

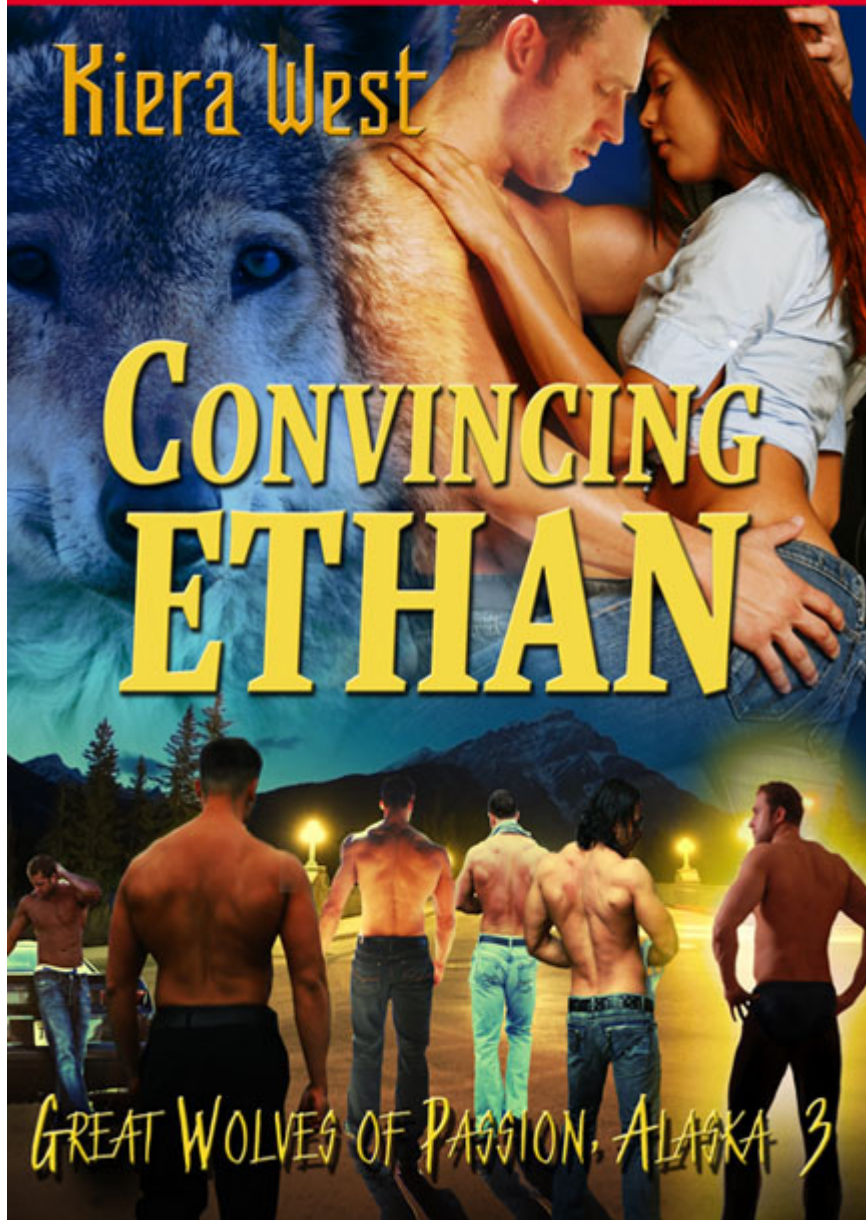
Siren Publishing

LoveXtreme Forever

Kiera West

CONVINCING ETHAN

GREAT WOLVES OF PASSION, ALASKA 3



Great Wolves of Passion, Alaska 3

Convincing Ethan

Ethan has been in love with Eve since he met her. He knows that she is their mate. Still, he feels drawn to her mind as much as her sexy, curvy body. Since she is the one who nursed him back to health after his attack, he thinks that her feelings spring from saving his life. But, for him, that is enough.

As Eve works side by side with Ethan, she finds a kindred spirit. He respects her mind and understands the way she thinks. It doesn't hurt that he seems to know what she needs even before she does. She knows he thinks she doesn't love him, and Eve decides to pull out all the stops to prove to the stubborn wolf she truly loves him.

But, someone is still bent on attacking the pack, and as the violence escalates, Eve and the Dillons find they have no one to trust but each other.

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Genre: Ménage a Trois/Quatre, Paranormal, Vampires/Werewolves

Length: 21,279 words

CONVINCING ETHAN

Great Wolves of Passion, Alaska 3

Kiera West

LOVEXTREME FOREVER



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DEDICATION

To my husband and girls. Thank you so much for the support.

CONVINCING ETHAN

Great Wolves of Passion, Alaska 3

KIERA WEST

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Chapter One

“I have never said this, but there is a good chance I might murder our mother,” Ethan said, unable to contain his irritation anymore. It had been over a two weeks since the attack, and his mother wouldn’t let him do a damned thing. His skin was starting to crawl from the inactivity. He needed to run and to run for a whole night. He hadn’t truly gone to wolf since before that night.

Noah looked up over his laptop screen as Ethan paced the kitchen. The smile his brother shot in his direction said it all. There would be no help from Noah. Nobody wanted to even try to tell their mother no. Including their father, the former Alpha of the pack.

“Coward,” Ethan sneered.

“When it comes to Mother, completely,” Noah said, nodding.

“Can’t you tell her to stop checking on me? Hell, Eve can do just fine taking care of me.”

Noah snorted. “Mother knows better. With Eve being our mate, she knows you’ll strain yourself.”

He said it with a perfectly straight face. Ethan stopped and stared at him. “I was wrong. I’ll just kill you. Then I’ll be Alpha and boss Mother around.”

Noah snorted. “Yeah, good luck with that. First, no Alpha has been able to boss around the Alpha female. Won’t happen. Second, if you kill me, you’ll be stuck with the shit I have to put up with.” He glanced at the clock and sighed. “Like the meeting I have to go to right now. I hate meeting with the other Totem leaders.”

Ethan thought of the endless politics, especially now after the attacks had gotten worse. Just dealing with the pack was bad enough. Tensions were high, and there was a growing unrest within the Passion Alaskan Preserve.

“You’re right. Meetings are a good form of punishment for you.”

Noah rose from his seat and grabbed the keys to his SUV. Another sign that things weren’t like they used to be. Noah wouldn’t have thought twice about going to wolf and letting off some steam with a run before a gathering. But with the problems they had been having, they only ran in packs for defense. One of the many orders that Noah had instituted since the fire. “Everyone else is out on patrol.”

“Eve?” Ethan asked.

Noah’s smile kicked up a notch. “She’s in the lab.”

After Noah left, Ethan headed in the direction of his lab. It was funny how so much had changed in the last two weeks. Some good, some bad. Just a week before he would have sworn he would let no one in his lab. But when a wolf had been attacked, he and Eve had worked together to save the wolf. Now she came and went when she wanted. And he was loathe to complain. She had saved his life, and well, it just seemed right. He liked being in there with her, working side by side. There was something peaceful about having her by his side.

He reached the door and watched her through the glass. When Noah had said he’d found their mate, Ethan hadn’t believed him. It was too early in their lives, since they lived an average of one hundred fifty years. Most mates weren’t found until later in life, after they had a chance to sow their seed, so to speak.

Until he met her. He had always had no problem controlling himself around women, but the moment he met Eve he had wanted to tear off her clothes and mount her. In the last week and half, he and Eve had shared pleasures, but not to the depth she and Ethan had. He knew the night they had declared their love for each other. It had been easy to see in the way they looked at each other.

Love. It was an easy word to throw around. He had been in love with her since he met her. *No.* Wrong. He had been in lust. The moment he had caught her unique scent, he had thought of nothing more than sliding into her hot, tight passage and losing himself. Worse, once he had, as it was for his brother and cousins, he couldn't even fantasize. Being near her had made it impossible. But once she'd been settled, he started reading up on her and doing a little research into her work. Through that and her kind, generous nature, he had fallen in love with her. It didn't hurt that she was beautiful.

Long red hair cascaded over her shoulders. She was wearing one of their shirts, his, he thought. It was entirely too big for her and a bit on the manly side, since it was a tailored white shirt. It fell to just above her knees, almost dwarfing her. He couldn't stop the heat that flared at that thought. She was their mate, and he had no problem sharing her with his brother and his cousins. But there was something about seeing her in his clothes that brought out a primitive yearning he didn't know he had before he met Eve. It had been growing each day he was in her presence. It was one of the reasons Ethan had avoided her until Noah had decided it was time to approach her. He hadn't been too sure he could keep his hands off her.

He cocked his head and studied her. She was reading a printout, probably something to do with her research. The shirt should have made her look masculine, but it didn't. Instead, the way it enveloped her, along with the snug tank top and body-hugging yoga pants, provided plenty to prove she was a woman.

As if she sensed him, she turned her head in the direction of the door. In the next instant, she smiled. The amazing wattage of that smile always shot straight to his heart.

He opened the door and stepped inside. The moment he did, the scent of her smacked him hard. He drew in a deep breath, trying to calm his pounding heart. It was musky, female, and utterly Eve.

“Hey, Ethan. I hope you don’t mind I was using your laptop to input my data. Noah is still being a bear about me going back to the cabin.”

He chuckled. “Don’t let him know you called him a bear.”

Her eyes widened. “Oh, I hadn’t thought about that. I guess he would see it as some kind of put-down.”

“Yeah. Especially Noah.”

“Hmm, why would that be? I thought Vic was perfectly nice.”

The idea that she had met Vic was bad enough. The leader of the polar bears wasn’t exactly an enemy, but they all saw him a rival. The bears always took just one mate. Vic and his brothers hadn’t found their mate yet, and he knew that since the bear had met Eve, he’d been intrigued. Enough that Noah had the meeting outside of the house. Ethan knew it was a pain in the ass, but Noah did it to keep all of the other totem leaders away from Eve until they claimed her.

“Sure he is. Bears who weigh several tons are always soft and cuddly.”

“I guess they aren’t exactly teddy bears.”

He laughed. “No, but I would love to see Redfoot’s reaction if you called him a teddy bear.”

“You sound good,” she said.

Her soft voice left him wanting more. He would always want more with her. He knew that. When he met her four months ago, he had realized just how much he needed her. He could handle that. What he didn’t like that she looked at him as if he were an invalid.

“Yeah, well, everyone is out on patrol. I thought you might want to talk about things.”

She crossed her arms and turned on her stool to face him. “Things?”

“I know what you’re thinking. The idea of what we are is a little out there for you.”

“Noah was going to explain, and I thought being the Alpha. He did say to ask you, but since the fire at Margie’s, I hadn’t wanted to bother anyone.”

He frowned as he walked down the aisle. “Didn’t want to be a bother? I don’t buy that.”

She shrugged and looked back at the laptop. “I just...” She sighed.

“You don’t have to be afraid.”

“I’m not afraid of you.”

“What do you want to know?”

She drew in a deep breath and looked at him as he sat down on the stool next to hers.

“Are you, well...you’re mostly human right?”

He smiled gently. He didn’t want her to think he was laughing at her. “Legitimate question. Yes, mostly. And for the first thirteen or so years, we are all human. We don’t change much until we hit puberty.”

“Are just the men wolves?”

He shook his head. “Females are born. But in this generation of our pack, only males were born.” And he wasn’t ready to explain that yet. She would probably freak if she knew she had been mentioned as part of a prophecy.

“Your mother?”

“She is now.”

Her brow furrowed. “Now? You mean, you can turn people.”

“Only our true mates can be changed. The human has to accept that once they are changed, they are mated to their mate or mates for life.”

She nodded. “The people in town know.”

“Yes. Most of them could care less, although not sure how that’s going to work now. With one of our own getting attacked, then Margie’s burning down, they might have second thoughts.”

“None of them want you gone. They have nothing but good things to say about the family.”

Ethan wasn’t sure just how long that would last. They owned the land, so it was no real problem. But Ethan didn’t want to lose their small group of residents. Many of them had been there for years and had become like an extended family. Just thinking about some of them moving away added a little stab to his heart. It would be like losing a relative.

He pushed that thought away and moved on to the subject at hand. “Is there anything else you want to talk about?”

She shook her head. “Truth was, I just finished up and I thought I would take a nap.”

“That is an excellent idea.”

She smiled at him. “I really need sleep.”

He held his hands up in mock protest. “Did I say we wouldn’t?”

