one missing captives, chained and hidden under the small cabin on the Redway Clan estate. Malnourished, half-frozen, and scared of their own shadows, the men broke Cole's heart. Death had been too lenient a punishment for Cyrus Redway.

Stavion still refused to acknowledge his leadership of the Redway Clan. Since the coven consisted of only twenty-nine members, he had petitioned The Council to have them join the Snake River Coven. Cole had a sneaky suspicion the whole thing was going to blow up in the vampire's face.

"I don't really remember my parents," Willow said, bringing Cole out of his thoughts.

"How old were you when they sold you?" He tried to keep his voice even and hold his temper leashed.

"I don't remember really. I think I was five or so." Willow's brows drew together as he concentrated. "They kept me in the basement, like Mistress Glenna."

"She is not your Mistress," Cole growled.

Willow waved him away. "You know what I mean. They didn't put me in a cage, and I had a few toys." A fond smile covered his lips. "I had a teddy bear named Leiland. I wish I knew what happened to him. Sometimes my mom would come and sing to me."

His chest constricted, and Cole swallowed down the lump in his throat. "Why did they keep you in the basement?"

"I don't know that either. I think they just didn't like me." Willow shrugged.

"That doesn't make any sense. You were just a baby. If your mother sang to you, then she must have loved you."

"I'm not an elf, though." Willow sighed and fumbled his fingers together in his lap. "I'm a hybrid."

"Were both your parents elves?" Cole had a sneaky suspicion as to where this was going.

"I think so," Willow muttered. "I can't remember. They both looked a lot like Elder Winters, the elven representative for The Council."

"They both had silver blond hair?"

"Yes, I do remember that. My mother's hair smelled so pretty when she'd hold me in her lap. Dad would get mad when she did that, though, so it only happened a few times."

"Honey, I don't think that was your dad." Cole closed his eyes as his heart shattered for his mate. "I think your mom might have had an affair." He opened his eyes and tugged softly at the end of Willow's dark locks. "Your hair isn't blond, baby."

Willow nodded thoughtfully for a moment before he smiled and shrugged. "It was a long time ago. I have a new family now."

"Yes, you do, and we love you very much." Cole kissed his lover's temple. "Do you remember your parents' names?" he asked casually.

Willow chuckled and turned to kiss his cheek. "Nice try. I appreciate that you want to slay my dragons, but some things are just better left in the past." His face became serious, and he tilted his head to the side. "Blaise never talks about his parents. Why not?"

"I'm not sure. I don't think he sees them much because of his job as a Hunter. From little things he's let slip, I don't think they have a close relationship, either. Maybe we'll get to meet them at Keeton and Logan's wedding in a couple of weeks, though."

"That's sad," Willow whispered. "The only one of us with real parents, and they never speak."

Before Cole could respond, Blaise rushed into the room, his eyes bright and shining as he waved a piece of paper around in the air like a maniac. "I got it!"

“Hell yeah!” Cole jumped out of bed and rushed over to snatch the documents from Blaise’s hand to read them himself. “Hell yeah!” he repeated.

“What’s going on? What is that?”

Cole looked up at Willow, his heart pounding inside his chest. “I have something for you to read.”

Blaise ripped the papers out of Cole’s hand and rushed over to plop down beside Willow on the mattress, pushing the files under his nose. Rolling his eyes and laughing, Cole hurried over to join them, crawling into bed on Willow’s other side.

“That’s my name,” Willow said as he stared intently at the words on the page. Cole watched his lips moving, sounding out the words as he read. “Willow Taylor-Cunningham,” he murmured slowly. Then his head shot up, and he let out a loud squeal, tackling Blaise to the mattress and devouring his mouth in a hungry kiss.

“Thank you,” he breathed when he finally came up for air. His attention turned on Cole, and he leapt across the bed, pushing Cole to his back and laying claim to his mouth as well. “Thank you,” he repeated.

“You didn’t have a last name, and we have two, so we figured we could just hyphenate them.” Blaise shrugged as his cheeks tinted crimson. “I talked to Elder Winters, and he agreed immediately. He told me to tell you to call him if you ever need anything. We just want you to be happy.”

Tears pooled in Willow’s eyes, but he smiled so big Cole thought his face would split in two. “I am more than happy. I’m perfect.”

* * * *

Shifting in his seat, Willow practically vibrated with excitement. He’d been plotting all week on how to properly thank his mates for everything they’d done for him. He had a last name, a real identity, and because of his mates, he could actually read and write that name.

They deserved something special in return, and he'd finally decided on the proper gift.

"So, what did you guys want to do tonight?" Blaise asked as he cleared the dishes from the table and carried them to the sink. "We haven't had naked movie night in a while."

"Yes!" Willow exclaimed. He bit his lip and blushed at his outburst, but naked movie night fit in perfectly with the plans he had for his men.