She rolled her eyes. “I can’t be in a bedroom or near a piece of furniture without one of you jumping me.”

“Are you complaining?”

She laughed. “Not by a long shot.”

He offered her hand, and she took it easily. She was small, and his hand dwarfed hers, but she seemed to fit just right. She had since she’d arrived.

“Did you find anything new out?”

“Hmm?” She looked at him, and her dreamy expression changed. “What? Oh, I was just going over some data, recording it. All the wolves I’m following are accounted for.”

The scent of her surrounded him, enticed him. “How many did you tag?”

“One hundred. I wanted to do more, but since this was a one-woman job, I wasn’t able to get to more.”

“You could have asked me. I would’ve helped.”

She said nothing as he let her step over the threshold in front of him into his room. “Eve?”

She smiled back over her shoulder, but she looked uncomfortable.

“Is there something wrong?”

She turned to face him. “Nothing. I just thought you didn’t like me when we met, so I avoided asking you for help. I wanted to, badly.”

She sighed again, the sound of it reaching out to him.

“But, what?”

“For one reason, it wasn’t the way I was raised.”

“Raised? Your parents didn’t believe in getting help?”

“Not when it came to research.”

Not for the first time, he wanted to have a long talk with her folks. He had only gathered bits and pieces of her background from Eve herself. The rest he had researched online. It seemed that her parents had raised her to be some kind of prodigy, which was fine if a person had a mind like Eve’s. But it didn’t mean you ignored the person. In the whole four months she had been there, he didn’t know if her parents had called once. If they had, it wasn’t more than once or twice.

He wanted to push her to answer more. There were clouds in her green eyes that he wanted to chase away. Something told him she wasn’t ready for that.

“That’s not the only reason.”

She nodded. “You were kind of distant when I first got here.”

He knew he had seemed that way, but it had been important. Otherwise, he wasn’t sure if he could keep himself from touching her. He couldn’t tell her that much. He couldn’t reveal the depth of his feelings for her or he might scare her away. She might have accepted them, and he knew that there had been a bond formed between her and Noah, but she had not been claimed yet. Any mistake could have her running for the hills.

“I’m sorry. I’m so accustomed to being by myself with science that I really don’t know how to share.”

Her lips curved into a small smile. “I like it. I like working with you. I was hoping we could do it some more.”

And just like that, Ethan’s body heated. He was always half aroused around her. It was the nature of the beast, truthfully. It was hard not to be. But that smile, along with the way her voice deepened, had his hormones humming.

Ethan stepped forward and pulled her into his arms. Every loving curve she possessed pressed against his body. Eve bent her head back and offered her mouth to him. He didn’t hesitate. He brushed his mouth over hers before pressing it against her sweet lips and diving in. As always, she tasted of desire, of need, and mainly of the one thing he needed in the world. Eve.

He slipped the shirt from her shoulders and allowed it to fall to the floor as he walked her back to the bed. Greed sank its claws into him as he tipped her back onto the mattress and followed her down. He kissed a path down her neck to her breasts. He pulled back slightly to tug the tank top over her head and toss it on the floor with the shirt. She wasn’t wearing a bra.

Damn, she was beautiful. He was never going to get use the alabaster skin, the pink nipples. She wasn’t big, but just the right size for his hand. She was perfect.

“Ethan.”

Her voice was low, needy, and it sent a tremor of hunger racing through his blood. Knowing she wanted him as much as he wanted her shredded his restraint. He wanted to ravage her, take her without any kind of finesse. It took every bit of his control to keep himself from losing it. His body hummed. His need soared.

Ethan made quick work of her pants and panties, and when she lay against the dark blue comforter completely nude, she smiled up at him. Her hair was spread out in a tangle of curls in wanton abandon. He didn’t think he had ever seen a more beautiful sight.

"I'm feeling a little underdressed," she said, amusement threading her voice and filling her eyes.

He placed his hand on her stomach and then slipped it up her torso. "Is that your way of telling me to get naked?"

She laughed, and he froze. The happy sound filled the room and his heart. At that moment, he knew he would do anything to hear her laugh, to make her happy.

"Ethan? Are you all right?"

"Gonna be a whole lot of all right in a few minutes."

"Good. Now get naked."

He laughed himself as he tore off his clothes. He kissed her then, enjoying the way she hummed against his tongue. Little shockwaves of pleasure moved through him. He made his way down her body again, kissing and nipping at her flesh as he went. He slipped his tongue over her nipple then he continued on. He dipped his tongue in her belly button. She laughed, the sound of it filling the room again. Never before had he thought of laughter as erotic, but that was before Eve.

He settled between her legs and sighed. The musky scent of her arousal filled his senses, urged his lust. He parted her labia and slid his tongue inside. Wild, enticing, the taste of her slipped over his taste buds as he felt his cock twitch. Damn, the woman was going to be the death of him. She had barely done anything, but just the scent of her, the taste of her had his beast beating to get out.

He teased her clit first with his tongue, then his teeth. He could feel the restlessness build within her, and he pushed it right to the edge. By the time he moved back up her body, she was writhing on the bed, her fingers clawing at the comforter. He rose to his knees and pulled her hips up. He entered her in one swift, fast move, all the way to the hilt. She was wet, but she still gasped.

"I'm sorry," he said.

She shook her head as she wrapped her legs around his hips. "Don't be."

She shifted her hips just a bit taking him deeper inside, and he lost control. He began to move, slowly at first, and then his actions became erratic. He couldn't help it. He needed this, needed the connection with her. But he wanted to feel her come, feel the way her muscles wrapped around his cock.

It wasn't long before he felt his orgasm approaching. His balls tightened as he slipped his fingers over her clit, sending her soaring into an orgasm. She convulsed and her inner walls spasmed on his cock as he thrust into her twice more. He exploded, shouting her name as he came.

Long moments later, he moved her legs from around his waist. He sank down beside her and then pulled her into his arms.

"Hmm," she said as he stroked his hand down her spine. "That feels good."

He brushed his mouth over her temple as he allowed his entire body to relax. It was hard to do as he held back what he felt inside. It was getting harder each time they made love. For him, their connection was growing. He wanted what Ethan had with her, but since his brother was Alpha, he would of course have a deeper connection with Eve.

That is the way he understood how it worked. It wasn't usual for a pack to take one mate, but from what he understood, the other members of the pack took a backseat. He figured from his studies it was to make the pack stronger. The Alpha would always be preferred. But, Ethan's heart didn't seem to care.

As she snuggled against him, he stared at the ceiling. He wanted so badly to tell her those three little words, but he held them back. He could never put that on Eve. So, he would relish these times together and be happy with that.

Chapter Two

Eve grabbed one of Ethan's plaid shirts and slipped her arms into it. The warmth of it and the unique scent of him surrounded her. She closed her eyes as she stood in the center of his bedroom and took in the feeling of contentment he had left her with. Their lovemaking wasn't as raw as it was with Noah when they made love alone. But there was something else there, something that tugged at her. She couldn't put her finger on it, but it made her hot at the same time it left her beyond contented.

She walked into the bathroom, needing to brush her teeth and go over what she needed to do today. With the restrictions Noah had put on her, she was sort of stuck doing most of her research around the guys. As she finished her task, she realized that there was a lot of noise approaching. Noah had been right. Her canine senses were increasing.

She walked out of the bathroom and came to a dead stop. Good lord, what was she thinking? Okay, she would not panic, because she didn't think she could turn any of the Dillons away. First, because she didn't want to. What woman in her right mind would turn away this group of men? They were hell bent on making her happy and keeping her in bed. She shifted her feet and grimaced. Well, okay, maybe she needed a small break from that. Still, she would have to be crazy to want to say no to them.

But the thing that bothered her was she still didn't understand them or what was between them. With the attack on Ethan, then the fire, they hadn't been able to talk much about it. She didn't want to admit it, but the truth was she was a little scared of learning all about

them. It was weird enough that six hot guys wanted her, let alone the fact they were all wolves.

Voices sounded, and they sounded very loud to her, but she had a feeling they weren't. These new abilities were giving her some trouble. Just like her newfound sense of smell. She could tell which cousin was behind her just by the scent of him. Noah was wild, dominating, somewhat intoxicating. With Ethan, she closed her eyes. With him, it was just wonderful. He wasn't as wild as Noah, but just as dangerous. Every time she caught his scent, she felt almost giddy.

There was a knock at the door. It opened to reveal Shane. "A bunch of the family just showed up."

"Family?"

His smile widened as he walked into the bedroom, shutting the door behind him. She did not like the look in his eyes.

"Shane, what do you mean there's family?"

"Our father and mother showed up. But they can wait."

She held out her hand. "No."

His smile widened. "Yes."

"Your mother just showed up," she protested as he grabbed her. Even knowing it was inappropriate, she couldn't stop the way her body responded to being near him.

"Mom will understand," he said as he started to nibble on her ear.

"I will?" a voice said from the doorway.

Shane sighed against her neck as she peeked over his shoulder. A woman of average height stood. Her short black hair was threaded with a bit of gray. Blue eyes sparkled behind a set of wire-rimmed glasses. She wore a plaid shirt, much like the one Eve had stolen from Ethan, and a pair of jeans. There was a lot of Native American in her face along her jaw and her high cheekbones.

With obvious reluctance, Shane pulled away but kept his arm around her waist.

"Mom, I came to get Eve."

His mother gave him a look that told Eve she knew better than to believe her son.

“And it took you this long because you lost your way?” she asked.

“Well—”

“Never mind. Go. I’ll bring Eve up front.”

She could tell from Shane’s expression he didn’t want to do it. Whenever Shane didn’t want to do something, his jaw tightened just a bit. He let everyone see the easygoing guy, but he hid some of his more aggressive and possessive feelings.

“I promise not to eat her.”

He kissed her cheek. “Don’t take any crap off my mom.”

When he left them alone, his mother smiled. “I’m Jen, by the way. Since my idiot son didn’t see fit to introduce us.”

“It’s nice to meet you.”

Her smile widened. “I know this is an odd situation, but you’ll get used to it.”

“Odd is definitely a word that I would use for it.”

Jen nodded and opened her mouth, but another head popped through the door. This time, it was Ethan.

“What’s going on? Everyone’s waiting.”

Jen turned. “I was rescuing her from your cousin. I don’t know what your father was thinking sending one of you back here to get her.”

He chuckled, his eyes dancing with amusement as he walked to Eve. “Well, I don’t have to worry about that. Come on. The rest of the family wants to meet you.”

“The rest of the family?” she asked, a wave of sheer panic slipping over her. “How many people are here? It sounded like a ton, but with this hearing...”

Ethan nodded and slipped his arm over her shoulders. “Don’t worry. You’ll get used to it.”

Jen snorted, but Ethan was already steering Eve out of the room.

“Uncle Burt and Aunt Jen, and then there is our Uncle Mike.”

“Three people.” She drew in a deep breath and released it. “I can handle it.”

He glanced down at her. Surprise moved over his face. “Of course you can. They aren’t going to eat you.”

He squeezed her shoulders, and it reassured her somewhat.

When they reached the end of the hall, she stepped into the great room and felt her nerves subside. It was odd that once she was around the guys, she would calm. It was as if she unconsciously knew that they would keep her safe. She felt their attention immediately, which was normal. From the moment she walked into their lives, they seemed to know when she was near most of the time. It probably had to do with those canine senses they all had.

Her face heated at the thought. She knew that a lot of it was wrapped up in the sexuality, and while they had no problem of thinking those things in front of their parents, she did.

To take her mind off her thoughts, she looked around for their guests. Cherise was nowhere to be found, but more than likely, she was in the kitchen. She had learned that Ethan and Noah’s mother loved to cook. Eve noticed a tall replica of Samuel standing on the far side of the room. He looked so similar to his brother she would have pegged them as twins. There were differences between the two men. He was talking to Samuel, but there was another man with them. Taller, a little older, with the barrel chest of a linebacker. He sported a beard that set off his ice-blue eyes. Most of the talking stopped as the rest of the room studied her as if she were some kind of bug.

“Uncle Burt and Uncle Mike, come meet Eve,” Ethan said as he gave her shoulders another reassuring squeeze.

Both men ambled forward with the same lethal grace the rest of the Dillons displayed. Ethan slipped his arm away but stood nearby as his uncles greeted her with warmth, opting to give her a hug and a kiss on the cheek.