Cole chuckled as he stood from his chair and started helping Blaise clean the kitchen. "A movie it is then. What do you want to watch, baby?"

He could honestly care less about the movie, but he wasn't ready to reveal his present just yet. "I'll go look." He sprang up from the table and practically sprinted to the living room, pulling off his clothes as he went. He heard his mates laugh from the kitchen but ignored them as he undressed, grabbed the first movie he saw off the shelf, and hurriedly put it in the DVD player.

"Do you want popcorn?" Cole called from the kitchen.

"No, just hurry!" Willow snatched one of the blankets from the love seat and spread it over the area rug before lying down to stretch out on his back.

"We're coming. Just hold your...Holy shit!" Blaise exclaimed as he walked into the room.

Willow palmed his aching cock, stroking it slowly as he stared into his mate's eyes. "Need you, big guy."

Blaise stripped in record time and dropped to the carpet, crawling to Willow and covering his smaller body. "You are so gorgeous," he whispered as he licked a wet trail up Willow's neck.

"I don't know if you realized this, but I'm kind of a sure thing. Maybe you can fuck me now, and we'll talk later." Willow squirmed beneath his lover, his body burning with need.

"Impatient much?"

“Yes,” Willow growled. What had started as a thank-you for his mates had quickly turned into a clawing desire to be fucked and sucked until he passed out.

“I thought this part happened at the end of the movie.” Cole laughed as he walked into the room and stripped out of his clothes. “I like this way better.”

“There’s a velvet sack in the top of the closet,” Willow panted while Blaise worked down his chest and bit at his nipples. “Hurry, Cole.”

Cole darted over to front closet and returned just seconds later, pulling open the large black bag and staring into it with rounded eyes. His head lifted, his eyes met Willow’s, and he arched his eyebrows. “Naughty, naughty little elf.” He grinned as he knelt to the floor and upended the contest onto the blanket. “I’m so glad we taught you how to shop online.”

Blaise released Willow’s pebbled nipple and groaned as he leaned over him to inspect the toys. “Kinky little brat,” he muttered under his breath. He picked up the roll of black satin tape and examined it. “Nice.”

Cole picked up the black, velvet-covered paddle, turning it over in his hands and snapping it against his palm. “Turn over, baby.”

Willow complied quickly, flipping to his stomach and pushing up on his hands and knees. “Fuck me,” Cole breathed, his fingers caressing over Willow’s upturned bottom. “Have you had this in all night?”

“Yes,” Willow groaned as one of his mates pulled gently on the large butt plug then let his hole suck it back in.

“We’ll play with the tape later,” Blaise mumbled as he tossed it to the side.

Willow pouted in disappointment until his big alpha moved around in front of him, his gorgeous prick just begging for Willow’s mouth. Blaise didn’t say a word, just palmed the back of Willow’s head and urged his head forward as he held his cock at the base.

Willow moaned, diving forward eagerly to lap at the engorged head, flicking his tongue over the slit to gather the beading drops of pre-cum. Blaise shuddered above him, growling deep in his chest as he pushed his hips forward, rubbing the crown of his cock over Willow's lips. Humming his approval, Willow opened readily, wrapping his lips around his mate's heated flesh and swirling his tongue over the perfect mushroom head.

His own cock strained and throbbed, weeping from the tip as his ass convulsed around the silicone plug in his channel. Pushing his nose into Blaise's closely cropped curls, he took the spongy head to the back of his throat, swallowing around it as he laved the underside of his lover's cock with his tongue.

A light smack landed on his ass, sending tingles through his body and causing him to moan around the turgid flesh in his mouth. Blaise groaned, fisting his hands in Willow's hair. "Fuck, that feels good, baby. Love your mouth."

Cole swatted him again, the velvet-lined paddle landing on his other cheek this time. Another swat, then another and another, Cole set a steady rhythm, paddling Willow's ass as he gently tugged on the butt plug, driving Willow out of his mind with pleasure.

Letting Blaise's erection slip from his mouth with a naughty slurp, he threw his head back and cried out as his balls drew tight to his body and threatened to unload. "Someone fuck me," he wailed. "Oh, my God, please!"

Blaise stroked his cheek, nodding once before stretching out on the floor and wiggling his head between Willow's spread thighs. Soft, wet heat surrounded his pulsing length, and Willow cried out, dropping his hips and thrusting into Blaise's glorious mouth.

Cole landed one final swat then tossed the paddle to the floor as he slowly worked the toy in and out of Willow's needy tunnel. "Come for us, Willow," Cole demanded, and Willow had no choice but to obey when Blaise's throat muscles constricted around the head of his prick.

Dropping his head to Blaise's thigh, he growled out his release, pouring his seed into his lover's waiting mouth. Blaise milked him for all he had then squirmed out from between his legs, giving him a wicked grin. "Our turn."