“Quit manhandling our woman,” Noah said as he approached her. He pulled her into his arms and gave her a quick kiss then he tossed

Ethan an unreadable look. When he looked back at her, concern filled his expression. “Did you get some rest?”

“Yes, although I need to get some more work done.” She needed to get out of there, away from all the people. It was too cozy, too comforting. A girl could get accustomed to the feeling, and then she would be left alone a few months later. Again.

She tried to shift away, but with a knowing look, Noah pulled her further into the room. “Figures will keep. I want you to get to know the family a little bit better.”

Unable to get away, she surrendered and allowed Noah to pull her into the living area. She looked back over her shoulder at Ethan, who offered her a smile before he abandoned her to the rest of the Dillons.

* * * *

Ethan wandered into the kitchen and stopped when he saw his mother at the stove. The scent of venison stew filled the air and made his mouth water. He should have known she was there, as she always liked to cook when his aunt and mother got together. He really wasn’t in the mood to deal with her mothering.

“Don’t even think about it.”

He sighed. He hadn’t made a sound, and she knew he was there. Besides being a mother with eyes in the back of her head, she was part wolf. They never got away with anything.

“What would I be trying to get away with?” he said, approaching her as she continued to stir something in the pot on the stove.

“Trying to get away without explaining why that girl still doesn’t understand her place in the pack,” his aunt said from behind him.

He leaned against the counter and crossed his arms. “What are we supposed to tell her? ‘You’re the mate for six guys.’ She understands it a little.”

His mother smacked him lightly on the arm. “You’re all avoiding it.”

“I think she’s had enough to deal with. With the problems the last few weeks, we haven’t had the time.”

The look his mother tossed him told her that she didn’t believe him.

“Really.”

“What I want to know is what is actually going on? What are you keeping from us?” his aunt asked.

He held up his hands. “Noah said nothing of the meeting. I know something happened, but he hasn’t had a chance to talk about it. I know nothing more than what you know. I swear.”

“Okay, I’ll let you go right now, but don’t you hide anything else from me. I’ll know. I always do,” his mother warned.

He would definitely have to avoid his mother. “You got it.”

She stirred the stew he’d smelled when he first stepped into the kitchen. It brought back memories of his childhood, of spending time with his mother in the kitchen. His mother was a scientist as he was, so they naturally spent a lot of time together.

“She seems to be holding up,” his aunt commented. He knew she was talking about Eve.

“Of course she is,” his mother said. “She’s their mate.”

He rolled his eyes. His mother might not have been born a wolf like his aunt, but she completely believed in the prophecy. She said she knew it from the time she birthed Noah.

“She worries.”

“Of course she does. She’s a woman.”

He frowned at his aunt. “I find that comment sexist.”

His mother laughed. “But we do. We don’t get to stalk around and growl at things. We worry. We are the ones at home right now. I wanted to go for a run last night with your father, and he practically patted my head and sent me on my way.”

“It’s dangerous.”

His mother snorted. “I am thirty years younger than your father.”

“And you’re...”

Both his aunt and his mother eyed him.

“We’re what?”

Women. But he couldn’t say that out loud. If he did, there was a good chance he would get smacked in the head.

“Am I interrupting?” Eve asked from the doorway.

He gave her a grateful look. “Not all. Did you need to do some more work?”

She took in the scene and a mischievous smile curved her lips. He could feel it to the tips of his toes. Just that little smile, along with the fact she was wearing another one of his shirts, had his blood humming. He needed her in a way that he really didn’t understand. He just had to keep it under control so she didn’t realize just how he felt about her.

“No, I got mostly everything done earlier. I thought I could help in the kitchen.”

His mother smiled, the warmth she felt for Eve easy to see in her expression. The two most important women in his life had bonded over his attack.

“I guess I’ll head on out to see what happened at the meeting.”

He walked past her then stopped, bending to give her a quick kiss. The warmth of her lips, the way she opened her mouth, and the scent of her had his head spinning, his body hardening, and his heart turning over. Never in his life had he been this head over heels, which was understandable since she was their mate. He pulled back his thoughts to the issue at hand. “Behave.”

She rolled her eyes. “I always do.”

And with that he left her in the kitchen with his mother and aunt.

“You feeling okay, Eve?”

The quiet question from Jen had her looking at the older woman. She could tell from her expression that she was worried about something.

“No, not really. It’s just that they ordered me out of the room like I was some little girl.”

She still remembered the way Noah had patted her on the ass and sent her away. She sighed.

“They’re all like that. They want to protect you,” Jen said.

Eve grimaced, which brought chuckles from both women.

“We know the feeling. It irritates, but they don’t do it because they think you’re stupid. Part of it is they feel responsible for you being in this mess to begin with,” Jen said.

“I got that, although that’s stupid.”

“I didn’t say it was smart. It’s part of their DNA.”

“I guess if I understood more about them, I would understand the situation a little more.”

The sisters-in-law shared a look. Cherise motioned to the kitchen table. Once they were all seated, she said, “What have they told you?”

“Not much. We started talking. Ethan told me a little. With the attacks, things have been a little crazy.”

Although she thought someone could figure out time to tell her what the hell was going on.

“Why don’t you ask us?” Jen asked.

She looked from one woman to the other. “The one thing that is freaking me out a bit is that no one sees anything wrong with me being with all six men.”

Cherise chuckled. “We’ve known from very early on they would share. And while it is an oddity in the human world and not that common in ours, we don’t look down on that. Sexuality is something that is very open for us.”

“If we thought you were playing them against each other, that would bother us. But we can tell that you have feelings for all of them.”

She thought back to the lovemaking with Ethan. He always made her feel so special, so needed. But as soon as they were done, he closed himself off.

“Yeah, I guess.”

Cherise slipped her hands over Eve's clasped ones. "Remember, you are confused, but so are they. And on top of that, they have the attacks to worry about. It brings out the more primitive feelings. They want to protect you against someone they don't know at all."

"And when that happens, there is a good chance they will get snarly."

Eve laughed. "They are really good at that. Especially Noah."

Cherise nodded. "Comes with the territory, being Alpha. There is a bit more on his shoulders than the others."

"I was confused by one thing. Mike isn't Alpha, but he is apparently the oldest of the three brothers."

Jen nodded sadly. "They aren't always the oldest. It just worked that way with Noah. From the time he was born, everyone knew he would be Alpha. He had the temperament, the drive that none of the others did. Mike was probably going to take over from their uncle. But he lost his mate and was never the same."

"Oh, that's too bad." She thought back to the cheerful man who treated her as if she were a long lost daughter. He had been so sweet when he asked her about her research.

"It broke him. He blamed himself, but there was nothing to do. Michelle wouldn't go stay in Anchorage, or even Fairbanks for that matter. And when she went into labor three months early, they were snowed in and stuck there. He was never the same after that."

Before she could ask more, the door opened to reveal Noah this time. "What's taking so long?"

"I think you need to tone down that voice, young man," his mother admonished, but her smile softened the rebuke.

"You know how the guys get if they don't get some meat on a regular basis. And after the run we had earlier, everyone is famished." As he talked he came forward and, without another word, plucked her out of the chair and then sat down in it and settled Eve on top of his lap.

"Noah," she said.

He frowned. "What?"

Both women chuckled as they left them alone. "You don't just walk into the room and pick me up."

"I think I just did."

The smile he offered her made her want to smack him. He was so condescending.

"You are already in trouble," she said as she squirmed on his lap.

He bent his head so close that she felt his breath on her ear. "You need to quit moving or I'm going to drag you back to my room and have my way with you."

The dark need she heard in his voice had her pulse scrambling, her body heating. She stilled and looked at him. "You wouldn't."

His smile broadened as he moved his hand up and down her spine. She shivered. *Of* course he would. Not one of them had any shame.

"Stop fooling around and get everyone in here to get their stew. You have enough time later for that."

"Indeed," Noah said with a chuckle. Eve's face was so hot she was amazed it didn't go up in flames. Instead of letting her stand, he slipped his arms under her again and stood in a fluid movement.

"Noah," she said.

"Eve." He said nothing else as he pushed through the door and into the great room. He headed in Ethan's direction. Before she could say anything, he practically tossed her at him. Ethan caught her easily. Noah smirked at both of them and turned to his mother and aunt.

"See, he's all better. Leave him alone. Let's eat, everyone."

* * * *

Vic Redfoot looked over the slain wolves and cursed silently to himself. The metallic scent of blood filled the air, and heat still rose from the bodies of the dead animals. They had just missed the killer or killers.

These wolves weren't shifters, but that didn't make any difference to any of the Totem Council. They were part of their family, and he knew the Dillons wouldn't be happy. Hell, he wasn't happy.

"So, you think it's the oil company?" his brother Damon asked.

Vic looked at him, then back at the dozen or so wolves left in the clearing. "No. There's something else here. Something evil."

His brother squatted down and felt the ground as he closed his eyes. "Yeah, I feel it too. Sick."

Vic nodded as he started thinking of the implications. This was the very end of their land. Not that they owned it—the Dillons did—but it was the parcel the Great Bears patrolled.

"When was the last patrol by?"

His brother rose, looked at him then back to the wolves. "Less than twenty minutes."

"Fuck."

"This wasn't human."

They both knew it, knew that no human could do it. Maybe with one or two men, but these wolves were gutted. There was no way a man could do this, sneak up on them and overpower them this way. It was definitely some kind of shifter.

They walked forward, trying to discern from the tracks what the hell had happened. There were only wolf tracks.

"That makes no sense," Damon said. "There should be something else."

"No. Could be a renegade Great Wolf."

Damon shook his head. "I don't feel that. I know all of the wolves in the region." He closed his eyes and drew in a deep breath. "There is something wrong, something that smells like death."

Vic sighed. He believed his brother's abilities, but sometimes, he made little to no sense. "There are twelve dead wolves. Of course you smell death."

When his brother opened his eyes, the dangerous glint in them told Vic he was serious. “No. This being walks with death. It follows him, mocks him, and one day he will lose everything to her.”

“We all do,” Vic said grimly.

“No, this one was born of death. His fate is hell, but he doesn’t care.”

Vic looked out over the slain bodies. “And he is doing this for what reason?”

“I do not know, but what I do know is that he isn’t done. Many more could die.”

Vic sighed, knowing that without a doubt Damon was telling the truth.

Chapter Three

Once she was alone in the lab, she felt her nerves settle. Eve had never been that embarrassed in her life. The Dillons were a wild and wonderful family. As usual, she didn't know what to say or do around them. She wasn't accustomed to it. And it extended to their parents and uncle. Each of them had been kind in their own way. In fact, she felt more comfortable with them than she did her own family. But they were a lot to handle for a woman who was used to doing things on her own.

"I thought I would find you here," Ethan said as he ambled into the lab. "I figured we might have overwhelmed you."

He kissed her cheek and sat in the stool next to hers.

"No, not really."

He laughed. "I never have to worry about you lying to us. You are miserable at it."

She smiled. "Was that tossing me across the room a way for Noah to get your mama to leave you alone?"

He nodded his head. "She's been a bit of a pain, and every now and then I need to run. It's been two weeks since the attack, and I'm ready to kill someone."

"I guess you need to do that?"

Comprehension lit his face. "Yes. You need to go to wolf every now and then. You have to allow that primal part of you to take over or you start having issues."

"And you haven't since the attack, of course."

He shook his head.

"I guess you would go a little crazy being stuck here with me."

He grabbed the hem of the flannel shirt. “Being stuck with you is about the only thing that has kept me sane.”

As compliments, it wasn’t the most wonderful one she heard, but it made her heart turn over. It was said with such blatant honesty that she knew it to be the truth.

“Are you as big as Noah and Shane?”

He nodded.

“So, if you were in a pack of wolves you would stand out?”

“Yeah. The wolves don’t have problems with it.”

“Oh. But would a regular person be able to tell? I can’t judge for myself because I know the Great Wolves so well.”

He cocked his head to the side. “Yeah. They would be able to tell we were bigger, and if they studied us, they would be able to tell us apart. What are you getting at?”

She shrugged. “Something is so wrong about your attack. I would have thought you would pick up on the scent of another person in the area.”

His eyes widened. “You know, you’re right.”

She worried her bottom lip. “Why would he try and disguise himself as a bear? I mean, the only thing you said was that you smelled the bear, right?”

Ethan nodded. “I didn’t see anything. There was scent, but not enough. You know, like it was just a whiff of it. If it had been a Great Bear, I would have smelled him a mile away.”