* * * *

Blaise flipped Willow to his back, removing the toy from his ass and replacing it with his cock in one smooth motion. Willow cried out, whipping his head back and forth as Blaise sank into the base and began thrusting immediately.

He couldn't stop, couldn't control it. Luckily, Willow seemed to be right there with him, arching his back and pushing up into him, meeting him stroke for stroke. So lost in his desire, he didn't immediately notice Cole move in behind him until his small hand began caressing Blaise's muscled cheeks.

Slowing down his pace, Blaise looked over his shoulder, meeting Cole's gaze, unable to ignore the longing in those brilliant green eyes. "Do it," he whispered. "Fuck me, baby."

Taking him at his word, Cole flipped open the lid on the bottle he held in his hand and coated his dick and fingers quickly. Blaise returned his focus to Willow, gliding in and out of him slowly as Cole's finger parted his cheeks, and one slick finger nudged against his entrance.

The digit breached the guarding ring of muscles, sliding in to the first knuckle and wiggling around a bit before pushing in deeper. Blaise groaned, closing his eyes and dropping his chin to his chest. Why had he been so afraid of this? It felt amazing.

Cole stretched him quickly, sawing his finger in and out until the muscles loosed enough for him to add a second. The slight pinch of pain only served to send Blaise's need to a boiling point. "Enough. Fuck me," he demanded.

"Hush," Cole said tightly. "You're not ready."

"I like the burn," Blaise confessed. "Just do it, baby. Please." Even a big alpha male like himself was not above begging for what he needed.

"Okay, but tell me if I hurt you." Cole gently pulled his fingers from Blaise's channel and pushed between his shoulder blades.

Blaise leaned forward, hovering over Willow and remaining motionless as he waited for Cole. "You're going to love it," Willow whispered up to him. "Just breathe, big guy."

"Love you," Blaise murmured, capturing Willow's lips in a soft kiss. He hissed at the stinging burn as Cole pushed in, working his thick cock inch by inch until he bottomed out.

His balls churned, and his cock pulsed inside the silky inferno of Willow's tight body. Damn, he wasn't going to last long. "Move."

Working together, they found their rhythm, increasing their pace as they all chased after their own climax. Blaise's head swam with pleasure as he worked himself between his lovers, driving into Willow's hungry ass and fucking himself on Cole's throbbing length.

All too soon, his belly tightened, lightning raced down his spine, and Blaise threw his head back, roaring loud enough to shake the windows as he spilled himself into his lover's dark tunnel. Willow followed quickly, groaning as his ass clamped down on Blaise's cock in waves, and hot ropes of semen erupted from his slit, painting his abs and chest.

Cole thrust twice more and stilled, his forehead dropping to Blaise's back as he growled, and scorching wet heat splashed against Blaise's inner walls. They slumped together, breathing heavily and trying to tame their racing pulses.

Eventually they separated, cuddling together on the floor, Willow on one side, and Cole on the other. Blaise wrapped his mates up in his arms as he stared at the ceiling, thanking whoever was listening for granting him such happiness.

"Thank you for not giving up on me," Blaise whispered.

Willow kissed his chest and snuggled in closer. “Never happen. You’re my happy ending.”

“Just don’t keep things from me or lie to me, and we’ll be right as rain.” Cole curled closer, placing a chaste kiss on Blaise’s cheek. “I’ve had a lifetime of being lied to by people I thought loved me. I can’t take anymore.”

“I promise anything softly spoken from my lips will be nothing but honesty.”

“Same here,” Willow said as he pushed up on his elbow to look at Cole. “Softly spoken or yelled at the top of my lungs, I will never lie to you.”

“Thank you.”

“Okay,” Blaise said jovially, hoping to lighten the mood. “Shower. We’re gross, and I still have cum leaking out of my ass.”

Cole chuckled, but Willow looked at him sadly, his bottom lip poking out.

“Hey, what’s all this about?”

“I didn’t get to be in the middle...again.”

“Fine,” Blaise sat up and looked from Cole to Willow. “First one to the shower gets to be in the middle.”

A lot of pushing, shoving, and laughter ensued as each man fought to gain his feet and be the first to the bathroom. Willow broke free, scrambling over them and racing down the hall, cackling madly the entire way. “I win!” he shouted.

Blaise looked at Cole and arched an eyebrow. “Race you for the bottom.”

THE END

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gabrielle Evans grew up in a small town in southern Oklahoma. We are talking one red light that may or may not work depending on the day of the week. She married her high school sweetheart and the rest is pretty much history. They have two very active boys and one high-strung wiener dog that keeps her constantly on the go. For now, she parks her car in north-central Texas, but who knows what tomorrow will bring.

Gabrielle believes in love at first sight, falling hard and fast, taking chances, and grabbing your happy-ever-after with both hands. She also believes that a great cup of coffee can cure anything.

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