“Maybe the disguise was twofold. He wanted us to think he was a bear, and maybe he wanted to confuse you, cover up his normal scent.”

“And that would mean the bastard knew what I was.” His face was set in grim lines. Anger simmered in his eyes. An air of vengeance settled about him. It was easy to forget because he seemed so laid-back usually. The predator lurking beneath the surface was just as dangerous as the one Noah showed the world. Maybe even more so because people didn’t expect it to rear its ugly head.

“Yes. I think that is exactly why he did it. Or she.”

Ethan shook his head. “Not a woman.”

She crossed her arms over her chest and stared him down. “Why not? If she were a wolf, she might have the power. You all seem to have extraordinary power compared to humans.”

He nodded. “A female wolf could rip you to shreds.”

“I’m not so sure about that.”

He chuckled. “Now, Eve, don’t get upset. You’re human, so any female wolf in good health would be able to take you on and win.”

“But not you?”

He shook his head, his gaze never leaving hers.

“Why?”

“I’m male.”

Her temper lit beneath her, and she popped out of her chair and leaned closer. “Are you telling me that you would be able to take an attack because you’re a man?”

“No.”

“Then what do you mean by that?” she asked, trying to hold on to her temper and failing.

“You forget I’m part wolf. So, it has more to do with being wolf than it has to be with being male or female.”

She opened her mouth to argue with him more, but he grabbed her and pulled her closer. He nuzzled her neck, and just like that, she felt her hunger for him surge. She didn’t know why she reacted so immediately to these men.

She pushed against his shoulder. “Stop that. You are not going to win an argument by using sex.”

Ethan chuckled, his breath feathering out over skin, and she shivered.

“I think I can prove you wrong.”

He slipped his tongue over the pulse point in her neck, and she felt her resolve melting. She could resist, but why should she? To prove a

point? What point would she prove other than the fact that she was stupid?

“Ethan, in the lab?”

He pulled back a little, just enough for her to see the curving of his lips. “It is one place I haven’t had sex before.”

“That’s because you’ve never let another woman in here, bro.”

Ethan glanced over his shoulder, and she followed his line of vision. Noah was slowly walking down the aisle, a knowing smile on his lips, then turned to face her again. “That’s true.”

“I’m the first woman you let in here?” she asked with disbelief. She knew not every woman would be interested in his lab, but it was hard to believe that he had never had one in there before.

He turned back around. “Yep. Of course, I don’t allow a lot of humans in here.”

She laughed and slipped her arms over her shoulders. She sensed Noah moving closer. “So, I am about the only human you let in?”

He shrugged as he leaned closer to nuzzle her neck again. She wanted to push him, ask just what the mysterious smile meant. It was important, something she was missing in the way he responded to her question. But that thought was lost as Ethan’s lips moved over her neck, his teeth scraping against the sensitive flesh beneath her ear. As Ethan pulled her off the stool, Noah stepped behind her. He pressed his body against hers as Ethan kissed his way down her neck. Noah’s hands moved to the shoulders of her shirt, dragging it off her arms. Ethan already had the bottom of her tank top in his hands, pulling it up and over her head.

He had barely gotten the shirt over her head before he had his mouth on her breast. Greedily he pulled her nipple between his lips, grazing his teeth over the very tip. Noah skimmed his hands down to her hips, slipping his fingers beneath the fabric of her pants. With fast movements, he had them off, and she stood between the two of them completely nude.

Ethan shoved his stool out of his way as he went to his knees in front of her. He slipped his hands between her thighs, urging them further apart. When she felt his mouth on her pussy, her knees weakened, and she would have fallen if Noah hadn't slipped his hands around to cup her breasts. He kissed her on her neck.

"Feel good, baby?" Noah asked. His voice had roughened, and she could feel his jean-clad cock against her backside. It was odd to feel the rough fabric of his jeans against her skin. It created friction while not allowing her to completely feel satisfied.

Ethan slipped his tongue between her pussy lips then glided up to her clit, teasing her just a bit, enough to drive her more insane. Noah pinched her nipples, his callused fingers easily teasing them until they were fully erect.

"You do have the sweetest-tasting pussy." Noah's breath was hot against her flesh. "Doesn't she, Ethan?"

Ethan said nothing but hummed as he took her hardened clit between his lips. The vibrations of it sent her soaring over into her orgasm.

She leaned back against Noah as Ethan stood. His hands going to the fastenings on his jeans. She licked her lips as she watched his cock spring free. Long, hard, wet with his need.

"Bend over and take him, baby."

She didn't hesitate, leaning over and taking him into her mouth. His pre-cum glided over her taste buds as she began to suck on him. His movements were measured, telling her he was still in control. Eve didn't like it. She didn't like feeling so out of control, and he was as calm as can be. She started to move over his cock, cupping his sac, caressing him. He groaned as he started moving in and out of her mouth faster. She barely registered the fact that Noah had unzipped his pants and was urging her legs apart. He slipped his hand between her legs, sliding his finger along her slit. She shivered, her skin still sensitive. She laid her free hand against the counter to balance herself as she moved her other hand up his cock. He groaned and flexed his

hips faster, shoving his cock in and out of her mouth as the broad head of Noah's penis started to enter her. Her pussy spasmed, clamping tight on his cock as he slowly entered her. She groaned against Ethan's shaft as Noah pushed all the way home.

As he started to move in and out of her, she doubled her efforts on Ethan. She wanted him to lose all control. His fingers slipped through her hair, molding to the back of her head. Noah's fingers dug into her hips as he started thrusting in and out of her, holding her steady so she could continue to pleasure Ethan. Ethan came first, his cum shooting into her mouth, coating the back of her throat. She swallowed it down, enjoying the sweet and salty taste of it as she lapped at the tip of his cock. Noah started to increase his movements as he slipped one hand down from her hip to her clit. He pressed against it, sending her into an orgasm with such speed it astounded her. She shuddered as he pressed into her pussy one more time and groaned her name.

She was weak, ready to collapse. Noah pulled out of her as Ethan pulled her up into his arms. She rested her head against his shoulder and shivered.

Noah leaned closer and brushed his lips over her temple. "Make sure she gets some rest."

She sensed Ethan's agreement. Then he turned and started walking back to his room. She kept her eyes closed as he made his way through the house. Ethan kicked the door shut and then ambled over to the bed. She should have been embarrassed being carried through a house completely naked, but she didn't care. The soft sheets were warm as she snuggled into the pillow. Her body was loose, fulfilled.

The bed dipped as Ethan slipped between the covers and pulled her into his arms.

"Get some rest, Eve."

She settled her head against his shoulder and decided to do just that.

* * * *

Ethan woke about an hour later, but didn't move. He laid there, enjoying the feel of Eve against him. It wasn't often he had her all to himself, and he relished each moment. He didn't begrudge his brother or cousins time with her, but he liked the idea of laying there with her. As if everything were normal and there weren't any problems. He could almost think that she had already accepted she would be their mate and accepted the change.

"You know, you think too much."

Her sleepy voice filled the darkness of the room. He could hear the amusement easily.

"Yeah? You're a fine one to talk."

She lifted herself up to her elbow. "I know. It is something that Noah always complains about."

Ethan chuckled. "I've heard that enough in my lifetime."

She said nothing for a moment or two.

"What? You can ask me anything?"

She sighed. "I hate not knowing things, but I also hate asking too many questions."

He heard the loneliness. Again, he had to fight the urge to go find her parents and beat the hell out of them. They had pushed her to succeed, all the while not allowing for her to fit in. He knew how hard it was to fit in when you had a brain that operated differently than others. While most of his family didn't always understand him, they always accepted him. He had a feeling that until Eve arrived in Alaska, she had never truly been accepted.

"How old are you? Do you have regular life spans?"

"No. We live about two times as long as humans."

"How old are you?"

"Fifty."

Her eyes widened. "Fifty? Good lord. Noah?"

"He's the old guy. He's about fifty-five."

“But you look close to my age.”

“When we hit thirty, our aging slows. It isn’t obvious unless you spend years with us.”

She frowned. “You said that people can be changed.”

“And they take on our abilities. They will have a longer lifespan than the normal human.”

She opened her mouth to ask him more, but the sound of shouting had both of them looking toward the door. It was still far off, at least outside, but it was rising in volume.

“What the heck is that?”

Ethan shook his head as he slipped out of bed. He grabbed a pair of jeans, stepped into them, then grabbed his shirt.

“Get dressed, and don’t come out until one of us comes for you.”

“Ethan?”

He looked back at her and felt his heart squeeze at the sight. Her hair was a tousle of curls dripping over her bare shoulders. She sat among his blue sheets, and he wanted nothing more to go back to bed and take her again. He fought the primitive urge, but he did walk back to the bed.

He leaned down, placing his fisted hands on the mattress, then kissed her. His blood heated. His heart turned over as he slipped his tongue between her lips. When he straightened, the urge to have her had grown.

“Stay here.”

By the time he reached the kitchen area, the argument had lowered to growls and grumbling. He found his brother standing in front of Vic Redfoot, with Shane and Rand standing behind the Great Bear.

“You want to tell me what the fuck you mean that it was a wolf? Because you might have to prove yourself another way if you even think of accusing one of us.”

“Noah, what the hell is going on?”

Noah didn't take his eyes off Redfoot. "This jackass had the nerve to accuse a wolf of the killings."

"Jesus, Dillon, I didn't accuse a wolf. I accused a shifter, something completely different. The point I was making was that there was no way in hell that they had been butchered by a human."

"Butchered?" Eve asked from behind Ethan. He silently cursed as he turned to face her.

"I thought I told you to stay in bed."

He thought he heard Redfoot chuckle, but he ignored the Alpha bear.

"Kind of hard to do with all the shouting." She tried to step around him, but he wasn't allowing that. He couldn't. The woman was theirs, and although he knew it was asinine, he did not want her to be seen by Redfoot.

Ethan wrapped an arm around her waist and tried to shove her behind him, but she threw him a disgruntled look and stood her ground. Knowing he couldn't convince her to leave, he kept her anchored to his side.

"Who was butchered?"

Redfoot's angry expression dissolved into a smile. "Good evening, Eve."

The languid change in his voice had Ethan growling.

"Good evening, Vic. What did you mean, butchered? What?"

His smile transformed into a frown so fast it had Ethan blinking. "Wolves. Some more of your wolves have been killed."

"Yeah, tell her the rest, Redfoot."

"Give it a rest, Dillon."

Noah turned around and faced her. Anger burned in his eyes.

"He thinks one of us is killing the wolves and attacked Ethan."

Chapter Four

Eve studied the men gathered around the table and sighed. Redfoot was sitting at the opposite end from Noah, and that was probably by design on Vic's part. They were facing off like adversaries ready to do battle. Anger vibrated in the air around them. To Vic's left sat a man who looked like him, but a bit younger, with short white-blond hair. No one had seen fit to introduce her. She sat to the left of Noah, Ethan on her other side. Shane and Rand sat on the opposite side of the table.

The stoic silence had lasted for more than a minute after she ordered them to sit down. Noah and Vic were in the middle of a stare down to end all stare downs. She glanced at Rand and Shane. They were looking at the new visitor. She turned to Ethan, who was looking at him, too.

"Does someone want to explain what is going on?" she asked. Ethan slid his hand to her knee and squeezed in warning. She ignored him. "Well?"

"Your mate seems to think my brother was accusing one of his pack of killing some wolves," the new man said, drawing her attention to him. Her assumption had been right that this was another Redfoot, which meant he was another bear.

"And you would be?" she asked.

His stern expression vanished as his lips curved. "I'm Damon Redfoot."

She couldn't help but respond in kind. "It is nice to meet you." The pressure Ethan had been applying to her knee increased. "If you

don't stop squeezing my knee, I'm going to smack you upside the head."

Damon's smile widened, and his brother chuckled.

"Yes, indeed, Dillon, you have your hands full," Vic said.

A rumble sounded in Noah's chest.

"Vic, you are at our table, and you will behave," she said.

He nodded but didn't stop smiling at her.

"Now, what I want to know is what the heck is going on? And I want it without any bitchy comments."

The growls around the table let her know that her barb hit home.

"I will be happy to explain," Damon said.

"Thank you."

"We found some more dead wolves."

"Oh, no."

"They were on their land," Rand said.

"Do you think I would kill a bunch of damned wolves and drop them on my land? I'm not that stupid," Vic said.

"The thought has crossed my mind," Noah said, lethal sarcasm dripped from each word.

She shot him a look. "Stop. This isn't getting us anywhere." She turned back to Damon. "Continue."

"There about a dozen. Guttled. I scented them first."

She swallowed back the bile that rose to the top of her throat at the thought. She knew the way it would smell. Closing her eyes, she willed it away.

"I apologize," Damon said.

Ethan was now rubbing her knee. She glanced at him, but he still wasn't looking at her.

"Now, can we talk about this reasonably?" Vic asked.

"We were, until you accused us—"

"Oh, give it a rest, Dillon. What I was saying was it was a shifter. There is no way they could have been killed like that by a human. Of course, being the beast that you are, you jumped to the conclusion that

I was accusing you of killing wolves or of setting you up. Not sure which.”

“You are pretty sure a human couldn’t do this?” Eve asked.

“Yes, very.”

“What makes you think that?”

“There are too many of them killed. There was no long-range weapon used. It was up close and personal. Knife.”

Again, she had to swallow.

“A shifter would be the only one who could get that close,” Ethan said. “That’s what was wrong.”

She turned to him. “What do you mean?”

“When I was attacked. It was something odd, something off. It had to be a shifter, yes, but there was another hint of another animal.”

“What did you smell first?” Vic asked.

“Bear.”

Vic cursed.

“Yeah, I wasn’t sure what was off first. But Eve thought it might be someone trying to disguise something. Bears have no reason to hide themselves, not that way. That led them to us.”

“And killing a bunch of wolves and leaving them on our land could lead you to suspect us.”

“Where was it?” Noah asked Vic.

“Over that last bluff before you hit our property. Right on our side. I wouldn’t have found it if Damon hadn’t been patrolling.”

“Shit, they wanted us to suspect you,” Shane said. “They have to know there is a little bit of rivalry between your herd and our pack.”

“Yes, and that means they have to be shifters. Who the hell else would know about this? Not outside humans,” Rand said. “Our humans know, for the most part. Unless someone sold us out to the oil company.”

“That could be a possibility. But that would still mean they have a shifter helping them,” Ethan commented.

Eve started turning over the discussion in her head, the things that had happened as the men continued to discuss things.

“They had to have a scientific background to be able to come up with some kind of way to make you think you scented a bear.”

Ethan looked at her. “You’re right. It has to be someone who knows our genetic makeup.”

“How did you know that it was a bear? You said you scented it.”

Ethan nodded. “But it was off, like it was bear and something else. I couldn’t figure it out.”

“But what is the motive?” Damon asked.

Everyone looked at him.

“Motive?” Noah asked.

“It seems that everyone is trying to figure out who it is. I think that might be impossible without at least narrowing down why the person is doing it.”

A few mumblings filtered over the crowd.

“I guess we should sit down and come up with a list of motives,” Noah commented. She could hear the weariness in his voice. It had been hard on all of them, but particularly rough for Noah. As Alpha, he took the protection of the pack on his shoulders, and when Ethan had been attacked, it had hit even closer to home.

“While you do that, Eve and I can start by figuring out how they used the scent of bears to fool me.”

She glanced at Ethan with surprise, although that seemed like the next logical step.

“Sure.”

They left the others alone and went to the lab. Ethan held her hand most of the way but said nothing. He seemed to be deep in thought.

By the time they stepped through the door of the lab, tension twisted around her spine. “Is there something wrong?”

Ethan glanced at her. “What?”

“Is there something wrong?”

“Why would you ask that?”

From the frown on his face, she could tell she took him by surprise. “Because you haven’t said a word since we got here.”

“I’m sorry. I was thinking.”

She sighed, wanting to argue him, but she knew better. They were too much alike. If he had his mind on work, it wasn’t that he was mad at her, but as single-minded as she was. She was just being super sensitive because of what had happened before.

“No, I apologize. I realize you have a lot on your mind.”

His frown deepened. “Did you have something you wanted to talk about?”

“No. Not really.”

“Eve.”

“I’m just...” She shrugged. She didn’t want to admit that she wanted something more, something like she had with Noah. It was odd that she still had a connection with Noah, but wanted more with Ethan. But then everything about her relationship with the Dillons was odd.

“Eve?”

She shook away the strange feeling and smiled. “What do you need help with?”

He studied her for a second or two. Eve knew he wanted to ask more, could see it in his gaze, but he must have known she wasn’t ready to talk about it.

“Why don’t we discuss your work and how that might tie into this? There might be something in your research to help us.”

She pushed her worries aside and gave him her brightest smile. “Sure.”

* * * *

Eve slipped into the hot, scented water and sighed. She closed her eyes and allowed the heat to work on her sore muscles. She had retired to Noah’s massive tub, leaving Ethan working on the most

recent set of findings. Her brain was mushy. All she could think of was those poor twelve wolves dead because of someone's sick game. She had wanted to stay, but Ethan had insisted that she leave.

She smiled when she thought about the way he had eased her out of the lab. Ethan definitely was different from his brother. Not in a bad way, just...different. Noah would have ordered her from the lab. On the other hand, Ethan had slowly walked her out of the lab, and before she knew it, she was heading back to Noah's room for a bubble bath.

Their lovemaking was as individual as each brother. Noah was all about power and control. Even thinking about the way he made her submit to him had her body heated. With Ethan, it was just as pleasurable, but there was a difference in his touch. No less exciting, and thinking about it had her yearning to go back to the lab and lure him back to bed. She smiled thinking about sneaking up behind him as he worked and surprising him.

"That's a naughty smile, Eve," Noah said.

She opened her eyes to find Noah sitting on the edge of the tub with Rand and Shane standing behind him.

"It's probably because I'm thinking naughty thoughts."

He chuckled and dipped his finger into the water, stirring the bubbles around her breast. "I like to think I am partially responsible for it."

"You're part of it."

Rand settled against the counter as Shane propped his shoulder against the doorjamb.

"You know, we're used to getting out for a run, but with the problems, we've been stuck inside."

She cocked her head and smiled at him. "Is that a fact? And just how can I help with that?"

He chuckled as he pulled her up and out of the bathtub. He set her on her feet on the floor. Rand threw Noah a towel as he came up behind her with one of his own. They dried her, rubbing the Egyptian

cotton towels over her heated flesh. Her nipples hardened as Noah paid particular attention to her breasts. Rand was molding his hands to her ass.

Rand nipped at her earlobe. "You like that, huh?" Arousal deepened his voice as he felt his teeth graze her ear.

"Always."

Noah's voice deepened with the same arousal she felt coursing through her body. Both the cousins had already abandoned the towels and were moving their hands over her body. Noah slipped his hands up her body as he rose and took her face between his palms. Without breaking eye contact, he took her mouth greedily, sliding his tongue into her mouth. She sucked on it and earned a healthy moan from him.

He pulled back. "Maybe we should take this into the bedroom."

"Yeah, I've been waiting for you," Shane said.

Noah picked her up and carried her into the bedroom. It was a good thing because she wasn't sure she would have been able to walk. Her knees were so weak she was sure to disgrace herself.

Shane was already on the bed, gloriously naked. His cock was hard, jutting out from the thick nest of dark-blond hair. She licked her lips, thinking of taking it between her lips. He followed the movement with his gaze and groaned. He wrapped a large hand around his shaft and pumped his cock.

"You are going to drive me insane. Those big green eyes and the softest skin make you look so innocent. Then you do something like that."

She laughed and leaned up to take his cock in her hand and then slipped it into her mouth. As she sucked him in, Rand slipped between her legs and, without a word, pressed his mouth against her pussy. She sucked in a breath then let it out on a breathy moan. Lord, these men knew just what buttons to push. He lifted his tongue to brush it against her clit each time he slipped between her pussy lips.

Soon, she could barely think straight and didn't want to. All she wanted was to surrender to these three men. She wanted nothing more than to lose herself in the pleasure they would give her.

"Eve," Noah said. She stopped working on Shane and looked at Noah. She hadn't even heard him come up to the bed. He was holding a tiny black silk blindfold. He didn't ask, didn't even say a word as he sat next to her and slipped it on over her eyes. She was immediately thrown into darkness.

"This way, it will be a way we can drive you crazy. You won't know who is doing what to you, and you won't know what is coming."

She shivered at the thought as he urged her up. Someone, probably Shane, slipped behind her, and two sets of hands moved her to straddle him. His cock pulsed beneath her pussy. She knew she was dripping juices all over it. He raised his hips, sliding it along her entrance, and she moaned. The chuckle that came from him told her she had been right. It was Shane. The other two pairs of hands moved away as Shane slipped his down to her hips. He lifted her then entered her in one hard, swift move. She sighed the moment he entered her. It was like that with each one of them. The moment they were in her, her world seemed right.

She sat up and started to move up and down, pivoting her hips every few strokes. She smiled with each groan she pulled from him. He slipped his hands up to her breasts, teasing her nipples. It sent little sparks of little energy through her and made her clit throb. Without her sight, she could feel and hear things more. And smell. When Noah approached, she knew it was him from his scent and the sound of his footsteps. Shane dropped his hands to her waist, then to her back, urging her down. She expected Noah to move behind her and take Shane's place, but instead, she felt the hard smack of his palm against her ass. The sting feathered out over her flesh. She shivered as he spanked her again. The sting worse this time, and so much more arousing. Then from the other side, there was another slap. That was

Rand, because it wasn't as hard, but it was just as arousing. They took turns spanking her. All the while Shane fucked her pussy. With each slap, each thrust, she moved closer. Every part of her body wanted this, needed this, and she couldn't seem to get there. Shane shifted again, changing the direction of his thrusts, and she realized that he was keeping her on the edge, not letting her come.

She wanted to complain, but she knew Noah would punish her more. The spanking stopped. Her flesh was hot and raw. Then she felt two sets of mouths on her, moving over the red skin, their tongues flicking out, easing her pain. By the time Rand moved behind her, she was barely able to form any kind of thought. Her brain had dissolved into one thought. She needed a release.

A gel-coated finger slipped into her puckered hole, then another. Soon, Rand moved closer. Shane stopped moving as Rand filled her ass with his hard cock, easing in slowly. The incredible feeling of fullness was now a familiar feeling to her. The brothers started to move in and out of her in tandem as she felt the bed shift. Noah said nothing as he slid his hands through her hair, urging her mouth to him. Before she let him in, she said, "I know it's you."

She couldn't see it, but she was sure he smiled. Then she opened her mouth and took him in. As the cousins all moved in and out of her, she stopped thinking completely. She didn't even contemplate her own release, wanting nothing more than this connection she felt with them, this thing she needed from them.

Flesh slapped against flesh as their moans and groans filled her ears. The scent of each man was unique. All of them had a touch of wildness to him. Shane, though, smelled of cedar that he worked with, and Rand, he smelled of the outdoors. Noah, he smelled of home. When her orgasm hit her, she moaned against Noah's cock. He thrust into her mouth one last time then held her still as he came.

He pulled out of her a moment later and bent down to kiss her.

But he moved away as the cousins started to move again. “Make her come again. Make her come again and again. I want her out of her mind.”

The cousins grunted but seemed to have no problem obeying the Alpha. Rand slapped her ass, the pleasure and pain of it almost made her sob. Shane’s mouth latched onto her nipple as he bit and nibbled at the tip. The wonder of it shot straight to her clit. Soon she was coming again and again. By the time that Rand and Shane came inside her, she was barely able to handle it. Her body was limp, shivering, spent. As they pulled out of her, Noah took her, pulling the mask off her face, then settled her against the pillows of the bed. He joined her there, as did Rand. She curled against Noah, enjoying his heat beneath her hand.

Tears pricked the back of her eyes as she swallowed. She was surrounded by sleeping men and didn’t want to bother them, didn’t want to give them any kind of reason to worry. They had too much on their plates to deal with right now.

A tangle of emotions tightened her throat. She was scared at the same time she felt safe. And she was beginning to think she needed these men more than she needed to breathe. Fear lanced through her at the thought. She wasn’t used to depending on other people.

It was only temporary, and she shouldn’t worry about it, she told herself. But as she lay awake, she couldn’t seem to shake the feeling that the pack wasn’t going to be enough to keep her safe from her heart.

Chapter Five

As Ethan walked down the hall to his room, he mentally ran over the facts he had in his head. He hadn't wanted to stop, but there had been a point when all the data started to bleed together. All he wanted to do was take a hot shower and then collapse into bed. When he walked into his room, he came to a dead stop. He hadn't expected to see Eve in his room that night.

He walked closer to her, being careful not to make a sound. But as he approached, she stirred, rising up to her elbow. The sheet slipped down with her movement, revealing that she was wearing a T-shirt. When he got closer, he realized it was his.

"I didn't know if you would ever make it back."

Her voice had that sleepy warmth he loved. It wrapped around his heart and squeezed hard.

"I decided to take a shower and catch a few hours of sleep. I didn't think I would find you here."

In the darkness he saw a flash of white indicating she was smiling. "Noah went out on patrol, as did Rand and Shane. I wanted to wait and hear what you had found."

The idea of her waiting for him sent a shot to his gut. He cleared his throat. "I didn't find much. The one thing I thought of was that maybe they could have used blood of a bear to confuse me. But that won't mean much if I can't figure out how or even why."

She pulled her legs up and wrapped her arms around them. "That definitely would rule out the bears. Why would they do that?"

“Doesn’t make sense. I never had a problem with them anyway. I doubt very much that Vic would have anything to do with it. He doesn’t want to run the preserve.”

“Then why did you get irritated with him?”

“Because he was eyeing you.”

She rolled her eyes. “I doubt that very much.”

“He was. Did the first time, from what I heard from Noah.”

She laughed. “As I said, I doubt it. Before you, Noah, and your cousins, I really didn’t have much luck with men.”

She tried to hide her pain, but he heard it as it threaded her voice. He settled on the bed next to her. “You’re a wonderful mate.”

Eve tried to laugh it away, but Ethan couldn’t allow her to do that. He needed her to understand, to know just how vital she was to the pack. To their very existence.

He took her hands in his. “You are very important to us. If regular men didn’t see that, it was something lacking in them.”

She tried to pull her hands away, but he tightened his hold.

“No. Look at me.”

He waited for her to raise her gaze to his. The agony he saw there tore at his heart.

“You are everything we have been waiting for. If you think any differently, ask my cousins, ask your Alpha.”

“*Your* Alpha.”

He shook his head, knowing he should explain her role, what would be expected of her, but he couldn’t. He was too tired to deal with it.

He cupped her face in his palm. “Why don’t you get some more sleep? I’m going to take a shower.”

She nodded, and he could see from her expression that she wanted to ask more, but didn’t. As he took his shower, he started thinking over what he knew of the wolves and the shifters. He knew in his gut the bears wouldn’t do this. There were many in the council who thought they should run it. Bears were the biggest, but they weren’t

the smartest. And the big problem was that Vic didn't want to be in charge of the council. Hell, Ethan didn't want to have anything to do with it. Politics weren't his strong suit. He hated meetings. He spent every minute in them thinking of things he needed to do in his lab.

There was something he was missing, but his brain was shutting down. Turning over the facts was making his head spin. There were so many little intricacies, so many details, he couldn't seem to move from one thought to the next in a logical fashion. Maybe his mother was right. Maybe he needed some more rest.

He entered the bathroom, closing the door behind him. After turning on the water to allow it enough time to warm up, Ethan undressed, letting his mind rest. He couldn't think about anything right now. He just needed some rest.

He stepped into the shower and let the heat of the water relax his muscles. The door slid open, and Eve stepped into the shower with him. She offered him a shy smile that almost knocked the breath out of him. Evan didn't think he would ever get used to seeing her look at him that way. "Got room for one more?"

He turned to face her and smiled. "Always for you."

She took the rag from him and soaped it up. "Turn around."

He did obediently. Her hands moved to his back, the soapy water making it easy for her to glide the material over his flesh. His arousal surged as she continued down, her hands moving over his ass. One finger slipped down the crevice between his cheeks, and his dick jerked.

"Like that?" she asked, her voice amused and gentle at the same time. It was as if she knew he needed a little tender loving care. His heart warmed at the thought.

"I like any time I get to have your hands on me."

She leaned forward and pressed her mouth to his shoulder. "It's amazing that there doesn't seem to be a mark on your body from the attack. A few little scratchy looking things, but otherwise, no one would know that you had been attacked and left for dead."

The wonder in her voice did a lot to help his ego. Hell, just the way she was moving her hands over him was enough.

“Turn around.”

Again he obeyed. She was gorgeous. She wasn’t very wet because he stood in front of the water, but her hair curled more from the humidity in the bathroom than from the water. The curls dripped over her shoulders, one curling around her pink nipple. He couldn’t resist, didn’t even try. He lifted his finger and slipped it over the turgid tip.

“Hmm,” was all she said as she soaped up his chest. The feel of her fingers moving over one then the other nipple had him curling his toes. Damn, she knew what to do to drive him crazy. Of course, their father and uncles had warned them that once they met their mate, they would have a handful.

She trailed her hands down, dropping the rag on the floor at his feet. Eve slipped both hands over his cock and pumped him. He leaned his head back and groaned. The slickness of the soap, along with the water, made it easy for her to tease him over and over. The friction wasn’t enough to really send him over the edge. The teasing, though, was driving him crazy. He wanted a release, needed it. When he looked down at his mate, her smile told him she knew just what she was doing to him.

He growled and pulled her hand away from his cock and reversed their positions. The water cascaded over her, dripping off the ends of nipples. With a need that he couldn’t control, he bent and licked off some of the water then drew the nipple into his mouth. She groaned and tried to move closer. Soon, he was kissing his way down her body and then knelt in front of her. He kissed her slick belly before leaning forward to press his mouth to her pussy. As the water fell on them, he devoured her, enjoying the way her body responded, the sound of her surprised gasps, and her heated moans. Ethan was barely holding on to his own lust as he slipped his tongue between her pussy lips. Her fingers slipped through his wet hair, molding to the back of his head as she leaned against the shower wall, using his hands to

spread her legs to give him more access. Sweet and sassy, the familiar taste spread through him as he pushed her over the edge into bliss in barely any time at all. She was still shivering as he stood, licking his way back up her body. He lifted her, almost dropped her because of the slickness of the soap and water.

“Wrap your legs around my waist.”

She didn’t hesitate. He entered her then braced them against the wall. As he moved in and out of her, he took her mouth, diving inside, knowing that she could taste her own arousal on his tongue. The thought aroused him even more, as did the way she sucked on his tongue. She was dangerous.

He steadied them both by holding her by her rear. Soon, though, he felt his orgasm approaching. But he didn’t want to be there alone. He wanted her to come again, feel all those little muscles moving over him.

“Come for me, baby,” he said between kisses. “Come on.”

She moaned as he increased his thrusts. In the next moment, she exploded. As he expected, that pussy clamped down tight on his cock, pulling him further into her heated core. He couldn’t fight it anymore, didn’t want to.

“Eve,” he groaned as he thrust into her one last time and spent himself inside her.

By the time he recovered, they had almost fallen down. Eve giggled, and he stopped moving at the sound. He looked at her, the joy on her face, and felt his heart constrict. Damn. He loved her so damned much. He kissed her then, slowly, surely, and let her feel the love he felt for her.

“Ethan.” His name came out on a sigh filled with awe and pleasure.

“We better get out of here before we kill each other.”

She looked like she wanted to say something, but apparently thought better of it. She offered him a smile and said, “I think you’re right.”

Chapter Six

“So, we have to figure out why they would target the bears,” Eve said as she sat down at the table with a hot cup of coffee. The smell of bacon and eggs cooking filled the room. She watched Shane and Max who were busy with the food. Ethan filled his own mug with coffee.

Max grunted but said nothing as Shane gave her a pitying look. “We aren’t so sure they don’t have something to do with it.”

She frowned at Shane. “I don’t think Vic would do something like this. As Ethan said, he doesn’t really want to be in charge.”

“But someone else might,” Ethan said quietly. “He isn’t the only who would benefit.”

“That’s a good point,” Shane said. “There are other bears who would like Vic to be in charge.”

“Are they?” she asked, turning the idea over in her head. “Or is there someone who would benefit from a fight with the wolves?”

“Vic would never take over. That’s for sure,” Ethan mentioned. “He wouldn’t allow a war to start up with us.”

“But, if that is the reason behind the killings and your attack, wouldn’t Vic be in danger?”

The cousins all shared a look. “Shit,” Ethan said as he grabbed his cell phone. “I should have thought of it.”

She opened her mouth to say something, but Shane shook his head. Ethan walked out of the kitchen as he dialed his phone.

“Let it go,” Shane said.

“Why should he have thought of it? I mean, all of you should have thought of it.”

Max chuckled as he set a plate filled with food in front of her. “Tell us how you really feel, Eve.”

She sighed when she looked at the eggs, bacon, and toast on her plate. “There is no way I am going to be able to eat all this.”

Max had grabbed a plate himself and slipped into the seat beside her. “You need to keep your stamina up.”

The grin on his face made her smile, but it soon faded. “I hope Vic is okay. I really don’t know why Ethan would take more of this one than any of you, which is what I meant earlier.”

Shane joined them at the table. “That’s Ethan. He was always the brain.”

“He’s more than that,” she said, her defenses going up immediately.

“Hey, settle down, darlin’,” Shane said. “It is the way he has always been.”

“You actually think of him as a brain, that he should have thought of this problem before. Why? The man was attacked and almost died less than two weeks ago.”

Shane smirked at Max over her head. Then, he returned his gaze to her and she could feel him watching her shove food into her mouth. She didn’t even pay attention to how wonderful the eggs tasted. She just kept shoveling it in.

“Eve, we aren’t putting him down.”

“Just because he’s smart doesn’t mean that is all he does. Or who he is.”

She had to fight the urge to rub her chest. The same crushing weight she had felt when she had started college so young. She remembered having to compete against people four or five years older, the worry that she would let her parents down. Their disappointment had been something she could never handle, not until recently.

“Hey, sweetie, don’t get so upset,” Shane said.

"It's bad enough he won't talk to me about certain things, treats me like I don't belong."

She didn't really notice Max moving away, but Shane picked her up out of her seat and settled her on his lap.

"Hey," Eve said, trying to smack his hands away. "I don't like being handled."

He smiled, one that went straight to her heart, not to mention heating her blood at the same time. "I think you like being handled, or at least, in a certain way."

She could feel heat flame in her face. God, she hated being a redhead. Everyone could tell when she was embarrassed.

"Now, why don't you tell me what you're talking about?"

She sighed and leaned back against his chest. "Nothing, really."

He chuckled, and she felt the vibration against her back. It soothed her. For some reason, she had been dealing with these kinds of outbursts regularly. It was hard to figure out that sometimes she felt like she was itching from the inside out. It had started when she arrived in Alaska, and now, it had increased after becoming involved with the Dillons.

"Tell me."

"I hate dumping on you all the time."

He placed a finger under her chin and raised her head to meet his gaze. "Eve, honey, I live to be here for you. We all do. If you are in pain, we are, too. So, tell me."

Knowing that Shane wouldn't let it go until she did, she settled back against his chest. "He seems to hold something back."

"Do you think he's keeping secrets?" he asked, his doubt easy to hear in his voice.

"Not really. Just, something. He is giving in on everything. Heck, he lets me work in his lab, which I understand that he doesn't allow ever. So that is something. But..."

She could feel her face heating again. Good lord, she was about to start talking about making love with his cousin.

“Ah, I get it. It has something to do with when you’re in bed?”

“Yeah.” She sighed. “He never really holds back. He is a very giving lover. You all are.”

“But?”

“It’s like there is something he doesn’t want to tell me. Is there something bad I should know about?” she asked, afraid of the answer but not wanting to hide from the problems anymore. She had enough as it was, with the fact she was in love with one brother and desperately falling in love with the second one. She had feelings for all the Dillon men, but there was something about Ethan that pulled at her.

“No. There is nothing he has to tell you, honest. You just have to understand from the time he was born, he was like that. It wasn’t anything that was foisted on him. We were all allowed to be who we were naturally. Now, down in Texas, we have some cousins...they don’t have a lot of say in what goes on in their lives.”

That brought her to attention as she sat up and looked at him. “You have some more of you in Texas?”

He chuckled. “Yeah, honey, we have relatives all over the place. But each division pretty much has their own rules and guidelines. For us, it was never that the oldest had to be the Alpha. But in other parts of our distant family, they play the traditional roles.”

She remembered what Jen had said about the roles. “And what is Ethan?”

“He’s our brain. He started talking before most of us, or so our moms tell us. He was...quiet, but studious, and his brain was amazing. We are very close in age, in the same grade at school, and I will tell you the ass screwed our curve every time. It’s what he enjoys.”

“So what does that have to do with the way he is acting around me?”

“He isn’t used to talking about feelings. Hell, none of us are. We’re men.”

“You seem pretty good at it.”

“I’m talking about him, not me,” he said, chuckling.

“So,” she said, twining her arms around his neck then slipping her hands up into his hair. “If Noah is the big, bad Alpha, and Ethan is the brain, what role to you fulfill?”

She could sense the change in his breathing and the barest hint of arousal in his blood. No, wait, she couldn’t sense that, could she? It had to be her imagination. She shook away her thoughts as Shane leaned closer to nuzzle her neck. His warm breath feathered over her pulse point the moment before she felt the flat of his tongue slide across it. She shivered in response, her body already gearing up for another taste of Shane. He was rowdy and fun and downright delectable. He slipped his hand up under her shirt and groaned when it came in contact with her hardened nipple.

“Damn, woman. You will be the death of me yet,” he said.

“Me,” she said, barely recognizing her voice. There were times in the last couple of weeks that she heard what sounded like a growl coming from deep inside her. “You all are enough to make a woman go completely mad.”

He chuckled as he drew back from her neck. The look in his eyes was something she had seen before, something that she had witnessed in all their eyes. Heat was there, flaring in the depths of his gaze, his need easy to see. But she sensed something else, something that called to her. She could barely put a name on it, but it felt like more than lust, more than just that basic primal need. As before, it disappeared in the blink of an eye as he leaned closer, brushing his mouth against hers. His tongue stole in, the taste of him and coffee he drank mingling together, causing her entire body to respond. Heat rolled through her, slipping through her veins.

He pulled back for one second as he tugged her shirt off her, leaving her in nothing but her panties. Without a word, he dipped his head and took a nipple into his mouth. As he pulled the turgid tip between his teeth and bit down, she moved to straddle his lap. God,

she didn't know how this happened, but even now, she could feel the need building, the almost unbelievable lust that seemed to guide almost every thought she had these days. It was as if she couldn't stop herself. She needed them, needed to be in contact with one or more of them or she felt like she was missing something.

Her panties grew damper as he moved from one nipple to the other. She ached. Every molecule of her body ached to be touched, tasted, needed. Never in her life had she wanted someone like she needed these men. It went beyond sexual, she knew that but her head just couldn't put thoughts together. Each time she thought she had a handle on her attraction to each of the cousins, she lost her grip. The attraction grew each time. She should be scared out of her mind, and she was. But she couldn't seem to think straight. Even knew she needed to. She needed to keep a part of herself separate, but each time they touched her, she lost her ability to think.

She moved against him and moaned when she felt his erection. Even through the layers of their clothing, she could feel the hard length of his cock, and her body yearned for it. She wanted this. More, it was as if her body was telling her she needed this to survive.

He raised his head as she grabbed the bottom of his shirt and pulled it up and over his head, throwing it behind her. She spread her hands over his chest.

"You are so marvelous," she said, and she meant it. None of them were little, and every one of the Dillon men was masculine. A thin line of hair trailed down his chest and abdomen and disappeared beneath his jeans.

She leaned forward and took his nipple in her mouth. If she gave herself time to think about her actions, she wouldn't be able to do this. Instead, she threw her inhibitions out the window and grazed her teeth over the tip. He groaned as he slipped his hands down her spine to cup her ass. His fingers dug into her flesh through the sheer fabric of her panties. Liquid heat slowly rolled through her, sliding down to her pussy. Her panties were dripping with her arousal.

“Having fun without me, again,” Ethan said. She looked up and gauged his mood. Heat flared in the depths of his eyes, but the thing that caught her attention was his smile. It was just the curving of his lips, but she had seen the look before. The sight of it shot straight to her heart. God, she was already in love with him. She couldn’t even think right now. Shane’s hands were moving over her flesh. Her body begged to be taken, conquered, satisfied. She didn’t think she could even form the words to tell him how she felt.

“Hey, cuz, you left. Your loss.” As always with all the Dillon men, there was no jealousy in his comments. Good-natured joking was all it was.

Ethan approached them. With each step he took, she felt her pulse beat. He was already shirtless by the time he reached them.

His hands went to his pants next, and soon he was naked in front of them. His cock was hard, bobbing up against his flat stomach. Her mouth dried up as she licked her lips. He lifted her up and kissed her. As he did, she felt Shane pulling her panties off her body. By the time she was settled back on his lap, he was naked, too. She was already wet with her arousal, so she lifted up and took his cock in her pussy.

“Damn, you always fit like a fucking glove.”

She leaned down to kiss him as she started to move. Then she turned her attention toward Ethan, who was watching the scene in front of him with a heated gaze. Eve smiled up at him and reached for him. He stepped close enough so she could take him in her mouth. She did as Shane took over her movements, taking her by the hips and moving her up and down. Soon, they were lost in the bliss she always found with the Dillons. Ethan flexed his hips, shoving his cock further into her mouth, his cock pumping the back of her throat. She ignored it. She felt Shane draw the flat of his tongue over her nipple. Ethan groaned and slipped his hands to the back of her head as he thrust into her mouth once more and came. She licked him one last time before he pulled out of her mouth. She had no time to think as Shane stood, holding her, and placing her down on the kitchen table. He started

thrusting, the table shaking with each powerful move. He slipped his hand down her body, pressing against her clit, sending her over the edge. Her orgasm shot through her. Shane thrust once, twice...then he came.

They were both breathing heavily as Shane cupped her face with both his hands and kissed her.

“Thank you.”

She felt tears press the backs of her eyes. She couldn’t figure out why, but for some reason she was overcome with emotion.

“Oh, Ethan, she’s starting to cry.”

Shane’s voice was filled with panic. He pulled away from her, and Ethan stepped up. He pulled her into his arms and then carried her down the hall.

“What is the matter with Shane?”

“He can’t really handle women crying. It is sort of his thing.”

She sighed and tucked her head under his chin. “Big bad wolf is afraid of a few female tears?”

He chuckled as they walked into his room. “Yeah.”

He laid her out on the bed then covered with the sheet. She felt her mind start to drift into sleep when she felt his lips on her forehead. “I love you, Ethan. You.”

Then she fell asleep, her body pleasantly loose and used, and her mind void of the problems they faced.

* * * *

Ethan stared down at Eve, unable to look away. She was snuggled beneath the covers, her arms wrapped around one of his pillows, her red curls strewn across his sheets.

I love you, Ethan.

The need to believe was so strong he could taste it, but he knew better. The prophecy said she would be their mate, but said nothing about her love.

Damn it, why did she have to say it? Now, he wanted to believe it. He wanted her to really mean it, not just say it because she was emotionally drained.

He sighed, knowing that he wasn't going to get anything done standing here mooning over her. He leaned down, brushed his mouth over her forehead then walked out of the room.

He could be happy without it, or thought he could. Until he heard those words.

I love you, Ethan.

Chapter Seven

He looked out over the valley and sighed. He didn't want this. Not really. He didn't know what he wanted, only what his mother wanted. He was sane enough to know that her ideas were wrong. Their kind didn't run the Totem council. Even if Dillon hadn't had his mother and her insane father cast out of the protective area, there was no way his mother or her father would have been in any kind of position of power.

"This is what I have always wanted."

His mother's voice sent a cold chill down his spine then sank into his bones. It had nothing to do with the wind that whipped through his hair and everything to do with the woman who lived in her own little world.

"I don't understand why. I never have."

Silence reigned between them. She slowly approached him. "You are going to give up. You didn't like killing the wolves?"

He did. That had been the problem. His bloodlust had taken over, and he didn't even remember killing them. What he remembered was the sexual thrill that it left afterwards. He had wanted nothing more than to kill again. It sickened him even now.

"No. I don't understand how this will get the Dillons fighting the bears. They aren't stupid."

"Of course they aren't. But you know how these wolves are. They don't trust anyone."

He knew that much was true. Between the Totem shifters, there was still distrust. Always.

“I think we need something else, something that will strike at the heart of the Dillons.”

“They are too careful right now. I don’t know if I will get one of them alone.”

“You will. They will do something stupid.”

He sighed and looked at his mother. The craziness was changing her looks. Her hair was now almost white, her eyes...weren’t right. He looked back of the valley and thought how much he didn’t want any fucking part of the mess his mother was creating.

* * * *

There was something wrong. Ethan didn’t know what it was, but there was something about to happen, something bad. He hated this intuition he seemed to have. It helped him through many of his experiments, but the truth was that it was as much of a curse as a blessing. He hated knowing something really, really bad was about to happen.

“Hey, something wrong?”

He looked across the lab table at Eve. Damn, she was gorgeous. There was beauty, that superficial kind that faded with time. With Eve, it was different. Her beauty was on the surface, but the true beauty was from deep within. She would grow more gorgeous with each passing year. He couldn’t wait until she was carrying a child. She was the type of woman that would be irresistible with a rounded stomach.

“Ethan?”

Her concern spoke to him. Her green eyes grew dark with concern. He shook himself out of his stupor.

“No. Nothing, just a feeling.”

She sighed. “I feel it, too. I’m not sure if it is coming all from you, but I do know that there is something bothering me. Like we missed

something, that there was something that we should have been paying attention to.”

He knew what she was feeling, but he couldn’t tell her, not yet. He had been honest with every question she had, but he couldn’t tell her about empathy. All their mates had it, from time to time, especially soon after making love.

“You know I meant it.”

I love you, Ethan. You.

He’d held those words close to his heart, but he had known it was the heat of the moment, or he thought it. He looked at her, studying her earnest expression.

“You don’t have to say it.”

A look of hurt moved over her face before she busied herself with her laptop. “Okay.”

Now, he was the one feeling her pain. Damn, he hadn’t meant to hurt her, but he understood there was a good chance that Noah would be the only one she would ever truly love. Most normal people would be upset over that. Not him, and not the rest of his cousins. She was theirs, but they all understood that Noah would be more a part of her because of being the Alpha.

She closed her laptop and stood.

“Where are you going?” he asked.

“I need a drink and a break.”

“I’ll come with you.”

She shook her head, and she wouldn’t look at him. “No. I...no.”

She turned to leave, and he couldn’t stand it. The sad look in her eyes cut at his heart.

“Eve.”

“Please, Ethan, leave me a little pride. I misunderstood. I know that it’s an odd situation. You can at least let me pull back a little.”

“Eve, hun, I know you don’t love me. It’s okay. You don’t have to.”

She turned then and instead of the tears he expected, fire blazed in the depth of her green eyes.

“What the hell is that supposed to mean?”

“I understand that you are going to be more partial to Noah. Makes sense.”

But now that he said it, it sounded stupid.

“Partial to Noah? Why? Like I can only fall for one of you and fuck the rest of you?”

Anger seeped from every word as she stomped closer to him. He had never seen her like this. She was definitely a redhead with that nasty temper of hers.

“No, it isn’t what I meant.”

“What did you mean?”

She backed him up against a wall and poked at his chest. “Do you not believe in yourself enough, or do you find something lacking in me?”

“I...”

He couldn’t think. Her anger added a flush of color to her skin, her voice deepened. The wolf in him sat up at attention. Damn, she was something. It was damned embarrassing that she was scaring him a little, but there was another part of her aroused at the sight of her. He knew she was their mate, but she had proven that by her reaction.

“Now, baby,” he started but snapped his mouth shut when her eyes narrowed.

“Baby? Oh, you make me so mad. You are all stupid. I love you. Deal with it.”

With that, she spun on her heel and marched out of the lab mumbling something under her breath.

“Shit.”

“Yeah, you stepped in it there,” Uncle Mike said from across the room.

Embarrassment grew as Ethan looked at him. “I didn’t see you there.”

“I didn’t mean to eavesdrop, but I came in to tell you I was going out to pick up some wood and ask if you needed anything. Your mate isn’t very happy with you right now.”

Ethan sighed. “I would have never expected her to get that pissed. I was giving her an out.”

“Son, you have a lot to learn about women. From the conversation I heard, she told you she loved you.”

“Right after sex.”

Mike rolled his eyes. “Like you haven’t had sex with her before? Of course you have. Has she ever said it before?”

“No.”

“I have a feeling you’re going to be apologizing in the next few minutes.”

Ethan eyed the door where Eve had disappeared into the house. “I’m not too sure about that.”

Mike grunted. “You will. I know women, and that is one woman who will expect an apology. Now, tell your uncle why you think she doesn’t love you.”

Ethan sighed again. “I really don’t want to talk about this.”

His uncle shook his head and took the chair Eve had vacated and smiled. “Not leaving.”

“Eve loves Noah.”

Mike stared at him for a couple moments. It reminded Ethan of the time he blew up his first experiment. He couldn’t hide the disaster from his uncle, who was there while his parents were away for an anniversary alone. He studied him just like this until Ethan finally broke down and told him what happened. Now, though, he had learned to keep his mouth shut and wait. Just barely.

“Yeah, and she now loves you, too. It was bound to happen.”

“Like you would understand. You had one woman. You *knew*.”

“Yeah, and she was the best.”

The sadness in his uncle’s voice tugged at him. “I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to bring up old memories.”

He waved that away. “The memories never leave. But there is one thing I do know. She will love all of you. Mark my words. And you will need it.”

Ethan studied his uncle for a moment. The gnawing worry in his gut increased. Ethan knew that he hadn’t been wrong about things. There was something bad coming. Much worse than what they’d been through.

“You feel it, too.”

Mike nodded. “Plus the prophecy. Each time there is a group like you and your cousins who take one mate, there is a reason. There are bad times ahead. Some that you might not be prepared for. All of you will need Eve to get through it. And in the end, each of you will have to give to her what she needs. Her life will depend on it.”

The gravity of his uncle’s words sank in. He knew that part of his uncle’s gift had been passed down to him. Ethan had to fight the panic that now clawed at his throat. He couldn’t allow it to overcome him.

“You know what’s going to happen?”

Mike nodded. “Kind of. Not sure of all of it, but I am worried. There will be more death. I can feel it.”

Ethan nodded because he did, too. “I don’t know what, but I feel something evil seeping through the night.”

His uncle sighed. “We can only watch and be prepared. But you have more important things on your plate tonight.”

Ethan nodded as he slipped his hands in the pockets of his jeans. “I have to figure out just what kind of animal attacked me and the wolves.”

Mike chuckled as he rose and headed toward the door. “No, son, you have to go apologize to your mate. She might be planning death and dismemberment, and not in that order.”

Ethan smiled as he watched him open the door. “Uncle Mike?”

He turned around.

Ethan wanted to say so much to him. Mike had been a secondary father to them when work had kept his father away. Always there with

a gentle reassurance or a stern warning. Ethan didn't think he, Noah, or the cousins would be the men they were today without him. All those words crowded his throat, but he didn't truly know how to voice all of them. Instead, Ethan smiled. "Thanks."

He nodded and then stepped out into the night, closing the door behind him. Ethan thought of everything he told him. Eve had told she loved him. They'd been alone and not in the middle of sex. He hadn't expected it, hadn't been ready for it. One thing Ethan liked was being prepared. Her oath had hit him hard.

Did she love him?

He thought of their time in the lab, the sharing of their love of science...the way she looked at him.

Shit, she did love him.

With that in mind, he went to find her.

* * * *

Stupid men. First Noah, now Ethan. Jesus, she wasn't too sure what the hell she was going to do about this. Seriously. What the hell did a woman do when she fell in love with two men at once? And they were stupid men. *Really* stupid men. She tells them she loves them, they doubt her.

She wanted to cry, but she was too damned mad.

There was a knock at Shane's bedroom door. "Go away."

He ignored her and just opened the door. Damn, man. They all ignored her when she told them to do things. They were driving her crazy, and on top of it, she wasn't sure where it was all going. Ethan was the worst of the lot in her opinion. He should understand why something like this would drive her insane. But, no, she gives him the words she had only spoken to one other person, wolf, whatever the hell Noah was.

She sighed as they continued to stare at each other. God, he looked so good. Even now, as pissed as she was at him, she wanted him, wanted him beside her in bed. Damn it. "I'm sorry."

"Yeah, you are. All of you are."

She sat up and turned her back to him. She heard the almost silent snick of the door and realized he had shut it so they could have privacy. Like that would work here. They were probably all listening with dumb wolf ears.

"Eve."

He was standing beside the bed.

"What?" she asked, her tone embarrassing her, but she pushed it aside. She had every right to sound like a hurt fifteen-year-old.

"I love you."

She looked up at him and saw his earnest expression. "You can love me, but I can't love you. That's stupid."

He sighed and sat beside her. "I don't know how to explain it."

She wanted to growl. Growl! A month ago if someone had told her she would be walking around snarling, she would have laughed at them. She was becoming as temperamental and moody as her lovers.

"Try."

"From the moment I met you, I could barely think. Noah kept talking about you, and I had read all your papers."

Warmth seeped through the cold anger still holding her heart. "You read my papers?"

"Yes. And your book."

She felt ridiculously pleased by that.

"I really enjoyed them."

She couldn't stop the smile, but she said, "Don't think that you're going to get away with not telling me."

His cheeks turned a ruddy color, and she thought he might be blushing. She blinked, amazed that she could make one of them blush. "I could barely talk around you."

She cocked her head as she crossed her arms beneath her breasts.
“What do you mean?”

He shrugged, a dismissive gesture she recognized from him. He did it to blow things off, but she knew it was more, that someone was getting to close. “I’ve never been a big talker. I’ve just always preferred my own company. But, with you, I could barely keep a straight thought in my mind. There were a lot of times my tongue felt like it was glued to the top of my mouth.”

“Why?”

He shook his head. “I think I started falling in love with you when I was reading your papers. You cared so much for the wolves. It was easy to see in your writing. Your facts were wonderful, but what made you so special was the love you felt for them. You can understand how that spoke to me.”

She nodded.

“But it was more. The time I spent with you...I just fell in love with you. I never thought you would return the feeling.”

She frowned. “Why not? Why do you think you’re not the type of person to be loved?”

“I always thought you were for Noah.”

“That doesn’t bother you? That I would sleep with you and not love you.”

“You cared, I knew that. It isn’t easy to explain. I just needed you.”

And she knew what he meant. Right then in that moment, she knew the need she had for him had grown in the last couple of weeks. She responded to all of the Dillons, but now, she seemed closer to both Ethan and Noah.

She cupped his face, and without taking her gaze away from his, she said, “I love you, Ethan.”

The sigh he released was filled with such pleasure that she shivered. She leaned closer and brushed her mouth over his. This

close, she could draw in his unique scent. It made her blood hum in need, in utter surrender.

She pulled back but did not break eye contact. "Please know that I love you because you are smart and strong, and when you look at me with those sad eyes, I just want to make you smile."

He smiled and slipped his arms around her waist and pulled her closer. "Thank you."

"Don't ever deny me again, Mr. Dillon."

"Hmm," was his response as he nuzzled her neck. She couldn't help responding, but this time it was different. Her body reacted and her heart right along with it. How could this be so easy, so simple? She didn't care. All she wanted was to taste, to feel, to share.

She urged him back onto the mattress and straddled his hips. A sense of true power came over her as she slid her hands under his shirt and pulled it up and off him. He lifted his hands to her breasts, thumbing her nipples as he leaned up to take one in his mouth. The scrape of his teeth sent a shaft of need spiraling through her right to her pussy. She felt the need to touch and taste, but also become one with him. It drove her on as she leaned down and kissed her way down his body. After she undid his pants, his cock sprang free. She wrapped her hand around it, enjoying the way it pulsed beneath her palm. It jerked when her thumb grazed the top of it, the dewy essence of his arousal already seeping from his slit. She looked up the length of him and brought her thumb to her mouth. Without breaking eye contact, she licked it. Sweet, salty, it danced over her taste buds. She loved to give all of them oral, loved tasting it as it slid down her throat.

She slipped to the floor between his outstretched legs and raised a finger, crooking it to tell him to move up. The smile she saw on his face told her he was enjoying this as much as she was. But he shook his head. Instead, he said, "Strip down and come up on bed with me."

At first she wanted to say no, but she saw the look in his eyes and shrugged as she stood. Within moments, she was nude as he was and

they were back on the bed. She moved to lay beside him, but he shook his head. He wrapped his hand around his cock and gave it a few pumps. She felt everything in her tighten at the sight of his hand wrapped around his bulging shaft.

“Suck me, baby,” he whispered.

She didn’t need another invitation. She leaned down and took him in her mouth. Again the taste of him filled her senses as the musky scent of his arousal. It was primal, needy, and everything she wanted. As she continued to take him into her mouth, he lifted her up and over him, positioning her pussy over his mouth. The heat of his breath hit her core first, before she felt the lick. She moaned against his dick, enjoying the heat that rolled through her at the contact.

His tongue slipped between her labia as she swiped her tongue over the tip of his cock, grazing the hole. He moved his hands up to her rear end, his fingers digging into her flesh as he pressed her down closer to his mouth. Heat soared. Her arousal wrapped in love and need pushed all thoughts out of her mind except completion. She wanted it, needed to give it to him. She added her hand to his shaft, pumping him each time he moved up. His groan vibrated against her clit as he sucked it into his mouth. He dipped a finger between her ass cheeks, slipping it into her puckered hole. As he moved his tongue in and out of her pussy, his finger worked in concert. Each time he dove into her holes, her body moved closer, but not close enough for the free fall into pleasure that she wanted. She moved her hand to caress his sac, enjoyed the way his dick jumped in her mouth. She couldn’t even fathom anything other than giving him pleasure and finding it herself. He continued his assault on her senses, his teeth now scraping against her clit. With each brush of his teeth, she shivered. She couldn’t help it. Nothing in the world had ever been this important with her. She wanted to share, to feel him come in her mouth, to find her pleasure.

In that next instant, he bit down on her clit and sent her flying over the edge. Her muscles contracted on his tongue in her pussy and

on his finger in her anus. The orgasm rolled through her, and she moaned against his dick. As she was coming down, he shoved into her mouth one last time then groaned against her clit. She joined him this time as her second orgasm slammed through her. Convulsions wracked her body as his cum filled her mouth and cascaded down her throat.

Long moments later, Noah pulled her up and off him then tugged her up to lay beside him. There in the darkened room, she drifted off to sleep centered and happy to be with a man she loved.

* * * *

Shouts were the first thing Ethan heard the next morning.

“What’s that?” Eve asked.

He didn’t know, but from the smell of fear in the air, along with the anger rolling in the voices, there was something very wrong. He jumped out of bed and shucked on a pair of pants as he worked his way to the door. He heard Eve behind him.

“Stay in the room.”

He should have known better. He heard her running behind him. From what he could tell, they were in his lab. His brother met him in the hall. Blood covered his clothes, his hands, and the first thing he thought was Noah was hurt. His gut twisted.

“Noah?” Eve screamed behind him.

One whiff in the air, though, Ethan knew the blood wasn’t his brother’s.

He caught Eve as she practically tried to jump past him at Noah.

“Whoa, he’s fine, but he’s covered in blood.”

He looked at his brother and saw the suspicious glint in his eyes. Fear crashed into him again. The fact that his brother was this upset told Ethan it had to be bad.

“Noah?”

He cleared his throat and pulled himself together. “It’s bad. Really bad.”

Ethan sniffed, and in that instant, he knew.

Uncle Mike.

Pain seeped beneath the fear that had been riding him hard. The air in his lungs seemed to back up, and he almost choked. They walked quickly to the lab and found the family gathered around his uncle who lay on one of the lab tables. Or at least what was left of him. His clothes were ripped to shreds, blood covered most of it. He knew without even checking there was no pulse.

Ethan had known. He had felt something bad was coming. There were hints of it in the air, threading through his blood. Mike had known. And, they had both known it would hit him hard. Ethan had never really expected this. The time he had spent with Mike fishing, running, just talking, flashed through his mind. He looked at his father and swallowed a lump that had risen in his throat. The pain and anger in his gaze hit him hard. He turned toward Eve and took her hand. Immediately, her soothing presence centered him. Together, they walked to the table to join the others. Each of the pack silently promising to do everything in their power to kill the bastard who had done this.

End of Book 3: Convincing Ethan

**To be continued in
Book 4: Shane’s Need**

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kiera West spends her days writing about sexy shape shifters and her nights dreaming of them. She is married with children. Readers can find out more about her writing at www.KieraWest.com.

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